CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Literary Advice from Quill to Keyboard

Anneleen Masschelein

INTRODUCTION

The “writing advice industry” is one of the most enigmatic and, until recently, most overlooked areas of literature. Christopher Hilliard coined the term to indicate a number of different services offered in the early twentieth century to amateur writers and aspiring authors, handbooks¹ as well as “other commercial dispensers of advice: writer’s magazines more analogous to the hobby press than to literary reviews; correspondence schools; and manuscript criticism and placement-advice services or ‘bureaus’” (Hilliard 2006, p. 20). Today, there is still a large array of practices on offer, ranging from commercial how-to books to creative writing manuals and textbooks, highly specialized volumes addressing specific aspects of a text or a genre (such as beginnings, middles, and ends (Kress 2011) or an encyclopedia of poisons for detective writers (Stevens and Klarner 1990)), self-help books, therapeutic writing manuals, and writing memoirs, in which established authors mix autobiography from the vantage point of the writerly lifestyle with advice. Writing workshops

A. Masschelein (✉)
University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

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are spreading across the globe, both inside and outside universities, and magazines about writing, both for amateurs and professionals, are widely available.

What truly boosted the advice industry is the Internet. The correspondence courses and manuscript advice services of the early days have moved online, as have the self-publishing venues. Amazon's Kindle Worlds, for instance, offers possibilities to publish on Kindle, in print and audio formats, leading to the emergence of what Nick Levey calls a "post-press literature" (Levey 2016; McGurl 2016). How-to treatises (self-published and others) are available to even the most inexperienced budding author to navigate this new world. Add to these writing communities like Wattpad and the oldest fanfiction community, fanfiction.net; writing support groups like Absolute Write Water Cooler or The Insecure Writers Support Group; writing blogs like Selfpublishing.com, Writer's Digest or Write to Done; podcasts such as Writing excuses, The Creative Penn, Australian Writers' Centre, and The Creative Writer's Toolbelt; YouTube tutorials and software for creative writers (e.g., Scrivener, Dramatica, and Save the Cat! Story Structure Software 4.0); and so on. To paraphrase Michelene Wandor's study of creative writing in Britain, *The Writer Is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else: Creative Writing Reconceived* (2008): The literary advice industry is very much alive and kicking, and continues to spread, leading us to wonder to what extent contemporary online and offline literary culture is being "advicified."

Still, no matter how omnipresent, literary advice is, not unlike Wikipedia, often depreciated by "real" authors and literary professionals because of the reductive and stereotypical systems and theories it seems to promote. At the far end of the academic institution of creative writing, the industry is associated with a commercial genre circuit outside the confines of "Literature," with the formulas of Hollywood storytelling gurus, and with its big brother, the self-help or self-improvement industry. Advice authors are said to encourage amateurs who lack genuine talent to churn out memoirs, genre fictions, or fanfiction, in the hope of writing the next bestseller, of achieving stardom in a limited niche of the world wide web, or just some peace of mind by unloading their thoughts on paper or a blog. Apart from these popular connotations of literary advice—which, as we will see, do not do justice to the diversity of the phenomenon—the overtly prescriptive aims and normative poetics of literary advice sit uneasily with the attitudes fostered by academic literary studies, narratology, and serious literary criticism.

And yet, for all its self-effacing and disposable qualities, literary advice is frequently used by would-be and by established authors and critics, and it has left its traces not just in literature, but also in well-known narratological treatises.² As a popular form of poetics, literary advice constitutes the most democratic level of access to creative writing, which (regardless of whether it is valued as literature) is one of the most accessible forms of (self)expression, at a low cost of entry and open to ordinary experiences (Caughey 2016, p. 143). Literary advice embodies a practical, what Jerome Bruner calls an “interactionist” knowledge of literature, i.e., a knowledge that is acquired by doing. At the same time, it also perpetuates a seemingly self-evident set of norms, the “unmentionable reference” of literary doxa.³ Or, as Andrew Levy put it in *The Culture and Commerce of the American Short Story* (1993), it is because the “axioms” codified in handbooks are “so central that the handbooks remain so invisible” (Levy 1993, p. 104). Like the school manuals studied by Pierre Bourdieu, literary advice—for all its repetitiveness, reductionism, and simplification—provides an unexpected insight into the residual, dominant, and even emergent trends of writing culture. Closely scrutinizing the field for the rise of new literary genres and trends, literary advice outlines the basic (and supposedly universal) components of a literary text. It also takes stock of the mores and customs of the literary world, and describes different authorial subject positions and myths that circulate in a given period and system, often in a very detailed manner (Grauby 2015). Moreover, a wide number of techniques and exercises to stimulate creativity, and overcome “fear of the white page” and “writer’s block,” literary advice also feeds the “cruel optimism” (Berlant 2011) that a “good” writerly life (i.e., a successful literary career) is attainable for everyone who is willing to put in the work.

It is not surprising, then, that from the early 2000s onward, scholarly interest in literary advice has greatly increased within various subfields of literary studies: the study of nineteenth-century English and American literature, the history of creative writing (in the wake of disciplinary histories of English studies), book history, literary sociology, and cultural studies. Thus, handbook author Douglas Bement’s advice from 1931 turned out to be prophetic: If twenty-first-century literary scholars want to understand “the writing hysteria of the twentieth century” (Bement in Levy 1993, p. 77), literary advice might be a good place to start. At the same time, the growing body of research is dispersed, with a lot

of information in unpublished dissertations, in book chapters, and articles. Moreover, scholars focus predominantly on the early days of literary advice in the USA and in the UK. Although these traditions are not the same, they are to a large extent intertwined (as there was a lot of cultural exchange at the time). Moreover, the Anglo-American is generally considered to be the first, and, until today, dominant paradigm of commercial advice, all the more so because the international dissemination of the academic creative writing program as a model for fiction instruction and as a successful academic discipline of its own has turned many of its early premises into unquestioned “lore.”⁴

The aim of this book is to enlarge the scope of the scholarship, by bringing together historical analyses with studies of more recent forms of literary advice, and by relating it to some of the important scholarship in the field of creative writing. Moreover, we want to open up the research toward other advice traditions, in other cultures or in adjacent fields. The present chapter will outline the development of literary advice from its origins in the nineteenth century to the present, zooming in on important landmarks, discussing the types and contents of literary advice, and its tangential relation to literature. The narrative is roughly chronological, with occasional flash-forwards and flashbacks highlighting the remarkable consistency of literary advice, as well as indicating how certain tendencies have evolved in its history. This brief history is based on the existing scholarship: First of all, an important part of the history of the advice tradition has been unearthed, especially in the long nineteenth century, and in the interwar period. Secondly, various types and subgenres of advice, in different media, have been examined—magazines, letters, handbooks, correspondence schools, etc.—including the specific audiences they address. A third focus of scholarship is the content of the advice: What topics are treated, the rules and suggestions, advice for specific genres, the discourse and types of address, and the ideology behind it. Finally, there is some research on the relation between literary advice and literature, in parodies for instance, but also in novels.

THE “ORIGIN” OF LITERARY ADVICE (ANTIQUITY–1846)

Preliminaries: From Classical Poetics to Professional Advice

Instruction about literary genres and composition has been around since Antiquity. Aristotle’s *Peri Poetikès* (335 BC) is probably the most well-known treatise about writing until today. The (incomplete) text has influenced both the Western and the Arabic philosophical and poetic tradition, and gave its name to a genre of writings about writing literature: poetics. Aristotele’s *poetics* famously describes the existing genres of his time as well as the role of literature and the poet in society. It defines the constituent parts of genres and formulates the rules to which good literature must conform. A lot of the terminology is still used in literary studies today, for instance, *mimesis* (imitation), *catharsis* (purification of the emotions, especially pity and fear, through identification with the tragic hero), *hubris* (pride), *peripeteia* (reversal), and *ethos* (character). Other poetics from Antiquity, both in Greek and Latin, have been rediscovered and translated in various periods, influencing contemporary literary production and reflection. The manuscript of the anonymous essay “Peri Hupsous,” attributed to Longinus or Pseudo-Longinus (first century BC), for instance, was discovered in the tenth century. The essay discusses good literature and famously introduces the aesthetic notion of “the sublime”. A new English translation in the eighteenth century brought the text back into prominence and since then, it has been regarded as a precursor to the theories of the sublime by Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, and François Lyotard. Quintillian’s *Institutio Oratio* (ca. 95 BC), a multi-volume Latin work on the theory and practice of rhetoric, remained highly influential from the Italian Renaissance until the eighteenth century, and was quoted by numerous European authors, from Petrarch, to Erasmus, Montaigne, and Alexander Pope, to name but a few. The most influential Classical treatise from Antiquity, besides Aristotle’s, is probably Horace’s *Ars Poetica* (19 BC). This epistolary poem about poetry and drama also introduced a significant number of literary terms, like *deus ex machina* (a god from the machine or an unbelievable sudden resolution), *in medias res* (starting the middle of things), *ut pictura poesis* (as is painting so is poetry), and *utile dulcique* (the combination of the practical and the aesthetic).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, academies for national languages and literatures were founded all over Europe. They primarily sought to define the standard vernacular language, but also saw it as their

task to define the literary canon, and to act as judges in literary disputes and later on contests (Guillory 1987; English 2005).⁵ Whereas popular playwright Lope de Vega pleaded for an update of the rules in his 1606-address to the academy of Madrid “El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo” (New Rules for Making Plays in This Time), his French colleague Pierre Corneille circumscribed the three unities of place, time, and action (1660) in tragedy in a much stricter way than the rules issued by Horace. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tradition of prescriptive poetics flourished in European literature. New translations of Aristotle and Horace were distributed widely after the invention of the printing press and were reinterpreted in different literary traditions. Literary creation was conceived in terms of imitation and emulation of existing canonical examples, and composition was regarded as a process that follows well-defined steps and rules. One of the most well-known French poetics of this period was Nicolas Boileau’s *L’Art poétique* (1674). In 1100 alexandrines, Boileau offers an overview of the writing process, the rules of poetry, and the hierarchical genre system.

