

Elegy for Thelonious*
Yusef Komunyakaa

Damn the snow.
Its senseless beauty
pours a hard light
through the hemlock.
Thelonious is dead. Winter
drifts in the hourglass;
notes pour from the brain cup.
damn the alley cat
wailing a muted dirge
off Lenox Ave.
Thelonious is dead.
Tonight's a lazy rhapsody of shadows
swaying to blue vertigo
& metaphysical funk.
Black trees in the wind.
*Crepuscle with Nellie***
plays inside the bowed head.
"Dig the Man Ray of piano!"
O Satisfaction,
hot fingers blur on those white rib keys.
Coming on the Hudson.
Monk's Dream.
The ghost of bebop
from 52nd Street,
footprints in the snow.
Damn February.
Let's go to Minton's
& play "modern malice"
till daybreak. Lord,
there's Thelonious
wearing that old funky hat
pulled down over his eyes.

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*Thelonious Monk (1917-1982) was an American jazz pianist and composer.

**A song written to Monk's wife, the title translates "moonlight for Nellie"

****Coming on the Hudson and Monk's Dream* are songs written by Monk