Otherness and Race Between Africa and Brazil: Whiteness and the Decentering of Brazilian Social Sciences[1]

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ABSTRACT

From my field experience in Angola, I seek to question the traditional characterization of Brazilian anthropology – and, by extension, social sciences – formed by "Brazilians" about "Brazil", reflecting on the new profile of social scientists with regards to ethnic, racial and class belonging, which has pluralized in the last 20 years. This transformation in the profile of social scientists challenges the idea of an "anthropological us", focused on a nation-centric idea that does not recognize the position of class, race and territory, i.e. white, middle-class, originating from or socialized in the South/ Southeast regions of the country. I defend the decentering of Brazilian social sciences, inspired by the new decolonization movements of social sciences. This decentering involves the recognition and politicization of the hegemonic whiteness of social sciences as a condition for its critical revision.

Alteridade e raça entre África e Brasil:
branquidade e descentramentos nas Ciências Sociais brasileiras[2]

RESUMO   A partir da minha experiência de campo em Angola, busco problematizar a tradicional caracterização da antropologia brasileira — e por extensão das ciências sociais — como feita por "brasileiros" sobre o "Brasil", refletindo sobre o novo perfil dos cientistas sociais quanto ao pertencimento étnico, racial e de classe que tem se pluralizado nos últimos 20 anos. Esta transformação do perfil dos cientistas sociais desafia a ideia de um "nós antropológico" centrado em uma ideia naciocêntrica que não reconhece sua posição de classe, raça e território, ou seja, branca, de classe média, oriunda ou socializada no sul/sudeste do país. Defendo o descentramento das ciências sociais brasileiras inspirada pelos novos movimentos de descolonização das ciências sociais. Esse descentramento passa pelo reconhecimento e politização da branquidade hegemônica das ciências sociais como condição para sua revisão crítica.

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I am sharing these reflections[2] with you, inspired by the innovations that have been observed in Brazilian universities in recent years, where an important ethnic and class pluralization has taken place. This pluralization has been a common phenomenon on graduate and post-graduate courses, but I would like to think about how it has enabled us to reflect about social science activities in Brazil. Two decades have passed since the intense debate on university quotas, which most of us witnessed in various political and academic forums; we have seen the arrival of black and indigenous undergraduate students, mostly coming from public schools. This phenomenon is not only related to the quotas, but was also made possible on account of the introduction of universities in smaller towns and the increase in admissions that has been strongly felt in the North and Northeast regions of the country[3]. Several years later, there has been a significant increase in post-graduate programs, thereby repeating this process, especially in social sciences and humanities in general – but not only in these areas.

This process hasn't been interrupted by the new period following the 2016 coup d'etat. However, the long-awaited stage of diversity among teaching staff, in ethnic and racial terms, has is yet to be achieved.

It is from this time-space (Quijano, 2005) of crisis - the largest one experienced by my generation, who graduated in the so-called New Republic -, that I allowed myself to think about some of the issues raised by policies to expand public universities, and affirmative action policies. Times of crisis can be productive to further reflect on tensions that have remained dormant, and since they could not be expressed, they are haunting us, preventing new movements and transformations.

It is important to emphasize that I speak as an anthropology professor at a university based in Baixada Fluminense[4]. I also have as a reference for this talk a recently-created collective of black anthropologists[5] which has been reflecting on the conditions of anthropological activity in Brazil from the perspective of black people[6].

II

I am drawing from my fieldwork experience in Angola, including all the challenges that my status as a "foreigner" and "person of mix-race" imposed on me there, to think about how black bodies can make a difference in Brazilian Anthropology, which, until now, had mainly been produced by white bodies who rarely see themselves from this position.

I allow myself to put both the terms "person of mixed-race" and "foreigner", in quotes, since I am starting from the trivial matter that Brazilian anthropology, like Brazilian social sciences, is basically an anthropology of Brazil. We know that in the core

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countries, anthropological activity means researching extra-national realities. Brazil has become a privileged field of study for academia, specifically when we talk about social sciences. This means that social sciences have put forward the task of thinking about Brazil and its different realities and contexts, based on what Mariza Peirano suggested as being associated with the "nation building" project (Peirano, 1999).

