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THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION: FROM MIDWIVES' ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC SPHERE TO THE PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF MAN-MIDWIFERY

Lisa Forman Cody

Why retell, yet again, how the British man-midwife displaced the traditional female practitioner during the eighteenth century? Haven't medical and feminist historians laid bare all the relevant evidence and problems here? After all, many sources—especially the major obstetric texts, the handful of midwifery texts written by women, and such novels as *Tristram Shandy*—have been closely examined and have generated scores of scholarly articles and books. Yet for at least thirty years, there seems to be no stopping historians of medicine and gender (myself included) from returning to this well-known tale of male doctors somehow triumphing over midwives.

Why do we tell this story so often? Surely for many feminists, the story serves as a most dramatic example of and also an allegory for the broader, complex shifts in the family, demographics, and professions that occurred in the eighteenth century. For instance, Louis LaPeyre's 1772 snipe, "a midwife is an animal with nothing of the woman left," not only reveals how a once important female occu-

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pation was dismissed as uncivilized, but also captures the contemporary vitriol used to check female spheres of influence and denigrate powerful women more generally.¹ Documents such as the learned, lengthy, and frequently sarcastic defense by midwife Elizabeth Nihell reveal how much midwives did know about reproductive anatomy and care at the time; moreover, her observations, such as that “many women have found, by severe experience, their having been enemies to themselves, in abandoning or slighting those of their own sex” also reveal women’s ability to construct an argument based on gender and attempt to create female bonds.²

Yet, even if we are right to grasp the story as both interesting in itself and standing for much larger shifts in gender relationships, the mechanics of the tale—*how* men conquered the midwives—seem much more elusive. Two opposing stories explaining obstetricians’ triumphs have dominated historical literature. From the time man-midwives began giving obstetric lectures in the eighteenth century, proponents trumpeted the triumphs of the profession: forceps, fillets, education, masculine ingenuity, and emotional detachment. Naturally, sensible fathers-to-be and their pregnant wives chose obstetricians.³ From the 1960s onward, many women’s historians echoed Elizabeth Nihell’s 1760 argument: obstetricians denigrated midwives, magnetically described their own charms, unnecessarily wielded instruments, cruelly thrust them into women, and often killed mothers and infants.⁴ These two versions—medical glory versus gory misogyny—verge on the polemical and often incorporate deeply ahistorical notions.

In the end, neither polemic convincingly explains how the transition from female to male midwives occurred. Even if man-midwives possessed stunning medical expertise, why, in a century of sexual modesty, would a woman permit a man to examine and touch her private parts? And even if man-midwives mesmerized and coerced the naive, why would any mother choose a practitioner who had hacked up other women and babies? Recent historians, most notably Roy Porter and Adrian Wilson, have retold the story in new and nuanced ways, emphasizing previously overlooked features of the doctor-patient relationship. In “A Touch of Danger,” Porter argues that the *accoucheur* cultivated his clientele not so much by brandishing his medical expertise as by listening to expectant mothers’ concerns, quelling their fears, and serving as friend, even confidante. Wilson argues that mothers were far from coerced, but rather based their decision on what relatives, friends, and neighbors had experienced during their deliveries. Man-midwives, as it turns out, did rather well by word-of-mouth and public recommendations.⁵ Porter and Wilson offer fresh and plausible insights because they are willing to challenge historical platitudes. Obviously they take on both sides of the obstetricians-versus-midwives polemic, but they implicitly challenge another historical convention: the association of the “private” with women and the “public” with men. Porter places the eighteenth-century man-midwife in the company of expectant mothers, taking tea, chatting, gossiping, engaging in stereotypically feminine, domestic activities; Wilson situates mothers in the public activity of seeking and spreading news.

In this article, I want to push further the implications in Wilson and Porter’s work by reconsidering reproduction in an unorthodox way, in light of Jürgen

Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. By doing this, I hope to highlight how midwifery, obstetrics, and reproductive concerns operated as a "private" category permeating and mediating between a Habermasian "public sphere" and what he describes as the "subjectivity of the conjugal family's intimate domain."⁶ In the last decade, historians have demonstrated the inadequacy and artificiality of bifurcating public and private as strictly male and female domains.⁷ The longstanding power of such a formulaic division has masked not only the multiple ways that men and women legitimately and actually inhabited both the indoor and outdoor worlds, but also the ways that traditional midwives functioned as public—almost political—authorities, and how Georgian man-midwives somewhat peculiarly put the intimacies of private life on public display. Of course, the actual acts of reproduction occurred mostly behind close doors, but reproductive matters were also discussed and debated publicly. In the words—not of Jürgen Habermas—of man-midwife John Leake, midwifery served "the general interest of mankind." Leake was certainly not the only contemporary to define midwifery as "a necessary Branch of Philosophy, as well as Physic; [and] the public Administration of Justice."⁸ In these ways, midwifery served as an experiential category, not peripheral but central to contemporaries who established the parameters of the public sphere and determined who were its proper inhabitants.

Viewing midwifery and childbirth as merely domestic and only feminine matters, as most historians have done, has reinforced the notion of separate gendered spheres. But more than that, by treating reproduction and the contemporary debate over man-midwifery as the stuff of only family and medical history, we bypass a discourse rich in insights about the nature of interpersonal relations and obligations. The seventeenth-century midwife stood at the threshold between conjugal relations and the state; as such, she had a uniquely privileged position and a duty to serve both mothers and the community. The eighteenth-century man-midwife, I will argue, modeled an idealized masculine subjectivity. He presented himself as personifying both reason and feeling, showing others how to be a man of the world and one of the home. Studying the professional transition from female to male midwives among a middling and elite clientele reveals how these women and men constructed themselves as beings who crossed the intimate and public worlds and negotiated with strangers in their most private concerns.

In the next portion of this article, I will briefly examine aspects of early modern midwifery and lying-in that might be considered to comprise an "alternative" public sphere.⁹ The final, longer portion of this essay will argue that the well-known medical and technological developments in obstetrics, fascination with embryology, the life sciences, and population studies repositioned reproductive topics epistemologically. Into the eighteenth century, nearly all agreed that midwives had a "natural," "innate" authority over generative matters because reproductive knowledge derived from personal, subjective, bodily experience. From the 1660s onward, scientific knowledge of reproductive matters and doctors' ability to demonstrate the truth of analogies—that the reproduction of some lower life-forms was akin to that of humans, for instance—helped to undermine women's epistemological and professional status as midwives. Obstetricians could only triumph once the fundamental intellec-

tual and emotional connection between midwives and maternity was ruptured, as it largely was from the early eighteenth century onward. The eighteenth-century man-midwife, alongside members of the Royal Society and amateur naturalists reporting their biological observations to learned and popular journals, all helped to transform reproductive issues into topics fit for “rational-critical” investigation and discussion. But the man-midwife presented himself as more than rational and also empathetically attuned to both mothers’ and fathers’ concerns. We can consider the eighteenth-century man-midwife’s publicizing his medical discoveries, philanthropic contributions, and relationship with expectant parents as functioning as a public spectacle, that is, simultaneously a sight to be seen and a lens through which to see the construction of intimate subjectivities, both female and male.

