

Reconstruction of the face with botox and filler injections[‡]

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Abstract

This article deals with the women's narratives of "natural" and "unnatural" appearance and the possible meanings in which these narratives indicate regarding the use of botox and filler technologies and applications, which are among the today's "youth" work interventions. This study, which was based on a field research and the participant observation technique, was carried out at the X Aesthetic Center in Ankara/Turkey between the years of 2021-2022. The data were obtained from in-depth interviews with the doctor who performed the botox and filler procedure and from the female participants in different range of ages who have these applications. In this study, which is based on the meanings attributed by the participants to the "natural" and "unnatural" appearance, and which takes the concept of "natural" as problematic, the discourse of "naturalness" is discussed in connection with the literature on nature, culture, body and technology. In the light of these discussions, we will focus on where and how we should position the bodily regimes of the participants involved in botox and filler procedures, and on the boundaries between the "natural" and "unnatural" body which will be tried to be blurred. In order to do so, it will be argued that Donna J. Haraway's cyborg figure, i.e. "machine-organism hybrids", can be adapted to the field of botox and filler applications.

Key Words: Botox and filler injections, "natural appearance", "natural/unnatural" body, cyborg figure, technology

Introduction

"The latest biochemical developments, technological innovations and collaboration with scientific methods of the aesthetic industry" (Moore, 2002) have enabled modification applications that focus on the signs of aging. These applications have provided individuals

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Botoks ve dolgu enjeksiyonları ile yüzün yeniden inşası[‡]

Öz

Bu makale, günümüz "gençlik" işi müdahalelerinden botoks ve dolgu teknolojileri ile uygulamalarının kullanımına yönelik olarak kadınların "doğal" ve "doğal olmayan" görünümüne ilişkin anlatılarını ve bu anlatıların işaret ettiği olası anlamları işlemektedir. Alan araştırmasına ve "katılımlı gözlem" tekniğine dayanan bu çalışma, 2021-2022 yılları arasında Ankara ilinde yer alan X Estetik Merkezinde gerçekleştirilmiş olup; veriler, botoks ve dolgu işlemi yapan doktor ile uygulama yaptıran farklı yaş aralığındaki kadın katılımcılarla gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine mülakatlardan elde edilmiştir. Katılımcıların "doğal" ve "doğal olmayan" görünümüne atfettikleri anlamlardan hareket eden ve "doğal" kavramını sorunsal edinen bu çalışmada, "doğallık" söylemi, doğa, kültür, beden ve teknoloji ile ilgili literatürle bağlantılı olarak tartışmaya açılmaktadır. Bu tartışmalar ışığı altında, botoks ve dolgu işlemlerine dahil olan katılımcıların bedensel rejimlerini nerede ve nasıl konumlandırmamız gerektiği üzerinde durulacak ve "doğal" ve "doğal olmayan" beden arasındaki sınırlar bulanıklaştırılmaya çalışılacaktır. Bunun bir yolu olarak da, Donna J. Haraway'in "makine-organizma melezleri"ne işaret eden siborg (cyborg) figürünün botoks ve dolgu uygulamaları alanına uyarlanabileceği ileri sürülecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Botoks ve dolgu enjeksiyonları, "doğal görünüm", "doğal/doğal olmayan" beden, siborg figürü, teknoloji

with new opportunities to respond to the aging appearance (Muisse & Desmarais, 2010, p. 126). With the increasing interest in the face as an indicator of age or aging, there has been a continuous innovation in the technologies and products offered in the search for "youth" in the medical (non-surgical) aesthetic industry (Brandt *et al.*, 2011). "Anti-aging" applications and products covers a range of technologies from anti-aging face creams to chemical peels, from laser skin resurfacing to, mesotherapy, from dermabrasion to injectable botox and fillers for the face (Fraser, 2003). Among anti-aging technologies, botox and filler applications are stated to be one of the "newest and

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most revolutionary in facial rejuvenation” (Hexsel *et al.*, 2007, p. 417) and are among the “most popular” aesthetic technologies (Singh & Kelly, 2003).

Botox, obtained from the bacterium “*Clostridium botulinum*”, is a toxin that is injected into the facial muscles to remove wrinkles on the face and blocks the potential actions of the facial muscles (Coleman & Carruthers, 2006). Fillers containing collagen and hyaluronic acid, on the other hand, are used for aesthetic purposes such as eliminating wrinkles as well as adding flexibility and volume to the skin (Brandt & Cazzaniga, 2008, p. 154). It is possible to remove facial wrinkles i.e. lines between the two eyebrows, smile lines, wrinkles around the eyes, lines in horizontal forehead and around the mouth, through these applications that work to minimize the signs of aging on the face over time (Coleman & Carruthers, 2006, p. 177).

