

Outbreak of Heresy 89

Aug 2021

from Nick Kinzett nick.kinzett@gmail.com 07505 004356

[deadline for next issue: **Sept 1st**]

NK: Once again, morning all (it is as I key this in), hope you're as well as can be under the circumstances. I'm putting this issue together from mostly pre-prepared files all over the shop, between bouts of Work, Rest and Not-Much-Play. (I'm participating in three by-email games at time of typing plus those I'm umpiring, being very much an active member in the 'word games' herein because you get points for entertaining me! ALL WELCOME to join these any time, by the way.) As for the last issue...

Karen Day: *...received as ever and printed off, batten down...*

Alex Richardson: *Received, thanks, and (to my delight) readable... That's "readable" in the sense that "my phone is willing to let me look at this one", I hasten to add.*

NK: Now I wouldn't dream you meant anything else, Alex.

Gary Lyon: *Thanks for latest issue – read whilst Final was on so to maintain my calm (or try to). My three pennethworth – is that 3p or 3d though? Old enough to be pre decimal – 3d used to be the cost of a portion of chips from the local market (now about £1.25). Same price as my bus fare home so could buy the chips then walk.*

No Manorcon again this year and will miss it – Expo at NEC in couple of weeks ((at time of email)), we hope to go but a bit apprehensive. But time to go out more? Hard to call and guess it's down to each of us to decide when we feel safe or confident enough to get out and about more. Lots of budgeted gaming money to spend saved over past 18 months. Hope there will be enough traders there to make it worthwhile, no bring & buy (of course) which will be missed.

NK: Entirely forgot to email Gary back to ask if, in the end, Expo even took place as rearranged (end of July, afraid I was too busy anyway) and with promised Covid precautions (especially with every second bod being 'pinged' all over the place).

Gary L: *I suppose many of us are inveterate collectors – games, books etc. What's the difference between antiquarian and Second hand? (cynically – price? A marketing ploy?). I have Pratchett hardbacks, Asterix hardbacks, Dr Who annuals and more 'cluttering' my bookshelves. But do often follow recommendations from here as to new things to try! Once find something I like I go through the series – currently on Skullduggery Pleasant for a lighter read (don't laugh, I know they are a kids series, but then so was Harry Potter). Every now and then do get a weightier tome (normally a history of some kind), depends on mood.*

NK: Wouldn't dream of laughing either – the mark of really good kid fiction (any medium) is something that can be enjoyed by adults too. The Asterix graphic novels you cite being a classic case in point, as I and others hereabouts will personally endorse (alas I lack the one featuring the charioteer character Coronavirus). As for your second(hand) point, here again is our resident expert:

Alex R: *Marcus states that "second hand" suggests pre-ownership unambiguously. Perhaps to a pirate weeding through his collection. "Several hook scratches on the front board; rum stain to front free endpaper; parrot feather laid in as bookmark. Otherwise Good in like jacket", etc. As for "antiquarian", that seems to be code for "add a zero". Or, if you're the owner of the shop I once passed by on the Fulham Road, "charge £5 and £10 for the old tat you stick in the throw-out bargain bin outside."*

Alex continues in SH Bookseller mode: *A tip of the hat to Andrew for passing on that little Fowles nugget. I'm not sure if (m)any shops are truly "careless" in this internet age, but such places are the cherished memory and ardent hope of all those who go looking. There is a shop in Paris, Un Regard Moderne, which looks as if it might fit the bill. It's on the same rue as the old Beat Hotel, double the fun for the book tourist.*

W Marcus Arnold: *John Fowles... The Magus is now mostly forgotten in favour of the Froggie Squaddies Bit (did he get a Booker?) but both would have been much better with fewer words. Andrew Fisher has my sympathy if he had Fowles' Bane for A-level study...*

NK: Andrew evidently wouldn't concur, though I'm unsure (speaking as we were of lengthy works being rarely taught) whether his study was of an extract from *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or the whole thing, and/or whether he tackled said whole thing later as I seem to remember having to do with too many works (only did English Lit up to O-Level, however). *TFLW* is in many ways a marvel of non-conventional narrative – its (seemingly digressive) narrator remains shadowy but increasingly obtrusive, itself a device that led to the multiple 'endings'; and it definitely centred on a non-stereotypical character (the so-called FLW herself, to put it slightly more felicitously than Marcus did). Being one-time resident of the region (Dorset if not Lyme Regis + famous cobb), Lorraine draws my attention to *TFLW* every time we go back. And, natch, to Hardy; and to *Persuasion* (only Austen novel I actually possess). // Speaking of Andrew...

Andrew Fisher: *Thanks so much for the latest Outbreak of Heresy which I enjoyed greatly. I just realised I have totally failed to meet your deadline for comments. That may be a good thing, I don't want to whine on about somebody else's pedantry again when my own is so clearly vulnerable. Have you considered acquired pedantry syndrome? Well, I suppose, being totally pedantic, all pedantry must be acquired. My current main bugbear is people who use font when they mean typeface. Having done some printing I guess it's an acceptable(ish) tic, but I'm sure I've only acquired it in the last five or ten years. And in that time I've come to accept all manner of mis-spellings and unorthodox writing when the meaning is clear. What is happening to me??*

NK: What's happening is that despite all fears you're in time to be inserted (oh-er) into the current lettercolumn after all, a consequence of being able to stitch the zine together from all these different files. We seem now to have moved from 'Lit' to 'Lang', albeit still with reference to those pesky SH booksellers:

Colin Evans: *Alternatives to 'secondhand' (or 'second-hand') ...and I don't mean alternative spellings: pre-owned, pre-loved, recycled (with or without hyphens?) // It is perhaps typical of the English language to be inconsistent in its spelling; two words, one word or hyphenated? Who knows? Who cares really? Doctor Johnson (author of the first comprehensive dictionary) should have been taken out and shot.*

NK: Bit harsh, were it not for Dr J we might not even have dictionaries (with all their manifold uses).

Colin E: *If you thought English spelling was bad look at the Irish spelling of names. Brian is pronounced 'Bree-an', Domhnall is pronounced 'Donal', Siobhan is pronounced 'Shi-phon'! ((I make it "Sh'vorn"...)) And they wonder why we mispronounce their names.*

NK: This one is partly down to the fact that our Latin-derived letters *do not necessarily have fixed values* and too often didn't back in the day (look at the Classical Rome use of the letter I, for example). So when various peoples came to adapt their various tongues (with their various sounds and needs) to a written form... well, you begin to comprehend the problem. The above variation in our differing receipt of "Siobhan" is a case in point. Note it's no more illogical to use the apparent aspirate "bh" for a v-sound than it is to use (as methinks you unconsciously did) "ph" for an f-sound – with the only difference between *v* / *f* (to this midland English ear anyway) being that the former is 'voiced' while the latter is 'voiceless', exactly with their labial basics *b* and *p* respectively. Compare the dentals *d*, *t* and you suddenly realize that practically all except Icelandic have lost the useful symbols that we more southerly types clumsily represent as "th". Or occasionally "dh" for the voiced form, as per some Celtic tongues, though for some reason the Welsh often use *dd* presumably on the same grounds that they use *ll* for "hl" [near enough and again you begin to see what I mean BUT...].

...but I don't want to set you off on Welsh again...

Karen Day: ColinE... be careful what you say of the Welsh, boyo.

Marcus: Now we get to Welsh. The dual language *is* rather silly when you hop on a Transport For Wales train to journey from Birmingham New Street to Birmingham International. Welsh train tannoy announcements must be rather irrelevant in Brum though it keeps the native Brummies amused whatever their cultural origins (many Welsh migrated to the Black Country to work in its mines but they became integrated over generations and spoken Welsh has almost certainly died out there).

NK: With this one I may grant its inherent redundancy, though it's still pretty harmless (may even serve to keep the announcer's hand/voice in). With train announcements I'm of the Bill Bailey persuasion anyway, most of them are incomprehensible whatever the tongue, "we apologize for the delay, this is due to the settlement of very heavy fluff from the planet Saturn...", etc. Back to Colin's main theme:

Colin E: If you want a word pronounced properly you should spell it properly, or at least spell it as the letters are usually pronounced. 'Feng Shui' is apparently pronounced 'Fung Shway' so why not spell it that way? It is not an English phrase so it could have been spelt in any way. Did they just grab some letters at random? Perhaps from a bag of Scabble tiles. I will always pronounce it as it is spelt.

NK: As a matter of fact, on those vanishingly rare occasions where I'm called upon to voice the concept (not exactly part of my everyday experience), so do I, and if enough of us do so that is how it might one day come to be pronounced – yet another step in the evolution of tongues. But again your complaint is mostly a function of how you, as Gloucester Man, perceive letter-values; and in any case you advert to this yourself:

Colin E: Beijing used to be 'Peking' but 'Peking' was rendered using the 'Wade-Giles' system in which some lunatic (actually two lunatics called Wade and Giles) decided many letters should be pronounced differently than they normally are in English. For example 'P' is pronounced as a 'B' and we only get a 'P' sound if it is followed by an apostrophe: 'P'. Thus 'Peking' should always have been pronounced 'Bay-jing', as it is more clearly now under the more modern Pinyin system which spells it in a more sensible manner. Wade-Giles resulted in the West mispronouncing Chinese words unnecessarily for a long time, sheer lunacy.

NK: See piece on *b/p* above. To this day we have "Peking [*peeking*] Duck" not "Beijing [*bayzhing*] Duck". Which, as I'm reminded by Mr Bryson, isn't even duck. Just to make things even more confusing.