The genre of the essay (named after Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais* [1572–1592]), both in prose and in verse form, was well-suited for reflections about writing, because it combined a poetical and a personal standpoint. In his didactic poem “An Essay on Criticism” (1711), for instance, Alexander Pope starts from the example of Horace and the Classical tradition of poetics to critically examine the contemporary state of literature, and to define the rules of good criticism. In the same period, Joseph Addison’s essay on “The Pleasures of Imagination” (1712) shows the gradual shift from defining strict, universal rules for good literature, to poets offering insight in the processes of literary creation, and examining the problems of imagination and fiction in the Enlightenment and Romantic period. In the early nineteenth century, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge further explored these issues in their meta-physical poetry, with chapter XIV of Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions* (1817) introducing “the willing suspension of disbelief.” Somewhat later, adding to the rhetorical tradition of poetics, a rich Western tradition of self-reflexive, personal writings about writing and advice by “Great Authors”—from Wolfgang Goethe, to Charles Baudelaire, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Virginia Woolf, to name just a few examples—emerged which remains widely in print until today.

Although all these classics undeniably constitute the backdrop of the larger history of the phenomenon of literary advice, there is a crucial divide between the older tradition of poetics and literary advice, which has to do with the advent of modern capitalism and democracy as well as with the commercialization and professionalization of literature in the nineteenth century. Classical poetics were addressed and accessible to a relatively small, highly educated elite and deal with literature as art. Literary advice, by contrast, has a different target, and primarily caters to authors interested in writing literature as entertainment. When in the nineteenth century, due to the ongoing developments of the printing press, the commercial press took off in the Western world, this had an enormous impact on the demand for fiction. Shorter and serial formats of fiction were sought by journals, weeklies, and by literary or so-called “little” magazines. The concomitant democratization of education and rise of literacy had made reading and writing accessible to people from the middle and lower classes, and women, who did not have the cultural upbringing that traditional—white, male, and upper-class—readers and authors had hitherto enjoyed. These new groups of readers turned to new genres such as the gothic novel, romance, science fiction, mystery, horror, adventure, and erotic tales, that were associated with sensationalism and escapism. This type of fiction was mass-produced in the heydays of “pulp fiction,” named after the cheap pulpwood paper used for the magazines (Locke 2004, 2007), from the end of the nineteenth century until the Great Depression. This period coincided with the era of literary professionalism (Wilson 1985; for Britain, see Keating 1991), and with the first peak of literary advice.

The professionalization of authors was facilitated by both philosophical and legal changes. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, academies and salons brought together artists from various disciplines, constituting networks around patrons and stimulating artistic mentorship. For the visual arts, music, and dance, this led to the institutionalization of training in academies. The fact that such an institutionalized pedagogical system was much less established in the field of literature is usually explained by the individualism inherent in the Romantic conception and cult of the poet as genius. However, as Dawson points out, in the eighteenth century the concept of the poet as genius was also associated with the faculty of the “creative imagination” (Dawson 2005, pp. 29–32). This, paradoxically, enabled nineteenth-century authors to see writing not just

as a mysterious gift, accessible only to the happy few, but also as a vocation and ultimately a profession. The idea was strengthened by successive copyright acts in Britain and in the USA in the 1880s, which helped protect the authors' income derived from their work, and encouraged aspiring authors from diverse backgrounds to try their luck at writing. In the rapidly changing literary landscape, these authors were looking for guidance, not just about writing, but also about legal and economic matters. However, they faced a gap due to the lack of academies and other forms of professional education, for instance in universities or colleges. By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, a newly formed class of literary "middlemen," who mediated between the aspiring author and the publishing industry—agents, editors, tutors, manuscript bureaus, and author societies—began providing literary advice as a commercial service.

*The Disputed Origin of Literary Advice: Edgar
Allan Poe's "Philosophy of Composition"*

Before going into more detail about the golden age of the literary advice industry from the 1880s until the 1930s, it is worth taking a closer look at the origins of literary advice. These are generally situated in the first half of the nineteenth century, more precisely, in 1846, the publication date of Edgar Allan Poe's "Philosophy of Composition" in *Graham's Magazine*. "The Philosophy of Composition" is the "magazine paper" Poe himself had, in vain, been waiting for: "written by any author, who would – that is to say, who could – detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion" (Poe 1846, p. 163). Dispensing with the Romantic myth of inspiration, Poe emphasizes how literature works with language in order to create maximum dramatic effect. According to Levy, the importance of this text for the ensuing literary advice tradition lies first and foremost in the scientific approach to writing adopted by Poe (Levy 1993, pp. 100–101). Although Poe's advice is based on a detailed technical description of the composition of one of his poems, "The Raven," the rational style of advice has been especially influential for advice about short stories, which are in Levy's view the first real target of literary advice, for two main reasons. Firstly, short stories are the most lucrative literary genre in the burgeoning magazine market. Secondly, because of its compactness, the genre is considered to be best suited for beginners.

In recent years, the “Philosophy of Composition” as *the* origin of the advice tradition has been qualified. As John Caughey demonstrates in this book, “The Philosophy of Composition” was not immediately successful in the US advice market, rather its canonization occurred belatedly. In fact, it was Brander Matthews, a literature professor at Columbia, who with his “Philosophy of the Short-story” (1885) “resurrected” the work of Poe. Matthews not only draws attention to short fiction as an American genre, outlining a straight lineage from Poe and Hawthorne, to the present,⁶ but he also returns to Poe’s insights in composition, primarily the “unity of effect,” in order to define the short story as a self-contained whole (Levy 1993, p. 125). According to Caughey, in his dissertation *How to Become an Author: The Art and Business of Literary Advice Handbooks* (2016), literary critics in the early twentieth century—especially the New Critics—who wanted to enlarge their scope from poetry to prose, both recuperated and dismissed the “pre-theories” found in the earlier short story advice tradition from the mid-nineteenth century.

The dissertation of Paul S. Collins, *Imaginary Subjects: Fiction-Writing Instruction in America, 1826–1897*, traces the origins of the advice tradition further back, to 1826, by imagining what type of advice would have been available to the seventeen-year-old aspiring writer Poe (Collins 2016, p. 9). This leads him to uncover a number of eighteenth-century works on poetry and rhetoric, that were still available in the early nineteenth century, as well as various series of advice articles in magazines, directed not just toward budding authors in general, but to women in particular. In the 1830s already, Collins points out, there were how-to series about popular genres available, by Frederick Marryat, and by Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton. In the same year, 1838, Poe already published his first advice article in *American Museum*.⁷ Collins goes on to map the mid-century marginal American advice scene, that consists of high school instruction manuals, university literary magazines, and early author manuals. This offer prefigures the advice industry proper which emerges at the end of the century with correspondence courses and writing schools offered to female writers, as Caughey also discusses in his contribution to this book. In a dissertation from 2013, *The Craft of Fiction: Teaching Technique, 1850–1930*, Mary Stewart Atwell studies the early stages of literary advice in British literature, bringing to the fore—among other things—another important early source of literary advice, i.e., the correspondences of established authors like Charles Dickens and Bulwer-Lytton with the (female) authors whom they mentored.⁸

Thus, in spite of the relative consensus among researchers about the origin of literary advice, this origin has been contested in two directions. Several scholars have shown how Poe's essay was very much embedded in an earlier tradition of poetics as well as in a much less visible practice of literary advice linked to the emerging market of literary journals. At the same time, the impact of Poe's essay has only been felt later, toward the end of the nineteenth century, mediated by other handbooks. Furthermore, in the scholarship, we find a later landmark for literary advice that is associated with the golden age of literary advice, the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, i.e., the debate between Sir Walter Besant and Henry James on "The Art of Fiction."

THE ERA OF THE LITERARY ADVICE HANDBOOK

The Bifurcation of Literary Advice: "The Art of Fiction"

Already in 1923, Fred Lewis Pattee dubbed the first decade of the twentieth century "the era of the short-story handbook" (Pattee in Dawson 2005, p. 62, see also Caughey in this book). A foundational event was a lecture on "The Art of Fiction" given by Sir Walter Besant—at the time a successful novelist and one of the founders of the British Society of Authors (1884) as well as editor of its mouthpiece, the professional magazine *The Author* (1891)⁹—at the Royal Institute in London in 1884. The publication of the lecture was followed by a response from Henry James, with the same title, which would, much later, eclipse not just Besant's original lecture in literary history, but also the many other voices that took part in the discussion. The intricacies and ramifications of "The Art of Fiction" are examined in great detail by Atwell and Caughey in this book. In a nutshell, the debate hinges on two different positions. According to Besant, fiction is an art on a par with other arts, and therefore, it can be taught, like music, painting, or sculpture. Subsequently, he lays out some rules to define good fiction. James, by contrast, responds that precisely because fiction is an art, there are no a priori rules that should or even can be taught, except for the notion that fiction should be interesting.

