



Deadline

For all games:  
Tue 2nd Mar

And, bowing to popular demand:

Your credit is  
This is high/ low/ not good enough

Subscription

20p this issue, but unless I miss my mark this is going to have to be adjusted upwards to meet the increased cost of postage. Er.. 25p OK?

Gamefees

Rh - 50p inc map	1829 - 1.00
Diplomacy -£1.00	Maya II - free
Abstraction - 75p	(please ask for map)

Please note that, if your credit is £3.00, you are entitled to one gamestart free. You get one extra free start for each extra pound in credit.

Productorial Address

Peter Doubleday  
Magdalen College  
Oxford OX1 4AU

Game lists

<u>Diplomacy</u>	<u>Abstraction II</u>	<u>The Maya II</u>	<u>LR Map N</u>	<u>RR Map L</u>
.. none ..	Julien Shepley Dennis Love	Simon Billns Colin Grubb Derek Baskett	.. none ..	.. none ..
& 7	&5	& 5	&4/5	& 6/7

Pink?

So I walks into this shop, and I says to the assistant, Do you print obscene T-Shirts?

Or then again, I should approach this from a different angle. After all, I don't want you to get the idea that I do this sort of thing frequently, me a God-fearing lad and so on. Look, I had a good enough reason, or so I thought..

The reason was the Pink party, which is a horrible idea, isn't it, and why I allowed myself to be dragged along I can't imagine unless it was vague thoughts of lechery: that's the usual reason. Now I ask you, can you imagine me robed in pink? It's unmanning, not to say a leetle expensive; even in my splendid collection of ugly ties I don't have anything in pink. Although you can't imagine me in pink, because because after all you can't imagine me at all, and that's the way it should stay; the full, horrid reality would tear your tiny brain to shreds.

So, am I going to allow myself to be exposed in pink, sweetie? I should say not. I need something to express my deep loathing of this and any other Concept. The girls organising the party are feminists and wet socialists, needless to say when one bears in mind the theme, and if there's one thing that makes me chuck it's a combination like this. Not that fascist nymnos would be a hell of a lot better, but this isn't a black leather shirt party, which would be just as expensive. And these are, after all, fairly pleasant and restrained f&ws's, or they wouldn't be at Magdalen. So I need clothes that spit in the face of their f&wsism, clothes that bear a distinct and unmistakeable message.

The message in question is 'Fuck the pigs'. Not a nice message, even when temp tempered with 'Oxford Hyopophilia Society' in little letters at the bottom. For those of you who don't know what 'hyopnilia' is, I can only say, Fuck the Pigs. I figure that this combines the worst possible taste with a Message that snipes at the very roots of f&wsism by appearing to side with it to extremities while at the same time holding it in contempt in a subtle, classical way. I mean, even I had to burrow deeply into the etymology of hyopophilia, discarding 'sous' for 'hous' because it's more Attic, and 'hous' for 'hyo' because I need the adjectival form. Naturally, then, no-one else will understand it in a million years, and we're left with a pointlessly obscene and subversive message. Mind you, even Catullus was pointlessly obscene on occasion, although as a nobleman he could hardly be pointlessly subversive and anyway he wrote shit-awful poetry. So the Message stands. As a sort of aside I should inform you that I intend to form the political party designed to alienate the greatest possible number of voters by using the shortest possible name - the 'Wog-Lovers' Party. Naturally this alienates all decent liberals, and with luck it should also disgust the working-class racist element. Sad to say, it will also get me lynched, because we live in an intolerant age.

Meanwhile, back at the printers, we find a rather embarrassed editor nerving himself up and crawling in. I have this terrible aversion to shops and shop-assistants, which I would like to adduce to an instinctive revulsion for the symbols of decadent bourgeois society but must admit has more to do with blind terror in response to any kind of formal authority. I am not, therefore, in a very good mood

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Thing Game 2      RT155B      Round 1

