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Bodies and Oppression, Collectives Are the Solution

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates how contemporary dynamics of oppression place the body at the center of biopolitics and how the formation of collectivities constitutes a strategy of resistance and the realization of rights. The research problem consists of understanding how the control of bodies, exercised through legal, political, and social mechanisms, can be challenged by intersectional and decolonial collective practices. The general objective is to analyze the role of the body as a political and legal category in the production of oppression and resistance. The specific objectives are: (i) to examine the relationship between the body and living law in light of the metatheory of fraternal law; (ii) to analyze the body from the perspective of anarchafeminism and intersectionality; and (iii) to understand the transformative potential of collective bodies in constructing counter-hegemonic alternatives. The research adopts a qualitative, theoretical, and transdisciplinary approach, using the hypothetical-deductive method, grounded in references from biopolitics, intersectional feminism, and decolonial theory. The main findings indicate that the body is simultaneously an object of control and a locus of resistance, with collectivity playing a central role in the production of emancipatory practices. It is concluded that collective articulations, particularly from an intersectional perspective, enable the subversion of structures of domination, expanding the possibilities for the realization of rights and social transformation.

Index Terms: Body • Oppression • Collectivity • Biopolitics • Resistance

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Bodies and Oppression, Collectives Are the Solution

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QUALIFICATIONS / ROLES

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Abstract

This article investigates how contemporary dynamics of oppression place the body at the center of biopolitics and how the formation of collectivities constitutes a strategy of resistance and the realization of rights. The research problem consists of understanding how the control of bodies, exercised through legal, political, and social mechanisms, can be challenged by intersectional and decolonial collective practices. The general objective is to analyze the role of the body as a political and legal category in the production of oppression and resistance. The specific objectives are: (i) to examine the relationship between the body and living law in light of the metatheory of fraternal law; (ii) to analyze the body from the perspective of anarchafeminism and intersectionality; and (iii) to understand the transformative potential of collective bodies in constructing counter-hegemonic alternatives. The research adopts a qualitative, theoretical, and transdisciplinary approach, using the hypothetical-deductive method, grounded in references from biopolitics, intersectional feminism, and decolonial theory. The main findings indicate that the body is simultaneously an object of control and a locus of resistance, with collectivity playing a central role in the production of emancipatory practices. It is concluded that collective articulations, particularly from an intersectional perspective, enable the subversion of structures of domination, expanding the possibilities for the realization of rights and social transformation.

Keywords: *Body, Oppression, Collectivity, Biopolitics, Resistance*

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1 Introduction

The issue addressed in this article concerns how chains of oppression place the body at the center of biopolitics, and how its formation into bodies and collectivities is essential for the transformative potential of struggles and the realization of rights. This research is situated within discussions on identity and its relationship with the body, as developed by Michel Foucault, particularly in his understanding of somato-political power within legal and punitive spheres.

This study seeks to analyze how the body, as a living entity, positions itself in relation to oppression and biovigilance. To this end, it aims to understand collective formations and their forms of resistance through the notion of an anarchic and collective body. The research adopts a transdisciplinary perspective and is theoretically grounded in the metatheory of fraternal law developed by Eligio Resta, particularly in relation to the concept of living law.

Intersectionality is employed as a key analytical framework to understand the control of bodies and the ways in which such subjugation can be challenged through collective constructions of mutual support, informed by the anarchafeminist method as articulated by Chiara Bottici. The study aims to contribute to situated critical perspectives, identifying possibilities for constructing forms of resistance capable of subverting the status quo, grounded in notions of human dignity emerging from social struggles. It adopts a transdisciplinary theoretical approach, with a qualitative orientation, enabling a broad epistemological understanding that, through a hypothetical-deductive framework, is anchored in decoloniality as a plural methodological approach.

This article is based on the recognition that contemporary dynamics of oppression are structured through the control of bodies, placing them at the center of biopolitical strategies that traverse law, politics, and social relations. Within this context, the research problem is to understand how the body, as a legal, political, and social category, is simultaneously an object of domination and a potential instrument of resistance, particularly when articulated through collectivities. The investigation seeks to challenge traditional understandings of law and subjectivity, highlighting how mechanisms of biopower operate on bodies marked by intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality, while also opening space for insurgent and counter-hegemonic practices.

Accordingly, the general objective of this study is to analyze the role of the body in the production of oppression and resistance, with emphasis on the transformative potential of collectivities. The specific objectives are: (i) to examine the relationship between the body and living law based on the metatheory of fraternal law; (ii) to analyze the body from the perspective of anarchafeminism and intersectionality; and (iii) to understand the formation of collectivities as a strategy for confronting structures of domination. To achieve these aims, the study adopts a qualitative, theoretical, and transdisciplinary approach, grounded in the hypothetical-deductive method. The methodology is based on a critical and interdisciplinary bibliographic review, articulating contributions from biopolitics, intersectional feminism, and decolonial theories, in

order to construct an analysis that highlights the multiple dimensions of the body as a locus of dispute and social transformation.

In the first section, the article discusses the body from the perspective of living law, exploring the proximity between law and the body, considering that law itself may be understood as having a "body" and, therefore, life, thus reinforcing its grounding within the legal field. Fraternal law is employed to position the body in its defense against biopower, as well as to understand its potential to form communities through the construction of identity.

The second section analyzes the body through the lens of anarchafeminism, situating it within political practice and concrete experiences of resistance, using intersectionality—developed by Black feminist thinkers—as a key analytical tool, in dialogue with anarcho-black perspectives and decolonial approaches.

Finally, the third section examines bodies within collective dynamics, drawing on Eligio Resta's concept of metamorphosis to understand these processes, and exploring examples of collective bodies, further deepened through queer ecology and the connections between bodies and their environments.

2 Body and Living Law

We begin by explaining the relationship between living law and the body, and how it cannot be understood independently of its "soul." Living law, when conceptualizing law through the body, reveals problems arising from both law and politics, particularly those related to decision-making processes in the formulation of laws and public policies. It is also important to highlight the connection between living law and the metatheory of fraternal law, whose assumptions are considered here as a framework for analyzing rights and their effectiveness.

