

BODIES AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATIONS IN RECENT BRAZILIAN STUDIES AND THEIR THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BASES: FOUCAULT, BUTLER AND BOURDIEU ¹

CORPOS E MIGRAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS NA PRODUÇÃO BRASILEIRA RECENTE E SUAS BASES TEÓRICAS E CONCEITUAIS: FOUCAULT, BUTLER E BOURDIEU

CUERPOS Y MIGRACIONES INTERNACIONALES EN LA PRODUCCIÓN BRASILEÑA RECIENTE Y SUS FUNDAMENTOS TEÓRICOS Y CONCEPTUALES: FOUCAULT, BUTLER Y BOURDIEU



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ABSTRACT: This article examines the theoretical and conceptual foundations of recent Brazilian scholarship on immigration that utilizes the body as an analytical or empirical reference. Our interest in this topic is premised on the shift in perspective since the turn of the 20th century: while the body was once primarily associated with biological notions of race, we hypothesize that contemporary understandings have moved away from this framework. To test this, we surveyed articles published between 2000 and 2022. Our findings indicate that Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu are the most frequently cited theorists. Drawing on their concepts, we argue that the body serves a dual purpose in current research: it is used to analyze systems of domination and precarity, while also highlighting the various expressions of immigrant agency.

KEYWORDS: Migration. Body. Brazilian Researchers. Theory.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, procuramos identificar e comentar as bases teóricas e conceituais de alguns artigos recentes de autoras/es brasileiras/os sobre imigração em que o corpo é uma referência analítica e/ou empírica. O interesse pelo tema tem origem no entendimento de que, na passagem do século XIX ao XX, o corpo era frequentemente associado à raça, entendida a partir de características físicas e biológicas, enquanto hoje — temos por hipótese — esse não é o entendimento corrente. Para atingir nosso objetivo, foi realizado um levantamento de artigos publicados entre 2000 e 2022. Como resultado, verificou-se que, entre os autores mais referenciados, estão Michel Foucault, Judith Butler e Pierre Bourdieu. Com base nesses autores e em seus conceitos, foi possível observar que o corpo é acionado para descrever e analisar, de um lado, processos de dominação, invisibilização e precarização e, de outro, para se referir a expressões da agência de imigrantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Migração. Corpo. Pesquisadores Brasileiros. Teoria.

RESUMEN: En este artículo, buscamos discutir los fundamentos teóricos y conceptuales de algunos artículos recientes de autores brasileños sobre inmigración en los que el cuerpo constituye una referencia analítica y/o empírica. El interés por el tema surge de la comprensión de que, a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX, el cuerpo se asociaba frecuentemente con la raza, entendida a partir de características físicas y biológicas, mientras que, en la actualidad, según nuestra hipótesis, esa ya no es la comprensión predominante. Para lograr nuestro objetivo, se realizó una revisión de artículos publicados entre 2000 y 2022. Como resultado, se encontró que, entre los autores más citados, están Michel Foucault, Judith Butler y Pierre Bourdieu. A partir de estos autores y sus conceptos, se observó que el cuerpo se activa para describir y analizar, por un lado, sistemas de dominación, precariedad e invisibilidad y, por otro, para referirse a expresiones de agencia inmigrante.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Migración. Cuerpo. Investigadores Brasileños. Teoría.

Introduction

The importance of the topic of international mobility has grown both quantitatively and qualitatively in recent decades. On the one hand, the number of people living as migrants, refugees, and stateless persons worldwide has been growing significantly. According to UN data, in 1990, there were about 153 million people living outside their country of birth. In 2020, this number rose to approximately 281 million, an increase of over 83% in thirty years. Alongside this vertiginous growth, studies on the topic of human mobilities have diversified with regard to empirical, theoretical, and methodological issues. Much research has been conducted on gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and social class in migratory contexts, based on diverse theoretical and methodological foundations that include the analysis of diasporic, circular and continuous, transnational, intersectional, and feminist movements (Glick-Schiller; Basch; Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Hall, 2009).

Within this significant set of changes, there is a greater interest among researchers in the bodily dimension of the dynamics of human mobility. This interest focuses on broader themes, such as those associated with racism and sexism, which translate into new and old mechanisms of exploitation, increased vulnerability, and hierarchization that people on the move experience and suffer due to their gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, and nationality.

In addition to all these aspects, there is also the fact that the body, especially when linked to the theme of race, was a subject of great relevance to scholars who dedicated themselves, between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to the theme of nationality, in which migrations constituted a phenomenon of great interest. If, in that context, the body was associated with race and fueled racist theories in Brazil and in a large part of the world, how does it appear in contemporary studies? Can we speak of a return to the body?

Methodology

The results presented in this article were obtained through a bibliographic survey of the production of Brazilian researchers on immigration in Brazil over the last twenty years, identifying their theoretical bases and discussing similarities and differences between the approaches to the body present in this production⁴.

⁴ There is an extensive international bibliography on the subject that focuses on issues such as biometric borders, mobility regimes, and necropolitics; however, this article fulfills the research objectives by focusing on Brazilian scholarly production.

