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Critical Whiteness Studies and International Relations: disputing narratives and challenging epidermalized structures of power in teaching, research and extension¹

Os Estudos Críticos da Branquitude e as Relações Internacionais: disputando narrativas e desafiando estruturas epidérmicas de poder em ensino, pesquisa e extensão

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to demonstrate that Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) may provide useful tools for interpreting epidermalized relations of power in the international system and for challenging the racial dynamics that cut across the teaching, research and extension dimensions in the field of International Relations. This study shows that CWS have potential to support the implementation of Laws 10.639/03 and 11.645/2008, which require the inclusion, in a cross-curricular manner, of education regarding ethnic-racial relations in higher education curricula in Brazil. In this paper, I provide an introduction to the field of CWS, drawing primarily from the Brazilian afro-feminist contribution in *pretuguês* of Cida Bento, with her concept of narcissistic pacts of whiteness. Methodologically, this article makes use of a decolonial approach, based on bibliographic and documental research techniques. This paper stresses the importance of naming and historicizing the power of whiteness, to understand how it hegemonizes itself in space and time, and through which means it does so. It is a novel and original study, which

¹ This research was conducted with resources from CNPq and FAPESC. I thank the members of the 'Ensino Pesquisa e Extensão em RI' network, who read the text and commented on it, as well as my friends Miguel Borba de Sá and Paulo Roberto Ferreira for suggestions.

innovates by introducing Black epistemologies and stating their applicability as regards teaching, research and extension, opening paths to destabilize the colonial support beams of the IR field.

KEYWORDS: Critical Whiteness Studies. International Relations. Racism. Teaching, research and extension.

RESUMO: O objetivo do artigo é mostrar que os Estudos Críticos da Branquitude (ECB) podem aportar ferramentas úteis para interpretar as relações epidermizadas de poder no sistema internacional, e para desafiar as dinâmicas raciais que atravessam as dimensões do ensino, da pesquisa e extensão do campo de Relações Internacionais (RI). Este estudo mostra que os ECB têm o potencial de apoiar na implementação das Leis 10.639/03 e 11.645/2008, que prescrevem a inclusão, de forma transversalizada, da educação para as relações étnico-raciais nos componentes curriculares do ensino superior no Brasil. No presente texto, mobilizo primordialmente a contribuição afro-feminista brasileira em pretuguês de Cida Bento, com seu conceito de pactos narcísicos da branquitude. A problemática deste artigo se refere ao poder da branquitude, e a sua hegemonização no tempo e no espaço, e nos meios do seu exercício na academia e na política internacional. Metodologicamente, a pesquisa se utiliza de abordagem decolonial, apoiando-se nas técnicas de pesquisa bibliográfica e documental. Trata-se de um estudo inédito e original, que inova ao introduzir epistemologias negras e atestar a sua aplicabilidade em termos de ensino, pesquisa e extensão, abrindo caminhos para a desestabilização das vigas de sustentação coloniais no campo das Relações Internacionais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estudos Críticos da Branquitude. Relações Internacionais. Racismo. Ensino, pesquisa e extensão.

1 INTRODUCTION²

Racial hierarchies are part of the ontology of International Relations (IR) and, as a consequence, forcefully project themselves on an epistemological level, that is, onto the processes of production and reproduction of knowledge in the area. Therefore, in this field of knowledge, occupied as it is with the dynamics of power in the

² I dedicate this text to Jéser Abílio de Souza, and to the Black and Indigenous students of Law and International Relations, so that it may serve as an epistemic tool in the fight for the right to anti-racist education.

international system, it is imperative that racism and whiteness be recognized as categories of analysis, as racism is a relation of power.

Analyses and knowledge regarding the international sphere have been produced for centuries. Academia, however, would organize content into disciplines only in the first half of the 20th century, coinciding with the height of colonialism and the dissemination of racist ideology. It is not surprising to mention that the agenda of IR was directed toward catering for United States³ interests, controlled by the white capitalist patriarchy, and thus aimed toward constructing narcissistic, civilizing narratives that staged glorious struggles for power and its phallic victories. Under the guise of universality and neutrality, mainstream discursivities excluded over half of the world's population, in addition to naturalizing a series of crimes, including invasion of territories and violent subjugation of peoples classified as indigenous, Black or Asian, operating based on intricate processes of racialization and genderization. In this logic, disciplinary components constituted a device for maintaining the power and privileges of whiteness in the international arena, given that whiteness is the main agent in the formulation and circulation of its own theses, as well as in the application of its norms and power strategies in the international stage of operations.

This paper aims to demonstrate that Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) may provide useful tools for interpreting epidermalized⁴ relations of power in the international system and for challenging the racial dynamics that cut across the teaching, research and extension dimensions in the field of International Relations. This study shows that CWS have potential to support the implementation of Laws

³ Even conservatives have recognized that. In that direction, see: HOFFMANN, 1977; WALT, 2011.

⁴ I use the term epidermalization based on Fanonian principles about the epidermalization of social positions and spaces, as these are marked by the racial division of labor, which indicates the space someone occupies based on phenotypical and cultural dimensions.

10.639/03 and 11.645/2008, which require the inclusion, in a cross-curricular manner, of education regarding ethnic-racial relations in higher education curricula in Brazil. (BRASIL, 2003, 2004, 2008)

In this paper, I provide an introduction to the field of CWS, drawing primarily from the Brazilian afro-feminist contribution in *pretuguês*⁵ of Cida Bento, with her concept of narcissistic pacts of whiteness. She did not write about the international context, but her arguments allow for a demonstration of the existence of an ethos of whiteness in international politics, given that whiteness traverses the construction and structure of the field. The racial ontology of IR produces hierarchized subjectivities and positionalities in the context of power relations. The convenient blindness and complicit silence of whiteness, like its alliances, serve the epidermalization of power and the preservation of advantages for a transnational elite.

Even though hegemonic theories neglect the importance of racism in relations of power within the system, there is a tradition of studies affiliated with critical epistememes, such as post-colonial and decolonial studies, which have given due emphasis to issues like colonialism, decolonization, Eurocentrism, universalism, patriarchy, civilizing missions, unequal relations of power, imperialism, colonial heritage, etc., many of which will be mentioned here. Critical Whiteness Studies, however, advance a few terms that will be explored throughout the text. By focusing on the white-centered system of power's modus operandi, they have promoted a methodological and epistemic turn, by making it possible, for instance, to racialize westernization, Eurocentrism, imperialism, the patriarchy and international politics.

The erasure of whiteness as one of the elements of modern power in its economic, political and epistemic modulations, as well as the absence of studies on the pacts of whiteness in IR corroborate the naturalization of oppressions stemming from racial hierarchies

⁵ *Pretuguês* is a term coined by Lélia Gonzalez which refers to the Africanization of the language spoken in Brazil, in a combination of *preto* (black) and *português* (Portuguese).

and naturalize a scheme of fixed, imprisoned, essentialized identities fabricated by colonialism, while exempting white groups from responsibility over historical reparation.

This paper's approach to the issue emerged after a previous article in which I identified the silence and selective blindness of IR in Brazil regarding white hegemony and the racial foundations of IR (SILVA, K., 2021); I thus proposed the introduction of whiteness as an analytical category. Certain questions and confrontations were left for a later moment. It would be necessary to account for the instrumentality of silence and selective blindness. Similarly, it became imperative to name and historicize the power of whiteness, to understand how it hegemonizes itself in space and time, and through which means it does so. To fulfill this task, I have decided to put CWS in dialogue with IR, showing how the former may be incorporated into the latter's epistemological spectrum, for the purposes of reading scenarios and raising tensions against the structures of power.

The first section presents a general overview of the field of Critical Whiteness Studies; the second section emphasizes the Afro-Brazilian contribution to it, especially through Cida Bento, highlighting certain theses that may potentially be applied to the field of IR; the third section demonstrates how separability, as an onto-epistemological pillar of modernity, produces discourses that perform the spaces of power of whiteness – and the subalternization of its racial “others”⁶ – which are maintained through narcissistic pacts of self-protection and self-assistance; furthermore, it shows how these complex logics cut across the entire core curriculum of IR. The discussions presented here combine institutional structural epistemic dimensions, placing Brazilian academic institutions in dialogue with aspects of international politics.

