Dreaming of England: land of hope and glory or just another country?

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This is an essay about cultural history, cultural consumption and the shifting patterns of cultural identification and their role in changing sociopolitical visions and ideologies, in this case of England and Englishness. I use an autobiographical method to try and pinpoint my changing vision of what was then, and to a large extent still is, my mother country. I try to do this through an exploration of key moments of cultural consumption and cultural identification– my own family history, Enid Blyton, Richmal Crompton, boys' own magazines and English rock and punk music. My point is that even the most seemingly secure ideas about national and cultural identity are always in a process of re-negotiation and re-formation.

Keywords: England, Englishness, autobiography, cultural identification, cultural consumption

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บทความชิ้นนี้เป็นกรณีศึกษาของประเทศอังกฤษ ถึงความเป็นมาของกระบวนการสร้างชาติทางมโนคติและสำนึกร่วมของคนในชาติ หรือที่พวกเราคุ้นเคยกันดีในนามของ “ความเป็นอังกฤษ” แบบแผนที่เปลี่ยนไปของความเป็นอังกฤษส่งผลกระทบโดยตรงต่อวิสัยทัศน์และอุดมคติทางสังคม-การเมือง ในฐานะที่ประเทศอังกฤษคือแผ่นดินแม่ ผู้วิจัยจึงมองย้อนกลับไปศึกษาอัตชีวประวัติของตนเองเพื่อกำหนดตำแหน่งและ รอยต่อที่ทัศนคติของผู้วิจัยต่อความเป็นอังกฤษพลิกผันเปลี่ยนแปลง โดยมองผ่านหลักฐานทางประวัติศาสตร์ ตลอดจนการวินิจฉัยของการเสพสื่อต่างๆ ของอังกฤษ อาทิเช่น ประวัติของครอบครัว นักเขียนวรรณกรรมเด็กเอหนิด บลายตัน นักเขียนหญิงริชมอลล์ ครอมพ์ตัน นิตยาสารสำหรับเด็กชาย และดนตรีแนวพังค์-ร็อก ทั้งนี้ประเด็นสำคัญที่ผู้วิจัยต้องการพิสูจน์และนำเสนอคือ อัตลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมประจำชาติของอังกฤษมีการผลิตซ้ำและต่อรองกันไปมาอยู่ เสมอ

คำสำคัญ: ประเทศอังกฤษ ความเป็นอังกฤษ อัตชีวประวัติ อัตลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรม การบริโภคทางวัฒนธรรม

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I

In their influential book, *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobshawm and Terence Ranger brought together a number of investigations into the authenticity and antiquity of national traditions such as those promulgated by Welsh and Scottish nationalism and those that seemed to underpin the ritual pomp and circumstance surrounding the British throne. While national traditions are normally seen by members of the nation as an authentic primordial inheritance with deep roots, Hobshawm and Ranger's book showed that many national traditions are recent inventions - much of the ritual surrounding the British monarchy was, for instance, invented in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *The Invention of Tradition* showed that the nation, national feeling and national identification were not a primordial inheritance; instead, they were cultural creations dependent on the mass consumption and acceptance of certain cultural ideas and symbols that were touted and ultimately believed in as primordial and authentic expressions of the nation.

In his equally influential book, *Imagined Communities*, which was first published in 1983, the same year as *The Invention of Tradition*, Benedict Andersen also argued for a constructivist view of the nation. Given that the members of even the smallest national entity could not possibly know all the other

member of that nation, how did they arrive at a situation where they would unhesitatingly identify themselves as Thais or Britons or Germans or Americans, to the extent that they would even sacrifice their lives in war for the nation? His answer was that a nation is an "imagined community". Despite the fact that its members do not and cannot know the other members of the nation, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (224). According to Andersen, the prime mover in this imagination of the nation was the advent of print-capitalism, and in Europe specifically, the movement away from the cosmopolitan lingua franca of Latin and the consolidation and emergence of local vernaculars as national languages. So Andersen too believes in processes of cultural consumption as necessary to cultural and national identification.

