Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades
CHAKIÑAN
ISSN 2550 - 6722

Unach

Número 9 / **DICIEMBRE, 2019** (22-36)

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CUERPOS PARPADEANTES: CARTOGRAFIANDO MULTICULTURALISMOS Y CIUDADANÍA INSURGENTE EN EL VANCOUVER NEGRO DE WAYDE COMPTON

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Recibido:
18/03/2019

Aceptado:
05/06/2019

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Abstract

We live in a moment of hardening of nationalist discourses against immigration and racial minorities. In this conservative climate, Canada prevails as a benchmark for multicultural integration. However, there are voices within the nation that question this image of harmony. The case of the Black Vancouver community has not yet been studied in depth in this regard. This article of reflection aims to contribute to the debate on the relations of the nation-state and subaltern groups, and how they manifest themselves in the multicultural city. Vancouver has been chosen as a paradigmatic space because of its transcultural character built on indigenous lands. The object of study was the literature of Wayde Compton author and black activist of the city. Stemming from theories of the socio-spatial dialectic of Edward Soja and Leonie Sandercock, this article analyses the connection between the city, its representation in literature and its effects on social relationships. The work of Compton and its parallelism with the geo-history of Vancouver and subaltern ethnic communities were analysed. The result reaches a reading of Vancouver as a (post)colonial city and space of subaltern multiculturalism, regarding the official Canadian model, and colonialism that has made invisible to the Black Vancouver and the indigenous communities.

Keywords: Black, Vancouver, literature, space, multiculturalism.

Resumen

Vivimos en un momento de endurecimiento de discursos nacionalistas sobre inmigración y minorías raciales. En este clima conservador, Canadá prevalece como referente de integración multicultural, sin embargo, existen voces dentro de la nación que cuestionan esta imagen de armonía. El caso de la comunidad negra en Vancouver aún no ha sido estudiado en profundidad en este aspecto. Este artículo de reflexión pretende contribuir al debate sobre las relaciones de la nación-estado y grupos subalternos y cómo se manifiestan en la ciudad multicultural. Se ha escogido Vancouver como espacio paradigmático por su carácter transcultural, construida sobre tierras indígenas. El objeto de estudio fue la literatura de Wayde Compton, autor y activista negro de la ciudad. Partiendo de teorías de la dialéctica socio-espacial de Edward Soja y Leonie Sandercock, este artículo analiza la conexión entre la ciudad, su representación en la literatura y sus efectos en las relaciones sociales. Se analiza la narrativa de Compton y su paralelismo con la geo-historia de Vancouver y comunidades raciales subalternas. Como resultado, se llega a una lectura de Vancouver como ciudad (post)colonial y espacio de multiculturalismo subalterno, frente al oficial canadiense y al colonialismo que ha invisibilizado al Vancouver Negro y a las comunidades indígenas.

Palabras clave: *Negro, Vancouver, literatura, espacio, multiculturalismo.*

INTRODUCTION

Terminal City, Hollywood North, City of Glass. These are just a few of the nicknames for the city of Vancouver, some reflecting on its geohistory or its architectural aesthetic. However, perhaps Leonie Sandercock's metaphor of the Mongrel City better describes Vancouver as the urban space in which difference, multiplicities and plurality shall prevail over the fears of the so-called decline of the Western Civilization (2013:2). In a time of hardening nationalist discourses, it stands for the possibility of building a community of togetherness in difference, and whose identity is multiple.

The forces of globalization are shaping the cities, making them interconnected, re-structuring and re-shaping them both economically and demographically. It is the case of Vancouver as the bridge between America and Asia through the Pacific but also as a dividing line between Canada and the United States through the 49th parallel. Its status as a multiethnic, multiracial and culturally diverse cosmopolis also comes with anxieties and fears: psychological, economic, the fear of the Other and of those deemed as un-belonging. Canada stands as a benchmark when it comes to integration and coexistence between different cultures, yet there are some discordant voices indicating otherwise.

The case of Vancouver's Black community and their claims have not yet been studied in-depth. This article argues that the analysis of the literature of these communities, their representation of the city and their relationship with the urban history can result in a form of creole multiculturalism different from the state model. Although being involved in "positive ways in addressing the challenge of integrating migrants from different cultures, engaging in the active construction of new ways of living together" (Sandercock 2013:8), it is essential to frame Vancouver in a racialized liberal democracy to understand its cultural landscape and spatial struggles.

Black presence in Vancouver is tightly related to space. Space is emphasized by Compton and other Black Canadian writers like George Elliott Clarke, especially those spaces defined by indigenous Black Canadian spaces that disrupt the myths of the nation-state, i.e., the false assumption that Canadian Blackness is recent and of Caribbean origin.

