Contents

Preface vii
Introduction: Self-Help Books and American Worldview 1
1. American Popular Self-Education 19
2. The Books, the Writers, and Metacommentary 35
3. The Critics, the Simple Self, and America’s Cultural Cringe 56
4. Giving Advice and Getting Wisdom 76
5. Memes, Themes, and Worldview 93
6. Stories 112
7. Proverbs, Quotes, and Insights 135
8. Finding a Use for Self-Help Testimonies 147

Epilogue 157
Notes 161
Bibliography 163
Index 183