

***Babbitt* as Veblenian Critique of Manliness**

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“The well-worn paths are easy to follow and lead into good company.”

—Thorstein Veblen, *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization*

The significance of Thorstein Veblen to American literary realism and, more widely, to the early twentieth century intellectual climate has been often noted. The “dean” of American realism, William Dean Howells, wrote one of the reviews of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) which launched Veblen’s reputation, significantly titled “An Opportunity for American Fiction.” Veblen scholars have also noted his importance to literary history. His biographer Joseph Dorfman claims “the book [*Leisure Class*] or at least its language relatively early made its appearance on the stage and in novels.” Veblen’s message and style were especially welcome to antagonists of the status quo. As Max Lerner puts it, “Veblen was more than a thinker” for his generation; he was “a symbol by which men measured their rejection of the values of the established order.” So pervasive was Veblen’s social critique that Maxwell Anderson wrote in 1918 in *The Dial*, “I once asked a friend if he had read *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. ‘Why no,’ he retorted, ‘why should I? All my friends have read it. It permeates the atmosphere in which I live.’”¹

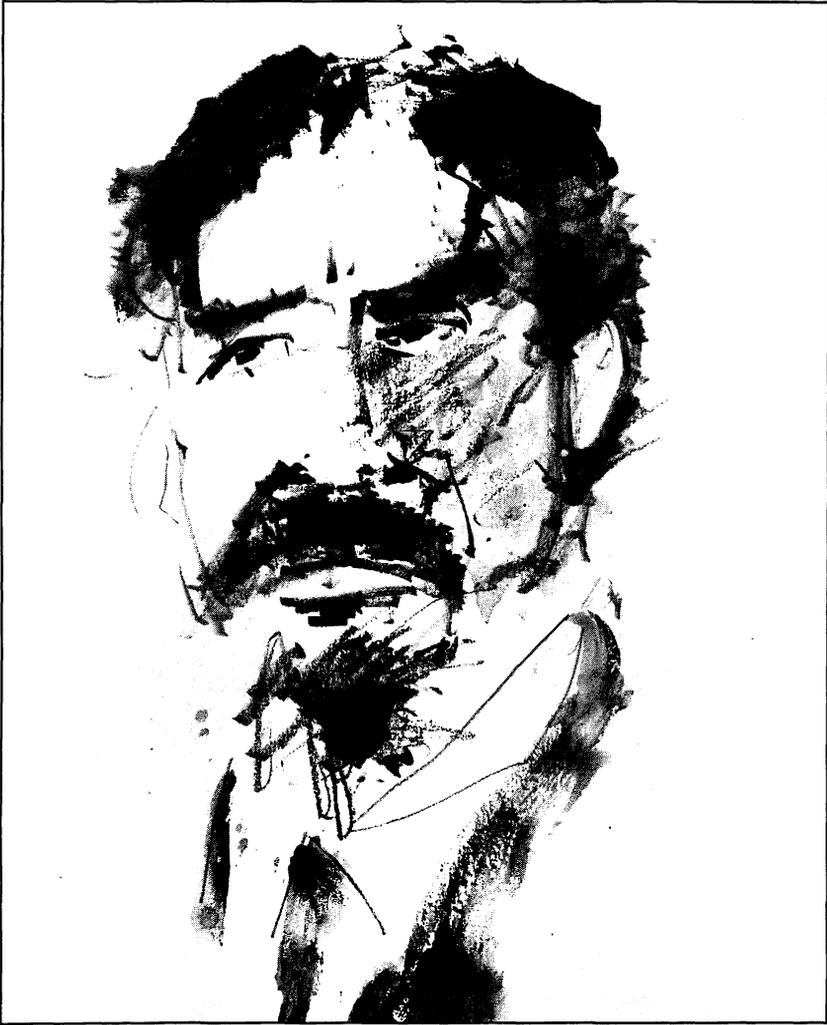
Yet in the case of Sinclair Lewis one need not rely on claims of Veblen-by-osmosis, for these two Midwesterners (Lewis was born in Minnesota, where Veblen moved at age eight) and Yale graduates were familiar enough with each other’s work to cite some details. The “pariah,” Red Swede in *Main Street* (1920), is not only Veblenian in his iconoclasm, in his failure to “decently envy the

rich,” in his analyses of “your leisure class”; he also has a book of Veblen’s on his shelf. Indeed, according to Mark Schorer, “in some ways the major contribution of Lewis’s novels was their continuation (or, at least, popularization) of certain leading ideas of Veblen, especially as to the leisure class and business enterprise.” More surprising given Veblen’s tendency to avoid citing authorities other than himself is his allusion in *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times* (1923) to *Main Street*. He opens his chapter on the country town by invoking “the perfect flower of self-help and cupidity. . . . Its name may be Spoon River or Gopher Prairie, or it may be Emporia or Centralia or Columbia.”²

Noting the parallels between Veblen and Lewis can help to clear up what has seemed a problem to many readers of *Babbitt* (1922). Many have complained that in this novel Lewis’ method of characterization seems at war with itself. The title character splits into “two Babbitts,” a boosting conformist and a rebel wannabe, which coexist uncomfortably. Lewis’ insistence that George F. Babbitt is not a type—a claim which sits uneasily with most readers—has only contributed to the devaluation of his art. The author, it is said, must be as confused as his character, for he cannot choose between satire and sociology, or between romance and the novel. The result, claim many critics, is disappointingly static, a museum piece or a portrait done in a morgue.³ Lewis was indeed torn between individualizing a sympathetic Babbitt and satirizing a member of a herd, but the criticisms seem to me to miss the point. Lewis provides a valuable chapter of cultural history by tracing Babbitt’s rebellion against “the duty of being manly”: a duty to manifest boosterism, clannishness, chauvinism, and anti-intellectualism.⁴

This definition of white, middle class, middle America manliness and Lewis’ understanding of the damage it causes the autonomous self point to the author’s correspondence with Veblen’s works, which, in turn, provides a theoretical explanation for the perceived gap perceived between the “two Babbitts.” The typical and often stereotypical qualities of Babbitt and his friends conform to the broad strokes of Veblen’s critique of manliness.⁵ In contrast, the reader sympathizes with Babbitt only insofar as the realtor casts off his “He-Man” role that his cohorts rightly perceive as a challenge to the status quo.⁶ The horror of the novel’s closed circle, the meaning of Babbitt’s aborted rebellion, lie not in revealing a static life but in illustrating Veblen’s theory of how an unruffled surface is maintained by institutional coercion.

