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Alice Ferrebe

*Dreamerica; Visions of
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Alice Ferrebe

Dreamerica; Visions of Transatlantic Masculinity in the 1960s English Novel

As easier and cheaper air travel breached the Atlantic Ocean during the 1960s, a spate of novels sought to address English experience of the newly-accessible frontier of the United States of America. Britain had, during the Second World War and its aftermath, been thoroughly permeated by American influences: by its servicemen, its goods, its literature, and, of course, its money. Though grace was at least aspired to in the acceptance of Marshall Aid, responses to cultural imports were generally unreservedly ungrateful. In 1951 the communist periodical *Arena* ran a special edition ‘devoted to the American threat to British culture, to all that is good and vital in our national tradition’¹. Richard Hoggart’s 1957 *The Uses Of Literacy*, an epitaph to the perceived cultural purity of the English working-classes, read American pulp-fiction, or ‘sex-novelettes’, as a virulent source of moral corruption, including bitter parodies of typical titles, among them *Death-Cab for Cutie* and *Sweetheart, Curves Can Kill*.² In David Storey’s *This Sporting Life* (1960), Arthur Machin, a newly-signed rugby-league star and a pulp-devotee, attempts to recreate the free-wheeling freedom of Stulton, hero of *Love Tomorrow*, in his new car. The Northern English road system, however, will have no truck with an imitation Kerouac: ‘The roads were crammed. They twisted and ducked about. And I’d only go a couple of miles, hardly leaving town behind, before I was in the next bloody place’.³

1. ‘The American Threat to British Culture’. Special issue of *Arena* Vol II, No 8 (June/July 1951).

2. Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 211, 212.

3. David Storey, *This Sporting Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 191.