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## THE LIVING CITY: CULTURE, TRANSFORMATION, AND THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT IN N. K. JEMISIN'S *THE CITY WE BECAME*

The paper examines the process of urban transformation in N. K. Jemisin's novel, *The City We Became*. Through a close reading of the novel, the paper analyzes Jemisin's portrayal of New York as a dynamic and constantly evolving entity that undergoes profound transformations throughout the narrative. Jemisin's work offers a powerful and imaginative vision for how cities can be understood and represented in literature and beyond. The complex social, economic, and political forces actively shape cities are emphasized by presenting the city as a living and breathing character. The city will be viewed through Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, Edward Soja's notion of postmetropolis, and Sharon Zukin's conceptualization of the life and death of cities. Jemisin's use of magical realism, intertextuality, and metaphorical language contribute to her vision of the city as a vibrant and multifaceted character that challenges and subverts dominant narratives surrounding race, gender, power, and urban inequality. By exploring the interplay between culture, urban theory, and literature, this paper offers a comprehensive and innovative perspective on the city and its ongoing transformation in the contemporary world.

*Keywords:* transformation, city, space, N. K. Jemisin, *The City We Became*

### INTRODUCTION

*The City We Became*, published in 2020, was written by three-time Hugo award-winning and New York Times bestselling author N. K. Jemisin. The novel is set in New York and readers witness the city's birth as the narrative's starting point. However, there have been "postpartum complications" (JEMISIN 2020: 21). A primary avatar emerges as the embodiment and representation of the city. Not being able to defend the city from attacks by an unknown Enemy, the identity of the city is fractured, and it is split into five more avatars, each representing one of New York's boroughs – the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. The avatars find each other and join forces to save the city from its death. The first avatar is Manny, a representation of Manhattan, whose memories, upon taking on the identity of his borough, are completely erased<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Of all the avatars, Manny is the only one who forgets his previous identity. Upon arriving in New York, he felt compelled to let go of his former self. In contrast, although not ethnically from New York, the others, had all been born and raised there. They intimately understood the functioning of the city, which is why

He accepts his role as the avatar of Manhattan and fully takes on the identity of the city: “this word–this *identity*–feels more true than anything else he’s ever claimed in his life. It is what he has been, without realizing. It is who he is. It is everything he’s ever needed to be” (JEMISIN 2020: 30). He is first joined by Brooklyn<sup>3</sup>, the avatar of Brooklyn, an African American, middle-aged, single mother, former rapper, and current city council member. Together, they seek out Bronca (the Bronx), a sixty-year-old Lenape lesbian art professor, and Padmini (Queens), an immigrant from India. The avatar of Staten Island is a white, thirty-year-old woman living with her parents. Growing up in an abusive and racist household in the borough with the largest geographic distance, she often felt neglected and overlooked. She is hesitant to join the avatars and ultimately sides with the Enemy, who manipulated her into believing the others do not want or need her help. A significant turning point in the novel is when Veneza, Bronca’s close friend, takes on the role of an avatar representing New Jersey, an honorary borough. This symbolic gesture replaced Staten Island and unified the city’s avatars, awakening the primary force necessary to vanquish the Enemy and restore harmony to the city.

The novel was published during the COVID-19 pandemic, which adds another interpretative layer to the narrative. The lockdowns enforced during the pandemic changed the rhythm of city life as “urban centers were suspended between life and death” (SHAW 2023: 155), much like Jemisin’s New York. These events revealed a host of social problems, such as unemployment, homelessness, and racial inequality in urban environments. Jemisin’s novel focuses on minority groups and giving a voice to underrepresented groups as it “both problematises the idea of racial distinction and emphasises the hypocrisy of white supremacy” (SHAW 2023: 160). Jemisin challenges dominant narratives about cities and urban spaces by focusing on social aspects of the city that have been ignored or overlooked by the mainstream discourse on cities.