This study originates in an in-discipline toward the white-centered racial ontology of IR and promotes an in-disciplinary

⁶ I write “other” in parenthesis because this modern “other” has been constructed as the antagonist of a cis-hetero-male superiorized “I”.

methodological inversion, as proposed by CWS. Addressing the field in question is a form of insubmission to the colonial world order, structured by patriarchy and racism. The discipline must be put in a listening position, while the white dual racial logic (MBEMBE, 2018a) that has racialized and sequestered a large part of the global population's humanity in order to dominate the world must be made visible. It is a novel and original study, which innovates by introducing Black epistemologies and stating their applicability as regards teaching, research and extension, opening paths to destabilize the colonial support beams of this field.

2 THE FIELD OF CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES

American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois is the precursor of what would be called Critical Whiteness Studies in the United States from the 1990s onward. The essay titled *The Souls of White Folk*, published in 1920, was responsible for promoting a veritable epistemic revolution. In the text, the author pioneers the use of the term “whiteness” and analyses white racial identity through the eyes of a Black intellectual.

I open parentheses to argue that Du Bois was an *avant la lettre* thinker not only for the field of CWS, but also for IR. In the 1920 essay, he pioneeringly reveals the racial dimensions of World War I in terms of international politics. He claims that white supremacy is behind the pillage of resources and exploitation of the colonized, racialized and animalized peoples' labor. For him, the “competition for the labor of yellow, brown, and black folks [...] was the cause of the World War.” He acknowledges that “other contributing causes there doubtless were, but they were subsidiary and subordinate to this vast quest of the dark world's wealth and toil” (DU BOIS, 1920, p. 933). He further considers that the war was a result primarily of the “jealous and avaricious struggle for the largest share in exploiting darker races.” In the name of “conquest [...] for commerce and

degradation [...] did Europe gird herself at frightful cost for war”⁷. Outlining the association between capitalism, colonialism, labor and race, he concludes that “colonies are places where ‘niggers’ are cheap and the earth is rich” (DU BOIS, 1920, p.933). In fact, Du Bois had already proposed such an association before Lenin, despite not being mentioned in academic texts within the area (HENDERSON, 2013).

Du Bois argues that there are subsidiary causes of war, but these are subordinated to disputes between Europeans themselves “for the dark world’s wealth.” According to his logic, white supremacy looms in the background of colonial expansion. This leads him to ask: “how many of us today fully realize the current theory of colonial expansion, of the relation of Europe which is white, to the world which is black and brown and yellow?” He further questions – also pioneeringly – white saviorism, stating that white Europe claims the duty “to divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe’s good” as if non-whites were “beasts of burden for white folk.” (DU BOIS, 1920, p. 931).

The sociologist provokes a true cataclysm in this text for two main reasons: first, because he challenges the dominant narratives of the time, which associated kindness and humanity only with whites. He denounces the cruelties, atrocities, murders committed by whites against Blacks, unveiling the façade of superiority that rested on the idea of white racial superiority. He acknowledges that racial dynamics were inscribed in international politics to such an extent that international relations could be more accurately named “interracial relations” (DU BOIS, 1915; HENDERSON, 2013). Second, he pioneeringly casts light on the real causes of the war, raising an issue that those authors

⁷ According to him, “the cause of war is preparation for war; and of all that Europe has done in a century, there is nothing that has equaled in energy, thought, and time her preparation for wholesale murder. The only adequate cause of this preparation was conquest and conquest, not in Europe, but primarily among the darker peoples of Asia and Africa” (DU BOIS, 1920).

considered to be classics of IR, like Edward Carr, Hanz Morghentau, Norman Angel, Raimond Aron, concealed and ignored in their studies about war and peace, about the factors that triggered the war and mechanisms to obstruct it. Obviously, the concept of narcissistic pacts developed by Cida Bento decades later explains the reasons for this disregard in the literature. Taking this into account, I consider Du Bois an interpreter of the international sphere, an author who should be among the classic authors of IR and, therefore, that his works should be included in the set of foundational texts of this field.

In 1935, another text by Du Bois adds proportion to the study of the white racial component, *Black Reconstruction in America (1860-1890)*. In the text, Du Bois introduces the concept of whiteness as a symbolic and material passport which facilitates social mobility in class societies, something neglected by so-called classical Marxism (DU BOIS, 1935).

In 1952, Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon released a book hailed as a landmark in the history of studies on whiteness. *Black Skin, White Masks* is an examination of the psychopathological dimensions of the colonization-racism-war triad conducted from the perspective of the colonized. In the book, he formulates the concept of colonial alienation as a disorder that affects both white and Black subjectivities, impacting the I-other dialectic of recognition (FAUSTINO, 2020; FANON, 2008). He argues that the production of Black inferiority is directly related to the superiorization of whites, as “*the racist creates the inferiorized*” (FANON, 2008, p. 90, italics in the original). According to the author, “that which is called the Black soul is frequently a construction made by whites” (p. 30), but when these construct the “other,” they also construct themselves (FANON, 2008; CARDOSO, 2014).

The Colonizer and the Colonized, written in 1957 by Tunisian writer Albert Memmi, also occupies a prominent place in the historiography of writings on whiteness. He considers the construction of the I x other hierarchized and reductionist duality to be part of colonial ideology and proposes a more accurate analysis of the colonizer’s role

in the oppressor x oppressed dialectic. This is innovative because previous theoretical analyses of race tended to look unilaterally at the oppressed, neglecting the oppressor's place; this suggested that oppression was a problem of the oppressed, over which the oppressor would have no responsibility, and that situations of inferiority would therefore constitute a natural condition, not subject to questioning. Even though he theorized the colonizer-colonized relation and not "white x non-white," Memmi is a fundamental thinker to reflect on this dialectic (MEMMI, 1985; CARDOSO, 2014).

In 1950s Brazil discussions on the study of whites also began, considering that a tradition already existed of investigations made by whites about Blacks, reducing the latter to mere research objects, like the studies of Nina Rodrigues and Silvio Romero, among others. Abdias do Nascimento (2019) credits Fernando Góes with being original in presenting the idea to promote studies about whites, an initiative, according to him, later taken up by Guerreiro Ramos, and also emphasized by Black activist Aguinaldo de Oliveira Camargo at the *Congresso do Negro Brasileiro* (Brazilian Black Congress) which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1950. Nascimento himself showed interest in researching what motivated "Europeans to enslave other human beings, with a brutal sadism unprecedented in history," and concretely examining what led the oppressor to "justify his actions of murder, torture, pillage, theft and rape with absurd fantasies named, for instance, 'the white man's burden,' 'civilizing savages,' 'Christianizing pagans,' 'racial democracy'" (NASCIMENTO, 2019, p. 293).

The ideology of whiteness appears in an unsystematized manner in writings by a few Brazilian authors, namely Gilberto Freyre (2005) and Florestan Fernandes (1978). However, the document considered inaugural and most potent is the chapter titled 'Social Pathology of the Brazilian "white"' that sociologist Alberto Guerreiro Ramos included in his book *Critical Introduction to Brazilian Sociology* in 1957. Such a text is a landmark in studies about whites in Brazil, as it causes a veritable methodological inversion by proposing the idea of "white-as-topic." From

Guerreiro Ramos on, the “object” is rehumanized, being positioned as producer and subject of knowledge, as scientist, and the white role is changed to figure as research topic. The sociologist writes: “Black-as-topic is one thing, Black in life another.” The latter is “multidimensional, not liable to immobilization” (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1957). Lourenço Cardoso states that Guerreiro Ramos was a pioneer due to his being the first author in the world to raise the “white-as-topic” theme (CARDOSO, 2014). In that sense, Guerreiro Ramos suggests revisiting epistemic approaches to race relations because they are shaped as a “sociology of the Black” (RAMOS, 1995, p. 171), given that only Blacks are highlighted as a problem to be unidirectionally and non-relationally examined. Cardoso updates the expression as “epistemology of the Black” (CARDOSO, 2018b), considering that such problematic approaches are not limited to sociology, but are instead evident in various areas of knowledge (CARDOSO, 2014; BENTO, 2002; RAMOS, 1995).

