

Over the years, Oliver Sachs has published a series of fascinating studies of strange and wonderful neuropsychological phenomena. None of these are “peer reviewed scientific case studies” and some of them have been severely criticized by researchers for misrepresenting the phenomena described, but I think we do better to leave Sachs' exaggerations and oversimplifications unchallenged, since they make such good stories. They are rather like fish tales—they excite others about the rewards of angling, swelling the ranks of eager investigators. Some of these will be disappointed to discover in their own research that things are more complicated and less clearcut than they had been led to expect, but so what? We can advise our students to keep the salt shaker handy when reading Sachs' poetic accounts, and count on them to supplement their reading with the rigorous scientific papers they never would have sought out, had it not been for Sachs' dramatic storytelling. Such stories couldn't have metaphysical implications, any more than fairy tales could, but they might well open people's minds to heretofore unimagined possibilities.