Given the issues posed by law and politics, and considering that living law is linked to the dual dimension of soul and body, it allows for an examination of the concept of incorporation alongside the concept of community:

> When politics and law present themselves as the rules of shared life in the city, they are faced with the alternative of privileging either the body—civil, human, political, in short, the body—or the soul—reason, the universal, form, in short, the anima—thus being compelled to choose between the human being as the measure of all things and the idea of *nomos*. Sovereignty is the locus of the ethical-political where such alternatives are sedimented. The solution indicated by philosophy, and never abandoned thereafter, is that of a law that incorporates the soul into its *soma*. It is only by an apparent paradox that this formulation presents all of this as "in-corporation." From that moment on, the "body" of law will reveal, in all its contours, for better or worse, the history of this coexistence between the body and its soul, or between the soul and its body (Resta, 2008, p. 38).

The incorporation of law becomes evident when politics and law are compelled to choose between the body and the soul, and, as we understand it, the body is chosen as the reference for structuring the system, whether for good or ill. In this context, the body is placed at the center of decision-making processes, giving rise to what may be understood as politics of the body, as well as to those dynamics identified within the scope of biopower. Through new forms of manipulation of the body by law, it is also possible to conceive law as a means of distancing itself from life; yet, in the attempt to reestablish this proximity, living law constitutes itself as a living body, necessary for reconnecting with the real world.

The soul is understood as *arche*, insofar as it is immortal (Resta, 2008, p. 41). By contrast, the body has no fixed limits to life, and its definition remains difficult, especially when it is understood solely in material terms (Resta, 2008, p. 43). Furthermore, the soul expresses its quality as origin—*arche*—when it is, in some way, connected to the body, which underscores the relevance of the body itself (Resta, 2008, p. 43).

Living law, understood as life, does not exhaust itself as law, since life is irreplaceable. This brings it closer to the protection of bodies, particularly in the face of their transformation into bio-objects. It also challenges the reduction of the body to mere biological concreteness—thus medicalized and controllable—introducing instead the notion of a "revenge" of the body against the mind that seeks to subjugate it.

> Rodotà (2006) is also correct in stating that "once again, bodies speak and question society," while, at the same time, society questions its own "bodies." It is precisely there that much of "our time" sees many of its problems crystallize, at times venturing onto slippery terrain where even the idea of a post-human condition is hypothesized—an idea which, like that of the "end of history," tends to resolve itself in naïve paradoxes that lead nowhere other than to narrating the history of the end of history. Far removed from a somewhat crude notion that would reduce human beings to "complacent cattle," the "human, all too human" body once again becomes the site where the problems of life (that "true" life?) take shape (Resta, 2008, p. 38).
>
> The idea of the mind's obedience to the body, understood as "all too human," and grounded in a humanist conception that places the human being at the center of existence, is related to the exclusion of all animals and living beings, leading to a total catastrophe. From this argument, it becomes possible to assert that law traverses the body, incorporating it in order to form its own language, thereby achieving what is termed a relative autonomy. In other words, law becomes partially concrete through the body, enabling transformations and the multiplication of meanings that accompany ideas of practices, strategies, purposes, and norms (Resta, 2008, p. 40).

Thus, it can be understood that, depending on its context, the language of law also changes its signs, thereby protecting itself from other domains, such as medicine; and when used in favor of life, it prevents life from being invaded by the will of power, restraining biopolitics. Once again, within this framework, the body can be understood as its own measure against the afflictions of disciplinary power, even when such power may carry positive meanings (Resta, 2008, p. 44). The naturalization produced by the body of law, through its systematic language that underpins all social constructions, represents the peak of antagonisms, precisely because it operates as a dual mechanism derived from living law (Resta, 2008, p. 46).

This understanding of the body and living law reflects on the problem of identity, linking it to its specificity and its duration over time. Identity largely belongs to the body, as it is through the body that experiences of pain and pleasure are lived, and even more so through its duration as mutable matter, which is not microscopically inert but constantly transforming. This movement also alters the body itself, which in turn reshapes identity, and it is within this dynamic that belonging is constructed through the body (Resta, 2008, p. 50).

In this context, nominalism escapes order and loses ground to the materialized power of law, in which naming becomes as significant as law itself (Resta, 2008, p. 53). When combined with the concept of incorporation, this leads back to the idea that linguistic codes carry power insofar as they reflect upon the body itself and become real, resulting in processes of identification and belonging. Thus, the words produced through such formulations ultimately dictate what should and should not be done with bodies. Here, there is no neutral concept, but rather one that serves to distinguish opposing meanings for the purposes of cognition and subsequent transformation.

The relevance of analyzing the body within living law becomes evident in its practical applications, as it regulates exchanges, imputes actions, and defines values (Resta, 2008, p. 53). The constitution of legal language helps to position law as an organizationally closed yet cognitively open system, identifying itself through its distinction from what is not law, given that this distinction is constructed through the body and, therefore, respects its semantic field (Resta, 2008, p. 54). There is no doubt that the body guides all the processes of law, long before biopolitics came to fully recognize its centrality:

> “The centrality of the body has the unique virtue of increasing, rather than reducing, the complexity of perception, due to the extent of its trajectory, where life is encountered in all its possible meanings, including the most contradictory ones, leading even to the “worlds behind the world” (Resta, 2008, p. 58).

This space of the body within law is grounded in a form of “fantastic metaphysics” that innovates the understanding of the body as composed of two distinct yet compatible dimensions: reality, through the solid exactness of the body, and its fluid discursive construction (Resta, 2008, p. 60). Indeed, through the process of incorporating the body into law, it becomes evident that law acquires and regulates bodily matters from within itself (Resta, 2008, p. 63). This can be understood as an opening of law to the body for its definition; however, law can never fully determine what the body is, except through its symbolic representations, which may carry either positive or negative connotations in expressing their interrelations (Resta, 2008, p. 65).

Living law makes it possible to clearly perceive the encounter between body and law in relation to justice and politics, enabling an understanding of its role in protecting against biopolitics, which specifically takes the living—and therefore mortal—body as the central object of all politics. In other words, there is no politics that is not a politics of bodies, whose historical analysis reveals the different techniques through which power manages the life and death of populations.