The constructivist approach examines nations and history partly through the analysis of mass culture. But mass culture is, as various cultural studies scholars have pointed out, composed of myriad individual cultures. It also follows that if a nation is imagined, then anyone – national or outsider - can imagine himself or herself into that community. To properly understand a culture, be it a national culture or a local culture, we need to understand the individuals that "imagine" and "re-imagine" it. So the cultural studies movement, beginning in Britain in the 1960s and gathering strength over time, initially found its reason for being in trying to recoup the voices of marginalized cultures such as working class culture and pop culture. The logical extension of this approach has been to study the individual voices, or as the cultural studies jargon has it, the "subjectivities" of those who are at

the same time, as major cultural studies theorists maintain, both the producers and consumers of texts and culture. Culture is not merely produced by the authors of approved texts; it is created through the interplay of texts and readers, through what in another context, that of historical theory, Michel Foucault named "discursive formations". Foucault wrote in his introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that his book "belongs to that field in which the questions of the human being, consciousness, origin, and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle, and separate off" (16). Traces of memory, imagination, and desire in Foucault's formulation were regarded as events in a discursive formation from which they derive their own particular and limited validity just as in another discursive formation a historical document might have its own particular and limited validity. This recognition has led cultural studies scholars into a "self-reflexive" semi-autobiographical position in their analyses of culture that highlights the effects of memory in constituting culture. Anthony Elliot noted in 2003 that "The emerging direction of contemporary social theory is perhaps nowhere more evident than the attention it lavishes upon the nature of the self, self-identity and individual subjectivity". This emphasis continues to strengthen. Stuart Hall, one of the founders of cultural studies as an academic discipline, has noted the need for theorists to be self-reflexive and not to always pretend to speak from an assumed position of detached objective authority:

> At one point in his presentation to the Illinois 'Cultural Studies' conference, in 1999, Hall spoke autobiographically of his own experience of the

> tensions and difficulties of the establishment of cultural studies work at the CCCS during the 1970s. In the interviews in this collection Hall again speaks autobiographically, of his family and upbringing in Jamaica – of being the 'blackest' in his family, the 'one from outside' who didn't fit and who found that experience replicated when he came to England to study: finding that he 'knew both places intimately but 'was not wholly of either…What Hall does here is to offer parts of his 'story' as… a way of illuminating not only his own autobiography but also the diasporic experience itself (Morley and Chen 13).

Turner points out that Hall is extremely critical of theorists who fail to "reflexively take account of their own (privileged) positions" (Morley and Chen 14). For Hall, all cultural analysis must be, in part at least, autobiographical.

Handel Kashope Wright goes further, arguing for the legitimacy of a fully autobiographical approach to issues in cultural studies in his article "Cultural studies as praxis: (making) an autobiographical case":

> This autobiographical essay 'takes cultural studies personally', drawing on experience, identity and the personal to indicate how and why the author is proponent of and is working on developing a model of cultural studies as social justice praxis …While this account acts in its own way as an argument for conceptualizing cultural studies as praxis, the primary focus is more modestly on my own

> autobiographical account as a specific case. In fact, an autobiographical approach is employed precisely to be specific and in the attempt to avoid the pitfalls of over-generalization and the authority of authenticity. (805)

In the essay that follows, I draw on the insights of the constructivists and cultural studies theorists and use a self-reflexive autobiographical method to examine the "imagined community" of the British Empire and England as seen from my perspective and to reflect on how my cultural consumption affected my imagination of this community. Like Wright, I do not make claims for the generalized validity of my experience. Like him, I want to avoid the "pitfalls of overgeneralization and the authority of authenticity" but to offer it instead as an interesting and perhaps useful piece of data for anyone thinking about questions of the relationship of nations and nationalism to the cultural imagination. Foucault also said that "the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured"(4). I am thinking in this essay of Foucault's ideas about the "history of a concept" together with the cultural studies emphasis on the importance of autobiography in order to illuminate the "various fields of constitution and validity" and "the successive rules of use" of the concept of England and Englishness as it seemed and seems to reveal itself in the traces of my cultural imagination and autobiography.