It is possible to talk about the “body” through these applications, as well as through the role of botox and filler technologies in maintaining a youthful appearance on the surface of the face. For example, as the statements of the participants who claim that they have gained a “natural appearance” with botox and filler applications inevitably raise questions about what it means to talk about the “natural body”, it also problematizes the concept of “natural” itself.

In order to focus on this problematic and open it up for further discussions, firstly, the meanings attributed to the “natural appearance” by the participants will be taken into consideration and the possible interpretations indicated by the references to the “natural appearance” will be included. Secondly, we will focus on how feminist theorists approach the concepts of “natural” and “unnatural body”, and then, in line with the discussions on the “natural body”, it will be mentioned where and how we should position the bodily regimes of the participants involved in botox and filler procedures. Thirdly, in order to blur the privileged alignments between the “natural” and the “unnatural” body, which the “natural” discourse puts at work, it will be suggested that Haraway’s (1985) cyborg figure, which refers to the human being integrated with technology, can be adapted to the field of botox and filler applications.

Methods

I decided to conduct research on botox and filler procedures, which are among the anti-aging medical aesthetic technologies. My aim is to include the perspectives of both practitioners and consumers on the management and modification of the body to prevent aging and achieve a youthful appearance. Botox and filler applications have captured my interest due to claims that they have surpassed traditional plastic surgery (Sarwer & Crerand, 2004, p. 105). They are

also considered among the most preferred aesthetic procedures globally (Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010, p. 68) and have witnessed a significant surge in popularity (Sarwer & Crerand, 2004; Sperry *et al.*, 2009). My interest in this subject arose from the necessity to comprehend individuals’ attitudes, beliefs, and expectations regarding the results of botox and filler applications, as well as their personal experiences with them. As Simone de Beauvoir (2020, p. 14) asserts, “a situation can only make sense in relation to the experiences of others.” In this context, gaining fieldwork knowledge grounded in the everyday manifestations of these practices contributes to the development of more nuanced perspectives on why women opt for botox and filler applications and how their bodies are represented, experienced, and transformed.

In the initial phase of this research, my task was to locate a doctor willing to provide information about such practices and allow me to meet with their clients. Doctor Levent¹ seemed to be a suitable candidate for this research, as I had become acquainted with him a few years ago through a friend who had undergone botox and filler procedures. During our face-to-face meeting, I provided Doctor Levent with a brief overview of the research I intended to conduct. I explained that I needed to conduct “participant observation” by meeting with clients and being present at every stage of the application, including before, during, and after the procedure. My rationale for conducting on-site observations and interviews was rooted in the belief that “the activities of individuals only gain meaning when they are described in terms of the structures and institutions in which these activities are carried out” (Walsh, 2014, p. 32). Additionally, participant observation afforded me the opportunity to actively engage in my research and share in the experiences of the individuals involved. Following our initial meeting, which lasted approximately two hours, Doctor Levent expressed his willingness to assist me and pledged to make arrangements for me to meet with his clients. Consequently, I obtained permission to become a part of people’s lives in the setting where botox and filler procedures were performed.

I initiated my research in June 2021, which was conducted at Doctor Levent’s X Aesthetic Center² in Ankara. The decision to concentrate my research in a single location was primarily driven by the challenges associated with gaining access to the facilities where botox and filler procedures were performed. Despite

¹ A pseudonym is used for each participant mentioned throughout the article in accordance with research ethics.

² In accordance with research ethics, the name of the place is not included.

my efforts to provide comprehensive information about my research via email to multiple doctors in Ankara who offer botox and filler applications, and my request for a face-to-face meeting, my attempts to conduct research in various locations with different doctors proved unsuccessful.

This research, conducted in collaboration with a doctor and female participants spanning various age groups, adopted an open ethnographic approach. This approach involved participants being fully aware of the study's purpose and providing verbal consent, as outlined by Paulson (2008, p. 258). Each participant was provided with an "informed consent form", and any unclear aspects were thoroughly explained to them. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants at X Aesthetics Center and varied in duration, typically lasting around half an hour, depending on the participants' preferences.

