

GERALD STERN

Sacco, Vanzetti

I have asked ten Italians at my beloved's
father's and mother's fiftieth wedding anniversary
at the Rainbow Room and not one of the ten
knew though it was the moment of Italian triumph
greater than Toscanini, greater than LaGuardia;
and I have a personal hero, Judge Musmanno,
who spent twenty years proving their innocence,
*a good shoe maker and a poor fish peddler,
never dreaming to steal, never to assassinate,
for whom I fight back tears and quench my heart,
throbbing to my throat to not weep before them,
whom I do love and who I would have marched for,
who taught me for to talk to scorning men*
in rooms the size of bathrooms or small stadiums,
throbbing to my own bosses and even friends,
since spit came first and drops of learning too
like slow-falling snow the day before spring
seventy-seven years later for whom not a stamp,
not a square, not a statue, anywhere to behold,
nor a text, nor a wall of labored steel for to remember
our helpless shame, their murder, tenors, sopranos.