II

I am a child of the British Empire, which is to say the English Empire. The students of my school were marshalled into battalions to wave at the Queen as her Rolls passed regally down Heidelberg Road in the Melbourne suburb of Alphington and we thought it was jolly decent of her to come since we were given a half holiday to celebrate the occasion. I love cricket – best game in the world, fair play and all that – and each year at the family cricket match after Christmas dinner, in a parody of some geriatric pukka colonel, I despair that the younger members of the family are not taking up the game with the same enthusiasm that I once had. I was in the Cubs where I absorbed the mythologies of Kipling's empire; given a fretwork kit and some sheets of plywood one Christmas I cut and painted a frieze of the entire cast of the Jungle Book which won great praise from Akela. Then I graduated to the Scouts where, for a brief time, until rebellious adolescence got the better of me, I learnt the manly virtues and practices set down by Lord Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking. Two of my grandfathers fought under the British flag in what was then known as The Great War; both survived but both died young, one in a lunatic asylum of a nervous complaint and one of a hole in the heart, and who could say they were not sacrificed to the cause. My father fought in the Australian army in Borneo, which had mobilized initially, as Sir Robert Menzies, our "British to the bootstraps" prime minister, said, as an inevitable and straightforward consequence of Great Britain being at war. My uncle was caught up in the mess at Singapore, the great British bulwark of empire, and survived Changi to nervously and quietly smoke Craven A cigarettes

in the house where he lived with my mother's other brothers and my step grandfather from Manchester who came here to chase whales, in self-exile from the family who had thwarted his romance with a woman from the Somme. The pink bits on my mental map of the world are still forever pink. My favorite drink is still a gin and tonic.

But that is only half the story. My Irish grandfather on my mother's side, the one who died of madness, whose terrifying stories of being locked in the hold to stoke boilers in the Battle of Jutland somehow came down to me well beyond his death in 1927, was a career petty officer who got seconded in 1919 to the Australian navy because, it seems, he wanted to get well clear of the fight between the British Black and Tans and the Irish nationalists. In a pure case of postcolonial confusion, he didn't know which side to be on. My father, coming out of a tradition of Catholic Labor Party nationalism thought that Menzies was a Tory lickspittle and after visiting Hiroshima as part of the occupation forces in 1946 he thought that nothing, especially not England, could ever justify any war again. By the time I left the scouts at the age of 14, I'd well and truly given up on Baden-Powell's injunctions against masturbation; I preferred cigarettes to apples and lounging to camping. I'd begun to learn the shadow side of imperial triumphs such as Mafeking – starving blacks pushed outside the perimeter away from the food supplies to serve as a buffer between the Boers and the British.

I'd also learnt now how to interpret the postcard sent on 14 December 1916 that is the one relic I have of my paternal grandfather, 1660 Sydney G. Hoy, Sgt. No. 3 Company, Jellalabad Barracks, Salisbury Plain. His parents

may or may not have been taken in by the coded message designed to spare their feelings that he sent before embarking for the trenches. He rhapsodizes about the prettiness of the English scene of early winter hoarfrost and hedgerows. Ostensibly just chatter about the weather and the scenery but in his final line he says that the "English chaps anticipate a hard winter." I doubt that they were just talking about the weather after returning from the Somme.

Still, I am a child of England. In a remote and these days rarely visited corner of my imagination, there is a green and pleasant land that is forever England, a land of babbling brooks, village greens, stone and thatch cottages, buttercups, daffodils, heath and hedgerows, the sounds of leather on willow and the song of the robin redbreast. It is eternal springtime and summer hols. Its country lanes are traveled by Noddy cars, gypsy caravans, blackfaced sheep and kind old ladies on bicycles. A hike down these lanes leads to smuggler's caves, ruined castles, safe adventures of every kind.

There are no dark satanic mills in this England – no Manchester, Leeds or Liverpool. The only industrial activity takes place at the village blacksmith. There is only one city, London, which exists purely as a theatrical set to display the Queen, Beefeaters in the Tower, the trooping of the colours and the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace.

