

From the editor



Who's leading the way?

Dear reader,

We welcome our new authors Alexandr Predke, Iva Videnova, Davorin Kuljasevic, Martin Lorenzini and Luke McShane. It is important to know the theoretical views of strong, active grandmasters. Predke enlightens us on two topical lines. Another strong, active GM is Anton Korobov. His exploits in the currently most fashionable line in the 6. ♗g5 Najdorf, described in Ruslan Ponomarev's Survey, are very worthwhile.

If you want to avoid the Najdorf altogether, because of the vast amount of theory, the Survey of Ioannis Simeonidis offers a valid alternative. The system with an early fianchetto of White's queen's bishop, first used with success by Magnus Carlsen, is becoming increasingly popular, and a sequel may soon be in order.

Generally speaking, White dictates the course of the opening. But it can be different, as I explain in my Survey of a relatively new line in the Nimzo-Indian, Noa Variation. It may become popular, since the results with it are very promising for Black.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov is doing extremely well these days. A well-balanced opening repertoire is part of his success. In the Catalan, against Kramnik, he picked up an old weapon of Gennady Kuzmin. The Survey is by José Vilela. Luke McShane highlights another variation favoured by Mamedyarov: the king's bishop fianchetto for Black in the Ruy Lopez. It is certainly more interesting than the Berlin Wall.

Anish Giri has also been doing very well of late. I was impressed by the way he got an edge against Navara from a seemingly innocuous line of the Caro Kann Advance Variation. The Survey on this line is by Luis Rodi.

Jan Timman

Opening Highlights



Luke McShane

To play on top level without studying openings for hours a day requires creativity. Luke McShane, who only just missed the British title recently after a brilliant performance, likes to **treat the Ruy Lopez like a King's Indian**. His fondness for the Neo-Steinitz with 6...g6, a favourite also of Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, started when Nigel Short caused him some trouble with this set-up a year ago. We managed to coax Luke into writing a delightful story on this fighting line – read it on page 152.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Many of today's top players evade mainstream theory, as many recent Yearbook Surveys illustrate. 'Shakh' Mamedyarov, the world's steady no. 3, lately confessed that pre-arranged draws are not alien to him. 'Normally', though, he is a fearsome fighter with creative opening ideas. At the Berlin Candidates he found a way to **go for glory even against Vladimir Kramnik's dreaded Catalan Opening** – see José Vilela's Survey on page 158.



Anton Korobov

There is a **way to avoid long theoretical lines in the Najdorf Sicilian with 6. ♘g5**! It starts with 6... ♖bd7, and it's quite popular among chess aces in Ukraine. Anton Korobov is one of the pioneers on the black side. He has faced both White's main replies, 7. ♘c4 as well as the increasingly popular 7. ♖e2, against which Black's hottest set-up is 7...h6 8. ♘h4 g6. Korobov's famous compatriot Ruslan Ponomarev writes on this revamped line on page 46.

Alexandr Predke

Another new Yearbook author is Alexandr Predke, a 2600+ Russian GM who is very active in what is arguably still the toughest chess environment: Russian top tournaments. The 24-year-old but already battle-hardened Muscovite debuts with two Surveys: one on the **sharp 10.h4 in the Steinitz French** (page 88), which he used to beat Alexei Shirov, and the other on the **subtle 8.a3 in the Classical Queen's Indian** (page 180), which caused him some trouble on the black side.





Anish Giri

So far it's been a great year for Anish Giri, who shared first prize at Tata and beat WC Challenger Fabiano Caruana in the Germany Bundesliga. Not only Anish's play but also his pencil is getting sharper and sharper, as you can see for yourself in Rodi's Survey on page 118. **Giri's analysis of his Caro-Kann win over David Navara** at Shamkir shows very nicely how a human player can beat another (strong!) human from positions that get a 0.00 computer assessment.

Iva Videnova & Davorin Kuljasevic

After Erwin and Alina l'Ami, this is the second time we hail a chess couple as two new authors: Bulgarian WGM Iva Videnova and Croatian GM Davorin Kuljasevic. Talk about a win-win situation! Davo's first is about **a rock-solid approach to the Fianchetto Grünfeld** (page 187), whereas Iva lashes out with **a fascinating rook sac in a theoretical Four Knights Sicilian** (page 61), which she employed to win the Pleven tournament this year.