The next bit harks back to what Andrew was just saying about finding acceptable all manner of misspellings (deliberate ones I would argue) and unorthodox writing where the meaning is clear (even when not so clear, I would argue). I mean, just look at what I sometimes do in *OoH* in search of a little light humour.

Colin E: Kathy Burke in 'Money Talks' ... used the word 'rammed' in referring to a theatre but not with its usual meaning. Why has it acquired an additional meaning? What is wrong with 'crammed' or 'packed' or 'jam-packed' or 'chock-a-block' etc? Who starts these misuses of words and why is it copied? The cause is probably careless / hurried journalists, or possibly misprints, and what is disseminated is often not checked. It is probably copied because it is new and thus 'fashionable'. If it is seen in print some people think it is correct. Instead it should be criticised. I'm not against new words, I am against the misuse of words.

NK: Yet consider that some spiritual ancestor of yours may well have complained about the derivation or construction of "jam packed", and certainly of "chock-a-block". Meanwhile, "rammed" in the sense meant may proceed, logically enough, from the theatre-goers being metaphorically rammed into the limited space. I could argue like this all night...

Colin goes on to excoriate hyphens so misused that rather than *legitimately separating clauses in a sentence* they instead end up making *unintended compounds*. Here I agree totally (and do my best to clarify herein), but enough. First games break, starting appropriately enough with the 'word games':

Steve Jones: *Have had a quick skim through, don't understand these word games you are running!*

NK: They are indeed word games in the sense that within my answers I can play on words, so 1 vp for your inadvertent clarification. Both here and in “Run Like Hell”... In fact “Quicksilver” involves identifying characters from fiction – which Karen has already shown must be from written fiction, though (as a demonstration of the word play) I did not say that they weren’t featured in other media (another reason you’re getting the vp). And as it happens you could definitely have a shot at two of the characters at the very least: they’re ‘tailored’ around known enthusiasms of the contestants listed below plus me and ColinE, with your namesake’s having already been correctly identified by John Riches as **Duncan Idaho** from the **Dune** series. Participants get 3 vp for identifying someone else’s character, 2 for one’s ‘own’, plus more for basically Yes/No questions along the lines of... well, see also my editorial reply (()) to Dave below.

Dave Berry: *“Quicksilver” – I'm really not good at this sort of thing. I keep jumping to conclusions on who the character is, without thinking of questions to narrow it down. And presumably the more correct questions we ask along the way, the more VPs we can get? ((More accurately, posing relevant questions or group-of-questions will score. Or if they’re merely... interesting, as you’ll see later & in “Run Like Hell”).)*

more Dave: *For ‘my’ character, I'm guessing the **Mars** trilogy, as they are the books I've discussed most in the OoH lettercol. ((Yes, 1vp)) Is the character male? That’s a question that I could ask of everyone’s character, so let's do that too. ((Yes for yours and obviously the already-revealed Duncan Idaho, in fact for everyone’s except Karen’s: another vp.))*

Dave again: *Assuming the Mars trilogy is correct: is the character a scientist (e.g. geology, biology, physics)? Is the character an engineer? Is the character one of the First Hundred? ((Engineer and Yes, of the Hundred: +1vp)) This kind of leads to a matrix of guesses. If male and a scientist: I'd guess Sax Russell. If male and an engineer: Arkady Bogdanov. If male and neither a scientist or engineer: John Boone.*

NK: **Arkady Bogdanov** is correct, another 2vp! And you were thinking along the right lines, your female equivalents being respectively Ann Clayborne, Nadia Chernyshevski and Maya Toitovna, your non-First Hundred guess (being, as you say, technically not part of the team even though voyaging with them) was Desmond the Coyote – all significant characters but not necessarily the major character (I’ve argued elsewhere that Sax Russell becomes such in the course of the trilogy, however).

Dave: *You say ‘your’ character is from **LotR** ((as per John’s correct guess)). I'm tempted to suggest a heretical character, in keeping with your heretical nature, but that would lead me to Saruman or possibly Boromir. They were surely the most heretical characters in the story. But, we have previous answers that everyone's characters are arguably heroic, and Saruman is definitely not heroic. I guess Boromir could be sort of classed as heroic but that would seem borderline. ((This is such interesting reasoning it gains 1vp)) The obvious question: is your character human (inc Numenorean as human)? ((Yes but no vp this time.)) I'm not sure if you'd pick the obvious hero ((Frodo already eliminated by Marcus anyway)) or perhaps one of the less obvious smaller parts, such as Eomer ((it’s not Eomer)). Anyway, here are some guesses:*

If female and human: Eowyn. If female and not human: Arwen. There aren't many female characters to choose from! ((Galadriel/Goldberry/Lobelia/Iorweth/Rosie: yes, increasingly marginal, as above none right)) If male and human: Faramir. If male and not human: Gandalf. ((Both No but 1vp on other grounds.))

Dave, finally: *I can't guess Karen's character because I haven't read **Jonathan Strange**. Given the recommendations from the OoH lettercol, I should add this to my “to read” list.*

Karen Day: *Right: **Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell**. Obviously neither of the two titular characters, that would be too obvious if not crass in Nicky Nick terms. ((Absolutely correct, 1 vp)) Mr Segundus? ((No.)) John Childermass? ((better guess but No.)) Surely not Miss Redruth herself/myself? In the book she only appears at the end and doesn’t say anything! ((cf Dave on gender so best guess of all, still No but 1 vp.))*

Steve Borndale: Curses, my character stolen from under my nose! Guesses this time are Mr Stephen Black (for Karen's) and Eowyn (for yours) on the grounds that they're important 'other' characters with a kind of destiny before them, like Duncan. ((No but good thinking and indeed see Colin's bit at end, so 1 vp.))

Colin Day: As Karen's eliminated Dune for 'my' character I'm guessing that this is from the actual novel I nominated as SF favourite, **The Mote in God's Eye**. ((Yes, 1 vp.)) If so there are plenty of characters to choose from starting from Rod Blaine! But I'd go for Kevin Renner as the most interesting major character and the one providing the most continuity into the sequel. ((Nice try but No: as with the characters already revealed there is no such continuity I would argue. So no v.p there, but see your last bit at the end.))

Colin D continues: Even if I'm right about the book that doesn't necessarily apply to others: Karen didn't choose any favourites (and has already guessed **JS&MN**, better leave that to her for the sake of domestic peace) and ColinE declined to name favourites as well. ((Ah but what has he been enthusiastic about?)) Steve's we already know and yours is from **TLOTR**, not Frodo but that still leaves way too many characters. Dave's is probably from **Mars** (even more characters!) ((1vp as Dave but you're too late for more there)) and I'm hoping Marcus's isn't from Van Vogt... ((he isn't))

W Marcus Arnold: Quicksilvery thing... jumping the gun, are you Bilbo Baggins? ((No.)) You're definitely not one of the other Hobbit characters. ((1vp as Correct, though not on the grounds of Dave's narrowing to human, as in Tolkien's words hobbits are "plainly relatives of ours" and thus arguably a HomSap variant.)) All the characters arguably heroic from books... am ignorant of **Strangeness**, Colin's not **Dune**, is his from **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**? ((No, see above, also arguably non-comedic.)) Am I from a work by J G Ballard? ((No.)) Am I from a work by Philip K Dick? ((Yes, 1 vp.))

Colin D (afterthought): In fact it seems a bit random just having one character apiece from potential lists of (in most if not all cases) dozens. Is there any connection between all the final choices? ((Yes! 2 vps. Same again for anyone who nails that connection.))

SCORES ON THE DOORS: DaveB 6, Karen 5, JohnR 5, Marcus 4, ColinD 4, SteveB 3, SteveJ 1, everyone else 0. __

"PIGS ON THE WING" (Aquarius Football) Game 5 (GM Tony Ross). Time to tune in to the radio...
"Barrow Infirmities two, Nottingham Forest S&B Club **THREE**. Brentford Bees **five**, Middle Piddling Rovers..three. Burton Swifts **one**, Hermits **one**. Mankcaster Limited **three**, Perfidious Albion..one. Newcastle United nil, Ireteam of Overham **FOUR**. Pinewood Old Boys **four**, New World Order **four**. Shaddongate United **three**, Wookey Wanderers..two. Swaythling Old Boys one, Saffron Walden **THREE**."

((Forest's full suffix is "Soccer & Banty Club" and I've added Brentford's, much more like it!))

Table after five games:	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nttm Forest S&B Cl (Paul Ratcliff)	5	0	0	18	8	15
Barrow Infirmities (Steve Titterrell)	3	1	1	15	9	10
Ireteam of Overham (Nick Kinzett)	3	1	1	17	12	10
Brentford Bees (Richard Breese)	3	1	1	17	13	10
Saffron Walden (Brian Henstock)	2	3	0	14	11	9
Shaddongate Utd (Ian Wilson)	3	0	2	13	17	9
New World Order (Mike Parnaby)	2	2	1	19	14	8
Pinewood Old Boys (Andy East)	2	2	1	18	14	8
Mankcaster Ltd ("Ginger Solcounty")	2	1	2	9	7	7
Burton Swifts (Simon Drew)	2	1	2	9	9	7
Wookey Wandrs (Andrew Harding)	2	0	3	11	12	6
Swaythlings OB (Graham Staplehurst)	2	0	3	10	12	6
Newtcastle Utd ("Ken Bruce")	1	1	3	7	16	4
Hermits ("N Peety")	0	2	3	7	13	2
Perfidious Albion ("Sam Rollderdyce")	0	1	4	6	12	1
Middle Piddling Rvrs ("Ecks the Unknown")	0	0	5	10	21	0

((Confess I don't understand purpose/nature of this intermission cup but here's first round robins anyway))
BarrowInf 2 Newcastle 1; NottmF 3 NWOrder 1; Ireteam 5 Mankcaster 0; Pinewood 4 MPRovers 1;
Brentford 3 Hermits 2; Swathling 1 PerfidiousA 2; WookeyW 2 BurtonSw 2; SaffronW 4 Shaddongate 4.