In March 2023, three online article repositories were consulted: SciELO Brazil, the Capes Periodicals Portal, and Google Scholar. We identified 45 articles⁵, but 11 were excluded because they did not address the topic within the time frame defined for this study. In addition to an introductory reading, which sought to verify whether each article met the selection criteria regarding the period, concepts, and most frequently referenced authors, two further readings were carried out: one to highlight the theoretical foundation and another to better systematize the relationships between the body and immigration present in the consulted bibliography.

As the articles were read and cataloged, it was observed that the “weight” or “centrality” of the body in the set of articles and in their authors’ arguments varied considerably, ranging from more secondary references to references of great importance. As criteria for defining the centrality of the body in each article, some more objective evidence was considered, such as references in the title, abstract, and keywords, as well as the number of times the term was used.

The data and information from the articles of interest, such as authors, concepts, and cited theories, were organized in an Excel database and subsequently transferred to Obsidian. Both tools were used to organize this article regarding how the authors of the selected articles related the themes of the body and migration to the most frequently referenced concepts and theories. As a result of this bibliographic survey, we identified a large number of authors and cited concepts. Among these, however, we observed more frequent references to Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu. For this reason, these authors will serve as the basis for the analysis proposed here. To provide a stronger foundation and foster dialogue between the analyzed articles and the concepts employed in them, we will review some of the main theoretical contributions of Foucault, Butler, and Bourdieu.

Foucault: State, Institutions and Society and the Control over the Immigrant’s Body

Michel Foucault is an author widely referenced in studies on the body, whether in migratory contexts or not. The body is a central social dimension in the author's works. This importance is associated, among other factors, with his conception of the emergence of

⁵ The articles were written by authors from different areas of knowledge, ranging from the Social Sciences to Literary Studies and including Public Health, Philosophy, and Psychology, revealing that the theme of the body in Migration Studies is quite multidisciplinary.

modernity as being strictly related to the changing forms of control over the individual and society through the body.

As *Discipline and Punish* (1987) shows, in European society prior to the emergence of modernity, this control was exercised through the exhibition of forms of punishment and chastisement, such as hangings, mutilation, and the burning of people. In modernity, forms of control involve removing the body from public exposure so that they can be exercised by institutions that educate, discipline, and punish. As Foucault states, punishment now aims to correct and discipline the convict and return them to society through docilization and disciplinization. The body is no longer the direct target of punishment, but rather what Foucault calls the “soul.” The body becomes a prisoner of its soul. Individuals are no longer punished only for what they “did, but [for] what they are, will be, or may be” (Foucault, 1987, p. 22, our translation). Dudrick (2005) understands that, for Foucault, the soul is not a substance and is articulated with power. It becomes a body as it acts directly in a political field. Foucault then seeks to “identify the specific mechanisms of technologies through which power is actually articulated with the body” (Dreyfus; Rabinow, 1995, p. 126, our translation).

This conception of the place of the body in modern society maintains a strict relationship with Foucault’s notion of power. The political technology of the body can be understood as a micro-power (Foucault, 1987, p. 23–24, our translation) and, as such, it is not a property and, therefore, cannot be appropriated by either the dominant or the dominated. Power cuts across both of them, and both use it under unequal conditions, either for or against existing norms as it reaches them. The body is invested by power in order to make it economically useful and politically submissive.

It can be seen that the body is one of the central pieces in the puzzle of Foucault’s theory of power. In *Poder-corpo* (1998), we find three important characteristics of Foucault’s notion of power. First, power is not unidirectional; it is relational. The action of an individual and/or a social group causes the movement and displacement of another individual or social group. Second, as a relation, power does not act negatively. It does not just prevent; it creates. Third, as a relation, power is not located solely in the state and in institutions, but it also functions beyond, before, above, and below them, on an everyday plane (Foucault, 1998).

Taken as a whole, it can be said that Foucault’s conception of power leads to the concept of governmentality. Through it, Foucault seeks to explain how power becomes governmentalized, which implies considering that government is one among other forms of power that becomes hegemonic in modernity. Governmentality is thus characterized, on the one

hand, by the emergence of institutions, apparatuses, and devices of power combined with new forms of knowledge and, on the other hand, by the population. The population, as a set of individuals, at the same time as it undergoes the action of scientific and political power, also feeds upon it in order to survive. These two sides overlap and mutually determine each other as an expression of governmentality through the disciplining and docilization of bodies operated by the apparatuses of power and knowledge (Dudrick, 2005, p. 239–240).

From these characteristics of power, as well as its relation to the body, we arrive at the concept of biopolitics (Foucault, 2002). Through this concept, Foucault teaches us how power dynamics materialize in the body. By “making live and letting die” (Foucault, 2002, p. 287), biopolitics does so through the establishment of norms of domination and subjugation at the most elementary level of social life, which merges with biological life, that is, “the act of being born, dying, and falling ill.” At this level, scientific power (medications and treatments) aimed at keeping people alive merges with the political power that disciplines these very same bodies in hospitals, schools, and other institutions.