Michel Foucault develops the concept of biopolitics to describe the relationship established by power with the social body in modernity. For Foucault, what we call the individual is the effect produced—the result of the linkage, through specific techniques, between political power and somatic singularity[1], biopolitical governmental techniques thus extend as a network of power that overflows both the legal and punitive spheres, becoming a somato-political force—a form of spatialized power that spreads across the entire territory and penetrates the individual body.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault analyzes religious cells of individual confinement as true vectors that modeled the transition from sovereign and violent techniques of controlling bodies and subjectivities, characteristic of the pre-eighteenth century period, to disciplinary architectures and confinement devices as new techniques for managing the population as a whole[2]. Disciplinary architectures are secularized versions of monastic cells in which, for the first time, the modern individual is constituted as a soul enclosed within a body—a reading spirit capable of interpreting only the directives of the State. Biopolitics establishes this new paradigm, shifting from the old right to “make die or let live” to the power to “make live or reject death.”

Living law does not understand that the preservation of life and its conditions of existence should be grounded in a rigid, cold, and pure law of apparent neutrality, from which its legitimacy would derive. Rather, it requires a law of possibilities that accommodates differences, considering that this “body” of living law may be confused with other forms of language and thus misunderstood within the paradigm of neutrality. In this sense, living law encompasses the excesses of life, creating for itself its own remedy through the ideal of reducing the harms of its own overbearing presence (Resta, 2008, p. 68).

It is precisely because our bodies have become the new enclaves of biopower, and our homes the new cells of biovigilance, that it is more urgent than ever to invent new strategies of cognitive emancipation and resistance, and to set in motion new antagonistic processes.

3 Anarchic Body

The body that precedes law is one characterized by maximum fluidity, to the point of being entirely free and without governance; thus, we refer to it as the anarchic body—one that lacks *arche* and confronts all subsequent constructions that seek to dominate it, such as those previously discussed in relation to law. Moreover, the anarchic body resists oppression through an intersectional lens, as it is also understood here within an anarchafeminist framework.

It is necessary to further develop the concept of the intersectional body as articulated by Black feminist scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), bell hooks (2015), Audre Lorde (2018), and Patricia Hill Collins (2000), who introduced and consolidated the concept within academic and feminist studies.

We begin with bell hooks, who discusses the desire of whiteness to exert control over Black bodies and minds—a dynamic transmitted across generations in order to sustain the exercise of power over Black bodies, expressing the internalization of values and attitudes associated with white supremacy (hooks, 2015, p. 112–113). She further argues that a central concern for feminist activists has been the struggle for women’s right to control their own bodies, noting that the very concept of white supremacy is grounded in the perpetuation of a white race and its ideological framework. hooks denounces the ongoing global interest in maintaining racist domination, ensuring that white patriarchy retains control over all women’s bodies, particularly those of racialized women (hooks, 1984, p. 52).

In connection with this, Patricia Hill Collins argues that the bodies of Black women (Rezende; Tárrega, 2021, p. 230) are perceived as units of capital, and thus commodified; their imposed silence itself serves as evidence of their colonization (Collins, 2000, p. 51). She further explains that the regulation of Black women’s bodies has historically benefited systems of race, class, and gender, while simultaneously protecting spaces for Black women’s self-definition—spaces that often required public silence on issues that affected them (Collins, 2000, p. 125).

[1] “What must be called the individual is the effect produced, the result of this linkage—through the techniques I have indicated—between political power and somatic singularity.” FOUCAULT, Michel. *Psychiatric Power*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2006, p. 69.

[2] “Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed. It is necessary to eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation; a tactic of anti-desertion, anti-vagrancy, and anti-aggregation. It is important to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to institute useful communications and interrupt others, to be able at any moment to supervise the behavior of each individual, to assess it, to sanction it, and to measure qualities or merits.” FOUCAULT, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Raquel Ramalhete. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987, p. 123.

Collins emphasizes that, just as race and gender oppressions inscribe social meanings onto bodies, heterosexism similarly marks bodies with sexual meanings (Collins, 2000, p. 128). She highlights the existence of highly visible sexualized racism, in which the visibility of Black bodies is reinscribed through the hypervisibility of a presumed sexual deviance attributed to Black men and women (Collins, 2000, p. 130). Furthermore, she notes that commodified bodies of all kinds function as indicators of status within class hierarchies, shaped by the interdependence of race and gender as social markers (Collins, 2000, p. 132).

Collins goes further by demonstrating that efforts to regulate the bodies of Black women illuminate how sexuality operates as a site of intersectionality, drawing on examples such as pornography, prostitution, and sexual violence to show how more powerful groups seek to control Black women's bodies (Collins, 2000, p. 135).

She also argues that one of the most salient historical features of racism has been the assumption that white men with economic power possess an unquestionable right of access to the bodies of Black women—a right historically claimed by slaveholders and their agents over enslaved women, as a direct expression of their presumed property rights over Black people as a whole (Davis, 1983, p. 102). In other words, distinct systems of oppression are part of a global structure of domination, and each system depends on the others to function (Collins, 2000, p. 222).

From the perspective of reproductive justice—which includes sexual freedom and autonomy over one's own body—it is essential to make visible the material consequences of embodiment within intersectional power relations, as the politics of the body constitutes a central pillar in the lives of women. The politics of the body is inherently intersectional, since power relations across gender, race, age, ability, ethnicity, sexuality, and class use the body to determine and explain social inequalities (Collins, 2020, p. 138–139). Furthermore, it is possible to observe dynamics of shared oppression:

> "Critical race theory, critical race feminism, gender and sexuality studies, queer theory, ecofeminism, disability studies, and critical animal studies all address how various social categories operate to place certain bodies at risk of exclusion, marginalization, erasure, discrimination, violence, destruction, or othering. Intersectionality has focused on bringing together the isolated struggles of Black and Chicana/o people, Indigenous peoples, women, and other historically marginalized groups. However, this strong emphasis on the significance of collective identity politics for these groups may overlook the importance of broader issues that affect both these groups and others. We therefore ask whether social justice and similar ethical concerns can provide a unifying ethical framework for intersectionality. Shared oppression offers a powerful starting point for dialogue among historically marginalized populations. While it is essential to recognize shared experiences of discrimination and victimization, can this process also generate a common vision for intersectional inquiry and praxis?