Compton's efforts on the recovery of Black geohistory and cultural landscape in Vancouver both through his literary production and the foundation of the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project (H.A.M.P.) reinforces the idea that "people invest places with social and cultural meaning and [urban geohistory] can provide a framework for connecting those meanings into contemporary urban life" (Hayden 1995:78). He goes beyond the task of recovering an invisible history as he explores "an emplotment within meaningful interpretive geography [in which] the present is researched for its insights in reinterpreting the past and for the sites from which to act to re-contextualize the future" (Soja 1996:192). His recovering of Hogan's Alley memory works to spatialize Black Vancouver's history.

Compton is known for his concern to recover and re-map the invisibilised historic Black presence in Vancouver, thus problematizing the given ideas of state multiculturalism and foundational narrations "in ways that question fixed ideas of nationhood, identity and belonging (…) crucially rooted in the textured urban spaces of Vancouver" (Leow 2012:49). This rootedness in the local context of Vancouver is what makes Hogan's Alley, the late immigrant, multi-ethnic neighborhood a crucial element in Compton's work and Black Vancouver history. If nations, as imagined communities, assume apparent homogeneity of their members, the racial, cultural and political tensions that participate in the systemic hierarchy of citizens expose the violence with which an artificially created homogeneity is forced.

Wayde Compton has coined the term Afroperipheralism to describe the situation of Black Vancouver: the feeling of invisibility and isolation on the margins of the Black diaspora, the search for local roots and racialized spaces, and at the same time rejecting modernist, exclusive discourses and cultural politics and those representations that cannot be applied in the local context of Vancouver. This puts them

in the uncomfortable situation between total assimilation or writing against elision, but it also provides an open space that allows more radical experiments on identity.

METHODOLOGY

Through the lens of theories of urban space and multicultural planning, this article of reflection will analyze the problematic relation between the city of Vancouver and the multiethnic minorities shaping it. Stemming from the modernist urban planning, the construction of fear of the Other and insurgent citizenship have been involved in the processes of urban renewal that extend this inequality to the social space.

This article of reflection will analyze this relation through the eyes of Wayde Compton, one of the leading literary figures of the city and whose work focuses on the Afroperipheral Black community of Vancouver and the subversion of narrow discourses on race and multiculturalism. Critical reading of The Outer Harbour (2014) will prove useful to analyze how subaltern cosmologies disrupt the hegemonic understanding of space. In this book, the city becomes another character exploring identity, gentrification and racial issues with a speculative dystopic tone that is sadly becoming real in the current Vancouver constant urban renewal and Indigenous land rights.

Edward Soja's theories of space allow for the understanding of Vancouver as a space that is neither neutral nor a mere outcome of the socio-historical and cultural events, but that it has also played an active role in them:

> all social relations remain abstract and unrealized until they are concretely expressed and materially and symbolically inscribed in lived space [and they do so through the social production of space,] a continuous and contentious process that is filled with politics and ideology, creativity and destruction, and with the unpredictable interplay of space, knowledge, and power. (Soja 2003:275)

Another contribution of these geographers to the theories of space was the idea that the role of urban planning in the city has been to regulate and discipline subjects through space, as an ordering tool treating the city as a disordered, polluted Other.

Multicultural planning theories show that in multicultural contexts, there is always a hegemonic culture whose narrative and practices are embedded in the system and official narrative in a more or less explicit way. These biases are embedded in the legislative fabric of the state and legitimized by their uncritical application. The state reproduces these conditions of racial stratification through its ideological and repressive apparatuses: bureaucracy, legislation, social service agencies or housing policies (Sandercock 2013).

Those public workers, urban planners and developers part of the dominant culture and political apparatus, rarely recognize dominant cultural norms and practices that clash with other coexisting cosmologies. These stories of progress invisibilise the role of urban planning as a tool for surveillance and control certain bodies in space, struggling with counter-hegemonic practices.

While official multiculturalism favored the preservation of ethnic culture, the neoliberal policies increase the material conditions of inequality for racialized minorities. The dominant liberal ideology presents itself as neutral, adopting non-white groups within the Eurocentric framework. The symbolic celebration of cultural difference has the effect of displacing claims of exclusion by racialized communities.

On the other side there is a response to these conceptions of space as a neutral entity. Through coexistence and transcultural activism, citizens articulate platforms like Militant Mothers of Raymur or Hogan's Alley Memorial Project (Compton 2010) that can disrupt the dominant perspective, claiming ownership or improvement of their spaces.

Bearing this in mind, this article of reflection will understand that the city inhabitants are "continually produced and reproduced by the forms of the city and that the form of the city is actively and continually constructed (and de/reconstructed) by

its citizens" (Epstein 1998:212-213).

This spatial approach will be completed with Barbara Hooper's notion (cited in Soja 1996) of a representational practice of somatography: a hierarchical differentiation of the flesh which orders ambiguous substances of matter as political meanings and territories. Thus, the body is turned into a mediated space transformed by representations and cultural interpretations, into a social and lived space intervened by the workings of power (Soja 1996:113). The body becomes a subject of social discourse, an imaginary obsessed with the fear of that which cannot be controlled, with things that are out of place, polluting the city and the spatial practices to lock or destroy these elements.