Bristol And Liverpool Locomotive System (RWalkerdine, purple) 20 & 5 :25

1a) (Bristol) J43 J44 I44      b) (I44) H45 H46 Gloucs D48      c) (D48) C48 C53

Unnamed (THill? - NMR, green) 20 & 10 & 5 (COBLARS) :35

1a) (Bhead) Lp1      b)(Lp1) I64      c) (I64) G63 G62 Stoke; (Lp1) K67

Parr's Innovative Steam Traction out of London (AParr, orange) 20 :20

1a) (London) C3 E4      b) (E4) J7 J8      c) (J8) J11 M12

Hull And Leeds Incredibly Fast Advanced Xpresses (RMorris, black) 20&10 :30

1a) (Hull) E31 G30      b) G30 G29 J28      c) (J28) Doncs Sheff; (M26) M24

Cream Of Bain's Library And Railway Services (KBain, blue) 20&5-5 (Terry) :20

1a) (Proston) J71 I71 H71      b) (H71) H68 Manch F66      c) (F66) F65 G64 G62 Stk F61

when I cross the rather seedy floor of 'Omni' on George Street. These things always seem simpler in theory than they turn out to be in practice. After what seems like an interminable trek, I eventually get to the point where I can collapse gratefully on the counter, to face a genteel, grey-haired shop assistant of about forty. I think my nerve would have failed me at this point, were it not for the rather curious message she appeared to be steaming on for the portly gentleman in front of me. This message ran 'Get Balled by the Bodger', and was rather incongruous even given the fact that the assistant and customer appeared to be old friends. Perhaps this was a professional relationship? Perhaps the message in front of me was only the latest in a long line of bold statements like 'Get fucked by the Fumbler', 'Have a Dirty Weekend with the Tupper', and so on. These things make you look at people in a different light, don't they? - rather like being told that 40% of Frenchmen have indulged in group sex at one time or another. Anyway, I was slightly cheered to see that this hideous message was not beyond the pale, so I stuttered out the question at the start of this productorial (you can look back, because I'm not going to repeat myself: that's bad style). I was not exactly encouraged to be told that "it depends how obscene it is; if the police object, they can trace it back to us". And, as you may have guessed, I didn't get a T-shirt printed. Well, there's always Freshers' Fair next year....

And I ended up going to the party in a pink tie bought especially from Oxfam. Not as great an impact, perhaps, but then the party was predictably dull and staid, as all thematic parties tend to be. Pyjama parties are perhaps the worst: lapsed juveniles stand around patting themselves on the back for being so daring and liberated, and from a distance the whole looks just like a tedious cocktail party filled with dull conversations, albeit dressed in a slightly unconventional way. I don't see how students can stand to spend their whole life partying; I think I'd far rather put in the work for a First. In which case, why am I typing this?

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THIS GAME THRLE - Voice game 10 as was.

81 DF Autumn 03

Austria (R.Pratt) A(Tri)MS A(Vie) A(Bul)S A(Ser)S A(Gre)st A(War)st  
 England (J.Caruso) F(ENC)-Bre @F(NTH)-Der@ F(NWG)-Nor A(StP)-Mos  
 France (N.Brennan) F(Wel)Tpl F(MAO)-Bre F(Por)st A(Bel)MS A(Bur)  
 Germany (I.Giles) F(Den)-NTH S By F(SKA) A(Hol)st A(Mun)st A(Pru)-War  
 Italy (A.Watson) F(AES)-Smy F(LoS)-Gre A(Tyo)MS A(Ven)  
 Russia (M.Avis??) NTR: F(Swe), As (Boh),(Mos) all stand u/o  
 Turkey (M.Mantle) A(Sev)S A(Rum)MS A(Bul) F(Smy)-Con

Retreat : English F(NLl) disbands, nrp.

Winter 03

<u>Austria</u> Bud Tri Vie Ser Gre War :6,nc	<u>Italy</u> Ven Rom Nap Tun & Smy :5 builds F(Nap)
<u>England</u> Lon <del>LpA</del> Edi Nor <del>PpA</del> aStP:4,& a(Lon)	<u>Russia</u> <del>Sst</del> Mos Swe : 2 GM removes A(Boh)
<u>France</u> Bre Mar Par-Bel Spa & Lpl, Por:7, no builds ordered!	<u>Turkey</u> Con Ank <del>Sst</del> Bul Sev & Rum :5, &A(Ank)
<u>Germany</u> Ber Kie Mun Hol Den :5,nc	

Press

Austria - Italy I wrote to you last ??

Austria - Turkey Would you like an alliance ?!

Italy(govt)-Austria Must apologise for the misinterpretation of your silence last season. Before hitting the self-destruct button, perhaps we should make contact, huh?