PUBLIC MIDWIVES

Childbirth, a woman’s lying-in month, and the midwife’s tasks all might seem to epitomize domesticity, especially since these were specifically described as “private.” Once labor began and until weeks later when she emerged into normal life again after her churching, a woman’s lying-in was a special time peopled by fellow women, the midwife, and gossips, ideally cloistered in a darkened and contained space.¹⁰ This would hardly seem to resemble a public life of news, debate, politics, and coffeehouses. But in fact, as many other historians have richly described, the seventeenth-century lying-in room where the birth actually occurred was not equivalent to, but in some opposition to, the family and regular intimate life. While the husband and other children were largely banished from this space and sexual activity was prohibited during this time, women existed together temporarily disconnected from men and the usual “constraints of survival requirements.”¹¹ Unlike the family where fathers more or less ruled—but very much like such developing “public” institutions as the Royal Society and coffeehouses—the participants in this space putatively left their socioeconomic status at the door and were allowed to enter if they possessed the requisite gender. Midwives were commoners, subordinate to elites outside the lying-in chamber, but once at delivery, women apparently abandoned such usual hierarchies for the tasks at hand. The head midwife directed the lying-in, but she and the other women at the birth worked and conversed together regardless of their rank. As male denizens of all classes in coffeehouse culture supposedly mingled together discussing politics and cultural life, so too did female neighbors, relatives, and servants at a lying-in join together and speak freely about all sorts of matters.¹² Whereas the culture of lying-in—like the ideal coffeehouse—was marked by ignoring class differences and hierarchies, both the birth chamber and the developing institutions of the public sphere often excluded on the basis of gender. Whereas the Royal Society, for example, explicitly forbade women from membership, the early modern lying-in chamber also prohibited men from entering (except in the cases of dangerous labors requiring a male surgeon).

The maternal space dominated by the mother, the midwife, gossips, and celebrants not surprisingly generated suspicions among some male commentators that both lying-in and the midwife were potential oppositional forces, capable of undermining patriarchal order in both symbolic and real ways. The customary liberties

given to women during the lying-in period were expressed through politicized metaphors. *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage* (1682) jokingly describes women's discussion of whom to invite to the post-birth gossips' feast, as "a serious Counsel...as if the Parliament of women were assembled." In *The Womens Advocate* (1683), the virago-like narrator threatened, "Tis a time of freedom, when women, like Parliament-men, have a privilege to talk petty treason."¹³ Contemporaries also made much of actual cases where women and midwives gained power through their reproductive functions and knowledge. Aside from the more common cases of midwives harboring single mothers or offering abortions, some famous midwives were seen as real political threats.¹⁴ Critics portrayed midwife Elizabeth Cellier as plotting against the Protestant state not only for taking part in Catholic intrigues in the 1680s but for predicting that James II and his Italian second wife would produce a son. Judith Wilkes who delivered the son of James II in 1688 was portrayed by the king's opponents as having helped literally delegitimize the Protestant state: according to critics, Wilkes secretly smuggled someone else's child in a warming pan to pass it off as (the unpregnant) Mary of Modena's royal infant. Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the ensuing "warming pan" scandal—including an actual royal juridical investigation into the charges of fraud—centered on Wilke's power and was informed by broad assumptions of the cunning prowess of midwives.¹⁵

How did female midwives gain such knowledge and power? On the one hand, it is clear in reality, as Adrian Wilson and others have shown, that midwives were unusually literate and generally well educated; in the case of midwife-authors Jane Sharp and Elizabeth Cellier, both were well-versed in the classics, too. Like male participants in the public sphere, midwives read texts, sometimes kept notes, and shared their knowledge through apprenticeships and mutual discussions.¹⁶ On the other hand, the language and logic of midwifery fundamentally differed from the rational-critical debate of the scientific revolution and Enlightenment. Midwifery's epistemological position, after all, was based on subjective feeling and a sympathetic attachment to fellow women.¹⁷ It would be this logic of sexual difference—that women felt more than men—which, on the one hand, justified men's exclusion from the alternative public sphere of midwifery, and, on the other hand, would prevent *women's* inclusion in the supposedly "rational" public sphere of Royal Society, learned and commercial debate. Men were unwelcome in the birthing room because they were believed incapable of acquiring and speaking a knowledge based on female experience, but women's experiences would later be seen as preventing them from being able to take part in intellectual and political matters.

This fundamental epistemological difference based on gender ultimately gave the traditional midwife status as a public actor. In the seventeenth century, midwives were legally treated as able to reveal the truth of the female body and to function as trustworthy public authorities. They carried newborns to christening while mothers still rested at home; they examined pregnant widows, those accused of infanticide, and female criminals "pleading their bellies" to postpone execution. Whether acting alone or as one of a deliberating "jury of matrons," midwives acted as agents of the court in search of sexual truth. Though they worked for the state, rather than necessarily opposing it, midwives and juries of matrons acted for the good of the

public weal. They arrived at truth through discussion rather than simply siding with fellow women through sympathy.¹⁸ Because women criminals, infanticides, rape victims, and civil litigants impinged on the community's life, and since women were believed to be fundamentally different, in some ways inaccessible to male knowledge and authority, this seventeenth-century patriarchal world *required* an alternative public sphere of women to act for the interest of the community as a whole. In this way, midwives were hardly opposed to civil society or the larger budding public sphere, but they did occupy a necessary public position seemingly unavailable to men. Despite commentators' fears that midwives could undermine patriarchy and the state, evidence suggests that midwives followed through on their obligation to the state, for instance in the uncomfortable case of being legally required to demand of a single mother the father's identity during the height of her labor. In this way and others, midwives were granted such a prominent public and political role because they ultimately reinforced the state's needs.

