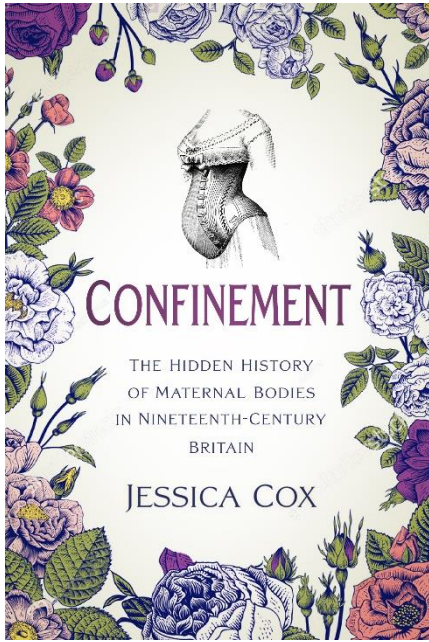


# PRESS RELEASE



The fascinating untold history of pregnancy and childbirth  
in Victorian Britain

## Confinement

The Hidden History of Maternal Bodies in  
Nineteenth-Century Britain

JESSICA COX

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*'Confinement is a long overdue contribution to nineteenth-century history. It's astonishing to consider that while women's bodies have birthed the world, so little attention has been paid to the realities of the maternal body of the past. This is an important, fascinating and frequently shocking read.'*

BERNADINE EVARISTO

*'Compelling, compassionate, and powerful, Jessica Cox's CONFINEMENT uncovers the moving and fascinating history of maternal bodies and experiences in the 19th century. Meticulously researched and elegantly told, CONFINEMENT is a necessary and vital work of historical recovery. A beautiful book.'*

ELINOR CLEGHORN

*'Fascinating, intensely-researched book...motherhood has received little recognition in history...Super detective work combined with beautiful storytelling... a much-needed addition to women's history.'*

PRAGYA AGARWAL, author of (M)otherhood: On the Choices of Being a Woman and Hysterical: Exploding the Myth of Gendered Emotions

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century having children was frequently viewed as a woman's central function and destiny – and yet pregnancy and the postnatal body, as well as the details about giving birth, are almost entirely absent from the public conversation and written histories of the period. Women's bodies were viewed as a taboo subject.

Drawing on letters, diaries, newspapers, coroner's reports and hospital archives, as well as medical advice, literature and art, Jessica Cox explores fertility, pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth, maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancies, infant loss, breastfeeding and postnatal bodies and minds. Famous names include **Mary Wollstonecraft**, **Emma Darwin** and **Queen Victoria** as the social spectrum is covered from the royal family to the inhabitants of the workhouse. *Confinement* gives us a fascinating, compelling, and sometimes disturbing, insight into the maternal experiences of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Dr Jessica Cox** is an academic in the Department of Arts and Humanities at **Brunel University**, London, where she teaches and researches nineteenth-century literature and culture. She has authored books on Charlotte Bronte and Victorian and contemporary popular fiction.

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## Additional acclaim for *Confinement*

*'This is a brilliant, original and deeply researched book. Jessica Cox's writing is both erudite and engaging, and brings to the fore a subject that has too long been omitted from the historical imagination.'*

**PROFESSOR EMMA GRIFFIN**, President, The Royal Historical Society and Professor of Modern British History at UEA.

*"Confinement finds the life thrumming inside original Victorian court documents and medical reports; inviting the reader to experience the past in perfect authenticity. Cox anticipates the modern reader's questions and answers them with sensitivity to modern mindsets and grace toward Victorian ones. Confinement is a thoroughly researched deep-dive into Victorian maternity that even the most casual paddler can access and enjoy. "*

**THERESE O'NEILL**, New York Times best-selling author of *Unmentionable: The Victorian Lady's Guide to Sex, Marriage, and Manners*

*'Confinement is a powerful work of history. Each chapter is thoroughly researched and carefully crafted, guiding the reader through each aspect of the book. Cox's great skill here is the way she weaves evidence into analysis. We see pregnancy and childbirth as it was experienced in the nineteenth century, through the touchstones of her own contemporary experiences of motherhood. This is a wide-ranging book, capturing the stories of babies born in palaces as well as workhouses. Confinement is full, informative, and deeply moving.'*

**CLAIRE LYNCH**, author of *Small: On Motherhoods*

*'This new book offers us a rare glimpse of the maternal experiences of Victorian women. It encourages us to reflect on the rights, responsibilities and restrictions of the birthing body, and how they have been and continue to be debated, challenged and subject to change.'*

**SARAH FOX**, historian and author of *Giving Birth in Eighteenth-Century England* (2022).

*'Illuminating, provocative, and so engaging. Cox's history of motherhood is revelatory about a past that resonates powerfully today. This important and timely book is written with great intellect, grace and empathy.'*

**HELEN CULLEN**, Author of *The Truth Must Dazzle Gradually*

*'What a fascinating intensely-researched book. We rarely see maternal bodies in art and literature and motherhood has received little recognition in history. Jessica Cox has done such a brilliant job of digging up these unseen unheard stories and bringing them to life. Super detective work combined with beautiful storytelling, and a much-needed addition to women's history.'*

**PRAGYA AGARWAL**, author of *(M)otherhood: On the Choices of Being a Woman and Hysterical: Exploding the Myth of Gendered Emotions*