While the novel provides fertile ground for postcolonial research, racial theories, and exploring the role of science fiction and magical realism, the paper will focus on the transformation of the city and the identities of city dwellers. As no research has been found in Serbian academic journals on the aforementioned themes in *The City We Became*, the paper provides meaningful insight into Jemisin’s work and understanding of the city as a living, transformative entity. The goal of the paper is to explore the concept of a city as a living entity within our modern society, moving beyond elements of science fiction<sup>4</sup>. The paper examines how a city can come to life, what implications this has, and the various transformative stages a city may experience. Consequently, as the city evolves into a living entity, its inhabitants undergo a corresponding transformation. They internalize the city, adopting its characteristics and becoming embodiments of urbanity. The enemy personifies the dangers faced by the living city and undergoes transformations through everyone except Manny retained their memories and individual identities that seamlessly blended with the essence of their respective boroughs. However, “the city needs newcomers” and Manny “belongs here as much as anyone born and bred to its streets” (JEMISIN 2020: 47).

<sup>3</sup> The avatar of Brooklyn is the only one whose name corresponds to the name of her borough. This is explained by the fact that Brooklyn has identified with the city and fought for it throughout her life. “Becoming a borough is just the literalization of something she’s always done” (JEMISIN 2020: 215).

<sup>4</sup> For this research, elements of science fiction and questions of precise genre classification of the novel will be disregarded, and the motif of the living city will be viewed from the perspective of spatial theory, urban geography, and sociology.

out the narrative. The analysis of the novel centers on urban transformation, with a focus on the smaller scale of movement within the city, often referred to as its *rhythm*. This is followed by the definition of a living city as one characterized by constant movement and change, mirroring the transformations occurring within its inhabitants. It is important to note that urban transformation is not defined in terms of modernization, gentrification, or architectural alterations, but rather the fundamental changes to the city's essence and its very definition as a living entity, in contrast to a stagnant or dead city.

## THE CITY'S RHYTHM

Rhythms. Rhythms. They reveal and they hide. Much more diverse than in music, or the so-called civil code of successions, relatively simple texts in relation to the City. Rhythms: the music of the City, a scene that listens to itself, an image in the present of discontinuous sum. (LEFEBVRE 2004: 36)

One of the most crucial concepts in understanding the urban environment, according to Henri Lefebvre (2004), is *rhythm*. The rhythm of a city includes the movement of all its residents – their daily paths according to fixed schedules of work commutes and social interactions, informed by capitalist economic processes. Rhythm is “a generative and creative force, rather than simply a reproductive one” (SMITH, HETHERINGTON 2013: 6). The lives of city dwellers are organized according to the cities' rhythms, most significantly, the flow of its streets. N. K. Jemisin depicts the streets of New York as arteries “vital with the movement of nutrients and strength and attitude and adrenaline” (JEMISIN 2020: 15) and, as such, necessary for the functioning of the city organism. Each city has its own unique rhythm “in which daily, weekly and annual routines overlap, enmesh and are organized at a distinct pace and in a multiplicity not found in other settings” (SMITH, HETHERINGTON 2013: 6). The avatars of Jemisin's novel communicate with the city through song and dance. Bronca expresses her experience of dancing with the city:

The city's hum rises to a song. Its heart beats—fast, *tap tap tap tap tap*. These are her rhythms. She turns with them, dancing from rock to rock, catching the weight of her movement with her core so that her steps fall lightly. This is the dance. (JEMISIN 2020: 162)

The noise of a city is “the background out of which rhythmic patterns of life and activity emerge” (HETHERINGTON 2013: 23). New York City, The City that Never Sleeps, known for its noise and commotion, is viewed in the novel through the prism of music. The sounds of New York are emphasized by the primary avatar as he begins to “sing the city” (JEMISIN 2020: 1). Singing the city implies internalizing its rhythm, becoming attuned to the movement on the streets, and deeply feeling the city's various transformations. Seen as a “means of connecting part with whole and the particular and universal” (SMITH, HETHERINGTON 2013: 6), rhythm defines the city. The attacks on New York in the novel are carried out primarily through the disruption of rhythm, as the Enemy puts up towers that are “breathing [...] in full, *arhythmic* heaves” (JEMISIN 2020: 371, emphasis added). The most significant threat to a city is the introduction of arhyth-

mic elements that can disrupt its unity and alter its established pace.

Hetherington (2013: 27) emphasizes the importance of the question of voice for understanding urban culture. It includes the right of all city dwellers to express their urban experiences and the ability to discern distinct voices from the noise of the city. The voices of minorities, often unrecognized or forgotten, “might be sounded as cultural memories that reveal a different pattern than would be the case if they went unrecognized” (HETHERINGTON 2013: 27). When Manny first becomes Manhattan’s avatar, he internalizes the voices of all New Yorkers and begins physically experiencing the city’s rhythm. He experiences the uproar of the millions of voices that cannot be quieted (JEMISIN 2020: 25).