The works of Lewis and Veblen exist within a wider field of concerns, one of which historians have identified as the American “crisis of masculinity.” Although the crisis has been variously defined and dated, its broad outlines can be traced. The nineteenth century witnessed an extraordinary rigidity in gender roles that increasingly strikes analysts as compensatory. With the process of industrialization came a “new uncertainty about what it took to be a man” and, as traditional ways of proving individualistic manhood become increasingly difficult to sustain, sex roles became dichotomous. Add to these technological and industrial challenges the ferment for women’s rights in the latter half of the



Thorstein Veblen by John Lo Presti, courtesy of John Lo Presti.

century, particularly the “New Woman” movement of the 1890’s and the result is manhood besieged, a “paradigmatic revolution in self-perception [for males] during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” One of the responses to the masculinity crisis was hypermasculine behavior, such as that seen in *Babbitt*. Peter N. Stearns sums up this state when he writes: “As it became harder to be a man . . . it became vital to prove one’s manhood, especially to oneself.”⁷

The relevance of this crisis in the male paradigm to *Babbitt* becomes clearer as we move into the 1920s. Women’s suffrage, achieved in 1920, seemed

apocalyptic to those bewailing the erosion of masculine privilege. After 1920, as males lost even the illusion of remaining in control which had sustained them in the previous century, there was a “shift in . . . masculinity-validating criteria” from active to reactive behaviors. The decade of the 1920s, according to several historians, marks a new period of American men’s history. Elizabeth and Joseph Pleck’s categorizations are useful: the Strenuous Life Period characterized by substantial male bonds (1861-1919) gave way to more interdependence between men and women during the Period of Companionate Providing (1920-1965). But, as Veblen was fond of noting, most people can’t keep up with historical change; institutional lag keeps us hanging on to “imbecile” models of behavior. *Babbitt* reveals the anxieties of this transition from macho to domesticated man: George Babbitt runs from (and, ultimately, back to) women in a frenzied search for a separate men’s culture that would help him to prove his manhood. Babbitt’s behaviors respond unconsciously to the marked decline in beliefs about distinctive “male” and “female” traits that was characteristic of the 1920s.⁸

Little wonder that Veblen would write in the same year *Babbitt* was published of the “Dementia Praecox” (precocious dementia) afflicting so many American males, which reduced their behavior to adolescent hysteria.⁹ Well known for deconstructing “woman’s sphere” as conspicuous consumer, Veblen joined many other social scientists in reassessing early twentieth-century masculinity. In this time when the male gender became suddenly visible, Veblen argued for the social construction of masculinity—or, more precisely, for the social coercion of masculinity.¹⁰ While other social scientific analogies might well be drawn, Veblen’s unique approach to the masculinity crisis is especially akin to Lewis’ in *Babbitt*: both combine two unlikely poses, as satirists and as anthropologists of everyday life.¹¹

Readers who dispute the effectiveness of Lewis’ novel can nevertheless agree on its satiric target: the monotonously ugly faces of standardization. Veblen foresaw in 1904 this “standardization . . . of the details of everyday life,” even of “conduct and knowledge.”¹² A prescient observer of turn-of-the-century capitalism, Veblen accused it of breeding standardization not only in commodities but in consumers themselves—an insight fundamental to *Babbitt*. (*Business*, 7, *Instinct*, 313). Babbitt’s rebellion against the pull of standardization provides the key which unlocks the satire and his critique of manliness.

Lewis examines several possible interpretations of this monotonous world. The unwary reader can follow Babbitt, who thinks he is in revolt against the pressures imposed by women: in the first chapter he “resent[s] . . . return from this fine, bold man-world to a restricted region of wives and stenographers, and of suggestions not to smoke so much” (7), and toward the end, his fling with Tanis Judique leaves him again “want[ing] to flee out to a hard, sure, unemotional man-world” (293). But Babbitt incorrectly identifies the source of the pressures on him to function like a standardized product. As Nina Baym explains,

we all . . . experience social conventions and responsibilities and obligations first in the persons of women, since women are entrusted by society with the task of rearing young children. . . . Thus, although women are not the source of social power, they are experienced as such.

Joe Dubbert's distinction between women's *influence* and men's *power* is also useful here.¹³ Babbitt is actually rebelling against social power—against, that is, regulation manliness.

In Zenith, which prides itself on producing “manly men and womanly women” (152), males are the true conformists. The narrator makes this point while providing two levels of commentary on the Babbitts' dinner party:

there were six wives, more or less—it was hard to tell so early in the evening, as at first glance they all looked alike, and as they all said, “Oh *isn't* this nice!” in the same tone of determined liveliness. To the eye, the men were less similar. . . and the strange thing is that the longer one knew the women, the less alike they seemed; while the longer one knew the men, the more alike their bold patterns appeared. (94)

The comparison is certainly, as Veblen might say, invidious. Lewis distinguishes not only between surface (women's) and deep (men's) conformity here, but also between levels of observation: only those able to see beneath the surface will recognize the true agents of conformity. Babbitt is too myopic to see that his revolt against standardization enlists him in a battle against manliness.

According to Veblen, who relished the “masculinity crisis,” the contemporary American model of manliness rests on the foundation of business enterprise. His paradigm begins with the premise that modern business derives from primitive humans' distinction between “industry” (the “effort that goes in to create a new thing”) and “exploit” (“the conversion to [one's] own ends of energies previously directed to some other end”). Productive industry, diminished in status as it comes to be aligned with drudgery, falls to women, while the honorific and counterproductive exploits are valorized into men's sphere (*Leisure*, 12-13; also see *Business*).¹⁴ Hence business, evolved from exploit, is predatory, competitive, and destructive. These same traits, Veblen contends, define American male prowess: business *is* manly, and manliness is businesslike.

Lewis employs the Veblenian sexual division of labor while equating manliness with business and exploit in *Babbitt*. Zenith cautiously segregates men's from women's spheres; “the realms of offices and of kitchens had no alliances” (97). The Floral Heights matrons with “nothing to do” (102) illustrate Veblen's theory that contemporary women's work includes conspicuous leisure

(*Leisure*, Chapter 3). Against this backdrop, Babbitt fights the “manly battle” (43) of business. Driven by his need to feel heroic, Babbitt’s mock epic behaviors illustrate Veblen’s conflation of business with predation: his “preparations for leaving the office to its feeble self . . . were somewhat less elaborate than the plans for a general European war” (44). The iconoclastic Paul Riesling translates the point into colloquial terms: “‘All we do is cut each other’s throats and make the public pay for it!’” (55).

