

Cyrus Lakdawala

The Trompovsky Attack

move by move

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About the Author

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

Also by the Author:

Play the London System

A Ferocious Opening Repertoire

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The Caro-Kann: Move by Move

The Four Knights: Move by Move

Capablanca: Move by Move

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Kramnik: Move by Move

The Colle: Move by Move

The Scandinavian: Move by Move

Botvinnik: Move by Move

The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move

Korchnoi: Move by Move

Acknowledgements

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Series Foreword

Move by Move is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate – as much as possible – lessons between chess teachers and students.

All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and to study chess in general.

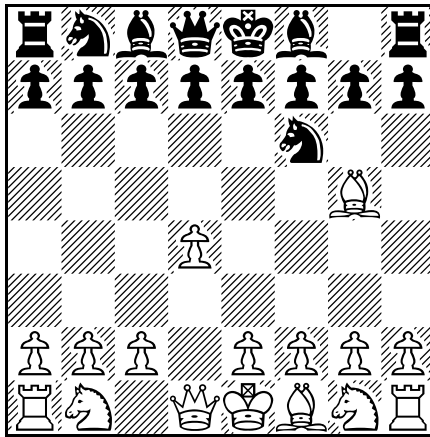
Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of Move by Move. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms,
Everyman Chess

Introduction

I see the bad moon arising. I see trouble on the way.

The Trompowsky: Dispenser of Abstractions



The DNA of every person on earth is virtually identical. Yet infinitesimally slight differences in our species give birth to the vast array of ugly and attractive, cruel and compassionate, idiotic and wise, those who take and those who give, evil and holy. A chess game is the same way. The tiniest shift gives rise to destinies as varied as winning, drawing and losing. The Trompowsky is an opening very much like this as well, where we reach hair-trigger positions which alter our destiny with one seemingly trivial inaccurate or accurate move.

In most openings, the positions we reach are like one of those dreams where the landscape always remains the same, no matter how far your dream character travels. But most certainly not in the Trompowsky, a paradoxical byway and an inexhaustible font for originality, a reality where 'normal' fails to apply and the solution to our problems is often a paradox within a paradox. It's difficult to label that which lacks an abiding identity and in the Tromp, accidental happenings – both terrifying and joyful – have a way of unexpectedly shaping our futures.

Yet our opening is not a case of ambition outweighing rationality. Deep down, we sense

a stratum of rationality behind what appears to be purely irrational. On our second move, our not-so-subtle message blares, as we issue the ultimatum: Play in my backyard, or else!

Our bishop arises from nowhere, just itching to create unrest. Almost instantly, we withdraw recognition of opening theory's intimidating authority and incite rebellion. 2 ♗g5 stands outside the terms of a 'normal' opening's contract. Be warned: the Tromp is an opening of wild fluctuations and our games rarely flow smoothly, in a consistently upward trajectory. We enter a realm where measurement of known quantities isn't so easy. The positions often defy physical laws and we find ourselves faced with paralyzingly difficult over-the-board choices and compromises.

People of cautious nature tend to live long lives, while graveyards are filled with optimists. The Tromp, I'm afraid, falls under the latter category. I tend to engage the Tromp when desperate for a win and unafraid of loss. For three decades the opening has been my not-so-secret weapon of choice in critical, must-win games. The Trompowsky is a very difficult opening system to play with a degree of skill. Play it without full understanding and familiarity, and we risk sounding like a Mozart symphony performed and assassinated by a high school orchestra. I originally took up the Trompowsky with a dreamer's natural aversion to mathematical measurement. Today, 30 years later, all this has altered, and the opening originally intended to dodge theory is now encircled by reams of it.

There are few things more depressing than the realization of your long labours having been rendered null and void. In a way we do just this to our booked up opponents, by engaging the Tromp. For King's Indian, Grünfeld, Nimzo-Indian, Queen's Indian, Slav, Queen's Gambit players, their theoretical knowledge – and more importantly, the experience accumulated from these lines – virtually vaporizes after our second move. With our second move we may disarm a normally well-armed theoretician and toss him or her into a world of partially-formed images, murky speculations, half-recollections of positions which shift in and out of focus into writhing, alien configurations.

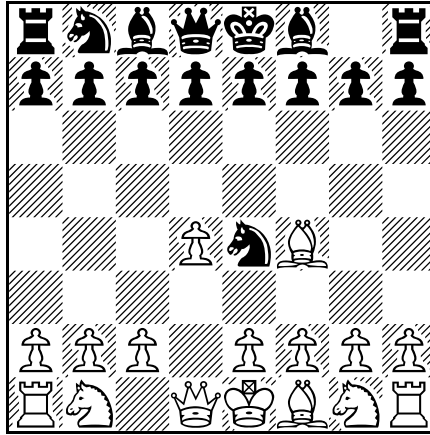
Each time I begin a book, it feels as if I am about to build the Great Wall of China and have placed but a single stone. For all my anti-theory rhetoric, this book will be an exceedingly difficult task for the reader to absorb, from a theoretical standpoint, mainly because the positions reached are so bafflingly alien and the convoluted variations so difficult to remember. Misunderstand one slight shift, or forget a single move in a variation, and we risk flipping a '+' into its dreaded opposite, '-+'.