Therefore, I am speaking based on my research on Angola, on the African continent, in the expectation that this produces a reflection which, in a way, is unusual for anthropology or even for the social sciences in Brazil, which is where I produce, research and teach. Perhaps it is an interesting starting point because it is a relatively decentered status.

Anthropology is constructed as an eminently comparative science, comparing ethnographies carried out in different contexts, and guided by a theory that is intended to be universal. However, it is not separated from a certain experience that is also personal, of being confronted with distinct contexts and how this produces knowledge from its place, its origins, its belonging and values. Various anthropologists have discussed this, but perhaps some aspects have not been explored sufficiently, in the sense that a large number of these positions and belonging were naturalized in the production of knowledge.

In my case, I worked on the ethnic and national identity of returnees in Angola. Those called "returnees" are a part of the Bakongo group, one of the main ethnic groups present in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Western Central Africa. They spent a period in exile in the Congo during the War of Independence in the 1960s, and returned to the capital, Luanda, after the independence, which took place in 1975. I studied the insertion of this migrated group, constructed as "foreign" in Angola, in the late 1990s. They are former exiles but, for various reasons, were seen as foreigners within the context of Angola, particularly in the capital (Pereira, 2000).

I also had the experience of being a foreigner in Angola. However, I have an Angolan family, which is the family of my older siblings, from my father`s first wife. This part of the family welcomed me each time that I visited. This is an important aspect, both from the point of view of field research, and my personal experience.

In anthropology, we think about these situations as experiences of otherness, distancing and familiarity; that is, they are games of approaching and distancing that we do in order to understand the classificatory logics, and think about how the differences and perceptions of difference are constructed; so as to think about the so-called "other", which is, as we all know, a relational process.

And it was in the research process, in Angola, that I drew from this familiar situation, in the sense of my family, and also in the sense of the historical and cultural proximities that connect Angola and Brazil[7]. However, there was also a context of identity in which I am a black woman in Brazil, but I was repositioned from a racial point of view in Angola as being of mixed-race, and this raised important issues that

anthropologists' collectives. However, I am inspired by Aílton Krenak's idea of the collective subject (Krenak, 2018), which suggests the construction of common knowledge through experience, and the exchange of common experiences, although not homogeneous, which include memories, heritage, and know-how from our ancestors. This collective subject in the sense that Krenak describes, enables me to think that this text is not exactly of collective authorship but the ideas developed here are greatly indebted to a shared space, although mostly online, inhabited by, and with discussions between black anthropologists.

7 | There are multiple relations between Angola and Brazil. They have an extensive history that starts with the period of slave trade, and develops with the circulation of Africans and Portuguese-Brazilians in the Atlantic. The African colonial period and anti-colonial reaction were marked by the political and diplomatic dispute for support both for Portuguese colonial ambitions – which until 1961 had the Brazilian government as a constant ally – and the African nationalists who sought support in Brazilian civil society for the anti-colonial struggle (Lima, 2017). There was an important circulation of African nationalists, Brazilian militants and anti-Salazarists between African territories, Portugal and Brazil, and of Brazilian literature that inspired Angolan writers (and intellectuals from other Portuguese colonies) to produce national literature in Portuguese language.

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dialogue with the field of Brazilian social sciences.

There is an important field of studies in race relations in Brazil that has always thought comparatively, using the United States as its benchmark. Race relations have always been considered in relation to the North American model. More recently, some works took up the idea of comparisons in a colonial matrix (Fry, 1991; 2003 e 2005). Despite the origin of this colonial comparison proposed by Gilberto Freyre, during the 1990s the idea of comparative colonialism reappeared here, with the assumption that there was an identity and common characteristics between countries of same colonization[8].