Stemming from this theoretical framework of socio-spatial dialectical theories of space and from the role of racialization or somatography in the configuration of the city and its racial trajectory, this article of reflection will offer a contextual background from which Compton's work emerges. After that, this article will analyze his latest work and how it represents the transcultural relations in and through the urban landscape of Vancouver.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

HOGAN'S ALLEY AND THE RACIALISED CITYSCAPE

While Vancouver tops rankings of most-livable cities and it is praised for its urban planning model, Vancouverism, they do not mention the B-side of urban renewal and the decline of multi-ethnic working-class neighborhoods. Compton addresses these issues and the situation of the Black community, many members of which lived in Hogan's Alley, part of Strathcona in East Vancouver. They paid the price of the razing of their homes for the construction of the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts in the late 1960s, part of a project to build a freeway that was ultimately stopped thanks to citizen's protests:

> Punning on the term 'urban renewal,' there was a 'Negro removal' -the destruction of the politically weakest community of a city for a large modernist planning scheme, portrayed as slum clearance. The city might have been saved, but from the perspective of the black community, this part of the city was shamelessly sacrificed. (Compton 2010:84)

Hogan's Alley was a specific site of Black Residence, but also home to Italians, Asians, First Nations people, and others. It is more precise to say that Hogan's Alley had a Black community within it, and one that was significant enough that we can refer to the neighborhood itself as a racially-identified space. It was a progressivist space understood as a product of interrelations; a sphere of possibility in which different trajectories coexist and always under construction, in the process of being made (Massey 2008). In what can be called spatial capital, members of different communities joined forces in SPOTA, an interethnic, transcultural activist group to fight back the cities' campaign of hypersimulation to present Strathcona as a slum. What was at stake was not only their home but their very constitution of being –the ways they perceived space, themselves and others, the modes of experience, their sensibilities shaped by the urban experience. Unluckily, by the time the project was canceled, part of Strathcona, including Hogan's Alley, had already been razed.

As it has been mentioned above, the process of somatography of Black bodies in Vancouver and the destruction of Hogan's Alley are key to understand the vision of the city and its spatial-cultural myths articulated by Compton in his works, reshaping the future of Vancouver by re-telling new stories about the past.

The reasons for the destruction of Hogan's Alley could be traced back to two complementary discourses that worked together: fear-fueled somatograpy and modernist notions of progress.

Fear can be understood as the spatial result of power relations if we include if we include Elizabeth Grosz's point on the city's form and

structure as:

> the context in which social rules and expectations are internalized or habituated in order to ensure social conformity or position marginality at a safe or insulated or bounded distance (ghettoization). This means that the city must be seen as the most immediately concrete locus of the production and circulation of power. (Grosz 1992:250)

In 1960s Vancouver, the demonized and racialized Black bodies of the Hogan's Alley residents represented the pollution, the social unrest, crime and the obstacle on the way of progress contributing to the creation of this "common sense" (Omi & Winant 2015:111).

Another approach was that the modernist idea of progress and order over spatial chaos. Hogan's Alley cheap land, inefficient land use, older housing stocks and working-class residents were the characteristics the government needed to prove that blighted areas existed in Vancouver to gain access to NHA infrastructure funds (Lee 2007:392). This perspective corresponds with Jill Wade's vision about the long-standing housing problem Vancouver suffers up to the present-day due to the lack of affordable dwellings in Metro Vancouver and the lack of middle-income dwellings to house middle-income families (Wade 1994:48).

The acceptance of the modernist Eurocentric discourse based on colonialist ideas of the Other, supported by the process of somatography was the basis for further action. The myth of the construction of a modern city for everyone allowed political actors to erase the Black presence materially and symbolically from Hogan's Alley and deem it invisible for decades from the heart of the modern metropolis.

After the razing of Hogan's Alley, the Black community dispersed throughout the city, which contributed to the feeling of isolation and invisibilisation, bringing a political vulnerability as a consequence:

> A scattering, an integration, partly forced, partly wanted, has made for no place, no sit, no centres residential or commercial, no set of streets vilified or tourist-friendly, and no provincial or federal riding that a politician would see as black enough ever to rate the wooing of a community vote. (Compton 2010:105)

Compton's work becomes this way a struggle of memory against forgetting. Through his poetry, he becomes an archeologist and an architect, re-creating spaces for the readers to inhabit, with his poems and prose reflecting on the urban landscape and contemporary construction responding to these non-places.

(POST)COLONIAL RE-SPATIALISATIONS

The already mentioned somatography of Hogan's Alley and the invisibilisation of Black Vancouverites become a crucial element in his latest work, The Outer Harbour, through the creation of fictional racialized spaces, imaginary urban geography superimposed on the actual one and manifesting the yearning to counter this under-representation. This is reflected in the Pauline Johnson Island subplot, which relates the emergence of a volcanic island in the outer harbor of the city, coming out of the sea. On this island subplot, Compton visibilises the materiality of racial exclusion in Vancouver, and how it affects not only the Black community but is most virulent against First Nations peoples in the region. The emergence of the island reconfigured an already racialized space. It altered the physicality of the city, but it also brought to clear focus the legacy of unjust geographies, the occupation of First Nations unceeded lands, the marginal spaces of the refugees, the racialized and the abject bodies deemed unassimilable.