GM : You may assume that Martin has gone into anarchy: according to my house rules, he has to send me six sae's before I let him order his units again - one for each of the rest of you, so that I can let you know he's back. Unlikely....

Mind you, there are other things to do at parties, and one that I particularly don't recommend is to take a camera in with you. In the first place, this is as good a way to waste a hundred nicker as any, because some drunken lout like me will indubitably step on it. In the second place, it tends to result in reams of repetitive celluloid - "Oh, look at X, he's rolling on the floor/ pawing over Y/ throwing up", and for some reason it's always X who's doing this. Everybody else is either on a manic drinking spree or else taking photos from a safe distance. In the third place, you really don't want to be reminded of the sordid details afterwards. It only takes an hour to remove the traces from a carpet left looking like a marble cake, but how can you decently dispose of a photograph that shows a man in a purple dress pushing a drunk into the cleavage of a large girl who looks like she's about to be colourfully ill and is, in turn, threatened by a horribly close blur that proves on inspection to be a boot belonging to a man sitting on someone else's head? And in the background of which, to set it off, there is a cameo of some anonymous canoodling? My god, that's horrible, but I could describe Leonardo's 'The Last Supper' quicker, so it has to be art, doesn't it? No, the camera doesn't lie, but it sure brings back some vile memories.

And while thus degenerate, I really should respond to Creese's Good Pub Guide by mentioning the worst pub I have ever been in. For someone of tender years and abstemious habits, I am nevertheless well qualified to pontificate on this point, for I live in Birmingham where almost every pub you see is the worst. They vie with each other to look like prisons, serve beer like slops, provide barmaids with faces granite-hard like warders and conversation bad enough to be rejected by Coronation Street. And not one of them is as bad as the Star Royal of Oxford, which has bar-staff poncy beyond belief, high prices and machines that are irritatingly compulsive. As soon as I started to get the hang of the Pac-Man they made the programme more complex; and on the final night I was subjected to the temptation of 20p left on the side by someone who didn't return. I finally succumbed at 10:35; and, you know, the most challenging part of the proceedings is to get the money in without the bloody machine rejecting a ten pence piece. I finally managed this at 10:40 prompt, only to be greeted by some turd turning the power off. Now, at such a point Birks would get understandably and violently upset, but I had more important things to do, like finishing off two pints of assorted swill that hadn't yet been drunk from my round - a task made no more palatable by the presence of a sluttish barmaid moaning

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 This seems as appropriate a spot as any to announce the start of Thing Game 4. At last, by various dubious means, I have managed to fill my Diplomacy waiting list (without even having to resort to using my brother! - but thanks for the offer anyway, Paul), and so the line up will be:

Austria Christie Jane Steers: 67 Hencham Rd, Tooting, London SW17

England Dave Huson: (Term) 17 Bateson Hall, Mary Rose St, Alec Rose Lane,  
 Portsmouth, Hants, PO1 2BL  
 (Home) 6 Gaveston Drive, Berkhamstead, Herts, HP4 1JE

France Les Hazelwood:

Germany Juliën Shepley: Shackleton-House, Shackleton, Godalming, Surrey GU8 6AX

Italy John Wilman : 22 Metcalfe Rd, Cambridge, CB4 2DD ((pew - nice and short))

Russia Chris Gordon: 63 Festing Grove, Portsmouth, Hants

Turkey Nigel Bateman: 63 Festing Grove, Portsmouth, Hants.

Gamefees do not apply in this case, since you lucky chaps all come under my recruitment drive. You should know that England, Russia and Turkey all know each other, although from what I've heard I can't see a cartel building up here: and if there is one, I shall look askance at all three. To judge from her name, I would say that Austria is an expatriate American; is this correct? She was the only one not to submit a preference list. A double deadline will apply if requested only. 'Luck!

that we shouldn't order what we can't drink. My god, if they're that worried, they shouldn't serve us. Service like this contrasts pretty badly with that in most rural Scottish pubs, where one can drink 24 hours a day if need be. I am also somewhat worried by the cramped darts run, which can take you unawares and give you a dart in the head. Going deeper, I don't think the clientele are quite cool enough for me, to judge by the rapidity with which 'Headbutts' comes round on the jukebox. In short, the Star Royal is a classic case of trying to cram too many facilities into a small space.