An example of the difficulties in the practical application of intersectionality is presented by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who, by citing case law, demonstrates the inability to properly understand intersectional forms of oppression when courts refuse to recognize the possibility of discrimination arising from an intersectional perspective against Black women. Instead, they apply a standard of equality based on the experience of white women, thereby rendering invisible the discriminatory employment experiences faced by Black women and treating them as equivalent (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 148). It is also necessary to understand, in light of this critique, that labor must be conceived as a concrete unit, as emphasized within the framework of social reproduction feminism[3].

When bell hooks states that feminism is for everyone, she echoes what has always been a foundational assumption of Black feminism: not merely a politics of identity, but a revolutionary conversation in constant development, often contested in terms of how the world can be imagined and remade.

Building on this, we connect the politics of the body to the histories of Indigenous peoples, such as the Wichí community, which understands knowledge as emerging from bodily resistance through the study of intergenerational transmission of trauma (Iosa, 2013, p. 85–91). Likewise, the encounter of bodies through multicultural interpellations demonstrates the power of performativizing ethno-racial identities[4]. By bringing this into dialogue with the performativity of the body—often positioned in tension with the politics of bodies—it becomes possible to understand multiple systems of male domination and to mobilize the dissemination of feminist thought as a means of horizontally distributing knowledge and power through bodies[5]. This demonstrates the breadth of the concept of intersectionality as a tool for understanding the specificities of oppression and confronting them. By situating the anarchic body within an intersectional perspective of oppression, it becomes possible to challenge the Eurocentric conception of the world and the domination of bodies, historically imposed by global empires over centuries and foundational to what is now recognized as Western culture.

In response to this, the concept of the coloniality of power is reformulated by María Lugones to incorporate gender, giving rise to the notion of the coloniality of gender (Lugones, 2003, p. 29). Through this concept, Lugones highlights how the binary classification of men and women, along with racial classifications of bodies, produces hierarchical extremes. Both binarism and racism are systems developed by Europeans through colonial expansion, which accompanied the formation of global capitalism.

In other words, although cultures have historically varied in their attitudes toward homosexuality and bodies in which gender is expressed differently, queer eros—queer forms of love—already existed and flowed in diverse ways prior to European colonialism. However, the imposition of gender binaries through violence intensified as colonial imperialism established this system as central (Bottici, 2022, p. 13). Within this

[3] "This potential of social reproduction feminism is grounded in a broad and complex understanding of labor as a 'concrete unity,' an ontological category that captures—it is a lived experience that mediates and produces—a contradictory, historical, and richly differentiated totality. It is a multidimensional concept of labor or practical human activity that enables a rigorously integrative theory of the social." FERGUSON, S. *Intersectional Feminism and Social Reproduction Feminism: Toward an Integrative Ontology*. Cadernos Cemarx, Campinas, SP, n. 10, p. 13–38, 2018. DOI: 10.20396/cemarx.v0i10.10919. Available at: https://econtents.bc.unicamp.br/inpec/index.php/cemarx/article/view/10919. Accessed on: Oct. 21, 2022.

[4] "Policies promoting the so-called 'Toba or Qom music' in Formosa, and the 'litoraleño' (littoral) candombe linked to an organization of Afro-descendants in Santa Fe, particularly focusing on the work of two female performers who have been fundamental to their dissemination: Ema Cuañerí and Lucía Molina. Our specific hypothesis is that, in response to multicultural interpellations to perform ethno-racial identities, these and other Indigenous and Afro-descendant performers have been encouraged to select, recreate, and spectacularize certain sounds, movements, and images considered 'ancestral,' inscribed both in 'embodied repertoires' and in performative 'archives'." CITRO, Silvia; BROGUET, Julia; RODRIGUEZ, Manuela; AGUERO, Soledad. *Indigenous and Afro-descendant Performances in Argentina: Sound-Body Recreations of the "Ancestral"*. Revista Hawò, v.1, 2020.

[5] "Through its slogans—'our bodies belong to us,' 'the personal is political'—emphasizing that women's oppression stems from multiple systems of male domination, feminist thought gradually spread, particularly among intellectualized middle classes, among Brazilian feminists, providing its methodological foundations. Unlike other spaces of organization within social movements, the feminist movement privileged a methodology that considers the horizontal distribution of knowledge and power among its members." GONÇALVES, Eliane; PINTO, Joana Plaza. *Reflections and Problems of Intergenerational "Transmission" in Brazilian Feminism*. Cadernos Pagu, January–June, 2011, p. 25–46.

framework, individuals are classified according to skin color or genitalia as if such categories were innate to the human mind, which they are not. The classification of bodies by sex, like racial classification, implies, among other things, a primacy of the visual register. Thus, the emergence of modernity is inseparable from the emergence of racial and gender systems, and the two cannot be understood independently.

An example of this can be found in the mechanisms adopted, at least since the late Early Preclassic period, by Mesoamerican societies, which attempted to channel bodies into more fluid forms. The persistence of these bodily practices may have been responsible for much of their power prior to colonization. Moreover, these practices are often framed as ahistorical due to their continuity, forming a specific Mesoamerican history of bodily appearance and action with a broad field of social acceptability. However, this history was reshaped by the colonial European imposition of classical Maya constructions of dichotomous heterosexual adult genders, through which authorities restricted and limited gender fluidity in Mesoamerican societies (Joyce, 2001, p. 115–116).

Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí argues that both gender and racial classifications are grounded in a form of oculocentrism—that is, the primacy of vision as the main source of knowledge—characteristic of a so-called Western worldview, and particularly evident when contrasted with precolonial Yoruba cultures (Oyěwùmí, 1997, p. 14).

Consequently, questioning the coloniality of gender also entails challenging the primacy of biological determinism and the visual classification of bodies—that is, the assumption that by merely observing bodies we can declare "this is a woman" or "this is a man." This perspective on bodily control is especially evident in the regulation of the female body, as established by Christianity and other religions, in which women are positioned as carnal, animal, and as bearers of the non-divine[6], and therefore must be protected and maintained within rigidly defined roles.

Gloria Anzaldúa, as a queer thinker, investigates the queerness of the body and its resistance. She identifies herself as a body in two—namely, an anarchic body, both masculine and feminine—embodying the *hieros gamos*, an original concept she describes as the union of opposing qualities within (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 19). She argues that from the non-passivity of the body emerges its intelligence for maximum resistance (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 19).

