

I Genitori Perduti

By Lawrence Ferlinghetti

The dove-white gulls
on the wet lawn in Washington Square
in the early morning fog
each a little ghost in the gloaming
Souls transmigrated maybe
from Hudson's shrouded shores
across all the silent years—
Which one's my maybe mafioso father
in his so white suit and black shoes
in his real estate office Forty-second Street
or at the front table wherever he went—
Which my dear lost mother with faded smile
locked away from me in time—
Which my big brother Charley
selling switching-signals all his life
on the New York Central—
And which good guy brother Clem
sweating in Sing Sing's darkest offices
deputy-warden thirty years
watching executions in the wooden armchair
(with leather straps and black hood)
He too gone mad with it in the end—
And which my nearest brother Harry
still kindest and dearest in a far suburb—
I see them now all turn to me at last
gull-eyed in the white dawn
about to call to me
across the silent grass

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "I Genitori Perduti" from *These Are My Rivers: New and Selected Poems*.
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Lawrence Ferlinghetti is best known for his rejection of traditional artistic and social ideas, a challenge that inspired a generation of writers in the 1950s known as the "Beats." As a forerunner of the group, he opened the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco in 1953. It became a major destination for freethinking writers and artists from all over the U.S., and also served as an independent publisher of "Beat" poetry, including his own, *A Coney Island of the Mind* (1958). Considered a historical benchmark for the time-period, that book maintains its place as one of the best-selling volumes of poetry of all time. The City Lights Bookstore remains a beacon for unorthodox writers and artists to this day.