The logistical challenges of the Tromp remind us of Noah's woes, when he had to work out a way to fit a pair of every animal on earth into an ark, 300 cubits in length – rather a tight fit. Luckily he didn't have to worry about the fish. Also, I quite reasonably ask: why did he bring along mosquitoes, wasps and venomous snakes?

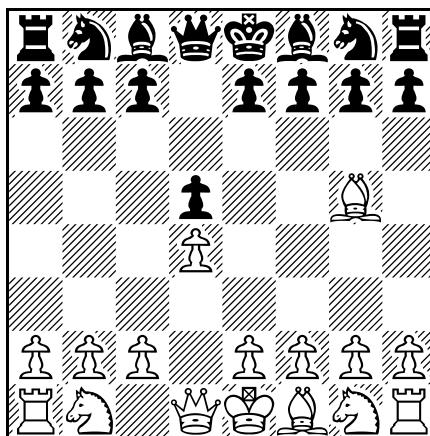
Frustratingly many of the Tromp variations we contend with are like ones in a dream, the memory of which fades to oblivion upon awakening. If this is the case for our side, then I argue: how much more so for our opponents, who I'm guessing, don't spend all that much of their study time on the Trompowsky?

Saying this, in our opening, the ability to retain one's bearings within the unfamiliar is

perhaps every bit as important as memorizing and then spewing out opening theory and its offshoot equations. But we must also recognize our limitations. The human brain is incapable of housing and storing so much data, unless your FIDE rating happens to exceed the 2700 mark. So prepare yourself to get tossed into indecipherable situations where we play by feel, rather than logic. And why not? When we were children, we all understood that the only way to blow the Deathstar to smithereens was to feel the Force and disengage the autopilot. Gaze at the vistas we may visit:



This innocuous-looking position, from Chapters One and Two often leads to head-spinning complications. Black's ambitious knight often lives with a guilty feeling of intrusion on its advanced square, since it grows vulnerable to various undermining devices and f3 tempo-gains.



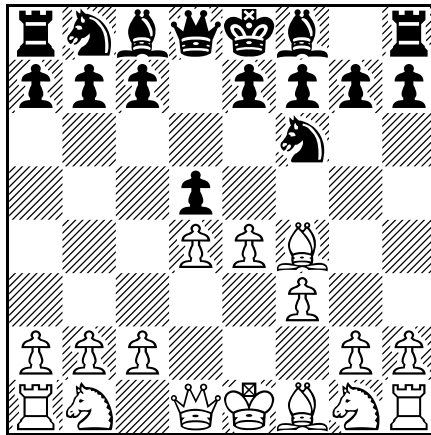
The Pseudo-Tromp (actually, technically the Levitsky Attack) can also be played on double queen's pawn games, where Black has a tempting array of second move responses:

- a) 2...♗f6 gets us back to Chapter Four.
- b) 2...c6 intends ...♖b6, attempting to punish us for our early bishop jump by going after b2.
- c) 2...f6!? 3 ♗h4 ♗h6 can lead to head-spinning complications.

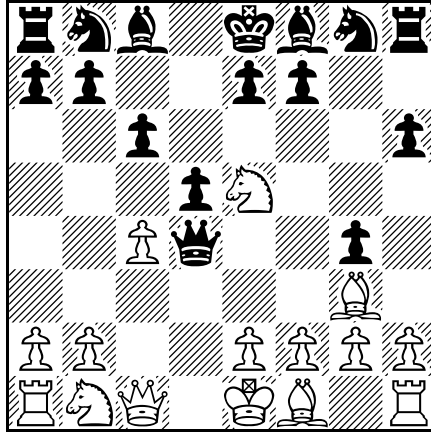
Trompowsky Gambits

If we keep a full grown tiger as a pet, we had better make certain it is well fed, or it may regard us as the next meal. The Trompowsky represents the blurred synthesis of a player from Morphy's era and one from the present. It is an opening conducive to extremes and some of our lines look a bit like a guy in a bar, having had one too many, warning another patron next to him, twice his size: "Look at me like that again and I'll take your head off, buddy!"