Conversations took different directions with clients and the doctor. In-depth interviews with female participants focused on their motivations for seeking botox and filler procedures. The doctor's interview, on the other hand, focused on topics that required more technical knowledge and expertise. This included discussions about what botox and filler procedures entail, which products are used on specific areas of the face. It also incorporated their personal opinions on these applications.

As the ethnographic field study didn't progress according to the researcher's initial plan, the interviews with the participants who consented to be part of the research were not conducted on a daily basis. Instead, the timing of these interviews was determined by the participants themselves, and they were not necessarily aligned with the specific days and hours originally requested by the researcher.

During this research, which I conducted intermittently between 2021 and 2022, I employed a method where, in situations where observation alone was insufficient, I posed open-ended questions in line with the research's objectives without disrupting the natural flow of procedures and conversations between the doctor and clients. If permission was granted, interviews were digitally recorded, and if not, I relied on written notes. In certain instances, I also made use of "mental notes" (Emerson *et al.*, 2001, p. 356) to help me remember specific details and impressions that would be valuable during the writing phase. As my observations and the notes I gathered started to exhibit similarities and repetitions, indicating to me that the fieldwork had reached a point of sufficiency, I made the decision to conclude the fieldwork in September 2022.

Numerous "stories" were gathered through in-depth interviews with the participants. However, for the

purposes of this article, the focus was placed specifically on narratives that revolved around the concept of a "natural appearance." The article aimed to interpret the potential meanings of these narratives within the context of existing literature.

Results

Meanings attached to the "natural appearance"

Botox and filler injections, which block the activity of facial muscles, prevent individuals from attempting some mimic movements such as "frowning", "raising the forehead", "squinting the eyes". For this reason, it is argued in the literature that botox and filler applications result in "loss of facial expression" (Singh & Kelly, 2003, p. 273) and destroy the "naturalness" of the face. However, botox and filler procedures performed with a correct technique by Doctor Levent are considered as technological interventions that do not spoil the "natural" appearance of the face: "Contrary to the popular belief, botox and filler procedures do not necessarily result in a dull, expressionless face. It is possible to obtain a natural appearance with the proper amount of dose applied. If you use too much filler, it will swell the face and make it unusable. If too much botox is applied to the tail of the eyebrows, the eyebrows will rise excessively, and it might lead to a person to suddenly look like Mr. Spock or have an expression we call the devil face [...] I am always in favor of creating a natural look in my operations."

For Doctor Levent, "natural appearance" is woven with meanings such as not to overdo it in the amount of dose applied, injection without disturbing the facial features (such as the structure of the eyebrows and lips), and not being noticed by others. Participants too who have botox and filler procedures agree that these technologies give the face a "natural" appearance. The meanings attributed to the "natural appearance" in the narratives of the participants are based on the comparison of the botox and filler applications with the "unnatural" interventions of plastic surgery. In addition to this comparison, it is based on how easily one can detect whether an individual had botox and filler injections.

According to 38-years-old Bade, who gives examples from popular culture figures such as Seda Sayan and Ajda Pekkan, referring to the media, plastic surgery is a technological intervention that puts the individual at the risk of "looking unnatural": "I don't want to be one of those women with puffy lips and ping-pong-ball cheeks and look like them. The aesthetic ones are all the same. They are like mass production out of the same factory. Aesthetic faces resemble each other, and in this case they look like everyone but themselves. But botox and filler do not spoil the facial features, you look

natural [...]” Bade equates the “unnatural appearance” with plastic surgery and consider the plastic surgery as a procedure aimed at the standardized ideals of beauty. “Puffy lips”, “cheeks like a ping-pong ball”, are like fashionable desires, and plastic surgery might be a more appropriate label for surgeries performed for non-functional reasons, which Anne Balsamo (1992, p. 213) calls “fashion surgery”. But, according to Bade’s narrative, the main goal of botox and filler procedures is “normality” and “functionality”: trying to remove wrinkles and prolong the youthful appearance as much as possible without spoiling the “natural” appearance. The “natural appearance” is equal to the ideal appearance, not to exceed the limits. It means that the less played on the face, the more it preserves its purity. Otherwise, procedures that do not conform to existing ideals could expose the female body to the accusation of “unnaturalness”.