In fact, in many countries, especially in the United States, several works were published throughout the twentieth century in diverse areas of knowledge denouncing white supremacy, the workings of institutional and systemic racism, and emphasizing the historical, cultural, psychological, sociological, etc. dimensions of white raciality, as well as the social construction of the ideology of whiteness as a producer of inequalities and a determining factor of socio-economic and racial hierarchies. Among the most renowned intellectuals, James Baldwin (1967), Peggy Macintosh (1988), Theodore W. Allen (1994), Vincent Crapanzano (1985), David Roediger (1991), Alexander Saxton (1990), Toni Morrison (1992), Ruth Frankenberg (1999, 2004), Henry Giroux (1997) and Gloria Wekker (2016) stand out. Nevertheless, the 1990s are considered a watershed, with studies in the human and social sciences about race and racism shifting their attention from the margins, from racialized alterity, to the center, that is, to the social place of whites and of an identity that performed itself as the norm and standard for human beings in the process of constructing the idea

of race. In the nineties, then, Critical Whiteness Studies are named in the United States, gain traction and establish themselves as an interdisciplinary field at the same time they expand to countries like the United Kingdom, Colombia, South Africa, Brazil and Australia, etc. From this moment on, countless courses and research laboratories specializing in promoting discussions about racism and the production of whiteness were created (BENTO, 2022; CONCEIÇÃO, 2020).

By shifting critical attention from the margins to the center, it became possible to notice, name, and denounce the micro and macro dimensions that cross self-constitution, the social sites of hegemony and subalternization, as well as strategies for seizing and maintaining power. Having said that, it is important to highlight that whiteness does not equal white racial subjectivity. CWS are not concerned with the study of white individuals, but with their social place in the structure of power. There is not, therefore, a white biology that would induce this group to devise a system of racial domination. Such a conception is an essentialistic one, simplifying the complexity of the issue, neglecting the diversity and multiplicity of white people, and thus placing even more obstacles to the deconstruction of racism. Du Bois (1999) teaches that the racial position defined by the color line demonstrates the confrontations with which people must deal, and that their lived experiences shape, but not necessarily determine, their responses as well as their ways of reading the world. This is why there are racist and anti-racist whites. And CWS are not concerned with study of the white individual, but of that individual's social place in the power structure. Furthermore, as Lia Schucman states, "being white takes on different, culturally shared meanings in different places," that is, being white is connected to contextualities, historicities and spatialities. To be white in twentieth century Brazil, for instance, is different from being white in the nineteenth century, or in the United States.

It is fundamental to emphasize that whiteness is the position of privilege that a person occupies in the social structure (BENTO, 2020;

SCHUCMAN, 2014). As a social site, it “keeps and preserves material and symbolic goods, initially generated by colonialism and imperialism, and which are kept and preserved in contemporary times” (SCHUCMAN, 2012, p.23). Thus, understanding whiteness requires an unveiling of the ways through which “the fundamental, concrete and subjective structures of power on which racial inequalities rest are built” (SCHUCMAN, 2014, p. 84). Even though it is a product of colonialism, whiteness continues to function as an active agent in the preservation of a racist power structure and, therefore, of white supremacy. Following Schucman, it is essential to understand the power of whiteness “as a network in which white subjects are consciously or unconsciously exerting it daily through small techniques, procedures, phenomena and mechanisms that constitute specific effects and sites of racial inequalities” (SCHUCMAN, 2012, p. 23).

Cida Bento (2022, p. 62) asserts that “whiteness is a set of unnamed and unmarked cultural practices”. This means that “there is silence and disguise around these cultural practices. It is a position of structural advantages, of racial privilege. It is a point of view, a place from which white people look at themselves, at others and at society.” For Bento (p. 5), whiteness is “a site of racial, economic and political privilege, in which raciality, not named as such, loaded with values, experiences, and affective identifications, ends up defining society.”

The site that the white person occupies transforms them into a person with superpowers. At the same time this group is in all spaces of power, it can become invisible, that is, it can perceive itself as non-racialized, depending on the context and interests at stake. It holds the prerogative of keeping silent about itself, while classifying and racializing the “others.” That is the site of the only human being that, while a universal being, is omnipotent. Whiteness is the zone of humanity, it is the zone of being itself. It is the site of the most admirable embodiment, of the scientist, the producer of valid knowledge; it is the site of those that can write history from their point of view; it is the site of those that create circulating theories,

of the legislator, the judge, the leaders (FANON, 2008; CARDOSO, 2014; SILVA, D., 2019).

In a brief summary, some common topics among the roster of authors who dedicate their attention to the issue and whom I consider relevant for the field of IR are: a) race relations are relations of power; b) race is not a biological category, but a sociohistorical and economic production tied to the fanciful conception of a group's superiority; c) ethnic-racial belonging is manifested bodily, through white skin, but goes beyond phenotype, as the body becomes marked by meanings that define who holds symbolic and material privileges, including structural advantages; d) whiteness is a socio-historical phenomenon whose effects persist in the present. The concept of racial superiority formulated by the theses of nineteenth-century scientific racism impacted bodies and engendered the socio-political and economic structures of national states and the international system, at the foundations of which lies a machinery that produces mechanisms of legitimation, connected to symbolic and material devices for discrimination and advantages, ascribing to whiteness the status of aspirational archetype, and also a trigger of power that operates in the social fabric; e) whiteness operates through pacts manifested in institutional spaces, as theorized by Cida Bento; f) the domination of subalternized groups is exerted via complex strategies that encompass the use of brute force and violence, as well as mediations and the formulation of ideological forms of consensus which naturalize violences as endogenous components of the social fabric (ALMEIDA, 2018, p. 75-76); g) whiteness's practices through power relations and in them result in violences of a social and epistemological nature (CONCEIÇÃO, 2014, 2017, 2020).

In Brazil, the field of CWS has grown at the same time that debates over structural racism have become popular in several sectors, reacting to pressures from Black and Indigenous movements, and have managed to overcome obstacles in universities that are still mostly white-centered, but which had their racial composition slightly altered by affirmative action policies. Black, white, and Indigenous intellectuals

have developed research that reinforces the transdisciplinary vocation of this field that already features in several departments, namely psychology, history, sociology, communication sciences, anthropology, etc. Among the most important names are Guerreiro Ramos, Maria Aparecida Silva Bento, Lourenço Cardoso, Lia Vainer Schucman, Liv Sovik, Edith Piza, César Rossatto, Verônica Gesser, Lúcio Otávio Alves Oliveira, Camila Moreira, Geni Nuñez, Ana Helena Passos and Wilson Conceição, in addition to others.

The next section will be dedicated to presenting aspects of whiteness that justify its inclusion as a unit of analysis in the relations of power within the international system, and that are connected to the silence and selective blindness regarding race in the study of IR: the concept of narcissistic pacts of whiteness created by Maria Aparecida Bento. The choice of this author is owed not only to the groundbreaking aspect of her work, but also for the potentialities of her thought for interpreting international relations.

3 WHITENESS AS POWER AND ITS NARCISSISTIC PACTS

A first relevant point worth highlighting is that debates about whiteness in Brazil are a product of Black movements. As previously mentioned, certain names mark the introduction of such an issue in national struggle agendas, like Abdias Nascimento, Fernando Góes, Guerreiro Ramos, Cida Bento, Cuti, Luis Silva, etc. Those works considered paradigmatic are, without a doubt, *Social Pathology of the Brazilian White* (1957) by Guerreiro Ramos – a participant of the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (Black Experimental Theater) – in which he innovates with the conception of “white-as-topic”, and the thesis *Narcissistic pacts in racism: whiteness and power in companies and in the public sector* (2002b) a work in which Maria Aparecida Bento, or Cida Bento, an activist in the Black movement in São Paulo, presents the concept of narcissistic pacts.

Second, bringing debate to the institutional dimension, it becomes necessary to emphasize the correlation between modernity, racial hierarchies and academic institutions. One of the features of modernity is the creation and performance of the ideas of “white” and inferior racial “others.” The glorification of reason, placed as an attribute exclusive to whites, occurs hand in hand with the objectification of Blacks. This process was instrumental for colonial invasion and Atlantic trafficking, as reification was a condition for the sale of human beings in the international market. The figuration of the Black person as object was a process that reached all sectors of modern life, and higher education institutions occupied a prominent position in this architecture. Academic spaces were transformed into the home of reason, of the intelligentsia, the only valid site for production of knowledge, in which researchers used non-whites as objects of study, scrutiny and scalping – which served in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to force the construction of the mythical theses of scientific racism, proposing the intellectual, moral, aesthetic and physical superiority of whites. In universities, the white-scientist-subject x Black-animalized-object-without-reason binary was ratified. As previously discussed, it is after Guerreiro Ramos that the object rebels (CARDOSO, 2014). The Black person, in an act of insubordination to the colonial methodological order, moves to the position of subject and starts naming the white.