Midwives' authority here was integral to society's very public functions. The fact that the family represented a microcosm of society and the state operated as macrocosmic version of the family collapsed what we might consider the "public" nature of the state and the "private" status of the family. Midwives had vital roles to perform within the family and the community at large, but their ability to manage sexual and reproductive matters also required that they be given some freedom from the interference of the community, the state, and men. Female midwives possessed an authority somewhat loosened from patriarchal hierarchy (even though they ultimately functioned to serve many of patriarchy's requirements) when they joined mothers and other women to manage pregnancy and birth. They, not men, possessed this special authority so long as there remained an underlying assumption that knowledge of the body and birth derived from feeling and gendered experience.

MAN-MIDWIVES AS SPECTACLES

Whether seen as incorporated in or oppositional to the larger needs of society, traditional female midwifery as an alternative public sphere disappeared in the eighteenth century. In some ways, women losing professional control of reproduction during this period is puzzling. The rise of capitalism required a growing population, and it would seem that female midwives who, as a group, tended to be literate and of at least middling economic status, would have been well positioned to offer their services in the name of demographic expansion.¹⁹ Those who benefited from capitalism found justification in the theories of political liberalism and an egalitarian public sphere unfettered by state intrusions. We might think that the growth of this space with its expanding print culture, public lectures, and even occasional plea for women's education would have benefited enterprising female midwives.

Yet these modern developments comprising a Habermasian public sphere specifically contributed to ending the special authority that female midwives once held. Eighteenth-century political theory, "rational-critical" debate, and the rise of public institutions like lying-in hospitals had no inherent reason in theory to exclude women. But in eighteenth-century practice, they sometimes did. For instance,

while social-contract theories, which replaced seventeenth-century patriarchal political models, could theoretically confer “personhood” on women both at home and in public, this was not the case in the eighteenth century. Many historians have argued that Locke only revolutionized political relationships outside the home because, in Michael McKeon’s words, Locke argued “that the world of the family and that of the state were regulated by fundamentally different—respectively customary and contractual—principles.”²⁰ In this reading, Locke cast patriarchy out of the state and public while essentially preserving it in the family; furthermore, Locke’s depiction of political relationships, labor, and property—all the categories of nondomestic life—never included women. As Ruth Perry argues, Locke’s emphasizing parental authority eliminated women’s special powers as mothers, both in the home and outside it. The monarchist, but feminist, Mary Astell complained of Locke’s effacing women in the state of nature: “‘How I lament my stars that it was not my good fortune to Live in those Happy Days when Men sprung up like so many Mushrooms...without Father or Mother or any sort of dependency!’”²¹ Locke’s social contract was effectively neutered because familial hierarchies no longer described political relationships outside the family, and reproductive differences were minimized inside it.²²

Despite sometimes relegating women to the home in political theory, Enlightenment arguments ironically did not lead to treating reproduction as only a domestic concern, and this too helped displace midwives. Reproductive topics were discussed avidly from the 1660s onward in all the budding public spaces: newspapers, advertisements, the Royal Society, learned demonstrations, and coffeehouses. (One 1677 critic, incidentally, even compared the new talkative culture of the coffeehouse to a lying-in: “Here Men do talk of every Thing, / With large and liberal Lungs, / Like women at a Gossiping, / With a double Tyre of Tongues.”)²³

Reproduction intrigued the eighteenth-century public in ways not seen in the seventeenth century, and in so doing became an area of knowledge available to all, attainable through “rational-critical” means rather than personal bodily experience. Although strange births had long entertained the curious, monsters and wonders increasingly generated broader, learned discussion in the Royal Society’s *Transactions*, the press, pamphlets, and medical treatises because these anomalies were believed not so much to reveal God’s miraculous signs, but to unlock how nature worked.²⁴ As I have discussed elsewhere, investigating Mary Toft’s famous 1726 claims to have given birth to seventeen rabbits was believed to reveal the specific relationships between a mother and her fetus, a mother and her doctors.²⁵ Contemporaries, of course, also believed that ordinary reproduction must be thoroughly examined. Medical progress had been made with William Harvey’s triumphant work on the circulatory system in the mid-seventeenth century, inspiring naturalists and doctors to seek the mechanics of generation.²⁶ Such technological advances as the microscope, which revealed the invisible world of spermatozoa, encouraged debate about conception and generation. Other work on lower life-forms, by Abraham Trembley, René Réaumur, Charles Bonnet, and others in the 1740s, as well as Carl Linnaeus’s taxonomic nomenclature modeled on human romance and sexuality, offered endless links between the animal and human worlds.²⁷ All such advances, as available to literate women as to men, fundamentally altered authority over reproductive matters because these “objective” advances allowed anybody, despite their gender, to master the truths

about pregnancy. Using nature to exemplify human principles produced abundant popular stories of maternal insects and stories of, for instance, the “man-midwife toad,” homely but convincing evidence of males’ “natural” proclivity to assist females during their labor pains.²⁸

Eighteenth-century man-midwives told their students and the public that their work strengthened the population and the nation’s economy. The state had always been invested in its numbers, but an intellectual shift occurred in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, which linked population more closely to the man-midwife’s enterprise. Because high mortality rates, late marriages, and large numbers of lifelong celibates prevented demographic expansion in the seventeenth century, political arithmeticians focused on death into the 1710s. As births began to outstrip deaths in the first half of the eighteenth century, however, population theorists presented marriage and birth as the key demographic variables. By midcentury, populationist rhetoric invoked healthy births in socioeconomic works, treatises on the nation’s manners, and philanthropic appeals.²⁹ Spokesmen for London’s five large lying-in hospitals and Thomas Coram’s Foundling Hospital reminded the public that their institutions “secure the birth, and protect the tender lives of infants, who may hereafter be usefully employed in trade and manufacture, or supply the waste of war in our fleets and armies.”³⁰ In fact, man-midwives, including John Leake and William Hunter, spearheaded these philanthropies; significantly, some female midwives rabidly opposed these institutions, including Elizabeth Nihell who accused man-midwives of turning poor women into prostituted, scientific objects.³¹

Male midwives, like female midwives before them, mediated between the family and the broader world, but the obstetrician placed himself in the public eye through print, news, and advertising. Adrian Wilson describes man-midwives’ professional success resulting largely from positive publicity and favorable gossip. According to Wilson, once parents witnessed man-midwives’ skill in dangerous deliveries, they spread the news and increasingly turned to men even for ordinary labors by the 1740s. Publicity, however, could work both ways, as many man-midwives warned their students. William Smellie admonished his students never to treat female midwives poorly because the resulting bad gossip could be disastrous, since a good reputation was the cornerstone of a successful practice. Teacher John Gibson reminded his students: “You well know we are much exposed to censure, and have many enemies to encounter with, who are always ready to take every advantage with us.” But he also advised that “if, at any time, the loud voice of calumny should go forth against you, you will always find it best to take no notice of it; if you bear it with calmness and temper, the clamour will soon cease.”³² Surely, some man-midwives handled vilification this dignifiedly. Others however turned to the press when they felt imperiled by gossip or negative publicity.³³

