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**WRITING ACROSS
THE LANDSCAPE** TRAVEL JOURNALS
**LAWRENCE
FERLINGHETTI**
EDITED BY GIADA DIANO AND MATTHEW GLEESON

This long-awaited volume provides a panoramic portrait of art and life across the twentieth century, from Mexico to Morocco, Paris to Rome, and beyond.

Over the course of an adventured-filled life, now in its tenth decade, Lawrence Ferlinghetti has been many things: a poet, painter, pacifist, publisher, courageous defender of free speech, and owner of San Francisco's legendary City Lights bookstore. Now the man whose *A Coney Island of the Mind* became a generational classic reveals yet another facet of his manifold talents, presenting here his travel journals, spanning over sixty years. Selected from a vast trove of mostly unpublished, handwritten notebooks, and edited by Giada Diano and Matthew Gleeson, *Writing Across the Landscape* becomes a transformative work of social, cultural, and literary history.

Beginning with Ferlinghetti's account of serving as a commanding officer on a Navy sub-chaser during D-Day, *Writing Across the Landscape* dramatically traverses the latter half of the twentieth century. For those only familiar with his poetry, these pages present a Lawrence Ferlinghetti never before encountered, an elegant prose stylist and tireless political activist who was warning against the pernicious sins of our ever-expansive corporate culture long before such thoughts ever seeped into mainstream consciousness.

Yet first and foremost we see an inquisitive wanderer whose firsthand accounts of people and places are filled with pungent descriptions that animate the landscapes and cultures he encounters. Evoking each journey with a mixture of travelogue and poetry as well as his own hand-drawn sketches, Ferlinghetti adopts the role of an American bard, providing panoramic views of the Cuban Revolution in Havana, 1960, and a trip through Haiti, where voodoo and Catholicism clash in cathedrals "filled with ulcerous children's feet running from Baron Hunger." Reminding us that poverty is not only to be found abroad, Ferlinghetti narrates a Steinbeck-like trip through California's Salton Sea, a sad yet exquisitely melodic odyssey from motel to motel, experiencing the life "between cocktails, between filling stations, between buses, trains, towns, restaurants, movies, highways leading over horizons to another Rest Stop...Sad hope of all their journeys to Nowhere and back in dark Eternity."

Particularly memorable is his journey across the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1957, which turns into a Kafkaesque nightmare in which he, lacking a proper visa, is removed from a Japan-bound freighter

and forced back across the Russian steppe to Moscow, encountering a countryside more Tolstoy than Khrushchev, while nearly dying in the process. Readers are also treated to glimpses of Ezra Pound, "looking like an old Chinese sage," whom Ferlinghetti spies in Italy, as well as fellow Beat legends Allen Ginsberg and a dyspeptic William S. Burroughs, immured with his cats in a grotto-like apartment in London.

Embedded with facsimile manuscript pages and an array of poems, many never before published, Writing Across the Landscape revives an era when political activism coursed through the land and refashions Lawrence Ferlinghetti, not only as a seminal poet but as an historic and singular American voice.

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