Like Bade, 27-years-old Eylem also reveals with the following words that botox and filler applications give the face a “natural appearance”: “As long as it is not exaggerated, the face does not seem aesthetic with botox and fillers. It is possible to gain a natural look with small touches” said Eylem. For her, the “natural appearance” become a meaningful practice by the idea that botox and filler procedures do not erase facial expressions in which it is difficult or impossible to detect technological modifications on the face.

Thinking that botox and filler injections make them look young “naturally”, Bade and Eylem frame these applications as more daily, “natural” and routine bodily procedures compared to the “extreme” or “transformative” processes of the plastic surgery. Botox and filler applications are among the technologies preferred for “creating distinctiveness and uniqueness” (Morgan, 1991, p. 35) for Bade and Eylem, who try to optimize the existing appearance instead of changing the facial appearance significantly.

The participants, who prefer botox and filler procedures with the claim that they give the face a “natural appearance” and built a “natural appearance” on the fact that other people do not understand what they have done to their faces, also keep such procedures secret from others. According to Doctor Levent, who states that women are comfortable having these procedures, but feel uncomfortable about sharing them with someone else, the reason why women hide these procedures from others is that they do not want others to call them “young through aesthetics”. “I don’t tell anyone what I’ve done to my face. Because I don’t want it to be known that I look better than before thanks to a procedure”. It is important for many of the participants, such as 39-years-old Gökçen to show their manipulated appearance as “natural”.

The fact that the participants do not share their botox and filler injections with others is similar to the women who have undergone plastic surgery in Debra Gimlin’s study named *Cosmetic Surgery: Beauty as Commodity* (2000). The participants in Gimlin’s study hide these procedures from others in order not to be accused of being “unnatural”. According to Gimlin (2000, p. 94), women are aware of the fact that the technologically altered body is a “hoax”, and in order not to deal with accusations of having an unrealistic representation of the self, they hide their technological interventions from others and try to convince others that they are in fact “authentic”. Because the “artificiality” created by aesthetic applications can be seen as a sign of “deception” and “fraud” for many people, in the sense that the user imitates something that is not herself and threatens transparency by hiding the “real” face (Goldstein, 1995, p. 312).

Another reason why the participants, who strive for a “natural appearance” while resisting “natural” aging through the botox and filler technologies, prefer not to admit having such procedures done with others is due to the fact that there is a social stigma towards these procedures as being “unnatural”. I come across narratives that categorize women as “natural women” and “unnatural women” through the discourse of “naturalness” during my field studies.

Complaining about the intensity of the criticism against women who have botox and filler procedures, 51-years-old Burcu states that in reality, no one is “natural” in one place: “There are many naturalists who speak by heart like ‘I always favor naturalness’. In order not to give them this opportunity, I hide that I have botox and fillers from most of my relatives. When I have botox, I become unnatural but they think they are natural with their make-up faces. Do they think that what they call natural is natural? This gang will never run out [...] Well, doesn’t every woman want to look younger in the mirror? You will take care of yourself in this life, because you will live with this face and body until you die. If you don’t take care of yourself, don’t go through the process, stay ‘natural’ as they say, this time they will bully you by saying that ‘she has aged, look at her type!’ When you take care of yourself, on the other hand, they say “what an effort to stay young!” Claiming that there should be a struggle against an aged appearance with the current youth interventions, Burcu shows a desire to resist the “oppressive and naturalistic” norms of femininity, while on the other hand, she seems to avoid “stigma” by hiding these procedures from her relatives.

Balsamo (1992) who argues that rejecting aesthetic procedures reinforces “romantic” concepts about a “natural” body, argues that women who choose to have aesthetic procedures, like women who get their noses

pierced, earrings and tattoos, can also be interpreted as an indication that they use their bodies as a tool to stage their cultural identity. While this assertion of Balsamo emphasizes the culturally constructed nature of the concepts of youth and beauty, it also tends to weaken the “neo-romantic” concepts of the body. However, Burcu’s statement reflects that botox and filler procedures are not as socially accepted as getting a nose pierced, wearing earrings, putting on make-up or dyeing hair. In this case, the discourse of “natural body” seems to continue to function as a resistance to the cultural or social prejudices in general, and it is one of the indicators that “aesthetic operations are an activity subject to criticism” (Gimlin, 2000, p. 85). For this reason, the “natural appearance”, which corresponds to a face as if no action has been performed on the face, is intended to hide the processes behind the changed appearance and reveals a strong social/cultural imperative.

