

Gorgons

by Harrie Grondijs

Monsters' right to exist

In our in-flight classification scheme we faithfully identified the nature of the various specimen on display. Perhaps the only *genuinely thematic* Monsters are ONION MONSTERS, for which the minimum number of pieces in the initial setting is a *sine qua non*. Then there are Monsters *by necessity*: the theme just can't be put to work with less pieces. And there are *accidental (or: willy-nilly)* Monsters as are the BMB's: the theme implies both sides having all their pawns. All the other Monsters, it seems, are essentially monstrous. One kind of Monsters is still open for discussion: the study that tells a story. In the article about Strategic Monsters and Symbolic Monsters in STES JOURNAL (2,1), we put it that there are two modes for emulating a different form of art through chess compositions. One is *image* composition (when the position looks like an object) and another *metaphor* composition: when the play instead of the exact configuration on the board evokes an image or vision. On that occasion we presented a number of contraptions in the form of endgame studies: treadmills, circuses, merry-go-round. In these studies, art manifesting itself through artifacts (sculpture, painting, movies) is called to mind. However, we left out the possibility of telling stories. Can it be done? Let's hear what a Sorcerer from the border of the river Dnepr had to say:

Studies with pictorial representation

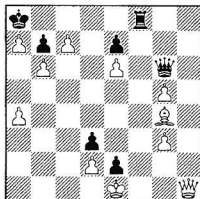
by T.B. Gorgiev in Deutsche Schachzeitung, Volume 119, 1970, page 345 and 346.

Compositions of problems with images are known since the days of A. Petrov, who produced the famous problem "Napoleon's flight from Moscow to Paris". Later Schumov, Loyd and others were active in the field of problems with symbolic representation.

Many of their witty compositions of this kind are quite well-known.

Until now however, no-one has composed studies representing images, because one assumed, that the realization of such a representation - that will always retain a grotesque character - is excluded, on the ground that the study is close to the practical game. The first apparently noteworthy attempts in this field were made by me. Now one may rightfully speak of the existence of studies of this kind.

MONSTER THE EIGHTYNINTH

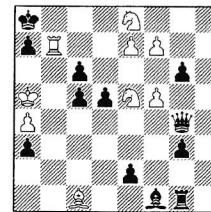


T. Gorgiev, Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1934, Hon. Mention, +, 4310.84

MONSTER THE EIGHTYNINTH features my first relevant study. Text and solution are: "White is the Soviet Chess organization. The great number of far advanced white pawns show the growing ranks of the chess movement. Botwinnik - the white queen - is on the verge of an important journey abroad. Together with him also Lasker - the white bishop - is bound to score a success. The road of the queen is courageous and dire: Qh1-f3-h5-f7. Here in a foreign country she completes

the successful manoeuvre Qf7-h7 and victoriously returns home: Qh7-f5-h3-f1. Lasker suffers a failure, but Botwinnik's victorious march sets an avalanche of white pawns into motion: the road to international successes for the Soviet Chess Organization has now been opened up. Solution: 1. Bf3 Qe4! 2. a5 Qxf3 3. Qxf3 Rh8 4. Qh5 Rf8 5. Qf7 Rh8 6. Qh7 Rf8 7. Qf5 Rh8 8. Qh3 Rf8 9. a6! with an easy win."

MONSTER THE NINETIETH



T. Gorgiev, 1959, +, 3442.48

On MONSTER THE NINETIETH I spent more than two years. Text and solution are as follows: "In the study a parody of the history of our home nation has been realized, in which our people following the dismissal of the Czar and the capitalists, for the protection of the attainments of the October revolution against the conspiracies of the counter-revolution, called to life the first Cavalry Army that conducted a glorious attack against the enemies on all frontiers and chased them away from the borders of our home land. In chess speak: they were mated! The study depicts the difficult position of the country (of White) as it is surrounded by enemies. However, on their approach the pawns convert themselves into knights [ie horsemen]. Thus the legendary Cavalry is formed that demolishes the interventionists on all frontiers and gloriously chases the black king into the corner on a1, where it is mated."