"The Art of Fiction" sparked a debate on whether fiction is an art, and therefore unteachable, or whether it is a craft, leading to a profession, which has continued into the present. It also marks the beginning of two traditions of literary advice. On one side, there is the scientific ethos found in what Locke and Caughey call "fictioneering": a body of

practical knowledge about the construction of a literary text from the point of view of the maker. This knowledge also extends to the more practical side of literature and getting published. Here, it is Besant who set the tone with *The Pen and the Book* (1900), a guide to publication and the customs of the literary world (that also includes some of his earlier writing advice). As Paul Vlitos shows in his chapter, focusing on handbooks in the British tradition, Besant was part of a flourishing British advice scene, where many handbooks of this type were available. At the other end of the spectrum, and increasingly opposed to the first type of advice, was the Jamesian tradition of handbooks, typically represented by Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* (1921). These handbooks focused on form and technique, and via their adoption by the New Critics later on, they evolved into the academic creative writing textbooks of the 1950s–1960s, exemplified by R. V. Cassill's *Writing Fiction* (1962).¹⁰

In the first decades of the twentieth century, however, these two types did not yet completely diverge, as Lubbock's title already indicated. Most short story handbooks were “mongrel textbooks” (Levy 1993, p. 80) for several reasons. First of all, they consisted of a mixture of older insights from poetics, rhetoric, and composition; definitions of contemporary genres; practical insights about writing offered by authors and the industry's middlemen, such as editors, publishers, and agents; and information about publishing, copyrights, and promotion. Secondly, they were written by very diverse authors, from established fiction authors, to scholars and professors, hacks or failed novelists, editors, and publishers. Thirdly, they addressed equally diverse audiences. Both in the UK and the USA, university students at prestigious institutions—American Ivy League universities that foster creative pedagogies, like Harvard and Chicago (Myers [1996] 2006; Collins 2016) and Oxford and Cambridge, that were introducing English literature in their curriculum (Wandor 2008; Caughey 2016)—were as interested in learning how to write, as middle- and lower-class authors, young girls and women, workers and soldiers (Hilliard 2006; Atwell 2013; Collins 2016). These aspiring authors could buy specialist magazines devoted to writing, but they would also find articles in more general publications.

*Form and Content of Literary Advice Handbooks
from the Era of the Handbook and Beyond*

Levy provides the most elaborate description of the form and content of the advice handbooks from the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. Initially, handbooks were often collections of shorter pieces (articles, series, lectures, surveys, or interviews), which had been revised or republished several times (Levy 1993, p. 79). Later on, monographs that constituted a mixture of scholarly description and advice were devoted to specific genres, not just to the short story or novel, but also to popular genres such as the mystery (Masschelein and De Geest 2017), the photo- and radioplay. According to Levy,

(t)he short story handbook could justifiably be described as a literary form, where the author was expected to employ or respond to certain rhetorical and structural strategies. Most followed the example of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and contained a brief introductory section describing the history of the genre, followed by a larger body where the act of writing was divided into elements – plot, character, style, dictions, titles, and endings, et al. These books either invoked an academic pose [...] or were designed to appeal to business people, advertising personnel, and psychologists. (Levy 1993, p. 87)

He further explains that most handbooks began by establishing the author's authority and by positioning themselves in the debate between art and craft, navigating the contradiction that while everyone can write, publication and authorship are not for everyone. When describing the characteristics of a genre, the frequent use of examples reinforced the author's credentials as connoisseur of a genre.

With regard to the elements of fiction, Levy pays attention to the importance of plot models which were often visualized, a tendency that continues until today as Liorah Hoek shows in her chapter in this book. These plot models reflected both the scientific ethos of the handbooks and the emphasis on action, which can be traced back to the Classical inspiration of narrative theories. Paul Vlitos provides an in-depth analysis of the discursive elements found in nineteenth-century British handbooks in his chapter in this book. In our own research on mystery handbooks, we found that handbooks generally treated the writing process in terms of the different phases of the creative process described by Classical rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, and delivery (Masschelein and de Geest

2017, p. 102). The first phase, invention, has to do with preparation, which can consist of reading, doing research, and using exercises to stimulate creativity. The second phase of arrangement entails the choice and elaboration of story elements, such as plot, character, setting, and point of view. The application of style is predominantly understood as positioning your work in relation to the conventions of a genre or subgenre. The final phase of delivery includes writing, revision, and rewriting. In addition to this, most handbooks, especially on the more commercial end of the spectrum, also devote some chapters to the market: finding an agent and a publisher, contracts and advances, preparing the manuscript, and in the case of publication, promotion of the book.

To anyone familiar with contemporary literary advice, it will be clear that much of this basic content of handbooks has remained constant since the late nineteenth century. A tension that marks both older and contemporary creative writing handbooks is that between the tendency to dehistoricize a limited conception of storytelling (Dawson 2008), on the one hand, and the handbooks' attunement to new trends and to local specificities of a genre, on the other hand (Masschelein and de Geest 2017). The universality of writing advice is perhaps most evident when looking at the limited number of adagios used to characterize creative writing pedagogy as a whole, "Show don't tell," "Write What You Know," "Find Your Own Voice," and "Read like a Writer."¹¹ Usually presented as timeless truths, these motto's are nonetheless of relative recent coinage. Many scholars attribute "Show don't tell" and the preference for action and dramatic storytelling over description to the influence of Flaubert and of realist poetics on early fiction theories (e.g., Dawson 2005, pp. 98–103; Griffith 2013). "Write what you know," or the importance of observation of daily reality, is alternatively traced back to Besant's "Art of Fiction," or to the teachings of innovative English Composition pedagogues, such as Barrett Wendell, who worked with "daily themes" in order to stimulate observation powers (Myers [1996] 2006, pp. 46–49). The third dictum, "Find your own voice," captures the importance of self-expression and voice in creative writing pedagogy, examined by Alexandria Peary in her chapter in this book. It is most often associated with the more self-help style of advice arising in the 1930s, which we will discuss in more detail below. In the eyes of many contemporary scholars, the phrase is related to a highly individualistic ethos that overemphasizes personal experience, at the expense of rewriting and craft (Wandor 2008, pp. 115–117), of more political forms of writing (Westbrook 2009), and even of fiction.

As Paul Dawson points out, in many handbooks voice conflates the notion of personal style and originality with “point of view” in New Critical and narratological theories of fiction (Dawson 2005, pp. 110–111)). A final cornerstone of “workshop poetics,” which Dawson attributes to Dorothea Brande (1934), is “Read like a Writer.” This motto must be regarded in opposition to “critical reading” and can have two meanings: reading in order to see how a text is constructed, or rereading your own material in view of revision (*ibid.*, p. 92).

In their study of late-twentieth handbooks for romance fiction, De Geest and Goris (2010) show how reading is a necessary preparatory phase of writing in which authors familiarize themselves with the constraints inherent in a genre. De Geest and Goris’s analysis of the normative discourse in popular handbooks for romance reveals how handbooks have to reconcile a strong emphasis on norms, related to genre and to the industry, which must be interiorized through reading, specific rules (do’s) and especially pitfalls to avoid (don’ts), with a more encouraging attitude, aimed at stimulating creativity within the constraints of a genre. Obviously, these constraints and some advice differ from genre to genre. In the field of mystery for instance, we found that one of the typical elements, which has remained fairly constant, is the concept of (fair) play: A mystery must be conceived as an intellectual puzzle that the reader must be able to solve, hence the importance of the right amount of clues (Masschelein and De Geest 2017). In handbooks for memoir, which have become very popular since the 1990s and the so-called “memoir boom,” other things are important. On the one hand, an exploration of the motives for memoir writing; on the other hand, an array of techniques and prompts to stimulate memory (Smith and Watson 2001, p 160). To this, we can add an emphasis on the possible ethical pitfalls of memoir.

One of the most notable changes in literary advice handbooks has to do with tone and layout. Most of the handbooks in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century appeared as bound monographs. In the twentieth century, the look of handbooks changed considerably, under the influence of trends in publishing, such as the popularity of the paperback in the UK, Germany, and France in the 1930s and somewhat later in the USA, and of front-list publishing (i.e., the rapid selling of cheap hardbacks) in the 1980s. In the commercial tier of the market, genre handbooks nowadays adopt a softcover textbook-style layout, with frames, bullet-points, and exercises, which coincides with a hands-on, colloquial, and motivational tone and a procedural structure: following the steps and the exercises

in the book will deliver a finished product. The shift in handbook titles from notions of “art” or “craft” in the first part of the twentieth century toward more active verbs like “writing” or “becoming” reinforces the activating dimension of handbook discourse (*ibid.*, pp. 101–103). Handbook covers feature either stereotypical writer’s attributes—from quill, to pen, typewriter, or notebook—or images that refer to typical genre elements, e.g., guns or magnifying glasses for detective handbooks, gothic fonts for thrillers, or spiraling pathways or winding roads for the memoir. As Françoise Grauby has shown in her study of French literary advice handbooks and in her chapter in the present book, these objects play an important role in what is in French discourse analysis called “authorial stances (*postures*),” i.e., images of authors that are both self-created by authors (in their works, interviews, and photographs), and attributed to them by other actors in the field (e.g., the media and publishers). Taken as a whole, authorial stances are part of a “scenography” of images, objects, places, and acts, which make it possible to conceive of yourself as an author in a given historical moment.

THE EXPANSION OF THE LITERARY ADVICE INDUSTRY

As the century progressed, a number of new actors came on the scene (or took on a more prominent role), who have exerted a lasting influence until today. First of all, literary advice “moguls”—to use Caughey’s term—built “empires” of literary advice for a wide range of genres and differentiated audiences. Secondly, literary authors began incorporating advice in their often parodic sketches of the literary field of the period. Thirdly, women, who had been present from the very beginning of literary advice, played an increasingly prominent role in the industry, especially in relation to a third type of advice—besides the commercial fictioneering handbooks and the more academic “counterhandbooks” (Levy 1993, p. 88)—which arose in the 1930s, i.e., literary advice/self-help. Because the topic is too large to discuss encyclopedically, we will shift in our discussion between different advice cultures, the USA, the UK, and France. Although the exact development of advice cultures is obviously particular, we observe similar tendencies in these traditions.

Literary Advice Moguls

One of the first publishers to turn advice into big business in the USA was Joseph Berg Esenwein, a minister and English teacher from Pennsylvania, who also wrote religious poetry. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Esenwein became the managing editor of several magazines: *Booklovers' Journal*, *Lippincott's*, the *Poetry Journal*, and *The Writer's Monthly*. He also set up the "Home Correspondence school" and "The Writer's Library," a series of handbooks for over a dozen genres or audiences (Levy 1993, p. 93). Esenwein himself authored and co-authored handbooks for poetry, the short story, the mystery, the photoplay, and public speaking, and lent his authority to the other books in his library by writing the prefaces. His *Writing the Short-Story: A Practical Handbook on the Rise, Structure, Writing, and Sale of the Modern Short-Story* (1909) epitomizes the "science-oriented ethos" of the early handbooks (ibid.) and contains an impressive repertory of the story handbooks of the time (ibid., p. 86). While this and other guides from Esenwein's catalog knew numerous reprints (and are still available in print-on-demand formats), it seems that by the 1920s Esenwein's empire was in decline. Besides some volumes on public speaking and writing good English, the last book he edited was a book on sport and adventure in 1937 (Esenwein died in 1946).

In 1920, a serious competitor came to the market: Ed Rosenthal, who founded the magazine *Writer's Digest* in Cincinnati, Ohio, where the company is still located today.¹² The magazine's subtitle, "A Monthly Journal of Information on Writing Photoplays, Short Stories, Verse, News Stories, Publicity, Advertising etc.," clearly demonstrates its commercial orientation (Rosenthal in Sexton 2007, p. 5). In the 1920s and 1930s, *Writer's Digest* was one of the "writers' mags," magazines divulging the trade secrets of the "pulp fictioneers" (Locke 2004, 12). These magazines offered advice to professional writers of popular genre fiction in the 1920s, and they continued to chronicle the demise and final death throes of the pulp market throughout "the Depression and World War II, and long-term paper shortages" (ibid., p. 13). At the same time, as Sexton's anthology *Legends of Literature* (2007) shows, *Writer's Digest* featured articles by successful authors in all genres of literature. Indeed, the magazine prided itself on closely following the market, featuring articles on new trends.

Apart from the magazine and its yearbooks, *Writer's Yearbook* and the annual *Writer's Market*, publisher F+W also built a hugely successful and diverse catalog of handbook titles under the brand *Writer's Digest Books*. The first title listed in the Library of Congress catalog was L. Josephine Bridgart's *How to Write Short Stories* (1921), a full-length monograph. In those early years, there were also courses for photoplay and volumes on the "cardinal elements of short-story writing" (Reeve 1929) and the "elements of plot construction" (Abbott 1929). After a long gap, the catalog picked up again in 1961, with Aron M. Mathieu's *Creative Writer*, followed by Jerome Judson's *Poet and the Poem* (1963). From this period onward, there was a steady stream of new writing handbooks about a range of genres—from cartoon gags, to poetry, the novel, confession writing, and the mystery—along with regular reprints of Mathieu and Judson. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a veritable explosion of guidebooks in *Writer's Digest Books* (including a volume on *How to Write "How-To Books" and Articles* (Hull 1981)) targeting different audiences, but primarily focused on commercial writing. This tendency toward specialization became even more pronounced in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with series like *Elements of Fiction Writing*, *Genre Writing Series*, and *Write Great Fiction*. The *Writer's Guide To* series featured, besides the above-mentioned book on poisons for detective writers, volumes on crime-scene investigations (Wingate 1992), on everyday life in the 1800s (McCutcheon 1993), and character-traits, including profiles of human behaviors and personality types (Edelstein 2006), two of which written by PhD-holding authors.

Today, all the big publishing houses as well as numerous smaller presses and academic presses have some type of advice book or series in their catalogs, and numerous self-published handbooks and websites contribute the further growth of the genre. However, the century-old empire of *Writer's Digest*, which now also boasts a solid online presence, continues to offer—like the advice industry in the olden days—articles, interviews, courses, workshops, manuscript services, competitions, and self-publishing. After its original publisher F+W filed for bankruptcy in 2016, the brand was purchased by Penguin Random House.

Advice in Literature

As the literary advice industry grew more prominent, authors started to respond to it in literature. This can be related to what systems theory sees

as an important characteristic of the autonomy and professionalization of a literary system, i.e., self-reflection. In *The Program Era* (2009) McGurl famously studied American postwar fiction as a self-reflexive, literary response to the rise of creative writing, which evolved from a pedagogy into a massive form of sponsorship of literature by neoliberal research institutions, and a new literary institution. In our comparative study of the rise of the literary interview as a hybrid genre in the French, German, and English literary fields in the same period that saw the arrival of literary advice, we came across something similar: When a new form or practice intrudes or emerges in the literary system, literary authors will respond to it, either by mocking it (and the new actors it entails), or by experimenting with it as a new literary form. (Masschelein et al. 2014, pp. 37–39).

A first strategy employed by authors to respond to literary advice is incorporating it into literary fictions. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a lot of British and American fiction—from Charles Dickens to Henry James, to name just some of the most well-known names—featured author-characters, who comment on literary life in the period. Atwell draws attention to a short story by Scottish author J. M. Barrie, in which a number of dead authors discuss the contemporary literary situation, including the emerging scene of literary advice. One of the most explicit novels on the rise of the commercial literary scene and the concomitant literary advice industry in the UK was George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891). The novel introduces Mr. Whelpdale, a literary advice author who, in Paul Vlitos's contribution to this book, will serve as a guide to the British advice scene from the period. As several chapters—by Elizabeth Kovach, Jim Collins, and Andrés Franco Harnache—in this book demonstrate, today authors from all literatures still resort to fiction to make sense of the omnipresence of writing culture and creative writing.

A second common reaction to the rising advice industry, and a strategy used by some advice authors, starting with Poe, is parody. In his dissertation on contemporary literary advice in France (2018), Gert-Jan Meyntjens studied the French tradition of *conseils*, which followed a comparable path of professionalization as the Anglo-American world in the nineteenth century. Meyntjens singles out two examples from the early advice period. The Symbolist poet, Remy de Gourmont, in his *Conseils familiers à un jeune écrivain* (1896, Familiar Advice to a Young Writer), advised readers that it is better not to write than to write, because the literary world is depraved and mercenary. In *Introduction à la l'étude*

de la stratégie littéraire (1912, Introduction to the Study of Literary Strategy), Belgian author Fernand Divoire presented an overt satire of the literary world, in order to strategically guide the aspiring author on how to network (Meyntjens 2018, pp. 73–76). Contemporary advice authors also resort to parody to make their work stand out. Sandra Newman and Howard Mittelmark’s *How Not to Write a Novel: 200 Mistakes to Avoid at all Costs If You Ever Want to Get Published* (2008), for instance, is according to the blurb “hilarious” but “extremely useful,” whereas *How Not to Write a Novel: Confessions of a Midlist Author* by David Armstrong (2003) summarizes each chapter with a warning: Either “Don’t be an author,” or simply “Don’t do it.”¹³ In more sophisticated cases, like French author François Bon or American avant-garde poet Kenneth Goldsmith—respectively the subjects of Meyntjens’s and Ioannis Tsitsovis’s chapters—parody is not simply used to distinguish one’s method of advice within the market, as in the negative advice books cited above, but as an avant-garde strategy to resist dominant advice cultures, and as an antidote to self-expressive literary culture as a whole.

A third literary form that will become increasingly more important for literary advice, as we will elucidate below, is autobiography or memoir. Atwell draws attention to the importance of Anthony Trollope’s *Autobiography* for the development of literary advice (Atwell 2013, pp. 23–28). Published in 1883 in London, Trollope’s candor about the business of literature and his decidedly unromantic, “secretarial” descriptions of his writing habits (*ibid.*, p. 24) shocked his readers, but the book prefigured the Besant-lineage of mixing writing advice with advice about the customs and practicalities of the literary world. One of Trollope’s great examples was his mother, Frances, who at the age of 50 started writing in order to support her family, and wrote more than 40 novels between 1830 and her death in 1863. Although extraordinary in her late and prolific career, Frances Trollope was in fact not that much of an exception, as many scholars have shown how the newly professionalized literary field was remarkably open to the entry of women as freelance authors.