In another corner of my imagination is the England of sturdy islanders, stiff upper lippers, Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, backs against the wall, a nation of shopkeepers bolstered by Churchillian rhetoric, the England that won the

war against Hitlerism – Russia and America only joined the show later - the only country to hold out alone against the forces of evil, we few, we happy few, we band of brothers. This is a land of modestly heroic, ordinary people who like John Mills or Alec Guinness or Greer Garson in a hundred English war films, are not particularly prepossessing but by God if there's a job to be done, they'll do it. This England is not just fighting the Germans – it functions also as a kind of un-America, unswaggering, unboastful, but resolutely determined. There is an affectionate but accurate parody of this England in the jaunty theme song from the English television comedy series *Dad's Army*:

> Mr. Brown goes off to town on the 8.21
> When he comes home each evening
> He is ready with his gun
>
> So who do you think you are kidding, Mr. Hitler
> If you think old England's done? (Perry and Croft)

Unfailingly proper, honorable, always doing the right thing, predictable and dull perhaps, but with right on their side. The underpinnings of these twin images of England are, on the one hand, a quaint, cozy old-fashioned decency and on the other, a quiet and reserved heroism.

It is somewhat embarrassing to remember that this stream of clichés – clichés which paradoxically I am only intermittently and dimly aware of - was something that I was once (and perhaps still am) powerfully emotionally attached to; if I had been asked where I wanted to live when I was seven or eight or nine or ten, I would have said England and by England I would have meant this combination

of Toytown, the haunts of the Famous Five and Secret Seven, the realm of English war propaganda and Ealing comedies. Even worse, and this is a piece of class treachery that I would never have admitted openly, but the person I wanted to be when I grew up in this imagined England was something like the local squire, the centre of order, wealth and agrarian culture, presiding over a happy and picturesque populace each in his place from the vicar to Farmer Giles to Constable Plod. It is something which George Orwell, writing of Dickens' bourgeois heroes, encapsulates as "a dream of complete idleness" (Orwell 123). Whatever adventures happen during the day, there's always toast and marmalade for tea.

It isn't difficult to see where these images of England came from. England may have lost most of its Empire in the 50s and 60s but not its publishing arm. Consequently I was raised like so many other Australian kids on English books. Atlases, encyclopaedias, calendars, even if they were written here which they sometimes were, oozed Englishness. We didn't get television, with its invitations to an American dream (and in any case my father always insisted on watching the ABC, an imitator of the BBC and recipient of much of their programming and style, right down to the plummy BBC accents of its imported Oxbridge announcers) in our house until 1965, and on a wet Saturday afternoon I would invariably curl up with a book by Enid Blyton and dream of her England. Blyton was a propagandist of genius in the cause that England was quaint, cozy and decent and I feel sure that the idea she gave me of England was widely shared. Likewise, the English war hero. In the 60s the most voracious

reader of English war stories and viewer of war films such as I was would never have heard of the English carpet bombing of Dresden and Hamburg.

What I want to do in this essay is to try and dredge from my memory the moments when this picture of England as a pastoral idyll began to develop troubling cracks and finally to wither away. When did this dream of England start to fade? Well, you grow up and stop believing in fairytales but I think I can identify – albeit inexactly - four moments in this process. The first was in Blyton herself, the second in Richmal Crompton, the third in the comic strip characters Captain Hurricane and his diminutive batman Maggot Malone in their fight against assorted Nips and Krauts, and the fourth when the Sex Pistols loaded, aimed, and fired at the ruins with "God Save the Queen" and "Anarchy in the UK".

I can't remember the full plot of a single Secret Seven or Famous Five story, despite - or maybe because of - the voracity with which I devoured them. But the overwhelming impression that they had on me was as an embodiment of what seemed to be the quintessentially English virtues of order and decency. The Five and the Seven were a sort of junior squireocracy devoted to the maintenance of order and the rule of law in their little fiefdom. They were forever foiling smugglers, thieves and poachers. And, as a loyal Englander, I cheered them on. But I do remember, vaguely now, an incident in one of the stories that started to break down the paradise that Blyton had so successfully built up for me.