A progression of belonging, ownership, and *becoming* is distinguishable in the novel. The primary avatar begins by *singing the city* (JEMISIN 2020: 1), emphasizing the importance of the city’s sounds and rhythm. Singing is followed by the avatar painting the city (JEMISIN 2020: 4), which imbues it with his creativity. Next, he *runs the city* (JEMISIN 2020: 9), representing the essential nature of movement in the city as a way of being. Finally, the avatar *lives the city* as the transformation is complete, and he has fully taken on the identity of New York.

## EMBODYING THE CITY

Michel De Certeau (2011: 95) describes the city as “a place of transformations and appropriations, the objects of various kinds of interference but also a subject that is constantly enriched by new attributes.” Interestingly, he utilizes the term “avatar” to describe the city as “a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies” (DE CERTEAU 2011: 95). The ultimate goal is “the creation of a *universal* and anonymous *subject* which is the city itself” (DE CERTEAU 2011: 94), that allows meaning previously assigned to individuals to be transferred to the representation of the city. The avatars of Jemisin’s novel become city-subjects and are the embodiments of urban culture. “They are New York” (JEMISIN 2020: 427), just as every city dweller, having internalized the city’s rhythms and functions, becomes the city they inhabit. The internalization is so significant that “[w]herever we go, even if it isn’t New York, we’ll be ... New York” (JEMISIN 2020: 188). The final transformative step in *becoming* the city is carrying its essence and energy regardless of location.

*The City We Became* most notably depicts the third perspective of Soja’s spatial trialectics<sup>5</sup> as it combines the material existence of New York City and the imaginary, lived, human aspect of urban experience through the city’s respective avatars who embody the city while retaining their previous human lives and memories. There was typically no connection between cityspace and what Jemisin terms *peoplespace*. Still, the avatars have

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5 Cityspace can be studied in three different but interrelated ways:

1. “as materialized ‘spatial practices’ that work together to produce and reproduce the concrete forms and specific patternings of urbanism as a way of life” (SOJA 2000: 10);
2. as “a mental or ideational field, conceptualized in imagery, reflexive thought, and symbolic representation, a conceived space of the imagination” (SOJA 2000: 11);
3. and “as a fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined-, actual-and-virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency” (SOJA 2000: 11).

made this new relation possible: “Cityspace is cityspace. Peoplespace is peoplespace. They are different universes, normally bridged only through us” (JEMISIN 2020: 325). In reality, cityspace and peoplespace are interdependent. This is best seen in the example of Staten Island’s avatar, who becomes secluded and distances herself from the other avatars. Aislyn’s actions directly affect the city as the map changes to show Staten Island as being further away than it is and dimmer than its surroundings (JEMISIN 2020: 324).

In the postmetropolis, processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization intersect. Namely, deterritorialization represents “weakening attachments to place, to territorially defined communities and cultures” (SOJA 2000: 151), dismantling previous urban realities, while reterritorialization constitutes “creating new forms and combinations of social spatiality and territorial identity” (SOJA 2000: 152). The final chapter of *The City We Became* depicts these processes as Staten Island is excluded from New York, and Veneza (New Jersey) becomes a replacement for the fifth avatar (JEMISIN 2020: 426). Additionally, processes of territorial restructuring are evident in the division of the avatars. The city has been split into multiple avatars because it could stand against the Enemy alone. When the boundaries were lifted, the final transformation into a postmetropolis was made possible.

#### TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE ENEMY

The Enemy in *The City We Became* is seen through three distinct transformations, focusing on the destruction of the cities vital characteristics – its rhythm, diversity, and social production. The avatars embody the city, while the Enemy materializes the threats faced by the living city. The Enemy initially appears as a Lovecraftian tentacled monster, followed by human figures as the Woman in White, leading to its final representation as the city of R’lyeh. As a deep-sea, tendrilled monster erupting from the asphalt, the Enemy presents a threat to the streets of New York. It stops traffic and prevents movement within the city, thus disrupting its innate rhythm. As the Woman in White, it threatens racial diversity and the premise of acceptance on which New York was built. Although frequently changing outfits and hairstyles, The Woman in White is always marked by an eerie glow and distinctive whiteness that pierces her surroundings. The general attitude of the Woman in White embodies “the whole more-Aryan-than-thou aesthetic” (JEMISIN 2020: 233), exuding beliefs of white supremacy. In this form, the Enemy brings forth the powers of gentrification, racism, and homophobia. The nature of New York City is welcoming, finding a place for all who wish to *become* (part of) *the city*. Lastly, the Enemy’s final transformation into the city of R’lyeh threatens the very concept of *the city* and questions the notion of life and death of cities. The Enemy’s identity is a direct reference to Lovecraft’s short story *The Call of Cthulhu*, which features the eponymous mythical, lost, and empty city of R’lyeh.