The Role of Women in the Advice Industry

Women had been targeted by both the commercial publishing world and the literary advice industry from the mid-nineteenth century onward, not just as readers but also as aspiring authors. Moreover, women played, from the early days of the advice industry to the present, an important

role as authors. In the existing scholarship on the early period of literary advice, many female advice authors have been unearthed. In the present book, Caughey discusses the case of *Atalanta*, a popular British magazine aimed at girls and young women, founded by L. T. Meade, an Irish feminist, in 1887. The magazine offered both short stories and serials by respected authors as well as essays on literature, literary advice, and competitions for the aspiring author. In the USA, Collins describes the case of Eleanor Kirk, “one of the unheralded pioneers of the American how-to writing guide” (Collins 2016, p. 140). Like Meade, Kirk was a suffragette, a working woman, and a single mother who published an early advice guide *Periodicals That Pay Contributors* (1888). She set up a Bureau of Correspondence that offered manuscript advice (ibid., p. 144), as did Flora Thompson, who founded The Peverel Society in the 1920s in Britain (Hilliard 2006, pp. 62–66).

Beyond the realm of amateur writing, women were also present in the more professional advice industry, both in the UK and in the USA. In the genre of early mystery advice, quite a number of prominent literary actors were active, like Carolyn Wells, who wrote one of the first handbooks for Esenwein’s Writer’s Library in 1912, and Marie F. Rodell, a literary agent, editor, and writer, whose highly specialized and “businesslike” advice targeted both the American (in 1943) and the British market (in 1954) (Masschelein and De Geest 2017, p. 100). In the emerging academic field of English composition, D. G. Myers mentions Adele Bildersee, an American pedagogue, whose proto-feminist *Imaginative Writing* (1927) “is recovering() a lost women’s tradition” through the many model authors she discusses in her book (Myers [1996] 2016, p. 141).

Two American advice authors of the 1930s and 1940s, Dorothea Brande and Brenda Ueland, stand out, not only because they have remained consistently in print until today, but also because they embody a particularly successful type of literary advice which could be regarded as a third way, besides advice on literary technique and practical advice about publication, namely advice about creativity and “literary lifestyle.” This type of advice brought literary advice close to self-help, which, as Beth Blum argues in *The Self-Help Compulsion* (2020), is in many ways linked to the literary culture of the era, including so-called high modernism. Moreover, as Alexandria Peary shows in this book, the teachings of Brande and Ueland have become part and parcel of the “informal aesthetic education of writers” because of their practical focus on the

psychological aspects of composition and voice, and the emphasis on creativity as a general human capacity.

Dorothea Brande's *Becoming a Writer* (1934) was a mixture of Freudian-based pop-psychology with practical advice about unlocking creativity and about leading a writerly life. Brande goes into extraordinary detail about which writing tools to use, what kind of friends to have, and even what to drink. At the same time, she explicitly distanced herself from technical writing advice and from insights about the publishing world, to focus instead on techniques to unleash creativity, which are used until today: writing daily for a certain amount of time without inhibitions, and "reading as a writer." Both practical and inspirational, *Becoming a Writer* was rediscovered in the 1980s, when both in the US and the UK new editions appeared with prefaces by established authors and creative writing teachers of the time, John Gardner (in 1981) and Malcolm Bradbury (in 1983), who would both go on to write advice books of their own. Brande's approach was moreover regarded as a precursor to the technique of freewriting, later popularized by Ken Macrorie and Peter Elbow, which remains an important staple in writing advice to this day (see Peary in this book). According to one of the leading figures in the therapeutic writing movement, Celia Hunt, "Brande's book, although dated in some respects, is still one of the best on writing and the creative process" (Hunt 2000, p. 22).

Despite her continued popularity, Brande is not without her detractors. Michelene Wandor sees Brande's self-help style of writing as the ideological precursor of contemporary how-to books that advocate looking inward, and focusing on self-expression and self-improvement, while deliberately concealing the critical work involved in writing (Wandor 2008, pp. 109–110). Moreover, cultural historian Joanna Scutts (2013) draws a link between the self-help discourse propagated by Brande, who also published *Wake Up and Live!* (1936)—a self-help title which the notorious modernist author Ezra Pound "is said to have chanted [...] every day for forty years" (Blum 2014, p. 21)—and the values of American fascism, to which she had personal ties.¹⁴

A similarly re-edited self-help/advice classic is Brenda Ueland's *If You Want to Write: A Book about Art, Independence and Spirit* (1983), which more explicitly than Brande addressed a female audience. Basing her notions of creativity and poetics on William Blake and on Russian nineteenth-century novelists, the book urged writers to "Be Careless, Reckless! Be a Lion! Be a Pirate! When you Write" and encouraged

women to neglect their housework in order to write. Although, as Alice Kaplan points out, Ueland's book is shallow in its neglect of tradition and its overemphasis on self-expression, and Ueland is not without personal faults,¹⁵ her career in a way prefigures a contemporary literary trend. Not just *If You Want to Write*, but also *Me: A Memoir* ([1939] 1996), about her bohemian life, was "a pioneering book, one of the first in an autobiographical tradition, now so central to American writing, that gives value to everyday experience" (Kaplan 2007, p. 3).

Brande and Ueland thus stood at the crossroads of three subgenres—handbooks for personal writing, self-help, and the writing memoir—that would become very important in later literary advice. First of all, the shift of emphasis in these books to creativity, self-improvement, and seeing yourself as a writer is still valued today, especially in handbooks about forms of writing which do not have publication as their primary goal, but instead emphasize the importance of process and personal growth, as Arne Vanraes, and Leni Van Goidsenhoven and Anneleen Masschelein will discuss in this book. Secondly, these popular forms lie at the basis of the immensely commercial tradition of self-help, in which writing will be instrumentalized as a technology of the self (McGee 2005; Illouz 2008). Thirdly, in her contribution to this book, Elizabeth Kovach examines how Brande and Ueland can be seen as prefiguring the genre of the writing memoir (and its most recent incarnation, the "literary-advice memoir") which emerges at the more literary end of literary advice in the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century.

‘THE PROGRAM’ AND THE RISE OF THE ADVICE AUTHOR AS AUTHOR

Creative Writing and Literary Advice

Short story handbooks momentarily "faded from vogue in the 1950s" (Levy 1993, p. 80), until a new wave of handbooks began to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s, to really pick up speed in the 1980s and 1990s. In this period, Levy distinguishes between the rise of "semi-autobiographical writers' advisories," such as John Gardner's *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writer* (1984), or Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down to the Bones* (1986), and "workshop classics" (ibid., p. 102) like Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction: A Guide to the Narrative Craft* (first published in 1982, with a tenth edition published by The University

of Chicago Press in 2019). In general, according to Levy, handbooks in this period displayed a great continuity with the earlier period in terms of form and content, although the discussion between art and craft was now rephrased in terms of the debate around MFA programs: Does creative writing pedagogy lead to a safe, stereotypical form of storytelling, or is it a necessary breeding ground for budding authors, that fosters new literary voices (see also Harbach 2014)?

The background of this evolution is complex. A determining factor, the institutionalization of MFA programs, has been extensively studied by, among others, Myers, McGurl, Glass, Dawson, and Wandor (with the latter two also focusing on Australia and the UK). Already in the 1930s, and even more so following the readjustment legislations for soldiers after the World Wars, universities saw a huge increase in student population. This contributed to the rapid growth of a lot of programs, among which creative writing, which was established as an MFA in the late 1930s (Iowa's Writers' Workshop was founded in 1936) in several major American universities. As McGurl (2009) argues, the spread of the program created a more or less self-sustaining circuit, with separate publication channels, in which creative writing students more often than not ended up becoming creative writing teachers themselves. This massive spread of pedagogues obviously also stimulated the production of textbooks, based on workshop methods, most famously R.V. Cassill's *Writing Fiction* (1962).¹⁶ Today, the main part of advice books has been written by creative writing teachers either in MFA's or in private or community workshops.

Although McGurl structures the chronology of his grand narrative of creative writing and postwar American fiction according to the diktats of commercial writing advice, "Write what you know," "Show don't tell," and "Find your own voice," relating them to key values of experience (authenticity), craft (tradition), and creativity (freedom), this is not based on the handbooks which are accused of perpetuating them. Indeed, McGurl consistently focuses on the academic tradition of creative writing, leaving the popular tradition of fictioneering and the genre traditions it is related to almost entirely out of his narrative. However, as Christopher Hilliard points out for Britain, the culture of amateur and popular writing from the interwar period, which was fed by the opportunities to publish in popular and pulp fiction magazines, did not really disappear after the war. It was transformed by the "reformulation of mainstream literary culture from the late 1940s (that) made the boundaries between

“literary” and “popular” writing more porous” (Hilliard 2006, p. 10), to re-emerge in full-force in 1970s DIY cultures fostered by feminist, Marxist and punk groups.¹⁷ In the USA, McGurl notes the growing literary importance of various non-dominant groups, like Jewish, African-American or Hispanic-American authors, who have entered American postwar literature and put pressure on the canon. Although handbooks are usually quick to follow new genre trends, here they did not seem to follow suit. As far as we can tell, handbooks targeting specific groups emerged relatively late. Robert Fleming’s *The African American Writers Handbook: How to Get in Print and Stay in Print* (2000) and Jewell Parker Rhodes’ *Free Within Ourselves: Fiction Lessons for Black Authors* (1999), and *The African American Guide to Writing and Publishing Nonfiction* (2002), for instance, were all published around the turn of the century, and they are but a very small part of the general handbook offer, although contemporary handbooks generally alert writers to be aware of sensitivities regarding the representation of ethnic and minority characters.

A specific trend in literary advice in the 1980s, related to the popularity of creative writing programs and the status of star teachers like Gardner, Goldberg, and Burroway, is the rise of the advice author *as author*. In what follows, we will take a closer look at three factors which have contributed to the changing status of the advice author: the popularity of the craft interview and the celebrity status of “star authors” (Moran 2000); the success of screenwriting “gurus” and advice “brand authors” (Thompson 2011, p. 211); and the consolidation of the “writing memoir.”

Interviews and Literary Advice

A first important factor is the emergence on the scene of the *Paris Review* in 1953. As has been amply documented, one of the most successful strategies of the magazine was its strategic use of the interview, especially in relation to craft. As Rebecca Roach shows in her contribution, *The Paris Review* was by no means the first to interview authors about their craft. From the nineteenth century onward, interviews and surveys were commonly used to question authors about literary and formal issues. In two interview series from different periods, “How Writers Work” and “The Art of Fiction,” Roach shows how the close link between the interview and literary advice played a crucial role in the development and

acceptance of the author interview. The two practices originate in the same period—the professionalization of literature in the late nineteenth century—and they both occupy a relatively marginal position in the field. In the case of the literary interview, this is due to its heteronomy: Because the form belongs to the domain of the press, and is governed by its rules (especially with regard to editing), it is harder for authors to establish authorial control, which is a defining characteristic of the literary field (Masschelein et al. 2014, pp. 20–22).

Literary advice is, like the literary interview, a hybrid form that—in Bourdieusian terms—partakes of different fields, such as education, the press, and self-help. Its strong association with commercial and amateur literary cultures has led to a low symbolic status, and even exclusion from the literary field as such. In the postwar period, as celebrity culture penetrated the literary field (Moran 2000; Murray 2012, pp. 33–36), the literary interview was increasingly accepted as a legitimate form to make writers talk about craft, in a double strategy of individualizing, and also streamlining them. The importance of the carefully edited *Paris Review* interviews which became legendary as a result of a careful selection strategy of established authors and, as Roach points out, the canonization of the interviews in the ensuing *Writers at Work* series, cannot be overestimated.

From the 1980s onward, the abundance of “shop talk” found in interviews also presented new opportunities for literary advice. Collecting quotes and statements from interviews with famous authors was an easy (and often cheap) way to create new volumes of literary advice. One example is *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*, a volume of quotes culled from Hemingway’s novels and his *Paris Review* interview, edited by Larry W. Phillips (1983), adorned with a profile photograph of Hemingway at work on his typewriter. In this way, “new” advice books by Great Authors entered the market, diversifying the (already large) offer, and turning literary advice into a more respected genre. Along with the “backlist”-editorial strategy used by commercial advice publishers, like *Writer’s Digest*, which resulted in frequent reprints of older titles, and new editions of books free from copyright (such as Dorothea Brande and Brenda Ueland), literary advice in the postwar period became more and more connected to legitimate literary author names, rather than to publishing houses or series like *Writer’s Digest*.

The rise of the advice author as author can be considered in the context of “brand-authors,” who are extremely valuable for publishers, because

“their sales are predictable, and second, they are repeaters” (Thompson 2011, p. 212). In the subfield of literary advice in the 1980s and 1990s, this translates as authors who become famous primarily as advice authors, publishing different volumes of writing advice based on the same formula rather than one-offs, and thus building an advice-brand. This trend is most notable in the field of screenwriting advice.

Hollywood Gurus and Advice Serials

A second circumstance which bolstered the return of handbooks in the 1980s, and affected the authorial status of handbook authors, was the media industry, especially film and television (and later on also the games industry and social media). These new media not only increasingly competed with literature for the audience’s attention, but they also contributed to a continuous demand for storytelling. As Jim Collins (2010) and Simone Murray (2012) have shown, in the second half of the twentieth century, screenwriting can no longer be disconnected from the literary field, nor, we may add, from literary advice. While handbooks for photoplays and radioplays have existed since the early days of literary advice, in the 1980s there was a marked increase of hugely successful screenwriting manuals, one of the first being Syd Field’s influential *Screenplay* (1979), which is still a classic in the field. In 1997, Robert McKee published *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*, based on the popular STORY classes which he had developed at the University of San Diego, and within the film industry since 1984. McKee—according to his own website “the Aristotle of our times” and the “guru of gurus”—even appears as the embodiment of all the clichés associated with screenwriting advice (played by Brian Cox) in Charlie Kaufman’s *Adaptation* (2002), a self-reflexive film about the craft of screenwriting.

Other gurus were Christopher Vogler, a Hollywood executive, who adapted Joseph Campbell’s popular comparative study of myths from 1949 into a screenwriting model in *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* (1992), later adding a volume for literary authors (1998), and Blake Snyder. In 2005, the first volume of Snyder’s immensely popular *Save the Cat!* boasted *The Last Book on Screenwriting You’ll Ever Need* as its subtitle, but it quickly developed into a trilogy, accompanied by software compatible with the Final Draft scriptwriting

software program. Even after Snyder's death in 2009, the brand has kept expanding, most notably in the direction of literature.

These screenwriting gurus, and the mass seminars that bolster their brands, appeal to the autodidact ethos fostered by Hollywood, which has remained very strong despite the rise of academic filmmaking and screenwriting programs, including MFAs. At the same time, the models they propose have drawn a lot of criticism, not just within fictional forms, as in *Adaptation*, where Charlie Kaufman cunningly creates a script by breaking all the rules issued by McKee, but also from an academic perspective. Ian MacDonald, for instance, states that “manuals are not enough,” and calls for more unified and sophisticated screenwriting pedagogies, which incorporate contemporary literary theory, and take into account the collective nature of the writing process in film (see MacDonald 2004a, b). According to Bridget Conor, who studies screenwriting from the perspective of labor in the neoliberal media industry, screenwriting manuals function as “a type of psy-technology and as a sophisticated form of professional self-help” (Conor 2014, p. 121). Like the early literary manuals discussed above, screenwriting handbooks transmit technical knowledge about a very rule-based type of writing, that is petrified into unquestioned, universal models, as Liorah Hoek examines in her discussion of the plot models propagated by Field, McKee and co. Like literary handbooks, screenwriting handbooks also perpetuate ideas about the *habitus* and authorial stance of the screenwriter. They conceal the reality of a collaborative and precarious career in a cultural industry behind the enduring myth of the writer as solitary genius (or the new myth of the “showrunner” as creative mastermind). In so doing, they help to keep the corporate macrostructures of the new cultural economy of media work in place (ibid., pp. 134–135; see also Murray 2012, p. 49; McRobbie 2016; and Grauby in this book).

By the 1990s, similar tendencies as in the screenwriting advice business emerged in the field of literature, albeit on a smaller scale. Successful commercial handbooks were often serialized, with authors building a brand that includes different titles and services, often based on a catchy hook, like James Frey's *How to Write a Damn Good Novel* (1987) (the beginning of series of similarly titled *How to Write a Damn Good...*—manuals for different genres). These advice series were transmedial, i.e., they addressed writing in different media at the same time, capitalizing on the potential of adaption or serialization of a story idea (Murray 2012, p. 35).¹⁸ Handbook gurus presented themselves as coaches and as experts

or authorities, often boasting academic credentials or awards within the niche of their genre (even when, as in the case of McKee, they have not actually written successful screenplays or novels). The “normative poetics” found in these types of commercial handbooks can be considered in terms of “constrained writing,” in that they negotiate different forms of normativity, both explicit and implicit (De Geest and Goris 2010). To apply the notion of “constrained writing” to this kind of object distances it from the avant-garde connotations that the term usually possesses. However, as Tsitsovis shows in his discussion of Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Uncreative Writing* project, sometimes avant-garde strategies like copying and sampling, which emphatically and programmatically go against the whole idea of craft and skill, can come remarkably close to traditional creative writing exercises. Likewise, Gert-Jan Meyntjens and Andr Franco Harnache show how advice authors and literary authors in the French and in the Hispanic world both adopt, and resist the dominant Anglo-American poetics of creative writing.

The Writing Memoir

One may question to what extent advice gurus really have an authorial status comparable to that of a literary author. Often, the series are more known by their title than by their author (as in the case of *Now Write!* a Penguin series edited by Sherry Ellis, who collects pieces of advice on various genres “from today’s best writers and teachers”). However, one literary advice form which has become more and more successful both in terms of economic and symbolic prestige, undeniably hinges on the status of its author, i.e., the “writing memoir,” a phenomenon that should not be confused with How-to guides to memoir writing.¹⁹ Wandor loosely defines the genre as “autobiographical words of wisdom, interviews, aphorisms by famous and successful, money-earning authors, (which) are considered as valuable pedagogic resources” (Wandor 2008, p. 115). The emergence of the writing memoir must be regarded in the context of a shift in various Western literary systems, where since the second half of the twentieth century memoir as a literary genre has become increasingly prominent (Smith and Watson 2010; Couser 2012). Today, memoir and life writing are not just open to a wide range of new voices, but it has become customary for literary authors to begin their career with a memoir or autofiction, and then move to fiction, rather than the other way around (Couser 2012, p. 146).²⁰ In a time and literary field where

creative writing has become a determining institution, this has led to a high degree of self-reflexivity, both in novels (Mc Gurl) and in memoirs (Smith and Watson 2010).