Thus, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique were relatively much closer than the British colonized countries, such as Zimbabwe, South Africa and the United States. Therefore, when I travelled to Angola, I was not thinking about comparative race relations, nor was I interested in this, but I saw myself in the position of a black woman in Brazil, and a *mulata* in Angola. Unambiguously, I am a *mulata* in Angola, and this does not have the same meaning as being a *mulata* in Brazil. I will use the term "mulata" because this is the term used there. Thus, this issue of comparative race relations was not my field of study, but I had to reposition myself in this way, as a *mulata* in Angola. At a later date, of course, this made me think that I was in another classification system that resembled Brazil, but it is not the same.

In other words, the meaning given by Gilberto Freyre (2003 [1933])[9] emerges, followed by this contentious idea of Lusophones in Portuguese-speaking countries, who, allegedly, have a common identity from a colonial or post-colonial axes that is shown by the use of the Portuguese language. However, we also know that it does not have the same weight, range or meaning in all of these countries[10].

And, in fact, we know that this identity is very misleading, since this familiarity brings confusion, which is the assumption that if you say *mestiço* or *mulato* in Brazil, Angola or Mozambique, it is as if you were saying the same thing, but we are absolutely not talking about the same thing. Therefore, all of my fieldwork in Angola, during my Master`s program, was working with this anthropological process of familiarization, defamiliarization, exoticization and de-exoticization, and trying to understand the emergence of difference and the process of foreignization of these former exiles in Luanda, and how they are positioned once this position as foreigners was established.

These former exiles were not in their original region, which was the North of Angola, but in Luanda, constituting an informal market, very much associated with the Congolese, but claiming an Angolan identity, an African and Angolan identity starting from an idea of the origins of their parents and grandparents.

In the Bakongos' case, the origins were much more important in the claim for nationality than their place of birth, which was the form through which white and mixed-race Angolans thought about national belonging. For white and mixed-race people, this idea, which we might call republican, of belonging to a territory

8 | Fry presented his first argument in 1991, when he defended a distinction between the forms of British and Portuguese colonization operating in colonial and race relations. The first produced a more rigid vision of racial difference, and the second was responsible for a more "relational", more assimilationist vision and, therefore, less essentialist, although racialized (1991). This explained the differences between the Mozambican and South African cases in the same way as the Brazilian and North American ones. This more direct transposition between the Portuguese and British cases in Africa and America was later toned down in the 2003 and 2005 texts, developing the British and Portuguese distinction only in analyzing the Mozambican case, compared with Zimbabwe.

9 | The works where Gilberto Freyre develops the idea of Lusotropicalism are particularly his texts that resulted from trips to the Portuguese colonies during the 1950s and 1960s (*O mundo que o português criou, Aventura e Rotina, and Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas*), but the central idea of Portuguese protagonism that creates its own, original way of colonizing, is present in the classic *Casa Grande & Senzala* [1933].

10 | On criticism of the idea of Lusophony, see Alfredo Margarido, 2000 in particular. On post-colonialism in the Portuguese case, see Miguel Vale de Almeida, 2002.

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and not a place of origin, was vital because, of course, these white and mixed-race people were the sons and daughters of Portuguese settlers, who had been ousted from Angola at the height of independence. However, in the case of the sons and daughters of Angolans born in the Congo, and who return from exile to Angola, the key to belonging was their origins and ancestry.

I was also constructing my place in an Angolan family, which is the family of my older siblings, with whom I had a close and warm relationship, but also of distance because they were not the family who raised me. It was a family based in the capital, but their origins traced back to the old, important 19th century Kimbundo families. At the same time, I was trying to familiarize myself with the universe of the returnees; I was trying to find a certain place in a family that thought that the returnees I was studying were the most exotic, strange, and less Angolan thing that I could study.

It was this experience of proximity and distance, identity and contrast that led me to my Master`s dissertation. However, when I returned to the field for my doctorate, I moved away from this interest in the struggle for identity - this process of contrast, of constructing the one through the radical otherness projected onto the other.

Thus, I decided to no longer study only the returnees, but the bakongo population in Luanda as a whole, starting from the processes of sociability and local power, the study of kinship, and the emergence of Christian churches, including Pentecostal and African churches (Pereira, 2005; 2012 e 2015). Namely, how family and church networks crossed in the construction of leadership in the break-aways and proliferation of Christian churches.