((Must reprint my after-match interview)) “Well Anthony, my man, this is becoming a habit don't y'know. Obviously very pleasing but can we reproduce the same form against the same team in the league, especially without the deep probing of Colin Oscopie who alas went in a bit far and injured a main appendage. I shall have to lend him my personal assistants, as distinct from assistance, in order to get him up and raring to go in again. Still it will be very edifying to give Mr Eddie Fying his chance over the next couple of matches. Must run or rather hobble as I see the aforesaid personal assistants are signalling me for my bath...”

“RUN LIKE HELL” (Who/What/Where/When/Why)

Turn Two

(GM: NickK)

Steve Jones... ((as per “Quicksilver”, though this time the players have already shown that The Answer isn't one related to fiction but is instead an historical event, pre-21stC, might be up your valley Steve, 1vp.))

Dave Berry: “Run Like Hell” ...I'm even more at a loss here...

...You say that you wouldn't describe the Who/What/Where/When/Why episode itself as Running Like Hell, but it allows the possibility of running like hell. Was it a possible disaster situation such as a dam potentially failing? ((Arguably Yes, a possible disaster situation, though not a dam: 1 vp.))

...I'm tempted to suggest the Battle of Marathon, which certainly led to Pheidippides “running like hell” to ask the Spartans for help, which would make the actual event be the Persian landing at Marathon in 490BC. I really doubt this is the answer but I'll propose it anyway as a shot in the dark. ((Nowhere near but so ingenious that it's worth another vp.))

...Apart from that, you mentioned that the “When” might be the most profitable line of questioning. So, let's try and narrow down the time a bit more. Did the event happen before 1 AD (or Before Common Era, if you prefer that terminology. Personally, I think the Common Era terminology does more to marginalise other calendars and religions than the BC/AD terminology, because BC/AD makes no claims to generality). ((No to the pre-AD1 question. You have a case about CE usage but I argue that we need some convention.)) If not before 1 AD, did the event happen in the 20th Century? ((Yes, 1 vp)) Let's also start on the “Where”: did this happen in Europe? ((No))

Paul Regan: “Run Like Hell”... I see we're going to do this the hard way. OK, was it pre-20th Century? ((No, score 1 vp as per Dave.)) Whether or not, does it have something to do with Warfare, e.g a battle? ((No, not in the strict sense anyway. Though it arguably used certain warfare terminology, so 1 vp.))

W Marcus Arnold: ...Run like Hot Tarmac... getting rather stuck here. The answer isn't in the realm of fiction. Music ain't fact or fiction. Damn I'll jump the Jo Jo Gunne and ask to get it off my mind, is it anything to do with that single by The Gun later covered by Motorhead protégé Girlschool ((and indeed Judas Priest)) “Race With the Devil”? ((No.)) No? well I'm not surprised. Is the answer connected with music? ((No.)) Is the answer 20th Century? ((Yes, score 1 vp as per Dave and Paul.))

Steve Borndale: Pity you've already specifically said that the Answer itself isn't Run Like Hell, otherwise I'd have suggested a phenomenon like Amazon (the mega-company not the mega-river). ((Brilliant, Steve! Hadn't even thought of that interpretation, so 1 vp even though just as astray as Dave's Battle of Marathon. Not forgetting that co.Amazon is very much a 21stCentury Schizoid Thing (yes yes eliminated music too)..))

NK: More progress than meets the eye back there...

SCORES ON THE DOORS: PaulRg 5, DaveB 4, Marcus 3, SteveB 1, SteveJ 1, everyone else 0.

NK: Now, as we were giving Amazon (the mega-company) some well-merited abuse:

Steve Borndale: *You know as kids and even young men (occasionally women) we had vague ambitions of going into Space? I bet that involved more than ninety seconds of weightlessness...*

NK: Some fair inclusions on Marcus' re-purposed *Ark Royal* (see below) might be Messrs Bezos and Branson (Musk waiting on the gangplank), though it's arguable how much of their recent efforts represent genuine advance and how much mere conspicuous consumption (with my TVEblen Political Economy hat on I heavily favour the latter). No few commentators have remarked the phallic symbolism of the Bezos vehicle, which I reckon has to be non-accidental, so my only issue on being thrown into his company (as in companionship not hapless employee) aboard the aforesaid *Ark Royal* might be that he's a Very Silly Man. (Which, given that it's Me talking, makes him extremely silly indeed.)

W Marcus Arnold: *Dear Old Nick. I'm having a devilishly awkward time in deciding how to start this letter so I won't. Yours sincerely, the Big G.*

NK: Knew you were going up in the world, Marcus, though I had no idea quite how high.

Marcus: *On second thoughts and despite your frequent Outbreaks of Heresy you can have a place on the HMS Ark Royal, now repurposed as a floating zoo for recreationally challenged Russian oligarchs and Golgafrinchians. I am sure that by now you are as culturally over-sated by imbibation of all that is going on in Coventry Galactic City of Mega Missed Opportunity. That being so I shall try to oversate you some more. NB in a survey of all known people called Nick, 99% when asked if they were called Nick said Yes, 2% said Sometimes, 3% said Turn off the Microphone. For more details send your bank details to...*

NK: ...surely not Amazon itself...

Colin Evans: *Amazon Doesn't pay enough tax. I feel as if it is lying about where its money comes from and the Inland Revenue ((and tax authorities + governments globally)) are letting them get away with it. Just because a purchase is 'processed' in Luxemburg, for example, does not mean Amazon's income originates from Luxemburg. When I buy something from Amazon the money goes from my bank account here not from any other country thus they should pay the appropriate amount of tax on that income to the United Kingdom not to some other country. // It is not surprising that the Republic of Ireland is objecting to the minimum tax rate proposed for such global corporations, because they are among those who are currently getting what tax income there is. They are effectively getting my money and **your money**...*

NK: In fact this kind of situation is something long since foreseen by a number of Science Fiction writers: Phil Dick, Stanislaw Lem and not least – I can't resist throwing this one in for those who've given up on him on other grounds (hi Dane/Simon!) – Kim Stanley Robinson in *Mars*. Whether it can go on in the case of Amazon and certain others will depend on how supine global governments decide to remain, but in the meantime all I can suggest is minimize (or eliminate) our usage of Amazon *et al.* (I know, I know, I'll have to change internet provider unless mine starts playing ball too.) // Other things to cut out:

Karen Day: *A couple of years back we picked up one of those Cut Down On Plastic adviser books and have been trying to follow the advice but it's sometimes hard! Just about every shop insists on wrapping just about every item of food in poly, or back it with a difficult-to-recycle plastic tray. Hygienic it may be but multiply that by about twenty million couples or singles or family units... (and that's just this country).*

There were some obvious things we could do and did. We started getting glass-bottled milk from a local milkie again (can do it because he delivers early enough on the days I go into Work, with the Lock downs that wasn't a worry of course). At the shops or (spit) (oops, sorry, Covid restrictions) supermarket we try to stick to items in recyclable packaging (cartons, tins) or go for the loose stuff. During furlough Colin found a greengrocer not too far away, so more loose stuff, paper bags not plastic. Try to use local shops where they do a non-polywrapped line and encourage them to keep it up. Only issue, it takes more time. Which we've had during Covid but with Colin now back at Work and me still part-time... ((Similar with us.))

Karen still in plastic mode: *We've got a copy of HALMA. Unfortunately it's a pretty modern edition, so still more plastic... (the pawns)*

NK: In fact the edition that Marcus donated me is the same or similar, plastic not wooden pawns. But as with many a cherished boardgame, it's not one-use throwaway plastic!

Bob Gingell: *I note mention of Halma. This was a game I remember from my childhood as a superior version of the Chinese Chequers that I thought was for little children. However, I can only remember playing it with my brother. // No other reminiscences come to mind, other than my grandmother staying in with a poorly child guest at my birthday party and complaining bitterly when we returned from playing in the park that the child could not play card games (crying when he lost at Beggar My Neighbour).*

NK: Very thoughtful of your Gran in the circumstances, though maybe not so wise in her choice of pastime (perhaps she too should have tried *Halma*).

Colin Day: *Noting your intention to use its ((Halma's)) board for a tactical-level addition to Sorcerer. Now I meant to ask you last year when you ran through your games: S must surely be the mad multi-coloured one by SPI (great idea but totally unplayable) you were "working on" 40 YEARS AGO. Confess?*

NK: Yes but that's nothing, e.g I've been "working on" my version of **TLotR** even longer (before, again, the SPI version, never mind Knizia *et al*). Like I say, long-term projects earmarked for completion during retirement. You'll be giving up Work about the same time (unless you DO take Early Ret), fancy another playtest? But talking of additions (and indeed addictions) to already richly mixed designs:

Gary Lyon (still in Collector Mode): *Same with some board games – you just have to get the expansions. Sometimes even though they aren't that good – addicts ! Terraforming Mars is a good case in point, next to get for me are the upgraded playing tiles (3d variants). And then there are fan produced add ons...*

NK: I'm still seeking advice as to which **TM** expansions it would be best to get, given my known proclivities (e.g promotion of the cooperative element even in overtly competitive designs, which would be the other way to tackle Dave's perceived problem of lack of player-interaction). If you can help here it will be gratefully received, the fan-produced add-ons not necessarily excluded. // More on boardgames later (see Andrew's attempt to inveigle me in Lists Syndrome), but one final word on:

Colin D: *Halma. Can't for the life of me remember where this featured in Adams / HHGG...*

NK: ...or H2G2 as some evidently prefer to abbreviate it...

