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The Mommy Makeover Is the New Feminist Rebellion

BY ANNA RAHMANAN · OCTOBER 24, 2026



A woman's body, we are told, is a temple. After childbirth, apparently, it becomes a monument. Every stretch mark a testament to sacrifice and every scar a badge of honor.

Heaven forbid we'd want to renovate, though.

Somewhere along the way, the feminist celebration of the postpartum body acquired the unmistakable tone of a commandment. Love your stretch marks! Cherish your C-section scar! Embrace the breasts that have surrendered to gravity! Look in the mirror and marvel at what motherhood has made of you!

Sure, there is something beautiful about this gospel of self-acceptance but there is also something faintly tyrannical about being told how to feel about the body you alone inhabit, especially when we are mostly expected to also squeeze ourselves back into pre-pregnancy

That all brings us to the great feminist declaration. My body, my choice.

But what happens when the choice is a tummy tuck?

The New Politics of the Postpartum Body Enter the mommy makeover, a combination of procedures often involving breast surgery, a tummy tuck and liposuction. On the surface, another indulgence in our culture's endless pursuit of physical perfection. But beneath the surgical promise lies a more complicated desire.

A woman seeking a new nose or a more fashionable backside may be chasing a version of herself she has never been. On the other hand, a mother seeking to restore her pre-pregnancy figure may be chasing someone she remembers intimately...Herself.

Would she ever have contemplated surgery had pregnancy left her body unchanged?

Alicia, a mother of three who underwent a mommy makeover, describes feeling torn between gratitude for her children and discomfort with her changed appearance.

"I think there's so much pressure on women to love and embrace their postpartum bodies," she said to Newsweek, adding that the message "can make women feel guilty for wanting to change something about themselves."

The irony is pretty apparent. A movement built around liberating women from expectations about their bodies risks imposing another: compulsory self-acceptance.

Dr. Jeremy Nikfarjam, of New You Plastic Surgery in New York, sees the contradiction.

"Women can appreciate what their bodies have accomplished and still want to feel attractive, confident and comfortable in their own skin," he said to Newsweek.

Pregnancy can also leave physical problems, he notes, including separated abdominal muscles, troublesome C-section scars and excess skin. For some patients, surgery addresses discomfort alongside appearance.

The Freedom to Be Imperfectly Feminist

After surgery, she remembers trying on jeans and crying.

“It might seem like such a small thing, but for me, it meant so much,” she said to Newsweek.

A pair of jeans is hardly the stuff of feminist manifestos, yet there is something quietly radical about a mother finding a measure of freedom in the simple act of getting dressed.

Of course, there is a less flattering interpretation of the mommy makeover: patriarchy with better anesthesia.

After all, the beauty industry has made a lucrative business of convincing women that their bodies require improvement. What does it say about our culture when the body that has produced a human being is regarded as something in need of repair?

It’s a serious feminist objection, but there is something equally troubling about assuming that a woman who chooses cosmetic surgery must have been manipulated into wanting it.

“I see my decision as both an act of empowerment and personal freedom,” Alicia told Newsweek. “To me, empowerment means having the confidence and freedom to make decisions about my own body without feeling the need to justify them to anyone else.”

Jennifer is similarly unequivocal.

“It was a choice I made for myself, without feeling pressured or influenced by anyone else,” she said.

Nikfarjam sees the danger in turning body acceptance into another obligation.

“Women shouldn’t feel pressured to have surgery to meet society’s beauty standards, but they also shouldn’t feel ashamed if it’s something they genuinely want for themselves,” he told Newsweek.

Perhaps the most uncomfortable question for contemporary feminism is whether it can defend a woman’s autonomy even when she exercises it in ways that some feminists disapprove of. After all, there is a peculiar arrogance in celebrating women’s freedom while reserving the right to decide which choices count as liberated.

The real feminist rebellion may be the refusal to let anyone else dictate what loving your body must look like.

And perhaps, after giving so much of herself to motherhood, a woman is entitled to keep a little something for herself.