Biopolitics is also expressed through the docility of bodies. The docile body is the body disciplined by scientific knowledge that analyzes it, helps it to be born, and, at the same time, keeps it alive, healthy, and useful. In turn, it is worth noting that, for Foucault, the process of disciplining can also derive from processes that lead individuals to think about themselves, which he designates as the process of “subjectification.” Such processes result in the development of “technologies of the self” (*technologies of the self*) (Foucault, 1988, p. 18, our translation). In this direction, the author points out that power operates through the production of knowledge and the creation of a desire to conform to the (historically variable) norms that such knowledge establishes. “Such a desire to conform leads people to voluntarily sustain their own oppression through self-discipline and self-surveillance in matters such as weight, elegance, femininity, reproductive practices, etc.” (Pylypa, 1998, p. 24, our translation).

Regarding the bibliographic material that served as the basis for this study, of the articles consulted, ten use Foucault in their references. The author’s centrality in this set of publications varies considerably between being the lead author (Brandão, 2018; Granada; Detoni, 2017) or being one among others, in addition to cases where they appear through an indirect reference, associated with the use of concepts such as necropolitics, “microracism” (Kowalewski; Schilling; Magalhães; Évora, 2019), and being cited alongside other male and female authors (Matsue, 2022).

The main concepts mobilized are biopolitics and governmentality. These concepts frequently appear associated with Foucault's notion of power, which emphasizes the relational and procedural dimension, such as micro-powers that distance authors from essentialized conceptions or from the idea of power as the property of a class, social group, institution, or individual.

For Granada and Detoni (2017), for example, human mobility produces issues related to health, concerning both immigrants and the local population. Migration is understood as a "social determinant of health" (p. 127, our translation). In this aspect, the article engages with Foucault's concept of biopolitics, according to which power materializes in the forms of control over the individual's body. In the article, *Bodies out of place: health and migration in the case of Haitians in southern Brazil* (Granada; Detoni, 2017) the migrant's body is a sick and threatening body. Haitian immigrants, in the condition of the other, appear as unwanted or stigmatized in different ways and at different levels by community agents, food and civil construction business owners, and neighbors. These social agents, by not considering the precarious living conditions in the host society, stigmatize the immigrant, producing a body "out of place" that can be understood as an expression of "state racism" (Fassin, 2000) and, as an expression of power and of the forms of "letting live and letting die" (Foucault, 2002, p. 287, our translation).

Biopolitics is also a central concept for Berger and Berger in *Immigration and Governmentality: Reflections on the Place of Immigrants in the Nation-State* (2018). In this article, the authors suggest that the immigrant's body is the target of biopolitics through forms of knowledge and power. To this end, the nation-state employs legal instruments and moral mechanisms in its effort to assimilate the immigrant and ensure the homogenization of the population and national culture. As an expression of biopolitics, immigrants are part of the population to be governed, and as such they are made vulnerable, through their bodies, so that they become integrated. Berger and Berger (2018) also revisit Foucault's conception of power with regard to its "positivity." In this sense, they demonstrate that immigrants' access to rights in the destination country is a consequence of the control that the Nation-State exercises over them. As they are recognized, rendered culturally, socially, and politically vulnerable, immigrants are integrated and become bearers of rights.

One of the analyzed articles, which is anchored in Foucaultian thought, is based more specifically on the concept of governmentality. In *The Other: a critical analysis of discourses on migration and gender*, Mountian and Rosa (2015) analyze markers of difference that produce

discrimination and fetishization of the other as a way to subordinate and invisibilize them. When analyzing the trajectories of transgender immigrants, the authors help us understand how the immigrant is recognized as the “other” through the concept of governmentality and what they call the “models of the panopticon and the plague.” The panopticon model is, as is well known, a reference to an ideal penitentiary conceived by the English philosopher and jurist Jeremy Bentham in 1785, which allows a single guard to observe all prisoners without them being able to know whether or not they are being observed, and it was used to emphasize surveillance and disciplinarianism as an expression of power and control over the immigrant, in this case through their body. The “plague,” in turn, is a way of referring to the immigrant as a stranger, enemy, and threat, a condition likewise conceived from the immigrant’s body (2015).

Vale (2007), in *O vôo da beleza: experiência transgênero e processo migratório*, accesses Foucault and the idea of micropower via other authors. One of them is Eribon, who engages in dialogue with Butler through, for example, the idea of the “efficacy of injury,” which acts both in subjugation and, to the extent that it is appropriated by the agent, as a form of subversion. Thus, Eribon proposes thinking about a “micro-femininity” as a reinvention of femininity by trans people in migratory contexts. For Vale (2007), migration, understood as nomadism, is part of this process of transitioning from the condition of subjugation to reinvention. In the migratory context, the sexuality and body of the trans subject would suffer less social coercion and less violence. Because of this, the trans immigrant experiences the intensification of the changes that contribute to affirming their condition (Vale, 2007).

The concept of micropower is also implicit in the article *Interseccionalidades, categorias de articulação e experiências de migrantes brasileiras* by Adriana Piscitelli (2008). The concept is indirectly referenced to provide analytical support for the process of racialization and sexualization of the Brazilian female immigrant. According to the author, the body of the Brazilian woman is resignified in the migratory context based on difference and its markers of gender, race, nationality, and class. For the author, the relationships between Brazilian women and men who are nationals of the destination countries are not stable. Migrant women can develop strategies of resistance and rejection against forms and situations of subjugation. For Piscitelli, this dynamic illustrates “the differentiated distributions of power,” an idea proposed based on a reference to Foucault (1977) and his conception of power.