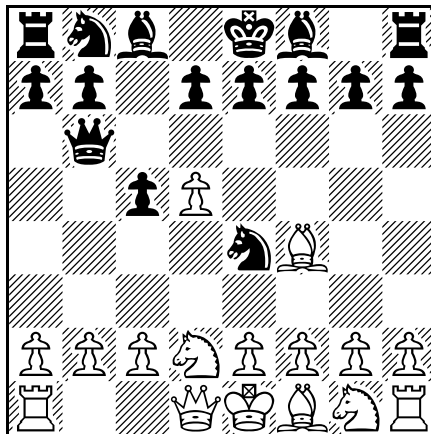
Sometimes in the Tromp we conduct business on a cash-only basis, and are required to pay up front. I speak of gambits, that altered reality where the heart rules the head, where b- and e-pawns are given away like candy at Halloween. It's always a surreal feeling when we spontaneously deviate from the predictable habits of a lifetime. I am not a gambiting kind of guy in any of my other openings. Yet there are several lines of the Tromp, which seem to hold a seducer's sway with my chess personality, in which I am willing to do just that. Even though every gambit in this book can't be endorsed as a construct of 100% unimpeachable soundness, I'm pretty certain they reach the 99% mark.



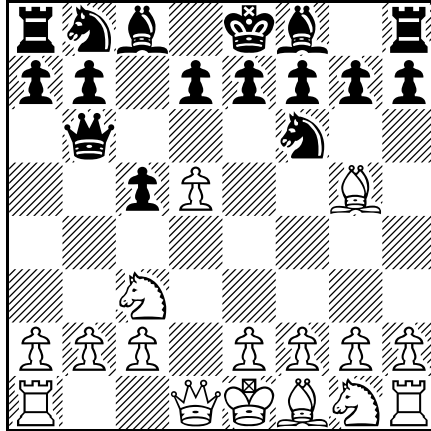
Here is the Reversed Blackmar-Diemer Gambit (a full move up for our side), Lakdawala-Ivanov, from Chapter Two.



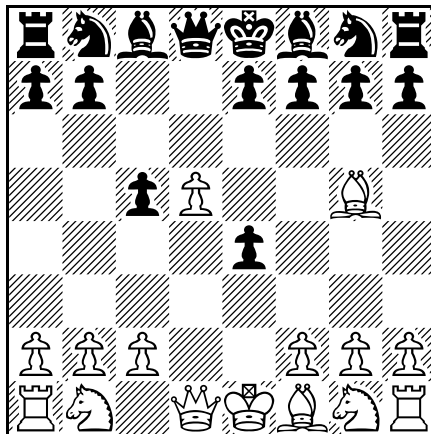
This is a gambit we offer in Chapter Seven, Hodgson-Lalic. White gets a development lead and a loosening of Black's structure in exchange for a pawn.



This is Gareev-Mikhalevsky, from the final chapter, where Gareev offered b2 to a fellow grandmaster.



The diagrammed position, Vaganian-Jansa, is from the dangerous – for White and Black! – and is known as the Vaganian Gambit.



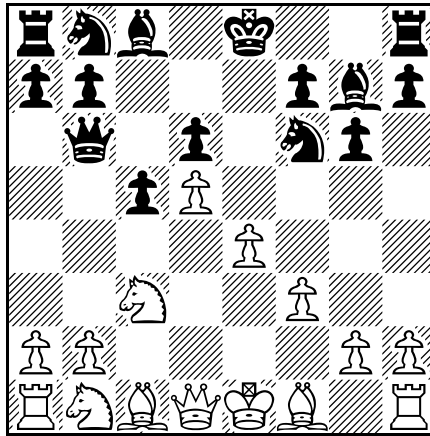
In Hodgson-Roeder we reach a Reversed Albin Countergambit, but a full move up since we get it as White, not Black.

The Contamination Factor

A few tiny granules of sand are enough to clog a system of vast machinery. One interesting feature of the Trompowsky is that we reach positions which look like other systems, but with a contaminated alteration sneakily inserted. This can play havoc on a rigid opponent who relies upon a theory-prescribed counter – except it doesn't apply, since we are not in his or her theory.

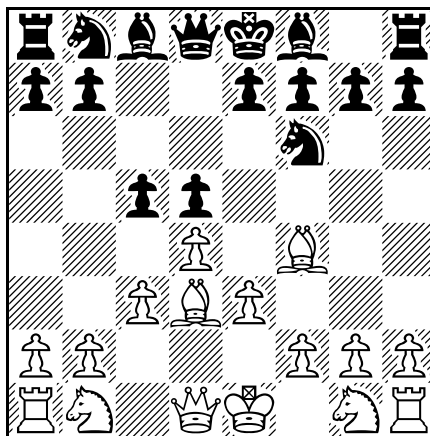
When chaos begins to morph into recognizable geometries, clearly some hidden organizing principle is at play behind it. These significant alterations have the power to render

a confused opponent vectorless and directionless, a drifting chunk of debris, floating in outer space. For example:

