

Tending Mothers and the Fruits of the Womb  
The Work of the Midwife in the Early Modern German City

von Gabrielle Robilliard  
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Gabrielle Robilliard

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#### THE AUTHOR

Gabrielle Robilliard is an independent scholar and academic translator specialising in the history of medicine, in particular early modern midwifery and obstetrics in Germany, as well as the history of early modern work. She completed her doctorate at the University of Warwick, United Kingdom, and has lectured in the history of medicine at the Universities of Bremen and Lüneburg.

The early modern period saw a fundamental shift in the history of childbirth from midwifery as a traditional, largely female occupation to modern obstetrics. The seeds of this transformation were sown in the cities, where municipal governments and their medical officials began reworking the often centuries-old systems of municipal midwifery. In Leipzig they overhauled midwife education and in the 1730s appointed a municipal man-midwife.

But why all the commotion about midwifery? How 'novel' were these developments really? And how did all these changes affect the everyday work of the city's midwives? Drawing on a vast array of administrative sources, Gabrielle Robilliard explores the world of Leipzig's midwives and early man-midwives from 1650 to 1810. Employing a prosopographical approach, she illuminates in minute detail the occupational culture and structure of both official and unofficial midwifery within the city – including social and economic milieus, client networking practices, and inter- and intraprofessional rivalries – and examines the nature of the encounter between traditional practice and new ways of organising urban midwifery provision.

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