

## **Abstract**

The thesis provides three distinct perspectives on the representations of urban spaces in poetry of Lawrence Ferlinghetti. While they are dissimilar in terms of poetic style, employed literary devices and concepts and themes they explore, one important aspect is shared: the images of the city serve to discuss themes that transcend the urban domain. Ferlinghetti uses the city as a framework for his reflections on subject matters that have been categorized as follows: intertextuality, memory, critical urban discourse.

The first perspective regards the city as a text and an intertext composed of various sorts of texts such as architecture, visual arts, literature, sculpture or music. These texts may enter the relation with the urban text when they are “read” in the context of actual physical location. A juxtaposition of two dissimilar texts may trigger production of new meanings, which has the character of continual process: it is the intertextual flux. As a result, the perception of one or both codes suffers modification; one text contaminates the other. The examples of these influences and interferences between urban and other texts are analyzed on the background of the study of intertextuality in reception and critical theory.

The second perspective presents the city as a mnemonic space where both individual and collective memory are stored and rooted in specific locations. Various attempts to retrieve individual, family and collective memory are carried out within spatial-temporal and social structures of the city in hope to ground thus one's identity. These include returns to once familiar places and confrontation with one's youth, but these journeys back in time often result in great disillusionment, for there is an uncrossable gap between the present and the past. The discrepancy between recollection and reality manifests itself in many different manners. Blurred indistinct vision, under which solid structures dissolve and which causes the cityscape to adopt liquid character, is characteristic for cities conceived as reminiscence images. These are often also depicted through conventional imagery that deprives the city of its realistic elements and converts it into an idealized picture. A sense of temporal remoteness is enhanced by emphasis on spatial distance. Ferlinghetti's reflections of memory center chiefly around its absence: ephemerality, loss and oblivion.

The third view offers an overview of numerous issues that concern the whole nation and which are exemplified within urban space. The critique is exerted over particular urban spaces associated with certain more general concepts: the suburbs with conservative values, social and political conformity, cultural homogeneity and “American way of life”; marginal urban spaces with chaos, refuse and emptiness; Macy's department store with consumerism, false substitutions of true values, and a sense of alienation. Besides larger national issues, also the psychological impact of the dehumanized urban environment is explored. In particular, feelings frequently experienced by urban dwellers like apathy, anonymity, alienation, solitude or a sense of rootlessness are described.