Thus, one of the most important dimensions of whiteness is that of power. Lourenço Cardoso claims that “the white person possesses, practically, all power, being white is being power” (CARDOSO, 2010). In his doctoral work, Cardoso considers the white person as the incarnation of power itself. For him, “being white means more than occupying spaces of power. It means the existential geography of power itself” (CARDOSO, 2014, p.17), a power that is routinely evidenced and manifested in practices and discursivities, and across the social fabric.

The affirmation of such power in the historiographical field and in academia is circulated based on a single western version of facts,

spread by a single subject, using artifices to construct the subalternization of the “defeated/other.” According to Cardoso (2014), “History is an intellectual instrument for exercising power over others,” and one of the manifestations of whites’ power is that they “tell the history of the other” to legitimize their actions and objectives. For Cardoso, “Your Honor, the white person” is the “lord of history” himself; he can speak about him and the other. He is the narrator and main character of western history, which he calls universal. In this manner, “he constructs and amplifies his power over all others.” The official version of history “does not make sense to the greater majority of humanity.” This may be seen in the narratives of mainstream theoreticians in International Relations, in the history of the international environment that became commonly presented as the true version.

Whiteness as “being power and being in power” (CARDOSO, 2010) is manifested geographically too. The cartography of power is white. The white person, especially the cis-heterosexual-male one, is almost an omnipresent being in that they are in all spaces of power in all international instances; “the white person is found everywhere disguised as national and global, etc.,” even if using the strategy of making their position of command invisible. The disguise is “an efficient strategy so as not to be questioned.”

The era of power in the hands of the white racial group, the “whitecene,” beginning with modernity, has been presented as timeless. This power is consolidated “beyond a brief circumstantial period”, as was the case of the Barack Obama government, in which a Black man was president of the United States only for a short amount of time (CARDOSO, 2014). White power is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, invading material and symbolic territories. Considering this, Cardoso recommends that research in the social sciences center on the power that whiteness embodies in order to understand power relations. Study of the epidermalized nature of power is urgent in academia.

Cida Bento, a PhD in psychology and activist, questions the white racial group, denouncing the strategies, dynamics for maintenance of

power and hidden benefits of its convenient invisibility. One of the most important foci of her attention since 1994, whether in her studies or in her wide empirical experience in institutions, is “the silence, omission and distortion around the place white people occupy in Brazilian race relations” (2002, p. 2). She thus delved into the reasons for silence regarding what has been termed whiteness and into the symbolic appropriation that such a group has been historically conducting, reinvigorating its self-esteem and self-conception as a standard for humanity and producing, as a consequence, the legitimation of economic, political and social supremacy. To the same extent, then, that the group keeps silent over its material and symbolic privileges, there is a sort of selective blindness, a refusal to look at oneself as part of relations of power, every time one is called to responsibility.

Pacts of power and white institutionalism

In her PhD thesis in psychology at Universidade de São Paulo, Cida Bento develops a case study of the actions of Human Resources managers in worker selection processes. She found that white managers occupying HR positions generally selected white candidates, even when non-white candidates had literacy levels or skills equal or superior to those of the white ones. Based on psychoanalysis, she concludes that there is a loyalty to the group. The idea of belonging to a group is an essential analytical factor, given that whiteness, acting as a politics of common interest, identifies whiteness as a criterion for preference and choice. She states that notions of group and privilege are fundamental to the theory of discrimination as interest. Acquisition and perpetuation of a group’s advantages, intentionally or not, are drivers for racial discrimination. The latter, then, may be caused by prejudice, or it may also have social and psychological motivations, such as defending one’s privileges. This leads to the conclusion that inequalities and racism are founded, too, on psychosocial factors (BENTO, 2002).

Racism as ideology was an invention of white elites to conquer, acquire riches through pillage of territories, resources and exploitation of labor, and to obtain the advantages of its racial and patriarchal capitalism (GONZALEZ, 1988; MUNANGA, 2004; GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1957; BENTO, 2002). The narrative constructed to justify such advances was the supposed existence of a problem that would be the categorization of Blacks itself. These discursivities laid the foundations for public policies aimed at whitening Brazil, as well as international policies of development, fight against poverty, and promotion of human rights initiated by multilateral institutions. White raciality starts to determine the ways of being in the world and viewing it. The group that dominates and constructs itself as the norm symbolically appropriates this performance to conquer and legitimate its economic, political and social supremacy. Consequently, there is an investment, conscious or not, in the staging of a problematic-Black, responsible for their own discrimination, for socioeconomic disadvantages and difficulties in accessing rights and more decent positions in the social structure.

The author reveals that the need for social belonging and emotional ties encourage the subject to promote investments in the group and its values, as a form of investing in their own self-image, given that our self-identifications are perceived collectively. As a result, by protecting one's own group, those that do not belong are excluded, in an act of evading moral commitment and psychologically drawing away from those that are performed as unworthy of compassion, mercy and humanity. A threefold chain is then established: stigmatization of the morally excluded group as the losing part; omission regarding violence exerted against that group; and, finally, silence over the agents that promote/benefit from that exclusion. Thus, the silence and deturpation of whites' place has narcissistic roots in self-preservation, provided with grandiose investments in the staging of a self-image as a standard for humanity, and made potent by the idealization of an "other" based on fear which is ultimately the fear "of oneself in the depths of the unconscious" (BENTO, 2002, p. 7).

Pointing to oneself as an archetype is a narcissistic act and attacking the “other” for the mistakes one either does not wish to admit, or does not wish to see in oneself so as not to corrupt an ideal model is part of a process of projection, of constructing the “other” based on oneself⁸ (BENTO, 2002, p.6-7). Narcissism, according to the Freudian perspective, is “the expression of love for oneself [...] as an element that works for preservation of the individual and generates an aversion to what is strange, different” (BENTO, 2002, p. 31-32). Frantz Fanon (2008) and, later, Grada Kilomba (2019) also described these dynamics of fabrication of an “other” as antagonist of the “I.” Kilomba writes that:

The *Black subject* becomes, then, a canvas for projection of that which the *white subject* is afraid to recognize about himself, in this case: the violent thief, the idle and wicked criminal. Such dishonorable aspects, whose intensity causes extreme anxiety, guilt and shame, are projected to the outside as a means of escaping them (KILOMBA, 2019, p. 37).

Cida Bento shows how an example of fear in group behavior throughout history is the elites’ dread regarding the dispossessed, as part of a process of projection and rejection that is not expressed only on an individual level. In this scenario, any crimes and vices are ascribed to the groups that suffer discrimination. Because of that, borders, hygienization practices, and policies for security, management of bodies and death for the “others” are conceived (BENTO, 2002; MBEMBE, 2018b, 2020).

⁸ “These two processes, having oneself as a universal model and projecting onto the other those human dimensions considered negative, are processes that under certain aspects may be seen as absolutely normal in the development of individuals up to a certain age. The former is associated with narcissism and the latter with projection. However, in the context of race relations, they reveal a more complex side because they seek to justify, legitimate the idea of one group’s superiority over another and, consequently, legitimate inequalities, undue appropriation of concrete and symbolic assets, and the maintenance of privileges” (BENTO, 2002, p. 35).

Bento thus identified what she called “narcissistic pacts in racism” or “narcissistic pacts of whiteness” in social/racial relations occurring in public and private institutions, sustaining racism and perpetuating inequalities. These pacts are complex agreements of protection, self-preservation, mutual aid and reward, encompassing practices mobilized by historically defined racial presuppositions, destined to safeguard hegemonic positions in the socioeconomic pyramid and racial benefits. These tacit, inter-group and unconscious, though not random or accidental, practices are repeated in everyday life and feed, through sophisticated mechanisms, an unfair social architecture in which they raise certain subjects to sites of privilege. Pacts are the ways in which agents act to uphold the structure. The most remarkable aspects of the pacts derive from that: silence, omission, negation and reproduction of systematic discriminatory practices to obtain or keep privileges (BENTO, 2002, 2020).

Silence and blindness are associated with a policy of common interests that impacts the economic sphere and with the maintenance of concrete and symbolic interests. There is no accountability, no reparations given either to Indigenous groups or Blacks for “appropriation of another group’s labor for four centuries” (2002, p. 3). The pact exempts whites from the social construction of racism and from self-questioning their historical role, as well as benefits that have been inherited and continue to be preserved through alliances, even if white people may be victims of other modes of oppression, such as sexism, ageism, classism and ableism, for instance.

