

BRITAIN

# Now the birth is over, let's erase all evidence on a mother's body

"Mummy jobs", in which cosmetic surgeons set out to erase all evidence of childbirth from a woman's body, are already big business in the United States. Now they are catching on in Britain. VIV GROSKOP reports.

Six months after giving birth to her daughter Eva, Orlaith McAllister had her breasts done, going from a C-cup to a D-cup.

"I breastfed for five weeks and I noticed that my breasts had got smaller, especially on one side," she says. "When Eva was born, she latched on to the left breast immediately and got to like that one, so it was noticeably smaller."

She didn't feel that she had to have surgery, she says, just that she wanted it.

"I'd been through all that pain and I just wanted to enjoy my body again."

McAllister, 28, lives between London and Belfast. Eva is now 10 months old. "Some women let themselves go," she says. "If they're comfortable with that, that's fine. But I believe that's how you get into a state of depression after you have a baby, because you don't like yourself any more. In my pregnancy I did everything to still be me: I ate healthily and exercised — I only put on a stone."

She intends to have more children: "I want to have four more babies. I don't want a breast operation after every one. But for now I am just looking after myself: this is my life and I'm not hurting anybody else by doing it."

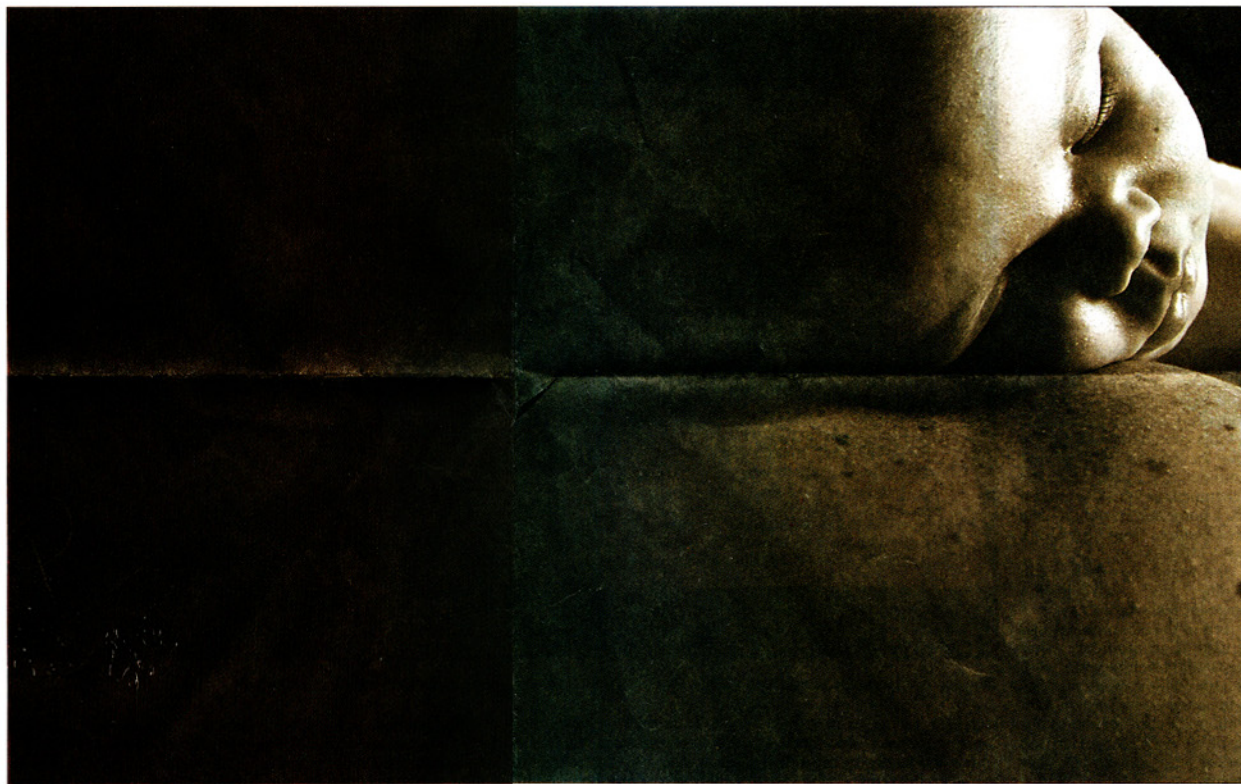
Perhaps this kind of surgery is not entirely surprising. McAllister is a model (she

appeared on Big Brother series six) and already had experience of surgery — she had had breast implants before having children. But she is part of a growing trend: women using surgery to "tweak" the bits of their bodies they don't like after childbirth. Indeed, the so-called "mummy job" has become common in the US and these "makeovers" are becoming increasingly popular in the UK.

