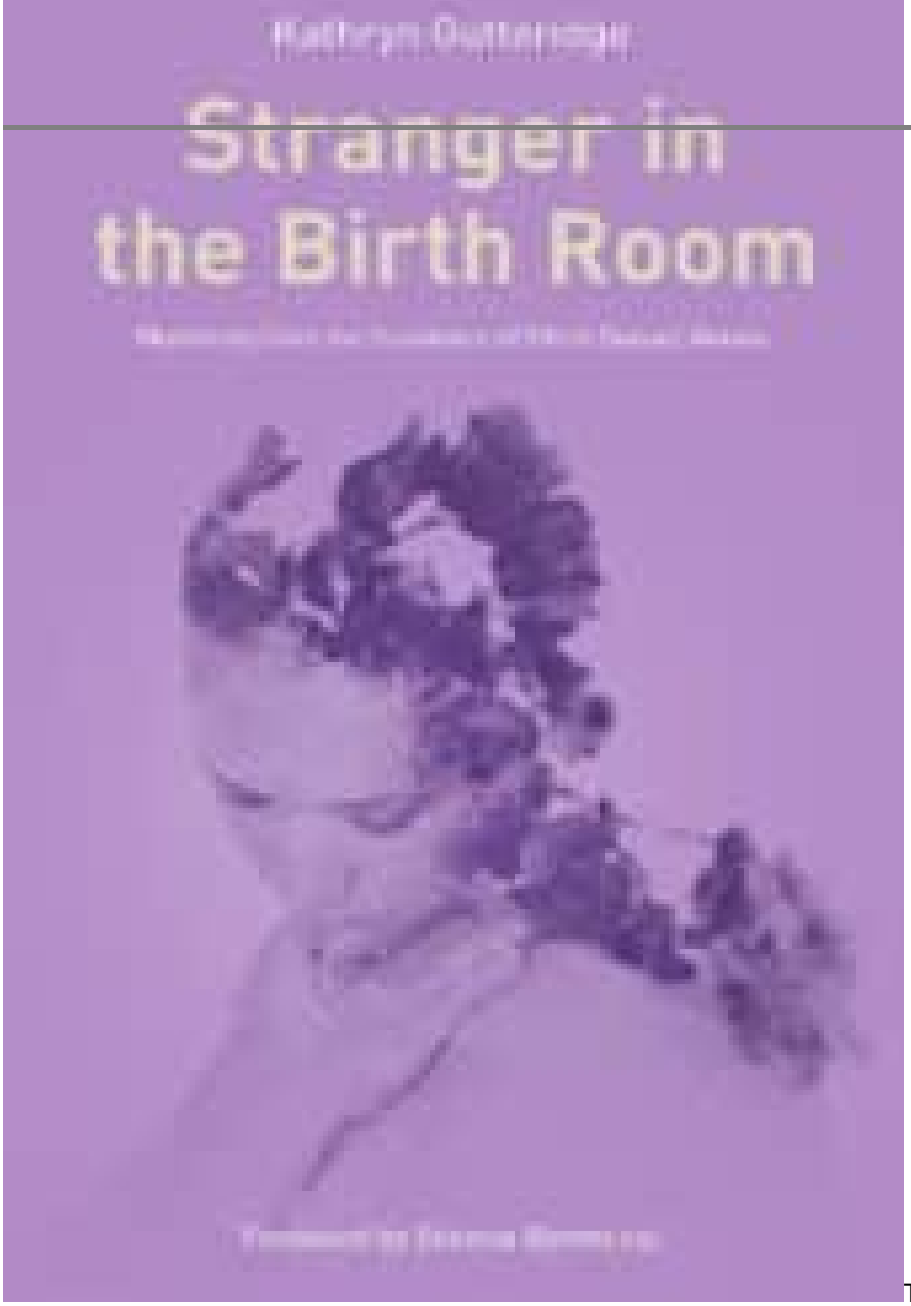


Description

Book Review: Stranger in the Birth Room

Author: Kathryn Gutteridge
Publisher: Montag & Martin Limited 2025
ISBN: 978-I-78066-815-4
Paperback
RRP: £14.99

Review by: Dr Tracey Cooper MBE, Chief Midwife for North East & Yorkshire, NHS England



This book is profoundly insightful and opened up new avenues of thought for me. It raised issues I had never previously considered and highlighted, with great clarity, how time spent with women—and the value of building trusting, continuous relationships—is central to maternity care.

The content is strongly evidence-based, supported with useful references and suggestions for further reading. Its logical chapter structure allows knowledge to build progressively, while the voices and experiences of survivors enrich the evidence, giving each chapter depth, authenticity, and context.

What makes this book especially powerful is the courage of the author. By weaving her own experiences as a survivor of child sexual abuse into the narrative, she adds a unique authenticity and emotional connection that I have not encountered in any other text. Her personal reflections are not only brave but also profoundly moving.

This is an essential read for midwives, obstetricians, midwifery assistants, and student midwives alike.

The book provides excellent, practical advice on supporting women who have survived or are currently experiencing child sexual abuse. It also offers invaluable insights into how certain behaviours may indicate that a woman is a survivor or is at risk. Many of these considerations were new to me and have given me a far greater awareness of the complexities surrounding this issue.

This is an essential read for midwives, obstetricians, midwifery assistants, and student midwives alike. Kathryn's knowledge, combined with her willingness to share her own experiences, equips readers with both the understanding and the tools to recognise when women in their care may be affected by abuse, and to support them with sensitivity and compassion.

I was particularly struck by Kathryn's poems, placed at the beginning of each chapter. These survivor words set the tone, making the experiences feel raw and real. They bring an immediacy to the subject matter that lingers long after the page is turned.

Thank you, Kathryn, for bravely revealing such a personal part of your life. Your willingness to share your history will undoubtedly help professionals provide better care, and more importantly, help survivors feel seen, heard, and understood.

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Date Created
7th October 2025