

Book Reviews

casebook of a female doctor, Tan Yunxian (1461–1554), and from accounts of midwives' practice in the same period, gathered from a variety of sources.

Cheng Maoxian described cases in considerable detail, setting out both his prescriptions throughout the course of illness and the reaction of the patients and their families to the proposed course of treatment. His main diagnostic method was taking the pulse, which, when treating women, meant that the niceties could be observed, but he sometimes demanded to see a female patient if he deemed it essential. Though the arrangement was typically made through senior male members of the female patient's family, Cheng's reference to closer examination of female patients contradicts the widely held view that sick women were invariably screened from male physicians, allowing access only to the pulse points of the wrist.

Male doctors were frequently called upon to treat women during pregnancy: Cheng Maoxian gave his wife ginseng and astragalus root to prevent bleeding in the third month, followed by peach kernel and Tibetan crocus which saved the foetus. They also treated a variety of post-partum problems but were generally called during childbirth only if problems arose.

Though Furth describes a variety of female healers through references in Ming (1368–1644) literature, the midwife was frequently characterized as incompetent and corrupt. The portrait of Granny Liu in the novel *Jin ping mei (Plum in the golden vase)* (1617) is of a Chinese Mrs Gamp, loud, overdressed and vulgar. Part of the midwives' task was to carry out the ritual burial of the placenta, but they were widely suspected of selling body parts, which were in much demand as highly potent medicines, then as now. An enormously expensive face cream currently being promoted in Chinese department stores proudly announces that its magic ingredient is human placenta.

A unique volume, preserved in the library of the Traditional Chinese Medicine

Research Institute in Peking, is Tan Yunxian's *Nü yi zayan* (Sayings of a female doctor). The daughter of a noted doctor, Tan Yunxian became very well known in her own right and acquired a substantial number of patients who disliked being treated by male doctors. For this reason, though she treated women, her practice was not restricted to specifically female problems but ranged from skin infections and digestive ailments to lupus.

In these partial presentations of the direct experience of sixteenth-century Chinese medical practitioners, Charlotte Furth usefully contributes to the body of material on Chinese traditional medicine in European languages, following the work of the late Joseph Needham and Paul Unschuld, in particular. It is to be regretted that she does not write with Needham's elegance, indeed some of her sentences are barely penetrable.

Frances Wood,
British Library

Daniel J Kevles, *The Baltimore case: a trial of politics, science, and character*, New York and London, W W Norton, 1998, pp. 509, illus., £21.00 (hardback 0-393-04103-4).

Between 1975 and 1988 the US biomedical research community was shaken by continual revelations of research misconduct, mostly plagiarism and invention of data. Prestigious departments in ivy-league universities were involved, with world-famous senior figures caught up through gift authorship of papers based on fraudulent data—indeed, usually on work that had not been done at all. Though the episodes were well publicized, the scientific Establishment was slow to react, claiming that science could police itself and anyway the prevalence of misconduct was low.

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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).

Stephen Lock,

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of Medicine

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).