The thrust of many attacks against man-midwives had been (and continued to be well into the nineteenth century) that they operated secretly with private designs. The seventeenth-century Chamberlain family had loudly boasted about inventing a secret tool making deliveries quicker and safer, but eighteenth-century man-midwives described themselves instead as scrupulously following a transparent nature. Eighteenth-century man-midwives usually presented themselves and their work

as entirely available and relevant to the public. William Hunter was only one of several eighteenth-century obstetricians who lectured all members of the paying public, both male and female. Even two of the great liberal political and economic theorists of the age, Adam Smith and Edmund Burke, attended his lectures in the 1760s and onward. The latter, irritated by Hunter's incorporating "panegyrics on the King" and attacks on the opposition in his medical lectures, complained that "he had heard of political arithmetic, but never before of political anatomy." It seems then that man-midwifery provided more than an interesting intellectual topic for the public, but actually sometimes functioned as a "rational-critical" public forum.³⁴ When not at the podium, man-midwives—unlike female midwives—informed the public that they could be found by expectant fathers and any other men curious about reproduction in the city's coffeehouses.³⁵

Man-midwives made reproductive knowledge available to all, at least in theory. In addition to lecturing formally and holding forth in coffeehouses, man-midwives published dozens of obstetric texts in the eighteenth century. Sir Richard Manningham, who taught obstetrics to male and female students, first published his pedagogical treatise on midwifery in Latin in 1739. But then, he added in his second edition of 1744, he realized that he should republish the work in English so that parents could learn enough about generation to examine potential midwives themselves. Rather than relying on the authority of midwives because they were women, eighteenth-century parents were to enter into conversations and contracts as informed parties to make a choice based on reason, rather than custom.³⁶ William Hunter described his monumental, illustrated *Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus* (1774) as publicly beneficial because midwifery was a branch "of science, on which the lives and happiness of millions must depend." He also explained that like witnessing live demonstrations, illustrated texts operated as "an universal language. Nay, [pictures] convey clearer ideas of most natural objects, than words can express."³⁷

Did Hunter then intend for universal access to knowledge of midwifery? Like Manningham, he surely wanted parents to be informed when choosing a birth attendant. But, aside from the prohibitive cost of his atlas, Hunter also specifically barred public access to his lectures on reproduction. In his course on anatomy, he stated: "if a student should wish to introduce a friend to any particular lecture, it will give us pleasure to oblige him.... The lectures, however, upon the organs of generation, and gravid uterus, are to be excepted. No visitor can be introduced when we are upon these subjects. The reasons for such exceptions must be obvious."³⁸ Hunter declared the public utility of his profession and offered "universal" forms of knowledge, yet the cost of buying texts and attending lectures (even when tuition was reduced for female students), and the presumption that students wrote copious notes (rather than just listening) eliminated those who lacked money and scribal skills.³⁹ Also, excluding a prurient public audience from *all* knowledge about the human body kept midwifery specifically in the hands of an elite few who met unspoken qualifications: money, literacy, good manners, and time to spare. Though women with these qualities were welcome, relatively few female members of the general public could have been properly equipped to participate fully or in great numbers. The democratic spirit of the man-midwife's enterprise, then, resembled the wider eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere of coffeehouses and Royal Society meetings. Participants be-

ing required to be nothing but “civil” implicitly meant much more: propertied, well-bred, and generally male.

Man-midwives were public figures from the 1720s onward. They established philanthropic enterprises, gave public lectures, and sometimes belonged to the Royal Society. While we know of only six British women who wrote manuals of midwifery between 1671 and 1798, dozens of male authors published on obstetrics, producing more than two-hundred texts during the same period. Man-midwives peopled coffeehouses as they waited for expectant fathers’ calls. They advertised in the press and were often the objects of interest and admiration, and, alternately, of amusement, disgust, and fury. From scores of references to man-midwifery in the press to the many cartoons that showed comic images of *accoucheurs* (especially Scottish ones in tartan) in both medical and political satires that sometimes had little to do with obstetrics *per se*, the literature of the age represented the man-midwife as a spectacular figure who registered—depending on one’s leanings—anything from the rise of scientific medicine to the decline of public morals.⁴⁰

As many feminist critics have argued, obstetricians helped define what women—both mothers and midwives—were and why they should be excluded from political, public activity. Although not as overtly misogynistic as his nineteenth-century medical grandsons, the man-midwife nonetheless presented physiological evidence of women’s fundamental difference. Like most medical men of the 1770s, John Leake strongly opposed the popular belief in the power of maternal imagination to shape the fetus *in utero*, but by this decade, scientific debate regarding the matter had largely disappeared, so the topic might seem irrelevant or quaint. But Leake explained, “It is much to be regretted that the generality of women are inclined to an opinion so unfavourable for themselves; which not only tends to disturb their repose and fill their minds with horror and dreadful apprehensions.” Leake disproved maternal imagination in the same stroke in which he demonstrated women’s fundamental unsuitability for reasonable thought by explaining “A woman’s mind, from the delicacy of her bodily frame, and the prevalence of her passions, is liable to so many excesses and inordinate motions that *had such causes been productive of marks or monsters, they would certainly have been much more frequent* (my emphasis).”⁴¹ Underscoring women’s supposed irrationality in lectures on midwifery situated emotional differences in the reproductive body and served to distinguish women from men and disqualify them from rational debate and public political participation. This maneuver also undermined women’s traditional epistemological justification: Leake presented women as feeling more than men to be sure, but also feeling incorrectly.

Though female midwives once had examined the bodies of female prisoners and plaintiffs, the male midwife became the preferred agent of the court in the eighteenth century. Leake explained that female midwives erred because their passions led them astray. Motivated by sympathy, they often let guilty women go free; blinded by arrogance, they sometimes condemned the innocent. He told how a Parisian midwife had “positively declared [a prisoner] was not pregnant; in consequence of which she was immediately executed; but when the body was publicly opened, a child was found in her womb.” Leake sniped that therefore any judges “who would admit of [a jury of matrons], ought to be deemed matrons as well as they.”⁴² Again,

Leake defined men and women as fundamentally different, not just reproductively but in reason. Women were led by the heart rather than the head; their subjective investment in pregnancy disqualified them from critically arriving at reproductive truths, but men—who, of course, were not themselves mothers—could gain necessary objective distance.