If we register our experiences in our bodies and emotions, capturing the "music" or feeling of what occurs, then what touches our minds and thoughts also marks our bodies (Gilligan, 2018, p. 36). Racism and homophobia are real conditions of life in this time and place; thus, each of us who reaches this deep place of self-knowledge may still transfer fear and aversion toward any difference we encounter, allowing us to understand how such dynamics are internalized and reproduced (Lorde, 2018, p. 156).

It is therefore possible to confront the anarchic body with the production of the "Third World woman" stereotype generated by globalization—one that depicts her life as essentially incomplete based on her gender, sexually repressed, and as belonging to the "Third World," characterized as ignorant, poor, uneducated, traditional, domestic, family-oriented, racialized, and victimized. This stands in contrast to the self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, white, in control of their bodies and sexuality, and free to make their own decisions (Bahri, 2013, p. 336).

Furthermore, the anarchic body can be understood through variations across contexts within intersectional theory, as a means of escaping biopolitical mechanisms—especially in relation to the formation of gender identities, the rigidity of gender scripts, and their embodied practices, which emerge from the sexually specific aspects of human reproduction and physiology (Alcoff, 2020, p. 45).

In light of the logic of exploitation and domination inherent in the politics of bodies—that is, the strategies a society adopts in response to the social availability of individuals—we observe a harmful, uncritical reproduction through the connection between body and emotions, intensifying its ambivalence:

> "Mechanisms of social bearability constitute a set of "behaviors" around which everyday life is naturalized, while the social processes that produced such conditions are erased and obscured. Emotions are understood through a dialectical process involving impressions, perceptions, and sensations. Impressions, as the first form of engagement with the socio-environmental context, impact bodies and structure the perceptions that individuals accumulate and reproduce. These perceptions, in turn, shape the sensations that agents experience regarding what may be designated as the internal and external world—the social, subjective, and natural realms.Sensations emerge both as a result of and as a precursor to perceptions, giving rise to emotions as effects of processes of adjudication and correspondence between perceptions and sensations. In neocolonial societies, the body and emotions are interconnected and strained by the logic of exploitation and domination (Scribano; Cena, 2011, p. 5).

Moreover, women's bodies in particular cannot be understood as fixed and stable objects, but rather as processes. We are not things; we are relationships. Women's bodies are plural bodies precisely because they are processes—processes constituted by affective and associative mechanisms that operate at multiple levels, namely inter-, supra-, and infra-individual (Bottici, 2022, p. 76). Our bodies thus come into being through inter-individual encounters when shaped by supra-individual forces, such as those determined by geopolitical locations, as well as through intra-individual processes, such as the air we breathe, the food we consume, or the hormones we may take—thereby connecting us, through infra-individual bodies, to ecosystems, modes of production, and reproductive structures that are themselves supra-individual (Bottici, 2022, p. 76).Within this possibility of processes unfolding across multiple levels, the anarchic body gains strength from an ontological movement toward transindividuality as a lens for understanding individuality:

> "First, instead of developing a form of feminism and then adding ecology as if it were something separate, here the two positions are unified from the outset because, within a philosophy of the transindividual, the environment is not something external to us; rather, we are the environment—something literally constitutive of our individuality (Bottici, 2022, p. 78).

When women's bodies are theorized as processes—as sites where futures are lived across different levels—it becomes possible to speak of women without falling into essentialisms or culturalisms. From this monist ontology, there is no room to oppose sex, as nature, to gender, as culture; such an opposition is sustained only where there is space for a dualism between body and mind, or for conceiving being as something

[6]"The gorra, the rebozo, and the mantilla are symbols of the 'protection' of women in my culture. Culture (read: men) professes to protect women" (my translation). ANZALDÚA, Gloria. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987, p. 17.

static and inert, opposed to a constantly changing process of becoming (Bottici, 2022, p. 15).

By adopting this transindividual ontology for the anarchic body, it also becomes possible to situate the concept of "woman" outside hetero- or cis-normative frameworks and to use it inclusively in relation to all types of women: feminine women, masculine women, women assigned female at birth, women assigned male at birth, lesbian women, bisexual women, trans women, cis women, asexual women, queer women, and others. In short, "women" becomes a generic term for all self-identified bodies that are constituted through an ever-changing narrative of femininity (Bottici, 2022, p. 16).

Thus, developing the concept of women as processes also entails overcoming the dichotomy that opposes the individual to the collective, understood here as non-existent, since all bodies are transindividual processes. There would be no pure, isolated individual separate from—or opposed to—a given collectivity. On the other hand, all axes of oppression converge in the belief that some bodies are superior to others, which in turn sustains and enables the implementation of a politics of domination.

This leads to the impossibility of addressing women's emancipation as an isolated experience, detached from the broader spectrum of economic, social, psychological, and political forms of oppression. Individual and social struggles are two sides of the same coin, as both individual and collective impulses are interconnected. As Emma Goldman, through her reconfiguration of the organicist metaphor of the body politic, argues: the individual is the heart of society, preserving and reproducing life, while society is its lungs, distributing the elements necessary to sustain life and, therefore, the individual (Bottici, 2022, p. 53). The individual and society are not understood through the traditional analogy of the body and its parts; rather, both are parts—heart and lungs—of a much larger body, which is life itself: the true anarchic body.

Therefore, body and mind are merely two modes expressing two different attributes of an infinite substance that manifests itself through an infinity of attributes (Bottici, 2022, p. 82). This perspective abandons the assumption that action precedes representation, or that there are actors behind actions, recognizing instead that the subject is already constituted prior to the process of subjectivation that transforms bodies into subjects (Bottici, 2022, p. 66).

4 Collective Bodies

Based on the understandings of the body in relation to living law and the anarchic body, the collectivity of bodies is conceived as a mass that contributes to the formation of a plural citizenship, in which we free ourselves from the fear of bodily contact, reclaiming corporeal proximity without hostility. This fear dissipates as the mass forms densely and openly, tending toward a process of transformative growth referred to as metamorphosis (Resta, 2008, p. 62). Ultimately, this process results in a "mask" over the individual body, representing its experience prior to becoming part of the mass (Resta, 2008, p. 62).