Brian Henstock: *H2G2: I had a great friend at school named John Searle. He was a young man of a far more cerebral nature than myself (or most of our contemporaries). A guitarist and exponent of the 'bon mot', plus a GSOH (as the modern parlance has it). I did not listen to the radio much in those days; John had several goes to interest me in a comedy show called "The Burkiss Way", and I finally gave in, and found to my surprise that I liked it very much (still use quotes from it today, as in "What's that horrible smell?" – "Eric Pode of Croydon"). When it ended a series, John assured me that the programme which would be replacing it would be equally worth a listen. Based on his having been correct about TBW, I tuned in to H2G2. I can quite honestly say that my life changed from that moment in time. I had avidly watched ST, DW, B7 etc. But H2G2 opened up a new universe of possibilities for my young mind. Back then, I still had the mental agility to keep the separate H2G2 incarnations clear in my head; the radio show went like this; the record was different in these ways; the second series had these differences; the TV followed this, but such-and-such was different; the books.... These days, they are all blurred in my recollection. I'd say that H2G2 was second only to FRP in my list of influences.*

NK: I suppose I'd already gone a bit far down the road of SF literature for it to have had quite the same impact, but even so kept on getting these little thrills of recognition, *I knew what Adams was getting at*. And so remain in debt (as you to John) to Colin or Frank or both for pointing me in the appropriate direction.

Brian: *Now, Frank Burrow....spookily, only this morning in a Zoom, someone joked that a young person's first attempt at making coffee for the parents might result in the use of gravy granules. I related the occasion over at Frank's house when one of the avid FRP 'set' (to whom I shall refer only by the initials MB – NK will recall him) ((indeed)) finally agreed to make tea for us all. The resulting beverage was interesting, to say the least, having been made using bouquets garnis in place of tea bags. Lost touch with Frank in the mid-eighties...*

NK: Me too, though a bit later, and equally regrettably – great bloke, great gamer. My abiding memory of him was on the rare occasion where one or t'other of the Cov games clubs persuaded me to run something other than a boardgame or my own insanely complex experiment in RolePlay Gaming, i.e a slightly less complex experiment. Frank as ever proved a keen participant, but (as you may recall) he was in one of his too-cunning-for-his-own-good modes. Via a written order he'd prepared beforehand for the scenario's 'known target' of legendary jewels (and so almost behind my back as GM!), his super-dextrous character made off with that entire trove, which the rest of the party blissfully believed had been divided (by Frank) one each between them. Whereas in fact everyone else got his paste substitutes...

Too busy handling the attentions of some 8-9 other players to examine his note, even I didn't realize this until the party's final getaway. For unbeknown to Frank or any in the party, though arguably guessable from the legend (for I always liked to give you lot a chance), the real jewels were cursed. The bearer of each would find his or her combat capabilities greatly enhanced, but their own vulnerability likewise – in bald game-mechanism terms all damage given or taken would be doubled. This was tested only when the fleeing party *en masse* took the resident guardian's fireball. On querying the excessive hits apparently suffered by all (definitely outside the usual range) but divining its cause, Frank sheepishly drew my attention to his note. Whereupon the party was entertained by Nick's Revision of damage absorbed, *i.e* halved again for all except Frank's character. Who, after an amusing application of the geometric series (I permitted him a re-take of the now mathematically irrelevant saving throw), had his “molecules” (as another of the party gleefully put it) liberally showered across the threshold. Incidentally providing cover for everyone else's escape, singed but still alive. Or so I was persuaded by Frank himself, anxious no doubt to make meaningful his own character's... sacrifice, shall we call it. [Which tale I relate to illustrate that RolePlay Games, run/played in the right spirit, could be a more subtle exercise in gaming than often met the eye.]

Brian: *I have a true-life recollection of the first time I saw 'Network'. I was living in Manchester, and it was the big film shown as a network premiere in the first week of the new Channel 4. My flatmates and I sat down with tinnies to watch it, and soon we were afraid to breathe in case we missed something. Then came the “I'm as mad as hell....” scene; we looked at each other, then towards the window... opening wide, and shouting at the top of our lungs “I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take any more!”. Then we waited for all the others in the neighbourhood to open their windows and follow suit... silence. I mean, not anyone. It was a short while later that we realised that we had been watching S4C (Welsh Channel 4), which launched a week before C4. Only our flat was high enough and westerly enough to receive S4C.*

NK: This doubtless before the days of obligatory Welsh subtitles (I'm winding ColinE up here) which would have given the game away earlier. But now we're on films...

Andrew Fisher: *And I watched that film Ghosts in the Shell and found it pretty depressing.*

Colin Evans: *...Ghost in the Shell film mentioned in OOH88 page 8. I have only seen the non-anime version with Scarlett Johansson which I found predictable and therefore disappointing despite being great visually. Isn't it a bit stupid to make a super-soldier out of some drop-out and discontent off the street instead of a loyal volunteer?*

NK: Perhaps, but much more interesting.

Colin continues: *Yesterday. Film in which an amateur singer is transported to an alternative timeline in which The Beatles never existed and becomes a star by passing off their work as his own. A good, quite funny, film. Some other things also do not exist in this world, but nothing drastic. ((I did enjoy this one.))*

still Colin E on films: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies ... Based on the book which is apparently all the original text of **Pride and Prejudice** with zombie bits added. Probably even funnier if you've read the original or seen a film version of it.*

NK: I fear that when I individually told them about this one, both our resident Austen experts – Lorraine and Karen – thought the very idea was just silly. Karen has added an apposite comment which we'll see lower down. But speaking of reading the original sources of film/TV adaptations:

still Colin E: *Is it necessary to read the book of a film or TV series one has seen? Depends, probably.*

NK: Depends indeed. As a rule I find it's almost never worthwhile reading an *ex post facto* novelization (almost invariably flat and lacking in nuance) of a film or TV series, but that's a different issue. Where an existing written text is thought worth adapting to film/TV it's usually the latter that suffers by comparison, even when the adaptation is pretty good, and reading the original can frequently open up new vistas. There are definite exceptions to this rule, however. Example, my favourite non-SF&F franchise (as mentioned in due course) *The Godfather*, the characterization in the movies being much more subtle (and so to me superior) to those in Puzo's text. Other visual adaptations have the virtue of cutting out what can be perceived as extraneous or even pointless material, as with your next case:

Colin E: *I've seen two TV series of **War and Peace** but have not read the book. The second series was shorter than the first (about 30 years ago) but there didn't seem to be anything missing.*

I don't intend to read the book because ...

1. It is heavy going, apparently, with much headache-inducing, and probably irrelevant, philosophical discussion.

2. It has a large cast of characters, possibly difficult to keep track of.

3. Many characters are called by several names, depending who is talking or being addressed. This could be their title, their rank, their family name, their first name, a nickname. Rather confusing apparently. Does it include a list of characters one can refer to?

4. I have oodles of other books I would prefer to read with even more being published all the time.

NK: Fair enough. And *Dramatis Personae*, as in several editions of Dickens like *Little Dorrit* or many a Niven/Pournelle collaboration (even in effect some Iain M Banks, I've discovered), are a definite plus. But I honestly can't remember if *W&P* has such, it's not a text I own, I read the English edition ages ago from a library copy and it certainly never moved me to re-read it. (Not a function of its length, obviously, says this fan of *TLotR* and *Jonathan Strange* and the combined *Claudius* books or *Titus Groan/Gormenghast* considered as a single entity, etc.) I would concur that at least one of the *W&P* TV series was much more engaging than the book, but then it didn't move me to watch any repeats or, again, renew acquaintance with the text.

Colin E (aside): *In a famous SF novel, **Who Goes Here?** by Bob Shaw, the book used for the main character's new name after his memory is wiped is misunderstood and instead of becoming 'Leo Tolstoy' the character becomes 'Warren Peace'...*

NK: Not untypical of our Bobby. Now for that earlier-mentioned bit from Karen, which (on absorbing the most recent *OoH*) my colleague Liz wryly endorsed:

Karen Day: *You realise that most of these films you're all mentioning are very much MAN movies, if not BOY movies... ☺ I mean, The Great Escape and Lawrence of Arabia don't even have any female characters as far as I remember! (Didn't stop my mum and me watching TGE along with my dad & brother every Xmas, though.)*

NK: I realize and Guilty as charged. Which tangentially brings a further difficulty to Andrew's challenge a bit further on (stipulating films that aren't even remotely fantasy). Even the magnificent *LoA* (never mind the part-fictionalized prisoners-of-war in *The Great Escape*, a number of the originals or their close relatives being very much alive when that film was made) is a simplified representation of actual persons and events.

still NK: The total absence of (named) female characters in the two films cited is of course a function of their themes. But until relatively recently it's been a general lack in most 'adventure' fiction (of whatever genre or medium) and indeed its sources of inspiration (again, e.g, written history) – and not just here in the Patriarchal West. Purists notwithstanding, one can only applaud the attempts of some modern film-makers to broaden (and so somewhat humanize) the material at hand. In “Quicksilver” we mentioned the paucity of female characters in *TLoTR*, for instance, and it was no accident that Jackson/Walsh/Boyens widened the roles of Eowyn, Galadriel and especially Arwen, or for that matter introduced the entirely plausible character of Tauriel in their rendition of *The Hobbit* (which incidentally is not praised sufficiently for making every one of the Thirteen Dwarfs a distinct personality, just to show it's not merely a gender thing). Great writer though I regard him, Stanislaw Lem was even more notorious than Tolkien for general avoidance of female characters, though methinks in his case it was to obviate the irrelevant issue of gender relations in his highly cerebral scenarios. (*Solaris* excepted for obvious reasons, even here it's noticeable that one grim scientist character is rendered female – and non-stereotypically female at that – in the second movie version, again entirely plausibly. Cf similar in the film version of Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain*.)

