

Book Reviews

Nevertheless, such claims quickly became recognized for the platitudes they were. More instances of egregious fraud were coming to light every year, with the public aware of their drain on research budgets (\$6 billion for 1988 for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) alone).

Hence in 1988 the US Congress acted, galvanizing a 1981 initiative that had subsided after Establishment assurances to the House committee (chaired by Al Gore) that it would devise machinery. The new committee, however, would not be bamboozled. In the Democrat, John Dingell, it had a chairman who believed that fraud was fraud, wherever it occurred, and who conducted his hearing in a manner some compared with the Star Chamber. He was aided by a team of experts and staffers, respectively described as the Savonarolas of the NIH and foul-mouthed bullies (reminiscent of Milton's celebrated stage direction: "Comus enters . . . with his rout").

Within five years of Dingell's appearance, the crisis was over: concerns had subsided and fair mechanisms for dealing with misconduct had been introduced. Ironically, the pivotal case for change—the subject of Kevles's well-researched book—did not involve fraud at all. After an inquiry, a panel, the NIH study, and the Congressional committee hearings, an appeal (alone taking 28 days and generating 6500 pages of text) exonerated the accused, Teresa Imanishi-Kari, a Brazilian–Japanese researcher, from anything more than sloppy science. Her inadequate English, the complex antibody genetics (misunderstood by even one official team), and the hubris of her boss, the Nobel laureate David Baltimore, had all kept the issue going in the lay and scientific media for ten years. For, given his high profile throughout, the "Baltimore" case is the only major instance to be called after the departmental head (never accused of fraud) rather than the alleged miscreant. His persistent outspokenness was subsequently to cost him the presidency of Rockefeller University,

many scientists holding that he had gone over the top and that the government might cut research funding.

Kevles's strength is to emphasize not only how rapidly the US will tackle an abuse once the community perceives that it has to act, but also how it will not leave the solution alone until it is adequate. In 1988, during the Baltimore hearings, the NIH introduced the Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI). Proving to be as Orwellian as its title, it was mistakenly based on dialogue among colleagues, and marred by leaks to the media, and, crucially, a denial of due process to the accused. As Kevles shows, the reforms that replaced the OSI with the Office of Research Integrity four years later largely overcome these, and the system has worked well. His book is a major contribution to the misconduct literature, being flawed only slightly by the suggestion that there was no interest outside the USA until 1997. As a literature search and the formation of several lookalike committees in the Nordic countries and other places would have told him, interest elsewhere has been strong since the late 1980s. But it is a trivial mistake for somebody who lives as far distant from Europe as Cal Tech (where ironically, as Koepfli Professor of the Humanities, he is now a colleague of David Baltimore).

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Annet Mooij, *Out of otherness: characters and narrators in the Dutch venereal disease debates 1850–1990*, trans. by Beverley Jackson, Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine, *Clio Medica*, 47, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, Rodopi, 1998, pp. vi, 295, Hfl. 150.00, \$78.50 (hardback 90-420-0267-0), Hfl. 45.00, \$23.50 (paperback 90-420-0257-3).

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This is a truly interesting and well written book. While many historical works on venereal disease focus on one particular kind of disease, in this volume public debates on the subject play a central role, and therefore we learn not only about syphilis, but also, for instance, about herpes genitalis and AIDS. This is not surprising, because the author's aim was to write a sociological study in which not only the diseases themselves but also the public responses to them and their symbolic dimension are understood in the specific Dutch historical context. In this she has succeeded very well. With the help of theatrical metaphors, the public debate is reconstructed as a changing stage on which new narrators as well as characters come and go, on which new definitions of the problem are introduced, and new solutions proposed.

While in the early debates the professional prostitute was seen as the source of infection, in the period between 1920 and 1955 the modern, promiscuous working girl—the amateur—was a central target of the campaigns to fight syphilis. While the main characters were condemned to silence and anonymity, medical practitioners and moralists—feeling superior to them—controlled the public debate. However, this relation between narrators and characters changed. In the sixties it was the life-style of well-educated, left-wing and sexually liberated heterosexuals which became associated with a new venereal disease, herpes genitalis. Now the main characters of public debate stopped being just the objects of controversy and became major participants in the debate. A new literary genre developed in which these patients testified to the meaning of this disease for their lives and relationships, and this genre played a major role in regulating sexual practices at a time when the pill as well as penicillin were available to prevent babies as well as syphilis.

Although, on the one hand, medical science and statistics became more and more

important in the debate on venereal disease, the erosion of the opposition between narrators and characters continued in the eighties when AIDS was put high on the agenda. In fact, the influence of medical experts on the debate grew in parallel with that of laymen, and the national government now also became an important actor. This changing relationship between narrators and characters marked the content of the discussion as well. The public debate on AIDS articulated a great awareness of the complexity of the spread of this disease and the interdependency of individuals. The older epidemiological models of the wheel and the chain now became replaced by the notion of network, which made it difficult to relate AIDS to some particular social groups. So, the fact that homosexuality in the Netherlands never became the successor to prostitution or promiscuity can be largely explained by this changing relationship between narrators and characters.

Mooij owes quite a lot to Allan Brandt's *No magic bullet*, but her study is conceptually more refined in several aspects. The relation between science and morals especially—treated by Brandt as simple and antagonistic—is handled in a more subtle way. Moreover, her book makes clear that a broad theoretical perspective on changing power- and status-relations between characters and narrators involved in debates on health and disease does not necessarily stand in the way of historical details and nuances. To conclude, this study is a fine piece of sociological historical scholarship and deserves a broad audience.

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Susan Scott and Christopher J Duncan,
Human demography and disease, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. xvi, 354, illus., £50.00, \$74.95 (0-521-62052-X).

This statistically and theoretically sophisticated, but flawed study is organized