In general, it is possible to consider the meanings pointing to the “natural appearance” in the narratives of the participants from two perspectives. First, the references to the “natural appearance” in the statements of the participants are about distinguishing between “good” and “bad” aesthetic procedures. “Good” aesthetic procedures achieve a “natural appearance”: the “natural appearance” is the naturalness of the result in the sense that there are no traces of complications such as needle marks, bruises and swelling behind the changed appearance on the face, and “the face that looks like it has not undergone any processing”. In this context, botox and filler procedures are perceived as more “natural”, “acceptable” and “reassuring” compared to the plastic surgery. Secondly, the discourse of “naturalness” is mobilized to criticize aesthetic procedures completely, with the emphasis on “natural appearance is good” as opposed to aesthetically altered appearances. According to Suzanne Fraser (2003, p. 71), since the discourse of “natural” is positioned as the condition of our own existence, the “unnatural” represents an order of existence beyond conscious perception. From this perspective, what is unconventional is open to being portrayed as “unnatural”. This version of “natural” can be used as a disciplinary strategy against women, providing grounds for condemning non-normative behavior. On the other hand, it can be said that women who have undergone these practices also act in a counter-strategy to justify and defend the use of aesthetic procedures, claiming that aesthetic procedures “do not spoil the naturalness”. As Fraser (2003, p. 137) argues, the discourse of “natural” as a term intended to inspire confidence rather than be false may serve to legitimize techno-scientific/cultural practices such as aesthetic procedures. As a matter of fact, the “naturalness” in the narratives of Doctor

Levent, who tries to create a “natural” image, and the participants, who try to achieve a “natural appearance”, is aimed at creating aesthetic “normality”. However, this “normality” indicates that botox and filler procedures are “unconventional” in themselves, as it can be seen in the participants’ avoidance of aesthetic evidence and concealment of their procedure from others. In a way, participants may think that they are getting a “normal/natural” look, but their involvement in these processes still marks them as “unnatural”.

In short, “naturalness” can be used to both justify and reject the use of botox and fillers. This situation is an indication of how versatile, complex and specific the usage and content of the discourse of “natural appearance” is. Moreover, narratives about the “natural appearance” raise questions about what it means to talk about the “natural body” and problematize the concept of “natural” itself. In order to concentrate on this problematic, in the next heading it will be discussed how the concepts of “natural” and “natural body” are handled in the feminist literature. Then in the following headings it will be emphasized where and how we should position the bodily regimes of the participants involved in botox and filler applications.

Discussion

"Natural body" vs. "unnatural body"

In the literature, there is a divergence in the perspectives of feminist theorists regarding the concepts of “natural” and “natural body”. The main division is between feminists who call themselves “essentialists” and those who call themselves “social/cultural constructivists”.

What corresponds to the “natural body” for feminists with essentialist visions, is a pure and original entity that is free from cultural pressures and influences which defies historical change and exists pre-culturally or independently of culture (Fraser, 2003). The body is not built with certain practices and policies, but is a fixed and unchanging essence that operates outside of it (Gatens, 2018, p. 27). The body, which is accepted as innate and unchanging, has been associated with the idea of a biological given body whose organic integrity is inviolable (Negrin, 2002, p. 29).

On the other hand, the “natural body” claimed by feminists from an “essentialist” perspective is circumvented by the fact that humans are born into culture. According to the feminists who oppose the “natural body” view, the body is not “natural phenomena of existence”, but is related to the culture in which it is exhibited, and therefore, the body is socially constructed as opposed to being “natural” (Grosz, 1994, p. 17-18; Turner, 2019, p. 11).

The reasons why the pre-cultural designation of the

“natural body” is not accepted are mainly twofold. The first reason is that it makes the concept of the “natural” controversial. Another reason for such rejection from the point of view of some feminists and post-modern theorists is the fact that the discourse of the “natural body” creates the nature/culture dichotomy and, consequently, helps possible meanings attributed to the dichotomy operative and circulate in the realm of discourse.