Other articles that are part of the analyzed sample are characterized by the reference to more than one of Foucault’s key concepts. This is the case of Brandão (2018) in his article

Foreign body: contemporary art. Based on the description of artistic installations, the author demonstrates how migrant people, through their bodies, are commodified, suffer from physical labor, and are oppressed and subjugated. For Brandão, Europe and its states sustain themselves through mechanisms that define who can enter, which is materialized through the control over immigrants. The more vulnerable they are—for example, due to a lack of documents—the more immigrants are subjected to “disciplinary power” and “bare life” (Agamben, 2010). Based on the analysis of various installations by different artists, Brandão points out that control over immigrants can occur through their bodies via different forms of violence portrayed by the conditions of foreigners, the undocumented, the opaque, those who wait, those who carry, or even as diseased and/or dehumanized. All these references to the body can be understood as variations of the production of anonymity, but also as the docilization and disciplining of immigrants through their bodies.

Another article that features several references to Foucault is *Corpos duplamente dissidentes: a condição da migrante brasileira no Japão*, by Regina Yoshie Matsue (2022). Drawing on her own experience as a doctoral student in Japan, the author demonstrates how she and other Brazilian women were doubly subordinated and exploited as women (in Japanese culture) and as immigrants (as workers). The author understands that, as a student in Japan, she was part of a political field and, through her body, was the target of state, institutional, and everyday surveillance and manipulation (Foucault, 1987).

On the other hand, the concept of micropowers appears to analytically support the process of adapting and learning that she experienced in the country through living with university colleagues and Japanese relatives, a process in which she experienced the reconstruction of her body as a path toward greater self-acceptance and integration into Japanese society. As an expression of micropowers, the author emphasizes that her subjugation “subverts the order by clashing with it.” That is, subjugation to cultural, linguistic, and bodily standards is never complete and may even subvert, in some respects, the process of docilization and disciplinarization.

The concepts of governmentality and micropower reappear in the article *Imigrantes ou refugiados?*, by Denise Jardim (2016). The author investigates technologies of governmentality and the Palestinian exodus to Brazil in the 20th century. For Jardim, governmentality technologies establish the norms and parameters for defining desired immigrants or refugees. These standards result, whether at the international or national level, from clashes and power struggles. These dynamics include margins of agency, expressed through micropowers

exercised by officials of nation-states and international agencies as they incorporate their norms, as well as by people on the move who negotiate the status they desire (immigrant or refugee) according to the expectations that each of these conditions offers in terms of security, survival opportunities, economic gain, reunification or maintenance of family ties, and greater mobility.

Kowalewski, Schilling, Magalhães, and Évora, in *Mobilidades contemporâneas no contexto Pós-Colonial: Mbembe, Glissant e Mattelart* (2019), revisit the idea of métissage (mixed cultures), the hybrid, and creolization to think about mobility as a characteristic of the human condition. In the article, the theme of mobility is approached in a way that makes explicit the political dimensions of the relationship between migrants and the restrictions imposed by nation-states and their agents. These restrictions are understood as expressions of different types and levels of mechanisms for the classification and discrimination of people on the move. These dynamics are analyzed as normative and moral systems, such as necropolitics and nanoracism (Mbembe, 2017, p. 95, our translation), in opposition to the right to mobility and to exist independently of one's place of origin. It is these concepts that bring the article closer to Foucault, whose work is present in the text indirectly, since necropolitics derives from a direct relationship with the concept of biopolitics, and "nanoracism" can be understood as an offshoot of the concept of micropower.

Finally, regarding the references to Foucault, Souza *et al.* (2020), in the article *Percepção das mulheres imigrantes haitianas sobre concepção de corpo, saúde e cuidado*, analyze narratives of Haitian women who receive care from health services in Brazil. The focus is on the disputes between, on the one hand, aspects related to "corporality" and "self-care," inherited from the society and culture of origin, and, on the other hand, the effects of the control mechanisms exercised by hospital institutions and the ideas of health disseminated by them, which act to make these women docile and discipline them through their bodies. The authors demonstrate that, on the one hand, the body is the basis for affirming cultural origin and gender status, but, on the other hand, the association of the idea of health with hospital care shows that Eurocentric conceptions prevail.

Butler: the abjection and performativity of the immigrant body

As in Foucault's work, the body is central to Judith Butler's thought and theory. Likewise, the body is an expression of power, but, in this case, as a materialization of discourse.

For the American author, “discourse inhabits the body” (2002). This theoretical and, at the same time, political perspective emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the body, power, and language in Butler’s theory, which is central, for example, to the debate on gender proposed by her (Peña, 2021, p. 233, our translation).

In Butler (2002a), the propositions about the body are purposefully contradictory; they are “performative formulas.” Beyond a historical perspective, Butler proposes a “philosophical imaginary” that seeks denaturalization as a means of establishing gender rules. In the interview with Baukje Prins and Irene Costera Meijer (2002a), Butler seeks to undo the constructivist interpretation of *Bodies That Matter* and emphasizes the ontological dimension of the body and of reality as a whole.