Seeing myself in another network, in this network of families and churches, I began to visit a different church every Sunday, and to follow women's services at a specific church during the week[11]. Therefore, I circulated in different churches the whole time, and I was asked about my religious identity, because there was no way of me being in the churches, even as a white foreigner, without any belonging.

It is important to say that in certain bakongo circuits, I was seen as white, which is something remarkable because some of the Bakongo, especially those who came from the Congo, do not conceive *mestiço* (mixed-race) in the way that people from Luanda do. They are much more binary, and this is connected to the Congolese context, as well as with aspects of bakongo cosmology, as a more dualist way of thinking.

Therefore, I was white on several occasions, and this generated some very complex personal, internal questions because I was already many things in Angola. I had to deal with old men being young at the time; I had to deal with women, and I did not have any children; besides being Brazilian, which involved dealing with various imaginaries of Brazil that circulated around Angola, which at times connect to the themes of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism[12] (Pereira, 2013).

But with all these church visits, I had to position myself religiously and, at a certain moment, I recovered my catholic heritage. I was born into a Catholic family.

11 | Angola is considered one of the most Christian countries in Africa, with a reduced Moslem presence. The statistics show approximately 90% Christians, most of which are Catholics, and the other half divided between historic Protestants, the heirs of colonial missions, and a growing Pentecostal and Evangelical proliferation in recent decades. Within the protestant universe, one has to consider the not insignificant presence of African churches, the heirs of religious movements of anti-colonial opposition. The statistics do not take into consideration the relation between belonging to religions and formal churches and the continuity of traditional practices. Thus, the so-called "traditional religions", in this logic of exclusivist classification, includes approximately 5% of devotees.

12 | The period of Angolan independence, and later on, fostered an unprecedented

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Then, I moved away from Catholicism, and went to Candomblé, but there was no way of translating this because the meaning of Candomblé in Angola would be different from the common meaning here in Brazil. There is no Candomblé, nor devotion to orixás in Angola. There is something much subtler, which are the various services that are called "traditional", in a logic that is very different to what is called "Candomblé Angola" in Brazil. Therefore, in saying "Candomblé" there, I would be accused of being a witch and I had no way of explaining this. Therefore, it made more sense to me, and to the people, to say that I was Catholic.

Therefore, I repositioned myself as Catholic, and it was not a question of pretense, but a way of negotiating a position that exists in the classification system of that context. Otherwise, I had no way of translating my legitimacy of being in the churches, or of circulating in them. I was able to circulate as a foreign white researcher, but circulating without a position, I could not be read. I did not have a way of reading.

Therefore, in fact, these were the keys to the religious classification system that made me realize how religion was crucial in bakongo labeling, both in the group`s internal composition and the way in which they thought internally, as in the identity transmitted outwards.

Therefore, the key to understanding the political kinship system and thinking about the link between the Bakongos' ethnic and national identity was to understand the church network, and I only understood this when I repositioned myself as Catholic[13].

This was curious because being Catholic in Angola represents some very interesting things: it is the church of the majority and holds the position of certain ethnic and ideological neutrality. Therefore, being Catholic is also portraying a place with certain neutrality, but a false neutrality, because being Catholic is hegemonic. Being Catholic simplifies and positions you in an easily identifiable place but, for me, it was very difficult because, when I came back, when I thought about it and re-read my field notebook, when I started thinking and writing about it, seeing me in this position became quite strange.

Being white or a *mulata* in Angola was also strange because being a *mulato* is being in an absolute minority position, very different from Brazil[14]. Being a *mulato* in Brazil is being in the majority, in the sense that being of mixed-race could mean a lot of things, and may also say nothing. In fact, it is along these lines of not saying anything that the idea of "*mestiço*" is placed in Brazil (Figueiredo and Grosfoeguel, 2010).

