



Deposited via The University of Leeds.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/141533/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Hollin, G (2018) Stephen T. Casper; Delia Gavrus (Editors). The History of the Brain and Mind Sciences: Technique, Technology, Therapy. Isis, 109 (4). pp. 861-862. ISSN: 0021-1753

<https://doi.org/10.1086/700986>

© 2018 by The History of Science Society. All rights reserved. This is an author produced version of a paper published in Isis. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

Stephen T. Casper; Delia Gavrus (Editors). *The History of the Brain and Mind Sciences: Technique, Technology, Therapy*. viii + 310 pp., figs., bibl., index. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017. £95 (cloth).

The back of book summary for this edited collection states that this 'history explores the exceptionally complex scientific and medical techniques and practices that have allowed practitioners to claim expertise in the brain and mind sciences over the past two centuries'. And yet while, building on this blurb, the terms 'technique', 'technology', and 'therapy' have made it into the book's title, it is really a forth concept which binds them together: the marginal. It is *marginal* techniques, *marginal* technologies, and *marginal* therapies which are the book's primary concern. Perhaps 'marginality' has performatively escaped from the title but, as Stephen Casper and Delia Gavrus say in their introduction, a core aim of the book is to make 'a collective case for exploring the field through the lens of seemingly marginal stories...' (2).

The rationale behind a focus on the margins is made clear throughout the introduction. The authors argue that what we might call 'histories of the centre' – for instance those which focus upon pioneering individuals (such as Charles Sherrington), disciplines and technologies we now understand as crucial (such as neurology and neuroimaging technologies), and terms which occupy vital positions (like plasticity) – have come to dominate the histories of the mind and brain. Here, however, it is argued that undue attention to these centres may mean that a fractured and fragmented patchwork (p.4) of context, contestation, and messiness is lost in favour of a teleological narrative wherein the object of analysis is self-evident and the direction of travel clearly mapped. It is a primary goal of the authors to demonstrate the utility of a change in perspective and enact a methodological and pedagogical reorientation to the margins.

The authors are not, of course, the first to make this argument. The epistemic case for studying margins was made by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger in *Towards a History of Epistemic Things*, who supported the claim that 'If there is a principle at all that guides the experimental roadmanship, it consists in "being attentive to answers arising on the margins or even outside the expected discourse"' (Stanford, p.79). Feminist science studies scholar Susan Leigh Star forcibly argued for the ethical importance of considering positions of 'multiple marginality,' for such sites are a source of 'a power that at once resists violence and encompasses heterogeneity' (*Power, technology and the phenomenology of conventions*, p.30). Despite this existing work, Casper and Gavrus make a convincing case that such approaches have not manifested themselves within histories of the neurosciences. The text's contributors, meanwhile, do a sound job of demonstrating the insights that such an orientation might bring.

The margins which come under consideration are certainly multiple. Both Casper and Jacyna focus their chapters upon apparently marginal scientific spaces with Casper considering public engagement activities at the 1951 Festival of Britain, while Jacyna's fascinating piece considers the Paris Menagerie as a space for understanding human intelligence in 19th century France. Kroker considers the importance of marginalised technologies and professions in the framing of *encephalitis lethargica* while diverse and marginal experimental materials ('circuits, algae, and whipped cream') are similarly foregrounded by Stadler in their chapter on the biophysics of the nerve. Both Garson and Casey emphasize the importance of discourse as a marginalized technology and technique; Casey examines the discursive work of the NIMH in their attempt to 'advance the cause of biological psychiatry' (p.230) while Garson's standout contribution considers the role of Alan Ginsberg and 1960s American counter-culture in the claim that 'amphetamine psychosis' could be

‘used as a biochemical model of schizophrenia’ (p.203). Indeed, the study of seemingly marginal topics is so consistent through the book that, perhaps unusually for an edited collection but certainly to its credit, it really needs to be considered *in toto* lest the relevance of individual contributions be missed. The brain and mind are so thoroughly marginalised in Thomas Shlich’s chapter on physiological surgery, for example, that out of context it would be hard to make case for its inclusion. (The brain appears at the margins even in Schlich’s title: ‘laboratory science as the epistemic basis of modern surgery (and neurosurgery).’)

Marginalized subjects also come under consideration. Stahnisch considers German refugee neuroscientists fleeing the Nazis, highlighting that arriving migrants in North America were often left on the margins, while the need to sell or leave behind equipment likewise shaped their practices. Gavrus most fully examines multiple marginality by asking after Thomas Dockrill, a technician positioned as marginal in at least three ways (a technician, working with a laboratory where the research programme ‘failed’, and whose views were most forcibly expressed within a novel). Despite these epistemological examinations (qua Rheinberger), however, the *ethical* stakes of marginality (qua Star) are never really explored and this may account for the striking omission of one margin in particular: The Global South. For all the fracturing and fragmenting, neuroscience remains a more-or-less unique concern of men from Western Europe and North America and, within this context, any role of gender, colonialism, and race is, well, marginalized. For sure, these are important elisions but they do not detract from what is present; a passionate and coherent argument for the study of the margins to take centre place in the history of neuroscience.

Greg Hollin is a lecturer in the School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK.