

**Tribhuvan University**

**Role of Capitalism in Forming the City in Jonathan Lethem's *Chronic***

***City***

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## Letter of Approval

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## Role of Capitalism in Forming the City in Jonathan Lethem's *Chronic City*

### Abstract

*The entitled research analyses Jonathan Lethem's Chronic City, 2009 as a Marxist text that explores the issue of capitalism arguing the role of the city as the economical interpretation. It analyses Jonathan Lethem's vision of the shape of the city as an economical construction. This research paper particularly focuses on the different problematic, social, political and cultural depiction of the city and its constructions. This novel revolves around the story of Chase Intheadman, former child television star. He has a new role in life as a permanent guest on the Upper East Side dinner party circuit, where he is consigned to talk about his astronaut fiancée, Janice Trumbull, who is trapped on a circling space station. A chance encounter collides Chase with Perkus Tooth, a wily pop culture guru with a vicious conspiratorial streak and the best marijuana in town. Together and separately they attempt to define the indefinable, and enter into a quest for the most elusive of things: truth and authenticity in a city where everything has a price. The author through this novel offers the idea that how the form of the city is built differently in a different era and how the city is economically constructed. The paper concludes that capital roles are universally used to justify development of the city but the fact is that each culture develops specific city formation and ideas of cities appearance; these are transmitted through cultural, social and political elements and then internalised by the individual of the city that is exactly how the process of the forming and shaping city never comes to one another rather is more subjective and socio-cultural matter.*

Keywords: City Forming, Capitalism, Social Cultural Construction, Popular Culture, Right to the City

## Introduction

This research intends to explore how and why Jonathan Lethem's *Chronic City* applies Marxism. In particular, this research work tries to depict the city of America which city's identity is shaped according to western hegemonic. Focusing on the formation of city through capitalism and culture of the people from proletariat class Jonathan Lethem projects formation of western city through the Manhattan.

City derives from a French word meaning 'citizenry'. A city is a large or important town. The city, as the noted urban sociologist Robert Park once wrote, is:

Man's most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. But if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself. (1)

Forming the city is a practice of exchanging commodities and growth of the city. The research paper explores the way how city formation effects the physical and psychological aspect of marginalized people under Marxist discourse. The civilization process has also impact upon inferior people as they actually get influenced by the higher class society to fulfil the needs and demands of Bourgeois and therefore to exist in relationship to them which can be vividly seen in *Chronic City*.

Jonathan Allen Lethem was born in Brooklyn, U.S. He was the eldest of three children. He is a novelist, essayist and short story writer. He gained an encyclopaedic knowledge of the music of Bob Dylan, saw *Stars Wars* twenty one times during its original theatrical release, and read the complete works of the science fiction writer Philip K. Dick. Lethem later said Dick's work was "as formative an influence as marijuana or punk rock- as equally responsible for beautifully fucking up my life, for

bending it irreversibly along a course I still travel”(8).So, the novel *Chronic City* is also affected by Philip K. Dick idea. As Lethem influenced by Dick writings, he had used science fiction technique in his novel also.

After graduating from high school, Lethem entered Bennington college in Vermont in 1982 as a prospective art student. He hitchhiked from Denver, Colorado, to Berkeley, California, in 1984.He lived in California for twelve years, working as a clerk in used bookstores, including Moe’s and writing on his own time. Lethem published his first short story in 1989 and published several more in the early 1990s. He married the writer and artist Shelly Jackson; they were divorced by 1997. In 2000, he married Julia Rosenberg, a Canadian film executive; they divorced two years later. As of 2007, Lethem lived in Brooklyn and Berwick, Maine, with his third wife, the filmmaker Amy Barrett. He has two sons.

Lethem’s first novel *Gun with occasional Music*, a genre work that mixed elements of science fiction and detective fiction was published in 1994. In 1999, Lethem published *Motherless Brooklyn*, which won the National Book Critics Award and brought him mainstream success. In 2003, he published *The Fortress of Solitude*, which became a New York Times Best Seller. Most of his works are inspired by his personal experiences with music, science fiction, visual artist as well as forms of the city which analyse capitalisation and radical issues and its psychological impact on the people of Manhattan. His works not only introduce readers with realistic cast of characters with real surroundings but also tell intriguing stories of the life of real people. In this context, the essential objective of Lethem’s writing focuses on role of money in forming a city, exploitation of proletariat and emergence of different cultural types.