Clearly, women were being constructed as more emotional than rational. In fact, many defenders of male midwives accused traditional female midwives of bias and a communicative irrationality because they spoke like women. One of the most extreme attacks came from Tobias Smollett who called midwife-author Elizabeth Nihell “a lunatic, not lucid....[who] sets up her throat...with the fluency of a fish-woman.” He charged that her *Treatise* amounted to an “explosion...which makes a dreadful noise,” nothing more than a “gossiping performance...brayed through the organs of [an ass].” Perhaps most nastily of all, Smollett adopted the traditional tactic of impugning Nihell’s sexuality for writing publicly; exceeding other critics who attacked female authors for being “public women,” Smollett went so far as to insinuate that Nihell’s sympathy was prurient and unnatural: “How far Mrs. Nihell’s shrewd, supple, sensitive fingers, may be qualified for the art of titillation, we shall not pretend to investigate....” Smollett besmirched Nihell’s claim to an inherent, sympathetic, sisterly bond as lesbianism, a threat to the entire enterprise of midwifery and obstetrics.⁴³

Eighteenth-century proponents of obstetrics amplified the traditional discourse of fundamental sexual difference which had once, only a century earlier, helped justify female midwives’ control of lying-in and other reproductive matters. As “science”—whether in the form of man-midwifery, natural philosophy, or population theory—gained authority over reproduction, authors described women’s passion and sympathy as limiting their capacities for the rationality required in all medical endeavors. In a 1787 dialogue on midwifery, Dr. Freeman asks his imaginary female student, a young midwife named “Sophia,” whether she is frightened to see his collection of pelvises, “(as many women are).” She replies, “No, Sir, I will walk...with you with all my heart,” suggesting that when female midwives were properly trained, the voice of the man-midwife would be internally present.⁴⁴ But we should note that as much as man-midwives emphasized women as creatures of feeling, these same man-midwives advertised their own masculine sympathy. Although Dr. Freeman constructed women as potentially fearful, subordinated, females, he used such imagined feminine hesitancy to highlight the man-midwife’s sensitivity to women’s feelings. Not only does the doctor know the science of the female skeleton, but he also intuits the feminine mind and, in doing so, offers her internalized strength, so that she can conquer her innate feminine fears.

This is the second way that the man-midwife functioned as a lens to see the construction of the self. Literary critics and cultural historians have described an intimate sphere where men and women developed interiorized subjectivities and, as Habermas explains, “viewed themselves as independent even from the private sphere of their economic activity—as persons capable of entering into ‘purely human’ relations with one another.”⁴⁵ Like novels, letters, and psychology texts, midwifery and reproductive texts could be used to gain insight into peoples’ most human qualities.

Leake claimed that midwifery revealed more than just generation: “the elements of human bodies...are illustrated and explained by the Science of Midwifery; for it brings us to an intimate acquaintance with the state and condition of man, even from the first stamp of his existence; and therefore, if we may say with a celebrated poet, that ‘The proper knowledge of mankind is man,’ and that ‘All our knowledge is ourselves to know,’ then surely, this must be deemed true knowledge.”⁴⁶ Leake may have quoted Pope’s *Essay on Man* to reveal what both men and women were embryologically and reproductively, but man-midwives’ presented themselves as defining their humane and masculine selves. Leake stated that “[For] a man of this profession...who [is] blessed with sympathy and benevolence of heart, this will afford the most exalted pleasure; especially where such assistance is given to women, who are to be considered as the weaker sex, and unable to help each other.”⁴⁷ By making women subject to man-midwives’ strength and charity, Leake fractures a community of fellow women. Such a potentially violent removal of mothers from other women is mitigated by the man-midwife who offers to replace feminine comforts. Having established in the previous fifty pages the vulnerability of pregnancy and labor and the weakness of female character, Leake ends on the imperative that “none, who are worthy to be called men, will desert even the poorest of them” because “we shall find that once we were in reality parts of themselves; for we sprung from their bodies,...nourished by their blood, and should have perished...had we not been sustained, nursed up, and cherished on their tender bosoms.”⁴⁸ In Leake’s ideal world, the man-midwife adopts his profession out of gratitude to his mother and a sense of kinship with women. He may form himself intellectually and professionally in the company of other men, through education and discourse, but he is a man of feeling because he was formed intimately in his mother’s womb and nurtured at her breast at home.

The eighteenth-century man-midwife extended his sympathy to mothers (including his own), as well as to other men. In turn, at least one man saw in the *accoucheur* the model of humanity. In 1767, William Hunter attended Lady Suffolk who died in labor. Her devastated husband wrote Hunter, apologizing for the physical dangers Hunter faced. Overwhelmed by loss, Suffolk found Hunter an emotional confidante, a fellow sufferer in the family tragedy, exclaiming, “You gave up everything to us!...Your heart felt for us!” In the letter, Suffolk focused on his relationship to Hunter, but briefly interjected awe for his wife’s stoicism in the face of death: “Indeed, indeed, Hunter! She bore her illness in a manner to make Men blush!” In reply, Hunter represented himself as almost psychically replacing the dead Lady Suffolk. Hunter suggested how his presence in the earl’s private life could serve as a lens through which she, from Heaven, could watch her child and husband: “I wish to talk upon a subject which you must forget. We will take it up in Heaven. At this moment I fancy that I have a Friend there who listens to my thoughts, and bids me to say to you in a little time we shall all be happy again....Allow me [that is, Hunter] to love your child all the days of my life....Allow me sometimes to see her, that I may indulge [in] doing something very agreeable to Heaven.” Then Hunter reminded Suffolk that mourning could not consume him, but that he should return to “the busy world again.”⁴⁹ Hunter offers to stand in for the lost wife, serving as a conduit between husband and wife, the living and the dead.