The concept of “natural” benefits from a system of dualities that pits nature and culture, woman and man, mind and body, activity and passivity (Fraser, 2003, p. 61). For this reason, references to the “natural” or pre-cultural body tend to reproduce normative binary gender and gender categories, since the discourse of “natural body” functions as a discourse that privileges men over women (Fraser, 2003). Since the problematic of nature is intertwined with the problematic of gender, the nature/culture dichotomy has led to the fictionalization of female identity “outside” of culture (Plumwood, 2020, p. 11-13). Women have long been positioned in a series of hierarchical cultural oppositions, representing the categories of “body”, “emotion” and “nature”, against the categories representing men i.e. “culture”, “mind”, “intelligence” etc. (de Beauvoir, 2020, p. 143; Harding, 1986, p. 23). As a matter of fact, the concept of nature in the Western tradition have functioned as a political category rather than a descriptive one. In this context, the concept itself has been designed as the “other” in the natural state that includes the feminine, which the concept of culture (male) keep it separate from itself and deems it inferior (Plumwood, 2020, p. 14). Within the paradigm suggesting that culture is privileged over nature, women are seen as closer to nature than men are and therefore considered secondary (Harding, 1986).

While the discourse of “natural” constructs the body as something unchanging in itself, it also enables the body and nature in general to be conceived in a “readable” and “controllable” way (Fraser, 2003, p. 133). If we evaluate this argument in terms of aesthetic procedures, one reason why the “natural” is circulated through the discourses of the aesthetic procedures is that the “natural body” stands as a raw material or clay which can be shaped by the “artist doctor” (Fraser, 2003, p. 135). In the hands of the “artist doctor” the unpredictable quality of the nature is controlled and disciplined. In this sense, successful aesthetic procedures become a matter of skill, requiring an indescribable “touch” like that of a “master” artist, just like Doctor Levent, who reconstructs the body and presents the changed face with botox and filler as “natural” by hiding all traces of the intervention, with the expression of “I always favor creating a natural image in my works”. Since the concept of nature and woman have been

closely related to the body throughout the history of Western thought, Doctor Levent’s discourse of “natural appearance” can be read as a discourse aimed at rendering aesthetic procedures feminine, but also as a discourse to position women’s bodies as passive and somehow outside the culture before his intervention become interpretable. Moving on from this view, it is the doctor himself who can resist nature by altering the body. The alignment of the body with nature serves to reposition the body as the logical object of scientific intervention, control, and healing through the role of science as the “master” of nature (Fraser, 2003, p. 167). Reproducing the elements of the traditional passivity, the associations around art, which contribute to the repetition of femininity through the metaphor of the doctor as an artist and the body as a work of art, use and reinforce the objectifying male gaze and the passive female object (Fraser, 2003, p. 135). On the other hand, “nature” still exists in the aesthetically treated woman, but it has been captured and shaped according to the doctors’ wishes. Therefore, the following paradox is reached: The man (doctor) both wants to capture nature in woman and judges woman on her artificiality since hers is a nature under transformation. “Woman is anti-nature as well as nature” (de Beauvoir, 2020, p. 195). Indeed, the “naturalness” in question is a “naturalness” acquired through the cultural means and clearly refers to a “man”-made youth.

In general, the body is an ongoing field of struggle in the “natural” and “unnatural” body discussions, which are handled within the scope of the definitions of nature and culture. While essentialist approaches tend to consider the body as “natural” and “immutable”, the perspectives opposing the essentialist view, on the other hand, regard the concept of “natural body” as partly invalid and unnecessary, since they make the body and the meanings surrounding the body immanent to the culture. It is clear that the “naturalistic” emphasis on the body is unsatisfactory to most theorists. “Naturalistic” views of human bodies tend to utter very little about the subject of what might be conceptualized as “body construction”.

The “natural body” from the “essentialist” point of view is a body that has not been altered by technological interventions such as anti-wrinkle creams, hair dyes, make-up, plastic surgery and non-surgical aesthetic procedures and is accordingly unaffected by culture (Dull & West, 1991; Gagne & McGaughey, 2002). For advocates of the “natural body” perspective, “naturalness” must exist outside the existing norms of beauty and youth. Essentialist views, which render women to be subordinated to the field of nature, seem to combine a “romantic” understanding of woman and nature, and attribute to women virtues such as “devotion

to nature” and “naturalness” (Plumwood, 2020, p. 20). For this reason, it can be said that the bodily regimes of the participants are in opposition to the essentialist perspective which gives women “permanent” qualities by referring to female nature and trying to make aging a “natural” process for women. The body, which is accepted as an “immutable” essence from an essentialist perspective, is a body that can be rejected, camouflaged and changed through the technological intervention, as it is the case in the narratives of the participants who applied for botox and filler procedures. Yet neither it means to accept the view that culture has absolute power to shape the body in anyway it wishes, nor it should mean to accept the devaluation of nature. Rejecting nature might be a way of maintaining hierarchy because when the culture which builds the body is grasped through such hierarchy, the body can reverse the formulation of “biology is destiny” as “culture is destiny” (Butler, 2014, p. 53). It might be argued that “naturalness” is based on socially determined criteria without a permanent basis in the body, however, this does not mean that the body is a “tabula rasa”. The body is not only constrained and endowed by social relations, but also provides a basis for and contributes to these relations (Shilling, 1993, p. 13). The body is a producer as well as a receiver of social meanings (Shilling, 1993, p. 70).