I'm afraid all this won't bring us very far into Andrew's quest for my fave non-SF&F/Horror movies! (Other than to somewhat defensively add *LoA* and *TGE* to the list.)

Andrew Fisher: *The main reason I jest about the (mythical! I've looked up the meaning and I'm not budging from this adjective) Progrock Singles List is its inherent implausibility as a concept, given that progrock was given over to triple album excess and looked down on the poor little seven inches of wonder. And I love lists. Can I put forward my favourite list of lists (personal to NK) you could attend to:*

1. *Top ten films that are not remotely scifi, horror, or fantasy.*
2. *Top ten Hawkwind spin-off albums.*
3. *Top ten board games, listed in the order that you have actually played them the most at Manorcon.*
4. *Top ten albums recorded in the 1950s.*
5. *Top ten Manorcons.*

...I can't get to ten, in my top ten list of lists.

NK: ...going to shuffle these about a bit for obvious reasons...

No.1 I'd have to think more about (see above) but it would start with *The Godfather* and *The Godfather II* and might have continued with the Spaghetti Westerns cited had I not reclassified these as a form of Fantasy.

No.5 would be a blur though the one when I met you must rate highly, as would the first World Dip Con for totally egocentric reasons (running a 26-board Dip tourney armed only with Paul Richards' ur-program and a football referee's whistle). Actually I can't even remember individual years – think WDC was 1988, anyway it went on my CV as an achievement and so may even have helped me land my next job.

No.3 also requires some thought as some of my favourite games I may not have even played at ManorCon, let alone “the most” – which to be meaningful must be interpreted as “the most time” not number of games. With this time caveat noted it would have to be topped with *Diplomacy* itself were we to consider that running the damn tournaments counts as participating (as I certainly would), not forgetting extras like playing in the 35-body *Chaos II* and GMing at least a couple of sessions of *Somewhat Demiurgic Dip*. Other monstrous designs on which I've expended inordinate ManorCon time must include *Arkham Horror*, *Talisman* (both Kinzettized), *Europa* (the Kinzett/SJones variant of *Britannia*) and *Seven Ages*, with a tip'o'the hat there to *History of the World* (including of course the Kinzett/SJones *Designer* variant). Arguably less monstrous are *Puerto Rico* (but I now find the all-building 5-player version much more fun) and its descendant *Race for the Galaxy* (nowadays as *Stroll through the Galaxy* needless to say). Still less monstrous but oft-indulged have been *Ark*, *Aladdin's Dragons* and *Acquire*. That's eleven-plus isn't it? Make it a dozen with *Carcassonne* (two-tile and so heavily Kinzettized, Rossified and Ratcliffied) and a baker's dozen with *Midnight Party* (practically every ManorCon since I retired from running the Dip, the ex-Warwick Uni mob have a lot to answer for here). Yet one more with *The World Cup Game*. But not *Settlers* or its variants, interestingly. The four to drop as no longer playable for me at cons would be *Carcassonne* (alas), *HotW* (alack), *Europa/Brit* (neither alas nor alack) and, natch, any f-t-f hint of Dip.

still NK, still on Andrew's lists:

No.2 is easy: the nine albums to date by **The Hawklords** (21st Century incarnation as the 20thC version was merely Hawkwind disguised) plus the excellent *Captured Rotation* by long-serving bassist **Alan Davey**. But **No.4** is an impossibility for me (don't have any as only born in 1957 and never bothered to catch up).

Which would have brought us neatly to music, but for technical reasons we shall instead interrupt the flow (speaking as we were of *The Great Escape*) with:

W Marcus Arnold: *I am glad you enjoyed your temporary escape from Stalag Luft Coventry. Did you meet any global superstar politicians and economists in Cornwall? Or were you serenaded through the night by super fit surfer dudes baying at the Moon after their Satanist beach parties involving strange rituals with small silver bottles and balloons a la Nena? Was the Captain Kirk in 99 Luft Balloons fair on fighter pilots, would the song still work if people had listened to its Cold War paranoiac warning lyrics? [Memo to self: get back to the point.]*

NK: Before you do, where do I start anyway. I'll leave the Nena questions to our resident music experts like Andrew or Kev or Nigel, but in answer to the first hint... Although it was very *thoughtless* and inconvenient for the G7 leaders to suddenly arrange their Summit for the same weekend we were going down to Cornwall, at least they were stuck on the north side while we headed southaway. My only concern was the security restriction that might have been thrown up about the approaches (Mr Bryson has not been alone in remarking how difficult it can sometimes be in actually getting into the Duchy). This was another potential problem arising from forgetting my utility bag – it contained major evidence that I was Me and legitimately Cornwall-bound, as opposed to an international terrorist or would-be Covid super-spreader. Happily these were never required (e.g I carry my proof of double-vacc like a talisman, as does Lorraine).

Our only other tactical error throughout the break (apart from the before-mentioned intensity of so many Covid-restricted visits that we left ourselves insufficient energy to much pursue the free air of the Coast Path) was to make a foray over to Newquay after the G7 had safely departed. If you see the name of so-called "Smart Parking" vilified in these pages, it's because they are RIP-OFF MERCHANTS doomed to die ALONE, UNMOURNED AND UNLOVED. In the unlikely event that any of their (apparently absentee) directors are reading this, I could vigorously defend this point of view (given what occurred) even in a court of law. Especially given the number of other unfavourable comments about their practices on the Web and, it seems, even an attempt to raise concerns about them in the House of Commons. May pursue this one.

Marcus: *I have RETURNED FROM THE WREKIN, offpeak (with discount) train ticket £10.20 Coventry to Wellington/Little Wenlock. Two pints in The Hunter's Arms £7.40. Sun all day, glorious woods, mud, brambles, sweat and wildlife. I am sending three pics to you. Wellington and The Wrekin are like Malvern with fewer tourists.*

Karen Day: *Yes we loved our break, even with all the Covid restrictions. Can't beat masks-off free air out by the sea! We've missed that a lot. Didn't get to swim though (even Colin), so you beat us there. Wasn't all that warm.*

Dave Berry: *Another last minute letter from me, I'm afraid. It's been quite a busy month. It included a trip to deepest Dorset & Devon for a family memorial for my Mum and then to scatter my parents' ashes where they first met, in Exeter during WW2. I also received a date for replacing my pacemaker, which was done on Friday last week; it's a simple day case operation and all went well. We've also had various domestic events; I organised a contractor to do a deep clean of the Linotol flooring in our tenement stair, for which they have to use a strong acid cleaner and special gel; and yesterday we had to take our cat to the vet because he hadn't been eating for five days...*

...Next weekend, we'll be off to a specially organised superspreader event in the form of a family wedding with over 100 guests singing in a church. I'm thinking of turning up in a hazmat suit. // Anyway, I hope you're keeping well!

NK: Pretty well, pretty well. It's so much easier on body and soul now having help at Work. Good practical bloke, Coventry Kid like me, and every so now and again I bemuse him with another extract from my long and varied Music Past.

Dave: *Apropos of nothing at all, I was going through my CD collection earlier this week and came across the attached gem from the Robert Calvert Live at Carlisle remaster and thought you would be interested, if you don't already have it. It's a totally wacky plan to host a 24-hour musical event, with three bands and at least one buddhist monk (but also Hindu gods – you've got to love hippies' respect for other people's religions). I love the details such as "Bob would have performed his part over a short wave radio link from atop any nearby high ground. Rhythmic pulse was to be provided by the BBC transmitter at Droitwich". Obviously this was not an actually plausible plan but the CD does include a much shorter interpretation that lasts a mere 18 minutes.*

NK: New to me so thanks (difficult as it is to picture the late great Bob as any sort of hippy).

Tony Wardlow: *I see that Hawkwind are playing Leamington in September...although no idea what the line up will be etc etc*

NK: Quite, for a band that varies its line-up nearly every album (studio or live), and we never know for certain whether Tim Blake will be part of the proceedings. The Covid situation is also far from clear with respect to these things and I fear that due to very bad planning on my part I may not be able to make it anyway. (Which'll be close to tragic if it turns out to be Dave Brock's swansong.)

Marcus: *Mr Fisher's tale of the Moles group interested me but my brain was stuck in a groove by "I am a mole and I live in a hole" (who recorded that?) ((The Southlanders)) then jumped track to Matching Moles' (a Soft Machine offshoot I believe) Little Red Record before squawking away to Wind in the Willows...*

NK: From such small beginnings do great things burrow. Y'know, Piper at the Gates of Dawn and all that.

