

Retired Ballerinas, Central Park West

By Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Retired ballerinas on winter afternoons
walking their dogs
in Central Park West
(or their cats on leashes—
the cats themselves old highwire artists)
The ballerinas
leap and pirouette
through Columbus Circle
while winos on park benches
(laid back like drunken Goudonovs)
hear the taxis trumpet together
like horsemen of the apocalypse
in the dusk of the gods
It is the final witching hour
when swains are full of swan songs
And all return through the dark dusk
to their bright cells
in glass highrises
or sit down to oval cigarettes and cakes
in the Russian Tea Room
or climb four flights to back rooms
in Westside brownstones
where faded playbill photos
fall peeling from their frames
like last year's autumn leaves

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