The primary text of this thesis *Chronic City* published in 2009, represents the

history of Manhattan, the world's largest central business district with the subjective narration of its protagonist Chase Insteadman, who is from America. Chase lives on residual checks and the occasional voice gig in New York. The text reveals the historical facts of capitalisation, superior and inferior people's culture and social and economical background of New York during capitalisation. New York City has been called the most economic and leading financial centre of the world. Chase Insteadman, who is from Bloomington but has been living in Manhattan. Talent agent discovers Chase to work and he leaves his old parents, friends of Bloomington at the age of high school junior. Chase uses metaphor of "bird" and "tiger" which represent marginalized people and digging machine. Chase gives momentary glimpse of a layered world : a flock of birds move in instinctive patterns around an unknown church spire that is the single structure rising into the city. In the blue sky beyond, an aeroplane passes through the frame. And in the black void beyond that, a space station with Chase's astronaut fiancée trapped on board continues its perpetual orbit around the earth. In the novel, Chase engages with two classes of people elite and inferior. He tries to show the fragmentation of world through capital. The politics of picking the story from Bloomington to Manhattan by focusing and valorizing the American pop culture and tradition is Lethem's cultural awareness as well as challenge against the capital system.

The text begins at Chase's working place where he reveals about the another character Perkus Tooth. He first meets Perkus there in the office of Susan Eldred (producer). Chase was there in the headquarters of the criterion collection, on Fifty-second Street and Third Avenue. He had gone there to record a series of voice – overs for one of criterion's high- end DVD reissues, a "lost" 1950s film noir called *The City Is a Maze*. Chase reveals that, with Janice far away, he lives too much on the

surface of things, parties, gossip, assignments in which he is the go-between or vicarious friend. Workplaces fascinate him, the zones where Manhattan's veneer gave way to the practical world. Chase needs VHS tape of Echolalia for his voice gig. So, he goes to meet Perkus in his apartment. Mainly, the story revolves around Perkus and other characters in the novel. The narrator gradually discovers the life of Manhattan. He uncovers much evidence of the rulers' contempt for the proletariat they claimed that they were 'developing or growing' but the narrator brings their cruelty and aristocratic nature as the formation of western cities.

The novel reveals the story of Capitalist society by American people through the narration of Chase. It exposes the history of America's formation of the cities, growth of pop culture, technologies and identity of the country by valorizing capitalism. The novel mostly focuses on important city formation of America. It highlights the main city only where the formation works had been done in history. Lethe repeated these things in the novel. For example, smoking joints, taking marijuana, drinking alcohol, eating fast food, hanging on parties, talking about artistic work, fear of tiger, playing games on the computer, talking about narrator's trapped astronaut fiancée and her letter, etc. He uses the symbol of "tiger" as a destructive force. Here, tiger is the symbol of 'digging machine'. Tiger is roaming around the city to destroy buildings. And thus, intimidates the city dwellers. To form the city it has to be destroyed first. So, in the novel, the tiger reaches only those areas where squatters' live and to make it a better place, the tiger destroys such illegal areas.

Lethe's *Chronic City* criticized from different perspectives. Many critics have examined *Chronic City* from historical, realistic, fantasy and cultural points of view and some critics have considered this novel a modern work of art. In fact, the novel evokes a layered world, gives agency for the characters. "The world is a web of



intersecting and diverging trajectories in *Chronic City* in which confluence is illuminated only by the partial visions of characters who construct, each according to their unique histories and paranoias, their own worlds within worlds” (Daniel Hamilton, 1). The novel highlights how the identity of city, people, culture and movement form the city’s life. These are the reliable ways to construct a city. Every character has their own story for example: Janice, Perkus, Chase, Richard etc. As Bookmunch indicates:

*Chronic City* is awash with popular culture, both real and imagined, Chase could well be Lethem, or a character who has ‘experienced’ perhaps some of Lethem’s own experiences as a minor celebrity himself, these days, in Manhattan, and there is a slippy – slidely sense of the real and imagined throughout, co existing, trying on each other’s clothes. (11)

This novel covers with popular culture also. It is a mixture of real and imagine things. Chase includes experienced things because he is a person from Manhattan. He depicts the real picture of past and present of the Manhattan in the novel. As well as he provides unrealistic things also in his novel. For example: a loose killer tiger that may or may not actually be a city-sanctioned tunnel digging robot that has developed a mind of its own, even the chaldrons are not real but holograms created by multiple laser lights. Chase and others in quest to obtain rare ceramics called chaldrons that may have magical powers. To prove Bookmunch lines, here is an example from first conversation of Chase and Perkus:

Perku’s spiel encompassed Monte Hellman, Semina Culture, Greil Marcus Lipstick Traces, the Mafia’s blackmailing of J Edgar Hoover over erotic secrets (resulting in the bogus amplification of Cold War fear and therefore the whole of our contemporary landscape), Vladimir Mayakovsky and the

futurists, Chet Baker, Nothingism, the ruination Guiliani's administration had brought to the sacred squalor of Times Square, the genius of *The Gnuppet Show*, Frederick Exley, Jacques Rivette's impossible – to – see twelve – hour movie out, corruption of the arts by commerce generally, Slavoj Zizek on Hitchcock, Franz Marplot on GK Chesterton, Norman Mailer on Mohammad Ali, Norman Mailer on graffiti and the space program, Brando as dissident icon, Brando as sexual saint, Brando as Napoleon in exile' - ' names, ' Insteadman continues, ' I knew and didn't . (8)

Here, he gives identity of artist, novelist, musician, actors name and their work which come under pop culture. The narrator also shows the smoking, taking drugs, hanging in parties, playing music loudly also emblem pop culture. Being the citizen of Manhattan, Lethem knows the name of artist, novelist, musician , actors and their culture. Narrator depicts the activities and lifestyles of the city's people which are the experienced things of his own life. The characters mark a departure from the expectation of mainstream culture. *Chronic City* shows that not everyone wants mainstream culture and these are some characters, such as narrator, Perkus of the novel, who want counterculture to recognise in the city.

Similarly, Janice Harayada in her review article Jonathan Lethem's *Chronic City* – cursed by the 'Genius Grant'? views:

simulated – worlds theory, which says that computers will some day become powerful enough to create a facsimile of the universe, full of people who really believe they're alive – they don't know they're fakes. Lethem brings the idea to literary fiction in a surrealist fable about Manhattan during the economic melt down: You're never certain whether his characters are real or created by forces beyond their ken. (15)

This novel draws same idea that science fiction writers have used for many years. In this regards, the novel has imitated the modern world and technology where people are engaged in money and wasting their time. Lethem has also created another virtual world where people are happy and they are not aware that it is not the real world. People are buying and selling things from online. They have mystical experiences bidding on eBay. Their world is a computer game like the popular Web site Yet Another World, but one that they take to be real. Technologies have controlled people. People are happy in their fake world which they have created own self. Focusing on the copy of the real city, Jack Goldstein, a blog critic opines:

*Chronic City* is as much concerned with how the madness of its world vision can and should be copied as it is with the actual copying. The city that it describes has real streets – 84<sup>th</sup> Street, Third Avenue. It has subways and taxis. It has landmarks like Lincoln Centre and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. But at the same time, the city describes may or may not have a tiger roaming its streets and undermining its buildings. It has an apartment house for dogs, but no place for its homeless people. It has a gigantic pit masquerading as a work of art. If it is Manhattan, it is Manhattan askew. (19)

This novel visits real and imaginary things. Some places, people and their culture where as well as some things like tiger, chaldron are imaginary. The novel is the combination of real and unreal representation of Manhattan. The novel indicates historical as well as modern elements. We can sense both old and new history of Manhattan.

Since the research paper aims to analyse the role of capitalism in forming the city, it brings theoretical insight from David Harvey's notion of capitalism based upon his book *The Right to The City*. It is a collective right to change the city and

shape the process of urbanization. According to David:

*The Right to The City* is, therefore, far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the process of urbanization. (1)

The major point of view of Harvey's *The Right to The City* is collective power to change the city rather than individual heart's desire and there should be equal right of people on city's resources. City should be changed because change brings better opportunities for the people. To get better facilities, process of urbanization is necessary. David claims:

To claim the right to the city in the sense I mean it here is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade and to do so in a fundamental and radical way. From their very inception, cities have arisen through the geographical and social concentration of a surplus product. (2)

From history, city has made and remade. To do so there is some kind of power to shape the city during urbanization. To establish city surplus product plays vital role. Lethem provides an example of 'chaldron' to show the role of surplus product to form the city. Perkus sees the picture of chaldron on the wall of hospital during his treatment through Strabo Blandiana (acupuncturist). He returns and search chaldron on the internet. He as well as other characters are fascinated madly towards this mystical vase on online sales. Lethem writes " This was an eBay page, after all. " So, I put in a reserve bid of eighteen hundred dollars. As you can see, that was surpassed ten minutes ago. It's already up to twenty- six, and there's still more than fifteen

minutes left" (98). Characters are involved in the auction. Modernization brings technologies and because of the technologies, people are buying and selling their surplus product from home. It helps them to buy and sell their products by sitting one place. David further says, "To produce surplus value, capitalists have to produce a surplus product. Since urbanization depends on the mobilization of a surplus product an inner connection emerges between the development of capitalism and urbanization" (2).