Within this framework, the formation of collectivities emerges as a powerful driver of transformation, including in its ecological dimension, where the development of this tendency toward expansion and openness becomes a measure of bodily cohesion (Resta, 2008, p. 62).

The resulting "mask" also represents a tension between the individual body and the mass, serving as a key to understanding the connections between the geometries of bodies and the grammars of action that constitute neo-imperialist forms of domination (Resta, 2008, p. 7–8). From an anarchafeminist perspective, the politics of bodies must be understood as the structuring of power.

It is important to recall that the logic of capital operates on the premise that each subject can potentially become a commodity. To achieve this, bodily sensations must be regulated so that they can be commodified, to the extent that everyday self-perception ultimately erases the awareness that life itself has become a commodity. Life is thus transformed into a set of objectified meanings, implying the expropriation and plundering of existence under contemporary extractivist capitalism (Resta, 2008, p. 8–9). This idea helps explain the large-scale commodification of life, in which the power of metamorphosis is mobilized toward mass destruction.

From this collective framework, gender can be understood as a constructed and classificatory category. Through this critical lens, it becomes possible to question what is meant by "masculine" and "feminine," recognizing them as symbolic and cultural dimensions shaped within different societies.[7]. We arrive at the idea of bodies and their collectivity of women who, across cultures and throughout history, have assumed the task of an independent, non-heterosexual, and interconnected existence, to the extent that such existence was permitted within their respective contexts. Due to pervasive violence, many non-conforming women often perceived themselves as isolated in their experiences. These collectivities have always been characterized by autonomy. However, such autonomy was not easily achieved, as few women attained an economic position that allowed them to resist either marriage or forced celibacy. As a result, they were frequently attacked and even killed for being single—attacks that ranged from slander and ridicule to deliberate gynocide. For example, the persecution of millions of women who deviated from the norms of marriage and obedience—burned alive and tortured for being widows or unmarried—during the so-called witch hunts of the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries in Europe demonstrates that such violence was not, and is not, exclusive to regions considered peripheral. A similar dynamic can be observed in the practice of *suttee* imposed on widows in India (Federici, 2017, p. 631). Thus, the struggle is not merely about maintaining inequality or property relations, but against a generalized set of forces ranging from physical brutality to the control of consciousness, revealing an effort to contain a powerful opposing force: women's collectivities (Federici, 2017, p. 631).

Once again, the "woman" described here refers to the representation of the *femina*, subjected to oppression precisely because of how her body is identified. These bodies confront compulsory heterosexuality, which facilitates the work of pimps and traffickers in global networks of prostitution and eroticization, profiting from these bodies. At the same time, within the private sphere, it manifests in the daughter coerced into accepting incest, the mother who denies it, and the abused wife who remains with her aggressor (Federici, 2017, p. 631).

Another form of violence highlighted by transborder feminist collectivities—those that blur boundaries (Fleck da Rosa, 2023, p. 95)—is "corrective rape," which occurs on a large scale against dissident female bodies, while also opening spaces for women's voices in self-defense, as will be further explored in emancipatory practices.

Heterosexuality is imposed both forcibly and subliminally upon women, yet resistance has emerged everywhere, often at the cost of physical torture, imprisonment, psychosurgery, social ostracism,

[7] "to refer to the foundational character of the cultural construction of sexual differences, to the extent that social definitions of sexual differences are themselves interpreted through cultural definitions of gender. Gender is thus a classificatory category that, in principle, can methodologically serve as a starting point for uncovering the diverse ways in which societies establish social relations between the sexes and cosmologically delimit the relevance of gender classification. This concept aims to methodologically investigate the symbolic and cultural forms through which social relations of sex are constructed, as well as all the ways in which classifications of what is understood as masculine and feminine are relevant and produce effects across the various dimensions of different societies and cultures." MACHADO, Lia Zanotta. *Conflicting Perspectives: Gender Relations or Contemporary Patriarchy?* Série Antropologia. Department of Anthropology, University of Brasília, Brasília, DF, 2000, p. 5.

and extreme poverty. Compulsory heterosexuality has even been internationally recognized as a crime against women by the Brussels Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in 1976 (Federici, 2017, p. 631).

We understand that there exists a process of disidentification that enables women to challenge the interpellations of dominant ideology, particularly in the construction of a radical multiculturalism focused on relational and intersectional aspects (Muñoz, 1999, p. 167). Such contestation can take the form of protest, as seen in contemporary feminist movements that adopt new organizational dynamics through assemblies, demonstrations, occupations of public spaces, and the use of bodies as instruments of political expression, especially through technological activism.

The politics of bodies reveals that the bodily effects of colonial histories are not separable into physical and cognitive elements, as the genealogical traces of colonial-sexual violence are experienced alongside the materialization of social and familial arrangements introduced by colonial and imperial power. This results in multidimensional disruptions at the boundaries of identity, revolving around gender, sexuality, race, nationality, and the coloniality of power (Rivera, 2011, p. 5). In this sense, decolonial feminist theories expose the constructed nature of bodily discourse in ways that echo Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that one is not born a woman, but becomes one, thereby contributing to dismantling sexual politics and its broader networks of power.

The objective is to identify the "cracks" (Rivera, 2011, p. 10) that divide collectivities, fragmenting the social body, which, when materialized in unique and complex forms of embodiment, rearticulates its transformations. It is not the elimination of bodily tensions that produces a coherent and unified body, nor the rewriting of a foundational myth of original totality—whose inevitable apocalyptic return would imply a final unity—since such notions conceal multiplicity under ideologies of purity or homogeneity (Rivera, 2011, p. 12). Instead, the aim is to construct visions of redemption in which bodies are capable of embracing their multiplicity without needing to become one. The body thus appears as a site of historical conflict and oppression, as well as a source of creative and mysterious powers capable of resisting, challenging, and transgressing the "knowledge" that sustains subordination, through the memory of an embodied past and the articulation of improbable hopes that materialize a new self (Rivera, 2011, p. 13).

Within this framework of the politics of bodies, there is also a critique of the liminality of bodily matter, which cannot be fully captured by intersectional positioning. Instead, bodies are understood as unstable assemblages that cannot be neatly decomposed into identity formations, thereby questioning the necessity of a fixed subject for the constitution of collectivities (Puar, 2013, p. 354).