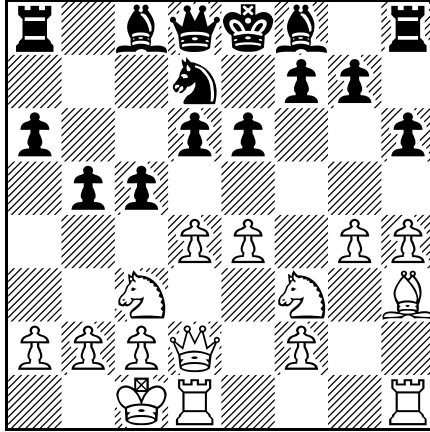


In Nakamura-Lie we see a kind of drunken Benoni, with a pair of modifications:

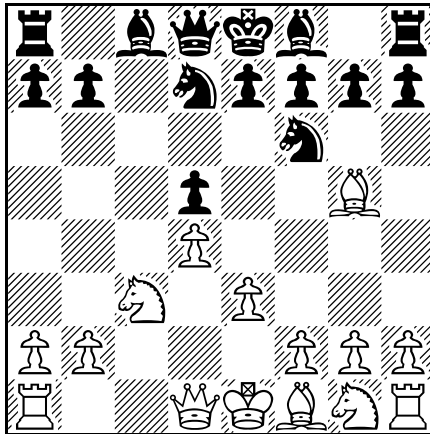
1. Black's b6-queen is misplaced since she gets in the way of the queenside pawn majority.
2. White's g1-knight usurped c3. This allows White to later play a4 and ♖a3, seizing control over c4, and also clamping down on Black's ...b5 and ...c4 breaks.



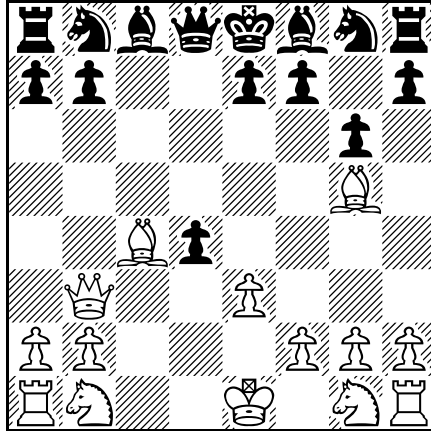
Lakdawala-Bruno reached a rather placid London System position, except White is up a full move over a normal London, since Black took three moves to play his knight to f6, while we only used two for our bishop to reach f4.



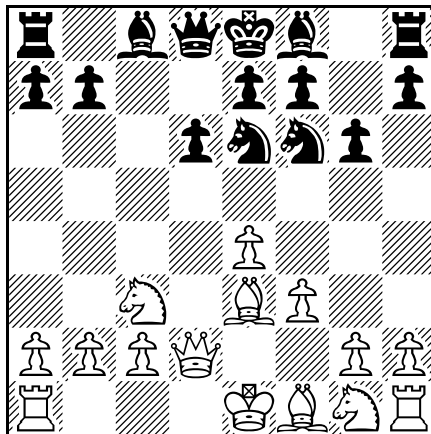
Finegold-Benjamin. Have you ever been this far ahead in development in an Open Sicilian? White's scary development lead probably means more than Black's bishop-pair and queenside attacking chances.



Hodgson-Del Mundo. We reach an Exchange Slav with Black's knight on the inferior d7-square. And here is the best part: Black probably intended to enter a Queen's Gambit Declined.



Lakdawala-Bruno. Have you ever been in a Grunfeld which looks like this? ...♙a5+ would pick off my hanging g5-bishop, except for the fact that White threatens f7.



Lakdawala-Cuarta. It's a Dragon; well, sort of, with Black's knight lured to e6, rather than its normal c6-square and White's knight remains on g1, rather than on d4. Also White looks further ahead in development than in a normal Dragon, and therefore retains the superior chances.

King Julian the First

Our opening was first played by Stepan Levitsky in the early 1900's, but is named after the Brazilian Champion Octavio Trompowsky, who bewildered opponents with it in the 1930's and 40's. Then our opening fell into unused disrepair for decades, until it was revived in the 80's through GM Julian Hodgson's amazing interpretation of an obscure opening scheme, which he single-handedly turned into a deadly and fully accepted theoretical

weapon. Today, the once rarity is commonplace, with super-GM Hikaru Nakamura's use of it in his repertoire.

Hodgson's games are the benchmark, against which all other players' Trompowsky skill throughout history will be compared. In fact, the opening really should be named after him, since he was the first GM to employ it exclusively with the white pieces. Hodgson's chess nature is not one to lend itself to conciliatory gestures and I would describe his style as never-back-down absolutism. At times his interrogative attitude borders on open bullying. This book is a virtual Hodgson-fest, loaded up with his always-entertaining games.

