



How to Make It as a Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present (Women in Culture and Society)

Alison Booth

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How to Make It as a Woman outlines the history of prosopography or group biography, focusing on the all-female collections that took hold in nineteenth-century Britain and America. The queens, nurses, writers, reformers, adventurers, even assassins in these collective female biographies served as models to guide the moral development of young women. But often these famous historical women presented untrustworthy examples.

Beginning in the fifteenth century with Christine de Pizan, Alison Booth traces the long tradition of this genre, investigating the varied types and stories most often grouped together in illustrated books designed for entertainment and instruction. She claims that these group biographies have been instrumental in constructing modern subjectivities as well as relations among classes, races, and nations.

From Joan of Arc to Virginia Woolf, Booth examines a host of models of womanhood—both bad and good. Incorporating a bibliography that includes more than 900 all-female collections published in English between 1830 and 1940, Booth uses collective biographies to decode the varied advice on how to make it as a woman.

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