Nevertheless, the non-static model proposed by Donna Haraway accounts for the indeterminacy and mutual constitution of embodied configurations of gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation (Puar, 2013, p. 354). The function of the cyborg, in this sense, is to dissolve binaries—between humans and animals, humans and machines, and the physical and the non-physical—positioning it as a being at the intersection of body and technology. More recent theoretical developments seek to distinguish between the biophysical, the biocultural, and the biodigital (Puar, 2013, p. 356). Haraway introduces the cyborg as a creature of a post-gender world, devoid of commitment to bisexuality, which she explains through a pre-Oedipal symbiosis and non-alienated labor:

> "The cyborg has no fascination with an organic totality that could be achieved through the ultimate appropriation of all the powers of its respective parts, which would then combine into a greater unity. In a certain sense, the cyborg is not part of any narrative that appeals to an original state, to a 'narrative of origin' in the Western sense. This constitutes a final irony, since the cyborg is also the apocalyptic telos of the expanding processes of Western domination that posit an abstract subjectivity, prefiguring an ultimate self, finally liberated from all dependence—a man in space" (Haraway, 2000, p. 38).

In this sense, the cyborg goes beyond the stage of an original unity, of an identification with nature that cannot be extended into a collective construction, thereby contrasting with such projects. The cyborg is decidedly committed to partiality, irony, and perversity (Haraway, 2000, p. 39)—or rather, it is oppositional, utopian, and far from innocent. Perhaps most importantly, it is no longer structured by the polarity between the public and the private, thus defining a technological *polis* emerging from a revolution in the social relations of the domestic unit, the *oikos*. Consequently, the cyborg does not dream of community, even when disregarding the Oedipal project—that originating in the organic family: "to know what cyborgs will be is a radical question; to answer it is a matter of survival. Both chimpanzees and artifacts have a politics. Why should we not have one?" (Haraway, 2000, p. 43).

Karen Barad reinforces a valuable perspective for shaping dynamic collective practices by considering the human body not as a discrete organic entity and matter not as a thing, but as a doing; in other words, meaning is only one among several elements that give a substance both significance and function (Puar, 2013, p. 357). She further argues that humans are part of the world-body space in its dynamic structuration (Barad, 2007, p. 172). In addition, she defends the concept of bodily materiality as foundational or self-evident, as a notion of gender performativity is developed that links the formation of the subject to the production of the materiality of the body (Butler, 2003, p. 191). She also mobilizes the concepts of biopower and the political technology of the body:

> "This technology is diffuse, of course, rarely formulated in continuous and systematic discourses; it is often composed of bits and pieces; it employs materials and processes that are unrelated to one another. Most of the time, despite the coherence of its results, it is nothing more than a multiform instrumentation" (Foucault, 1987, p. 29).

She continues by referring to domestic violence through the space-event of the home, understood as an undefined event constituted by a single act or a series of actions and activities that fold different temporal dimensions into one another (Puar, 2013, p. 360). This perspective reaffirms the importance of intersectionality in attempting to understand political institutions and their corollary forms of social normativity and disciplinary administration, conceived as assemblages. In an effort to reintroduce politics into the political domain, it becomes necessary to question what precedes and what exceeds what is ultimately established (Puar, 2013, p. 360).

From this understanding of violence, it is also important to note that capitalism does not reflect the authentic economy of society nor the social question itself, but rather an economy that has absorbed cultural, ethical, and psychological dimensions into a material system of needs and techniques, resulting in the growing domination of human beings over one another (Bookchin, 1982, p. 98).

In this context, theories of democracy that assume a world of active subjects and passive objects appear increasingly insufficient at a time when interactions among human, viral, animal, and technological bodies are becoming ever more intense, rendering human culture inextricably entangled with vibrant non-human agencies. Within this framework, human intentionality is understood as agency; and if such agency must be accompanied by a vast assemblage of non-human actors, then the appropriate unit of analysis for democratic theory is neither the individual human nor an exclusively human collective (Bennett, 2010, p. 120).

This is especially evident in the experience of damage inflicted upon territories and bodies, which relates to the decision to resist and to strengthen identities—connections that can be observed between territory, body, and ancestry. The figure of the tower is presented here as a metaphor for the penetration of territory and the violence inflicted upon bodies, explaining the choice of resistance as a response to state and corporate logics (Alonso, 2018, p. 30). The tower thus represents an enclave of imbalance: rising above the surface while simultaneously penetrating deep into the earth through its pipelines, extracting energy flows that are later converted into capital. Climbing the tower is a highly risky endeavor, exposing bodies to danger and leaving no space for those unprepared to ascend (Alonso, 2018, p. 32).

The tower illustrates extractivism as a model of economic and social relations that produces subjective configurations expressing the pain inflicted upon bodies, as these are treated as separate from the space they inhabit, forming subjectivities that are part of hegemonic systems regulating sensations (Alonso, 2018, p. 34). Within this trajectory, two lines of understanding emerge: on one hand, the recovery of the body as an emancipatory vehicle and a source of knowledge; on the other, collectivization—the practice of feeling and thinking together. By emphasizing the autonomy of bodies and their capacity for self-determination, these dynamics reflect the central struggles in the formation of women's movements and feminist activism in peripheral territories (Alonso, 2018, p. 36). Displacement and violence against women's bodies are thus directly linked to the exploitation of territories and the violation of bodily integrity.

The genealogy of "painful bodies" contributes to understanding collectivities as practices of territorial resistance in response to social harm and suffering, reactivating arguments that affirm the historicity of belonging to a people. These "painful bodies" can be observed among the Mapuche people, who debate, organize, articulate, and confront state and corporate policies. They reveal the foundational dichotomy of modernity and coloniality expressed between the human and the non-human and, consequently, the reinforcement of hierarchies and privileges. Furthermore, bodies and their actions make visible domestic demands, raising questions about the distribution of political space:

> "By channeling their demands into the domestic political spaces of disempowered, if not entirely failed, states, this framework isolates external powers from critique and control. Among those protected from the reach of justice are powerful predatory states and private transnational powers, including foreign investors and creditors, speculators, and transnational corporations. Also shielded are the governance structures of the global economy, which impose exploitative terms of interaction while exempting themselves from democratic oversight. Finally, the framework of the territorial state is self-isolating; the architecture of the interstate system protects the division of political space that it institutionalizes, effectively excluding transnational democratic decision-making on matters of gender justice" (Fraser, 2007, p. 304).