Here, he claims that due to surplus product, city has risen and urbanization also depends on this surplus product. He is trying to say that there is a close connection between capitalism and urbanization in the formation of city. Such surplus value has been taken from oppressed class. Capitalist provides certain amount of money to marginalized people to make surplus product and through advertisement oppressor sell it in high price. As in the novel, chaldron is a simple vase but through advertisement it's value has been increased and by selling consumers as mystical tools.

Harvey's theory encompasses ideas which aim to explain how political energy is put into promotion, protection and construction of the city, how city changes and develops and also discusses how and why such formation about city affects the life of people and the economy of the nation.

"Capitalism" surround around the idea of the "reinvest". Harvey argues that to remain a capitalist, some surplus must be reinvested to make even more surplus. According to Karl Marx there are two types of people in the society: Bourgeois and Proletarians. Here, Bourgeois are the capitalist who have lots of money. They reinvest money to make more money. And in other side there are Proletarians who are from a working class. They don't have money to eat food and fulfil their

basic desire. How do they reinvest money? In the case of capitalism, Bourgeois spend lots of money in pleasures and they reinvest, too. In this regard Harvey writes:

The result of perpetual reinvestment is the expansion of surplus production at a compound rate- hence all the logistical growth curves (money, capital, output and population) that attach to the history of capital accumulation. This is paralleled by the logistical growth path of urbanization under Capitalism.(2)

Due to reinvestment, it helps to grow the way of urban area. So, capitalism plays a vital role to form a city, and thus capitalism and urbanization go side by side. Capitalism is an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit. Economy is profitable or profit making site.

In fact, the entire construction of argument will revolve round the principle of capitalism that has remained the central message of Harvey in *The Right to The City*, in which he conceptualizes that economy has a fluid role to form the city or urban area. As the novel *Chronic City* imbeds multiple issues such as social, cultural, economic issues on Lethem's concept of formation of city shares an angle of proximity with Harvey's notion on *The Right to The City*. By formation of city Lethem means to contend that every city needs capital to form its shape and size because it is important to have capital in order to sustain life. His creation of a male protagonist Chase as a narrator embodies the principle of historical formation of city of American where his curiosity acts give him an agency for city discovery and development. His constant efforts to get knowledge from culture, arts, movies and other characters point of view show the way of the traditional identity of the city and it also reminds us of the working of what Harvey gives the idea of historical construction of city. Like so, portraying the Manhattan's city through forming procession, Lethem advocates the

economic flux.

To show different kinds of economic crises while forming the city in history, Harvey provides some examples from different countries also. He gives example from France, America, India, Afganistan, Iraq, etc. He mentions the first economic case of Second Empire Paris (1848). He elaborates, “The crisis of 1848 was one of the first clear crises of unemployed surplus capital and surplus labour side-by-side and it was European – wide” (3-4). At that time, country saw the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, who proclaimed himself Emperor in 1852. To survive politically he had to solve the problem of capital also. He took program of infrastructural investment both at home and abroad. Here abroad meant the construction of railroads throughout Europe and down into the Orient as well as support for grand works such as Suez Canal. At home meant consolidating the railway network, building ports and harbors, draining marshes, etc. Bonaparte brought Haussmann to Paris to take charge of the public works in 1853.

Haussmann mission was to help the surplus capital and unemployment problem through urbanization. To change city he needed financial institution and debt instruments which were constructed on Saint – Simonian lines (the credit mobilier and credit immobilier). He used Keynesian like system of debt financed infrastructural urban improvements.

This system worked very well for Fifteen years. This system crashed in 1868. There was a war between Napoleon III and Bismarck ‘s Germany and lost. After that new party emerged Paris Commune, one of the greatest revolutionary episodes in Capitalist urban history. The city was destroyed and re-made time and again to maintain economy of that country. Different economic crises had occurred from history to now and to manage economy USA also followed the idea of Haussmann. It

worked out for some years and it failed again.

In the current situation in the United States, housing market is the stabilizer of the economy. As Harvey says:

In the United States it is accepted wisdom that housing market has been an important stabilizer of the economy, particularly since 2000 or so ( after the high- tech crash of the late 1990s) although it was an active component of expansion during the 1990s. The property market has absorbed a great deal of the surplus capital directly through new construction ( both inner city and suburban housing and new office spaces) while the rapid inflation of housing asset prices backed by a profligate wave of mortgage refinancing at historically low rates of interest boosted the U.S. internal market for consumer goods and services. (6)

To stabilize the economy and absorb surplus capital America destroyed old city and built new. And new buildings increased the price of the land. Housing market helps to grow the economy of the New York. In novel also some characters like Chase, Perkus are living in rent house. They are paying rent to live in the city. It helps to stabilize economy in the city. Housing market becomes business in Manhattan. So, *Chronic City* represents these things very well in the novel.