Ioannis Simeonidis

An amazing new trend was set by our World Champion against Radek Wojtaszek in Shamkir this year. After 1.e4 c5 Magnus played 2.♘c3, took back on d4 with the queen, withdrew it, and then fianchettoed his queen's bishop! It's **a revolutionary Anti-Sicilian idea** which quickly found many followers. The concept came from Greek IM Ioannis Simeonidis, who relates how this system was born on page 79. Read Simeonidis' fabulous story – it's really a chess theoretician's dream come true!

Martin Lorenzini

For decades, players of the Scandinavian have been dodging the natural follow-up 3...♗a5 in favour of the semi-natural 3...♗d8 or 3...♗d6. Unfairly so, argues Martin Lorenzini. **The Scandinavian is the most direct reply to 1.e4, so why not continue with the straightforward 7...♙b4?** On page 128, the Argentinian GM advocates this line favoured by his Czech colleague Viktor Laznicka. It leads to lively play, and, if anything, is sure to wrongfoot your opponent.



Your Variations

Trends & Opinions

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HOT! = a trendy line or an important discovery

SOS = an early deviation

GAMBIT = a pawn sacrifice in the opening

Echoes and expansions

The FORUM is a platform for discussion of developments in chess opening theory in general and particularly in variations discussed in previous Yearbook issues.

Contributions to these pages should be sent to: editors@newinchess.com

The London System through the eyes of VD

by Adhiban Baskaran

QP 5.12 (D02)

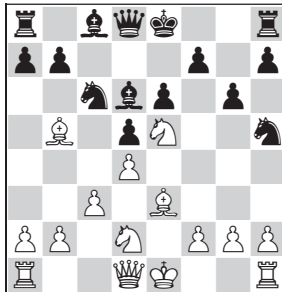
YB 124

There were many good things about the Survey on the London System by Gujrathi Vidit in Yearbook 124. Let's start off with the good stuff first and then proceed to the dirty stuff ☺.

I liked the selection of the games: simple yet instructive ones, and I would never have forgiven VD if he had failed to include the stem game of this line, Giri-So, London 2016!

The analysis and the many novelties VD mentions are really top-notch. One of my favourites was:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♙f4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.c3 ♘c6 6.♘bd2 cxd4 7.exd4 ♘h5 8.♙e3 ♙d6 9.♘e5 g6 10.♙b5

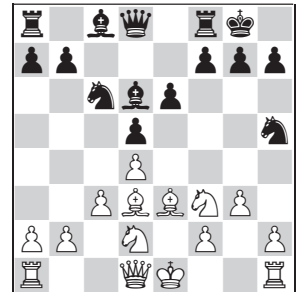


10...0-0!N in the notes to Dominguez Perez-Kryvoruchko, Varadero 2016. I was surprised to find that Black missed the

opportunity to employ this stunning novelty in a later game Gordievsky-V.Kovalev, Moscow 2017, but luckily the record has been set straight with two wins for Black towards the end of 2017 and one in 2018.

Although I agree with much of his analysis, there were some lines in which I feel the final word hasn't been said yet.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♙f4 e6 4.e3 c5 5.c3 ♘c6 6.♘bd2 cxd4 7.exd4 ♘h5 8.♙e3 ♙d6 9.g3 0-0 10.♙d3



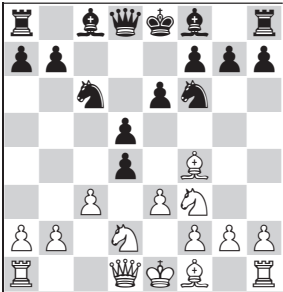
In Grischuk-Nakamura, Paris rapid 2017, VD recommends **10...♘f6** as the better option and after **11...0-0** gives **11...♙d7** as equal. I am not sure about this assessment as White is playing the QGD Exchange Variation with reversed colours, and could still pretend to an edge. While **11...♘g4** has been given as a mistake after **12.♙xh7+ ♘xh7 13.♘g5+ ♔g8 14.♙xg4 f6 15.♘gf3 ♙e8 16.♘h4±** as the final conclusion, here



Santosh Vidit Gujrathi

my comp feels Black has full compensation for the pawn due to the two bishops and potential control over the light squares. There are also striking similarities between this position and the pawn sac line in the Meran with ♖g5 ♙h2+ with colours reversed. I leave the final verdict to the reader...