Here is a whopper of a homework assignment for any reader brave enough to undertake it: fire up your database, and call up and study every Hodgson Trompowsky (in case you were wondering, I did this in preparation for this book). To start you off on this monumental project, here is a classic Hodgson win with his opening:

Game 1
J.Hodgson-J.van der Wiel
Amsterdam 1994

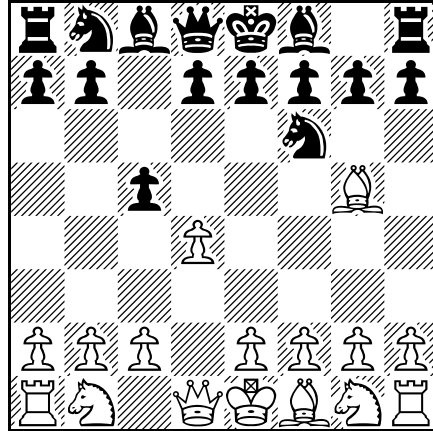
GM Aaron Summerscale writes of this game: "The Hodgson Legacy: Julian Hodgson has done more than anyone to revitalize the Tromp. For anyone learning this exciting opening, his games are a treasure trove of interesting and entertaining ideas. The following game highlights Hodgson's creative approach to the Tromp, as he happily sacrifices material for a fierce initiative."

1 d4 ♖f6 **2** ♙g5

Bye, bye King's Indian; adios Nimzo-Indian and Queen's Indian; au revoir Old Indian; godspeed Grünfeld...you get the picture. On our second move, we politely ask our opponents to leave their theoretical knowledge at the door, wipe their feet, and enter our home: The Trompowsky.

2...c5

For the record, here is the earliest Trompowsky game in my database: 2...g6 3 ♙xf6 exf6 4 c4 ♙g7 5 ♖c3 0-0 6 e3 d6 7 ♙d3 f5 8 ♖ge2 ♖d7 9 ♚c2 ♖f6 10 0-0 c6 11 b4 ♚e8 12 ♚ab1 ♚e7 13 b5 with a position remarkably similar to ones we look at in Chapter Six, S.Levitsky-A.Burn, Breslau 1912.



3 ♟xf6

Question: Don't we cover 3 d5 and the Vaganian Gambit in this book?

Answer: Correct. I had no room for the variation Hodgson played in this game (the normally easy-going folk at Everyman view your undisciplined writer with enraged, bloodshot eyes of menace whenever I surpass a book's space quota – which is pretty much every book I write), and decided to sneak it into the book's introduction.

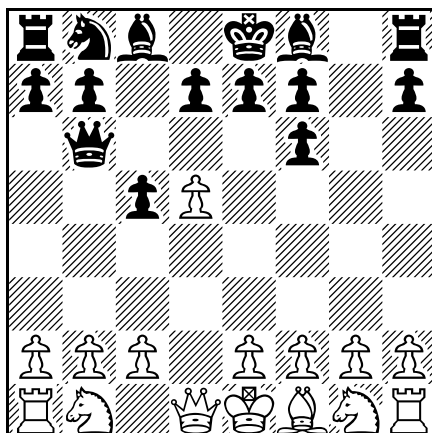
3...gxf6

Question: Why not recapture with the e-pawn, as Black does in Chapter Four?

Answer: This position is very different than the Chapter Four version, since Black already tossed in ...c5. Let's look: 3...exf6 4 e3 and now if Black follows logically with 4...♞b6 5 b3 (5 ♟c3!? ♞xb2 6 ♟d5 cxd4 7 ♞b1 ♞xa2 8 ♟c7+ ♟d8 9 ♟xa8 dxe3 10 fxe3 ♟c5 actually looks at least equal for Black, since he eventually picks up the a8-knight) 5...cxd4 6 exd4 ♟c6 7 c3 d5 8 ♟d3 ♟d6 9 ♟d2 ♟e6 10 ♟e2 0-0 11 ♟f1 ♞a5 12 ♟e3 b5?! (Black later pays for this move strategically) 13 0-0 ♞fd8 (13...b4 14 c4 favours White) 14 a3 g6 15 f4 f5 16 ♞e1 ♟e7 17 b4! ♞b6 18 ♟c1! (heading for c5, which nullifies Black's would-be pressure on c3) 18...♞ac8 19 g3 ♟g7 20 ♟b3 ♟g8 21 ♟c5 White stood clearly better, since a4 follows, with queenside pressure, Y.Zherebukh-A.Hambleton, Athens 2012.

4 d5 ♞b6

Our Achilles heel in the Tromp: b2, which we often sacrifice.



5 ♔c1

But not this time.

