



# Living Up to the Ads: Gender Fictions of the 1920s (New Americanists)

*Simone Weil Davis*

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In *Living Up to the Ads* Simone Weil Davis examines commodity culture's impact on popular notions of gender and identity during the 1920s. Arguing that the newly ascendant advertising industry introduced three new metaphors for personhood—the ad man, the female consumer, and the often female advertising model or spokesperson—Davis traces the emergence of the pervasive gendering of American consumerism. Materials from advertising firms—including memos, manuals, meeting minutes, and newsletters—are considered alongside the fiction of Sinclair Lewis, Nella Larsen, Bruce Barton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Zelda Fitzgerald. Davis engages such books as *Babbitt*, *Quicksand*, and *Save Me the Waltz* in original and imaginative ways, asking each to participate in her discussion of commodity culture, gender, and identity. To illuminate the subjective, day-to-day experiences of 1920s consumerism in the United States, Davis juxtaposes print ads and industry manuals with works of fiction. Capturing the maverick voices of some of the decade's most influential advertisers and writers, Davis reveals the lines that were drawn between truths and lies, seduction and selling, white and black, and men and women. Davis's methodology challenges disciplinary borders by employing historical, sociological, and literary practices to discuss the enduring links between commodity culture, gender, and identity construction. *Living Up to the Ads* will appeal to students and scholars of advertising, American studies, women's studies, cultural studies, and early-twentieth-century American history.

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