On one of their endless holiday jaunts, the Secret Seven or the Famous Five – it doesn't matter which – had been informed that a turnip thief or chicken rustler was out and about doing his nasty work. The impression of hobnail boots was found at the scene of one of the crimes. As they were hiking along a country lane, they noticed a tramp of surly and swarthy appearance resting by a haystack. The sharp-eyed sleuths immediately saw what he was wearing. Hobnail boots. A dead giveaway. Straight to the village constable to turn him in and home in time for tiffins. Good show[2].

[2] I must emphasize here that this was my unprompted memory of the story. But on looking through Blyton's stories to check my memory of this particular incident, I was unable to find it. It may be that I have missed it given that Blyton was extraordinarily prolific, publishing by many accounts over 700 complete books and numerous short stories. It may be that my historical imagination has conflated a couple of stories or it may have come from a story by one of the legions of Blyton imitators. Still, the general impression remains true. In Blyton's stories, in particular in *The Famous Five* series, the working classes and outsiders like Gypsies were constructed as the Other, the obvious suspects in cases of criminal activity. See, for instance, *Five Go to Mystery Moor*. The Enid Blyton Society webpage – hardly a stern, politically correct critic - has this to say of its treatment of gypsies: — There's a band of gypsies who camp on the moor and one of them — a young lad, brings a horse with a damaged leg to the stables for treatment. Sniffer is what this boy's father calls his little ragamuffin and it has to suffice because unfortunately he can't remember his real name. A little later the children meet Sniffer's father who is a fair representation of a gypsy as generally portrayed by Enid Blyton. He looks a nasty piece of work and there's plenty of evidence that he thumps his son quite regularly" (Gustafson). Many readers would probably agree with this characterization of the Famous Five and Secret Seven: — though heaven knows they did live in a nice middle-class fantasy land, where all criminals were common people or gypsies" (Larbalastier).

I didn't know what hobnail boots were - I'm still not quite sure - but I knew that only poor people would wear them. For some reason I started to feel proletarian sympathies. I'd applauded their exploits against smugglers and thieves before but this was just too easy. The only incontrovertible proof against the tramp was that he wore the wrong sort of shoes and he had the wrong sort of complexion. He was a Gypsy. I think at this stage of my life I'd started to become aware of the Holocaust and I knew that Gypsies were sent to Auschwitz as well as Jews. Being a Gypsy in Enid Blyton's England was immediate grounds for suspicion. I didn't have the intellectual apparatus to formulate the thought but the impression was building in my mind that the Secret Seven and the Famous Five were junior members of the British Union of Fascists. The squire, the vicar and the village constable began to lose their air of decency and started to look like fully paid up members.[3]

Seeking the same sort of reading pleasures but with my growing intellectual sophistication, I began to read Richmal Crompton's *William* books. The middle-class, more suburban backdrop to these stories is similar to the environment that Blyton created. It has the same charmingly picturesque quality. But where the Seven and the Five were incipient Fascists, William was a young anarchist. His position on everything was opposition - to parents, adults, school, older siblings, authority in general. William insinuated to me the possibility that England was no particular haven of sanity, decency or order. Life in Crompton's England was thoroughly and

[3] For a brutal parody of The Famous Five from a similar perspective see The Comic Strip's *Five Go Mad in Dorset*.