Ironically, the federal government claimed possession and turned it into a protected zone, a national site for research and names is after a writer and performer popular in the late 19th century who was the daughter of a Mohawk chief

of mixed ancestry and an English mother.

The trajectories taken by social interactions in each space-time, are crucial in the process of identity formation. A given moment, along with the understanding and negotiation of the surrounding space, history and the correlation of forces, will lead to the construction of an individual cosmology or a unique manner of relating to the surrounding space-time. The resulting multiplicity of cosmologies can be considered coexistent to the extent that they share a physical space, but in the field of socio-political practices, they might be antagonistic.

Depending on the correlation of forces, one cosmology or another will become hegemonic, despite other insurgent cosmologies trying to stop it, becoming entangled in the process (Harvey 2017:181). This interconnection can be seen in the Pan-Indian activists that occupy Pauline Johnson Island in The Outer Harbour. This group struggles against a model of racialized liberal capitalist democracy that tries to expand its cosmology of accumulation of capital through the colonization and commodification of new spaces (populated or not) with the consequent disciplining of the space.

Pauline Johnson Island becomes a microcosm where the colonization of British Columbia is replicated. This formerly unpopulated space will be claimed by the city council and the federal government without even discussing if it should remain First Nations land. In the present, cities like Vancouver are not only multicultural insofar as multiple races, cultures and ethnicities coexist, but they continue to maintain a colonial present through the discourses of fear and threat that contain and control the different First Nations peoples, on whose unceded lands the city of Vancouver rises.

In this story, the main characters are Fletcher, an Indian boy adopted by whites, and his girlfriend Jean, who is pretty much Black. They decide to gather some friend and organize "some kind of intervention, occupation, (…) get in on the anti-colonial ground (…) a country with a less than a two-year timeline. Its ancient past was under the ocean" (Compton 2014:34-36) echoing not only the invisibilisation of Black history in Vancouver, but also the settler colonialism, modernist planning and urban renewal that shaped the city, as the island shape seems unnatural, "as if it had been designed rather than born [and soon] a pop can will wash up on its shores and it will be officially colonized" (Compton 2014: 36-37).

Jean sees their plan as "a kind of retort to the Vancouver she has known (…) all the where-are-you-froms and all the where-are-you- really-froms; (…) being preemptively estranged (…) The plan was something to capsize for" (Compton 2014:37).

Jean sees the opportunity to claim this island as an open space where those racialized and estranged bodies can build a new community, a new home place of belonging non-existent in Vancouver. Once in the island, she takes an empty bottle, folds a drawing into it and buries the bottle with the expectation of creating a new history, authentic First Nations glyphs from one of the minor coastal islands.

It does not take much time for the police to arrive with helicopters moving ferociously fast, throwing leaflets telling them literally how to surrender in a place that makes them illegal by being there, insurgent citizens not recognized by the other pole of the power relation. Their mere presence in the unclaimed island and their own recognition as members of a unified community stranger to the formal hegemonic citizenship problematizes the dominant notion of citizenship as national identity and the role of the nation-state as a form of political community (Holston 1998:51). Parallel to the trajectory of settler colonialism in Canada, First Nations peoples were constructed as an obstacle to progress that had to be destroyed, either by assimilation or genocide, to gain access to their lands and resources.

Fletcher tries to win some time for the press to arrive by writing a message on the sand in what appears to Jane as "gliding across a ballroom floor. Soft shoe or Indian-style, she cannot decide. Either. Both (…) The island first dance." (Compton 2014:46) reflecting the hybrid and transcultural social landscape of Vancouver, in which the notion of formal and substantive citizenship is continuously problematized, revealing the paradoxes of the official foundational narrative of the city.

In the face of this defiance to the dominant cosmology, the State response to discipline space results in the police raid and the subsequent killing of Fletcher, the insurgent leader. In Vancouver, the small number of the Black community allowed them to avoid the most virulent forms of systemic racism, but the Chinese and First Nations did not have the same luck (Compton 2010). In the case of the First Nations peoples, not only were they stripped from their ancestral lands, but their rituals (which defied the cosmology of capital accumulation) were prohibited and prosecuted, even isolating them from certain professions and mainstream Canadian legal services.

Even today, Indigenous peoples face a notorious history of racial profiling and spatial violence. Episodes like the Trans Mountain Pipeline crisis in 2018 reveal the problematic accommodation of Indigenous cosmologies within the dominant frame. Over 150 First Nations and Chiefs signed a treaty opposing the project and the exploitation of their ancestral unceded lands. Indigenous rights are depicted as an obstacle to (mainstream Canadian) progress (Maynard 2017).