**1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 d5 3.♙f4 e6
4.e3 c5 5.c3 ♗c6 6.♗bd2 cxd4**



The one thing I am not forgiving VD for is that he doesn't mention 7.cxd4 as an option (though I am not overruling the possibility that it was just outside the subject of his Survey). While I was aware of it, thanks to my preparation on the white side against a certain someone... whose name rhymes with 'WE DID IT'! Anyway this **7.cxd4** is not such a big deal as after

7...♝b6 8.♞b1 (8.♙d3 was the only try to pretend for an edge, but Black is doing fine here also) **8...♗h5** White was already struggling to equalize in Artemiev-AD, Sharjah 2018. This whole line with ...cxd4 and ...♗h5 is doing well and it was also the reason why Artemiev decided to deviate with ...cxd4, hoping for unexplored grounds.

Do your Yearbook exercises!

by Frank Erwich

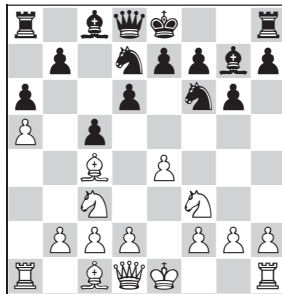
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YB 123, 126, 127

Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa Wesley So

Leon rapid m 2018 (2)

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.♙b5+ ♗d7
4.a4 ♗gf6 5.♗c3 g6 6.a5 a6?!
7.♙c4 ♙g7?**



What would you play? Of course, **8.♙xf7+!**. After **8...♙xf7 9.♗g5+ ♙g8 10.♗e6 ♝e8** (the a5-pawn prevents both **10...♝b6** and **10...♝xa5**) **11.♗c7** White will be an exchange and a pawn up. Thanks to the a5-pawn the knight on a8 can always escape via b6 if necessary. **♙xf7+** followed by **♗g5+-e6** or **♗g5** and then **♙xf7+**, **♗e6**, is a well-known motif, but does not always have tremendous impact. Take for instance the Philidor Defence: **1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4**

♗f6 4.♗c3 ♗bd7 5.♙c4 ♙e7 6.♗g5 (6.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 7.♗g5+ ♙g8 8.♗e6 ♝e8 9.♗xc7 ♝g6! (with a pawn on g6, as in the above game, this move is impossible, of course) **10.♗xa8 ♝xg2 11.♞f1 exd4 12.♝xd4 ♗e5** is very good for Black) **6...0-0 7.♙xf7+ ♞xf7 8.♗e6 ♝e8 9.♗xc7 ♝d8 10.♗xa8**. White is again an exchange and a pawn up, but the difference with 'Pragg'-So is that the knight on a8 will be lost after **10...b6/b5** and **11...♙b7/♙a6**. Of course **10.♗e6** makes no sense as Black can choose between **10...♝b6** and **10...♝a5**. A small change in the position (pawn on a2 or a5) can make a big difference in the outcome! Unfortunately for the youngest grandmaster in the world, he went for d.d3 and eventually lost. Moreover, the position after 7 moves was not new. This position was even an Exercise in Krisztian Szabo's Survey in Yearbook 126. In Zhou WeiQi-Szoen (Oropesa del Mar 2000) White did play **8.♙xf7+** and after **8...♙f8 9.0-0** Black resigned on move 26.

It's not the first time an Exercise from a Survey is seen in practice very soon afterwards. In YB 123, Vidit Gujrathi wrote about the Chigorin Variation of the Ruy Lopez:

Ivan Saric

Axel Delorme

Helsingor 2018 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♗f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♗a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 ♗d7 12.♗bd2 exd4 13.cxd4 ♗c6 14.d5 ♗ce5 15.a4 ♞b8 16.axb5 axb5 17.♗xe5 ♗xe5 18.f4 ♗g6 19.♗f3 ♙h4 20.♞f1 ♙g3 21.f5 ♗e5 22.♗g5

Chess players in the North!

by Victor Bologan



Victor Bologan, a top grandmaster and writer of several best-selling chess books, scans the most recent top events for new trends in opening play.