undeniably political and volatile whereas in Blyton's England things went on forever in the way that God, King and Country had ordained. Where Blyton's characters subscribed to adult values, William thought for himself. I remember reading William's analysis of the English political situation and I remember how much it shocked me. From memory it went like this: "Conservatives want to keep everything the same, Socialists want to steal everything and Communists want to kill everyone." Unfortunately, in writing this essay I backtracked through Crompton's writings to check this quote and I found that it didn't have quite the same punch although it does carry a similar idea: "Conservatives want to make it better by keeping everything just the same as what it is now and Liberals want to make it better by killing everybody but themselves which at first sight seems the simplest way but which would really make the world very dull because there'd be no one left for them to quarrel with." (Crompton 63) The important lesson I learnt from Crompton, who like Blyton was a schoolteacher, is that even in England there is always something or someone to quarrel with and that these quarrels are no joke. They're deadly serious. And always recurrent despite the surface calm. My step grandfather on my mother's side, who rejoiced in the name Cyril Royston Barrett, came to Australia from a middle class part of Manchester, right next to the Old Trafford cricket ground. As I said earlier, family legend says that he came out to get over an ill-starred romance with an unsuitable French girl. For me it gives him something of the aura of the aristocratic Charles Smithson in John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. That is an exaggeration after the fact but nevertheless he is irrevocably associated in my mind with Englishness. He loved the Queen and he loved the cricket.

After my grandmother died, he inherited her house and her four Irish-Australian sons from two previous marriages. When I used to go and stay there with my brothers the main reading material was what you might expect from a house of bachelors, *The Sporting Globe* and mildly titillating cheesecake magazines such as *Pix*, *People* and *Man*. To divert us from such unwholesome reading, Grandpa bought us the standard works on British military history – W.E. Johns' *Biggles* books and C.S. Forester's *Hornblower* novels which, of course, fed my anglophilia. But we also read an English comic magazine, called *Valiant*, which came out in various configurations from 1962 to 1976.[4] It was a boys' own magazine pitched at a working-class urban English audience and it featured short cartoon stories of sporting and war heroes, assorted adventurers, and comedy strips such as Billy Bunter.

The most engaging and memorable of these to me was a series starring Captain Hurricane and his diminutive batman Maggot Malone as they won just about every battle in WW11. Captain Hurricane represented a vastly different interpretation of the English officer classes than I'd been offered before. Captain Hurricane is an almost completely ludicrous – and with the benefit of hindsight, consciously farcical - attempt to portray Britain and its officer class as an overwhelmingly powerful force, something which would

[4] I am thankful to Stephen Carver for sending me the Captain Hurricane strip. My other efforts at locating a copy proved futile. Mum and Dad took all our moldy old copies to the tip during my inattentive adolescence. Sadly, this is the fate of so many cultural artifacts and it means that the archaeologist of the cultural imagination must go digging through mental and emotional middens as well as digging in search of the actual artifacts themselves.

not be attempted again until the Iron Lady conquered the Falklands. No tweedy, monocle-wearing, effete aristocrat, he is all brawn like an American superhero or one of socialist realism's heroic workers. He is generally pictured doing things like crushing a couple of myopic Japanese in his bare hands or turning red with rage, uprooting a tree and mowing into a few battalions of storm troopers who turn tail and run at his approach screaming "Donner und Blitzen". But unlike American superheroes or the classic English aristocrat the captain is completely unglamorous. He has no mystique. A mindless, xenophobic, idiotic killing machine, he eschews the strength of English nostalgia – the qualities of decency and reserve that even such avowed non-ideologues as George Orwell had managed to see as quintessentially English.

The really interesting figure in this strip is Maggot Malone, a feeble weakling whose main interest is self-preservation. This at least gave him some degree of realism. Maggot Malone is the working-class lad on the make, the Cockney spiv, the wide boy, the shirker and conman who plays the system for all he is worth. We knew that in every episode Captain Hurricane would win the war; the dramatic interest lay in the question of whether Maggot Malone would outwit him. He usually did. In fact, often Maggot Malone would, by virtue of his intelligent cowardice and laziness, be the one who was effectively giving the orders and saving the day. The "shiftless squid" of the strip featured in this cartoon awakened me to the fact that England was not just a land of quiet heroes but that it had its share of bullies, thugs and enterprising cowards and that the battle had never been simply between England and other less

honourable parts of the world but within England itself. The Captain Hurricane strip was a caricature of English class conflict and if it provoked any sympathies at all, it was for Maggot Malone (see figure 1 below).