Pauline Johnson Island erupts. This climatic eruption reflects the destruction of the subaltern spaces and how the socio-spatial dialectic operates, with the identity and the formation of space being co-consecutive trajectories. The violent seizing of unceded lands points to settler colonialism and the failure of reconciliation policies in Canada. These policies cannot be isolated from the geohistoric context from which they arise, in a nation marked by European colonization and expansion and the maintenance of a colonial ideology that marks the government and the hierarchy of space, indigenous communities and institutions.

Reconciliation policies point to a possible future of repairing past damages but always from the maintenance of a settler cosmology and European order. This does not mean a true reparation or deconstruction of the geohistoric sedimentation process, but the acceptance of a present that maintains a colonial order and for which an apology is meant to suffice. For Blacks and First Nations peoples, reconciliation should only be the beginning of a process to rethink the hierarchy of space and institutions through colonial lenses to argue that the idea of humanity is the fruit of multiple perspectives and the European is just one of them (Walcott 2016:76).

The Boom covers the next years after the violent repression in Pauline Johnson's Island, and as it happened in the 60s, despite the protests and commemoration events, the government decided to rezone the area for private development, ignoring the local life. In this case, to build a tower of luxury condos called ARRIVAL in a sarcastic reference that "boldly blends the pioneer spirit of Canada's heritage with 21st-century bravado" (Compton 2014:109).

Colonizing an already inhabited and claimed island is rewritten as a discovery, pioneering experience. The only language that matters it is that of urban development, mirroring the actual housing crisis in Vancouver and its constant rezoning of the cityscape to build more high-middle class unaffordable housing while homelessness and fentanyl-related death crisis rise in East Vancouver (Pablo 2018). Real state plans replace words. Despite the official recognition of cultural rights of Indigenous populations within the national political framework, these recognitions represent a new language to speak of the same colonial situation of dispossession of lands and resources.

> The island becomes a symbolic one: the only refuge from crime at this side of a fairytale castle pit. A closed community with restricted access in what used to be public space, now privatized. It reflects the gradual change of public spaces into security housing developments with clearly demarcated borders, with walls and controlled entries to prevent an alien invasion. The big quartz glass towers are based on a design that gives priority to vertical growth and excessive concentration in the heart of the city sacrificing a more open, horizontal and more human urban space. It is also a response to the fear of the city as fear of the Other, an implicit belief that safe spaces can resolve social interactions. In the worst case, even well-intended safe spaces can deny and repress social difference and diversity (Epstein 1998:211).

HOLOGRAPHIC CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURALISMS

In the final story, The Outer Harbour, we are told that Jamie Langenderbach creator of a Vancouver-based live-action role-playing game called The Secret Commonwealth after a centuries-old Scottish guidebook about mythical creatures, is an employee in Enfortech, a firm that develops non-lethal crowd control devices and has ties with the government. He is secretly using his game design experience to create a paramilitary device, using the live action role-playing game to test-run it.

The game uses "an imaginary spatialisation of the Lower Mainland into 'realms' (…) divided into warring factions with battles played through Langenderbach's algorithm. These imaginary cantons are superimposed over the topography of real-life Vancouver and its outlying suburbs" (Compton 2014:161). Racialised neighborhoods like East Vancouver, Chinatown, Strathcona (where Hogan's Alley used to be) are designated as a series of subterranean caverns called the Shadow Realm, bearing in mind that this was the location of the first immigrant and racialized neighborhood which suffered a process of neglect and industrialization.

The idea of a paracosmic Vancouver works as a mean to create and navigate through urban imaginary racialized spaces superimposed on the actual city. We are presented with the other side of the coin: a parody of the simcity, the conceived space operated by the hegemonic power. We see how it reads the human geography and space of the city, showing once again that no space is neutral, but a correlation of forces in the lived space.

> The game is basically always running, and although the face-to- face meetings that players hold monthly during the spring and summer in parks and camp-grounds are important, their movements online also extend play into a real-time, 24/7 digital experience –at home, at work, at school, always. The storylines (…) are carefully crafted by Langenderbach behind the scenes (…) [H]e can and does manipulate the results he desires. (Compton 2014:162)

At this stage, paracosmic civilian vs. government-imposed discourses through Enfortech, parallels multiculturalism-from-below versus Western liberal state multiculturalism.

State multiculturalism, according to Walcott (2016) tries to contain the multiplicity of trajectories and cosmologies that share the urban space, so they do not overflow on the postcolonial wound, the transnational migratory flows and the persistent systemic racism in Western metropolis. State multiculturalism, adopted by Western liberal democracies, is read as a racial contract to manage and neutralize post-WWII struggles for social and economic justice by racial and cultural minorities, and to constrain the movement of mainly non-white migrants into national spaces, which had formerly imagined, represented and performed themselves as entirely white. State multiculturalism sought to contain such uprisings through policies centered on identity and culture while maintaining and retaining the power to authorize and legitimize the material relations of the nation-state.

This applies not only to the official multiculturalism or the cultural relativism that dissolves Black subjectivity in a universalist melting pot but also to the narrow cultural essentialism that promotes polarizing discourses such as Black Nationalism or Afrocentrism.

