



# European Poems and Transitions: Over All the Obscene Boundaries

*Lawrence Ferlinghetti*

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## European Poems and Transitions: Over All the Obscene Boundaries Details

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# From Reader Review European Poems and Transitions: Over All the Obscene Boundaries for online ebook

## Ben says

In this collection Lawrence Ferlinghetti takes the reader with him on a long, strange trip, through the old Europe of his youth, into the atomic new age of America, traversing through the yellowed pages of time as they were immortalized by literary greats like Eliot, Proust and Dante. As always with Ferlinghetti (at least for me), the imagery is stunning, though not so much as one finds in his earlier collections of poetry; as the work returns to the setting of the new, modern America one gets a taste of the Ferlinghetti who would later write "Time of Useful Consciousness," his latest collection. These works are more political than many of his early works. And his voice here is clearer than in many of his 1960s works, still filled with symbolism, but not so tangled in it.

As a poet, Ferlinghetti is one who almost always has the ability to make me feel and to enter into his world. His imagery takes me to the rainy streets of Paris as he found them in the 1970s and 80s, with "solidified nostalgia," and as they were in his twenties ("Paris in the Rain 1898/only it is not 1898/It is 1948/a slight juggling of numbers/and no horse carriages/but the same eternal feeling/sad and elated/walking in Paris in the rain"; a city that is a "floating dream/a great stone ship adrift/made of dusk and dawn and darkness"), to Italy (where "Some church nearby/is raising dust with its bells"), to the Netherlands, to memories of his boyhood.

Reflecting back on the modern America, Ferlinghetti's final poem in this collection, "History of the World: A TV Docu-Drama" is filled with chilling imagery of a "country [that] is electrified," in which "Civilization beats out Eros/and Proust perishes," in which "paranoia floods the world" as "Hunger persists" and "Love lurches on." Much as we find in his "Time of Useful Consciousness," this is a warning of the direction civilization is heading. Much like Corso, Ginsberg, Dylan and so many others of the period, Ferlinghetti is also a product of the atom bomb-fueled generation, a generation in fear of the threat of the madness of mutually-assured destruction.

This work is a nice transition from the early Ferlinghetti to the later Ferlinghetti, filled with haunting imagery, references to pop culture, borrowing from the literary works of other poets and writers. It contains many great poems, but among my favorites are the last one ("History of the World"), "Seeing a Woman as in a Painting by Berthe Morisot," "Women in Rooms," "A Fable of the So-Called Birds" and the very touching piece, "The Photo of Emily." This is not Ferlinghetti's best, but it is an accessible and enjoyable work with a great deal to offer to readers, a work that can make one laugh, cry and think as we become lost in the world painted by the poet's words.

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## R. says

I enjoyed my Ferlinghetti phase.

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## Rachael Quinn says

I've been really enjoying Ferlinghetti's poetry lately but this wasn't my favorite. I had a hard time with the European scenery and some poems were even left in French. Still, he is quickly becoming one of my favorite poets.

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### **Dewey says**

Poetry booklets featuring geographic journeys that most evidently follow that progression are some of the best and the most accessible poetry collections for those wanting to acclimatize to this more and more inaccessible and ignored form of writing. In this collection from the 80's, *Over All The Obscene Boundaries*, Lawrence Ferlinghetti travels to France, Italy and the Low Countries, comparing the changes from previous visits among other things. They don't bear as much of his particular beatnik stylistic trademarks as *Coney Island of the Mind* or *Starting From San Francisco*, but they are as good as anything else I've read by him. Sometimes the way he talks about Parisian or Italian things seems to lean towards the cliché, but his matter-of-factly voice in the poems stops them from becoming just that. A fascinating surprise was the several poems Ferlinghetti wrote in French, making him the only other English language writer I know with bilingual writing on his/her resume (the other being Samuel Beckett, although a few poems aren't much compared to all the works Beckett wrote in French). A native French speaker could say better if they're good, but one can tell that the poems do work.

*Coney Island of the Mind* is a better place to start for those wanting to start with really distinctive Ferlinghetti, but there's no shame in reading this collection first if one finds it before another, especially since it's an accessible collection.

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### **Molly says**

This is really good, except for the poems in other languages which I can't read. Well I suppose they might be really good too, but how would I know?

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### **Artifice Magazine says**

I enjoyed my Ferlinghetti phase.

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### **Michael Anderson says**

Many years ago, I read some beat poets and decided, probably unfairly, that I liked Ferlinghetti's *Coney Island of the Mind* and *Starting From San Francisco* better than most. So it wasn't hard to pick up this book when visiting *City Lights* in San Francisco last month. Oddly, I didn't like this one as much as I remember liking his early stuff. My tastes have obviously changed. But his cadence is still rocking and the images he creates for me are still strong. If you like good poetry, you can do much worse than this.

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## **Molly says**

Great poetry - I definitely recommend this!

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