

broader and flowed faster than that from Scandinavia to the rest of Europe, the latter by no means merely trickled. These were not marginal men.

The essays also reveal how “the study of nature [was] . . . a form of worship” (208). The introduction notes that two rulers (significantly “usurpers”), Gustav-Vasa in Sweden-Finland and Frederik I in Denmark-Norway, regarded the new evangelical ideas as “useful for their aim of establishing national churches under royal control” (1), thus lending royal support (at least implicitly) to the driving force that religion (Protestantism/Lutheranism) became in fusing medicine, natural philosophy, and religion intellectually. Many sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century thinkers, in Scandinavia as elsewhere, shared the idea that the “book of nature” was “much more than a mere metaphor.” In nature one could find “inscribed [God’s] . . . own perfect wisdom” (172). Melanchthon insisted that knowledge of anatomy was the best way for Protestants, who inhabited an imperfect sublunary world, to perceive God.

These two strongly articulated themes bind the collection together, but the individual authors also highlight differences. Each contribution provides considerable detail (sometimes a bit too much detail) but rarely strays far from the main interpretations advanced here. The result is a richly textured view of science, medicine, and religion in post-Reformation Scandinavia. Scholars who know a good deal about the relationship between early modern science and religion and who believe that relationship is complementary and not antagonistic, will not be surprised by the general interpretations presented here. Nonetheless, these twelve articles do not just add their moiety to our store of knowledge; rather, they enhance, nuance, and expand it while demonstrating how tightly interwoven, but also richly variegated, the intellectual world of post-Reformation Europe was.

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*Cognitive Confusions: Dreams, Delusions and Illusions in Early Modern Culture.* Ita Mac Carthy, Kirsti Sellevold, and Olivia Smith, eds.  
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Cognition-centered scholarship is here, and *Dreams, Delusions and Illusions in Early Modern Culture* is a welcome new contribution. This collection of essays tackles one of the most challenging of cruxes: the relationship between the literary and scientific investigations into the states listed in the book’s subtitle. Insofar as dreams and delusions exist as part of human experience, they are, by definition, productions of the human brain. Currently, there is renewed excitement over the scientific investigation into these emergent states of subcognition—so described because they are processes of meaning production not up to the standards of truth correlations and reason-instantiated data that we associate with conscious rational thought. By the authority of the book’s prin-

cipal title, *Cognitive Confusions*, these errant states are something close to mistakes. We might even wonder, in evolutionary terms, how the gods of selection could have put us here with meaning-making faculties so counterfactual, even out of control, and yet salient enough to interfere with our constructions of reality. If literature, in its imitation of our natures as a species, remains true to such potential, then every generation of interpreters is challenged to explain us to ourselves regarding our dreams and delusions, and how we struggle to keep track of them through metaconscious conceptualizing. In this enterprise, as old as the ancient Greeks, we now face a brave new world, for if Freud made a mess of it, and the cultural constructivists denied those aspects of our natures determined by our genes, then the work is to be done all over again, meanwhile making old literary texts new through extended understanding afforded by the cognitive sciences and evolutionary psychology.

Our new challenge is how students of human nature through the study of literature can qualify themselves as bona fide investigators in these scientific fields. It is a growing necessity, because if literary scholars find themselves talking about minds, persons, selves, memory, limitations to computational recursion, and the layers of provisional worlds, then they will quickly become obsolete if they ignore the recent progress in our understanding of the ways of the brain and its emergent properties. There is resistance due to old habits, of course, but that cannot long endure. Literature does things with brains, and brains do things with literature; and if brains are designed, then environmental conditions in our ancestral pasts did the selecting that biases and tilts all that we mentally produce today. We are discovering that we are a very particular species, with very particular phylogenetic propensities. Once we know that, literature becomes a profound new set of testimonials.

Nearly all of the essayists in this collection have familiarized themselves with certain of these new perspectives to the end of constructing analytical bridges between modern theory and early modern texts. But always there looms the double challenge of making new ideas familiar and applicable without vulgarizing them, and of building nonreductionist approaches to the texts. Commendably, these articles are largely free of baffle-talk, and I thank them for that, hoping, in the spirit of Denis Dutton, that we choose, this time around, to write with studied clarity and precision—that we will no longer need Ivy League gurus to interpret occulted wisdom from afar.

I found myself wanting to dialogue with each of these writers, but space is limited. What should we call these liminal cruxes when reality, illusion, and delusion stand in stark apposition—dream data and waking norms, real worlds and imaginary worlds, rational thinking and emotional thinking—all in relation to the brain of a survival-oriented species? In the first essay, Othello imagines infidelity; Ariosto's Orlando imagines love. Both resist corrective evidence. Both are driven by values embedded in their genes to delude themselves. This article explains why the instincts behind sexual jealousy and those pertaining to erotic desire are not simple inversions of each other. What makes beliefs delusional, in the next essay, turns out to be a matter of socially con-

structed and relative norms—and wisely opined. The authors discuss “thought insertion” (thoughts perceived to be outside the self), “alien abduction,” and “self-enhancing beliefs,” with examples taken from modern clinical writing. Religious delusions are a litmus test. People who think they are God are wacky, but those who, in congregations, turn wafers into the flesh of their God in order to eat him are not! The article on the early modern ghost deals with the phenomenology of the revenant. I wanted to chat with the author about Fustel de Coulonges’s study of Roman religion and the degree to which beliefs in the persistence of ancestors after death turned the ghost delusions of the Romans into a state religion. Of primary concern is the progression from folklore to the very real agency of devils that led to witch hunts and the Inquisition through an institutionalized delusion.

The essay on dreams explores this brain phenomenon as a place of freedom and truth unconstrained by the conformities necessitated by reality, thanks to Ficino writing on Synesius and Iamblichus. Descartes’s first *Meditation* serves as a context for introducing “theory of mind” and the human obsession with what other people are thinking. For our species, other minds are our most challenging environment, and yet we can read them only through signs, projections, and probability. The study of Aubigné exfoliates into an investigation of our capacity for recursion: the ability to reflect, at metaconscious levels, upon sources of information, the nesting of speakers, and the limits of inset narratives. The essay on Anton Francesco Doni returns to the question of the utopian vision in relation to reality, satire, and belief, but now through the remarkable experiment in *I mondi*. The final essay on Holbein’s *Ambassadors* is a rich discussion on matters pertaining to the hidden and the revealed and the cognitive elements of play elaborated out of the work of Huizinga.

These one-liners fall short of the richness of the studies themselves, but may, at least, provide a foretaste. These are worthy and well-conceived essays, occasionally overestimating the capacities of the uninitiated in the casual use of terms such as *scope syntax*, *embodied cognition*, *tagging*, *epistemic vigilance*, and matters of Latin stylistics. But what matters is that they enter into essential new investigations into the diversity of our cognitive experiences. There are no real cutting-edge cognitive theories, but rather a redirecting of several that are now settling in and perhaps soon to become pedagogical cookie cutters for astonished undergraduates. But that’s all right. These are the ideas proving to have the most direct applicability to literary explication.

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