Therefore, as mentioned above, whiteness needs to be understood as an ideological complex entrenched in the social structure; for this reason, it cannot be identified with an individual, as it is not encapsulated in a subject or phenotype. It is a socio-historical construct that affects subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and is part of the economic structure (GORDON, 1995; GONZALEZ, 1988; ROBINSON, 2018; FAUSTINO, 2020; FANON, 2008). Colonial alienation, as Fanon teaches us, invades the fields of the psyche and sociabilities, becoming a component of a

much larger process of domination, of capitalist relations of production. The social genesis of colonialism and (FANON, 2008; FAUSTINO, 2020, p. 39) encompasses both the production of identities and social sites, of meanings for the world, and it also includes economic relations of domination which, in turn, affect the creation of institutions and the preservation of epidermalized sites of power (FANON, 2008). Understanding the collective dimension of whiteness is essential to focus on structural and not only individual responses to the system.

Psychoanalysis explains the dynamics of race relations and unveils subjective processes that converge to sustain structural racism throughout history. According to Cida Bento (2002, p. 39), “fear and projection may be at the genesis of processes that stigmatize groups, seeking to legitimate the perpetuation of inequalities, the creation of institutional policies of exclusion and even genocide.”

Narcissistic love is directed to equals, appreciated as a deposit of virtues, according to a model based on oneself (BENTO, 2002). She writes that “narcissistic love is related to identification, as much as narcissistic hatred is to unidentification” and, therefore, “the object of our narcissistic love is our equal [...] on the other hand, the target of our narcissistic hatred is the other, the different one” (BENTO, 2002, p.14). According to this logic, those who identify as white will employ mechanisms to protect themselves and their equals from those who will be targeted by their narcissistic hatred, that is, those seen as holders of evil (BENTO, 2002). This subjective exercise may be externalized rationally through the production of theories that underpin concrete actions of discrimination and violence, such as scientific racism, which orientated the supposed “civilizing mission” of whites to foster the “progress” of “savage” and “backward” peoples of Africa and Asia. In contemporary times, it is present in the actions of multilateral institutions and hegemonic states for promoting peace, development and human rights.

In 1992, Bento started to develop her analyses of institutions with regard to racism and sexism, a topic that, in the United States,

started to emerge in the 1960s. She notes that institutions are not only founded by narcissistic pacts, but also regulate and disseminate them (BENTO, 2022).

The interests and worldviews of the groups that occupy and intend to continue in sites of power are manifested in institutional structures. The modus operandi of these instances comprises methodologies, rules, processes, work instruments and selection processes that operate silently to choose people the dominant group identifies with. Such mechanisms work “systematically to transmit the group’s centuries-old heritage,” a phenomenon Bento calls narcissistic pacts (BENTO, 2022).

Nevertheless, public and private institutions regulate and disseminate ways of functioning that not only homogenize a given system of values, but also standardize the profile of those occupying positions of power – in all fields, that profile is mostly cisgender, white and male, so that the hierarchy of relations of domination that has been designed for centuries by the developers of capitalism is maintained. The perpetuation of whiteness in time and space materializes through non-verbalized pacts of complicity between white people, functioning in various types of institutions and seeking the maintenance of privileges (BENTO, 2020, p. 18).

Pacts, due to their everyday nature, translate into institutional racism and are disguised through slogans of neutrality and objectivity, which are manipulated to conceal prejudices and discriminations practiced by way of a psychological distancing device marked by the lack of moral commitment to the people excluded by the group and deprived of their rights. Whiteness, by placing those it considers weak outside its moral universe, feels authorized to be unfair and even perverse. The forms that the exclusion of non-whites takes on in institutions are very similar, but they are systematically denied or silenced. In that direction, Cida Bento considers that these pacts possess “a component of narcissism and self-preservation, as if what is ‘different’ threatened that which is ‘normal,’ ‘universal.’ This feeling of dread and fear is at

the essence of prejudice, of representations of the other and how we react to that other” (BENTO, 2020, p. 18).

These everyday practices, regardless of intention, and not endorsed by all whites, turn organizations into perverse and illegitimate environments, as they directly affect certain groups. White over-representation in institutions is responsible for race and gender inequality, as well as for Black and Indigenous under-representation and genocide (BENTO, 2022).

In societies disfigured by racism, white overrepresentation in positions of power in public and private institutions related to finance, education, health, safety, etc. has material and symbolic dimensions, performing racially hierarchized subjectivities and positionalities. The epidermalization of spaces of power also operates to keep the shameful acts committed by the dominant groups’ ancestors hidden, in order to facilitate maintenance of the status quo which, in turn, is “enjoyed by new generations as the group’s merit, as if they had nothing to do with anti-humanitarian acts committed in the period of slavery, which corresponds to 4/5 of the country’s history” (BENTO, 2022, p. 120-1).

The discursivity of merit in institutions legitimizes white economic, political and social supremacy at the national and international levels. The abundant heritage left by colonizer ancestors strengthens the self-esteem and self-conception of white peoples as the “winning, competent, beautiful, chosen to rule group” (p. 121). The hygienization of history and the forgery of facts reconstructed in a positive light by a segment of the population facilitates enjoyment of that heritage, bolsters its assets and ensures its transmission to coming generations.

Bringing the topic to the field of IR, it may be noticed that the concept of narcissistic pacts has great applicability in several areas, especially in analysis of international institutionalism, as it contributes useful resources to interrogate the forms of acquiring and exerting power in the system, under the light of different rationalities and hermeneutics. Discourses, norms and institutional practices form a machinery that operates the racial-gendered capitalist system and

marks the symbolic and institutional continuities of colonial relations of domination (SILVA, K., 2021; FANON, 2008; MEMMI, 1985).

It is worth stressing that not all people subscribe to the pact, even if all of them benefit from racism to a certain extent⁹. It is also important to mention that white individuals are multifaceted beings, as previously mentioned, and that in this site of power there are hierarchies and internal struggles for power within the group, crossed by social markers of oppression such as class, gender and sexuality, as asserted by Lia Schucman in her 2012 doctoral thesis. Lourenço Cardoso also demonstrates how such hierarchies are also constructed in terms of nationality, as, for instance, an English white person is seen as superior to a Portuguese one, and a Brazilian person seen as white here is not recognized as such in metropolitan contexts.

In the range of whiteness there are racist people who affirm identity construction as a mechanism for supremacy, but there are also anti-racist ones, those who acknowledge the existence of racism, question their racial privileged and engage in the anti-racist struggle. This debate is essential to understand the far-right's growth around the world and the re-significations of colonialism in contemporary times, as a reaction against progressive movements. After the death of George Floyd, racial issues gained more prominence in the media and, according to Cardoso, the existence of a third group, which he calls "racist anti-racist whites:" a segment of whiteness that, even though acknowledging racism and calling itself anti-racist in public, is not so in practice, as it does not question its own privileges, omits itself in opportunities to play

⁹ According to Lia Vainer Schucman, white subjects may be anti-racist, but whiteness cannot be said to be anti-racist as it, being a social position, configures itself as racism, given that it is constituted based on an idea of superiority founded on the notion of race formulated in the 19th century. All white people benefit from racism in Brazil. They receive privileges passively at birth, but exercise the legitimation of whiteness when distributing benefits among the group, for instance: when they reinforce a white ideal of beauty, when they attribute the choice of white candidates to their competence, when they state that the idea of civilization is Europe. Available on: @okingaofficial

an anti-racist role, defends meritocracy via the imposition of class as a unit of analysis regarding social inequalities, among other behaviors. These people restage racist actions in institutions daily.

Considering the social genesis of racism (FANON, 2008; GORDON, 1995; FAUSTINO, 2020), the concepts and notions proposed by critical whiteness studies surely go beyond studies about social relations and domestic organizations, and have an enormous potential of applicability to all areas affected by race relations and hierarchies, as is the case of international relations in their entirety, encompassing the teaching, research, and extension triad, which will be explored in the next section.