Like all full participants in the bourgeois public sphere, the man-midwife presented himself as a human able to cross the boundaries between public and intimate life. In public, he emphasized his impartial scientific reason, but in private—at least as he advertised it in public—the man-midwife was a very different creature: sympathetic, respectful of his female patients' questions and worries, and even willing to protect women's secrets from their husbands and fathers. As Roy Porter and Adrian Wilson argue, this latter tendency to present himself as women's confidante won the man-midwife his female clientele. Porter argues that this angered husbands, but much evidence suggests otherwise.⁵⁰ The man-midwife won men to his side too, and this he seems to have done by fully participating in the public world of coffeehouses, politics, and lectures, while at the same time portraying himself as a man of emotional insight and strength. Hunter, at least, played a powerful role in other men's psyches. Suffering from sorrow and stress, Horace Walpole noted how "of all moments, that between sleeping and waking is the most subject to terror. I started up and my first thought was to send for Dr. Hunter."⁵¹ It was not just women and the subordinated female midwives, like Dr. Freeman's Sophia, who would promise to "walk with" the man-midwife "with all my heart," but apparently men, too.⁵²

The man-midwife did not triumph without vocal opposition from both displaced female midwives and men accusing man-midwives of seducing the wives of Britain. These opponents, including vituperative journalists, insisted that obstetricians harbored private interests despite invoking scientific neutrality and charitable impulses.⁵³ Author-midwife Elizabeth Nihell argued that man-midwives "obscure by a cloud of scientific jargon" and rely on nothing more than a "crazy foundation of false principles." They "throw the dust of erudition into the eyes of those who do not penetrate beyond the surface of things."⁵⁴ Such accusations that man-midwives ideologically represented gender and reproduction so as to disguise their private interests would be precisely the sorts of accusations that critics would eventually make against the falsely democratic language and logic of the classical bourgeois public sphere.

The discourse of an eighteenth-century public sphere articulated and relied on the rights and sanctity of the individual in explicit opposition to the state's intervention and in implicit defense against the encroachment of those lacking the status—age, gender, property—to fully possess "inalienable" rights. Traditional female midwifery had existed as an alternative public sphere, sometimes working for the state but also opposing patriarchy and temporarily suspending the demands of the family. Man-midwives ultimately worked in the interests of the developing bourgeois public sphere to articulate the natural, physiological, psychological, and moral constitution of both female and *male* individuals. That the state church attempted to control female midwives through licensing and offered them special legal positions in regard to childbirth, suggests that women were believed to have some special powers because of their fundamental reproductive differences. In the eighteenth century, generation, midwifery, and population interested a growing literate public, while women simultaneously began losing their special public status in relationship to birth. Licensing of midwives had disappeared in London by the 1720s; dramatically fewer numbers of women pleaded their belly in London courts with consequently few "juries of

matrons” called after the 1720s. In the eighteenth century, man-midwives and other commentators consistently defined generation, childbirth, and population as categories of “universal” and “public” interest to “men and women,” rather than areas exclusive to women.

Because rational-critical discourse presented itself as relatively disengaged from “the constraints of survival requirements,” the visceral concerns of the public sphere and its bodily requirements for participation have been abstracted and masked. The public, as Nancy Fraser, Joan Landes, and other feminist critics remind us, is etymologically linked to pubes—adult individuals possessing phalluses.⁵⁵ Symbolically, the public spectacle of the man-midwife, then, might be considered the display not only of female genitalia but also of his own. When the sailor Tashtego falls overboard into the Sperm Whale’s well in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, it is “through the courage and great skill in obstetrics of Queequeg, [that] the deliverance, or rather delivery of Tashtego was successfully accomplished.” Melville’s narrator remarks, “Midwifery should be taught in the same course with fencing and boxing, riding and rowing.”⁵⁶ A metaphorical piece of advice to be sure, but also evidence that by the nineteenth century midwifery had become a most masculine art (and here in the most masculine of novels). Perhaps man-midwives were successful not because they coerced mothers, but partly because they taught fellow inhabitants of the public sphere what it was to be a man.

NOTES

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1. Louis Lapeyre, *An Enquiry...Whether Women with Child Ought To Prefer the Assistance of Their Own Sex* (London: S. Bladon, 1772), 35.

2. Elizabeth Nihell, *A Treatise on the Art of Midwifery* (London: A. Morley, 1760), 3.

3. For a typical example, see “A Course of Midwifery Delivered by Dr. Thos. Young” [London, 1770], MS B 44, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD; and Thomas R. Forbes, “Midwifery and Witchcraft,” *Journal of the History of Medicine* 17 (1962): 264–83.

4. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives and Nurse* (Old Westbury NY: Feminist Press, 1973); Ehrenreich and English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts’ Advice to Women* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1978); Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978); Edward Shorter, *A History of Women’s Bodies* (London: A. Lane, 1982).

5. Roy Porter, “A Touch of Danger: The Man–Midwife as Sexual Predator,” in *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, ed. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 206–34; Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man–Midwifery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995); Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter, *Patient’s Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth–Century England* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989), 173–85; Jean Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of the Struggle for the Control of Childbirth*, 2d ed. (London: Historical Publications, 1988).

6. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 28; see also Anthony J. La Vopa, “Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth–Century Europe,” *Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992): 79–116; Margaret C. Jacob, “The Mental Landscape of the Public Sphere: A European Perspective,” *Eighteenth–Century Studies* 28 (1994): 95–113; Greg Laugero, “Infrastructures of Enlight-

enment: Road-making, the Public Sphere, and the Emergence of Literature," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1995): 45–68; and Kathleen Wilson, "Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity in the English Provinces, c. 1720–1790," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1995): 69–96.

7. Works critical of the traditional separate sphere argument include: Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Sphere: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36 (1993): 383–414; Lawrence E. Klein, "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1995): 97–109; and Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650–1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London: Longman, 1998). Important new work showing the myriad ways women legitimately enjoyed aspects of the public sphere include Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998); Margaret R. Hunt, *The Mid-dling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996); Donna Andrew, "London Debating Societies, 1776–1799," *London Record Society* 30 (1993); Mary Thale, "Women in London Debating Societies in 1780," *Gender and History* 7 (1995): 5–24; and Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995): 807–34.

8. John Leake, *A Lecture Introductory to the Theory and Practice of Midwifery*, 3d ed. (London, 1773), 60.

9. I borrow this phrase from Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109–42.

10. Adrian Wilson, "The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. Valerie Fildes (New York: Routledge, 1990), 68–107. The most impressive and nuanced account of early modern childbirth experiences and customs is David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997); see also the collection edited by Hilary Marland, *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe* (London: Routledge, 1993); and Linda Pollack, "Childbearing and Female Bonding in Early Modern England" *Social History* 22 (1997): 286–306.

11. This phrase is Habermas's in reference to the *bourgeois* public sphere of coffeehouses and salons (Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 160). For examples of lying-in as inverting society's hierarchies, see Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in *Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1975), 124–51; David Cressy, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996): 438–65, esp. 444–52; and Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 84–87. For contemporary examples, see the works following in note 13 and chapter three in *The Bachelor's Banquet*, ed. Faith Gildehuys (1603; Binghamton: SUNY Press, 1993), 61–73; and *The Spectator*, no. 326, 14 March 1712.