Renovation of the city brings change in people lifestyle. The lifestyle of people is materialistic. They have to pay money for everything to survive in the city. David further says, "Quality of urban life has become commodity for those with money, as has city itself in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries have become major aspects of urban political economy"(8).

As capitalist believe, because of urbanization the quality of life of the people increase.



In this regard Lethem writes:

Out, for Perkus Tooth, I'd now begun to learn, wasn't usually far. He liked to feed at a glossy hamburger palace around the corner on Second Avenue, called Jackson Hole, a den of gleaming chrome and newer, faker versions of the linoleum table in his kitchen, lodged in chubby red- vinyl booths. (7)

People are eating fast food at restaurant. Although Perkus is from Proletariat class, he likes to eat food at restaurant. They gets peace by eating fast food outside. Further, he says "The waitress seemed to know Perkus, but he didn't greet her, or touch his menu. He asked for a cheese burger deluxe and a Coca-Cola."(7). Chase and Perkus go to Jackson Hole to eat food. It shows the lifestyle of urban's people. Food has been business. People get peace through materialistic world.

Due to development, city's world is fragmented and seen struggled in city.

Lefebvre wrote:

In the developing world in particular, the city: is splitting into different separated parts, with the apparent formation of many "microstate" Wealthy neighbourhoods provided with all kinds of services, such as exclusive schools, golf courses, tennis courts and private police patrolling the area around the clock intertwine with illegal settlements where water is available only at public fountains, no sanitation system exists, electricity is pirated by a privileged few, the roads become mud streams whenever it rains, and where house – sharing is the norm. Each fragment appears to live and function autonomously, sticking firmly to what it has been able to grab in the daily fight for survival. (15)

In the novel also, we can see two worlds: Bourgeoisie world and Proletarian.

The narrator hangs on these two worlds. He attends parties with Bourgeois and stays

with Proletarians. Lethem depicts two worlds of the Manhattan. Lethem writes:

there was nothing to say the Woodrow dwelling wasn't some stupendous and historical town house, now widened to modern style, walls layered with black-framed photography and paintings as crisp as photographs, behind dustless glass, and with a curving interior stairwell as much a proscenium for entrances as that in *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Yet their home was invisible to the street. It had nothing to enunciate to the street. (19)

This is the description of Maud and Thatcher Woodrow's duplex apartment where the narrator went for party. Maud and Thatcher are from wealthy class. They have decorated house with paintings and pictures on the wall. The house is wide with modern style. While Perkus Tooth is from working class. Jonathan writes:

To live in Manhattan is to be persistently amazed at the worlds squirreled inside one another, the chaotic intricacy with which realms interleave, like those lines of television cable and fresh water and steam heat and outgoing sewage and telephone wire and whatever else which cohabit in the same intestinal holes that pavement – demolishing workmen periodically wrench open to the daylight and to our passing, disturbed glances. We only pretend to live on something as orderly as a grid. (5)

He narrates to live in Manhattan is just like to live secretly like squirrel with complexity. All the things are there in city like outgoing waste water, telephone wire live together like intestinal holes. Jonathan provides the representation of Proletariat through Perkus Tooth. He says "The place was a bohemian grotto, the kitchen only in the sense of having a sink and stove built in, and a sticker-laden refrigerator wedged into an alcove beside the bathroom door"(6). As Harvey says the life of people divided in developing country, it shows the lifestyle of people divided according to the

capital.

As the city's people continue to threat with tiger presence, Perkus asks Richard about tiger, "You're saying the tiger is a machine?" said Perkus. Here, he wants to be clear about tiger whether it is machine or animal. Richard nods and replies:

A machine, a robot, that's right, for digging a subwaytunnel. The thing is, in Europe they had two of them. One started in France, the other in England. He raised and spread his hands to model this for us in the air in front of his face. "Two identical machines, they' d never met, but they went underground and began digging toward each other." His hands progressed downward, toward a meeting point at his chest, clawing like moles at the imaginary earth. "Day and night, just digging that tunnel for months, these two woebegone creatures moving ever incrementally closer.(110)

To rebuild the city, day and night work has done by machine.Machine is used to dig tunnel or destroy the building in the novel. But the people of Manhattan is thinking that there is real tiger in the city and it comes to city to frighten people.Here, the narrator uses the homonyms of the tiger. Tiger gives double meaning here. One gives the idea of real tiger where as another gives the idea of digging machine. But the people of Manhattan are unknown about the fact. They are thinking that there is destructive tiger in the city and it is destroying the city.