Langenderbach's appropriation of the LARP means the disruption of a real-and-imagined space "for those who feel themselves to be outcasts and misfits . . . where people came to feel enveloped in an atmosphere of acceptance, which remained the subculture's best feature. It was a place where the weird was welcome" (Compton 2014:163). This virtual world, this paracosmic Vancouver superimposed on the real city was appealing to those who do not conform with the dominant concept of citizenship in racialized liberal democracies and looking for an atmosphere of acceptance in safe communities.

The island was bought by the federal government and turned into Pauline Johnson Island Special Detention Facility, a prison for immigrants classified as Individual and Collective Displacement Phenomenon. The island has become a carceral space, yet the conversion of the residential tower into detention housing is barely

perceptible.

The island as a carceral space has two symbolic layers: First, it symbolizes oppressive hegemonic discourse of race, ethnicity, multiculturalism. And second, it symbolizes an urban space, a prison archipelago where people have restricted mobility through space and is closely guarded despite the appearance of free movement.

These ideas are clarified through Barbara Hooper's concept of somatography (quoted in Soja 1996), body-writing, a hierarchical differentiation of the flesh, the understanding of the human body as a highly intervened space, transformed by interpretations and cultural representations, a social space.

> Every society produces its own order, its own spaces, its own bodies, cities and texts, socially produced spaces, always in process, always flowing . . . Body and city are the subjects of a social/civic discourse, of an imaginary obsessed with fear of unruly elements . . . These acts of differentiation, separation and enclosure involve material, symbolic and lived spaces . . . bodies cities and texts . . . and are practiced as politics of difference, as segregation and separation. (Soja 1996:114)

They and we are dichotomously spatialized and enclosed in an imposed territoriality of apartheids, ghettoes, fortresses and other trappings that emanate from the center-periphery relation. Hegemonic power universalizes and contains difference in real-and-imagined spaces (Soja 1996:87). Racialized immigrants are dehumanised and held back based on meanings ascribed by somatography to notions of race, nation and space.

"Each year, an average of eleven thousand migrants, a large number of whom are racialized, are held in immigration detention in Canada, including over eight hundred children" (Maynard 2017:166). Immigration detention centres, unlike prisons, represent administrative punishment for not having adequate documentation or when considered illegal human beings. Since it is not punitive incarceration, they do not have legal guarantees as a right to a lawyer since there are no charges or trials against them. The incarceration of these migrants reflects the impact of unwanted migrations in the discourses of liberal democracies and human rights. It shows that the interests of the liberal state are not really the people and highlights the B-side of globalisation.

Thus, the called Individual and Collective Displacement Phenomenon has multiple interpretations:

First, as the departure from liberal multiculturalism. In Canada, official multiculturalism is the state's liberal response to racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, in that it attempts to respond to ethnic particularities as a step towards achieving integration, into a universal, inclusive national culture. Official multiculturalism assumes the national culture as the existing, normative, national culture of the hegemonic whiteness, while it does not address racism systematically (Lee & Lutz 2005:17).

It is a discourse that does not recognize racialized bodies as part of the foundational narrative of Canada, framing them in the discourse of Canada as an anti-slavery Canaan but fails to recognize Blackness as Canadian in the Western provinces, particularly in Vancouver. Compton defines this departure as the roots of Aphroperipheralism: a challenging, but creative position rejecting the transplant of Afrocentrism or African-Americana to British Columbia and also the white scripts of nation-building or the vapidness of liberal multiculturalism: it is the resistance to both assimilation and elision.

Secondly, the transformation of the island into a detention centre also points to First Nations peoples relocation and Canadian colonialism. The racialization and discipline across the Canadian space, and in this case, the Vancouverite, is marked by its settler colonialism trajectory. The forced relocation of First Nations peoples into reservations and residential schools was the first stage of dispossession of their territory and their political attachment, thus giving way to the extraction of resources and establishment of settler societies.

More recently, the focus has shifted to the penal system to continue the colonial control of space and, despite constituting a five per cent of the Canadian population, Indigenous peoples represent a quarter of the prison population (Maynard 2017:85). Statistics by the VPD show that Blacks make up 1% of the population and 4% of reported street-checks; while Indigenous people make up 2% of the population and 15% of reported street-checks and 39% of homeless people in Metro Vancouver (Manojlovic 2018)

A second interpretation of the island as a carceral space is the rejection of the urban modernist discourse of progress through constant renewal, the formation of transcultural, intersectional movements to claim the right to the city, the right to difference. A space of radical openness. These bodies flicker literally:

> the inmates appear to have the free run of the building. There's a yard they are allowed access to, but in shifts. It's fenced in, . . . I got the sense it was routine to find migrants outside and on other parts of the island . . . Entire groups of migrants disappeared and reappeared outside the walls of the facility, and had to be escorted back in. They disappear from their various units and appear all together beyond the walls of the building, standing in a crowd. (Compton 2014:170-171)

Rezoning the unassimilable, abject bodies are sent to a remote, inaccessible space, separated from the rest of the city with barriers, in this case, the sea, under disciplinary control. This spatial isolation has its counterpart. One girl, the only inmate that had learned to speak English, being mistaken for a holographic immigrant, she is locked in this prison due to the citizens' hysteria against the racialized bodies. The isolation of the island, reflecting the uneven urban development and lack of basic services, prevents the girl from receiving medical assistance, and she dies from an asthmatic crisis.

