Louise Bourgeois Encyclopedia Article

Louise Bourgeois

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1563-1636

French midwife who was the first woman to write a textbook on midwifery, *Observations Diverse sur la Sterilite, Perte de Fruict, Foecundite, Accouchements, et Maladies des Femmes, et Enfants Nouveaux Naiz* (Diverse Observations on Sterility, Loss of Fruit, Fecundity, Childbirth, and Diseases of Women, and Newborn Infants; Paris, 1609). Bourgeois, later Boursier, was a well-educated woman who was trained and licensed at the famous Paris hospital, Hôtel Dieu. She raised the respectability and social standing of midwives, eventually becoming official midwife to the court of Henry IV. Her book, based on the teachings of French surgeon Ambroise Paré, and written in the vernacular, was widely read in her time and established her reputation as a pioneer of scientific midwifery.