However, in Angola being of mixed-race or *mulato* is being in a very pronounced placed, associated with privilege, not so much from an economic, or social point of view, but a place of privilege in a symbolic sense, and a place of a certain national synthesis. Above all, being a *mulato* in Angola resonates with being from a place between Africaness and Occidentality that determines a certain national being that white people in Angola do not have. Therefore, it is an extremely comfortable place, although it is often extremely arrogant, subject to insults, and the target of

approximation between Brazil and Angola, marked by the Brazilian military government`s surprising recognition of Angolan independence, declared by the socialist liberation movement, MPLA. The Brazilian presence in Angola is reflected in political support, intense trade between the two countries and the presence of various companies, highlighting the construction company, Odebrecht, which has a history of operations in the country. For decades, Odebrecht could be seen almost as a second Brazilian Embassy in Angola. From a cultural point of view, in addition to the above-mentioned influence of Brazilian modernist literature, its soap operas have always been eagerly devoured in Angola, and have been responsible for much of the Angolan imaginary of Brazil since the 1970s. Brazilian music, in its various styles, has also contributed towards this imaginary since the colonial period. The circulation of Angolans in Brazil refers to the presence of the so-called "sacoleiras" (sales people); these are people who purchase clothes, and other objects, which are re-sold in Angola; which was very common during the 1980s and 1990s among students and refugees. The first wave of refugees began in 1992, on the resumption of the civil war, following the 1991 elections.

13 | Social scientists` religiosity and religious beliefs have not received due attention in reflection on the construction of anthropological knowledge. I refer to Vagner Gonçalves da Silva's (2000) vital work on the relation between anthropologists and followers of traditional African religions, and Regina Novaes' study on the religious belonging of social science students in Rio de Janeiro (Novaes, 1994).

14 | Those called "of mixed race" in Angola are approximately 5% of the total of the Angolan population, and Angolan white people, less than 1%. It should be highlighted that the mixed-race, or mulato category, in Angola also complies with some regional variations and the contexts of class and status, although seemingly less than in Brazil (Pereira, 2013).

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resentment. It is different from the position of white Angolans, who despite having a certain economic power, are questioned extensively from a national point of view, delegitimized, and even foreignized (Pereira, 2013).

I was often mistaken for an Angolan, I was not immediately seen as a Brazilian; in short, being a *mulata* was convenient on the one hand, but an extremely difficult situation to deal with because, after all, I am not Angolan.

This experience of being placed in various classifications, and having to reposition myself in the racial system enabled me to see that I had to position myself in the religious classification system, in order to understand the group I was studying.

That is to say that the experience I am narrating goes beyond my subjectivity in the field. My presence in Angola and among the Bakongo involved both decentering, and the politicization of the positions I took - sometimes fixed, and sometimes circumstantial.

This means that the otherness in the research was not obvious, and was constructed in various ways. In addition, the relationship of otherness was shown to be unstable. But certainly without reflecting on the positions – whether racial, religious or national - that I took, even if in a circumstantial way, I would not have made the discoveries that I did.

III

Mariza Peirano dedicated many of her texts to thinking about Brazilian anthropology and its various differences from the so-called central anthropologies, and in comparison with national traditions, called peripheral, such as India, for example. In her text, published in the "ANPOCS – o que ler nas ciências sociais brasileiras" (ANPOCS – what to read in Brazilian social sciences) collection, published 20 years ago, Peirano defines otherness as the basic aspect of anthropology. She draws attention to the central characteristic of Brazilian anthropology, as an Anthropology of Brazil, where the so-called exoticism that has determined the anthropology of central countries did not exist (Peirano, 1999).

Peirano establishes a typology of Brazilian anthropology from different degrees of otherness. These are (1) radical alterity, which corresponds to indigenous ethnology; (2) softened alterity, which broadly corresponds to studies on peasants and those on inter-ethnic contact; (3) proximal alterity, which are studies conducted in an urban environment, and, lastly (4), minimal alterity, or Brazilian reflection on its own anthropology[15].

In Peirano`s text, difference and alterity appear as being almost synonymous, even though what alterity is founded on is not clearly defined, whether on spatial distance or cultural difference (Gupta and Ferguson, 2008), and even on what terms this difference is expressed.