Paul Regan: *Once again, as a big Floyd fan myself, I enjoyed your Shameless Reminiscence even though I can't quite agree! From those I've seen so far I gather you've been doing them some time ((more or less since I revived **OoH** as a 'public' zine from issue 60)) and I wouldn't mind seeing those I've missed...*

NK: I'll see what I can do. There'll be more than apparent as I did two for letter A ("Astronomy Domine" and "Atom Heart Mother") and two for E ("Echoes" and "Endless River [The]"). Sandwiching "Breathe", "Careful With That Axe Eugene" and "Dogs of War" – the rest will be apparent from recent issues and where you started getting the zine anyway. It's just a fun piece of games 'press' that arose when Hawkwind titles constituted the theme for naming games in Alex Richardson's *Obsidian* – thus Kinzett's Shameless Hawkwind Reminiscence Files. Only problem with the Floyd one is that I'm not going to be able to cover X,Y,Z (ignoring the film *Zabriskie Point*, as we will).

Marcus: *The various Kinzett Shameless Pink Floyd Reminiscence Files... **The Wall**, well conceptually it was *The Who's Tommy* all over again and over-promoted. We don't need no rock stars to tell us that skool ain't no fun. Yeh, were they that conformist to bring out an album just for a one-hit single. Apart from one track, which is basically Hotel California without its poetic metaphor but at least not as sanctimonious ((take it we're talking of "Comfortably Numb"?)), the album is trite, musically unimaginative, has too many songs and minimal psychedelia...*

*...Hey, but at least they didn't do Dark Side of the Moon Orchestral Version
a la Mr Oldfield and Tubular Bells...*

NK: You'd be surprised, or maybe you wouldn't, with how much I concur with Marcus' sentiments here.

Marcus: *breaking news... **Grantchester Meadows** has been closed due to littering and anti-social parties by Cambridge University (deliberate ambiguity). Well me hearties that is down to the non-player participants not following unstated rules.*

Marcus... Pigs on der Ving: *wot, no no-score draws? Games cancelled due to downpour of Cats & Dogs?*

NK: Definitely think Tony was wise to avoid any such concessions to the 'Real' Thing. Speaking of which:

Marcus: *FUTBALL D FUTURE. Cut out the boring bits and just have a penalty shoot out like in Cricket World Cup tiebreaker. Makes more money per minute, better for TV, cuts down team size to 5, gets rid of silly rules like offside and no fouling biting gouging or playing dead, makes sense don't it?*

NK: You'd be surprised (no you wouldn't) with how much I don't concur with Marcus' sentiments here. Apart from his well-merited aversion to the biting/playing dead (or at least dumb), mentioning no one by the name of Suarez in particular.

Ah yes, time to tune into the radio again...

"PIGS ON THE WING" (Aquarius Football) League Game 6 (GM Tony Ross).

"... Hermits three, Barrow Infirmities **FOUR**. Ireteam of Overham **three**, Mankaster Limited..one. Middle Piddling Rovers **three**, Newcastle United **three**. New Word Order **five**, Burton Swifts..one. Nottingham Forest S&BC **three**, Brentford Bees...two. Perfidious Albion **three**, Swaythling Old Boys..one. Saffron Walden **four**, Shaddongate United..two. Wookey Wanderers **five**, Pinewood Old Boys **five**."

((Tremendous final game there! More evidence that high-scorers should get a bonus? See below.))

<u>Table after six games:</u>	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nttm Forest S&B Cl (Paul Ratcliff)	6	0	0	21	10	18
Ireteam of Overham (Nick Kinzett)	4	1	1	20	13	13
Barrow Infirmities (Steve Titterrell)	4	1	1	19	12	13
Saffron Walden (Brian Henstock)	3	3	0	18	13	12
New World Order (Mike Parnaby)	3	2	1	24	15	11
Brentford Bees (Richard Breese)	3	1	2	19	16	10
Pinewood Old Boys (Andy East)	2	3	1	23	19	9
Shaddongate Utd (Ian Wilson)	3	0	3	15	21	9
Mankaster Ltd ("Ginger Solcounty")	2	1	3	10	10	7
Wookey Wandrs (Andrew Harding)	2	1	3	16	17	7
Burton Swifts (Simon Drew)	2	1	3	10	14	7
Swaythlings OB (Graham Staplehurst)	2	0	4	11	15	6
Newcastle Utd ("Ken Bruce")	1	2	3	10	19	5
Perfidious Albion ("Sam Rollderdyce")	1	1	4	9	13	4
Hermits ("N Peety")	0	2	4	10	17	2
Middle Piddling Rvrs ("Ecks the Unknown")	0	1	5	13	24	1

NK: Can anyone stymie the mighty Nottingham Forest Soccer & Banty Club? Barrow Inf undergo the unusual experience of winning yet dropping a spot due to Ireteam's marginally better performance overall: same points / goal difference, one more goal For thanks to the start given this time by supersub Eddie Fying (NB Tony, not Eddie Flying...). Unfancied Saffron continue their unbeaten run, NWOrder their goal-fest. At the other end of the table Middle Piddling Rovers get their first point of the season but will likely regret that it wasn't more...

Usual heretical bit: Someone pointed out the general inflation (in this high-scoring league) if awarding an extra point for three goals netted in any match. So if instead it was limited to four-plus (still only two match points for bare 1-0 wins and none for a scoreless draw), the table would then read NttmForest 20, Barrow 17, Ireteam 15, NOW 14, Pinewood 13, SWalden 13, Brentford 11, Shaddongate 9, Mankaster 8, Wookey 8, Burton 7, Swaythlings 6, rest as above (poor old MPR for all their goals still wouldn't have more than 1).

Game started Aug 2019 CE (post-*OoH69*), ended May 2021 CE (*OoH87*) in outright 18-centre victory for **ITALY (Colin Day)** in game-year **1911** from **England (Neil Carson 9)** and **Russia (Steve Borndale 7)**, who both nevertheless came within an ace of snatching the Not-so-Intimate game-end condition (occupation/ownership of supply centres in all three player-nations, those of rivals indicated by italics *e r i* below and preceding the s.c count if relevant in the Spring, at no time did any of the players lose control of all of their own home supply centres). (^ = unit short after Fall adjustments.)

Where **e r i** (and **n** for remaining neutral) appear in **bold** on the table below, it indicates which player-Power ordered for that mercenary in that game-year. I’ve also added the number of credits held by each player after the Winter/Fall of that game-year (became irrelevant once all non-player Powers eliminated).

		3/9	9/17	2/11	11/21	9/19	(29...)					
Englsh credits (16)		3/9	9/17	2/11	11/21	9/19	(29...)					
Russn credits (16)		9/15	6/15	8/17	1/11	11/20	(29...)					
Italian credits (20)		11/16	11/18	3/12	0/11	0/15	(30...)					
	(init)	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911
ENGLAND	(3)	6	8	9	10	10	10	10	9	10	9	<i>i 9 i</i>
RUSSIA	(4)	6	9	9	10	9	9	8	<i>e8e</i>	<i>e7e</i>	<i>e8e</i>	<i>e7e</i>
ITALY	(3)	5	7	9	11	15[^]	15	16_r	<i>r17_r</i>	<i>r17_r</i>	<i>r17</i>	18
...France...	(3)	e2	n1	r2	i1	e0	-	-	-	-	-	-
...Germany...	(3)	e3	r3	e2	r1	i0	-	-	-	-	-	-
...Turkey...	(3)	r3	n1	r0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
...Austria-H..	(3)	i2	i2	i1	r0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(neutrals).....	(12)	(7)	(3)	(2)	(1)							
		<i>Swe Por</i>	<i>Por</i>	<i>Por</i>	<i>Por</i>							
		<i>Hol Spa</i>	<i>Spa</i>	<i>Spa</i>								
		<i>Ser Bel Gre</i>	<i>Bel</i>									

Neil Carson (England): *Nick wants a few words. Thanks to him and the others for the game, the cunning swine Steve included, congratulations to Colin. It was nice to actually play some form of Diplomacy! The three-player idea is a great one and I’m already deep into the follow-up – I can’t say too much on this one or I might give too many ideas away... But then I can’t remember a lot about the early part – I got a good start but lost my way. I’d chosen England as it seemed the least vulnerable country, but didn’t appreciate the difficulty I’d have getting at any of the others. But I do remember having a crack at a Russian centre before the Italian breakaway forced Steve and me into some kind of desperate alliance.*

It was some kind because Steve really was a cunning sort, though he constantly made himself out to be a bit of a scatterbrain. I’d understood from the start that he and Colin had known each other (and Nick) for years, all being rather older than me. But this never worried me, if anything the advantage would be mine as the unknown factor. Besides, Nick’s NSI rules made pointless any two-way dumping on the third player! ((NK: A crucial feature of the design that arguably should apply to ALL multi-sided competitive games...)) In fact Steve was full of ideas but had a trick of making me feel they were mine as well. All in spite of claiming that he wasn’t really a Diplomacy player and was only playing “Fearless” because Colin had asked him to make up the numbers.