5... ♗h6

Black utilizes a deflection device. He can also try the calmer:

a) 5...f5 6 c4 ♗g7 7 ♖c3 d6 may be Black's best line. The unopposed dark-squared bishop makes up for White's space. An example: 8 e3 ♗d7 9 ♗c2 ♗a5 10 ♗h3 ♗b6 11 ♗d3 ♗d7 (also possible is 11...♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♗a4 13 ♗b3 e5 14 f3 with approximate equality) 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 e6 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 e4 fxe4 16 ♗xe4 0-0-0 17 ♗g5 ♗hg8? (necessary was 17...♗df8 18 ♗hx7 ♗f7 19 ♗d3 d5 20 cxd5 exd5 21 ♗g6 with great complications) 18 ♗f7 (forking d8 and d6) 18...♗xc4 19 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 failed to offer Black enough compensation for the exchange, L.Van Wely-E.L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

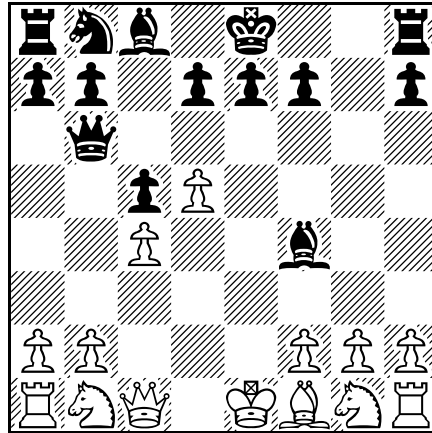
b) 5...♗g7 6 g3 (what a loathsome feeling to clearly see a path and then not take it out of cowardice; I wish I had the courage to jump through the flaming hoop with 6 c4) 6...d6 7 ♗g2 f5 8 c3 ♗d7 9 ♗d2 ♗f6 10 ♗h3 h5 11 ♗c2 ♗d7 12 a4 h4 13 ♗f4 hxg3 14 hxg3 ♗hx1+ 15 ♗hx1 0-0-0 16 ♗c4 ♗a6 17 ♗d3 ♗h8 18 ♗g2 ♗c7!; ...e5 is in the air and Black already stood slightly better, C.Lakdawala-H.Nakamura, US Championship, La Jolla 2004.

6 e3 f5 7 c4

The safer 7 g3 prevents the coming firestorm and ruins the fun for both sides.

7...f4!? 8 exf4 ♗xf4!?

Overloading White's queen, whose services are required to cover b2. The parties draw near to the inevitable collision course. We sense that Hodgson feels restless and uneasy, a corralled horse before an approaching storm, since Black's last move fails to mollify White's attacking ambitions.



9 ♔xf4!?

Everyone wonders if White's queen may soon require the services of a tailor, to measure for a straitjacket. Clearly the new regime makes for fewer allowances for insubordination than the old one. The greatest offence you can give to a person of imperious nature is to challenge her authority. White's queen does just that with her b6 sister. The feeling of constraint which hung over White now vanishes, to be replaced with reckless abandon. But this is to be expected, since the Tromp's nature is one which veers to extremes.

Question: Wait a minute! You just said "overloading White's queen, whose services are required to cover b2", didn't you?

Answer: Those words don't ring a bell, but having reviewed the transcripts, I see that you may be right. In this case, Hodgson accepts the dare, offering a full exchange and pawn for a massive development lead and dangerous attacking chances.

No one has tried 9 ♔c3 ♖g8 10 g3 ♕h6 11 ♔c2 d6 12 ♗c3 ♘d7 13 f4 ♕f8 14 ♗f3 ♕g7 15 ♕d3 h6 16 0-0 when I actually prefer White's space and attacking chances over Black's bishop-pair and dark-square control.

9...♔xb2 10 ♗e2

The beginning of a dual purpose plan to trivialize Black's offside queen and also unravel White's kingside.

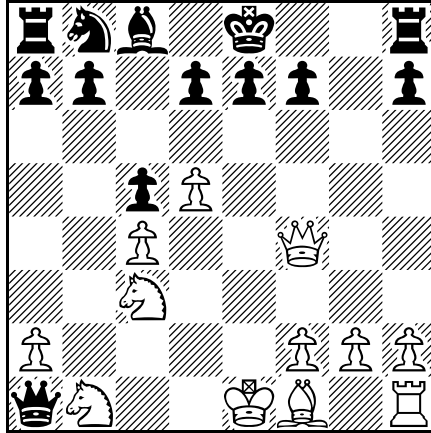
10...♔xa1

The queen realizes she sinned, thinking: "Ah, yes, that pesky eighth commandment – that one about stealing...I keep forgetting. Oh, well, I will be forgiven." Unfortunately, she is mistaken in her theory.

11 ♗ec3

Because of chess computers and databases, we now live in an age of miracles, where 12-year-olds memorize theory into the middlegame. This is all book so far. Be careful

though. There lies a great divide between the theoretical and actual performance of a task. Such positions should first be practiced against the comps, before they are tried out against human opponents. After all, would you hire a bodyguard if he had a black belt in jujitsu, earned by a correspondence course? So test such ultra-sharp positions first, before engaging them in tournaments.