15 | Mariza Peirano is the anthropologist who produced the most extensive work on Brazilian anthropological activity, starting with her doctorate. I could refer to more than ten articles or chapters, where parts of these discussions reappear, allowing distinct reflections addressed at times to different audiences, as it is the case of her articles in English. Since this is not an analysis of Peirano's work itself, but we are taking her work as the starting point for our discussion, we have opted to consider mainly the text included in the collection published by ANPOCS in 1999 as the main reference.

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An important aspect of this analysis is the inseparable relation between the social sciences, the tradition where Brazilian anthropology is inserted, and the nation building project that requires an understanding or definition of national ethos. Social science is understood here as committed to the principle of "enlightened modernity" in which the nation is included as a *sui generis* reality, that is, in its singularity. This is results in certain homogeneity in the construction of its center, which assumes the existence of internal "others". This is how one can consider indians as "radical alterity", and peasants and black people as "one's others".

Anthropological studies on other realities outside of Brazil were defined by Peirano in this typology as another type of radical otherness, although with degrees of closeness, as in the case of Portugal or Portuguese-speaking African countries, for the alleged proximity with the Lusophone universe that I problematized above.

 Now, by relativizing the idea of alterity in Brazilian anthropology, through the categorization of different internal "natives", Peirano defines, although not explicitly, the place of the Brazilian anthropologist as non-indian, non-black and non-peasant. This place appears through an absolutely naturalized "us"[16].

I should mention that I am referring to Mariza Peirano for her continuous and important reflections on the making of anthropology, but the naturalized "us" that I refer to has appeared for a long time in the voices and texts of many Brazilian anthropologists[17]. This means that I consider Peirano`s reflections as indicating something like a unconscious of Brazilian anthropological activity.

Therefore, if anthropology is made by "us", who study the Brazilian "other", what is the place of the black, indigenous and peasant Brazilians who eventually become researchers and study universes in which they have a proximity or belonging?[18] Or, to put in another way, at which epistemic level is this so-called "otherness" located, which makes the anthropological activity possible in and of Brazil? Expressed in a more provocative way, "Us who, paleface?"

I have always been questioned for not studying "race relations". As students whose body was unusual in the University of São Paulo's Graduate Program in Anthropology twenty years ago, it was assumed that black students studied black people, as well as foreign students studied topics concerning their own countries. However, at the same time, the idea of "studying oneself" was not well-regarded in the anthropological canon, due to the lack of detachment from the object.

Although these issues have already been quite relativized by post-modern critique and gender studies, where the legitimacy and pertinence of women`s interest in studies on women are rarely doubted, studies by us, black people, on the racial issue, black identity and ethnicity were always frowned upon, under the heading "militant studies", where confusion between theory and politics, native and analytical categories were seen as regrettably blended together[19].

Thus, anthropology from a native point of view, that is, made by male or female

16 | Or "the feckless us" in Osmundo Pinho`s (Pinho, 2019, p. 107) words.

17 | For example, Schwarcz (1999).

18 | On new subjects in the production of anthropology, see Alex Rats (2009), Ângela Figueiredo and Grosfoguel (2007, 2010), Osmundo Pinho (2019).

19 | On the emergence of the "black movement within an academic background" in Brazil from the 1970s, see Ratts (2009, 2011).

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Brazilian anthropologists studying their own country, as a founding characteristic of Brazilian anthropology would only be conceivable as anthropology undertaken within Brazil, based on an internal otherness between "us, anthropologists" and their others, blacks, indians, the poor and the peasants. After all, we are the nation`s "others".

By this, I would like to say that Brazilian anthropology has been interpreting as otherness or cultural distance differences that are also based on distinctions of race, class and territory. Peirano`s declarations on the need for alterity, to construct anthropology, do not clarify the level at which we may place this alterity. This is a disseminated idea that naturalizes the place of the anthropologist as "us", which is deeply marked by the racial and social positioning of whiteness, of an allegedly cosmopolitan upper or upper-middle class urbanity, from the South and Southeast of Brazil (and the Federal District).

At the moment the "other" emerges as a researcher, s/he urgently needs to position him/herself as a researcher by explaining his/her position and belonging to his/her research universe, constantly running the risk of being delegitimized, due to extreme proximity or "militancy" [20].