4 CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES: IMPACTING TEACHING, RESEARCH AND EXTENSION IN IR

CWS may bear relevant contributions to teaching, research and extension in international relations, especially in the context of a country like Brazil, where racism constitutes a “cultural neurosis” (GONZALEZ, 1988). It is worth remembering that Brazil was a laboratory for theories about race conceived in Europe, as Lilia Schwarcz (1993) writes in *O espetáculo das raças: cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil, 1870-1930* (*The Spectacle of Races: Scientists, Institutions and the Racial Question in Brazil, 1870-1930*). That is why Law 10.639/03 makes compulsory the inclusion across curricula of education for ethnic-racial relations, which includes “the struggle of Blacks in Brazil, Brazilian Black Culture, and the Black person in the formation of Brazilian society, recovering the Black contribution to the social, economic and political areas regarding Brazilian history.”

Additionally, in this society disfigured by structural racism, it is our duty to educate for all possibilities of being and existing, as well as educate for resistance, making use of epistemologies of combat. Educational processes that do not give visibility to racial dynamics support

the formation of professionals alienated from national and global reality. In that sense, including whiteness as a category of analysis and placing oneself in a listening position with regard to critical whiteness studies is fundamental to understand socio-phenotypical structures, the modus operandi of power systems, and confront blindness and silence about racism in the formative processes of IR.

The need to revise disciplinary contents, course plans, pedagogical projects and curricula is, too, a response to the consumption of pre-packaged or consular IR, borrowing the terms used by Guerreiro Ramos in his critique to Brazilian sociology in the 1950s, which, in his view, did not engage with the national reality, instead assimilating foreign intellectual production without restrictions, as universal truth. The study of IR in Brazil must be mediated through our reality, and it must bear the face of the people.

CWS encourage us to observe the ways in which narratives, institutions, practices and norms continue to be articulated in order to uphold colonial hierarchies in contemporary times. Peripheral or metropolitan educational institutions have been instrumentalized as crucial devices of the colonial enterprise, observing all its mutations and re-actualizations. It was precisely in modern universities that the bases of so-called scientific racism were founded, beginning especially with the conduction of research which positioned racialized bodies as objects of scrutiny, as is well described by Guerreiro Ramos and Lourenço Cardoso. In the same direction, Nilma Lino Gomes (2012, p. 730) writes that “the colonial educational and civilizing enterprise has always been pervaded by the idea of race.”

Modern rationality is the norm that governs the field of IR. According to Denise Ferreira da Silva (2019), one of the onto-epistemological pillars of modernity is separability. The modern racial-gendered grammar is founded on binary representations that separate mind/body, reason/emotion, subject/object, culture/nature, man/animal, man/woman, white/non-white, civilized/savage, attributing superiority to the first components in the pairs. This hierarchizing

logic mobilizes chains of association to inferiorize those who have been racialized as non-white and connect them to supposedly savage geographies which, as a consequence, should be controlled. The inferiorized body is thus inescapably tied to an equally colonizable cartography. Such conceptions support the mythology of scientific racism, formulated to justify the conquest of whites over non-whites, as the latter are performed as bearing traits like savagery, irrationality, aggression, backwardness, ignorance, ugliness, etc.

The binary logic is connected to associative chains that form the epistemic-legal-political-economic architecture of expropriation. They fabricate identities and positionalities. The binary grammar mobilizes discourses, norms, institutions and practices to perform the subject and its racial “others” constructed via ontological negation (SILVA, D., 2019).

Separability, negotiated by the instruments of coloniality – like international law and IR – fragments the world of whites and non-whites through the articulation between subject, space and time, according to Denise Ferreira da Silva (SILVA, D., 2019; SILVA, K., 2023). In a reductive manner, whiteness is conceived “as a descriptor of kindness” (SILVA, D., 2019), of innocence, wisdom and prudence, while Blackness as a performative category becomes a descriptor of people (violent, criminal, idle, wicked), of the places they inhabit (primitive, unorganized, underdeveloped, poor, violent, an antithesis of progress) and of the world which becomes the true “Subject’s shop,” a place where only the Subject may legislate, judge, manage subjectivities, intersubjectivity, and all power relations inscribed in the capitalist system (SILVA, D., 2019). In this large workshop he is conferred the “burden”¹⁰ of civilizing, promoting development,

¹⁰ In 1899, English poet Rudyard Kipling wrote “The White Man’s Burden,” in which he ascribed to White men the responsibility of conquering and civilizing savage peoples. The poem became a symbol of imperial/racial/patriarcal relations of power between colonizers and the colonized.

applying his notion of human rights and, finally, of saving the world. I thus claim that international relations, like international law, articulate discursivities that promote racially hierarchized subjectivities and positionalities, with race functioning as a category that orientates relations of oppression in the system of domination that racism is. That means that identities are constructed in contexts of power, and race guides readings of the world and way of acting on it.

In Brazil, Black intellectuals introduced racial issues in research, teaching and extension in IR. As regards teaching, some programs have created specific courses about race and international relations, like those at UFSC¹¹ in 2016 and UNILAB in 2017, but advances must be made to discuss whiteness and racism not only in one course, but in all courses that form the main axis of the curriculum, given that both patriarchy and racism are structural.

The modern racial ontology intersects the entire formative composition of IR. Because of that, concepts, issues, analytical tools, theses and arguments from CWS unveil a new landscape which enables a questioning of power, denouncing the absence of the category of whiteness in the assessment of structures. Horizons for application of Laws 10.639/03 and 11645/08 are thus revealed, as well as horizons for anti-racist action in terms of teaching, research and extension. This allows for understanding and rewriting of various contents related to curricular components – in a cross-curricular fashion – that are encompassed in the main axis, following the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for Undergraduate Programs, especially: Theories of International Relations; Security, Strategic Studies and Defense; Foreign Policy; History of International Relations; International Political Economy; Political Science; International Law and Human Rights; International Institutions, Regimes and Organizations.

¹¹ In the IR program at UFSC, a course titled “Race and International Relations” was created in 2016 and the course “Gender Politics, Race and International Relations” was created at UNILAB in 2018.

Keeping in mind what was discussed in the previous sections, I propose considering certain aspects about power for research purposes and inclusion in IR curricula: whiteness as a site in the structures of power; narcissistic pacts as strategies of solidarity for maintenance of a group in power, with international law and multilateral institutions being explicit examples of how, when, why and to what end agreements within the group are made; forms of wielding power, whether soft or hard¹², that is, via the use of brute force through security apparatuses, or via strategies of persuasion reflected in consensus and mediations; race as a category aimed at guiding power relations in the system; pacts of masculinity co-constituting pacts of whiteness.

As regards History of IR, Political Science, and Theories of IR, the inclusion of whiteness in its international dimension as an analytical tool allows for a racialization of the West's hegemony and an understanding of how the latter is grounded on the pathologization and genderization of difference, as well as on the racial causes of wars and peace; furthermore, it gives visibility to the role mainstream theories in IR play as instruments in service of hegemonic structures.

Robert Vitalis confirms a view according to which IR are a white-centered field of study, with “white political scientists teaching in white departments and publishing in white periodicals” (VITALIS, 2015, p. 13). IR, in their dominant version, constitute the apotheosis of the colonizer's narratives of victory, while narrators, main characters and heroic scenes reveal the western toxic and phallogocentric single perspective. In fact, only the subject embodied in a figuration of the white, European, bourgeois, Christian, cis-heterosexual man, considered the bearer of reason, reflection, discernment, judgment, holding elevated morals to legislate, judge and theorize IR. He is the subject/agent capable of ruling all spheres of national public life and, internationally, is an ambassador, savior

¹² I intentionally employ these terms created by whiteness in the United States.

and paladin of civilization¹³. The pacts of white cis-masculinity are revealed in all arenas of power, including epistemically, so the study of theories, whether critical or not, must take this fact into account.

The concept of narcissistic pacts enables us to problematize and dislocate the foundations of this Eurocentric international system and IR. The modern nation-state is an extremely violent institution, created by racist, classist and genderized pacts (MILLS, 1997) meant to govern most of the world, formed by populations that have been racialized for control of their labor and territories. The modern nation-state is an agent of the colonial enterprise. Its nature is as imperial as it is national and international. The national state, in fact, emerges at the same time as the imperial state, and this bears an impact in terms of space and time. Sovereignty, then, starts to be understood as an attribute that extends beyond the frontiers of a given territory; similarly, the national state's chronology of foundation must be understood as the same as that of the (modern) international environment, and not prior to it. Additionally, the treaties of Westphalia, like those resulting from the Berlin Conference constitute, as tools of international law, narcissistic pacts aimed at the acquisition and maintenance of power and wealth. Westphalia would be a milestone of the modern system, not of the international one because the latter *per se* had existed long before. Imperialism, in fact, was at least as relevant for the development of international relations and international law as the Peace of Westphalia, reputed to be the most important event for these disciplines.