Colin though was definitely the real thing. Mostly he kept out-guessing us, especially in the bidding, and it was no surprise that he burst through to win eventually. But at least Steve and I held him up for ages. And nearly won ourselves, individually or as part of a draw which I suppose would have really annoyed Colin after all his clever play. This was mainly thanks to Steve. Once he’d had a go at stealing an NSI win he kept up this grand plan of forcing Colin into a draw by any two of us achieving the NSI condition. Of course I always knew he’d try to arrange things so he’d get the solo NSI win. But towards the end I nearly did the same myself, so I can’t complain. Good fun, good game, hope “One Slip” is the same! Well done Colin again, thanks Steve and thank you Nick.

NK: Thank you Neil. Before Colin's piece, quick word from the cunning one himself. Which perhaps demonstrates that your impressions... weren't that far astray...

Steve Borndale (the Russian bad bear): So Col he rings me up n sez to me, Steve Steve y'know that Nicks got this typical Nicko idea fer a (wait fer it wait fer it) DIPLOMACY game fer only three bods, its in **Hearsay**, fancie a shot? NO idea wot yer on about, sez I, and I b'aint played Diplomacy for forty year. Ah go on go on sez he, **me neether**, well nearly. **URNS OUT**, not nearly enuff...

Thort itd be a laff enyway. So Nick gets me map n rools, reminds me ow to play, all comes back like a flud. Wiv Nick twist like wot Col promised. Nick to ref. Otha bloke this Neil, nice guy, FIRST thing I sez to him wots a yungun like you doin getting mixed up wiv uz old gits? Jus wanna PLAY sez he. OK OK so now im doin three guys a fava. Betta be worf it.

It wuz. Ta to all.

NK: Ah Steve Steve indeed. We knew it was sound policy to get you involved!

Colin Day (Italy - won): First, thanks to Neil for playing, Steve for agreeing to play and then surprising himself (told you Steve) and Nick for umpiring. Nick's already summed up the ending pretty well a couple of issues back, so I won't labour the point except to re-emphasise that I nearly blew it. Twice at least.

This was entirely due to me under-estimating the threat of the 'instant' NSI Dip victory condition. I spotted Steve's bid (Edinburgh plus one of mine around 1907-8) easily enough and covered my end, I thought it worthwhile letting one annoying fleet hanging around my waters in return for getting more units forward. Not to forget promoting possible confusion and distrust between Neil & Steve. Now at that time Neil and I had more or less blocked each other at the entrance to the Med so I didn't think there was any chance of getting the NSI condition myself, and not much more chance for Neil. So it seemed a case of hammering away to 18 hoping the others couldn't stalemate me, or drive me back, and keeping an eye on Steve's fleet.

Then suddenly, and I'm not sure if this was Neil's plan or Steve's or happy accident, everything became fluid again. At first I didn't mind, I thought once I was on or near 17 it was just a matter of take more centres than I lost, further builds not relevant. So I kept going forward. Ironically it was by getting a forward unit destroyed by Neil that saved me (and him) from an embarrassing sneak-Steve win. So that was my first under-estimation. But thanks to me doing this doesn't-matter-how-many-I-lose-AS-LONG-AS line, Neil got a couple of armies through. Enough to threaten Venice (with Steve's help) and possibly at the same time sneak into Warsaw – also with Steve's connivance provided he himself could take an Italian centre. I only just prevented the Warsaw bit (spotted at the last moment) but eventually lost Venice to Neil.

Meanwhile I'd broken through to English waters and kept taking or threatening the odd Russian home centre. So we had a situation where, instead of my 18-centre win, the game could have ended in (1) an Italian NSI win; (2) an English NSI win; (3) a Russian NSI win; or (4) any combination of the above, which by Nick's rules (and quite rightly in my view) would mean an all-way Draw, all before I could get to 18. So I actually had to hang back from the first possibility in case the fourth resulted instead! Which of course Steve and Neil were constantly playing on. Thus at the same time each hoping for a solo themselves...

And it could have easily happened if I hadn't spent about five hours working it out (most of it anyway). That's one big difference from, and possible advantage over, the face-to-face game Nick, that I'll admit! ANYWAY, congratulations to both Neil and Steve for pushing me so far; to the brink as Nick says (as said, my first 18+ win in a Dip-like game ever). And thanks to Nick naturally, for the idea and the opportunity. Rusty though his GMing sometimes was. Advanced age, you know.

NK: Cheeky so-and-so, at all of two months older than me. Admittedly I did commit a few typos, to the zine reports especially (promptly corrected, good idea this play-and-adjudicate-by-email lark). But no actual misadjudications as such, I wasn't that rusty (that said, I've just noted another typo in the "One Slip" report, mutter mutter mutter).

NK continued on “Fearless” *Not-so-Intimate Diplomacy* is of course a logical three-sided corollary to the two-player *Intimate Diplomacy* (itself v.superior to the two-player variant suggested in the Dip rulebook), and for all I know it (or something very like) has been invented before – Alex Richardson was suggesting as much (in being frustrated in his search for such, before himself falling with glee upon my modest proposal). The key is that *NSI Dip* is much more a Diplomacy variant than the purely tactical Intimate, because – as the games run both here and in **Obsidian** have proved – there’s scope for some (even a lot) of inter-player negotiation, particularly as an email exercise. And the one reservation I have on email Diplomacy – theoretical ease with which one can ‘forward’ negotiation – is not a factor when you have only three players and no joint win nonsense. (Though I’m assured by those who frequently indulge in email Dip that such forwarding isn’t much practised anyway, presumably because corrosive of the game’s rationale.)

The other key is the rule that we all adverted to above: there can be no Draw, let alone so-called “Joint Win”, that excludes a party unwillingly. Back when I was putting together the rules this was merely to obviate the instincts of those gamers (and indeed game-designers) who habitually mis-think otherwise or don’t actually understand what gaming is about (this certainly wouldn’t include Colin or Steve or Neil). With “Fearless” it turned out even more significant than even I had anticipated, as in the event it shaped the endgame – everyone had a shot at a win and the very fact made Colin’s task a genuine challenge right to the very last gasp. Thank you, my friends, well done again Colin.

“ONE SLIP” (*Still Less Intimate Diplomacy*)

(GM: NickK)

Winter 1903

((**NK**: as was obvious from the Spring position, that Fall Austrian order should have read A(**Ank**)-Smy, definitely my typo not Paul’s! (must be mistaking him for Col). Players swiftly informed...))

FRANCE (Tony Hedges).. 12 credits: bids Eng 4, **Tur 5**, Ita 3. Controls Turkey, 7 credits left.
 GERMANY (Neil Carson).. 17 credits: bids Eng 13, Tur 4, Ita 0. Controls England, 4 credits left.
 AUSTRIA-H (Paul Regan).. 17 credits: bids Eng 3, Tur 1, **Ita 13**. Controls Italy, 4 credits left.
 [credits for Mercs: Eng 23, Rus(exile) 9, Tur 14, Ita 23]

“ONE SLIP” (*Still Less Intimate Diplomacy*)

(GM: NickK)

Spring+Sum 1903

FRANCE (Tony Hedges) A(Edi)-Cly, F(Lon)-NTH [*stood off*], A(Par)-Pic, A(Bur)sA(Par)-Pic [*cut, dislodged**], A(Mar)sA(Bur), F(GOL)-TYS [*stood off by superior force*], A(Tun)holds, A(Pie)-Tyl [*fails*].

...Turkey... F(BLA)-Con.

GERMANY (Neil Carson) F(Stp/nc)-Nwy, A(Den)-Swe, A(Kie)-Ruh, A(Mun)sA(Ruh)-Bur, A(Ruh)-Bur, A(Bel) sA(Ruh)-Bur, A(Ber)-Sil, A(Mos)-Ukr [*stood off*].

...England... A(Nwy)-Fin, F(NWG)-NTH [*stood off*].

AUSTRIA-H (Paul Regan) A(Sev)-Ukr [*stood off*], A(Smy)-Ank, A(Bud)-Gal, A(Vie)-Boh, A(Tri)-Ven, A(Tyl)sA(Tri)-Ven [*cut*], A(Rom)-Tus, A(Apu)-Nap, F(ION)-TYS.

...Italy... F(WMS)sAusF(ION)-TYS.

*retreat phase: French A(Bur) to Par.

Summer: FRANCE grants 1cr in proposal to revive Russia (6cr left); GERMANY grants 1cr to Turkey (3cr left); AUSTRIA-H grants 1cr to England (3cr left). [Merc credits then half, odd halves lost: remaining credits Eng 12, Rus 5, Tur 7, Ita 11]

NK: And so back to the lettercolumn.

W Marcus Arnold: *Now where was I? Ah yes PPat and his disciplinary offences. Handing mail to a person leaving the house is a serious disciplinary offence, according to the rules it must be put through the letterbox. When I was a postman you had a week in training when you learnt the rules you were unofficially expected to ignore. All the while behaving like Pat the Community Postman... Another rule was that you deliver to the address not the name, so even if you knew that Mrs B lived at no.93 but someone had written Mrs B 91 xx Road you must deliver it to no.91. This rule was never followed unless you disliked Mrs B.*

NK: I had to ask.

Marcus: *Monty Python. Its formula I think was humorous skits/sketches, often parodic, sometimes surreal, occasionally peurile. Like the Ronnies' Four Candles it has contributed to the English lexicon of metaphor, e.g Pining for the Fjords ((or Fords as I had it when running postal Thunder Road)). But well-intentioned criticism of things like racial bigotry as in the off-camera character Mrs N-----Baiter has not aged well.*

NK: Agree. There are no few Python skits which on these and similar grounds are basically unrepeatable nowadays (and the memory of which can, incidentally, make the surviving Pythons quite uncomfortable). Conversely, as you suggest, they definitely enhanced humorous allusion, from They Do Not So Much Fly As Plummet (this applicable to anything beyond physical feasibility) through NOBODY Expects the Spanish Inquisition (Palin himself once pointed out that in fact, by Inquisition Law, everyone did) to the astonishing feats of Bicycle Repair Man (which was really a very clever comment on the general haplessness of HomSap in the face of even fairly basic technology, and that was nearly fifty years ago). And thus generally making fun of the things that passed hereabouts for Accepted Society or Higher Learning or Popular Culture.