And what's this here? Have I actually got some Hobby News?

### Hobby News

Are you kidding? Hobby news from the Thing would be coals to Newcastle. Not only am I a little behind the times, but there are so many editors amongst my readership that I'd be wasting space.

Put like that, I can't see any objection to a different way of wasting space than I've used so far, so here goes.

As a new editor, I have a proprietary interest in folds, so theoretically I should be well pleased by recent developments. This thought was prompted by the post this morning, which contained the final issue of Filibuster in its second form. In truth, however, I can only grieve at both this and the demise of Voice. This isn't because I would have rated either of them as favourite zines, so perhaps I'd better explain. You see, Filibuster represents the old guard of the hobby to me, a group firmly established in power when I entered in early 1978; and, basically, I hate to see change in any form. Who now remembers Relief, or Jigsaw, or any of the old mainstays? Although many of them weren't especially good. I suppose I feel the same way I did when John Lennon was shot (something that would mystify Baird and Palmer): another link with the past has been severed. The new centre of the Hobby is now, whatever Birks, Creese or Chapman may claim, (ecch) music and similar trashy fads. Ah well, I can but wait for the third version of Ethil: come on, John!

Voice I feel rather differently about. There were a lot of loyal readers to Voice, sure, but what gets on my nerves about the fold is the bloody orphans. I mean, look at the casual comments appended to orders in Voice 10:

"I've all but lost interest in Dippy"

"It's up to you if you want me to stay" ... "Second thought - replace me"

"I am glad to have time to say that I would really like to pull out of this"

- and they're just the ones who were kind enough to append comments to their orders! In many cases these comments were originally aimed at John, so it isn't the orphanage, which was anyway clean enough. In addition, I have one person going into anarchy, one person phoning after the deadline, one person who wrote a scrap of orders even later, and one person actually wanting to continue, bless him.

I am seriously thinking of declaring this game a joint win between that player and me, since we seem to be the only ones who have any interest left.

Err .. no, I'm not. I still have high hopes for this game to reach a natural conclusion, otherwise I'd have added incriminating names to the above details. Many of those with least interest are on the way out in any case. However, I wish to stress that I will not use standbys, and unless anyone objects I shall run the remainder of the game under my house rules.

The other bother about this is the parallel with my career, which will hit a rough spot this time next year with finals looming. Still, several others have managed to struggle through.

Good egg - I've left a little space for other hobby news. Pete Birks seems to have got his shit together and put the Counter Eurocon scheme on the road: if you are interested in a holiday with the hobby Proles in Portugal from 20th to 31st May for £186.50, let Pete know as soon as possible. I shan't be going: I notice that the membership appears to be largely what I described, apparently incorrectly, as the Birks Crowd in the MidCon report. 'Counter'? With Baird and Nye, together with the sort of crowd who would have eventually attended Eurocon anyway? But I have to admit that I'm more affected by a) the price (reasonable as it is) and b) the dates. Maybe two years from now?

A quick reminder also: Rusty Bolt votes to Ken Bain by 13 February. Be there!

From our New York Correspondent

Ignatius lowered his gargantuan rear onto Myrna's Art Nouveau chaise-longue, adjusted his green visor to cut out the harsh light, and began his task. In his flaccid paws he held a package sent by Patrolman Mancuso to replace his old copy of the Consolation of Philosophy, impounded for evidence. On opening this proved to be a royal blue volume, which pleased Ignatius greatly; the colour had, in his opinion, been grossly under-used since its heyday in the paintings of Giotto. The subject, also, appeared interesting: 'Godel, Escher, Bach' - a work which would apparently blend Mathematics with Philosophy in an entertaining manner. Mathematics had been one of Ignatius' undeclared passions since he far outshone the rest of his class by getting a 'B-' in the Sophomore class on Simple Arithmetic at Louisiana State. Reaching for a Dr Nut, he peered out over a greasy moustache with his astonishing yellow-blue eyes and began to read.