Given her aversion to self-expression in literary advice, it is not surprising that Wandor does not really consider these works as genuine pedagogical tools. Still, she concedes that some of them—by Margaret Atwood, Stephen King, John Gardner, Ray Bradbury, and Jorge Luis Borges—do have value, not just for the inspiration that they offer, and the fact that these are genuine literary works, but also for their emphasis on writing as labor. To Wandor's list, we can add other bestsellers, like Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life* (1990) or Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird: Some instructions on Writing and Life* (1995), which not only emphasize literary labor, but also focus on the literary description of a specific lifestyle, marked by solitude, introspection, and moral values. Being a writer is here associated with a secluded environment, close to nature, with a love of literature and reading, with specific objects and interiors, and with a patient recording of daily life.

As Bourdieu pointed out for the diaries of the Goncourts, “what attracts and fascinates in the occupation of an artist is not so much the art itself as the artist's life-style, the artist's life” (Boudieu 1993, p. 346). However, more than in the autobiographies of the early period (e.g., Trollope's *Autobiography*) or the self-help style manuals *à la* Brande and Ueland, the writing memoir is not just a depiction of writerly life. Rather, in the blend of memoir and advice, the author shows herself as a writer, *in the act of writing a literary work*. In other words, she teaches by example. This also has the effect that literary advice becomes more subjective, daring, and creative in itself, and is thus “literarized.” Above, we already pointed out more complex forms of advice from a more avant-garde background, like Goldsmith's *Uncreative Writing* (2011), based on his course at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2001, Robert Olen Butler, an experimental author and creative writing professor in Louisiana, filmed his writing process for a PBS series “Inside Creative Writing,” and subsequently put the episodes on the Internet (McGurl 2009, p. 189).

This tendency is perhaps most clear in the highly intriguing works of graphic novelist Lynda Barry. Barry's work is not unique in the sense that comic instruction in drawn form had already given rise to some advice classics, such as Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), and especially Scott McCloud's seminal *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993). In both cases, these works were followed by other advice

books. Barry's series, *What It Is* (2008), *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor* (2014), and most recently, *Making Comics* (2019), takes this type of advice one step further in the direction of process-oriented works and writing memoir. Not just focusing on technique and craft, Barry explores the nature of creativity in drawing by providing a detailed and highly creative account of her drawing courses at the Wisconsin Madison art department and at the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery. In the notebook-style graphic novels, her own drawings are mixed with those of her students, and advice is interspersed with childhood memories, dreams, and fantasies, in a highly personal drawing style reminiscent of art brut.

ADVICE IN THE DIGITAL LITERARY SPHERE

Today, literary advice can be conceived as a continuum on (at least) two intersecting axes: on the one hand, from non-literary forms (textbook, interview, and list) to literary forms (memoir, novel, essay, poetry, graphic novel); on the other hand, from amateur audiences that do not envision publication, to literary writing that has a high symbolic value, both in terms of sales figures and of critical esteem, and even literary awards. On the side of non-literary forms which address amateurs and do not envision publication, we find advice for life writing, therapeutic writing manuals and notebook manuals. At the far end of the non-literary forms that nonetheless carry high symbolic esteem, we can situate the MFA creative writing handbooks. Combining literary form with amateur audiences leads towards the self-help tradition, such as Dorothea Brande and Brenda Ueland, or to essays dealing with writer's block, or the creative process. The combination of literary form and high prestige, finally, is found in the writing memoir, literary advice novels, or in the experimental graphic advice novels by Lynda Barry.

This very rudimentary depiction, however, does not suffice in the age of the Internet, which witnessed not just a new explosion of advice, but the emergence of a complex ecology of online and offline advice, of older and newer forms, and of amateurs and professionals. One may wonder, at this point, whether we are not stretching the limits of literary advice too far. Following and extending the arguments of among others, Jim Collins (2010), Beth Driscoll (2014), Sarah Brouillette (2014), and Angela McRobbie (2016), contemporary literary readers are not merely passionate, serious, and aspirational, turning to literature for therapeutic

reasons and for self-improvement. Spurred by the neoliberal impetus to “Be Creative!,” they are consistently activated and coaxed to become writers. Writing is presented as accessible and democratic, as a technique for working on the self, as a path toward a good, meaningful life, and as a potential career. Advice helping you to do it is omnipresent. This evolution has been greatly stimulated by the arrival of the “digital literary sphere,” i.e., a contemporary “multi-actor system that can account for the complex interplay of intellectual, political, and economic forces” (Murray 2018, p. 2). In the recent scholarly literature on the impact of the Internet on literature, literary advice is sometimes invoked—for instance by Simone Murray—but it has not yet been directly studied. The domain will be opened by several contributions in this book, e.g., Roach, who focuses on the proliferation of the author interview as advice strategy on the Internet, Van Goidsenhoven and Masschelein, who discuss the on- and offline advice strategies of Jessica Kingsley Publishers, and, most importantly, by Bronwen Thomas, who examines literary advice on Wattpad, one of the most prominent writing communities.

A number of parallels (besides obvious differences, such as scale) between the contemporary digital literary sphere and the early period of advice stand out. First of all, the Internet, and especially the “post-press” phenomena of fanfiction and self-publishing have given rise to a massive resurgence of amateur and fan cultures, and to what Robert Stebbins has called “serious leisure” (the systematic pursuits of amateurs, which require skill, knowledge, and experience, as well as sincerity, dedication, and seriousness, see Stebbins 2015), for which Aarthi Vadde coined the term “mass amateurization” (Vadde 2017, p. 27). These new amateur literary cultures are characterized by a blurring of the boundary of reader and writer, by a strong sense of community, and by a complicated relation of complicity and resistance vis-à-vis the commercial aspect of Internet and the gift economy of social media platforms (Jenkins 2007; Vadde 2017). In her summary of fanfiction studies, in between media studies and narratology, Bronwen Thomas points to an interesting feature from the perspective of literary advice, i.e., its processual nature. Because of fanfiction’s embrace of serialization and process rather than product, its attachment to rules, and its devoted community, readers not only become writers, but also critics and “fictioneers.” In her contribution to this book, Thomas focuses on Wattpad, and shows how advice in this community is hierarchical and multiform. These bodies of community advice could be regarded as a “pre-theory,” much like the early fictioneering body of

work, which—as Thomas shows—is important for cognitive narratological theories.

McGurl, Levey, and Vadde also look at the impact of self-publishing on literature from a combined sociological, philosophical, and narratological viewpoint. In their accounts, there are a number of striking similarities with the early period of advice in the era of amateur and professional writing. According to McGurl, the “Age of Amazon” and self-publishing is “an age of genre fiction,” especially romance and science fiction (McGurl 2016, p. 460) as well as of serial and shorter forms (Levey 2016). Although the symbolic capital of self-publishing is still limited (Waldfoegel 2018, p. 136), several success stories—for instance E. L. James or Andy Weir—have contributed to making self-publishing an important breeding ground for fiction, not just in the eyes of aspiring, but also established authors (most famously Margaret Atwood), publishers, and literary scholars (McGurl 2016; Vadde 2017). The complex relation of self-publishing and fanfiction to both commercialization and community, and their predilection for rule-based genres that are nonetheless subversive, have raised comparisons not only to the late nineteenth century and the pulp fiction era, but also to the paperback-pulp revolution of the 1960s (Levey 2016, n.p.), and the DIY sci-fi counterculture of the 1970s (Vadde 2017, p. 46). It is not surprising, then, that the literary advice industry also sees a revival. For the horde of amateurs, who are finding their way to writing, and for professional authors, who are increasingly expected to perform their authorship online (Murray 2018, pp. 22–52), literary advice—addressing writing, publishing, and authorial stances in the digital literary sphere—is vital. It is issued by commercial advice authors, moguls, gurus, and would-be gurus who are firmly present on the Internet’s many platforms. Older sources of advice content are unearthed and distributed (with or without copyright infringement), and advice is crowd-sourced by the users of the many sites and online writing communities.