Veblen’s analysis of businessmen finds them as dazzlingly inept at making things as they are skilled at making money. Producers “only by a euphemistic metaphor,”¹⁵ businessmen profit from “the higgling of the market” (*Place of Science* 294). A realtor who knows nothing about architecture, Babbitt personifies the Veblenian businessman as do few characters in American literature. As Lewis says, Babbitt “made nothing in particular, neither butter nor shoes nor poetry, but he was nimble in the calling of selling houses for more than people could afford to pay” (pp. 38-39, 6). This description of the parasitic businessman follows Veblen’s explanation that

To “do well” in modern phrase means to engross something appreciably more of the community’s wealth than falls to the common run. . . . Men are conceived to serve the common good somewhat in proportion as they are able to induce the community to pay more for their services than they are worth. (*Instinct*, 349-50)

Veblen considers it ironic that Americans venerate business, for the worshipping attitude permits the rapacious individual to profit at communal expense (*Business*, 291).

What Veblen says about “the types of manhood which the life of sport fosters” characterizes as well his view of business: “the reason for the current approval and admiration of these manly qualities, as well as for their being called manly, is the same as the reason for their usefulness to the individual” (*Leisure*, 263). Manliness, in other words, is divisive, self-serving, and counter-productive. Lewis evidently agrees about the host willingly supporting the parasite, for the self-interest and smug complacency of Babbitt and his friends are unthinkable without their culture’s approval of business. Babbitt illustrates the point: “He serenely believed that the one purpose of the real-estate business was to make money for George F. Babbitt” (38). Why the serenity? Veblen pins down what is ultimately at stake here: pecuniary success constitutes “the final test of manhood” (*Higher Learning*, 82). So ingrained are pecuniary criteria that “when we say that a man is ‘worth’ so many dollars, the expression does not convey that moral or other personal excellence is to be measured in terms of money, but it does very distinctly convey the idea that the fact of his possessing many dollars is very much to his credit” (*Place of Science*, 393).



Sinclair Lewis by John Lo Presti, *courtesy of John Lo Presti.*

But Veblen's successful male does not live by individual and invidious business success alone. As much modern research into male identity formation has demonstrated, manhood demands a more public form of testing than that expected for women. According to anthropologist David Gilmore, "true manhood is a precious and elusive status beyond mere maleness, a horatory image that men and boys aspire to and that their culture demands of them as a measure of belonging."¹⁶ This is certainly the case in Veblen's writings, as in *Babbitt*. Veblen concluded that manhood is sustained by group affiliation. Indeed, since he repeatedly contrasts ceremonial with functional behaviors to the detriment of the

former, men's public, competitive, and ritualistic behaviors only make the social construction of masculinity an even easier satiric target for him to hit. Veblen considers the back-slapping, herding tendency fundamentally masculine, and traces it from the "instinct of sportsmanship" in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) to patriotism in his war writings.¹⁷ By *The Nature of Peace and the Terms of its Perpetuation* (1917) he is defining patriotism as "the prime attribute of manhood" (40). Clannish acts, whether in war or in sport, share the competitive spirit of business enterprise, but they differ in being collective endeavors, forcefully binding the individual man to his habitat. Hence the American male's "sentiment[al] . . . approval" of patriotism along with property necessitates an unsteady psychic balance between "servitude" and "predation" (*Business*, 290). Veblen's brilliantly homely metaphor which explains patriotic behavior nicely characterizes his view of all manly clannishness:

The analogy of the clam . . . may at least serve to suggest what may be the share played by habituation in the matter of national attachment. The young clam, after having passed the free-swimming phase of his life, as well as the period of attachment to the person of a carp or similar fish, drops to the bottom and attaches himself loosely in the place and station in life to which he has been led; and he loyally sticks to his particular patch of oose and sand through good fortune and evil. It is, under Providence, something of a fortuitous matter where the given clam shall find a resting place for the sole of his feet, but it is also, after all, "his own, his native land" etc. It lies in the nature of a clam to attach himself after this fashion, loosely, to the bottom where he finds a living, and he would not be a "good clam and true" if he failed to do so. . . . [A]ll men of sound, or at least those of average, mind will necessarily be of a patriotic temper and be attached by ties of loyalty to some particular establishment. (*Nature of Peace*, 134-5)¹⁸

Babbitt provides a veritable stew of such bivalves. The realtor knows well that being a He-Man is not only about looking out for Numero Uno. The compulsion to attach himself to the right groups in order to sustain his manhood is the downfall of the sympathetic side of Babbitt. A deep and insidious peer pressure influences his actions at the Realtors' Convention where he stirs himself into a state of "hysteric patriotism" (134). Lewis aligns his views with Veblen's as he documents Babbitt's speech on, appropriately, manhood:

"the ideal of American manhood and culture isn't a lot of cranks sitting around chewing the rag about their Rights and their Wrongs, but a God-fearing, hustling, successful, two-

fisted Regular guy, who belongs to some church with pep and piety to it, who belongs to the Boosters or the Rotarians or the Kiwanis, to the Elks or Moose or Red Men or Knights of Columbus or any one of a score of organizations of good, jolly, kidding, laughing, sweating, upstanding, lend-a-handing Royal Good Fellows, who plays hard and works hard, and whose answer to his critics is a square-toed boot that'll teach the grouches and smart alecks to respect the He-man and get out and root for Uncle Samuel, U.S.A.!" (155)

To adopt the phrase of Gilmore, Babbitt's speech confirms that masculinity is preeminently about "the need to establish and defend boundaries."¹⁹ This policing of boundaries may involve vehement defenses of "male" versus "female" territory, or, as it does here in Babbitt's speech, necessitate declaring a specific version of manhood as the norm, the natural, the right.

One of Lewis' most satirical deflations of the American businessman is surely this revelation that the "self-made man" is, in fact, group-made. John Remy's discussion of the "men's hut" illuminates this aspect of *Babbitt*. Distinguishing between patriarchy and fratriarchy, the latter, argues Remy, "is based simply on the self-interest of the association of men itself" rather than the needs of the family unit protected by the patriarch. Most of Babbitt's male bonding rituals are, likewise, fraternal—as Lewis depicts them, reactive measures to counter female influence and to prop up flaccid egos. Yet the seat of power in both patriarchal and fraternal societies is the "men's hut" which defines itself by setting up boundaries, excluding women as well as any dissident males.²⁰ Such is clearly the intent of Babbitt's speech at the Realtors' Convention which defines who are, and who are not, his cohorts.