This aspect mirrors the isolated conditions of neglected neighbourhoods, carceral urban spaces to control racialized bodies and those considered aliens. In the case of Vancouver, the depiction of Hogan's Alley as a blighted slum prior to its demolishment (Compton 2010). The death of this girl, from the point of view of the imprisonment of racialized immigrants, is not unusual given that "at least fourteen have died while behind bars since 2000" (Maynard 2017:171).

The holographic projections were developed as part of the Multiple Perception Immobilization Device, providing the police with a non-lethal security solution for crowd control. The said device:

> projects holographic images of people into a crowd, causing a perceived doubling or tripling of the crowd density, in turn causing rioting individuals to perceive themselves as surrounded by far denser crowd that is the case. The device initially scans the subjects, making composite holograms by recombining facial features, clothing, etc. so that its seeded projections closely resemble the demographics of the targeted crowd . . . the rioters become distracted, slowed, and ultimately vulnerable to other pacification measures. (Compton 2014:181)

For the people in the crowd, it is impossible to discern the holographic three-dimensional bodies from their real companions and the effect is:

> like standing in the middle of a sea of people, and though I could pass through the hologram, and realized projections were being used, the realism of the imagery was enough to make me hesitate significantly, and after colliding with more than one person I'd taken for fake, I moved more slowly and uncertainly, which is the machine intended function . . . I saw a particular 'person' in the crowd and immediately felt a sense of recognition, seeing some of my own facial features as it passed. (Compton 2014:188)

Canada officially proclaims multiculturalism: a space that neither others nor represses racial mixing and simultaneously eviscerates restrictive creations of identity. Being multiracial equals a prediction to struggle with carving a space in this official Multiculturalism that overemphasizes the cultural pattern while ignoring the presence of a racialized geography. As it was said at the beginning of this article, the situation in Vancouver is a special one, characterized by a high degree of interethnic exchange and the lack of a central Black community.

In After Canaan*,* Compton(2010) asserts that the average Black person in B.C. seems to be a light-skinned, mixed-race person. He dwells upon this topic and the act of passing, which is commonly burdened on the person whose race is being questioned, while the mis/perception of race is the responsibility of the viewer. Borrowing from biology, Compton adapts the term pheneticizing, denoting classification according to an assessment of physical appearances rather than the identification of shared ancestry.

The holographic bodies are not real; they are simulations and a particular type of somatography created by the apparatuses of the State, Power and official Multiculturalism that, even though might seem real, they are just void images that paralyze the progress of the citizens who claim a space. It can be interpreted as a clash for a racialized space in the city, between state liberal multiculturalism versus a growing multiculturalism-from-below, which allows for more rhizomatic and complex identities, as opposed to simplistic stereotypes and racialization of bodies.

It also reflects a struggle against a discourse and weapons that seem to be verging into the simulation and fable, like the media depiction of Hogan's Alley prior to its demise, a matter of illusion failing in the light of verisimilitude. Compton effectively satirizes on the fictional character of racial definitions and as he does with Aphroperipheralism, and struggles against compulsive control procedures: Fragmentation, mutilating the information so it fits into a code; homogenization to express the information in a predictable code; and repetition, reducing differences to small variations of the same item.

An adaptation of the concept of urban psychasthenia in a postmetropolis such as Vancouver will prove accurate to analyse the failure to recognize the differences between the citizens' bodies, the holograms, and end up assigning them the status of immigrants instead of recognizing their space within the national narrative.

> Defined as a disturbance between the self and surrounding territory, psychasthenia is a state in which the space defined by the coordinates of the organism's own body is confused with represented space. Incapable of demarcating the limits of its own body, lost in the immense area that circumscribes it, the psychasthenic organism proceeds to abandon its own identity to embrace the space beyond. […] This simulation effects a double usurpation: while the organism successfully reproduces those elements it could not otherwise apprehend, in the process it is swallowed up by them, vanishing as a differentiated entity. (Olalquiaga 2014:31-32)

Psychasthenia helps us situate the holograms and racialized bodies in a place where the powers of conceived representations of space find new ways to reproduce its dominance, also affecting the lived space, especially the increasingly camouflaged racialized Black body in Vancouver. As a consequence, there is a growing incapacity of our minds to map not just the city, but also the bodies and multiculturalism-from-below that inhabit it.