As Elizabeth Grosz (1994, p. 21) states, the body does not mean that it is natural or raw in any sense, i.e. non-social or pre-social, and the body itself cannot be seen as a mere construction of social and cultural significations, devoid of its significant materiality. The body is not merely engraved and marked by external social pressures. It is also the sum of products and direct effects of the social construction of nature itself. It is necessary to approach the body as a threshold term between nature and culture and to consider the interaction of the natural and the social or cultural in this context. Taking the body simultaneously as a biological and social phenomenon means to generate a kind of realignment between naturalist and social constructivist approaches. Such an attempt accepts nature as an undeniable reality as a ground that makes cultural life possible, and argues that nature as well as the body cannot be condemned to passivity. The objection is that the idea of nature, when is adopted as an “immutable” essence, produces unequal and privileged nature-culture alignments in the historical and cultural construction of the body.

Moreover, this view of the body outlines an approach that goes beyond the partially reductionist and deterministic tendencies of naturalist and social constructivist perspectives, and highlights the importance of human embodiment by helping to understand why the body is important to individuals. As Bryan S. Turner

(2019, p. 12) argues, cultural representations of the body are historical, but there is also an experience of embodiment in which the body can only be understood by grasping it as a living experience. In other words, the body is mediated by culture, but it is also important to assume that individuals are embodied (Turner, 2019, p. 46-47). Both essentialism and constructivism that are not concerned with the language in which individuals use to describe their bodily experiences, do not allow one to analyze the phenomenology of the everyday world in which the body is involved. That is to say, it is important to argue that the body is both a physical and socially constructed entity for the purpose of taking into account the subjective experience of the body and the biological and social aspects of it.

In this direction, under the next heading, I suggest that in order to avoid acknowledging the body solely on the “nature” side or purely on the “culture” side, it is possible to state that the body has a cyborg (Haraway, 1985) existence with its ability to articulate with technology. While doing this, I combine this perspective on the body, which allows one to consider the body both biologically and socially, with the “embodiment experience” (Turner, 2019) through the way individuals live, experience and perceive their bodies.

Embodiment through technological intervention: The cyborg figure

Rejecting the essentialist category of “natural” Haraway (1985, p. 5) presents the “unnatural” conception of the body as a cybernetic organism (cyborg) corresponding to a hybrid entity of the organic and the technological. Contrary to the idea of organic holism, Haraway’s (1985) concept of the cyborg in which the “natural” and the “artificial” are indistinguishable, encourages a view that the “natural” body is transcended by technology.

Haraway regards the technological intervention as a critical aspect of embodiment: “To us, technologies can be intimate components and friendly selves” (1985, p. 61). She claim that biotechnologies can be important tools for reshaping our bodies and make physiological functioning more efficient. Haraway tries to support her claim by giving examples from science fiction novels which include human-machine hybrids from virus vectors to genetically modified divers, from heart implants to micro-electronic devices (Haraway, 1985, p. 63). For Haraway (1985), contemporary science fiction, as well as “modern” medicine, is full of cyborgs pointing to the connections between organism and machine: “Paraplegics and other severely disabled people have the most intense experiences of complex hybridization with technologies” (1985, p. 61).

If the body is an entity between the “natural” and the “artificial”, it will be possible to state that the body

has a cyborg existence with this articulation ability, in the face of the metaphysical discourse's representations that records with the body on the "natural" side. Likewise, we are familiar with Haraway's cyborg figures today. As a result of bio-technological and bio-medical developments, we have become quite accustomed to the artificial attachments that replace the "missing" parts of our bodies or that are placed to correct or improve our bodily functions: such as a number of technological "innovations" from contact lenses to pacemakers, from dental implants to bionic arms (Haraway, 2010, p. 10). In addition, cyborgization can also occur in less visible technical ways, as in the programming of everyday emotions by applying psychopharmacology (Le Breton, 2019, p. 213). In fact, Chris Hables Gray (1995), who argues that living-machine mating has become widespread in all areas of daily life, proposes to call for the association of "half-cyborg", which is experienced with tools that are integrated with the body from time to time, such as automobiles, telephones, headphones and computers.