It is fitting that Lewis lodges his satirical vision of "the ideal of American manhood" in Babbitt's oratorical triumph, its clichés and slogans revealing the grammar of standardization. Lewis discloses a frightening territory with this map showing how manliness sanctifies chauvinistic and violent response to dissidents. Babbitt's clichés lead us into the land of institutional coercion and, indeed, "Babbitry" has passed into general circulation to mean conformity of a most depressing sort. The contrast with Veblen's prose is, at first glance, striking. Far from following predictable paths, Veblen startles readers by using unfamiliar juxtapositions. He is remembered most often for the arcane rather than the familiar. While Lewis revels in documenting slogans and banalities as surely as Veblen resists using language like anyone else, I would like to resist the temptation to use the contrast to (invidiously) privilege one writer's discourse over the other's. Lewis and Veblen's contrasting prose styles illustrate how different methods can work toward a similar end. Lewis' deadening clichés, like Veblen's idiosyncratic phrases, make readers uncomfortably conscious of the prisonhouse of language. Raising our awareness of the extent to which language

entraps its user is precisely their shared goal. Parroting contemporary platitudes, Lewis shows from the inside how language restricts thought and, therefore, action. Situating his writing on the outside, Veblen illustrates the subversive possibilities of discourse that does not bow to received wisdom. Yet Veblen, too, invents clichés, however unwittingly—"conspicuous consumption" being only the most famous example. The "Man from Main Street" and "Man from Mars" both use language to illustrate the brilliantly transformed cliché which lies at the heart of Veblen's most famous work: "Whatever is, is wrong" (*Leisure*, 217).²¹

Babbitt, however, prefers Whatever Is. The compulsion to belong to the right groups insinuates itself into all facets of his life. Babbitt's business ethics—"he followed the custom of his clan and cheated only as it was sanctified by precedent" (40)—directly follow Veblen's characterization of American business as "a spirit of quietism, caution, compromise, collusion, and chicane." (Veblen illustrates the idea with another homely metaphor: "the silent hog eats the swill" [*Higher Learning*, 70-71].) Men's play follows the same pattern as their work. Lewis uses the precise terms of Veblenian conflationary logic to describe Babbitt's enthusiasm for baseball: "the game was a custom of his clan, and it gave outlet for the homicidal and side-taking instincts which Babbitt called 'patriotism' and 'love of sport'" (128). Veblen could easily explain Lewis' odd comment that Babbitt "honestly believed . . . he loved baseball" (128). According to Veblen, the "lower motive of unreflecting clannishness. . . stands out perhaps most baldly in the sentimental rivalry . . . shown at intercollegiate games and similar occasions of invidious comparison" (*Higher Learning*, 235).²² Even the rebelliousness of Babbitt's sexual play, his fling with Tanis Judique, is compromised by the need for acceptance by "The Bunch."

Although Babbitt's business ethics, sportsmanship, and general love of boosting provide targets for raucous satire, his inability to realize a sense of self apart from his clan identification is chilling. The compulsion to remain identifiably male prohibits self-realization. Existing beneath the back-slapping, mutually re-enforcing surface of Zenith's He-Men is a core of self-immolation. This is the dark center of American manhood perceived by Veblen, who finds the effacement of individual desires in the service of the clan's wishes characteristic of the masculine patriotic spirit (*Nature of Peace*, 46). What follows is that acceptable men, who recognize themselves only by their group identification, *cannot be* autonomous.

It follows as well that manliness can only be confirmed by other males. Myra Babbitt, for instance, is "too busy to be impressed by that moral indignation with which males rule the world" (92) and ignores her husband's cries for kudos as Vice President elect of the Boosters Club (213). Once Babbitt's business contacts begin to erode and he faces retribution for "treachery to the clan" (257), the ceremonial proofs of his identity vanish. This process again illustrates the breakdown of the traditional male role. As Peter Stearns says, the more difficult the process of "male self-definition," the more crucial becomes "proof before

other men.”²³ Babbitt faces a frighteningly uncharted territory without the familiar signposts to confirm his masculinity and responds with hypermasculine behaviors.

Readers of scholarly journals hardly need reminders that American culture has a history of excluding intellectual work from the approved masculine realm—that the athlete need not share his laurels with the academic. Lewis’ treatment of this scenario is Veblenian in spirit and in detail. He recognizes how the clannishness fundamental to middle class manliness would breed anti-intellectualism. He makes the equation explicit when he comments that Paul, by “becom[ing] highbrow,” “committed an offense against the holy law of the Clan of Good Fellows” (p.119). Babbitt’s son, Ted, must be herded away from such blasphemy. (Ted’s full name, Theodore Roosevelt Babbitt, harkens back to a favored model of masculinity.) The father instructs the son about anti-intellectualism, illustrating again how men confirm each other’s identity, and the faith:

“Course I’d never admit it publicly—fellow like myself, a state U. graduate, it’s only decent and patriotic for him to blow his horn and boost the Alma Mater—but smatter of fact, there’s a whole lot of valuable time lost even at the U., studying poetry and French and subjects that never brought in anybody a cent.”
(72)

This conflation of patriotism, boosting, and education illustrates Veblen’s observation that “invidious patriotism has invaded [academia], too” (*Higher Learning*, 53). It is manly to boost the local university, but effeminate to learn about culture. Recommending the study of Business English over Shakespeare (65), Babbitt pushes for a business degree—a specialization which Veblen drily describes as “thereby widening the candidate’s field of ignorance” (*Higher Learning*, 207). Babbitt’s opposition to Ted’s pursuit of an engineering degree (248) fits the Veblenian pattern perfectly. In his most revolutionary work, *The Engineers and the Price System* (1921), Veblen argues that productivity would be increased by anywhere from three-hundred to twelve-hundred-percent were the engineers to overthrow businessmen and run industry themselves (83).²⁴

Lewis’ satirical treatment of Babbitt’s educational values also corresponds to Veblen’s argument about the decline of *The Higher Learning in America* (1918). He finds that the bastion of manliness, business, has “infect[ed]” the university (*Higher Learning*, 62). The result is monstrous: “corporations of learning” run by “captains of erudition” and operated as if they were “business house[s] dealing in merchantable knowledge” (85). He warns against the confinement of knowledge to the “quantitative statement” or the “balance-sheet” (86). Lewis illustrates the effects of this contamination with Babbitt’s speech about ““Those profs. . . . If we’re going to pay them our good money, they’ve got to help us by selling efficiency and whooping it up for rational prosperity!”” (155). The correspondence course advertisement, crowned by “an inspiring educational

symbol—no antiquated lamp or torch or owl of Minerva, but a row of dollar signs” (65), reiterates the point.