The language used in the novel to express the Enemy’s attacks is that of infection and contagion. The city is presented as an organism, with its separate systems of organs, circulatory system, and numerous pathogens trying to infect it and alter its anatomic structure. Described as “an irritant, an infection, an invader” (JEMISIN 2020: 15), the Enemy takes on a parasitic form, feeding off the city organism as host. Attempting to answer

the question *Whose city is it?*, Andy Merrifield (2014: 109) concludes that “it’s the parasites’ city,” with parasites representing those who “chomp away at the common-wealth the world over, eating away inside the social body, stripping people’s assets, foreclosing homes, dispossessing value rather than contributing anything toward its creation” (MERRIFIELD 2014: 109). Through *The Better New York Foundation*, the Woman in White evicts Brooklyn and her family, takes away their property and promotes art that is “racist, misogynistic, anti-Semitic, homophobic” (JEMISIN 2020: 141). The Woman in White touches passers-by, leaving traces on them in the form of a “thin, pale nub” (JEMISIN 2020: 94). The infection is rapidly spreading, transforming New York’s inhabitants into stereotypical, racist, “modern” consumers who continue to destroy the diversity, authenticity, and life of the city. By turning New York’s residents into Minions in White, the Woman in White achieves the “*antithesis of presence*” through erasure. Whiteness, emptiness, and lack of diversity in New York’s unique cultural heritage, bring it one step closer to death.

### THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE CITY

New York in *The City We Became* is represented as a breathing organism, providing a literal interpretation of the notion of “the living city.” The primary avatar breathes life into it by painting graffiti of a throat on the city’s walls. The city’s throat is “a thing that breathes and swallows endlessly, never filling” (JEMISIN 2020: 4), showing the impossibility of New York becoming too full, too diverse. The city is never complete because, as a living being, it grows and transforms throughout its entire lifespan. Not only is the city a transforming and living entity, but also one with a consciousness and state of mind. When the primary avatar yells to the city from a rooftop, he is certain that “the city’ll figure it out” (JEMISIN 2020: 1). A city’s state of mind includes “its sentiments, its attitudes, its sense of self, its mood – gives it a specific character all of its own” (PILE 2005: 2). Cities have personalities that are, just like their rhythm, distinctive:

Cities are not people. But, like people, cities have their own personalities: in some cases one city has many different personalities -- there are a dozen Londons, a crowd of different New Yorks. A city is a collection of lives and buildings, and it has identity and personality. (GAIMAN 1993)

Living cities are not defined by their physical environment, location, or politics, but are instead “*made of whatever the people who live in and around them believe*” (JEMISIN 2020: 425). *What is a city before it is born?* According to Jemisin, “it’s nothing. Just buildings, people, and possibility” (JEMISIN 2020: 361). Jemisin’s New York is at risk of dying before it is born, in which case the birth of the city is connected to the city gaining its unique identity and being established as a whole. In order to live, the city must be considered as a whole, not merely as its individual parts. The primary avatar, in isolation, could not conquer the Enemy until it fully embraced diversity, merged with others, and became a unified entity.

Many sociologists and urban geographers have explored the ideas of living cities, attempting to discover what constitutes the life of a city. Baudrillard views the living city as a city filled with people and noise:

Nothing could be more intense, electrifying, turbulent and vital than the streets of New York. They are filled with crowds, bustle, and advertisements, each by turns aggressive or casual. There are millions of people in the streets, wandering, carefree, violent, as if they had nothing better to do – and doubtless they have nothing else to do – than produce the permanent scenario of the city. (BAUDRILLARD 1988: 18)