Solution: 1. Bd2 Qxa4!! (if ...e1Q, then

2. Bxe1 Qe2! 3. Nd3!! - but not 3. Rb5?? Qxe1† 4. Ka6 Bxb5† 5. axb5 Qa5†!! 6. Kxa5 a2 - 3. ... Qxd3 4. Rb5! Qxb5 5. axb5 a2 6. Bc3! a1Q† 7. Bxa1 Rg2! 8. Nc7† Kb7 9. bxc6† Kxc7 10. Be5† and wins) 2. Kxa4 a2 3. Rb8†! Kxb8 4. Nd7† Kc8! 5. Nd6† Kc7 6. e8N†! Kxd7 7. f8N† Ke7 8. f6†! Kxf8 9. Bh6† Kg8 10. f7† Kh7 11. f8N† Kxh6 12. Nf7† Kh5 13. Nf6† Kh4 14. Nxe6† Kh3 15. Ng5† Kg2! 16. Nf4† Kf2 17. Ng4† Ke1 18. Nf3† Kd1 19. Ne3† Kc1 20. Nd3† Kb1 21. Nd2† Ka1 22. Nc2 #." [translated by HHG]

An appreciation

Gorgiev's article proceeds with another glorious milestone in the Soviet Union's struggle for existence, and concludes with the revelation of a granite monument in honour of Richard Réti. First a console is set up, then follows a 'dynamic sculpture' representing a well-known idea of a Réti study. I left them out because they are monstrous but are not Monsters. Gorgiev must have been deeper into Historic Materialism than into Historic Truth at the time he wrote the article. He cheerfully brushed aside a number of plain facts. In the article MONSTER THE EIGHTYNINTH is inscribed as: 1957, for the participation of the Champion of the USSR Botwinnik in the tournament of Nottingham 1936. It was really composed several decades earlier, even before the Nottingham tournament, as can be verified in Gorgiev's own collection of studies published in 1959! In the context of Monster studies we must abandon natural reticence and give it to the Soviet Union that it has served to bring an important issue into focus: can chess compositions tell epic tales? To avoid getting entangled into a philosophical, if not a semantic knot, I'll confine myself to a short technical comment on Gorgiev's contributions, the 'Gorgons'.

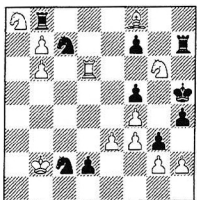
Gorgiev's approach to the subject matter

of MONSTER THE NINETIETH is as follows: first of all Napoleon fled back to France, then some-one made a painting of this retreat (the image), then some composer (ie Gorgiev himself) represented this image in a composition. This can be compared to Moussorgsky's "Pictures at the Exhibition". A series of paintings relating a number of unconnected events are emulated in Moussorgsky's musical piece. The thing is that, beyond the expressed moods (happy, sad, uptight and so on) one can interpret the music *after* one is informed about what can be seen on the pictures, but never *beforehand*. In the same vein one can stare at the study and observe: "Hey, that pawn is making it to the other side", or "See, two 'batteries' are aiming at each other on the long diagonal" but to me it seems impossible for anybody to guess the exact would-be event that is evoked.

The story of Lancelot

On the other hand, the moment the true story has been unveiled one sees which tasks the composer has set himself to realize certain metaphors. 'Once upon a time' I have tried to capture a story in a study myself. This happened at a stage in the writing of NEVERENDING when I got carried away to the point of almost losing the greater part of my mental faculties (in chapter 12, on page 263).

MONSTER THE NINETYSECOND



H. Grondijs, Die Schwalbe, 1994, +, 718.75

1. bxc7 Rxb7+ 2. Kxc2 Rxc7+ 3. Nxc7 gxf2 4. Ne8 h1Q (if 4. ... fxe6 5. Nf6 # and if 4. ... Rh6 5. Ng7 #) 5. Nf6+ (not 5. g4+? because Black draws after 5. ... fxe6 6. Nf6+ Kxg6 7. Ne4+ f6 8. Rxf6+ Kh5 9. fxe6+ Kxg4 10. Nf2+ Kf3 11. Sxh1 Ke2 12. Rd6 Rc7+ 13. Kb2 d1Q 14. Rxd1 Kxd1 15. Nf2+ Ke2 =) 5. Kxg6 6. Ne4+ Kh5 7. g4+ fxe6 8. fxe6+ Kxg4 9. Nf2+ Kf3 10. Nxb1 +-; if 7. ... hxe6 8. Nxb1 +-.