Butler extends this idea beyond sex and heteronormativity so that it can refer to bodies devoid of life and lacking materiality (Butler, 2002b). In this sense, it is important to remember that, much like gender, sex is performed; therefore, it cannot be understood as an expression of the biological in opposition to gender, which is more commonly understood as an expression of politics and culture. As Peña (2021, p. 229, our translation) argues, “both are discursive products.”

Likewise, the bodies that matter are those defined politically, that is, through relations and hierarchies of power. This is what would explain the (non-)place of the female body and of abject bodies in the philosophical, cultural, and political tradition inaugurated by Plato (Butler, 2002b).

Therefore, in *Bodies That Matter*, Butler returns to the controversy over how to think of the body as discourse. For the author, the fact that post-structuralism centers its critique and analysis on the category of discourse does not eliminate the importance of the body, whether as a discourse or as an expression of physical and symbolic violence. The materialization of reality is what produces what matters. For the author, the more materialized the bodies are, the more they matter. The fewer or the more invisible they are, the less they matter. Following this assumption, materialization/importance and invisibility/abjection, exemplified by migrant bodies, are discursive productions that materialize in bodies, with the result that these bodies can be hierarchized. That is, bodies are “historically contingent nexuses of power/discourse” (Butler, 2002b).

In *Precarious Life* (2006), Judith Butler returns to the theme of the body. This time, she highlights that, through it, we experience an ambiguity. This is because, at the same time as it is ours in an identity and political sense, it exists in a public sphere. In this domain, we lose

absolute control over it, which is not necessarily a contradiction because this public dimension is the expression of a fundamental sociability, given that it is through our bodies that we interact with the “other,” who, as we shall see below, can be materialized by the figure of the immigrant. In turn, it is this inexorable condition that makes us vulnerable, since we depend on the “other” to live (to find shelter and food). That is, we are not self-sufficient. Vulnerability is accentuated as we are rejected, subjugated, dehumanized, and rendered invisible, and as the creation of vulnerability serves as a mechanism for strengthening the other (Butler, 2006).

The centrality and ambiguity of the body with regard to its political dimension are revisited in a more recent work. In *Frames of War* (2015), Butler reinforces her thesis that we are invariably and inexorably in relation to others through our bodies. Our body defines our individuality, but, as already stated in *Precarious Life*, we depend on others to survive. In the contemporary world, however, as seen in the events of the Iraq War (2003–2015), mutual dependence, rather than generating solidarity and identification, generates otherness and estrangement, which are the basis for hierarchical dynamics. In this sense, the definition of who should live and which deaths deserve mourning (a principle that Foucault had already similarly highlighted as a principle of governmentality) has as its counterpart the abjection that materializes in the precarization of the lives of people whose lives are not recognized and whose deaths, as already mentioned, do not deserve mourning (Butler, 2015), such as those of many immigrants.

From the set of analyzed articles, we found six that make reference, at different levels of importance, to Judith Butler. As with Foucault, Butler is the most important reference in some of these articles, while in others, she shares references with other authors, including Foucault and Bourdieu. As we will see in general terms, the authors of these articles draw upon Butler to address the themes of gender, abjection, and vulnerability, as well as the processes of identity destabilization experienced by immigrants, which also produce changes in the host societies.

This is the case of the article *O vôo da beleza: experiência transgênero e processo migratório* (Vale, 2007), in which Butler is referenced to support the analysis of sexuality and gender. Alongside Didier Eribon (1999), the author criticizes the so-called “common structure of inferiorization” to which gays and transvestites are subjected. The article places greater emphasis on migrant transvestites and their destabilizing power over gender heteronormativity. That is, migrant transvestites would call into question the supposed “originality and naturalness” of sex. Against the feminist critique according to which the *travesti* is a colonizing

appropriation of the feminine (Vale, 2007), the author draws on Butler and her idea of parody as a way to destabilize ‘compulsory heterosexuality’. Still drawing on Butler, Vale reminds us that gender has no immanent truth regarding its definition and must be understood as a “fabrication” inscribed on the surface of bodies.

Mountain and Rosa (2015), in *O outro: análise crítica de discursos sobre migração e gênero*, draw on Butler as a theoretical basis for thinking about migrant trans women from the perspective of alterity. In this case, Butler provides analytical support for thinking about these people as others based on the concepts of queer, abjection, and performativity. Through these concepts, the feminine is deconstructed. In this sense, the trans person can be understood as a parody, since this involves an appropriation of the feminine in order to deconstruct it in its cisgenedity. That is, this supports the idea that, in migratory contexts, travestis become abject because they are unintelligible and break with “hegemonic norms” regarding the relationship between gender, sexuality, sexual practice, and desire (p. 154). The critique of the abjection suffered, in turn, is sustained by the very queer condition and by the performative character of the gender and sexuality experiences of these female immigrants, through which they seek greater visibility, striving to resist the process of invisibilization they experience.