To absorb the surplus capital urban transformation is necessary. It has negative impact also. It creates fragmentation between people. Marginalized people suffer mostly from this transformation. As Harvey says:

But surplus absorption through urban transformation has an even darker aspect. It has entailed repeated bouts of urban restructuring through " creative

destruction.” This nearly always has a class dimension since it is usually the poor, the underprivileged and those marginalized from political power that suffer first and foremost from this process. Violence is required to achieve the new urban world on the wreckage of the old. (9)

Perkus Tooth is from marginalized class. So, he suffers most in the novel.

Perkus's apartment is been condemned after the “tiger” destroys the nearby Jackson Hole, and he is saved by his homeless friend Biller, who secretly installs him in the Friendreth Canine Apartments. In this dwelling- house devoted solely to dogs, Perkus shares an apartment with a three-legged pit bull named Ava, who is recovering from the loss of her leg after a policeman shot it in a drug raid. Development creates violence to form a city. Chase says:

Perku's dwelling, holy diorama of possibility and encounter, had been bureaucratically shrunken to a mere area. The police presence had nothing to do with Perkus or where we'd been the night before, that was just my lowly brain connecting the nearest available dots. When I sorted out my confusion, I learned it was the weight of the snowfall and the erosion of street salt on the century- old foundations accessible within the Jackson Hole crater that brought about the wider damage which made Perku's building, and the others, unsafe.(208)

Police are roaming around the city and Perkus is also missing from some days which creates one kind of fear among under privileged people. It shows the violence in the city. These kinds of activities help to destroy the peace of the city and create fragmentation between people. Powerful people are using power to erase old buildings of marginalized people and build new one.

In the novel, Ava and Perkus appear to have rescued each other, but the old Perkus

soon re-emerges, riffing on his conspiracy theories about contemporary culture. When Chase finally tracks him down, Perkus begins to spin out the epiphanies he has gained from the chaldrons: He claims that New Yorkers are living in a theme park and that the multiple urban disasters( such as the building-eating tiger, a grayfog that covers the city, pervasive chocolate smell, and massive blizzards) are parts of a virtual reality that is being controlled by outside powers. They are all, in effect, players in a computer game being run by someone else. Perkus is also physically sick, however, and when Chase and Richard finally rush him to a hospital, it is too late. He dies of internal bleeding. So, there is a kind of threat in the city of some power over marginalized people.

Harvey further says “Haussmann tore through the old Parisian slums, using powers of expropriation for supposedly public benefit and did so in the name of civic improvement and renovation”(9).Here, in the novel also Lethem provides some references of rebuilding area from Manhattan’s history like ' Tompkins Square Park riots and Lexington Avenue '. The symbolic tiger reaches only those area where urban transformation is necessary. These areas are related historically. Through the uses of symbolic tiger Lethem wants to show the formation of city in destructive method to gain economic prosperity.According to Engles:

The growth of the big modern cities gives the land in certain areas, particularly in those areas which are centrally situated, an artificially and colossally increasing value; the buildings erected on these areas depress this value instead of increasing it, because they no longer belong to the changed circumstances. They are pulled down and replaced by others. This takes above all with worker’s houses which are situated centrally and whose rents, even with the greatest overcrowding, can never, or only very slowly, increase above

a certain maximum. They are pulled down and in their stead shops, warehouses and public building are erected. (18)

In the Novel, Richard had settled Perkus in the lease when he bought the place.

Richard says to Chase:

That pad was my college graduation gift, at the rent, in 1988, of seven hundred and forty – six dollars. I think it's gone up a hundred bucks since then. I set up Perkus in the sublet when I bought my place. A new management company bought the building five years ago and harassed all the rent stabilized tenants out with the old trick of not cashing their checks and then suing for none payment, so I've had to personally wade in and fend off all sorts of shit just to keep him installed there, including a definite abuse or two of the power invested in me by blah- blah- blah. (204)

Richard keeps his apartment in lease and that apartment's land is increased and buy by new management company and harassed rent stabilizer. To increase the money of that land, capitalist destroys the building of lower class people where they dwell by paying rent.