At the end of the book, we see the ghosts of the immigrant girl and the dead Pan-Indian activist looking at the city burning in the distance. They take a boat row towards the ruins to take another one like them. They find a hologram, now called composite, indicating a mixture of features, as in the multicultural city or the multiracial bodies that disrupt liberal multiculturalism, and gives it agency, no longer a ghostly image.

The holograms escape the categorization of individuals as unitary, coherent and already

constituted subjects, and they hold multiple, open and porous subjectivities always in the process of formation. They take him to the island. As they row away from the city, they are exceeding the range of the projectors and thus the government reach for definition, so the composite starts flickering then disappears, only to appear again when they reach the island.

The girl is "excited to be a knowing guide and takes the composite by the hand to show him the detention center, the research facilities, the other shores, the people who can't perceive them" (Compton 2014:193). The three are ghosts, invisible to the others around them, yet they are still in that lived space. Like Vancouver's Black community and First Nations peoples, they are there, fighting against erasure and elision, occupying a figurative island for the immigrant, racialized bodies. This voices from the borderlands "inhabit and embody the new cultural politics of difference, complicating that politics with intersectionalities of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual preference formations of 'difference'" (Sandercock 2013:26-27).

Despite this dystopian ending, there is still hope. There is an opportunity for Afroperipheralism and multiculturalism-from-below to create a space of radical openness to keep claiming a space in the city, an open, progressive space informed with the possibilities of the psychasthenia. "At dawn he and she and the newcomer will make plans to rendezvous with those yet to come. They will discuss what it means to regroup" (Compton 2014:194).

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, in the struggle for the right to the city of Vancouver deeply related to identity, space and the body act as metaphors in the reformulation of cultural identity. Compton's stories destabilize the ideas assumed of Canada as a white, benevolent and just nation by building spaces of resistance rooted in the nation.

While they question it, they involve it ethically to develop ideas of nationality, belonging and citizenship, and as Black and First Nations individuals are configured within the urban and national geohistories. Confused in a city of glass with transparent borders and an invisibilised body, Black identity fluctuates between opposite possibilities.

On the one hand, there is a psychasthenic dissolution into space, disappearing into the cityscape. Without a body, identity adheres to any scenario like a disposable costume. On the other hand, Black identity can take advantage of this border-crossing feature, reverting the psychasthenic process before the final step of dissolution, enjoying more extensive borders. This means to fight against fragmentation and rigid categorization. The battle for this vanishing body is manifested in the fight for the territory.

In the case of Black Vancouver, there is an extremely hybrid identity lacking a specific cultural space that cannot be defined on the basis of national origins or other inherent relations of belonging, but according to the network of relations that this group and individuals establish in their everyday life and their actions in the real-and-imagined Vancouver.

This is where Wayde Compton's stories point to: rejecting the choices that modernist discourses imposed upon the activist Black subject. It points to the adoption of a space that is simultaneously central and marginal; an identity that is not informed by a narrow cultural nationalism.

It is marginality that one chooses as a site of resistance; an open space of possibility from which to articulate their sense of the world, claiming a space of ones' own in the city and in the national narrative while being inside and outside at the same time. Associations like the United African Communities of B.C. represent Africans establishing capitalist networks for the development of African-owned businesses and claim spaces for these communities through everyday life practices (Creese 2011).

Transcultural associations defend the integration of subaltern cosmologies against the dominant ones in the City of Vancouver: Hogan's Alley Trust achieved ownership of space in Strathcona

to use it for residential, cultural and commercial purposes instead of speculation. In 2019 this work paid off with the opening of Nora Hendrix Place, a 52-unit temporary modular housing development primarily for Black and Indigenous homeless (Green 2019).

The result of this analysis of Compton's work is that the production of space cannot be understood only from the dominant prism. It needs the perspective of those insurgents who question the stratification of society through space and build a counter-hegemonic cosmology. It is about multiple encounters and the transcultural interactions that complete the story. Compton's narrative weaves complex networks of collaboration in the interrelation of differences instead of assimilations or exclusions presented by regressive discourses.

Compton's cartography of Vancouver in The Outer Harbour connects familiar Black narratives with other racialized experiences of the city beyond the community and ethnic-racial boundaries, engaging with the lives of a multi-ethnic cast of characters. Acknowledging the more racially hostile experience of the Asian and First Nations peoples in the B.C. context, Compton refuses any unitary narrative of Black pride or uplifting, instead articulating a narrative tapestry of diasporic subjects within and beyond the Black community.

Compton radical open space allows for inter-ethnic connections and a site of "political encounters that reveal an ensemble of diverse and interracial subject positions that, together, explore the stakes of imagining more humanly workable geographies" (McKittrick & Woods 2007:108).

In the current moment of global turn towards conservative discourses on race and immigration, a conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis of Compton's work is that beyond nationalist discourses, the city becomes the space from which to articulate alliances and emancipatory political projects beyond the dominant geohistory. In The Outer Harbour's Vancouver, the metropolis is not a space of resolution or closure, but a space of possibility from which a multiculturalism-from-below, driven by the intimacies of urban life and transculturation might be possible.

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