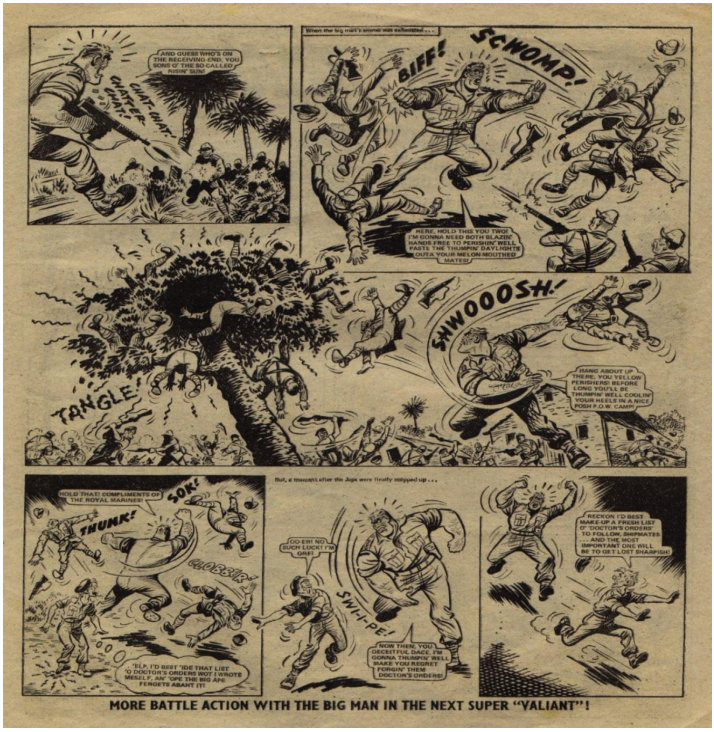

Figure 1. Captain Hurricane and Maggot Malone

Skip forward a few years. 1976. I've gone beyond Toytown, the Secret Seven, the Famous Five, William and Captain Hurricane. I like music, particularly English music: the glam rock theatre of Roxy Music, T.Rex and David Bowie, with Bryan Ferry playing the part of Noel

Coward and Marc Bolan as the fairy at the bottom of the garden, the pompous and bloated orchestral pretensions of Yes and Genesis, and the Rolling Stones who by now had left their roots in the Mississippi Delta and suburban London for mansions in Sussex and Surrey. I'm practicing the guitar and the saxophone and throwing my long hair back seductively in front of the mirror as I strike a chord. Actually, it's not so much music that I like as the idea of being a rock star and a glamorous life. And that's where the old vision I had of England still retains some mystique. The rock stars who survived the 60s were busily losing their primitive simplicity and replacing it with rural respectability. English rock stars became the new squires, living in stately homes in the country and celebrating a rural English idyll. Ray Davies of the Kinks, an acute observer of English manners and mores throughout the 60s and 70s, parodied the preoccupations of upwardly mobile musicians and downwardly mobile aristocrats in songs like "Sunny Afternoon": "The taxman's taken all my dough, and left me in my stately home, lazing on a sunny afternoon … But I love to live so pleasantly, live this life of luxury, lazing on a sunny afternoon." A reprise of Orwell's Dickensian dream of complete idleness.

But the old quarrels still remain. A class society is always volatile and in 1976 the Sex Pistols, whose undernourished physiques and unhealthy complexions remind me of Maggot Malone – a good name for a punk rocker – are ready to spit on the sacred symbols and values of the aristocracy and the rockocracy - good taste, country life, and propriety; they were properly English too, using

and abusing the sacred iconography of the flag and the Queen. Punk rockers like the Sex Pistols were the anarchist, anti-Christ, nihilists coming to "Get pissed, destroy". Johnny Rotten in his Irish yob hobnail boots is about to come stomping all over my remaining illusions as he snarls out the words of "Anarchy in the UK":

> Is this the MPLA
> Or is this the UDA
> Or is this the IRA
> I thought it was the UK
> Or just another country
> Another council tenancy

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