On the other hand, when this researching body does not take its own group as object, something appears not to make much sense, since the "others" should only be responsible for speaking about themselves, since there is no possible centering. Thus, it appears inappropriate for the subaltern, or primitive, to talk about another that is not themselves, from the naturalized viewpoint of their own immediate reality. After all, only a universal outlook would have the capacity to represent both them and the other. (Carvalho, 2001; Pinho, 2019).

Thus, the other, as an anthropologist, appears to play an already lost game, since s/he is not in the center, from where s/he may see an other, and is not authorized to talk about him/herself with adequate detachment.

Therefore, what is the "position of speech" the so-called Brazilian anthropology? In other words, where does it speak from? If the eye that sees is the eye of tradition, according to Boas, or if situating oneself in the Geertzian perspective allows cultural dialogue which is the mark of anthropological hermeneutics, without which we cannot interpret interpretations, our anthropology seems to talk from a certain place in the so-called "Brazilian culture", this construct which was partly created and is partly uncovered by Brazilian social sciences (Pechincha, 2006).

Now, the idea of Brazilianness is characterized by concealing and making invisible the ethnic markings of Africanity and Amerindianity[21], in the name of creating a so-called Brazilian culture, characterized among other aspects by cordial racism and institutionalized miscegenation, oriented by whitening, and by erasing and minimizing conflicts as its central ethos.

Thus, this "homemade" anthropology is able to epistemologically solve the problem of alterity, producing its own domestic otherness, which is the others of

20 | For a critique of the false dichotomy between academic research and activism, see Patrícia Hill Collins (2000).

21 | See Lelia Gonzales' concept of Amefricanity (1988).

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the national state – black and indigenous people, peasants and the poor – but takes itself as unsituated author. Although we recognize the political engagement that is part of Brazilian anthropology and social sciences, engagement[22] today is no longer enough to deconstruct the allegedly "universal" point of view from which Brazilian anthropology thinks itself [23].

IV

The critical spins of anthropology concerning the subject`s position, enable us to develop the hermeneutic principle that implies the importance of situating oneself; in short, the importance of context for interpretation and analysis (Geertz, 1989 [1973]). This relates to the inter-subjective dimension that allows interpretation. This movement has also produced a break in the usual procedures of objectification and detachment that are classical in anthropological practice (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986).

This same movement also problematized the idea of authorship, introducing an ambiguity that enables us to keep the "us" of the neutrality of science in tension with literary authorship which requires the so-called author`s presence, through ethnographic writing (Geertz, 1988; Foucault, 1992 [1969]).

All this criticism of authorship has focused more on the rhetorical aspects of legitimizing ethnographic authority and little on the actual place of anthropological science as the production of knowledge/power over the other, and maintaining the idea of the other, and otherness, as the center of anthropological reflection. This means that the critical spin of so-called post-modern anthropology was very restricted to the problems that representation involves, but did not problematize theoretical production itself, in the sense of reconsidering the place of universality that anthropology or, by extension, the social sciences, has constructed for itself (Carvalho, 2001).

We had to wait for post-colonial theory, a reflection that came from outside social sciences, to finally displace Enlightenment as the key event in the triumphant narrative of modernity, and regard the colonial drama and the idea of a decentered modernity instead. Modernity is now understood as being constructed within colonial expansion, and this phenomenon is seen from then on as the condition for the emergence of capitalism and no longer as it is merely unfolding[24].

Decolonial theory, the most recent development of the post-colonial movement, allows us to reposition race and gender, which were seen as a by-product of undesired aspects of modernity, at the center of the making of modernity. In other terms, racialization and genderification processes are now observed as structural for the production of modernity, without which it is not possible to understand capitalism, and the various modes of production hierarchically ordered within it (Quijano, 2005; Mignolo, 2003)[25].

22 | See Howard Becker (1977) on the idea of the bias inherent to sociology in its friendly approach with the groups it studies. Evidently, the point here is not to criticize the engagement of social scientists. However, although the different dimensions of this engagement are extremely complex, the distinction between engaged anthropology and the subject`s position as constitutive of the production of anthropological or sociological knowledge should be reiterated. For a discussion on engaged anthropology, see Fonseca (2002).

