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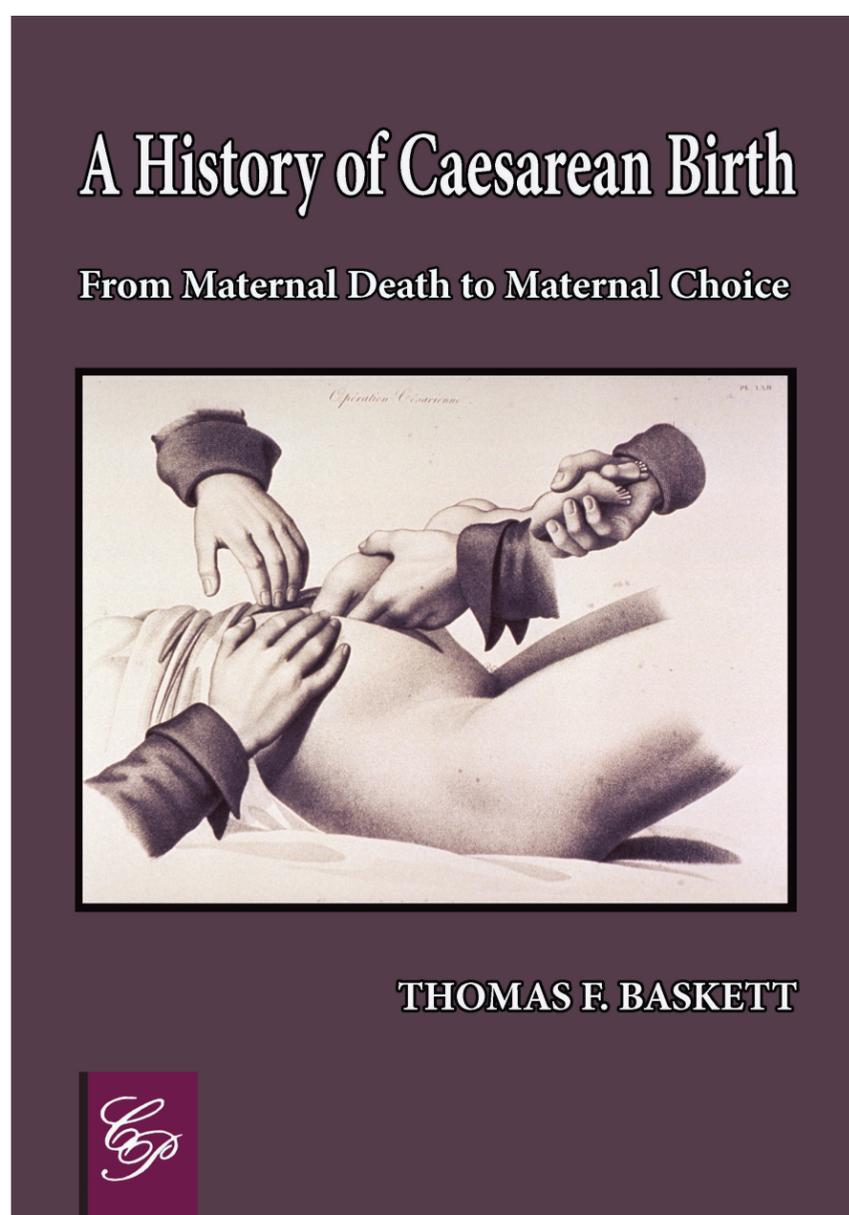
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## A history of Caesarean Birth. T F Baskettt Book Review

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This book takes on a challenging task, giving a comprehensive treatise on the origins, history, and present state of Caesarean Section in the broad spectrum of delivery options for women. He subtitles it “From Maternal Death to Maternal Choice”, a stark reminder of where we have come from and the present state of play.

I enjoyed reading this book - it is very well referenced and researched, and while it only has just under 200 pages, it encompasses a wide range of the history of Caesarean section delivery - from earliest references, through to the naming of the procedure, to individuals in Shakespeare's works who might have been so born (Julius Caesar and Macduff if you are interested).

I particularly enjoyed Chapter 4 on self performed Caesarean sections. These are documented meticulously yet in a fresh manner, and you wonder how these could even have happened. They were mostly in younger women in straightened circumstances, and these are not mythological or lost in mists of time. One case, reported in 2004 in the *Int. J. Obstet Gynecol*, related the tale of a woman in her 9th pregnancy who, with a sharp kitchen knife delivered herself of a baby boy, and all her intestines poured out. Her eldest child fetched a nurse who stitched the skin having replaced the intestines, and then arranged for a 12 hour truck ride to take her to hospital to have it repaired properly. The baby thrived, apparently. Anecdotes like these bring the book to life, and make it an enjoyable read. Tales of the first successful survival of the mother and baby following a section in 1889 from the Rotunda hospital (where my eldest child was born 100 years later) make the gap between some of the mythology of the first chapter and today's reality a very narrow one.

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