

fixed, therefore, to one of his philippics, an engraving representing a personage, half man and half woman; the male half grasping a lever, and the female presenting to view a pap-boat.

This "strange compound" was early objected to, and numerous attempts have been made to fix upon a word less objectionable than this barbarism. Dr. Maubray, a man of infinite pedantry and self-conceit, coined a long word from the Greek, to designate *the man who gives aid to females in child-birth*, and this whole sentence he very felicitously, as he imagined, comprized in the sesquipedalian compound, *Androboethogynist*, which appellation he took to himself, and bestowed upon his obstetrical brethren\*.

Douglas, a Surgeon, who published in 1736†, says, it is absurd to call men, wives; and not much less so, to use the word *Midwife*, when the officiating person is either a widow or a maid! He adds, "the French express it very beautifully by the word *Accoucheur*, and I shall always express it by the word *Midman*, which though not so neat as the French, yet is much better than the absurd word complained of." The female practitioners Douglas denominates "*Midwomen*, which includes Maids, Wives, and Widows." Subsequently, Douglas applied the word *Accoucheur* in a proposed dedication to his brother: "To that accurate Anatomist, and consummate ACCOUCHEUR, Dr. James Douglas, Physician Extraordinary to the Queen, &c." This is the first time that the word was so employed in England.

Chapman‡ defends the expression *Manmidwife*. *Midwifery*, he contends, is expressive of practice not *by*, but *upon* a wife, and therefore he asserts that *Manmidwife*, and *Manmidwifery*, are words not chargeable with incongruity.

This explanation of the meaning of the word *Midwifery*, is not inconsistent with the derivation of the word as suggested by Todd. Johnson says, "Midwife is derived both by Skinner and Junius, from *mid* or *meed*, a reward, and *pyf*, Saxon." Todd, in addition says, "the interpretation of this

\* Female Physician, 1730.

† State of Midwifery in London and Westminster.

‡ Reply to Douglas's Short Account, &c. 1737.

## Gentleman's Magazine 1830

Mr. URBAN, Jan. 11.  
TODD, in the last edition of Johnson's Dictionary, speaks thus of the word *Man-midwife*:

"*MAN-MIDWIFE*, *n. s.* A strange compound, denoting the man who discharges the office of a Midwife. It is now frequently converted into the finical *Accoucheur*. Bishop Hall may be considered as giving rise in some degree to the present expression:

This *Man* was not their *Midwife*.  
*Bp. Hall, Hon. of the Barr. Clergy. p. 100.*"

The Sermon of Bishop Hall, here referred to, was published in 1620. The earliest date at which I have found the word *Man-midwife*, is 1637, when it was employed in the preface to "the Expert *Midwife*." It is used as a verb, to *manmidwife*, in "Wolfe-ridge's *Speculum Matricis*," 1669.

The dissection of this "strange compound" has afforded no little amusement to those writers whose delight it has been to vituperate and hold up to derision the Physicians and Surgeons who have engaged in this branch of medical practice. Your old Correspondent, Philip Thicknesse, was not contented with words only, but strove, by pictorial embellishments, to make his sarcasms more effective. He pre-

etymology, which Versteegan also gives, is 'a woman of meed, deserving recompence.' But this seems a forced meaning. May not the word be more naturally derived from the Saxon preposition *med*, *with*, and *piſ*, *wife*, implying the *wife* or *woman*, who is attendant upon, that is with the woman in childbirth?" But if this be the derivation, it would apply equally, whether the woman was attended by a male or a female.

Thomson, in his "Etymons of English Words," gives another derivation. He considers the Gothic *mid* and Danish *mit*, analogous to *wit*, knowledge, wisdom, so that Midwife, according to him, corresponds with the French *sage femme*, and the Scots *cannte wife*.

I have often wondered that our Lexicographers and Philologists have not looked nearer home for the derivation of this word. The *natural* etymology may, I think, be found in the old English word *Modir*, which is used both for the mother and the womb. Midwife then, is the contraction of *Modirwife*, and is applied to the wife, the good woman, whose duty it was to be in attendance upon this important part of the female system.

Of the "finical" word *Accoucheur*, I have already mentioned the first use in the English language. Astruc\* tells us that the word was invented soon after the year 1663; the first time I have noticed it, is 1668 †. The Dictionnaire de Trevoux traces its etymology to the Latin *accubare*. The feminine *Accoucheure* has been formed from *Accoucheur*; but with an absurdity beyond measure ridiculous, the "finical" English, who have substituted *Accoucheur* for the incongruous compound *Man-midwife*, are now dignifying all the old Midwives with the splendid appellation of *female Accoucheurs*.

Instead of *Man-midwife* or *Accoucheur*, to both of which words objections have been largely made, some formatives from *Obstetrix* have been proposed; viz. *Obstitor*, *Obstetricator*, and *Obstetrician*. This last, as being analogous to *Geometrician*, *Mathematician*, *Physician*, &c. seems deserving of being adopted. Unquestionably,

*Obstetric Surgeon*, or *Obstetric Physician*, might appropriately supersede the ill-assorted *Physician*—or *Surgeon-Accoucheur*, which appears to be the term at present much employed.

Yours, &c. OBSTETRICUS.

\* History of the Art of Midwifery.

† L'Accoucheur Methodique, par D. Fournier. 18mo.