Marcus: *I think it was mainly the acting team themselves that wrote their scripts and it is in this aspect that they perhaps deserve acclaim. Considering how many series and episodes there were, perhaps a judge of overall quality might be in how much is remembered and how it is remembered (mostly I find too much Python tedious except when enlivened by Eric Idle...). When good it was very good but at its worst it was, as it were, worsen than the rest. Ministry of Silly Walks was almost traditional British music hall humour and Fawlty Towers, Cleese's offshoot vehicle, even more so. It is best forgotten how many waiters were insulted by boorish middle class customers by being addressed as Manuel...*

NK: I always had very mixed feelings on *Fawlty Towers*. Very funny and sharply observed in parts, there's a lot then and now which just made me squirm, and this was in no way because I empathized with the mostly self-inflicted woes of the ghastly Basil himself (more like how could even such a character be so purblind). But this too has contributed to the lexicon, from "Thank you, God!" (in sheer exasperation) through "You'll have to sew them back on first" (response to implied threats from one's nearest and dearest) to "Herds of Wildebeeste sweeping majestically..." (a counterpoint to unrealistic expectations).

Marcus: *INTERMISSION. Before the Second Half of this letter commences, the curtains are drawn THE LIGHTS come on and the audience departs to Q for toilets, drinks and perhaps popcorn (it's a long time since I've been to the Cinema) and the WURLITZER RISES (too young to have seen one). The tune this Wurlitzer plays is Musings on Conspiracy Theorism. To make it easy to fast forward, this section is written against the grain for the gluten intolerant.*

NK: *i.e.*, he turned the paper sidewise and wrote in landscape rather than portrait. What followed was a fairly analytical rant about Conspiracy Theories which I'll have to leave to another time as I'm running out of time to get this *OoH* completed, sorry Marcus...

...But I MUST mention that Marcus, obviously goaded by my passing comment last time, has managed to render his marvellous handwritten zine **WELCOME** (or **WELCOME MOUSEMAT**) into an electronic version. Which I still can't readily reproduce in *OoH*! However, if anyone would like to see it I can readily forward these e-versions.

still NK: Well once again we've reached that part of the zine devoted to random comments from Marcus and ColinE and, no doubt, one or two others:

Marcus: *Memo to self 2: put this down and eat. Eating is generally a good idea, except at MacDonald's Farm. It's fun attacking that franchise unfairly ((unfairly?)) as they don't know where I live...*

NK: Nothing unfair about it, they along with countless other merchandisers actually trumpet their culpability in destroying the planet by persisting with litter-packaging bearing their very logo.

ColinE: *Talking to one self. I think this is to facilitate communication between the two halves of the brain. The brain has two distinct halves joined by only a fairly small part and each half carries out particular functions. It is almost as if we each have two brains! (Reminds me of the film 'The Man With Two Brains' with Steve Martin.) // "We only use 10% of our brain." Commonly stated but experimentation has shown that this is not true. We may use only about 10% of our brain at a time but in general different parts of the brain carry out different functions, so all of our brain is used, just not all of it at the same time.*

Marcus: *I am mostly in agreement with Colin E (and his recycled food theory) re lack of drama in toilets. But I suspect that in the original Star Trek the food replicator was a dumb waiter. Later I think a use of matter transmission technology was implied, but if you can replicate 100 spotted dicks why not 100 Kirks. ((Aaaggghhh!!!))*

ColinE: *Olympics etc. Broadcasters complain that people do not watch 'niche' sports but in fact people don't (actually can't) watch it because they are not broadcast. Things have improved, Olympic matches in judo and taekwondo etc are now broadcast. A few Olympics back (2008?) only a few seconds of our medal wins in these sports were broadcast. Disgraceful! ((Me, I'm averse to all Olympic ceremonies anyway.))*

Marcus: *Again, with Mr Evans' warning on reading history from contemporary documents I am in agreement ((twice in one lifetime? When you're hot, you're hot)) and would like to add to his comment on words changing meaning. **The exception proves the rule.** The original sense of "prove" was **test**. When something was tested it was "proved", if it passed the test it was "proofed". (Water proof clothing originally was "proved" to show its impermeability to water.)*

NK: This is precisely why I prefer to say "the exception that tests the rule", occasionally varying it with "the exception that demonstrates the rule" (implying rule in general not something fixed beyond deviation).

ColinE: *In Gloucester we recently voted for city councillors, county councillors and the police commissioner. For the police commissioner the only information provided was the names and political parties of the candidates, though some were 'independent', and more information may have been available online etc. I feel this should not be a political appointment and felt I could not vote for any candidate on the limited information provided and I submitted an unmarked voting slip for that position. I believe in democracy and I think I have voted in every election possible but I feel the position of police commissioner should be filled not by voting but by careful selection by a suitable board. I do not feel I am qualified to properly select the best candidate for the position. ((Me neither and concur absolutely.))*

Marcus: *As in grammar, all its exceptions test the validity of the rule. I before E except after C will on occasion FAIL as any Concierge could tell you.*

NK: I'm sure *their* minds would encompass more commonplace examples too.

ColinE: *It has been suggested that lockdown be prolonged further. I think this would have resulted in mass disobedience and I think the PM realises that, though giving other logical reasons to end it. When should restrictions end? There will probably be an upsurge this winter so one would have to extend them into next summer.*

NK: A consequence of too many people, arguably. Speaking of which...

Marcus: *Harrison's Make Room Make Room is Raymond Chandler style detective fiction given an SF twist (cynically by Mr Harrison who rapidly satirised SF and found the SF community didn't see the satire), quite apart from the algae grown using corpse and sewage. It's a classic Cop / corrupt system / moral ambiguity / Dirty Harry / Los Angeles at Night pulp fiction. Cop investigates dead gangster, adopts gangster's mistress and exploits gangster privileges.*

Steve Jones: *I was interested to see that Dave Berry found Hilary Mantell's "Wolf Hall" and "Bring up the Bodies" gripping. Since these books dealt with the upper crust of Tudor London, may I suggest that he (and you!) try C.J. Sansom's Matthew Shardlake novels. These seven novels are also gripping accounts of life in Tudor England particularly as it affected the lower echelons of society, and also double as detective stories. The main protagonist (the lawyer Matthew Shardlake) actually works for the hero (sic) of Mantell's novels in the first couple of books of the canon.*

NK: Noted, with thanks. // Steve has some contentious conclusions on his re-reading of Cordwainer Smith and follows these up with even more contentious remarks on **Dune!** Which again I'll need to hold over until next time if I want to (and I do) fit in his latest book review...

***The Invention of Science* (David Wootton) review by Steve Jones**

This book is a fascinating look at the Scientific Revolution following the Reformation; indeed, the sub-heading is a new history of the Scientific Revolution. It is Wootton's contention that modern science was invented between 1572 and 1704. What marks these years out are that 1572 saw a supernova appear in the skies of Europe (as described by Tycho Brahe), which destroyed the perfection and eternity of the heavens, and 1704 saw Isaac Newton publish his Opticks.

The thesis of this book is that the modern conception of science after 1704 was invented. The process of how this "invention" occurred between 1572 and 1704 involved the evolution of radical shifts in thinking, concepts, language and methodologies which separated the medieval and modern mindsets. For starters, the medieval mind believed that there was literally nothing new under the sun, and that anything that "appeared" new was previously known to the Ancient World. When Columbus discovered America, it was a new world found while looking for a new route to a known world – China. The concept of discovery did not exist, and the word "discovery" did not exist and had to be invented. In a similar way, a whole raft of words and concepts had to be invented or undergo linguistic change during this process; these included facts, competition, priority, eponymy, evidence, experiment, replication, laws, hypothesis, theory and machine, among others. Tied up with this process was its interaction with a number of inventions including the printing press, the telescope and the microscope, which often proved to be critical.

Although this book provides fascinating and mind-blowing revelations about the processes which led to the invention of science, it is not that easy a book to assimilate; certainly, it cannot be read in a single session (being nearly 600 pages long!). it is, in parts, dense and heavy with concepts and arguments. Nevertheless, if you have an interest in the history of science and ideas, it is thoroughly recommended.

NK: Again, many thanks Steve. Besides all those in the lettercol/my games WE ALSO HEARD FROM Mark Nelson, Janey Cage, nephew Dan (congratulations) and Graham Staplehurst (belated congratulations and sorry we were away). Also from my growing number of fellow-eds who perhaps haven't quite realized what they've let themselves in for here – now including Jim "CJ" Reader of the **Variable Pig**, mini-review of which is yet another thing I'll have to delay until next time (sorry Jim) but if I don't put the zine to bed tonight I'll be into another weekend (again). Final word from **John Riches** who sent me an amusing juxtaposition of Messrs Elijah Wood and G.M.T.Sumner in their full fantasy film gear underneath the legend HAS BLADE NAMED STING, amazing what difference is made by possession of even half a colon... // Fare Well, as well as you can in this increasingly incendiary world (but at last they're talking) – **NickK**