Nancy Fraser (2007) introduces representation as a means of confronting misframing, as articulated by transnational feminism, thereby making visible this third dimension of gender justice—beyond redistribution and recognition—while seeking to balance it. She argues that representation is not merely a matter of ensuring equal political voice for women within already constituted political communities; rather, it requires reframing disputes over justice that cannot be adequately contained within established regimes (Fraser, 2007, p. 305). From an intersectional perspective, women's collectivities enter the spectrum of representation as painful bodies, body-territories, sexualized, gendered, and racialized bodies.

Reinforced by theories that challenge the notion of the body as passive, plastic matter—by exposing how bodies are discursively produced—we encounter the concept of the abiological body, constructed socially, culturally, experientially, and psychically, thus positioning itself against or beyond purely biological claims. At the same time, the biological body is not bracketed out, so as not to sever its evolutionary, historical, and continuous interconnections with the material world, since a body detached from its biological dimension risks becoming ethically, politically, and theoretically untenable. In this regard, transcorporeality offers an alternative: as a theoretical site where bodily theories, environmental theories, and scientific studies intersect and interact productively (Lara, 2017, p. 126). Understanding transcorporeality can be likened to observing the "gastronomic" relationships between the earth and the stomach, as a digestible example of transcorporeal flows (Alaimo, 2010, p. 13). Although transcorporeality as the interaction between body and environment may appear highly localized, tracing a toxic substance from production to consumption often reveals global networks of social injustice, exposing regulatory failures and environmental degradation.

Consequently, environmental health—which rejects conventional medical models—must also be incorporated into collective constructions, affirming that the human body is permeable and therefore vulnerable to specific places and substances (Alaimo, 2010, p. 15). As a growing scientific, political, cultural, and consumer movement, environmental health addresses how, in contemporary risk societies, bodies are compelled to engage with scientific knowledge and epidemiological frameworks in order to confront the dangers of everyday life (Alaimo, 2010, p. 23).

There is no disjunction between body and territory, as territory is not external to the body. The concept of body-territory is significant as a political category of resistance, offering a distinct conceptual and methodological framework for analyzing processes of struggle and resistance, particularly highlighting the central role of women and their collectivities in these dynamics. We thus propose that the conception of the body intertwined with territory emerges from a Mapuche worldview as a unified entity, rather than two separate ones (Alonso; Díaz, 2018, p. 80).

In this sense, feminist collectivities are also constituted by body-territories that originate from decolonized worldviews, positioning themselves as expressions of decolonization through direct and often informal actions. These collectivities traverse intersectionally all chains of oppression, forming transboundary collectivities of painful bodies, sexualized bodies, racialized bodies, and body-territories that reclaim the meanings of ancestral bodies.

5 Conclusion

This study was grounded in the problem of understanding how the body, as a central category of biopolitics, is simultaneously captured by dispositifs of power and mobilized as a tool of resistance, particularly through its articulation in collectivities. Throughout the analysis, it was demonstrated that the body cannot be understood in a neutral or abstract manner, but rather as a political-legal construction traversed by power relations, as evidenced by the contributions of biopolitics and living law. In this sense, the body, as a locus where power operates, is also reaffirmed as a privileged site of dispute, in which both mechanisms of control and possibilities of emancipation are produced.

Based on the proposed objectives, it was verified that the articulation between biopolitics, intersectionality, and anarchafeminism—when coherently situated—allows the body to be understood as a relational and processual category, constituted by multiple social and historical markers. The analysis revealed that oppression does not operate in isolation but in an interdependent manner, affecting racialized, gendered, and territorialized bodies, thereby reinforcing the need for intersectional approaches. In this context, anarchafeminism contributes by shifting the focus from institutional structures to horizontal and collective practices of resistance, demonstrating that emancipation does not occur solely at the normative level, but primarily within concrete social practices.

As a main finding, the study demonstrates that collectivities constitute a central element in transforming conditions of oppression, as they enable the construction of networks of support, recognition, and political action. The notion of "bodies" adopted here refers to a theoretical category that understands subjects in their relational, historical, and material dimensions, moving away from essentialist or individualizing conceptions. Thus, collective bodies are not merely the sum of individualities, but forms of organization that challenge structures of power and produce new possibilities of existence and the realization of rights.

Bodies, understood collectively, are situated within the concept of biopolitics, which places the living—and therefore mortal—body at the center of all politics. They confront the perspective of controlling the female body as established by Christianity and other religions. They advocate for reproductive justice, including sexual freedom and autonomy over one's own body, making visible the material consequences of embodiment within intersectional power relations, in which the politics of the body emerges as a central pillar in women's lives. They also challenge the construction of the stereotypical image of the "Third World woman."

Bodies defend the commons, echoing the same defense historically carried out by women through their collective practices. They resist compulsory heterosexuality and engage in processes of disidentification that enable the contestation of dominant ideological interpellations, aiming at the construction of a radical multiculturalism grounded in relational and intersectional perspectives. They seek to trace the fractures that divide collectivities, fragmenting the social body while simultaneously strengthening resistance.

Bodies are part of a dynamic world-body space. They confront capitalism, which fails to reflect the authentic economy of society and the social question itself. They also face experiences of damage to their territories and relate to the decision to resist and strengthen identities grounded in the interconnection between territory, body, and ancestry.

Bodies struggle by placing themselves at the forefront of resistance in the public sphere, making visible domestic demands and opening new possibilities for the redistribution of political space. Bodies are transcorporeal, constituting a theoretical site where bodily theories, environmental theories, and scientific studies intersect and interact productively. Within this framework, bodies advocate for environmental health, rejecting conventional medical models and proposing a broader ecological understanding of health as existing between living and non-living entities.

Finally, it is concluded that the emancipatory potential of the body lies precisely in its capacity for collective articulation and resistance to forms of biopolitical capture. However, it is also recognized that this construction demands greater rigor in theoretical and methodological delimitation. Future research should deepen the articulation between the theoretical frameworks employed and their contexts of production. Such refinement is essential to ensure greater analytical coherence and to strengthen the contribution of debates on the body, law, and social transformation within contemporary legal scholarship.

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