According to Harvey there are events when the ideal of human right takes a collective turn, as when the rights of labour, women, gays and minorities come in front ( a legacy of the long – standing labour movement and the 1960s Civil Rights movement in the United States that was collective and had a global resonance). These struggles for collective rightshave, on occasion, yielded some results ( such that a woman and a black become real contestants for the US Presidency). These kinds of movements have a huge role to form the city. There has been different kinds of social movements that have influenced American life and politics since late nineteenth century. In this regard Lethem writes:

Richard Abneg had begun as a radical, an anarchist. His formative event the Tompkins Square Park riots, when the police quelled the rebel spirit of the Lower East Side. ( I faintly recalled these facts, another version of the city's Original Sin.) Abneg had spearheaded a squatters' seizure of a famed building on Ninth and C, a cherished last stand, toe stuck in the slamming door of progress. (21)

Lethem gives the representation of Tompkins Square Park in this novel through Richard Abneg, who was also the anarchist of then period. This movement was occurred on January 13, 1874, at Tompkins Square Park in New York.

The riot started after the New York City Police Department clashed with a demonstration involving thousands of unemployed civilians. Impelling the workers demands and the subsequent riot was poverty which, as the result of the panic of 1873, had become significantly more prevalent in the United States, causing great plight to American workers. The Bureau of statistics in Massachusetts had found that the majority of working men then were unable to support their families from their earnings, and depend on the assistance of their children in order not to be in poverty and debt. Meanwhile, workers also had to deal with inflation as prices for rent, fuel and clothing didn't fall to meet decreased wages. Harvey writes:

Capital accumulation stagnates or ceases and capital is devalued ( lost ) and in some instances even physically destroyed. Devaluation can take a number of forms. Surplus commodities can be devalued or destroyed, productive capacity and the assets can be written down in value and left unemployed, or money itself can be devalued through inflation. And in a crisis, of course, labour stands to be devalued through massive unemployment. (3)

Further, this movement also highlighted the economic status of marginalized people

of then society.

By the 1880s, Tompkins Square Park had become for many New Yorkers synonymous with the city's increased social as well as economic problems. The park at that time was a high crime area that contained encampments of homeless people, and it was a centre for illegal drug dealing and heroin use. Jonathan writes:

Perkus Tooth was nothing if not a collector. "Here". He took a perfect finished joint from where it waited in the in the lip of an ashtray, clamped it in his mouth and ignited the tip, then handed it to me unquestionably. It takes one, I suppose, to know one.(6)

As this novel also representation of then society, narrator goes in the apartment of Perkus. Chase smokes pot and talks about movies with Perkus, a social critic, film guru, and general outsider weirdo. The mixed crew spends long nights smoking pot in the mole-hole Perkus has carved out of his rent-controlled apartment. An inordinate amount of time is devoted to them engaging in stoner philosophy and then bidding with a dial-up internet connection on eBay, chasing after elusive talismans called 'chaldron' that inevitably go at the last second to anonymous bidders for tens of thousands of dollars.

Biller, who is homeless person supply drugs to Perkus. Perkus shares cigar with the narrator in his first meeting. As he says:

More important, though he never actually entered the apartment, was Biller. I learned of his existence by a rattling at Perku's window, the window onto the airshaft at the building's rear. I heard the intruding sound first –I'd just come up, and Perkus was beginning to expound, to spread his wings- and ignored it. Then Perkus, without explaining, shifted his attention, became silent. He didn't go to the window immediately, instead scooping together items from his



linoleum table, items I now saw had been arrayed, made ready. (14)

It shows that Billerillegally supplies drug in the apartment of Perkus. He is hiding his self existence of dealer there. From thepoint of view of outer world he is just a homeless person who sleeps under the subways but from innerworld he is a drug dealer who is hiding his original identity in the society.

*Chronic City* also represents the counter culture and struggle for American independence or freedom from British colonization. Lethem raises the issue related to rituals and culture of American society. After de form and re innovate the city by authority there had been emerged new culture in the society which was opposite of the mainstream culture. Playing loud music, smoking joints, talking about social change, demonstrating social issues were the activities that marginalized people had done in past and continue now also. Counter culture groups are also smaller groups of like-minded people who gather within a more dominant culture. Counter culture groups go against the mainstream culture. In the Novel also people are illegally supplyingexpensive drugs, joints which onlyelite peoplecan afford. Lethem writes “A pair of Lucite boxes labeledWHITE RHINO, one of Watt’s brands” ( 29 ). This brand is high quality brand. Marginalized people go against the rule and import such kinds of things easily.