To be honest, I have become slightly tired of writing about one and the same players, and one and the same openings, and it is probable that the readers also have to suppress a fit of yawning when looking at yet another Berlin or Anti-Berlin.

But suddenly I myself was 'fortunate' enough to sit down at the board in a respectable round-robin in Poikovsky, in parallel with which the traditional super-tournament in Stavanger took place.

Of its own accord the theme of comparison suggested itself. A comparison of everything – openings, players, standard of play, venue and, finally, ratings. Incidentally, this last factor, clearly in favour of the tournament in Norway, is an objective reality, as was confirmed by my disastrous 1.5 out of 9.

The basis of the worst result of my career was my play in the Queen's Indian with black. It is interesting that in Norway it did not occur once. There Black performed quite successfully in the Queen's Gambit Declined.

Santosh Gujrathi Vidit

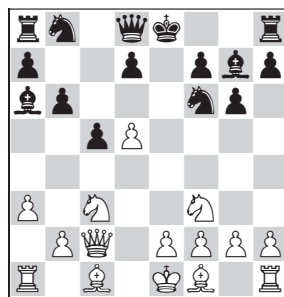
Victor Bologan

Poikovsky 2018 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♙f3 b6 4.g3

Generally speaking, I was intending to play another variation... 4.a3 ♙a6 5.♖c2 c5. It would appear that after this article the 5...c5 variation will go out of use for a long

time: 6.d5 exd5 7.cxd5 g6 8.♘c3 ♙g7.



A) 9.h4! is an exceptionally strong idea, which casts doubts on the entire 5... c5 variation: 9...0-0 (9...h6 10.h5 g5 11.♘xg5 hxg5 12.♙xg5±) 10.h5 ♘xh5 11.g4 ♙f6 12.g5 ♘e8 13.♖e4 ♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 f5 15.♖h4 ♖e7 16.c4 d6 17.♙b2± Stockfish 260318-Houdini 6.03, chessdom.com 2018;

B) 9.e4 ♙xf1 10.♙xf1 d6 11.♖a4+ ♖d7 12.♖xd7+ ♘bxd7 13.♙f4 ♘e7 14.h3 (14.♘b5 ♘e8) 14...a6 15.a4 ♘e8 16.♘d2 ♘e5 17.♙e2 f5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.♙xe5 ♙xe5 20.♘c4 ♖b8= Akobian-Onischuk, St Louis 2018;

C) After 9.♙f4 it was possible to play 9...d6 10.h4 h6 immediately. I did not want to have to face h4-h5 after castling:

C1) 11.g3 ♖e7 12.♖a4+ (it turns out that after the simple 12.0-0-0 0-0 the attack again works for White: 13.h5 ♘xh5 14.♖xh5 gxh5 15.♘e4 ♖d8 16.♙h3±) 12...b5! (a typical sacrifice, allowing Black not only to draw breath, but even to partially seize the initiative) 13.♘xb5

Relevance

by Erwin I'Ami



In this column, Dutch grandmaster and top chess coach Erwin I'Ami scours the thousands of new correspondence games that are played every month for important novelties that may start new waves in OTB chess also. Every three months it's your chance to check out the best discoveries from this rich chess source that tends to be underexposed.

Mayhem in the correspondence world! In New In Chess 2018/2 Nigel Short discussed the world of correspondence chess in a piece titled 'Obsolescence'. Nigel wrote that correspondence chess had a rich history until we arrived at the age of computers with their 'cold, harsh verdict'. Let me put it frankly: of course he has a point. The computers have made an enormous impact on chess and on correspondence chess in particular. But does that mean correspondence chess no longer serves a purpose? New In Chess 2018/3 saw a fair amount of reactions to Nigel's column and I particularly liked Kirill Oseledets' reply to the notion that playing with the help of computers is pointless. [...] it is similar to saying scientists should not use computers in their research, because that undermines their achievements. Chess may be

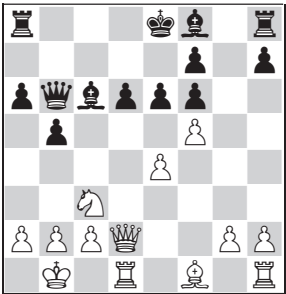
purely a sport, but it is also art and science for others [...] Spot on!