IR are narratives of power, more specifically of white power. Like international law, they are a technology that emerges in service of imperialism and colonialism. Indeed, their institutionalized origins

¹³ “The European bourgeois woman was not understood as his complement, but as someone that reproduced race and capital through sexual purity, passivity, and being tied to the service of the white bourgeois European male.” (LUGONES, p. 936, 2014). The Black woman, for modern thought is the antithesis of humanity, as represented by the cis-heterosexual white subject. This is why race and gender are categories which co-constitute modernity.

have much more to do with the Berlin Conference, which partitioned Africa, than with World War I. It is thus imperative to revisit and problematize the founding myth of IR, which confines study of the causes of WWI to disagreements within European territory. The studies of Du Bois show that the power disputes between white European states in the African and Asian theatres of operation were at the center of conflict, and that racial domination was a dimension that constituted world politics at the time. European expansion in other continents is related to the expansion of white supremacy. The Berlin agreements are significant examples of narcissistic pacts in all their components.

CWS have another advantage: not being only one more theoretical perspective among many others. Its transformative potential resides in presenting different prisms through which to see re-actualizations of hegemonies, emerging with fads such as, for instance, the so-called “Global South,” a construct manipulated by elites for their maintenance in power through a discourse that claims to be against the system. The concept of “Global South” is a trap to the extent that it intends to homogenize the Southern Hemisphere, hiding “internal colonialism” (HAYWOOD, 1948) in peripheral countries and the “color line” (DU BOIS, 1915), which defines who is in “the living room with its crystal chandeliers, its velvet rugs, satin pillows” and who is “in a spare room” like “an unused object” (JESUS, 2014), that is, who lies within the zone of being, and who has been condemned to the zone of non-being (FANON, 2008). The “Global South” project, in addition to de-racializing debate, undermines the radical character of counter-systemic movements such as Third-Worldism, instead placing academic elites as voices in unison in the region and righteous defenders of critical discourses while actually marginalizing voices and bodies. On the other hand, the binary Global North/South division conceals movements of insurrection and counter-systemic agendas of struggle existing within the so-called North. For that reason, when referring to our region, instead of Global South I prefer to operate the concept of *América*

Ladina created by Lélia Gonzalez, an epistemological proposition that recovers the history of struggle and resistance of the peoples victimized by colonization against violence, in order to think “from within” Indigenous and Black frameworks, moving away from interpretations focused on modern thought which disqualify otherness.

Certainly not everything can be interpreted according to the tenets of CWS, as no theory is complete, but such a contribution must be introduced into the catalogue of IR theories because it manages to explain important topics like power, development, humanitarian interventions, human rights, international conflict and cooperation, center-periphery relations, among others.

In courses of the Regimes, Organizations and Institutions axis, the pacts of whiteness are tools that demonstrate soft power and racial solidarity for maintaining hegemonies built on negotiation, establishment of regulations, dissemination of values, agendas, and the epidermalization of sites of power. As discussed in another paper (SILVA, K., 2021), the Atlantic slave trade was an international regime, perhaps modernity’s first. It was made from arrangements encompassing strategies of cooperation, international norms, as well as public and private organizations serving trafficking, profit and, consequently, capitalism.

Regimes, norms and institutions are arrangements of western white male power. The liberal discursivity that advocates for cooperation via institutions and/or legal devices in order to propagate liberal peace is a trick by the dominant class to domesticate those it subalternizes and conduct racial management. As regards the creation of institutional agendas, representation of a biologized “other” rests on the idea that nations of the so-called North define strategies and nations in the South have needs, stemming from a mentality according to which politics are produced in only one space while, in another, like a theater of operations, control is exerted.

Another example of narcissistic pact is the initial Rooseveltian formulation of a United Nations collective security system based

on a metaphor of three police officers: United States, France, and United Kingdom, later expanded to five. In this staging whiteness, in addition to managing, legislating and judging the world also has police-like functions, protecting its interests in the territories it usurps and activating international law and organizations to uphold the farce of promoting world peace and security.

As I have argued in another paper (SILVA, K., 2023), modern international law produced, in tandem with other colonial tools, an intricate scheme of identities, articulating cis-masculinity and race as determining axes for the construction of an otherness that, associated with the absence of rationality, is liable to colonization and control, to custody (DOTY, 1996). Public international law was engineered to validate slavery, the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, functioning as a worldwide technology of racial governance.

The modern binary lexicon of public international law operates associative chains that stage identities and positionalities. A racialized, animalized identity has been performed as an allegory of “an Other of the Subject who has already attained consciousness” (SILVA, D., 2019, p. 107), and because of that it would not have the individual autonomy for self-governance, something that in the context of law (and IR) corresponds to the absence of legal personality and sovereign authority. By association, the sovereign subject is endowed with international responsibilities of tutelage over those incapable of self-determination. This is the rationality that led to the League of Nations system of mandates, the administration of non-autonomous territories and the United Nations Trusteeship system.

In the same direction, ontological negation of the racialized being (absence of autonomy) is expressed in terms of an absence of sovereignty at the level of domestic and multilateral institutions. In other words: the objectified are neither political subjects, nor subjects of internal or international law. This is why African states’ struggles for national liberation were also struggles for emancipation, for humanization of those condemned to live in the zone of non-being (FANON,

2008). This is the hermeneutics of articles 2, 4, 73–85 of the Charter of the United Nations. The consecrated principle of self-determination in the treaty which instituted the United Nations did not include the plea of colonized peoples; because of that, the Charter of the United Nations results from a narcissistic pact of whiteness. It is a contract of the same nature as the Westphalia treaties and the treaties signed at the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885. Still in the context of the UN, the Statute of the International Court of Justice makes evident in its articles 9 and 48 that the judges who will compose the Court shall be the representatives “**of the highest forms of civilization**” and that decisions will be guided by general principles of law, recognized by “**civilized nations**” (emphasis added).

Considering what is discussed above, it may be observed that the binary racial grammar fabricates racially marked subjectivities, intersubjectivities and positionalities. That is, discursivities explicit and implicit in international legal and political arrangements stage a colonizable “other” and determine positions of subordination and superiority in the power relations at work in the system. Public international law, as a mechanism which derives from narcissistic arrangements, works as an international security device, as it constructs procedures for controlling bodies and territories, and consequently for facilitating the distribution of resources among capitalist elites in central nations.

White saviorism, one of the faces of imperialism, has been used as justification for wars and interventions supposedly in the name of universalist human rights discourses, propelling the arms industry, the world economy and gathering solidarities. In addition to that, the association between imperialism, cooperation, wars and racism must be established. Rosa Luxemburg stated in 1911 that Europeanism and the idea of a European union were always connected, openly or subliminally, to an imperialistic offensive against races deemed inferior, Asian and Black. According to her, “the solution of European unity within the capitalist social order may objectively mean, in the political

sense, only a racial colonial war” (LUXEMBURG, 1986, p. 256). That is to say, an overt version of the pact.

In contact with law and international organizations, the Security and Defense course components may profit from dialogue with Critical Whiteness Studies, given that the latter contribute to understanding that control of power and privileges of whiteness in the international sphere have always been connected to mechanisms for the handling of violence, unequally directed at those on the subordinate side of the relation. Aversion to those who have been animalized is the foundation under construction of borders, the use of ostensive security actions and the practice of necrogovernance masked by megaprojects for fostering development, human rights, a supposed construction of peace and migration control. Physical and symbolic borders delimit resources prone to usurpation, and labor that may be explored for the “good” functioning of gendered racial capitalism.

Security arrangements, cooperation agreements and legal tenets paint the color line (DU BOIS, 1925), separating zones of humanity and protection from zones of subhumanity, in which death and violence are not only permitted, but also promoted for the civilizatory enterprise to succeed and the “good citizen’s” peace to be ensured. In such zones, racial hard power is practiced to the fullest for, after all “racial violence is widely codified in the language of borders and security” (MBEMBE, 2020). Capitalist whiteness, holding biopower and necropower (MBEMBE, 2018b), life and death, makes use of sophisticated technologies to control biological bodies, to discipline them and reorganize them into multiple heteropatriarchal hierarchies. Mbembe continues to explain that biophysical elimination of the “other” whose pure and simple existence is read as a threat to the life and safety of the universal human being “is one of the imaginations of sovereignty” (2020, p. 128-129).