Matsue’s (2022) article, *Corpos duplamente dissidentes: a condição da migrante brasileira no Japão*, already discussed above in relation to Foucault, also dialogues with Butler to analyze the ambivalences of the process of adhering to gender roles socially and culturally constructed as appropriate for Japanese women. The author uses her own experience as a Brazilian of Japanese descent who went to live in Japan to pursue her doctorate. In this sense, she recalls that, even though she did not adopt such roles during her childhood and youth in Brazil (which were part of an introjected repertoire but were not performed in Brazil), these roles found resonance in her life while she lived in Japan. The author draws upon Butler and her idea of the “prior working of power” to refer both to the capacity to recognize cultural gender codes and to the spaces of agency available to her and to other Brazilian women in Japan. For Matsue, it would be possible not only to resist hegemonic culture and gender roles, both in the place of origin and in the destination, but also, through the discomfort and disjunctions caused by the attempt to reproduce the irreproducible, to subvert the order. That is, the tensions and suffering arising from conflicts potentially give rise to ways of transgressing Japanese cultural codes, creating new gender performances.

The invisibilization, precarization, and abjection of immigrants are portrayed in the article *Corpo desconexo: O(a) imigrante no TGI Italiano*, by Fabiane Cristina de Albuquerque

(2022). Using footage from an Italian television broadcaster, the author recounts cases of migrants and refugees whose suffering and deaths during their attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea demonstrate how they are disregarded and erased, both by the media and by ordinary people.

Most of these migrants are Black, young, and African. In the article, the media, particularly a news program on an Italian channel, produce the idea of the immigrant as a disposable body in the context of the increasing arrival of people originating from Africa in precarious boats. The article highlights the unilaterality of the reports and the limited or complete absence of the immigrant voice. This reveals a great asymmetry of power, since the broadcaster produces narratives about the situation without allowing immigrants to express their suffering and pain over the deaths of their compatriots or the denial of the right to life and human dignity.

The ambiguity and possible agency experienced by migrant women are taken up again in the aforementioned article by Piscitelli (2008), *Interseccionalidades, categorias de articulação e experiências de migrantes brasileiras*. The author returns to Butler and her contributions in the field of philosophy to feminist studies on gender and sexuality. Piscitelli highlights that the category of gender in Butler is relational, but relational in the sense that gender is a performance beyond the male/female binarism. In its place, queer thought broadens this binarism by including intersex and trans people. Butler is remembered as an author who supports the intersectional analysis undertaken by Piscitelli by reinforcing that “racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of identities are discursively constituted” without any of them being a “primary condition of oppression” (Piscitelli, 2008).

In turn, in the article *O corpo das mulheres brasileiras e o seu estereótipo no universo fitness em Portugal* (Novaes; Rossi, 2018), Butler is also invoked from the “identity key,” in which gender, beyond being evidence, results from discourses and power relations that perform it. In the case of the article, fitness centers and physical activities are spaces and practices that materialize a performativity of the female body in Portugal, which oscillates between reinforcing stigmas about Brazilian women and “empowering” them in their social relations in Portugal.

Bourdieu: immigrants, domination and agency⁶

Pierre Bourdieu is the third most referenced author in the set of articles by Brazilian authors that served as the basis for the analysis of how the body is mobilized as a relevant dimension of migratory dynamics. Six articles by five different authors that cite Bourdieu at different levels of importance and theoretical and analytical centrality were read and analyzed. Of these, two also cited Butler, and one also referenced Michel Foucault alongside Bourdieu.

In Bourdieu, as in Foucault and Butler, the body is a dimension of social reality of great relevance. This centrality can be verified at an epistemological level, since Bourdieusian theory steers us away from rationalist and abstract approaches to social reality (Csordas, 1990; Bourdieu, 2007). In this sense, the body is one of the expressions of the materialization of society in the agent within their cultural context and, at the same time, of the practical dimension of the agent's action in social space. This dynamic, which is relational, is analyzed and explained based on categories and concepts such as *habitus* and, above all, *hexis*. As is well known, Bourdieu conceives *habitus* as a central concept for going beyond both objectivist and structuralist approaches, which erase the subjectivity of social agents, and subjectivist approaches, which, in turn, erase the social, determining the sovereignty of the individual, whether under the condition of a social actor or subject (Csordas, 1990; Connell; Mears, 2018).

The bodily dimension of the *habitus* is best defined by the concept of *hexis*. Just like the *habitus*, the concept of *hexis* was not originally formulated by Bourdieu (2007, 2014a). Both are present, for example, in Marcel Mauss's classic text "Body Techniques" (2003).

Through *hexis*, one can affirm that Bourdieu (2014a) seeks to refer both to the aesthetic dimension (form, self-care, etc.) and to bodily techniques (physical skills, idioms/accents, ways of gesticulating and walking, etc.) that are produced by power relations among social agents, whether in the broader social space or in specific fields, such as the economic, religious, and artistic fields, giving rise to social inequalities, as highlighted by Connell and Mears (2018, p. 561).

Besides *habitus* and *hexis*, we can also think of the body as capital based on Bourdieu. That is, as an expression of power whose presence or absence interferes with the positioning of agents within the fields in which they operate (Machado, 2004; Piscitelli, 2008; Ennes, 2020).