Yes, initially this seemed promising. The writer was obviously influenced by JS Bach, which was all to the good even if Ignatius' personal preference, Scarlatti, was of an earlier period. The fellow appeared to have some idea of the need for a proper theology and geometry. However, when Ignatius reached the first dialogue between Achilles and a Tortoise he found curious pains beginning in his stomach. "My God, do I believe what I'm reading!" he thundered. "This mongoloid offends all possible sensibility with his egregious assault on the classical tradition!" He was referring to the author's habit of putting the vernacular, and a rather repulsive vernacular at that, into the mouth of animals. It was not enough that he should be improbably interested in Escher and in abstract mathematics, but he was also to ejaculate at regular intervals "Yikes", "Good gravy", "Say, I once heard a word-puzzle.." or "Those cookies look delicious". It was at the last of these that Ignatius' valve sealed with an enervating plop! and, bounce as he might, he could not reopen it. Hofstadter's weltanschauung was quite unacceptable: placing such a dialogue in the mouths of his characters, once again, Hroswitha had ruined an initially promising venture.

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Or, to put it another way, this book is horribly 'folksy'. Hofstadter has only used these two characters because it will earn him the accolade that he has 'much in common with Lewis Carroll'. Horse-shit! The man is a talentless, pompous, long-winded American bore. I haven't read Carroll's use of a similar dialogue, but I expect that it shows more grasp of the subject. Hofstadter's characters might as well be Abbot and Costello, and indeed produce just as much that is unmemorable. Is this book really "of such depth, clarity, range, wit, beauty and originality", as Martin Gardner claims?

I don't see how it can be, given that it covers 760 closely packed pages. It is only by page 190 that we are treated to the finalisation of his exemplary formal mathematics system, simple though it is. Already he has brought in DNA, simple programming structures, and Zen. The former is unintelligible in context. The second covers stacks and recursive transition networks in ten pages, managing to be so verbose about them that even I, with some knowledge on the subject, am fairly confused by the end. And why bring in Zen at all? Over the following pages we are bombarded with koans which are all, as usual for koans, childish self-contradictions. They don't add anything to the thesis; Hofstadter is just playing with an idea that has taken hold. So impenetrable as the text that one longs for the relief of the dialogues, such as they are; but unfortunately, by half-way, the author tires of them, much as Plato in the Republic, and they occur with less frequency. By page 272 he has finally revealed that he is to produce a theorem of TMI which states "I am not a theorem of TMI"; by around page 450, he has actually achieved this aim. But though he may breathe a hearty sigh of relief, the reader must still wade through another 250 pages. Why? Because Hofstadter is not sure that he has yet convinced you of his eclectic brilliance, that's why. He is also able to show a wonderful book-knowledge of biology and a professional interest in artificial intelligence. Personally, I would rather get these from the original sources, which are surely written in a less dense style; and any Maths book should be able to explain a theorem as elegant as Godel's in a clearer and more concise style. As a final touch, the book is sprinkled with pictures that in the fine

traditions of History books themselves have no relevance to the text. In such a work the Rosetta Stone can be of only symbolic significance. And if the book teaches one thing clearly, it is that all Escher prints spring from the same, rather tired, idea, with perhaps only five major variations. I'm afraid that I find this book a terrible indictment of American education, whose shallow breadth I would attribute the incredible profusion of themes with little connection to the central idea.

As final comment, I append a quoted joke. If there's one sure way to recognise the essential worth of the thought processes behind any 750 page tractatus, it is to examine the humour within it.

(Ach) "By the way, another place where '4.33' would come in handy is in the Hall of the Big Cats, at feeding time"

(Tor) "Are you suggesting that Cage belongs in a zoo? Well, I guess that makes some sense..."

(Me) har har har har har har har har

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On the other hand, John Kennedy Toole's 'Confederacy of dunces' is a really good book. Few other American writers are so adept at sketching out such a wonderful, accurate picture of the poor negro: walk down into the slums of Philadelphia, watch the blacks drooping out of the window for lack of "air-condition", whoa, listen to the racial bias of pigs who really are pigs, and you'll see what I mean. Neither have I seen such a devastating description of the French Quarter of New Orleans, tourist trap par excellence. As for Ignatius Reilly, I am flabberghasted. This man has single-handedly redefined 'Habelasian' in a way that removes all the tedious long-windedness of the original, with its 264 different categories of shit, and leaves good, rip-roaring filth. As you may see I have tried to indicate on the previous page that Toole's style borders at times on the self-pastiche, and as a comedy novel the characterisation is bound to be narrow; but episodes like the 'Crusade for Moorish Dignity' are screamingly funny, and I defy anyone not to laugh. Hofstadter gets the hype; Toole gets ignored with such regularity that he shoots himself. As one might expect.