We start this Yearbook's harvest with a game by my fellow countryman Tom Bus. He is a devotee of the Kozul Variation in the Classical Sicilian and this line has served him well in plenty of games. In the following game, however, his opponent introduces a strong new idea.

Jawhar Ben Fredj
Tom Bus

ICCF 2017

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘f6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♞d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♙d7
The Kozul Variation, named after Zdenko Kozul who has employed this line on many dozens of occasions.
9.f4 b5 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.♙b1 ♞b6 12.♘xc6 ♙xc6 13.f5



Obviously both White and Black had interesting deviations along the way, but going through all of them would lead us outside the scope of this column. I believe White's handling of the position is the most critical.

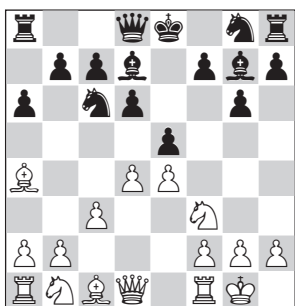


Jawhar Ben Fredj

Solid and flexible

by Luke McShane

- | | | |
|----|------------|------------|
| 1. | e4 | e5 |
| 2. | ♘f3 | ♘c6 |
| 3. | ♙b5 | a6 |
| 4. | ♙a4 | d6 |
| 5. | c3 | ♙d7 |
| 6. | d4 | g6 |
| 7. | 0-0 | ♙g7 |



Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

According to Wikipedia, there are about two dozen chess openings named after the 1st World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz. Many are of little significance, but the French Steinitz is still a major main line (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5). The Steinitz Defence in the Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 d6) is too passive to attract many followers, but the ‘Neo-Steinitz’ or ‘Deferred Steinitz’ (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6) is a more compelling proposition. Flicking in 3...a6 ensures that Black will not have to cede control of the centre, since 5.d4 b5 is fully satisfactory for Black. Top players like Mamedyarov, Ivanchuk and Short have often used the Neo-Steinitz, and common sense suggests that unpretentious developing moves like 4...d6 must be respectable. Once you factor

in different move orders which transpose to the Neo-Steinitz, such as the Smyslov Variation with 3...g6, the pool of regulars includes Carlsen and Caruana.

After the introductory moves of the Neo-Steinitz (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6) the most commonly played move is 5.c3. We won’t cover the Siesta Variation with 5...f5 in this article (see the Survey by Nikolay Ninov in Yearbook 126). Instead, 5...♙d7 is the main move, and after 6.d4 the road forks again. Both 6...♘ge7 and 6...♘f6 have been played plenty of times by strong players, but we will focus on Mamedyarov’s favourite 6...g6. The position after 7.0-0 ♙g7 has been reached a couple of thousand times, and this is the key position for this article.

The critical option

From the above diagram position, 8.d5 is a critical option, aiming for a King’s Indian structure. Practice has shown that Black’s healthy development promises a comfortable game despite the exchange

of light-squared bishops. Playing ...f7-f5 before ...g8-f6 saves time (even if ...h7-h6 is included). White's centre often comes under serious pressure after ...f7-f5 and ...c7-c6. The games Nakamura-Carlsen and Gopal-Caruana both illustrate this.

White has many sensible alternatives to closing the centre with 8.d5, of which the most important is 8.♖e1.

Some sensible alternatives

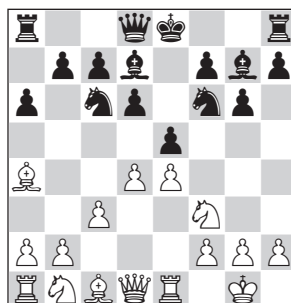
Instead, 8.♗g5 f6 9.♗e3 ♘h6 doesn't seem to cause Black great inconvenience, as f7 is a reasonable square for the knight. After 10.dxe5, Black is best off simply recapturing with the d-pawn, with approximate equality. Still, these symmetrical positions are rich. It is worth playing over the games S.Zhigalko-Vavulin and Firouzja-Fier. The former is an impressive positional squeeze from start to finish. The latter game shows that 8.dxe5 should not be dismissed as a feeble equalizer. However, White's early initiative didn't amount to much, and Black was in good shape before he blundered.