Question: White remains down a massive amount of material. Didn't he wander past legitimacy's borders and shouldn't he be thinking about resigning here?

Answer: Not quite, although an enraged *Houdini* insists that Black is winning. It certainly appears as if Hodgson courts his own destruction. Upon closer inspection, we find that White actually accumulated enormous compensation for the exchange:

1. Whenever we deliberately violate a principle, we essentially plead (to ourselves) extenuating circumstances. In this instance Black violated the E=MC squared of principles: don't fall behind in development.
2. Black's queen, who comes across as a bit of a half-portion when compared to her powerful sister, takes an eternity to return to relevance.
3. If White is allowed to play d6, he generates serious attacking chances along the devastated dark squares.
4. White scores 60.3% from this position – a higher average than most white opening lines.

Conclusion: Let's ignore the nay-saying comp's assessment and test this gambit, which looks sound to a human, like your writer. In fact, I think this line is more than sound, and prefer White's side.

11...♔b2!?

Van der Wiel, fearing for his queen's life – since ♔d2 may trap Black's queen – decides to get her out while he can, but at high cost to his king.

11...d6! is the true test of White's speculation: for example, 12 ♖d2 (threat: ♕d3, 0-0 and ♘a3, trapping Black's wayward queen) 12...♙g8 13 g3 ♙g4?! (13...a6 looks safer) 14 f4 and I still prefer White's attacking chances over Black's material, N.Vitiugov-D.Dubov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013. At this stage *Houdini*, getting cold feet about its earlier assessment, claims the position is now in White's favour.

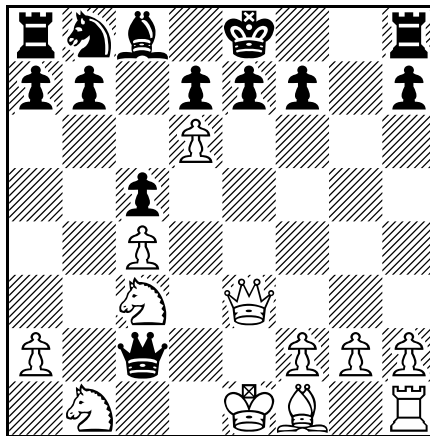
12 d6!

This move punctures the dark squares around Black's king, who endures trial by ordeal in order to pay dues for past unpunished transgressions.

12...♞c6?

In such hair-trigger positions, even a seemingly trifling deviation from the exact sequence brings with it fatal consequences. This knight is the awkward best man who desperately searches for the misplaced ring, while the entire wedding party awaits in expectation. It was awarded an exclaim by Summerscale, but Black's position is so precarious that I think it may be a losing move (although I must confess: sometimes when I criticize a player for a move or plan, I suffer a guilty twinge, realizing that I may well have followed exactly the same incorrect plan over the board; sometimes criticism applies equally to the critic):

a) 12...♞c2?? (a paroled ex-convict, when faced with freedom's temptations, sometimes forgets her promises to her old jailers) 13 ♕e3! and Black is busted. 1-0, P.Wells-A.Shirov, Gibraltar 2006.



Question: I wonder if you care to elaborate on your outrageous claim? Why didn't Shirov spiel on when up so much material?

Answer: Upon review, Black's position fails the examination with multiple unsatisfactory elements. Black's last move was a blunder. White wins since Black can't unravel and basically plays without the use of 80% of his army: for example, 13...♞c6?! 14 ♕d3 ♞b2 15 0-0 b6 16 ♕e4 (threat: ♕xc6, followed by ♞xe7 mate) 16...e6 17 ♕xc6 dxc6 18 ♞g5 (threaten-

The Trompowsky Attack: Move by Move

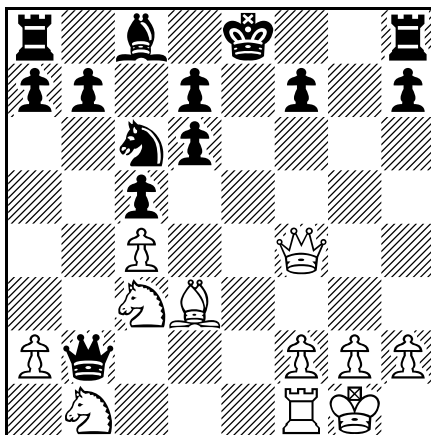
ing mate on the move) 18...♙f8 19 ♖h6+ ♙g8 20 ♚e1 f6 (20...a5 21 ♚e2! ♗b4 22 ♚e3 forces mate) 21 ♗xf6 h6 22 ♗d8+ ♙g7 23 ♗e7+ ♙g8 24 ♘e4 ♗h7 25 ♘f6+ and Black must hand over his queen.

b) 12...♗g8! may be Black's best move: 13 ♙e2! ♗g6 (13...♗xg2?? 14 ♗e4 ♗c1+ 15 ♙d1 ♗g5 16 ♙f1! wins the rook) 14 0-0! ♗xd6 15 ♙h5 ♗f6 16 ♗e4 d6 17 ♘d5 ♗e5 18 ♘c7+ ♙d8 19 ♗xe5 dxe5 20 ♘xa8 and *Houdini* claims chances are even while I like White. It isn't so easy for Black to trap the a8-knight.