And does the following not remind you irresistably of Baird?

Abelman's Fry Goods  
Kansas City, Missouri  
USA

Mr I Abelman, Mongoloid, esq:

We have received by post your absurd comments about our trousers, the comments revealing, as they did, your total lack of contact with reality. We were you more aware, you would know or realise by now that the offending trousers were dispatched with our full knowledge that they were inadequate so far as length was concerned. ((24" inside leg!))

"Why? Why" you are in your incomprehensible babble, unable to assimilate stimulating concepts of commerce into your retarded and blighted worldview.

The trousers were sent to you (1) as a means of testing your initiative (A clever, wide-awake business concern should be able to make three-quarter length trousers a by-word of masculine fashion. Your advertising and merchandising programs are obviously faulty) and (2) as a means of testing your ability to meet the standards requisite in a distributor of our quality product .....

.... We do not wish to be bothered in the future by such tedious complaints. Please confine your correspondance in future to orders only. We are a busy and dynamic organisation whose mission needless effrontery and harassment can only hinder. If you molest us again, sir, you may feel the sting of the lash across your pitiful shoulders.

Yours in anger, etc

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And Birks is wrong when he says that all the characters are complete failures. In the finest traditions of farce/comedy, Gus Levy turns out to gain rather than lose from Reilly's ministrations. A book I have read twice, and will again.

Idle banter

An Intercourse with my Readers

or, What You Will

My, Shakespeare was a pretentious old fart, wasn't he?

Not that this has anything much to do with the burning issues with which your investigative Thing concerns itself this month. Roll out burning issue number 1:

Malcolm Smith "Sorry for the delay, but everything's chaotic in smoggy Boro, Cleveland loike, so I can't get owt done.

Bloody computer's knackered, so I can't get any work done ...  
The Shit on the Doorstep was really good; say, even with stiff competition you'll do real fine. Just suck Birks' and Creese's arses and you'll get mega-reviews. Probably why BR is getting funny ones these days."

Yes, a little local patois there to liven the murderous prose I've used thus far. This perplexing missive was accompanied by four copies of BR 5, for reasons I can't even guess at. Does anyone out there want one? This is just one more indication that young Smith is completely round the twist, and this being so I don't think he has anything to complain about concerning his reviews, which seem to reflect this common belief. Need I say that I recommend Bohemian Rhapsody to all interested in an enthusiastic home for their Diplomacy game, and can I have issue 6, please, Malc?

As for this vile allegation of coprophagia, I can only wonder at your effrontery, sirrah! I get the impression from other casual comments that many people consider me a kind of apprentice Creese with Birkean influence. Should I find such a fate overtaking me I will probably jack the whole thing up in disgust. As for sucking, I can only say that I would review the miserable organs of both these creeps if only I could think of anything at all original to say; but, of course, when a zine has been going for as long as WHK! or GH! almost everything that can be said has been said already. I may get around to it if I get sufficient new members of the Hobby to subscribe, since they above all will require the sordid truth to be told. And have you noticed how the art of zine reviewing seems to have died the death of late? One of the traits that characterised the early Hobby as I remember it was the frequent insertion of mini-reviews, whether to fill space or simply to engage in mutual back-slapping I don't know. The practice is now in abeyance except in folds like that of Voice. I blame it on Creese, who produced a couple of lethargic 'in-depth' reviews, earned himself a certain notoriety thereby, and set an impossible target for later editors to follow. Were I to bring a fresh mind to the problem, I can see myself alienating a whole lot of people in my inimicable way; I would simply be crushingly rude to everybody for no apparent reason. This is apparently a bad thing for my public image.

And the next person to cheapen the name of this magnificent circular will get a plastic turd by return of post...