From psycho-pharmacology to communication tools, from medical prostheses to daily life, one of the fields where technologies nourish almost every area of human relations which offer the possibilities of new embodiments is the field of aesthetic technologies. As Llewellyn Negrin (2002, p. 29) states, the emergence of "new" bio-technologies, such as the aesthetic technologies which function to intervene and reshape the human body, has radically changed the understanding of the body, which is presented as an unchanging fact of nature. In this unity of technology and organism, the body is perceived as a social and culture structure, rather than being solely determined by nature. As the aesthetic procedures changes a historically, environmentally, genetically and socially located and informed body, naturalistic concepts of identity are also technologically shifted (Gibson, 2006, p. 51).

In this context, we can say that botox and filler applications, which are aesthetic technologies which contribute to the construction of bodies, also build a "techno-body" through the hybridization of the organic and the technological. Aformentioned human-technology association in this article finds its translation in the freezing of muscles with botox and fillers injected under the skin. In the extent of this article, although the meanings in which the participants ascribe to "natural appearance" is a young face that looks "natural", "unmodified", the body corresponds to an intervened body rather than being "natural" on its own. In other words, looking natural is not the same as being natural. The body in the narratives on the "natural appearance" is reconstructed through the cooperation of an "experienced" doctor and the secret technological

interventions. In this context, the body becomes one of the indicators of Haraway's (1985) understanding of the body as a cybernetic organism (cyborg) corresponding to the hybrid existence of the organic and the technological. In this image, which represents an understanding of the ontological combination of "cultural" and "natural", neither the female body is reduced to a mere technology, nor it is completely subjected to naturalness, that is to say, the body and technology are an integrated entity. This means that the body is no longer immanent to life forms that are neither purely natural nor purely cultural, but capable of carrying both at the same time. With this blend of technology and organism, nature and culture are reworked where "one no longer constitutes a resource to be appropriated by the other" (Haraway, 1985, p. 9).

As Don Ihde (2014, p. 541) points out, who draws attention to the ways of relating physically with technologies, "some capacities are different from one's bare capacities". According to Ihde (2014, p. 539-540), who deals with human capacities through some functions such as seeing, hearing and feeling, a person can make his actions more operative by embodying his practices, habits and works through technologies. For example, a person wearing glasses sees the world through glasses, a hearing aid does this for hearing, and a visually impaired person's cane does the same for tactile mobility. Technique is a symbiosis of the artifact and the user in a human action: the world is seen through glasses, heard with a hearing aid, felt with a cane, and these technologies constitute a "half-me" status. While Ihde exemplifies the relationships of embodiment through the technology with visual, sensory and tactile relationships, I find it equally meaningful to consider botox and filler applications from this perspective. That is, "We're going to get old, it's inevitable. But we don't have to let ourselves go just because we're getting old, we can slow down the aging process by taking care of the skin. To control this process, I regularly get botox and fillers" said 57-years-old Jülide, emphasizing that aging is "natural" and inevitable, while actively resisting "natural" aging with botox and filler technologies. Through botox and filler technologies, she can prevent the signs of aging and achieve a youthful appearance by making technology a part of her body. In this context, it would not be correct to say that other participants, such as Jülide, cannot control the development of a life style shaped by nature or the restrictions imposed by the body through existing technologies. Botox and filler technologies "constitute a critical aspect of embodiment" (Haraway, 1985, p. 65) and women "actuate and represent technological intervention" through their bodies (Elliot, 2010, p. 465).

Conclusions

In this research, which is based on fieldwork and participatory observation technique, the focus is on the “natural appearance”, which is one of the reasons why the participants have botox and filler procedures. Based on the meanings attributed to “natural appearance” by the participants, possible interpretations of the concept of “natural” are included. The meanings which are circulated by the dichotomies such as “nature/culture”, “natural” and “unnatural” body are evaluated in the context of the existing literature. Consequently, the concepts of “natural” and “naturalness” are made open to discussion. As a result of these discussions, it is argued that the body cannot be recognized immanent in purely natural or in solely cultural realm, on the contrary, cyborg bodies (Haraway, 1985), which allow the hybridization of “organism-machine” in the field of botox and filler applications, are open to construction.

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