The task I had set myself, was to show a knight riding from the castle in search of Adventure and eventually Capturing (ie. mating with) somebody else's Queen. The technical task became the implementation of this script: 'A knight's progress from a8 to h1. It slays several monsters (ie enemy pieces) on the way down and finally captures the (a) black queen on h1.' I emerged with a working version (one trusts) after Michael Pfannkuche returned numerous defunct attempts.

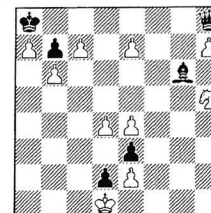
Less evocative (if you wish abstract) story telling like: a king/queen visits all four corners of the board (as achieved by Halberstadt and others), has always attracted interest and is perhaps a more fruitful, because more open field than tasks requiring a maximum number of pawn promotions and the like.

Every picture tells a story

Gorgiev's Gorgons are no Good as Epic Monsters. I mean: such a kind of story line can be connected up with most if not all studies. The stories should gain plausibility through some special feat assign. Implicating that Botvinnik (of all people) is a white queen: turns a study into a monstrosity. Gorgiev's Epic Monsters are Monsters open for *Hineininterpretierung* (for all I know, Botvinnik's adventures abroad might have been entitled *Napoleon's Save Retreat from Moscow into Mrs. Lasker's loving Arms*). Here are some earlier Monster studies from the same Sorcerer (Sorcerer, yes!

This same Gorgiev stunned the world with 85 published studies, including a choice of masterpieces, in the years 1928 to 1930 alone!). They are all open for epic interpretation. Consider them as paintings in Moussorgsky's picture Gallery the sources of which are lost. Here, for example, look what I found in Gorgiev's Collection of best studies (published in 1959): It seems Botvinnik and Lasker ride again! However, this time the outcome isn't quite as glorious!

MONSTER THE NINETYTHIRD

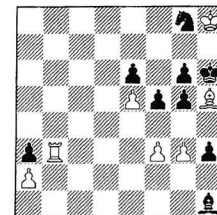


T. Gorgiev, Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1940, +, 3031.83

1. Nf6 Bf7 2. d5 Bxd5 3. exd5 Qe8 4. Nd7 Qh8 5. Ne5 Qe8 6. Nc6 Qh8 7. Nd4 Qe8 8. Nb5 Qh8 9. c8+ Qxc8 10. Nc7+ and wins, also after 1. ... Bxe4 2. Nxe4 Qe8 3. c8Q+ Qxc8 4. Nc3 Qe8 5. Nb5 White takes it away.

Gorgiev's other Monsters

MONSTER THE NINETYFOURTH



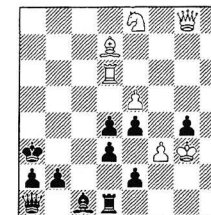
T. Gorgiev, 64, 1939, =, 143.46

1. Bg4 fxe6 2. fxe6 h2 3. Rb8 Ba8 4. Re8 (not 4. Rf8? h1Q 5. Rf7 Qb7; also not 4. Rd8 h1Q 5. Rd7 Ne7 6. Rxe7 Qb7 and wins) 4. ... h1Q 5. Re7 Qb7 6. Rf7 Qxf7 stalemate.

An exotic beast rides on the back of this strategic Monster: an anti-metocritical move for the defence! Within the line-up a (square h1)-S (bishop on any square but a8)-o (being the target square b7 for the queen-to-be), the bishop moves over the o square to stop interfering the line of action of the queen.

But in the end, White knows best!