An emblematic example connecting the aspects mentioned by Cida Bento about the construction of pacts – such as empathy between members of the white group and moral exclusion of those who do not

belong to it – with migration and the building of walls became clear with the war that began in Ukraine in 2022. National and international media widely reported selective global solidarity with Ukrainian refugees and disregard for Black populations living in the country.

In the field of Foreign Policy, I draw from another paper (SILVA, K., 2022) in which I explored how Brazil employed all instruments of its external policy to present itself as a tolerant nation building a unique model of sociability, and a result of a benevolent and soft Portuguese colonization. Such a hygienized and positive self-representation was always used in an attempt to form pacts with the administrators of international capitalism in order to bring advantages for white elites in the country. The Brazilian state mobilized discursive and visual resources as instruments of external policy, trying to appear in multi-lateral institutions as a nation promoting consensus and, therefore, as an agent of peace, mediating international conflicts and being worthy of acquiring responsibilities in collective security schemes.

Furthermore, since the Brazilian debut in the international context, the administrators of Brazilian external policy always intended to show the country as white and civilized, governed by descendants of Europeans who mastered the art of neutralizing racial conflict. Such a narrative, in fact, was debunked by researchers from the UN's Unesco project in the second half of the twentieth century. For a long time, Brazilian external policy agents feared that the country would be mistaken for a nation with a Black majority and, because of that, there was for centuries a refusal to promote alliances with the African continent; instead, many advances, including legal ones, were made to form pacts with the colonizer, such as the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Consultation, established with Portugal for mutual support regarding decisions in the international arena. Moreover, the state invested heavily both monetarily and legally to attract white immigrants that would serve a project of national whitening.

Other uses of external policy have historically been the silencing of international appeals by Black and Indigenous communities,

as well as denial of the genocide of Black and Indigenous populations (NASCIMENTO, 1978). Migration policies in an international perspective, including the creation of affirmative action policies to attract European immigrants, were an important agent in the structuring of racism (SILVA, K., 2020; SILVA, K., 2022).

Regarding the area of political economy, one contribution provided by CWS in the notion that the construction of “white” as a racial category “has been patiently constructed in the junction between law and regimes of labor force extortion” (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 88). As Lélia Gonzalez (1988) explains, racism is at the core of capitalism’s organization and development. The dynamics of labor exploitation are mediated by conceptions of race, gender, class, sexualities, and age which, in an imbricated fashion, were conceived to facilitate the expropriation of land and labor. The regime of white supremacy combines class, race, gender and sexualities (BENTO, 2022). Following Bento, capitalism is tied to race as much as to the control of resources and territories since the Atlantic slave trade, and it is reflected in acts of ecocide and genocide of Black and Indigenous populations.

All these agendas connect research and teaching practices engaged in the transformation of structures with extension, and the last point I wish to highlight is related to the latter. The mind-body division also presupposes a dissociation between theory and practice, as if mutual feedback between the two did not exist (CURIEL, 2020). The mind-body, theory-practice separation draws academic thinking away from engaged praxis and activism. This is why intellectual activism (COLLINS, 2013) is inconceivable for science.

Another issue which must be approached is the inclusion of extension in curricula, particularly as regards creation and execution of actions together with the non-academic community. Extension must free itself from the dangers of absorbing the white salvationist set of ideas that cuts across a significant part of curriculum components. Indeed, as previously discussed, messianism orientates colonial epistemic production. Extension must be understood as the affective

encounter with difference for promotion of non-hierarchical dialogues and mutual learning. Extension that is liberating is not made through the messianic action of “the righteous,” considering themselves illuminated beings and representatives of the intelligentsia. Communicative extension is meant to construct collective solutions for social challenges, as Paulo Freire (1985) teaches, given that the university must engage with the reality that mediatizes us through dialogicity and intercommunicability (FREIRE, 1985; SILVA, CASTELAN, 2019). Teaching institutions must accept historical responsibilities, their position as agents producing social transformation, and must question structures of oppression instead of producing or reinforcing vectors of social-racial violence, whether in terms of teaching, research or extension.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The ontology of IR is colonial, racial and cis-gendered, but its convenient blindness prevents it from looking at itself and seeing its own problems. The dominant rationality in the field produces narratives that perform hierarchically classified subjectivities and positionalities in the international system. It conceals the fact that the west’s power is marked by the overlapping articulation of race, class, sexuality and gender, among other markers. That power is white-centered, embodied, cis-heteronormative, preserving itself through agreements and the production of discursivities that glorify central nations and their adventures, measured through a toxic masculinity. Nevertheless, as the conquest of power is never definitive, the maintenance of said power requires daily actions to neutralize or minimize dissent and opposition. Furthermore, as explored above, it is within institutions as sites of disputes for power that racial solidarities are manifested and made concrete, both through unsaid practices aimed toward the protection and preservation of dominant groups and through sanctions against those considered to challenge the status quo.

CWS, as demonstrated, inaugurate a new perspective from which to look at IR. Although a few critical theories already renowned in the field approach issues raised here, such as white hegemony, it is important to note that Du Bois is a pioneer in studies about whiteness and racism as an element of international politics. Cida Bento, in turn, is the first to present the *modus faciendi* of the group dominating structures of power.

In the academic institutional context, calling upon CWS as a perspective of dispute is an appeal to action, to the mobilization of energies and loyalties with the objective of breaking pacts and silences, transforming curricula and institutions. Pedagogies, methodologies, and epistemologies are crucial instruments to dispute narratives, sites, territories and futures. Fights for territory, whether in terms of possession or presence, are part of racialized peoples' centuries-old grammar of struggle. In that direction, Beatriz Nascimento calls for repossession. "Repossess" is a verb that encompasses spatialities as well as epistemes and the purposes of academia, as academia is not only matter; it is, too, a symbol.

Higher education in its Enlightenment version has served to "uneducated the Black person" (WOODSON, 2018), that is, to discipline, justify racial oppression and alienate those who have been racialized. (Un)education reinforces whiteness as the norm, as a savior of the world, alienates racialized subjects from themselves, their own history, and undermines possibilities of insurgent action mediated by solidarities. Thus, the production of a discourse in IR that questions the whiteness of power, the elements that lie between the lines of white social-racial construction and its hegemonic permanence in institutions, epistemologies, and the social imagination would be a radical transformation.

CWS are a potent tool to advance from the "interracial relations" stage toward international relations in many senses: because they enable problematization of the lack of studies on whiteness and white saviorism in IR; because racializing discussion about power

allows for a deciphering of the complex workings of the presence of whiteness in institutions and demand that the field, academia, and other white-centered institutions look inward and interrogate themselves as a problem, as reproducers of racism, social and economic inequalities; because CWS urge the part of whiteness that sees itself as critical to denounce and dissolve unsaid pacts that sequester humanities; because it aims to unveil, confront and abolish separability as a foundation of “authorized and justified” violence on part of power apparatuses, both internal and international; because it is a way of raising tensions against the violence organized by states/institutions that translates into Black and Indigenous genocide, while exposing the role of whiteness in producing and circulating discursivities of separability (SILVA, D., 2019); and, lastly, because CWS are, above all, an essential foundation for the application of Laws 10.639/03 and 11.645/2008 in classrooms, for the promotion of cognitive justice and inclusion of most of the world population, with agencies and experiences that have been made invisible by the dominant epistemes in the area, much like the injustices that were committed in the name of conquest.

CWS are a useful tool also because, by questioning whiteness, they have the potential to break some of the narcissistic pacts. They may also be used against the degeneration of post-colonial studies (BORBA DE SÁ, 2021) or the ‘gourmetization’ of decoloniality (BALDI, 2019), a recent trend in some sectors of academia which consists of appropriating Black and Indigenous knowledge and agencies while simultaneously de-racializing and omitting the overlapping dimensions of class, gender and race from anti-systemic critical theories.

Finally, our teaching must be re-Orí-ented toward reception, toward disintegrating systems of oppression by activating intervention and liberation processes, toward “repossession” and emancipation. This means confronting power, denouncing silences and selective blindness: it means educating for all possibilities of thinking, being, existing differently, and resisting dehumanization. As Bell Hooks

(2019) teaches us, academia must be a site of reception and affection, but also of indiscipline and transgression.

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