According to Jane Jacobs (1961: 145), the liveliness and vibrance of a city are found in its diversity of uses, and the death of the city would be the rise of chain stores with the same uses and aesthetic. While chain stores would not necessarily impact the diversity of a single street, since it is rarely the case that more than one would be found in close proximity, the heterogeneity of the city as a whole would be disrupted as streets would start resembling each other. In this context, a feeling of *rightness* and *wrongness* marks Manny's first experience of the streets of New York. When looking at local restaurants, small, family-owned convenience stores, and trade shops, he feels that "all these things belong; they are rightness" (JEMISIN 2020: 34). However, when he catches a glimpse of the numerous chain restaurants and clothing stores, "he twitches a little, lip curling in involuntary distaste. Something about its façade feels foreign, intrusive, jarring" (JEMISIN 2020: 34). Thus, diversity is aligned with a sense of rightness, and signs of consumer capitalism with a sense of wrongness.

Jemisin's fiction is typically attributed to The New Weird movement of speculative fiction, drawing inspiration from H. P. Lovecraft's urban fantasy. According to Mark Fisher (2016: 15), the weird in a narrative is centered around the notion of wrongness, which he defines as an entity "so strange that it makes us feel that it should not exist, or at least it should not exist here." In Jemisin's New York, the weird is present in all actions that erase the city's tradition and old aesthetic. Central Park and the antique cab feel right because they are emblematic of New York (JEMISIN 2020: 57). What has not been tarnished and transformed by the Enemy is right. However, everything that traditionally defines New York is being destroyed and replaced with "generic *bullshit*" (JEMISIN 2020: 357).

For Sharon Zukin, a living city is equated with an authentic city<sup>6</sup>.

The idea of authenticity is important because it connects our individual yearning to root ourselves in a singular time and place to a cosmic grasp of larger social forces that remake our world from many small and often invisible actions. To speak of authenticity means that we are aware of a changing technology of power that erodes one landscape of meaning and feeling and replaces it with another. (ZUKIN 2010: 220)

Authenticity is part of people's social imagination as it is "filtered through the actions of developers and city officials" (ZUKIN 2010: 27) based on popular consumer trends and opportunities for financial gain. Thus, the diversity, or, as Zukin terms it, the

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<sup>6</sup> "To speak of a city being authentic at all may seem absurd. Especially in a global capital like New York, neither people nor buildings have a chance to accumulate the patina of age. Most residents are not born there, neither do they live in the same house for generations, and the physical fabric of the city is constantly changing around them. In fact, all over the world, "Manhattanization" signifies everything in a city that is not thought to be authentic: high-rise buildings that grow taller every year, dense crowds where no one knows your name, high prices for inferior living conditions, and intense competition to be in style" (ZUKIN 2010: 2).

authenticity of a city's streets does not account for its living quality. Instead, the rapid changes in lifestyle and consumer trends, along with the city's growth, make it vibrant and alive.

Jemisin's New York is suspended between life and death as the primary avatar remains in a coma for most of the novel. During this time, the avatars get glimpses of an empty, presumably dead, city. Manny sees two New Yorks – the living and the dead city, co-existing.

In one, there are hundreds of people within view and dozens of cars and at least six chain stores that he recognizes. Normal New York. In the other, there are no people, and some unfathomable disaster has taken place. He doesn't see bodies or anything ominous; there's just no one around. It's not clear anyone ever existed in this place. Maybe the buildings here just appeared, sprung forth fully formed from their foundation instead of being built. Ditto the streets, which are empty and badly cracked. (JEMISIN 2020: 32)

In *Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino (1974: 40) presents a city simultaneously dead and alive, "a double city." The death of a city cannot be viewed in binary terms but must take on the notion of reversibility and exchange. In a symbolic system, life and death are integral to each other's existence, as death is not seen as the end but as a part of a constant exchange that defines life (BAUDRILLARD 1993: 133). A city can experience a "still-birth," which entails "the shell of the city surviving to possibly grow again in the future" (JEMISIN 2020: 6). It can also occur that "sometimes different cities follow one another on the same site and under the same name, born and dying without knowing one another, without communication among themselves" (CALVINO 1974: 30-31). In the symbolic exchange, the transformation of cities, from living to dead, occurs seamlessly.