Dave Huson "I hope we will have game statements before the game starts: I Hampshire intend to be thoroughly rude to Chris and Nigel. In line with this, perhaps you'd like to reconsider before you slash press. Interaction between players is one of the things that keeps the Hobby on its feet, surely. Don't scare players away by threatening no press"

Ah, who says I want that kind of player? From my ivory platform I can say that most of the press I have seen in the last four years has been embarrassingly jejeune or useless. This one thought alone consoles me whatever I type. Within limits press is fine, and sometimes even a joy, but I will not go the way of DAS by lapsing from censorship. For the benefit of Andrew Poole and others, Piggot's second law of fanzines ((or is it first?)) states that editors shall publish what they please, and this seems fine to me. As an old hand I can also recognise the pattern of new, struggling zines: they tend to get a sudden glut of games which overwhelm the editor with ennui, and I am simply not going to succumb. Meden agan, as the Greeks say, meden agan. Only, they say it in a script that fits the sound better. Game statements are fine, though again I may chop bits out if they're too long - two or three paras are surely enough.

"Is it just my interpretation, or are you very angry when you type?" -  
Doubleday examines his trembling hands with concern: is this blind fury, or has he



just got the DTs again? - "Issuc 1 reeks of optimism,; since then issues 2 & 3 have changed in tone. Let's have the old enthusiastic Pete back! "

Ek! First Brian Creese accuses me to my face of looking like an 'Angry Young Man', and now this! I must start the old death-list up before I'm saddled with a reputation like Mike Allaway's, only for anger rather than depression. Believe me, Dave, I type each issue with an idiot grin on my silly face, but until I branch out into Litho I won't be able to show documentary evidence for this. Less anger than yer seminal Fear and Loathing, I would say; but I'm sorry if I don't come over as ~~drippy~~ affable as Tom Tweedy. Dave also appends a do-it-yourself letter to Thing:

I think the Thing is \_\_\_\_\_ and when I read it I \_\_\_\_\_. It amazes me how anyone can possibly \_\_\_\_\_ in the face of such \_\_\_\_\_. I spend hours \_\_\_\_\_ in preparation for its arrival. I have written letters to the Post Office telling them to \_\_\_\_\_ with this \_\_\_\_\_ property.

... into which blanks the reader is invited to write. I dunno, Dave, the only word I can think of that fits is some form of the root 'puke'. 'Ta...

John Norris, "A few thoughts on the Thing ... You seem to be having difficulties getting players, with the current glut of opportunities for games. Have you thought of offering one or more of United, Cricretboss, and En Garde, all of which seem to have demand exceeding the supply. En Garde also provides entertaining press, with lots of abusive press - real escapism! "

Indeed I have thought of including such games, but only to crush the thought at birth. Alan Farr has also suggested I start a Sopwith game up, for which I have and can understand the rules. I will not, however, be taking up any of these suggestions as yet; the first three are not my sort of games, and the mere censorship of press would be a great pain, while the latter is something I shall have to think about during the holidays, since at present I'm not sure that it is any more suitable a postal game than is hare and Tortoise. Any ideas? These and other suggestions are most welcome. Perhaps the one secret hankering I have is to run a game of 'The Crusades', which looks all jolly fun, but I'm not sure I could cope safely with the rules or with the set-up. The Thing will not be pushed into the mould of a gameszine any more than it will into any other mould: simply because I enjoy games in a broad sense, I do not necessarily enjoy running them. Such an attribute is not in my opinion conducive to good editorship. And as for chat,

Colin Grubb "I see the British government is now cutting research into fusion power; this is typical of their short-sighted view. Fusion, when developed, will be cleaner and cheaper than fission power, which the government is still spending money on. The development of fusion power would give us enough energy for all our needs (and it doesn't make bombs), which the 'soft' energy options will not."

Aargh! Here we have a man with the opposite intention, to force me into the Creese mould (and so the humble letter column reaches a rather satisfying sonata form, as we see here the recapitulation of the first three). Magazine for reject players of RR in NMR! this may be, but for stale NMR! arguments? Never! Although I agree with the general drift of this letter I suggest that Colin and anyone else interested takes a look at Jerry Pournelle's 'A Step Further out' which covers the subject in great and compelling detail. In it you will find equations suggesting that fusion is not as safe as the educated layman would think, after all. Meanwhile I suggest that 'it doesn't make bombs' is misleading, since fusion is now the main principle behind the arsenal of the free world; people make bombs, and people with technical knowledge about fusion are far more dangerous in the abstract than others, since Hydrogen is a somewhat easier element to isolate than is Uranium. However, I'd rather leave the subject, which is normally clouded by ignorant political bigotry, there. Anyone for Biological Engineering?