Lewis’ characterization of the professional academic, Howard Littlefield, particularly shows the influence of Veblen’s critique of the higher learning. Littlefield holds, appropriately, a Yale Ph.D. in Economics; Veblen a Yale Ph.D. in Philosophy.²⁵ Veblen would appreciate Lewis’ character’s name, with its insinuation that his “field” is narrow, for he dedicated his career to railing against colleagues who upheld business as usual. Economists, says Veblen, “ten[d] to work out what the instructed common sense of the times accepts as the adequate or worthy end of human effort. . . . [They justify] a projection of the accepted ideal of conduct” (*Place of Science*, 65). The reigning “quasi-science” in economics “necessarily takes the current situation for granted as a permanent state of things. . . . It is a ‘science’ of complaisant interpretations, apologies, and projected remedies” (*Higher Learning*, 187). Rather than pursue disinterested research, economists conform to the “homiletics and wool-gathering” that the common man mistakes for science: “the conclusive test of scientific competency and leadership, in the popular apprehension, is a serene and magniloquent return to the orthodox commonplaces” (*Higher Learning*, 182). In short, they specialize in “taxonom[izing] . . . credenda” (*Place of Science*, 21).

Lewis illustrates this co-optation of the academic economist through Littlefield, who,

confirmed the business men in the faith. Where they knew only by passionate instinct that their system of industry and manners was perfect, Dr. Howard Littlefield proved it to them, out of history, economics, and the confessions of reformed radicals.
(24)

He is what Veblen describes as a “spokesman for the competitive system” (*Place of Science*, 189) and one of the queries put to him, to define the meaning of “sabotage” (24), seems an unmistakable allusion to Veblen’s lengthy discussion of the word in the first chapter of *Engineers*, which appeared in book form the year Lewis was working on *Babbitt*.²⁶ Boosting business, justifying the clan’s exploits, and curtailing dissident thought, Littlefield is the only sort of academic likely to seem manly in Zenith. He belongs, and rationalizes the belonging of others. Babbitt understandably admires him for “‘put[ting] the con in economics!’” (98). Littlefield illustrates Veblen’s point that economists, like the patriotic clam, are “due to be the creatures of their heredity and environment” (*Essays in Our Changing*, 3).

Lewis’ treatment of Zenith’s anti-intellectualism draws strength from Veblen’s fears that higher education had lost its integrity by serving the manly interests of boosting, conformity, and business. Veblen was horrified that the university should be the handmaid of business, considering these “two extreme terms of the

modern cultural scheme” antithetical and predicting that only the intelligentsia could save “the substantial code of Western civilization” after the great war (*Higher Learning*, 76,52). He contends that “the two lines of interest—business and science—do not pull together; a competent scientist or scholar well endowed with business sense is as rare as a devout scientist—almost as rare as a white blackbird” (*Higher Learning*, 149-50). Clearly, the insistence that science serve business lies at the heart of Zenith’s anti-intellectualism. He-Men fear any method of reckoning other than the pecuniary. Knowledge is acceptable to them only insofar as it furthers business as usual. Littlefield illustrates the point nicely.

But, according to Veblen, the true intellectual does not confirm the faith; he subverts it: “Intellectual initiative . . . [cannot] be reduced to any known terms of subordination, obedience, or authoritative direction” (*Higher Learning*, 86). He was well aware that this, his alternative model of manhood, did not correspond to “the current ideal of manhood” (*Place of Science*, 30). Veblen’s description of the scientist suggests why Zenith cannot tolerate intellectual initiative: it would mean challenging “habitual convictions” and looking at,

the nature of the conventions under which men live, the institutions of society,—customs, usages, traditions, conventions, canons of conduct, standards of life, of taste, of morality and religion, law and order. . . . Skepticism is the beginning of science. (*Higher Learning*, 180,181)

Rather than policing established boundaries, Veblen’s model of manhood would trespass them. His skepticism is devoutly to be feared by the custodians of convention.

Veblen names this skeptical spirit of inquiry “idle curiosity.” We who read Veblen—much less, scholarship on Veblen—manifest this trait. Idle curiosity is Veblen’s construct to explain—and to celebrate—the academic’s devaluation in an anti-intellectual culture. Although the “most substantial cultural achievement of the race” (*Instinct*, 86), idle curiosity is not pragmatic. Indeed, idle curiosity has no “ulterior purpose”; it is wholly “fortuitous” when the fruit of scientific investigation is turned to useful ends (*Place of Science*, 18,16). Because the spirit of free inquiry threatens to unmask what passes as practical knowledge—and “‘practical’ in this connection means useful for private gain; it need imply nothing in the way of serviceability to the common good” (*Higher Learning*, 193)—it must be co-opted or suppressed.²⁷

Littlefield, as much a police of the status quo as Vergil Gunch, illustrates the process of co-optation. Babbitt’s retribalization illustrates the suppression.²⁸ Early in the novel, Babbitt patrols his own thought and self-censors any opportunity for idle curiosity. For instance, he tells his son, “‘what’s the use of a lot of supposing? Supposing never gets you anywhere. No sense supposing when there’s a lot of real facts’” (69). Strategically, Babbitt’s rebellion consists of a lot

of supposing: suppose he sat at a different table at the club? suppose he went on a trip alone? suppose Paul were right? suppose he cross the line of acceptable flirtation? Lewis describes Babbitt's moment of crisis as the glimmering of an intellectual awakening: "he was thinking . . . perhaps all life as he knew it and vigorously practiced it was futile. . . . What was it all about? What did he want?" (221). He senses how his known "world. . . , once doubted, became absurd" (236). As Babbitt grows intoxicated with the heady freedom of supposing, he manifests such independent behaviors as "enjoy[ing] the right to be alone" (221) and declaring to Myra, "I know what the League stands for. . . . the suppression of free speech and free thought" (298). These rebellious suppositions illustrate Veblen's point that idle curiosity, by definition, breaks the rules. Babbitt's rebellion lets him peer beyond the sportsmanlike clannishness and anti-intellectualism of Zenith men into the subversive territory of independent thought.

But Babbitt, of course, is no Arrowsmith, the scientist whose idealistic and intellectual principles lead him to renounce civilization. The realtor's story is about the inexorable pull of the status quo. Veblen's theory of institutional coercion accounts for the failure of the realtor's rebellion and the triumph of the status quo. Babbitt succumbs to what Veblen, in an unusually paranoid moment, describes as "those massive interests that move obscurely in the background." Babbitt had long parroted what Veblen calls the Vested Interests.²⁹ His words and thoughts have always been those of the advertisers, the press, ultimately of the Republican Party and big business. Veblen comments upon this phenomenon: "farmers, workmen, consumers, the common lot, are still animated by the fancy that they themselves have something to say" (*Vested*, 175). Babbitt illustrates how "bias of loyalty" and "civic duty" allow the Vested Interests to control duped citizens (*Nature of Peace*, p. 10). So strong are the ties that bind that Veblen prophecies in *The Engineers and the Price System* the inevitable failure of revolution in America:

By settled habit, the American population are quite unable to see their way to entrust any appreciable responsibility to any other than business men. . . . This sentimental deference of the American people to the sagacity of its business men is massive, profound, and alert. (139)

Babbitt, finally unable to let go of this valued cultural identification of power, respect, and manliness, illustrates Veblen's point. As he succumbs to the pressure of the aptly named Good Citizens' League he affirms, "'I'm a business man, first, last, and all the time!'" (277). With these words he returns to the men's hut.

