

# 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

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "Retired Ballerinas, Central Park West" from *These Are My Rivers*.

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