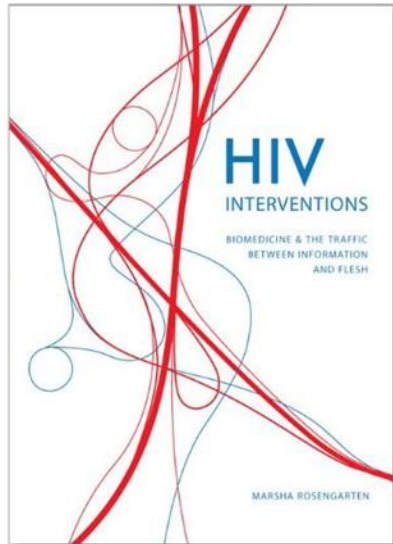


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HIV Interventions

Biomedicine and the Traffic between Information and Flesh

By Marsha Rosengarten

“In this remarkable and timely work, Marsha Rosengarten makes the compelling argument that to approach the issue of HIV intervention as if information and flesh are distinct - as if the task of intervention is simply to convince fleshy bodies to behave according to the information - constrains our ability to think the processes and relationships at stake. Writing with admirable concision and clarity, she transfigures a theoretical terrain too long encumbered by such restrictive understandings in order to provide an alternative, nuanced perspective on how the HIV

assemblage - the virus, the diagnostic apparatuses, antiretroviral treatments, pharmaceutical trials and interests, human embodiment and wider responses to HIV - consists of a myriad of processes that quite literally inform matter. Well beyond debates on ‘performativity v matter’ and ‘technological v organic’, this erudite work contains the best arguments I know for the political importance of thinking through the implications of such ‘informed matter’.” - **Vikki Bell**, Professor of Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London

HIV has changed in the presence of recent biomedical technologies. In particular, the development of anti-retroviral therapies (ARVs) for the treatment of HIV was a significant landmark in the history of the disease. Treatment with ARV drug regimens, which began in 1996, has enabled many thousands to live with the human immunodeficiency virus without progressing to AIDS. Yet ARVs have also been fraught with problems of regimen compliance, viral resistance and iatrogenic disease. Besides intensifying the technological and ethical work of medicine, the drugs have also affected conceptions of risk and risk practices, in turn presenting new challenges for prevention.

In order to fully devise safer, more effective forms of treatment, prevention, and possibly cure, Marsha Rosengarten asserts, it is essential to understand the relationship between HIV, medical technologies and ideas about the body. HIV is an entity that constitutes and is constituted by complex material and informational environments. Recognition of this two-way traffic between the medical science of HIV and the expression of HIV provides a novel basis for devising new or supplementary modes of thinking about and intervening in the epidemic. Through a series of case studies, made up of such diverse materials as drug advertisements, pill formulations, scientific articles, clinical trials, diagnostic test results and viral imaging as well as interviews with those living and working with HIV, Rosengarten provides numerous demonstrations of how

the entities comprising the HIV epidemic - bodies, viral resistance, diagnostic results, safe sex - are forged through dynamic relations.

University of Washington Press

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