Internal pressures such as habits of thought play as large a role in Veblen's theory of institutional coercion as do the external pressures exerted by the Vested Interests. All customs "exercise a selective surveillance" over mankind: partly a "coercive, educational adaptation" (as we see in the case of Babbitt); partly "a

selective elimination of the unfit” (as the instance of Paul Riesling illustrates) (*Leisure Class*, 212). Habits of thought, “sanctioned by social convention, . . . become right and proper and give rise to principles” (*Instinct*, 7). On this observation rests Veblen’s brilliant theory of institutional lag, according to which any innovation comes to be seen as “bad form” (*Leisure Class*, 200). Babbitt’s aborted rebellion illustrates the ingrained oppositions to change: he discovers “that he could never run away from Zenith and family and office, because in his own brain he bore the office and the family and every street and disquiet and illusion of Zenith” (242). Veblen explains the point nicely: “The most tenacious factor in any civilization is a settled popular frame of mind” (*Vested*, 147).

Veblen means “popular” in two senses: widespread and favored. Perhaps most chilling about his theory of institutional coercion is the part that the duped common man plays in sustaining the status quo. The common man,

beset with the picturesque hallucination that any unearned income which goes to those Vested Interests whose central office is in New Jersey is paid to himself in some underhand way, while the gains of those Vested Interests that are domiciled in Canada are obviously a grievous net loss to him,

is in fact *indispensible* to the maintenance of the status quo (*Vested*, 133, 16). This is the ultimate purpose served by clannishness. Men pride themselves on their affiliation with the expensive, the impressive, the large—with the Vested Interests. Babbitt, like Zenith’s other He-Men, sustains the status quo by “respec[ting] bigness in anything; in mountains, jewels, muscles, wealth or words” (29); by feeling “clever and solid . . . to bank with so marbled an establishment” as The Miners’ and Drivers’ National Bank (45). Lewis puns in his description of another bank to emphasize Veblen’s point: “the tower [was] a temple-spire of the religion of business, a faith passionate, exalted, *surpassing common men*” (15, emphasis added). The common man, says Veblen, “pays the cost [for the Vested Interests] and swells with pride” (*Vested*, 137). This is why even so petty a character as Babbitt must be reclaimed: he is part of the skeleton to which the muscle of the Vested Interest attaches.³⁰

Reading *Babbitt* as a Veblenian critique of manliness sheds light on the problem of the “two Babbitts”: one a stereotype and the object of Lewis’ satire; the other an appealing, if failed, individual. The alleged conflict vanishes once we recognize a sustained treatment of the crisis of American masculinity. The end of the novel depicts Babbitt reaffirming his manliness at the expense of his individuality. He returns to the sanctuary of “facile masculine advice” and “true masculine wiles” (291, 295). The status quo of Zenith is restored, and Lewis has demonstrated the pressure and even coercion needed to maintain the unruffled surface. He-men marshal the battle to uphold the established order, receiving in

return the confirmation of their manliness. All this so that the Vested Interests can continue business as usual—which, says Veblen, “means working at cross-purposes as usual, waste of work and materials as usual, restriction of output as usual, unemployment as usual, labor quarrels as usual, competitive selling as usual, mendacious advertising as usual, waste of superfluities as usual by the kept classes, and privation as usual for the common man” (*Vested*, 140-1). Babbitt’s aborted rebellion against business as usual illustrates Veblen’s ironic truism: “history records more frequent . . . instances of the triumph of imbecile institutions over life and culture than of peoples who have by force of instinctive insight saved themselves” (*Instinct*, 25).

Reading Babbitt in this way may also help to rejuvenate the decidedly old-fashioned reputation Lewis has in most quarters. Recent findings in “Men’s Studies” suggest the currency of Lewis’ Veblenian views on male identity formation. Part of the “ubiquitous” pattern located by anthropologist David Gilmore is that “the manhood ideal is not purely psychogenetic in origin but is also a culturally imposed ideal to which men must conform whether or not they find it psychologically congenial.” Sociologist Michael Kimmel extends this troubling insight further: “The constitution of men’s power over women is simultaneously the power of one version of masculinity over multiple masculinities. Women are subordinated by men in different but parallel mechanisms by which non-normative men are marginalized from the hegemonic construction.” Veblen and Lewis were early subscribers to this belief that masculinity coerces men as well as women. If, as Joe Dubbert says, American males are “trapped by a masculine mystique,” dating from a “crisis of the male paradigm” threatening men in the last two decades of the nineteenth century with “urbanization, civilization, and feminization,” it is little wonder that the next generation would all the more belligerently assert their manhood. In an ingenious new reading of literary naturalism, Mark Seltzer speaks of the “statistical persons” which abound in early twentieth century texts and cautions, “This is not, however, to replace individuality with standards . . . but to make the achievement of the standard the measure of individuality.”³¹ *Babbitt* and the writings of Veblen document a concern that coercive standards for masculinity were strangling the autonomy of individual males. They disclose the operations of the imbecile institution of white, middle class, middle American manliness in the early decades of this century.

Notes

1. W. D. Howells, “An Opportunity for American Fiction,” rpt. in *W. D. Howells as Critic*, ed. Edwin H. Cady (London, 1973), 286-91; Joseph Dorfman, “New Light on Veblen,” in *Essays Reviews and Reports* by Thorstein Veblen, ed. and with an introduction by Joseph Dorfman (Clifton, N. J., 1973), 45; Max Lerner, “What is Usable in Veblen,” *New Republic* 83 (May 15, 1935), 7; Maxwell Anderson quoted in Catherine Ann Caraher, “Thorstein Veblen and the American Novel” (Disserta-

tion, U. of Michigan, 1966), 2. Stephen MacKenna likewise declared in an 1899 review entitled "The Luxury of Laziness," rpt. in Veblen, *Essays Reviews*, 615, that "given a slightly different setting, [Leisure Class] would make the literary fortune of a novelist."

2. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (1920; New York, 1961), 114-17; Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* (New York, 1961), 772; Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times* (1923; Boston, 1967), 142. Subsequent references to the Veblen text will be made parenthetically. Edgar Johnson similarly remarked that Lewis "often seems to be nothing but dramatized Veblen" in "Veblen, Man from Mars," *New Republic* 105 (July 28, 1941), 122. Connections between Lewis and Veblen are also mentioned by Sheldon Norman Grebstein, "Babbitt: Synonym for a State of Mind," rpt. in *Critical Essays on Sinclair Lewis*, ed. Martin Bucco (Boston, 1986), see especially 35-8; Arthur B. Coleman, "The Genesis of Social Ideas in Sinclair Lewis" (Dissertation, N. Y. U., 1954); D. J. Dooley, *The Art of Sinclair Lewis* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1967); Lewis E. Atherton, "The Midwestern Country Town—Myth and Reality," *Agricultural History* 26 (July 1952), 73-80; and Caraher, "Veblen," Chapter 3.

3. Dooley, in Art, 87, 88, locates two Babbitts, and dislikes the rebellion plot. Schorer, *Life*, 355, cites Frederick Hoffman who identifies these two Babbitts as a Menckense "boob" and a "doubting Babbitt." T. K. Whipple, in "Sinclair Lewis," rpt. in *Sinclair Lewis: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mark Schorer (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), 74, concludes that there is "no 'real' Babbitt. There are several Babbitts who have never been integrated." Sinclair Lewis, "Unpublished Introduction to *Babbitt*," in *The Man from Main Street*, ed. Harry E. Maule and Melville H. Cane (New York, 1953), 22. H. L. Mencken, "Portrait of an American Citizen," rpt. in *Critical Essays*, ed. Bucco, 38, 39, sees no character development in Babbitt and describes him as a museum piece. Vernon L. Parrington, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920* (New York, 1930), 368, sees Lewis divided between realism and satire and describes him as sketching in a morgue. In "Sinclair Lewis," rpt. in *Collection*, ed. Schorer, 86, Walter Lippman accuses Lewis of inventing stereotypes and finds the products "altogether dead... like an anatomical model of an average man." Whipple, "Sinclair Lewis," 71, 79, compares Lewis' art to Madame Toussaud's and sees him divided between satirist, artist, romanticist, and philistine. Bernard DeVoto, "Sinclair Lewis," rpt. in *Critical Essays*, ed. Bucco, 57-8, describes Lewis as "a warring marriage, a divided soul, a novelist and a satirist forever at each other's throats. The virtues of the satirist are the defects of the novelist." Mark Schorer, "Sinclair Lewis and the Method of Half-Truths," rpt. in *Critical Essays*, ed. Bucco, 119, 123, notes the absence of conflict in the novels. Schorer also observes in *Life*, 352, that *Babbitt* reads as a series of sociological set pieces. Lewis himself declares in "Unpublished," 22, that *Babbitt* was "inherently more satiric than *Main Street*" but called the title character "too tragic a tyrant for the puerilities of deliberate satire."

4. Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (1922; New York, 1961), 15. Subsequent references are all to the Signet edition and will be cited parenthetically. Sally E. Parry, "The Changing Fictional Faces of Sinclair Lewis' Wives," *Studies in American Fiction* 17 (1989) 65-79, provides useful information on his views of women, including the claim that he is a feminist writer. James D. Riemer, "Rereading American Literature from a Men's Studies Perspective: Some Implications," in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies*, ed. Harry Brod (Boston, 1987), 294-95, devotes one paragraph to *Babbitt* as revealing a crisis in masculinity.

5. I will draw on a wide range of Veblen's writings to illustrate his critique of manliness. This critique is perhaps most blatant in *An Inquiry into the Nature of Peace and the Terms of its Perpetuation* (New York, 1917), where "manly" becomes synonymous with belligerent, stupid, and self-destructive behavior. As an early reviewer of the book, Frances Hackett, notes in "The Cost of Peace," rpt. in Veblen, *Essays Reviews*, 655, "there is nothing sacred to Mr. Veblen in the conception of patriotism, of property, of success, of manliness, of good breeding, of national honor, of prestige" (emphasis added). Subsequent references to the Veblen text will be cited parenthetically.

6. One of Lewis' working titles for *Babbitt* was "A He-Man."

7. Joe L. Dubbert, "Progressivism and the Masculinity Crisis," *The American Man*, ed. Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1980), 303-20; Peter N. Stearns, *Be a Man! Males in Modern Society* (New York, 1990), 10-11, passim; Joe L. Dubbert, *A Man's Place: Masculinity in Transition* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1979), 3, 9; Elizabeth and Joseph Pleck, "Introduction," *The American Man*, ed. Pleck and Pleck, 22, 23; Michael S. Kimmel, "The Contemporary 'Crisis' of Masculinity in Historical Perspective," in *Making, ed. Brod, 143; Stearns, Be a Man!*, 45. Cf. Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (Baltimore, 1986).

8. Dubbert, *Man's Place*, 86, 204, 198; Pleck and Pleck, "Introduction," 6; Stearns, *Be a Man!*, 11, 157; Pleck and Pleck, "Introduction," 23-4; Stearns, *Be a Man!*, 224.

Veblen's theory of institutional lag is a cornerstone of his philosophy. Ch. 8. of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; New York, 1934) provides a concise introduction. The theory underwrites all of his books, perhaps most especially his favorite one, *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (1914; New York, 1941). In *The Vested Interests and the Common Man* (1919; New York, 1933), 27, he makes the startling claim that there is no "historical present"; the phrase

"always signifies the recent past,—that is to say, the past as it had come under. . . observation." Subsequent references to these Veblen texts will be made parenthetically.

9. Rpt. in *Essays in Our Changing Order*, ed. Leon Ardzrooni (1934; New York, 1964), see especially 434-6.

10. Discussions of Veblen and gender include David Riesman, who in *Thorstein Veblen: A Critical Interpretation* (New York, 1953), 2, bases his analysis in part on the theory that Veblen "felt himself deficient in the usual manly virtues"; John P. Diggins, "The Barbarian Status of Women," *The Bard of Savagery: Thorstein Veblen and Modern Social Theory* (New York, 1978), 141-68; Edythe S. Miller, "Veblen and Women's Lib: A Parallel," *Journal of Economic Issues* 6:ii and iii (Sept. 1972), 75-86; Barbara E. Ryan, "Thorstein Veblen: A New Perspective," *Mid-American Review of Sociology* 7 (1982), 29-47; Jeffrey Waddoups and Rick Tilman, "Thorstein Veblen and the Feminism of Institutional Economists," *International Review of Sociology* (Rome) 99 (1992), 182-204; and Clare Virginia Eby, "Veblen's Anti-Anti-Feminism," forthcoming in *Canadian Review of American Studies*.

