

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FICTION AND CULTURES OF SELF-HELP

This is a book about the encounters that contemporary North American fiction stages with distinct strands of self-help. Its central argument is that ever-expanding and diversifying self-help cultures are generatively elastic sites of inspiration as well as antagonism for contemporary authors. It offers new perspectives on the work of nine very different writers by exploring how they play different forms of self-improvement off against one another to explore betterment means in personal, ethical, and societal terms. This book explores the clashes between practices ranging from commencement speeches and grassroots communitarian self-help to time management productivity manuals, trauma recovery theories, pop-neuroscience, and makeover cultures, showing how contemporary writers use this friction to reimagine agency and authority, asking how – and if – it is possible to live and write ‘better’ in a compromised individualistic world.

Following her PhD in Literature at the University of Cambridge, Gillian Moore completed an Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship at Trinity College Dublin. She also recently graduated from an MSc in Psychology at the University of Kent where her research focused on interoceptive processes and the psychology of embodiment. Prizes she has received include the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council Award, Cambridge Trust Vice-Chancellor’s Award, Trinity College Dublin Gold Medal, and University of Kent MSc Psychology Scholar Award. Her research centres on the relationships between contemporary literature, therapeutic rhetoric, public speech, and psychology, with new work focusing on embodied practices of reading and literary depictions of interoception and proprioception. She is Reviews Editor at Irish literary magazine, *The Stinging Fly*, and is committed to public literary engagement and communicating academic ideas to a broad audience.

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