13 ♙d3 exd6

An old landmark which turned into an eyesore, is finally taken down. Gulp! *Houdini* assessment: +11.92 – completely resignable for Black. However, Black can't survive 13...e6 14 0-0 ♗g8 15 ♗h6 b6 16 ♙xh7 ♗f8 17 ♗g5 ♗h8 18 ♘d5! ♙f8 (18...exd5 19 ♚e1+ ♙f8 20 ♗h6+ ♗g7 21 ♚e8+ forces mate) 19 ♘f6. The threat of ♗h6 costs Black his queen after 19...♗xf6 20 ♗xf6 ♗xh7 21 ♘d2 when he has no chance to survive White's coming assault.

14 0-0



No rush. 15 ♚e1+ is a horrendous threat. A key element of martial arts is that at certain stages of combat, the martial arts expert yields, rather than resists, in order to throw the opponent's equilibrium off balance. Hodgson utilizes this strategy with a calm move, increasing his development lead.

14...♘e5

It isn't easy for Black to retain defensive bearings while under a fusillade of threats, both real and imagined.

15 ♗f6

The black king begins to look exceedingly uncomfortable. Even more crushing is the simple 15 ♚e1 f6 16 ♘d5 0-0 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♗xf6 when there is no good defence to the coming ♙e4, transferring to d5.

15...0-0

The beleaguered king clutches at his f8-protector in a fervour of gratitude. Black gets

annihilated after 15...♖g8 16 ♖e1 ♗b6 17 ♘d5 ♗d8 18 ♗xd6 f6 19 ♘xf6+.

16 ♘d5

Threatening mate on e7.

16...♖e8 17 ♗g5+ ♘g6

17...♔h8 (Black's king, not feeling so well, notices an uncharacteristically bitter after-taste to his morning cup of tea; even more disconcerting is the fact that his ambitious sister on g5 seems to be watching him with unusual attention this morning) 18 ♘f6 ♘xd3 19 ♗h6 is decisive.

18 ♘f6+

White begins the final assault, driving Black's king to the centre of the board.

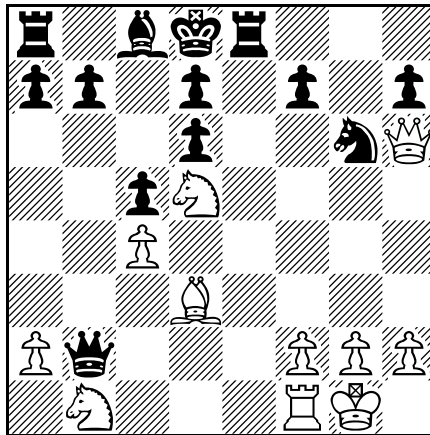
18...♔f8

The king is forced to emerge from his hermitage, to face the dangers of the outside world.

19 ♗h6+ ♔e7 20 ♘d5+

Of course this knight is worth a lot more than Black's rook.

20...♔d8



Exercise (planning): White's attack flows with one mind, as a single unit, free from independent parts or interrelated components of any kind. One glance tells us that all is not well in Black's world. We sense a knockout, but where in the name of Alekhine is it?

Answer: Removal of a key defender/Interference.

21 ♗xg6!

The black king's depleting and weakly-armed garrison soon gets whittled down to zero.

21...hxg6 22 ♘bc3! 1-0

Shutting out the black queen's influence over f6. Attackers stare in cold cruelty at

The Trompowsky Attack: Move by Move

Black's king. There is no reasonable defence to 23 ♖h4+ or 23 ♖g5+: for example, 22...f6 23 ♖g7 ♜e6 24 ♖f8+ ♜e8 25 ♖xf6+ ("well, well, well, what have we here?" gloats White's queen, as she discovers Black's king cowering within a secret chamber; the queen voices popular sentiment when she apologetically informs the king: "we took a vote and it was unanimous: we all want you dead") 25...♜e7 26 ♖xe7 is mate. With the fall of the final defender, the black king's isolation is rendered absolute.

Black played the entire game without the help of his a8-rook and c8-bishop, so in effect, it was White, not Black, who was up material the entire game.

Summary: The exchange and pawn sacrifice looks completely sound for White – at least to your writer's Tromp-biased eyes!

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