12. Wilson, "The Ceremony of Childbirth," 26–27, 30–31; Patricia Crawford, "The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), 3–38.

13. *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage* (London, 1682), 97; *The Womens Advocate: Or, Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*, 2d ed. (London, 1683), 24; see also Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book* (London: Simon Miller, 1671); and Anon., *The Midwives Just Petition*, (London, 1643).

14. Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722; reprint, New York: Norton, 1973), 125–33; Anon., *The Bill Intituled, An Act for the Relief, Imployment and Settlement of the Poor* (London: Charles Hill, 1705); Richard Head, *The Miss Display'd, with All Her Wheeling Arts and Circumstances* (London, 1675), 48–49; several of Eliza Haywood's stories incorporate midwives hiding mothers and managing unwanted infants (see *The Female Spectator* [London, 1745], 1:20–21, 1:364–72, 4:218–38).

15. On Cellier, see Susan Bruce, "The Flying Island and Female Anatomy. Gynaecology and Power in Gulliver's Travels," *Genders* 2 (summer 1988): 60–76; Margaret George, *Women in the First Capitalist Society* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988); and Helen King, "The Politick Midwife: Models of Midwifery in the Work of Elizabeth Cellier," in Marland, ed., *The Art of Midwifery*, 115–30. On Judith Wilkes, see *A Melius Inquirendum into the Birth of the Prince of Wales* (London: J. Wilks, 1689); and Rachel Weil, "The Politics of Legitimacy: Women and the Warming Pan Scandal," in *The Revolution of*

1688–1689: *Changing Perspectives*, ed. Lois Schwoerer (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 65–82.

16. David Cressy, "Literacy in Context: Meaning and Measurement in Early Modern England," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), 305–19; Doreen Evenden, "Mothers and their Midwives in Seventeenth-Century London," in Marland, ed., *The Art of Midwifery*, 9–26, 20–23; David Harley, "Provincial Midwives in England: Lancashire and Cheshire, 1660–1760," in Marland, ed., *The Art of Midwifery*, 27–48, 28–30; Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery*, 30.

17. Ruth Ginzberg, "Uncovering Gynocentric Science," in *Feminism and Science*, ed. Nancy Tuana (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989); Lisa Cody, "The Doctors in Labour; Or a New Whim Wham from Guildford," *Gender and History* 4 (1992): 175–96; see also Bruce, "The Flying Island." Contemporary assertions include Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book* (see note 13) and Sarah Stone, *A Complete Practice of Midwifery* (London: T. Cooper, 1737).

18. James C. Oldham, "On Pleading the Belly: A History of the Jury of Matrons," *Criminal Justice History* 6 (1985): 1–64, esp. 13, 19, and 29 for cases in which matrons ruled against women's pregnancy claims; J. M. Beattie, *Crime and Courts in England, 1660–1800* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988), 101–2; Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men*, 15.

19. See Doreen Evenden-Nagy, "Seventeenth-Century London Midwives: Their Training, Licensing, and Social Profile" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster Univ., 1991). For the French case in which female midwives more successfully preserved their profession under the leadership of an extraordinary woman, see Nina Rattner Gelbart, *The King's Midwife: A History and Mystery of Madame du Coudray* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998).

20. Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660–1760," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28 (1995): 295–322. See also Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England 1500–1800* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 293–96.

21. Mary Astell, *Moderation Truly Stated* (London: J. L. for Richard Wilkin, 1704), xxxv; quoted in Ruth Perry, "Mary Astell and the Feminist Critique of Possessive Individualism," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23 (1990): 444–57. Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan* [1651; reprint, New York: Dutton, 1950]) was explicit that mothers, not fathers, had this power: "where there are no Matrimonial lawes, it cannot be known who is the Father unless it be declared by the Mother; and therefore the right of Dominion over the Child dependeth on her will, and is consequently hers" (pt. 2, chap. 20, 169).

22. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988).

23. *News from the Coffee House* (London, 1667), quoted in Aytoun Ellis, *The Penny Universities. A History of the Coffeehouses* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956), 265.

24. Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past and Present* 92 (August 1981): 20–54; Evelleen Richards, "A Political Anatomy of Monsters, Hopeful and Otherwise: Teratogeny, Transcendentalism, and Evolutionary Theorizing," *ISIS* 85 (1994): 377–411; Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993).

25. In November 1726, news reached London that a poor woman named Mary Toft had given birth to several rabbits. Although unquestionably an amazing story, Toft explained that she had craved eating rabbits so persistently during her pregnancy that she had marked her fetus with this wish. Some contemporaries took Toft's claims seriously because they believed that this sort of forceful maternal imagination could account for natal deformities and birthmarks. Other contemporary critics, including William Hogarth, Alexander Pope, and John Arbuthnot, instead emphasized different relations in their satires, including the power play between a mother and her doctors, and the different epistemological capabilities that women and men possessed in reproductive matters. See Cody, "The Doctors in Labour," 175–196, esp. 177–83, 191; and Alan Shepard, "The Literature of a Medical Hoax: The Case of Mary Toft, 'The Pretended Rabbet-Breeder,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 19 (1995): 59–77.

26. *Two Introductory Lectures, Delivered by Dr. William Hunter* (London: By order of Trustees for J. Johnson, 1784), 49–53; François Jacob, *The Logic of Life. A History of Heredity* (New York: Vintage,

1973); Barbara Stafford, *Body Criticism. Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 20–21, 210–79.

27. Clara Pinto-Correia, *The Ovary of Eve: Egg and Sperm and Preformation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997); Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993); Mary Terrell, "Salon, Academy, and Boudoir: Generation and Desire in Maupertuis's Science of Life," *ISIS* 87 (1996): 217–29; Janet Browne, "Botany for Gentlemen: Erasmus Darwin and *The Loves of Plants*," *ISIS* 80 (1989): 593–621; Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science," *ISIS* 77 (1986): 261–77.

28. On family values among bugs, see *The Ladies Magazine, or the Universal Entertainer*, no. 18 (13 July 1751); on the man-midwife toad, see *Curious Remarks and Observations....Extracted from the History and Memoirs of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris*, ed. Peter Templeman (London: C. Davis, 1753), 371–74; for related ways that contemporaries worked out females' political power (or lack thereof) in nature, see Frederick R. Prete, "Can Females Rule the Hive? The Controversy over Honey Bee Gender Roles in British Beekeeping Texts of the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of the History of Biology* 24 (1995): 113–44.

29. [John Brown], *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, 7th ed. (London: L. Davis and C. Reymer, 1758), 187–91. For the shifting rhetorical strategies of population theorists, see Lisa Cody, "The Politics of Body Contact: Disciplines of Reproduction in Britain, 1688–1834" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California Berkeley, 1993), chap. 1.