*What constitutes the death of a city? What does a dead city look like? Can a city ever truly die, or simply be transformed into other spatial forms or modes of urbanity?* The death of a city can thus be understood as the death of its residents, leaving behind an uninhabited, empty, and useless space. A dead city may be one in which all buildings and institutions have been destroyed. Perhaps the death of a city is achieved through the suspension of movement and disruption of rhythm. A dead city is still; a city in which there is no movement or change. A dead city no longer transforms and adapts to the lives of its inhabitants and changing social, political, and economic circumstances. Emblematic of a city's death is the end of stories when people inscribing the city with meaning by creating identity-forming memories. As a city is shaped by its inhabitants, it cannot truly die; it can only transform and continue transforming endlessly.

## CONCLUSION

Space holds social and cultural significance, as it emerges from human interactions over time, demonstrating the city is alive and able to grow, transform and take on new meanings. Jemisin's creative decision to retain the avatars' human forms and memories while they are transformed into their respective boroughs clearly depicts this idea. The boundary between the avatars' human and city form is blurred, reflecting the interdependence of the city and its residents. The city is thus viewed in a manner comparable to biography writing (SOJA 2000: 11), because buildings, streets, and people tell stories.



“Human beings occupy one space, tell enough stories about it, develop a unique enough culture, and all those layers of reality start to compact and metamorphose” (JEMISIN 2020: 304). The city and its inhabitants continually undergo transformation in an unending process of re-inscription as the city is rewritten before the eyes of its inhabitants. This idea is exhibited in the creation of the avatars – representations of the city that possess the power of language and the ability to form memories and share their past. The city is defined not only by its architecture but by people’s behavior in urban contexts. Although urban behavior is traditionally viewed as restrictive, and city dwellers as emotionally distant people, Steven Pile contradicts this widely-held stereotype by arguing that “*what is real about cities is the sheer expressiveness and passion of its life*, even in its most boring, or most objective, forms (PILE 2005: 1-2). Through Jemisin’s writing, an essential distinction emerges between the built environment, representing the city as a collection of buildings, and the urban environment, which is a product of social interactions and transformations. Life unfolds within the urban environment, and it is within this context that the city becomes *living* as its inhabitants bring movement to its streets, contribute to its diversity, and infuse it with meaning. Transformation in the urban environment is both constant and inevitable, as it is intrinsically linked to people and social changes. The city thus undergoes perpetual transformation – growing, evolving, thriving, and truly living.

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### **ŽIVI GRAD: KULTURA, TRANSFORMACIJA I URBANO OKRUŽENJE U ROMANU *THE CITY WE BECAME* N. K. DŽEMISON**

#### Rezime

Cilj rada jeste ispitati proces urbane transformacije u romanu *The City We Became*, američke spisateljice urbane fantastike, N. K. Džemison. Analizira se predstava Njujorka kao dinamičnog, promenljivog, entiteta koji se transformiše tokom čitavog narativa. U romanu, Njujork je predstavljen kao živo biće, koje se rađa i oglašava posredstvom svojih avatara. Pored avatara koji simbolizuju čitav grad, postoje i avatari pojedinačnih naselja Njujorka. Ovi avatari pripadnici su etničkih manjina, čime se ukazuje na raznolikost stanovništva Njujorka i omogućava kritika rasizma. Neprijatelj se javlja u tri oblika, svaki od kojih predstavlja različitu vrstu opasnosti gradu. Tri oblika u kojima se neprijatelja pojavljuje jesu čudovište sa pipcima, poput onih koje možemo sresti u delima H. P. Lavkrafta, *Žena u Belom* i personifikacija napuštenog grada R'lyeh. Neprijatelj jeste pretnja ritmu grada, koji Anri Lefevr ističe kao najvažniju komponentu urbanog života, njegovoj rasnoj raznolikosti i shvatanju grada kao društvene tvorevine. Delo N. K. Džemison omogućava sagledavanje grada u društvenom, ekonomskom, političkom i urbanističkom kontekstu, čime doprinosi tumačenju samog koncepta grada u književnosti. Upotrebom elemenata fantastike, intertekstualnosti i metaforičkog jezika, N. K. Džemison doprinosi shvatanju grada kao živahne i višedimenzionalne ličnosti koja izaziva i podriiva dominantne narative o rasnoj, rodnoj, moćnoj i urbanoj nejednakosti. Istraživanjem međusobnog uticaja kulture, urbane teorije i književnosti, ovaj rad nudi sveobuhvatan i inovativan pogled na grad i njegovu kontinuiranu transformaciju u savremenom svetu.

*Ključne reči:* transformacija, grad, prostor, N. K. Džemison, *The City We Became*