



How to Do It: Guides to Good Living for Renaissance Italians

Rudolph M. Bell

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How to Do It shows us sixteenth-century Italy from an entirely new perspective: through manuals which were staples in the households of middlebrow Italians merely trying to lead better lives. Addressing challenges such as how to conceive a boy, the manuals offered suggestions such as tying a tourniquet around your husband's left testicle. Or should you want to goad female desires, throw 90 grubs in a liter of olive oil, let steep in the sun for a week and apply liberally on the male anatomy. Bell's journey through booklets long dismissed by scholars as being of little literary value gives us a refreshing and surprisingly fun social history.

"Lively and curious reading, particularly in its cascade of anecdote, offered in a breezy, cozy, journalistic style." —Lauro Martines, *Times Literary Supplement*

"[Bell's] fascinating book is a window on a lost world far nearer to our own than we might imagine. . . . How pleasant to read his delightful, informative and often hilarious book." —Kate Saunders, *The Independent*

"An extraordinary work which blends the learned with the frankly bizarre." —*The Economist*

"Professor Bell has a sly sense of humor and an enviably strong stomach. . . . He wants to know how people actually behaved, not how the Church or philosophers or earnest humanists thought they should behave. I loved this book." —Christopher Stace, *Daily Telegraph*

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