30. John Nicols, *A Sermon Preached...[for] the City of London Lying-in Hospital for Married Women* (London: C. Say, 1767), 5. The best work on the lying-in hospitals is Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989).

31. Nihell, *Treatise*, passim; for similar charges in regards to Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital, see "A letter from an old midwife, to the governors of the Foundling-Hospital, in which it will appear why she does not apply to be of their society," *The Ladies Magazine, or the Universal Entertainer*, no. 15 (1 June 1751).

32. William Smellie, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Midwifery*, 8th ed. (London, 1774), 1:283; 3:373–380; John Gibson, *Some Useful Hints and Friendly Admonitions to Young Surgeons on the Practice of Midwifery* (Colchester: W. Keymer, 1772), 38–39; for a gentle spoof of these issues, see [William Taplin], "Gregory Glyster," in *The Aesculapian Labyrinth Explored; Or, Medical Mystery Illustrated. In a Series of Instructions to Young Physicians, Surgeons, Accoucheurs [etc.]...* (London: G. Kearsley, 1784).

33. Frank Nicholl's cynical *The Petition of the Unborn Babes* (London: M. Cooper, 1752) accused the man-midwives of the British Lying-in Hospital of torturing infants with their instruments. The hospital's governors had published in all the London papers a lengthy denial, emphasizing that they had "made a strict enquiry into the facts alledged." The British Lying-in Hospital, *Minute Book, 1749–1757* (17, 23 January 1752), London Metropolitan Archives, H14/BLI/A1/1 (and throughout for several other incidents).

34. Roy Porter, "William Hunter: A Surgeon and a Gentleman," in *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-Century Medical World*, ed. W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 7–34, 22. Quotes are from Horace Walpole's journals, cited in Jane M. Oppenheimer, *New Aspects of John and William Hunter* (New York: H. Schuman, 1946), 150–54.

35. The most illustrious man-midwives frequented the British Coffeehouse: Sir Charles Illingworth, *The Story of William Hunter* (Edinburgh: E. and S. Livingstone, 1967), 49.

36. Sir Richard Manningham, *An Abstract of Midwifry, for the Use of the Lying-in Infirmary* (London: T. Gardner, 1744).

37. William Hunter, *Anatomia uteri humani gravidi....The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus* (Birmingham: John Baskerville, 1774).

38. Hunter, *Two Introductory Lectures*, 133.

39. Hunter, *Two Introductory Lectures*, 106–7 for an extended discussion of man-midwives participating in the republic of letters.

40. For several press accounts attacking man-midwives, see "Clippings," Royal College of Surgeons, London, 275.h.3 [17], and for regular mention of obstetric stories, see *The London Evening Post* and *The Craftsman; or Say's Weekly Journal*. For depictions of the man-midwife, see Arthur Cash, "The Birth of Tristram Shandy: Sterne and Dr. Burton," in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. R. F. Brissenden (Canberra: Australian National Univ. Press, 1968), 133–54; Porter, "A Touch of Danger," 215–24; Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery*, 165–69; and Cody, "Politics of Body Contact," chap. 4. For an outstanding analysis of medical teaching, including midwifery and obstetrics, see Susan C. Lawrence, *Charitable Knowledge: Hospital Pupils and Practitioners in Eighteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), especially chapter five, "London lecturing: Public knowledge and private courses," 162–211. The man-midwife and the social changes he represented operated spectacularly as a show to watch in the public sphere. But the man-midwife also operated as a spectacle in the second sense, that is, as a lens through which to see the natural order.

41. Leake, *A Lecture Introductory*, 25–26.

42. Leake, *A Lecture Introductory*, 5–6.

43. [Tobias Smollett], *The Critical Review* 9 (1760): 187–97.

44. S[tephen] Freeman, *The Ladies Friend, and Family Physical Library. The Midwifery in This Edition Is by Question and Answer* (London, 1787), 305.

45. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 48; see also Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31 (1992): 1–20.

46. Leake, *Lecture Introductory*, 31

47. Leake, *Lecture Introductory*, 54.

48. Leake, *Lecture Introductory*, 54. Numerous texts, including works by Smellie and Hunter, invoked man-midwives' humanity and charity, and when man-midwives behaved poorly, they were attacked publicly for being brutes. For example, *The Craftsman; or Say's Weekly Journal* reported how a woman presented herself at the Public Office in Bow Street because she had been expelled from a lying-in hospital for asking for too many bowls of caudle. She reported that her doctor caustically demanded "whether she wanted caudle six times, or thirty-six times a day... the Doctor grew angry, struck her, and said she should turn out of the hospital, and drew her, with her child and the bed, out on the floor." The woman left, went to a public house where kindly people fed her, but her child soon died. In court, the doctor denied hitting the woman, but admitted to expelling her since the hospital rules permitted him to. "Sir John objected to it, saying that all rules, contrary to the laws of nature, are absurd and void of themselves; that, as a man and a physician, humanity should be one of the first of his characteristics" (9 October 1773).

49. Quoted in Oppenheimer, *New Aspects*, 140–42.

50. In *The Gentleman's Daughter*, Amanda Vickery addresses Porter's point explicitly, finding in her meticulous analysis of thousands of family letters, "the absence of a single instance of reported tension between mother and father-to-be over the choice of birth assistant" (101–2).

51. Walpole quoted in Oppenheimer, *New Aspects*, 150.

52. William Hunter's students seem to have adored him; see a "Lsetter from John Morgan, writing on behalf of the Anatomy Class, to thank W. Hunter" (18 March 1761), H43; "Letter from W. Shippen" (5 November 1765), Univ. of Glasgow Archives, H44; on Hunter's sarcastic humor overly impressing his students, see Alexander Monro, *An Expostulatory Epistle to William Hunter, M.D.* (Edinburgh: G. Hamilton, 1762), 28.

53. *The London Evening Post* frequently attacked man-midwives throughout the 1760s; journalist Philip Thicknesse wrote many pieces for the press throughout the 1760s and 1770s and also authored very popular, salacious pamphlet diatribes against man-midwives, including *Man-Midwifery Analysed* (London: R. Davis, 1764); for an outstanding analysis of these and other works written by men, see Porter, "A Touch of Danger."

54. Nihell, *Treatise*, 250, 31, 245.

55. Fraser, "Rethinking," 114; Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 3.
56. My grateful thanks to Robert Faggen for drawing my attention to this passage: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York: Norton, 1967), chap. 78, 290

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