The counterculture movement, from the early 1960s through the 1970s categorised a group of people known as “ hippies” who opposed the war in Vietnam , commercialism and overall establishment of social norms. Those included in this movement sought a happier and more peaceful life and often did so by experimenting with marijuana and LSD. Lethem writes:

The atmosphere was helplessly giddy, we allstreamed in the chaldron’s light, like hippies in some LSD mud puddle. “ I mean it makes me want to dance

with you, my darling Hawkman . . .” Richard lifted them both from the chair, still pinning her around her waist. They shimmied together to one side of us, swaying to Sandy Bull’s droning chords like the last couple on a prom floor, Richard clinging to Georgina, growling endearments with his beard crushed into her long, bared neck.(95)

Chase and his friends are in Perkus apartment to bids on chaldron. They are listening high volume of music, taking cigar, dancing and the narrator compare this scene like hippie movement. It represents the counter culture movement. The counter culture movement largely was in support of the anti-war movement. They organised protests while brandishing signs promoting peace, love, and drugs. Burning draft cards were also a symbol of the movement and became iconic of the anti war movement.

Hippies are the people who are associated with counter cultural movement. They believed that fashion was the ideal way to express who you are, which is why their fashion and hair statements are iconic. Hippie fashion included many trends, such as bright colour, ‘raggedy’ clothing, beads, fringe, afros and sandals. Many more fashion trends also define the counter culture movement. Jonathan writes:

Biller’s new costume looked anything but second hand. He might have been deputized to arrest us, if the mayor’s graffiti squad had been configured on a Blaxploitation theme. Biller was famously boycotted from the building, but it was hard to imagine Perkus’s neighbours challenging him now. Somebody had laid out some money to dress the homeless man this way. (150)

Their fashion distinguished hippies from the rest of the society. Most clothing was purchased from yard sales, thrift shops, and flea markets in order to fight commercialism.

Counter culture movement is the strong desire to change the dominant culture. These groups are created to fight against the pervasive values of a larger culture. Sometimes these smaller groups can grow and gather momentum, and eventually become a larger movement. Some examples of counter culture groups that have become movements are:- Hippe protesters in the 1960s, civil rights activists, peer movement, feminist groups, LGBT Q2 groups, environmental groups etc. In the novel, Lethem provides the reference of “ Lexington Avenue” by saying “ Traffic was a nightmare. The cabbie was saying something about the escaped tiger getting loose again on Lexington Avenue”(24). The tiger looses only those city where the people are living illegally or in poor area and the government wants to reinvent those area to increase price of land and property.

Lexington Avenue is related to “ The Battles of Lexington”. It is connected to history of Americans from colonial to independence. For thousands of years, North America was populated mainly by Native Americans and was mostly unknown to Europe. In the 1500s, Europeans began arriving in North America; they found a land with many natural resources and began to claim parts of it. While the French moved into the north and the Spanish settled in the South and West, the British founded colonies on the East coast. The British settlers come to these new lands for many reasons. Some wanted to make money or set up trade with their home country while others wanted religious freedom. In this regard Harvey says “ Terrains for raw material extraction have to be opened up ( imperialist and neo –colonial endeavors often have this as their objective)” ( 3). British people need raw materials and for it , they have to travel another country. They travel another country and colonize it , which helps them to take out raw materials from there. In the early 1600s the British king began establishing colonies in America. By the 1700s most of the settlements

had formed into 13 British colonies. The colonists or people living in the colonies, were unhappy about paying taxes without having any say in their government. This unhappiness would eventually lead to clash between the Americans and the British and lead to the American Revolutionary War ( 1775- 1783 ). When the British were defeated at the end of the war, America was free to take the first steps towards creating a new system of government.

Indeed, capital plays vital role to form and grow the city of America. Capitalism is also a discourse created by Marxist. But Lethem doesn't settle his writing only by saying Bourgeoisie help to form city when he talks about city formation. City isn't constructed with the money of Bourgeoisie alone, but with sacrifice and struggle of Proletariat. As there is different class system and culture in Manhattan, city is formed according to the powerful people's desire. As being amodernist author, he reveals the fact of city formation of United States. Therefore, Lethem advocates the role of city formation does not only happen by Bourgeoisie but also by Proletariat equally. He does not limit the formation of city process for Bourgeoisie only rather including people of different classes and culture should have right to live equally and respectfully in Manhattan. So, Lethem's characters in *Chronic City* analyses the capitalisation. His projection of characters deconstructs the traditional connotation as city is constructed by powerful people. His character raises the question of identity, rights, culture of the American people.

*Chronic City* delineates how politically, socially and culturally constructed city paves way to form in Jonathan Lethem's recent novel *Chronic City*. Lethem advocates to show the history of America through his novel. Lethem discloses that the history is politically created phenomenon which designs certain images and representation making them to stick to capitalism. Such linear characterization about

Bourgeoisiespower, economic status fail to address the marginalized people's culture, geography, rights and identity. He exposes that the categorisation of people on the basis of money and political power, it leaves serious impact upon marginalized people such as the emergence of subordination, discrimination, social exclusion, low social status, frustration and so on.

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