One of the problems with producing a new magazine, of course, is the absolute dearth of correspondants: readers are either editors themselves, or, often, new converts to the Hobby who don't realize that editors are grateful for any old rubbish, as long as it gives them something to type up. In this context, then, I'd like to thank all the contributors above, and point out that I welcome contributions from anyone, obscure or otherwise. Preferably otherwise. Perhaps new 'chatzine' ((ugh,ugh,ughrh)) editors should spend much of their effort in recruiting the inveterate letter-writers ... ?

Unk, last page, thank goodness. I will at this point explain that the back page will in future be formatised, as I expect the expression is in the 'Sun'. To put it another way, it will be boring and predictable, as opposed to boring and unpredictable. Basically it is going to be an overflow page: Richard Walkerdine points out that under my present system of game numbering, Thing is liable to not only to hit the doormat with a thud but to go through it with a resounding crash, since its weight will increase ad infinitum with the number of games. More serious a problem is the possibility that I will cock something up on a specified game page and need more space to explain it: so in case this unthinkable thing happens, I hereby warn all gamesplayers that they should always look on the back page in case I have anything further to add. I'll get you reading the Thing cover to cover yet! As for RJW's comment, I get round it by numbering new games with defunct numbers where necessary; I'm still cool.

And the first thing to say on this month's overflow is that Terry Hill may be expected to drop out from Thing game two very fast. I heard once from him by telephone, in which call he expressed interest in a game start of RR, but he's been silent since. Perhaps he's changed his mind; perhaps he's taken umbrage at my attempts to speed the gamestart up (although no-one else did); perhaps I even sent Thing 3 and his copy of the map to the wrong address. I don't know, but at the moment I don't hold a subscription from him. I would rather not have a four player game on this board, so I've made a quick set of moves for him and will endeavour to get a volunteer replacement. If Terry was annoyed at my efforts, I wish he'd be bothered to write to tell me.

While on the same game, please look at your maps. Since these are Butehorn maps, and lack a numbering system, I've been forced to scribble one on myself. In the case of Richard Morris this seems to be just plain wrong; but in Ken Bain's case there seems to be a mix-up over the direction the numbers increase in. Could you all check that the numbers on your map correspond with 'reality', which is that the southernmost row of hexes, below London, are numbered from A1 to N1 to A41 to N41, going right to left. Please also check the other numbered rows, which may have skipped one or two by mistake. All clear? Currently I can work out what you mean, but as the options become more complicated I may not be able to do so.

Another whizzo prang feature this page will have is the occasional forewarning of future developments, and this month's lucky winner is the rules for 'Kleinstaaterei', a lovely pretentious name for a simple cross between Diplomacy and RR set on the German map. I've been meaning to do something of the sort for a long time, and unless I get a statement of intent down I shall never get around to doing it. So be forewarned: next issue may well contain the rules for what certain nameless editors call 'those variant things'. Unfortunately the supposed resurgence of interest in variants is largely an artificial creation of editors, so I don't expect to fill a list for Kleinstaaterei. Still, you never know, and the concept may be interesting.

Another variant which I hope will enjoy increasing popularity is the Sharp, or F(Rom), variant. I'm currently playing in the second gamestart of this in NMR! as Austria, which just happens to be my favourite country anyway, and in order to save myself diplomacy time I shall append my thoughts to 'Oolite' over the rest of the page. Firstly, the alteration from the original game is so minor that my diplomacy position at the start hasn't changed much, bar a considerably lesser paranoia over a possible Italian attack; indeed, the lunatic von Metzke attack becomes almost palatable for me! Don't worry, Pete, I shan't be trying that one out quite yet. The obvious Italian line is a back-to-back cartel with Italy, which can occasionally be arranged to great profit even on the cut-throat normal board. In this case it will lead to a reasonable parity of gains by the two partners, since Italy can use his two fleets to more advantage than he would his two armies. However, I've already had a communication from Birks and he doesn't seem too keen on this plan, so I'm left with the usual Austrian options - Russia or Turkey. Birks, as usual, has a rather difficult attack on France, a long range pot-shot at Turkey, or a double-cross on me. So what's changed? Very little, apart from the extra security that Austria gains. I wonder how many people put Italy high on their lists? I put it higher than usual, but since I usually put it sixth this is not very meaningful. Perhaps some other minor alterations need to be tried?