Alternatively, 8.♗e3 ♘f6 9.♗bd2 lets Black choose between the straightforward 9...0-0 and chasing the bishop with 9...♗g4 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗h4 ♖e7 with murky play. Mamedyarov opted for the murky option in a basque game against Yu Yangyi in December 2017.

The main move

Let's return to the main move, 8.♖e1. In the Ruy Lopez, ♖f1-e1 is nearly always useful. The bishop won't get harassed on c1, and the ♘b1 may yet wish to find a home on c3. After 8.♖e1, Black has an important choice. My

interest in this line was sparked by the game McShane-Short from the British Knockout 2017, where Nigel opted for 8...♗ge7. After 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♗bd2 h6 11.dxe5 I attempted to get a grip on the queenside (like Zhigalko), but Nigel didn't allow that to happen – see the notes. Impressed by this, I tried 8...♗ge7 on the black side against Ni Hua at the World Rapid, 2017. He went for 9.d5, which is importantly different from 8.d5 discussed earlier. After 9...♗b8 10.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 11.♗e3 I played 11...h6 and got myself into desperate trouble, although I won the game in the end. I would have done better to follow the steady example of Karjakin-Carlsen with 11...♗g8. After 8.♖e1, although Nigel's favourite 8...♗ge7 is the most popular move, and I followed him, I'm not sure why it is preferable to 8...♗f6, as preferred by Caruana and Carlsen. Firstly, although they may transpose if White plays d4-d5, it's worth noting that after 8...♗ge7 9.d5 ♗b8, Jakovenko tried 10.c4!? instead of exchanging on d7. Secondly, if White does not play d4-d5, ...f7-f5 is very risky, so leaving this pawn unblocked is of limited benefit. However, it's worth noting that 8...♗f6 entails a pawn sacrifice:



9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.dxe5 ♗xe4 11.exd6 0-0 12.dxc7 ♖xc7. Black has decent compensation, but perhaps this position

Modernized?

by Glenn Flear



Englishman Glenn Flear lives in the south of France. For every Yearbook he reviews a selection of new chess opening books. A grandmaster and a prolific chess author himself, Flear's judgment is severe but sincere, and always constructive.

In the review section this time, there are a couple of Thinkers Publishing books, both being part of their *Modernized* series. The use of this term is naturally aimed at catching people's attention, perhaps creating a sense that a 'modern approach' to the opening (whatever that means!) has been employed.

If the M-word is familiar, there is a good reason, as Metropolitan Chess Publishing have also brought out a couple of titles (*Modernized: The Open Sicilian*, by Amanov & Kavutskiy (2015, see Yearbook 116) and Bojkov's *Modernized: The King's Indian Defense* in 2014, see Yearbook 112), but these were a while ago. Are both publishers aware of this situation, I wonder?

My impression is that there is a tendency, in such works, for the author to make extensive efforts in those areas where he has something novel to say, whilst keeping more to the basics on the boring old stuff where not much has changed recently.

We consumers of chess theory aren't too worried about who publishes what and how they decide to name it, as long as it's good stuff. Still, perhaps this goes to show that when it comes to chess-book-title-terminology there is nothing new under the sun. However, what is certainly new this time are a couple of the authors, so

there is definitely some sort of modernization going on!

Adrien Demuth

The Modernized Reti

Thinkers Publishing 2018

For a reviewer, it's often stimulating to read through a newcomer's book. In general, a novel author will be determined to make a good impression, so he'll put a great deal of effort into his writing. I enjoy discovering their unique way of making their case, expressing their views, and generally trying to present their own analyses and conclusions. Adrien Demuth comes into this category and doesn't disappoint.

Of course, it helps that he knows a fair bit about the subject in question, which is the case here, as he has played various forms of the Réti against many a grandmaster, including some of the world's elite. Other recent treatises on this opening (I'm thinking of those by Delchev with Semkov, and Viktor Mikhalevski) have led to the transformation of the Réti from a largely positional backwater for sedentary souls into a theoretically mainstream weapon.

Nowadays, starting a game as White with the king's knight means less of 'I'll get my bits out in a sensible way and then see what happens' and more a series of ultra-critical