McAllister had her surgery with Make Yourself Amazing, a company which promises "a life-changing experience that revitalises, rejuvenates but most of all reassures". It recommends breast surgery, tummy tucks and liposuction for the post-birth body — the aim is to erase all evidence of childbirth from a woman's body.

The Californian surgeon David A. Stoker was one of the first to market the mummy makeover, offering an all-in plastic surgery package that includes a breast lift, with or without implants, tummy tuck and liposuction. Women, says Stoker, need no longer feel "self-conscious or resentful about their appearance". Last year, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons performed more than 325,000 mummy jobs on women aged 20 to 39, up 11% on 2005.

The UK market is still small, but is growing. A survey last October for the online bank Egg claimed that 0.2% of new British mothers had surgery to get back



Magical time: but a disturbing trend towards cosmetic surgery for youmothers has surfaced.

Photo: Fairfax

their pre-baby bodies — but the real figure is likely to be higher. The number of cosmetic surgery procedures in the UK has doubled in the past two years, and surgeons report that breast surgery is increasingly popular with women who are unhappy with the way that breast feeding and pregnancy have altered their figures.

The mummy job is all about self-esteem, say fans. It is a misogynist pathologising of the

post-pregnancy body, argue critics of the procedure. Diana Zuckerman, president of the US National Research Centre for Women and Families, recently said that if marketing could turn the post-pregnancy body "into a socially unacceptable thing, think of how big your audience could be and how many surgeries you could sell them". In short, making women believe that their bodies look disgusting after childbirth is a marketing

man's dream. It is probably not difficult to achieve. On the parenting website Mumsnet, a popular thread about the post-baby body includes detailed and lengthy descriptions of inside-out belly buttons, loose skin, Caesarean scar overhang, "diabolical stretchmarks" and handlebars sitting across hip bones, with everyone claiming that their disfigurement is the most hideous.

"Does anyone know how

this can be improved except for surgery?" asks one mother in desperation. A 2005 survey by Mother & Baby magazine found that 87% of new mothers were "positively unhappy" with their figures: 50% would "consider surgery"; 25% said they would "definitely have surgery".

The ravages of motherhood are mentioned as a factor in a quarter of the case studies featured in the most recent series of Channel 4's 10 Years

Younger. The production company responsible for the programme, Maverick TV, posted a request on parenting forums which reads: "Mothers!! Has childbirth left your body looking like a deflated balloon? Have you lost the baby weight but not the wobble? Wish you could go from saggy tummy to yummy mummy? Then 10 Years Younger are here to help." Major surgery is always part of the process.

Rajiv Grover, a consultant plastic surgeon in Harley Street, lists "post-pregnancy surgery" as an option on his website and describes "women who want to get their bodies back after having children" as a major part of his client base. Breast surgery is common, he says: "What you're seeing now is women who are wanting not to be bigger but to have back what they've lost."

Also on Harley Street, Angelica Kavouni offers "cosmetic solutions for modern motherhood".

A 40-year-old mother of two young children, she has had a mummy job herself in the form of a breast lift. "There are a few women who are lucky — maybe 10% to 15% — and their body shape returns to normal after childbirth," says Kavouni. "Unfortunately with the rest of us — and I include myself in this — you are left with loose skin and your breasts appear droopy."

She describes her breast surgery as "not an augmentation, just a small tidying-up". She now sees two to three clients a week who want the same, with or without tummy tuck.

"The type of women I tend to see have already lost a considerable amount of weight and are more or less back to their pre-pregnancy weight," she says. "They are the type who do yoga while they're pregnant, take care of their nutrition and find that although they have tried to take all the precautions, there are two problems: loose skin on the abdomen and breasts that never recover. These women are not obsessed, they do not have operation after operation. They just want something very specific."

But then there's the money. Cosmetic surgery starts at £1000 (\$2800), although it is cheaper overseas. —Guardian