Beyond the migratory context, it is worth recalling the use of the notion of bodily capital in Loïc Wacquant's important work on pugilism in the United States (Wacquant, 2002, p. 148).

⁶ We thank Prof. Maria Chaves Jardim for the precious references of Pierre Bourdieu, who addresses the theme of the body.

The proposal to think of the body as capital in other social contexts reappears in some studies, such as Shilling (1991) and Connell and Mears (2018). Shilling (1991) seeks to rescue the importance of the body in the field of sociology based on the concept of embodied capital. For the author, the body is an important element in the production of social and gender inequalities. To this end, the author draws on the concept of embodied capital based on the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu. For Shilling, it is necessary to expand this concept beyond its relation to social class. This expansion involves considering how individuals have different opportunities to convert bodily capital into other forms of capital, such as cultural, social, and economic capital.

Also, for Connell and Mears (2018), bodies carry social differences. This idea is largely based on Bourdieu's contributions regarding the body as a site of social inequalities (Bourdieu, 2007). This would imply bringing the body back into social theory to deepen the analysis of gender and sexuality, race and immigration, labor and urbanization, and social forms of suffering and exclusion. On the other hand, according to Connell and Mears (2018), the notion of the body as capital has favored neoliberal perspectives on individual trajectories and made the structural dimensions of inequalities invisible. One way to deepen and broaden the scope of Bourdieu's bodily capital would be to relate it to the concept of aesthetic labor, that is, "the management of affect and bodily capital."

Regarding the six analyzed articles in which he is cited as the main author, Bourdieu appears in basically three ways. First, through his concepts; second, through his methodology; and third, more diffusely, through references to forms and mechanisms of domination. In this case, Bourdieu is referenced alongside Foucault, who, in reality, is a more important reference for the authors of these articles.

These are the cases of the articles *Corpos que ameaçam, corpos instrumentalizados - raça e gênero no debate público sobre imigração na Itália* (Garcia; Zanin, 2021) and *Immigrants or refugees? Technologies of governmentality and the Palestinian exodus to Brazil in the 20th century* (Jardim, 2016). These texts present the results of studies on immigrants in different contexts and involving different nationalities. On the other hand, both similarly reference Bourdieu (2010) to support arguments about domination—in this case, involving gender, a common concern for both Shilling (1991) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2018)—and forms of control described and analyzed from the perspective of governmentality. However, by drawing on Bourdieu (2014a), the authors intend to take up again the "historicity" of the mechanisms of power and thus allow access to dimensions of agency both for the

representatives of nation-states and international bodies linked to the theme of migration and refuge and for the social agents themselves who experience these conditions.

In the case of articles that rely on Bourdieu's conceptual system (Ennes, 2010, 2020; Novaes; Rossi, 2018), Bourdieu occupies a more central place. In *Imigrantes, cirurgias plásticas e poder em dois tempos: contribuição para uma hipótese de pesquisa*, Ennes (2010) basically uses two concepts developed by Bourdieu: *habitus* and strategy. Without resorting to the concept of *hexis* in this article, the author seeks to understand the body as an expression of the *habitus*, therefore proposing that the practical and symbolic dispositions associated with the immigrant condition are expressed in immigrants' bodies. When analyzing the occurrence of ethnic plastic surgeries among immigrants, the author suggests that, beyond pure adherence to hegemonic aesthetic standards, these body modifications may result from immigrants' strategies or practical sense and can be understood as investments in one's own body in the pursuit of better social and economic positioning (Connell; Mears, 2018).

Ten years after this first article, Ennes published *Bourdieu and the 'migrant-body'. Embodiment in the migrant context* (2020). In this article, the author delves into Bourdieusian theory to propose the notion of the "migrant-body." To this end, the author suggests that Bourdieu's concepts, as Bourdieu himself advocated, be treated as a system. Thus, the author returns to the concepts of field, capital, strategy, *habitus*, and *hexis*. The author uses this articulated set of concepts to analyze articles by Brazilian female and male authors who have studied, from different perspectives, the contexts experienced by Brazilian migrants.

This analysis results in two possibilities for thinking about the body in migratory contexts. The first refers to the processes of visibilization and invisibilization that immigrants suffer and/or produce. This dynamic would be associated with the types of capital (mobilized or absent), including the body itself, conceived both from an aesthetic point of view and in terms of physical abilities understood as bodily techniques. The body is also thought of as an expression of *habitus/hexis* or capital to explain immigrants' strategies in certain fields of action. In this sense, the implementation of bodily changes, carried out both to mitigate differences and to accentuate them (such as accent, haircuts, and ways of gesturing), must be understood in accordance with the demands of the specific field. This approach openly dialogues with the analytical proposal of Connell and Mears (2018, p. 562), as it makes it possible to analyze the body both as an expression of social inequalities and as a form of transgression of social hierarchies.

According to Ennes (2020), the second possibility for thinking about the “migrant-body,” more directly associated with the Bourdieusian theoretical system, is to revisit migratory trajectories through the categories of alienated body and unencumbered body, as expressions of *habitus* and *hexis* and their possibilities of being updated along migratory trajectories.