23 | Mônica Pechincha (2006) develops an in-depth discussion on the natio-centrism of Brazilian anthropology, and the universalization of theory as central elements to produce the anthropologist`s neutralized position in face of the internal others, whose alterity is produced in this process. See also José Jorge Carvalho (2001).

24 | As we know, post-colonialism does not form a homogenous group, can be observed in different movements, and is orientated by various subjects and chains of thought. However, Homi Bhabha (1998), Stuart Hall (2003), Dipesh Chakrabarty (2001) and Partha Chaterjee (2004) are some of the authors who made this change possible in the way of describing modernity to be seen.

25 | For a feminist critique of the formulation of Aníbal Quijano`s decoloniality of power, see Maria Lugones, 2008.

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From this perspective, we can circumscribe this "us" that is put in an unseen place, from where the "other" is seen. That is, displace the nation-centric perspective from which Brazilian anthropology can represent its internal others, since it speaks from the place of Brazilian national science as the re-duplicated center of modernity, from where it names and represents its other national peripherals.

Finalizing this reflection, I would like to say, more concretely, that it is no longer possible for the anthropological discourse to maintain this place of reproducing central modernity. This means that we need to politicize the "position of speech"[26] of anthropologists and of anthropology – namely, the positions of race, class, gender and sexuality[27], in a racialized, gendered, elitist and urban-centric academia[28]. This strain the regulations that reproduce colonial spatiality and temporality.

The proposal is to overcome the limitation of thinking about race and gender only from the "subordinate" link. This is valid for various aspects of an investigation, starting with the place of the investigator. The white subject is also racialized (Bento, 2002; Sovik, 2009). Race cannot only be attributed to non-white people, in the same way that gender should not only be attributed to women. Although this reflection appears to be commonsense in research nowadays, it is worth emphasizing that forging and maintaining "racial neutrality" within academia helps to perpetuate the characteristics of a colonized and colonizing anthropology.

Accepting racialization, which has always marked the place of the other, is accepting the fundamentally relational aspect of the production of meaning, not only of identity but, above all, of knowledge. It is no longer possible that Brazilian social sciences inhabit this place of Western universality – a place that includes us but does not belong to us.

We need to decenter ourselves starting from the unstable position that questions Brazilian whiteness, to be able to construct knowledge that overcomes the very idea of otherness.

By operating through the subversion of the standard experiences of racial labeling and neutrality, this may also be the condition of overcoming these, for other forms of relation, more horizontal and liberating.

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26 | Despite the trivialization of the idea of the "position of speech" in Brazil, I defend its original meaning, in which the one who speaks takes up the position where knowledge is constructed; that is to say, the radical refusal of accepting any form of neutrality. This is distinct from the idea of experience as a source of legitimization for political statement. For an extensive discussion on the topic, see Ribeiro, 2017.

27 | Intersectionality supports the point of view according to which race and gender are social constructs of mutual establishment (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). Post-colonial and decolonial readings, as well as the historical anthropology of colonialism, have been expanding this perspective, locating this construction within the process of colonial expansion, concomitant with the assertion of bourgeois ideology in metropolitan countries, in the context of class struggle (McClintock, 2010).

28 | With the expansion of universities to inner towns of Brazil, we should be able to observe the extent to which appears a sociological perspective that is rather decentered from the predominantly urban or urban-colonized perspectives, which marks the outlook of social sciences. Unlike the indigenous and black struggle in the field of education, which produced an intense politicization of these subjects, constructing them as a collective, the place of speech from the rural area does not appear with the same intensity. However, we have various experiences within a number of universities where there is a Degree in Rural Education, where we can see the emergence of the rural in the university routine. By understanding the relativity of the constructed opposition between rural and urban, and its profound variations, perhaps we may see the production of a distinct perspective, and even more so when marked by ethnicity in the case of the quilombolas and other traditional forms of territorial organization. Quilombos are rural black communities formed by descendants of enslaved Africans, which are mostly rural but there are also some urban communities, similar to the Caribbean "maroons".

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