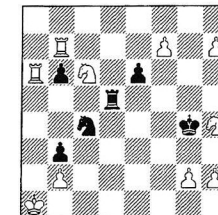
MONSTER THE NINETYFIFTH



T. Gorgiev, 1965, =, 4441-.27

1. Ra6+ Kb4 2. Qf8+ Kc3 3. Rc6+ Kd2 4. Qb4+ Ke3 5. Qe1 Rxe1 6. Nd6 d2 (else Nc4 mates) 7. Rc3+ dxc3 8. Nf5+ Kd3 9. Bb5+ Kc2 10. Nd4+ Kb1 11. Bd3+ exd3 12. Nb5 Kc2 13. Nd4+ Kd1 14. Nf5 - threatens mate again -, Nd4+ repetition of moves.

MONSTER THE NINETYSIXTH

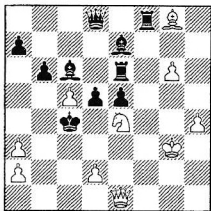


T. Gorgiev, Achalgazda Komunistie, 1957, +, 505.53

1. Rd7 Rxd7 2. Ne5† Nxe5 3. Ra4† Kg5
 4. Nf3† Nxf3 5. Rg4† Kxg4 6. gxf3† Kg5
 7. h4† Kg6 8. f8N† +-.

From the starting position White is under the threat of being mated by the black rook. White gives up all of his material plus to draw the rook onto d7 and next chases the king to an unbecoming spot.

MONSTER THE NINETYSEVENTH

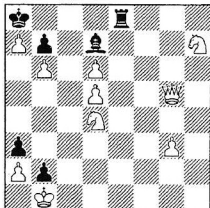


T. Gorgiev, *Isvestia*, 1929,
 4th Prize, +, 4671.64

1. Qe2† Kd4 2. Qe3† Kc4 3. Qb3† Kd4
 4. Nf6 Bxf6 (or 4. ... Rxf6 5. Qc3† Ke4 6.
 Qe3† Kf5 7. Qf3† Kxg6 8. Qg4 Kh6 9.
 Qg5† #) 5. Qc3† Ke4 6. Qe3† Kf5 7.
 Qf3† Kxg6 8. Qf5† Kxf5 9. Bh7† +-.
 What's that? Was Lasker still the better
 of Botvinnik, and must Mikhael still do
 the hard work?

Now follow a few more *systematic* Monsters.

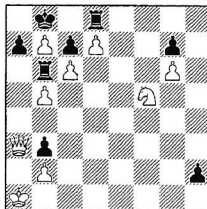
MONSTER THE NINETYEIGHTH



T. Gorgiev, *Tidschrift*
 KNSB, 1960, +, 1332.63

1. Ne6 Bxe6 2. dxe6 Rc8 3. Qg8 Rxc8 4.
 d7 Rf8 5. Nf6 Rh8 6. Nh5 Rf8 7. Nf4
 Rh8 8. Nh3 Rf8 9. Nf2 Rh8 10. Nd1 wins
 (but not 10. Kc2? b1Q† 11. Kxb1 Rh1†
 ⇒). After closing the open rook lines
 with all his might, White has got the
 rook alternating between f8 and h8, as
 the knight progresses to d1. Now the
 black rook can't reach the bottom rank
 with check any more, the race is run.

MONSTER THE NINETY-NINTH



T. Gorgiev, *Schack-*
världen, 1937, +, 1601.65

1. Ng3 Ra6 2. bxa6 h1Q† 3. Nxb1 Rh8 4.
 Qf8† Rxf8 5. Nf2 Rh8 6. Nh3 Rf8 7. Nf4
 Rh8 8. Nh5 Rf8 9. Nf6 Rh8 10. d8Q†
 Rxd8 11. Nd7† wins.

MONSTER THE NINETY-SIXTH, and
 MONSTER THE NINETY-NINTH
 share their progress towards a final
 knight check. Here the knight meanders
 to the top rank for a change.

With a giant leap the knight ends on top
 of the rook. '*That's art!* (Isaac Babel).'