Last but not least, in a reaction against the digitalization of literature and in a nostalgic return to “craft,” there is also a resurgence of analog writing culture. In high-end bookstores, library- and museum-shops, luxurious Moleskine notebooks, pencils (not surprisingly one of the cover images for Richard Sennett’s *The Craftsman* (2008) features pencils) are sold alongside elegant hardbacks of writing memoirs, or nostalgic small paperbacks of advice essays (e.g., the Penguin classics *Why I Write* series, named after Orwell’s essay from 1946). These objects also feed the “writing hysteria of the twenty-first century,” and the concomitant

need for writing manuals for the masses. Thus, literary advice, in myriad forms, has deeply penetrated our literary culture on all levels. By no means a marginal genre, literary advice for all its complicity with the creative industries, with commerce, and with normative poetics, is rooted at the heart of literary culture. It is a highly complex historical phenomenon, that cannot be neatly compartmentalized: Despite its omnipresence and its imperialist tendencies, advice is also repressed, reviled, and necessarily forgotten, for in order to uphold the dream of authorship it must remain devoted to the very myths of solitary genius and autonomous creation which it in fact debunks.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This book is organized in three parts that demonstrate the broad scope of research on literary advice. Part I, “From Fictioneering to Wattpad,” focuses on the most important developments of literary advice from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. John Caughey opens the book with a broad discussion of the history of fictioneering, ranging from the debates between Sir Walter Besant and Henry James to *Atalanta’s* School of Fiction targeting aspiring female authors. Mary Stuart Atwell’s contribution zooms in on the aftermath of Henry James’s “Art of Fiction,” studying not just the contemporary authors that weighed in on the discussion, but also bringing the debate into the present. Paul Vlitos presents an overview of early British literary advice, taking George Gissing’s advice author character Whelpdale as his guide to unfold the wide range of advice available in the early twentieth century. In her chapter on author interviews as increasingly important sources of literary advice, Rebecca Roach compares different moments in the history of the craft interview, from the early twentieth century to the twenty-first century. The final contribution in this part, by Bronwen Thomas, studies the emergence of peer-to-peer advice in online writing communities like Wattpad in the twenty-first century.

Part II presents a number of case studies of literary advice, in which specific corpora or types of literary advice are scrutinized. First of all, Liorah Hoek’s chapter studies how the dominance of triangular plot models in some of the most commonly used advice books until today has streamlined concepts of plot, and raises the question whether different visual representations might yield different plots. Françoise Grauby examines a broad sample of contemporary French literary advice to reveal

the discursive construction of authorial “postures” and the way in which handbooks perpetuate conceptions of authorship. Alexandria Peary’s contribution explores more self-help oriented advice classics as a form of informal aesthetic education. Arne Vanraes turns to a very specific type of advice, i.e., advice about keeping a notebook, and unearths their underlying process-oriented philosophy. The second part concludes with Leni Van Goidsenhoven and Anneleen Masschelein’s exploration of the field of therapeutic writing handbooks, focusing on the handbook series in the catalog of niche-publisher JKP.

Part III, finally, examines various ways in which literary advice culture in the broad sense is adopted and resisted in different cultures and within literatures. Ioannis Tsitsovits shows how Kenneth Goldsmith’s antagonistic project of “uncreative writing” which emphasizes copying over originality, echoes some of the writing exercises proposed by classic writing advice. Gert-Jan Meyntjens discusses François Bon, one of France’s most well-known creative writing pedagogues, who in a pseudonymous mock-translated manual introduces the American advice tradition as a subversive move to revive contemporary French literature. Andrés Franco Harnache provides a broad overview of the influence of Anglo-American creative writing pedagogy on contemporary Hispanic literature, but also advocates that contemporary authors resist this pedagogy by reconnecting to their own literary traditions. The last two contributions of the book examine the emergent phenomenon of the advice novel. Elizabeth Kovach focuses on the examinations of writing as work in the novels of Deborah Levy and Alexander Chee. Jim Collins’s contribution reads three contemporary novels, by Tommy Orange, Sigrid Nunez, and Ocean Vuong, that depict the changed relation between amateur and professional writing in the twenty-first century, and raise the question of voice, so central to literary advice, in a new way.

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NOTES

1. In this book, terms like ‘handbook,’ ‘manual,’ ‘guidebook,’ ‘How-to book,’ and ‘textbook’ will be used more or less interchangeably, despite obvious distinctions in the way each format presents itself, for instance the amount of exercises, the directive language that is used, the insertion of textboxes and summaries, the inclusion of bibliography and sources, etc. We will reserve the notion of ‘literary advice’ for the broad category, with the different authors in our book maintaining their preference for a certain designation.
2. Both Gérard Genette in *Narrative Discourse* ([1972] 1980) and David Bordwell in *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) refer to Percy Lubbock’s *The Craft of Fiction*. Tzvetan Todorov turns to a more popular form of advice, building his theory of detective fiction on S. S. Van Dine’s “Twenty Rules of Detective Fiction” (Todorov 1977).
3. According to Pierre Bourdieu, doxa is “what circulates between contemporary philosophers, of those of different epochs [...] not only canonical texts, but a whole range of philosophical doxa carried by intellectual rumour – labels of schools, truncated quotations, functioning as slogans in celebration or polemics – and above all, perhaps, in school manuals (an unmentionable reference), which perhaps do more than anything else to constitute the ‘common sense’ of an intellectual generation” (Bourdieu 1993, p. 32).
4. By making available to an English-speaking audience some of the research on the French advice tradition, most notably Françoise Grauby’s *La Roman de la creation, écrire entre mythes et pratiques* (2015) and Gert-Jan Meyntjens’s PhD research *Contemporary Literary Advice in France: Adopting, Adapting and Transforming American Creative Writing Handbooks* (2018), and by including a chapter on the rise of creative writing in the Hispanic world by Andrés Franco Harnache, we hope to contribute to broadening the scope of an emerging ‘literary advice studies’.
5. Unlike the academies for painting, music, and dance, academies of languages and literatures have traditionally been much less involved in education. According to the 1634-mission statement of the Académie Française, its task is to compose a grammar, rhetorics, and poetics for the French language, but the main focus of their publishing activities was clearly grammar.
6. Caughey contests the idea that the short story is a typical American genre, and draws attention to existing short story traditions in Britain and in France (Caughey 2016, p. 123). A similar nationalist rivalry existed for other genres, such as the mystery genre (Masschelein and De Geest 2017).
7. “The Psyche Zenobia,” later reprinted as “How to Write a Blackwood Article,” is basically a send-up of literary advice avant-la-lettre. By “article”

Poe means a sensational tale or short story. As is usual with Poe, it is hard to know when he is pulling whose leg—if not his own. In this period, *Blackwood's Magazine* also ran a regular feature (“Noctes Ambrosianae”) containing spoof advice banter.

8. As Mary Atwell has shown for Dickens and Bulwer-Lytton, and Jeanne Campbell Reesman and Dale Walker (1999) for Jack London, many authors were both generous and ambivalent in taking up the role of mentor, corresponding with aspiring authors.
9. A journal with the same name was founded in 1889 by William S. Hill, who had founded the first professional journal, *The Writer* in 1887 (Caughey 2016, p. 108). For more information about professional writing magazines in the UK, see Hilliard (2006, pp. 31–33).
10. Andrew Levy describes the 1920s–1930s as a phase of “counter-handbooks,” indicating the strong critiques from New Critics against the formalist and nationalist tendencies of the first-phase handbooks. Caughey, by contrast, convincingly argues that the New Critics developed their theories of different genres not merely in opposition to, but also based on, the earlier fictioneering pre-theories.
11. Another rule, “Kill your darlings,” is commonly attributed to William Faulkner, but according to Wickman, the phrase comes from Arthur Quiller-Couch’s 1914 lecture on style (Wickman 2013).
12. Originally, it was called *Successful Writing*, changing to *Writer’s Digest* in 1921.
13. The negative form of advice, or the idea of prohibitions, is present since the beginning of literary advice, and is not always used parodically. For instance, Claire Gilman’s *How Not to Get Published. Fifty Mistakes to Avoid if You Want to Get Published* (2013) or Ben Yagoda’s composition guide *How to Not Write Bad. The Most Common Writing Problems and How to Avoid Them* (2013)—although radically different in tone—are both serious manuals.
14. Brande was married to Seward Collins, editor of *The Bookman* who later on started the right-wing magazine *The American Review*, to which Brande contributed, and both were associated with American fascism. Scutts links Brande’s self-improvement ethos to the Nietzschean “Will to succeed,” elitism and a critique of modernity (Scutts 2013).
15. Kaplan unearths a plagiarism scandal from 1949, where Ueland herself violated the high standards of authenticity which she laid out in her earlier manual.
16. Initially, creative writing classes used New Critical anthologies and textbooks, such as Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate’s *The House of Fiction* (1950) or Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren’s *Understanding Fiction*, from 1943 and re-edited in 1959 (McGurl 2009, pp. 132–133).

17. Hilliard cites the arrival of the paperback, exemplified in Britain by the success of publisher Penguin, who no longer distinguished between “high Modernist” literature and “middlebrow” or genre fiction, as one factor contributing to a changing landscape (ibid., pp. 277–278).
18. Screenwriting handbooks for fiction films have long been the standard in the industry. However, since the success of television series like *The Sopranos*, and the rise of ‘quality television,’ more specialized guides for series are available, focusing on important concepts in this subfield, such as the showrunner and the Bible (the story DNA of a long-running series).
19. The writing memoir is not included as a subgenre in Smith and Watson’s useful classification of common forms of memoir in *Reading Autobiography*, but they do pay attention to the rise of How-to guides for life writing (Smith and Watson 2010, pp. 159–162) in different formats. Likewise, Couser signals the rise of manuals for memoir in general (Couser 2012, p. 54).
20. The importance of this trend is also reflected in the boom of handbooks for memoir writing and creative nonfiction since the 1980s. Following the adagio that “everyone can be a writer, because everyone has a story,” these guides address a very broad range of audiences, from retired people wanting to note down their family history, in the wake of the popularity of genealogy projects, to aspiring authors pursuing a literary career. Moreover, memoir includes several subgenres, like journaling, notebook writing, and therapeutic writing, which more often than not do not envision publication.

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