In turn, in the article *O corpo das mulheres brasileiras e o seu estereótipo no universo fitness em Portugal*, Novaes and Rossi (2018) study Brazilian female gym users in the city of Lisbon and use the concepts of *habitus* and *illusio* to explain the association of “Brazilianness” with the embodiment of practices and aesthetic standards exercised in gyms. These practices, understood as dispositions that function as “structuring structures,” are considered a dimension of what could be called *habitus*, such as those related to the inherited capacity to perform movements and dances. This capacity is reinforced, as an expression of *illusio*, in the migratory context, as a belief and investment in the assertion of bodily characteristics socially constructed as Brazilian and in the distinction in relation to Portuguese women, whether within the gyms themselves or, more directly, in the broader society (Novaes; Rossi, 2018).

Finally, in the article *Meu corpo em campo - reflexões e desafios no trabalho etnográfico com imigrantes na Itália*, Albuquerque (2017) narrates and analyzes her experience as a Black Brazilian female researcher during her fieldwork conducted in Italy. In this case, Bourdieu is referenced not for his concepts, but as a counterpoint in terms of gender and race markers. By problematizing her condition as a researcher and the difficulties and situations in which she suffered discrimination, Albuquerque recalls that, although Bourdieu carried out ethnographic work both in France and in Algeria, he never had to address and/or make explicit his gender, race, and national origin, since all these markers were hegemonic. These markers, when considered in relation to the locations (rural France and Algeria, an African country), would place him in a situation inverse to that of the female researcher, who suffered from the stigmas and prejudices resulting from her gender, race, and country of origin while conducting her research in Italy.

Final considerations

The growth in publications linking the theme of international migration to the body motivated us to write this article. Initially, the approach seemed intriguing to us, since in the past, more precisely between the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Ennes, 2024), the relationship between immigration and the body, especially based on the centrality of race in the

social and political thought of the period, maintained a close relationship with racist theses and theories.

The bibliographic survey and reading work led us to articles from different areas of knowledge, ranging from the Social Sciences to the Health Sciences and including literary studies. This diversification already points to the multidisciplinary nature of the bibliographic production on the subject. Another finding was the great diversity of male and female authors cited and referenced in the articles that served as the sample, which suggests that there is no broader hegemonic theoretical framework in the field of migration studies. Given the difficulty of systematizing the material in a way that would lead us to the theoretical matrices of all the articles read, we chose to analyze the publications that relied on the three most frequently referenced authors: Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu.

Several other articles that were part of the initial sample do not reference these three authors and were therefore left out of the analysis performed here. On another occasion, they will certainly contribute to a better understanding of the place of the body in contemporary migration studies.

What Foucault, Butler, and Bourdieu have in common is the central importance they give to the body. All of them, albeit in different ways, associate the body with relations of power and domination. In the case of the articles in which Foucault is the central author, the body is conceived as a dimension of migration through the control exercised by power apparatuses, docilization, and discipline. This occurs primarily through the State and its apparatuses of power, which control both the entry and the permanence of immigrants within the logic of “making live and letting die.” There are also articles that analyze the action of control devices over immigrants and their bodies, such as hospitals, social services, and their agents. In these articles, immigrants are prevented from crossing borders through the control exercised over their bodies. Among those who do cross borders, their bodies are rendered docile and/or disciplined in accordance with the health norms, jobs, values, and customs of the destination countries.

Butler has been referenced by authors who have researched the bodily dimensions of migrations, especially regarding issues related to sexuality and gender. In this sense, some of the articles examined the bodies of immigrants to identify forms of control and abjection affecting cis women, trans women, and travestis. In these cases, the queer analytical perspective was mobilized both to refer to processes of destabilization and identity conflicts in the destination locations and to distinguish between the realities experienced by trans and cisgender

women migrants. In line with the queer argument, some female authors have turned to Butler to highlight dimensions of immigrant agency in adverse and oppressive contexts, especially drawing upon the ideas of visibility and performance.

Finally, in most articles in which Bourdieu is referenced, one can notice the authors' concern with highlighting the embodied dimension of the immigrant experience. That is, these articles examine how elements of the society of origin and the actions of immigrants in specific fields in the destination societies are embodied. This process of incorporation is understood as an expression of *habitus/hexis* or, in some cases, as a process through which these are updated during the migration trajectory. In this context, there are also references to how the availability of capital (economic, social, and/or symbolic) or its absence combines with strategies in specific fields, such as the professional or educational fields.

The articles that served as our basis cover a broad analytical and empirical range of studies by Brazilian female and male authors on immigration over the last two decades. Foucault, Butler, and Bourdieu are referenced to analyze the reality of immigrants in Brazil and Europe through different approaches to the body. In this sense, it is possible to state that the bodily dimension of migratory trajectories represents a valuable perspective that allows us to access different levels of the reality experienced by migrants. Depending on bodily aspects such as markers of gender, sex, race, nationality, and class, migrants are more exposed to forms of control, exploitation, and invisibilization.

Finally, based on what has been analyzed, it is clear that the body—unlike how it was mobilized in studies on immigration at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, that is, associated with biological evidence in the form of race—has returned in contemporary studies, above all, in its strict relationship with power, whether in terms of domination, agency, or political and identitarian ambivalences and loopholes.

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