11. On the reconstruction of the American social sciences during the Progressive Era, see Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge, 1991), especially Part III, and Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science* (Urbana, 1977). Ross notes the uniqueness of Veblen on several levels, including his adoption of the anthropological "alien observer" pose. The ferment in the social sciences during this period responded to an array of social concerns, including, she says, "the breakdown of Victorian gender roles" and the recognition of historical change. Also see Rosalind Rosenberg, who includes Veblen in *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, 1982), as an early twentieth-century academic who challenged traditional views of male supremacy. Christopher P. Wilson sheds new light on Lewis' "anthropological" style in *White Collar Fictions* (Athens, Georgia, 1992), 239-46.

12. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904; New York, 1919), 14, 67. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

13. Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," rpt. in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York, 1985), 72-3; Dubbert, *Man's Place*, 15.

14. In an essay rpt. in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization*, (New York, 1919), 291, Veblen explains that "half a century ago it was still possible to construe the average business manager in industry as an agent occupied with the superintendence of the mechanical processes involved in the production of goods and services. But in the late development the connection between the business manager and the mechanical process has . . . grown more remote." He elaborates on these themes in *Business Enterprise* and in *Absentee Ownership*. Veblen's *The Engineers and the Price System* (1921; New York, 1963), 63, likewise examines how businessmen were growing "increasingly out of touch with that manner of thinking and those elements of knowledge that . . . make up . . . the mechanical technology." The early and important essay rpt. in *Essays in Our Changing Order*, "The Instinct of Workmanship and the Irksomeness of Labor," explains how productive industry (generated by the instinct of workmanship) comes to be disvalued. He pursues the idea in *Instinct of Workmanship*, 213, where he argues that in the Handicraft Era, "the increasingly wide differentiation between workmanship and salesmanship grew into a 'division of labour' between industry and business. . . —a disjunction of ownership. . . from workmanship."

The sexual division of labor is central to Veblen's economic theory. He deals with women's role in several early essays reprinted in *Essays in Our Changing Order*—"The Beginnings of Ownership," "The Barbarian Status of Women," and "The Economic Theory of Woman's Dress"—before writing *Leisure Class*. He suggests several times that women possess a greater share of the productive "instinct of workmanship" which disinclines them to the predacious and unproductive exploits of business. Subsequent references to all of these Veblen texts will be made parenthetically.

15. Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America* (1918; Stanford, 1954), 208. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

16. David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven, 1990), 17.

17. Veblen explicitly links patriotism with sportsmanship numerous times; see, for instance, *Nature of Peace*, 33. It is important to bear in mind that for Veblen, patriotism is a *maladaptive* carryover from an early stage of human development. *Nature of Peace* as a whole makes this clear, but see, for instance, 77.

18. I offer this lengthy quotation also in response to the tendency of Veblen scholarship to lose sight of his concrete, homely images in discussions of his well-known obfuscations and latinate convolutions.

19. Gilmore, *Manhood*, 77.

20. John Remy, "Patriarchy and Fratriarchy as Forms of Androcracy," *Men, Masculinities and Social Theory* (London, 1990), 43, 45, 56, 49.

21. *The Man from Main Street* is the title of the collection of essays written by Lewis previously cited. "The Man from Mars" has passed into general circulation in the Veblen scholarship but I believe

the phrase originated with John Maurice Clark's obituary, "Thorstein Bunde Veblen, 1857-1929," rpt. in Veblen, *Essays Reviews*, 603.

Discussions of Veblen's prose include Daniel Aaron, *Men of Good Hope* (New York, 1951); Stephen S. Conroy, "Thorstein Veblen's Prose," *American Quarterly* 20:3 (Fall 1968), 605-15; William Waller and Linda R. Robertson, "Why Johnny (Ph.D., Economics) Can't Read: A Rhetorical Analysis of Thorstein Veblen And a Response to Donald McCloskey's *Rhetoric of Economics*," *Journal of Economic Issues* 24:4 (December 1990), 1027-44; and Teresa Toulouse, "Veblen and His Reader: Rhetoric and Intention in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*," *The Centennial Review* 24 (Spring 1985), 249-67. For a critical view of Veblenian rhetoric, it is doubtful that anyone could improve on H. L. Mencken, "Professor Veblen," rpt. in *Prejudices: First Series* (New York, 1919), 59-82.

22. The conflation of patriotism and sportsmanship was no doubt exaggerated by the revival of the Olympic games in 1896. He-men enjoyed the attendant proof of American superiority. The twentieth-century male's love affair with sports also seems a form of male compensation, a "defense against effeminization" and "surrogate frontier" for men to conquer, in the words of Dubbert, "Progressivism," 309, and *Man's Place*, 201-2. T. W. Adorno has some interesting comments on Veblen's analysis of sportsmanship in "Veblen's Attack on Culture," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 80-81.

23. Stearns, *Be a Man!*, 152,

24. The Veblenian arithmetic on this varies. In *Instinct*, 224, for instance, he calculates that fifty percent of the output of business is waste.

25. Also appropriately, it was at Yale that Lewis' nickname, "Red," acquired political overtones.

26. *Engineers* was originally published as a series of essays in the *Dial* in 1919.

27. Appropriately, another of Lewis' working titles for *Babbitt* was "A Good Practical Man."

28. I adopt this word from Daniel J. Levinson's "detrribalization," which he defines as the male midlife change when an individual "becomes more critical of the tribe. . . . He is less dependent upon tribal rewards, more questioning of tribal values," resulting in greater personal autonomy. See *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York, 1978), 242; quoted in Michael Messner, "The Meaning of Success: The Athletic Experience and the Development of Male Identity," *Making*, ed. Brod, 206.

29. Thorstein Veblen, *Vested Interests*, 175. Veblen defines a Vested Interest as "a marketable right to get something for nothing." The opposing term, the "common man," is "common in that he is not vested with such a prescriptive right to get something for nothing." Veblen estimates that the Vested Interests comprise five per cent of the population. See *Vested* 100, 162).

30. Veblen's institutional analysis corresponds closely to the socialist feminist critique of masculinity, especially the disjunction noted between the individual male's sense of powerlessness and the institutionalization of patriarchal power. See Harry Brod, "Introduction: Themes and Theses of Men's Studies," in *Making*, ed. Brod, 13-14.

31. Gilmore, *Manhood*, 223, 4; Michael Kimmel, "After Fifteen Years: The Impact of the Sociology of Masculinity on the Masculinity of Sociology," in *Men, Masculinities*, ed. Hearn and Morgan, 96; Dubbert, *A Man's Place*, 2, 101; Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York, 1992), 155. As Stearns remarks, as the late nineteenth century "definition of appropriate male personality became more explicit . . . , concern about deviance . . . increased" (*Be a Man!*, 144). On hegemonic masculinity also see Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," *Making*, ed. Brod; especially relevant to *Babbitt* is 92-93.