

Organized disharmony

A different reading of helpmate content

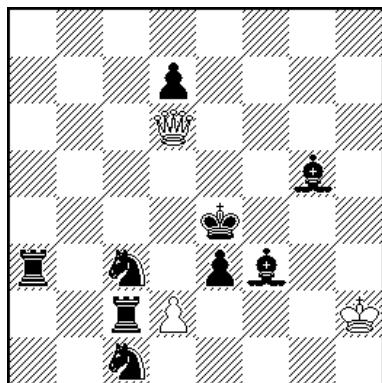
(Dedicated to Živko Janevski and Nikola Stolev for the decades of enthusiasm and tireless work that earned the “Orbit Era” its place in the history of chess composition)

The Chatting column brought Orbit a specific charm. When Grandmasters Fadil Abdurahmanović and Živko Janevski began publishing short and polemical notes in their different styles, they immediately got my attention. Subjective opinions are always interesting when they come from experts. Unfortunately, modern electronic forums and blogs were quickly occupied by contributions that were more confrontational and less well informed (how true this is in other fields of life). Experts instinctively run away from such “democratic” discussions, and leave us with little hope that any open forum could replace the expert level of the Chatting.

This article was inspired by one of the compositions that became a subject of polemics in the Chatting. Many readers will recall **No.1**, published and awarded in Orbit. According to the usual helpmate terminology it was described as the Albino theme, made possible by quadruple unpinning on a single square:

1.Fadil Abdurahmanović

2.Pr. Orbit 2010



h#2

4111

3+9

1.S3e2! d4! 2.Rd3 Qe5#

1.e2! dc3! 2.Ke3 Qd4#

1.Be2! d3+! 2.Kf3 Qg3#

1.S1e2! Qe6+ 2.Kf4 de3!#

Under the strict command of WQ & WP, the complex thematic blend works with incredible facility. However, there was a single “blemish”, instantly noticed by solvers, readers and the judge. The last Albino move 2...de3# comes as the mating move (W2) while the 3 other WP movements serve as W1 moves.

The questions are: Is this discrepancy so bad? May it be good, or possibly ingenious and highly inspiring? Could a different reading of the same content radically change the evaluations?

The eyes of modern helpmate composers became accustomed to perfect analogy between the phases and to equality of all phases. Even a newcomer will quickly spot when a single half-move doesn't fulfil the required, repeated pattern. This is a basic rule of perception; a 3 year old child might perfectly distinguish many models of car, depending on the slightest details of shape and sign. In the field of chess composition, it is much easier to comment on the imperfection of small details than to take a wider picture and discuss the overall outcome.

After delving deeper in the content of **No.1**, we may notice that the fourth solution isn't only formally different from the others; it is also different in the tactical content. It is the only phase that presents *a pure unpinning* of WPd2. The black move 1.S1e2 has no other purpose except unpinning. We may add now another element of “disharmony” and call the other 3 unpinnings “impure”, for each of them uses one more tactical effect apart from unpinning: 1.S3e2 activates BRa3; 1.e2 vacates e3 while 1.Be2 vacates f3. Besides, each of them involves genuine dual-avoidance, unlike 1.S1e2.

Now let us read the content in the language of the direct mate #2, as BLACK ARRIVAL CORRECTION on e2. When we transfer the last solution to the lead position, the black move 1.S1e2 becomes the primary black arrival on e2 with no other purpose except unpinning d-pawn. The other 3 arrivals prevent the

primary outcome but each of them allows a new function of the unpinned Pawn. We shall treat the other 3 solutions as 3 equal secondary corrections and explain the dual-avoiding effects:

1.S1e2 Qe6+ 2.Kf4 de3!#

(1.S3e2 Qe6? 2.Kf4 de3 3.Re3! Opening of the BR line)

(1.e2 Qe6? 2.Kf4 de3?? Vacation of the e3 square)

(1.Be2 Qe6? 2.Kf4 de3 3.Kf3! Vacation of the f3 square)

1.S3e2! d4! (2.Qe6?) 2.Rd3! Qe5# Opening of BR line

1.e2! dc3! (2.Qe6?) 2.Ke3! Qd4# Vacation of e3 square

1.Be2! d3! (2.Qe6?) 2.Kf3! Qg3# Vacation of f3 square

Triple secondary Black Arrival correction + Albino

The imperfect harmony of the “helpmate reading” (4 x 1 solution) converts into a perfect construction of Black Arrival correction (1 + 3 solutions). Instead of an equality of the phases, we see a hierarchy of phases that arises from the theory and language of #2; i.e. a primary phase + three equal secondary phases.

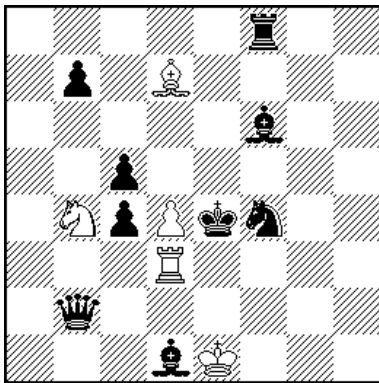
A “h#2-#2” concept of *Contrasting Effects*

The use of “h#2-#2” language to interpret **No.1** combines the potential of two genres to produce something atypical of both of them! Do note a paradoxical twist impossible in the #2; each harmful effect (against the primary solution) in solutions 2-4 (opening of the BR line + vacation of the e3 and f3 squares) turns into a useful one. Each of them manages to prevent and to promote. Such double-sided tactical effects (we shall call them *contrasting effects*), could not be used in a direct mate. They strongly remind us of the potential of the S# to turn each harmful effect into useful one, and vice-versa.

Correction play has been a rare guest in a multiphase h#, mostly initiated by some highly inventive #2 experts. Norman Macleod produced subtle h#2s with Tertiary Correction, in both Departure and Arrival forms. Let's see **No.2** with its Tertiary Arrival correction:

2. Norman Macleod

4.HM Feenschach 1981



h#2 2111 5+9

1.cd4: Sd5 2.Kd3: Bf5#

(1.Bd4: Sd5? 2.Kd3: Bf5 3.Rf5:)

(1.Qd4: Sd5? 2.Kd3: Bf5 3.Qe4!)

1.Bd4:!! Sa6! (Sd5?) 2.Be5 Sc5:#

1.Qd4!! Sc2! (Sd5? Sa6?) 2.Qd5 Re3# Tertiary Black Arrival correction

The second solution of **No.2** uses Rf8 only to prevent the primary plan (harmful effect), while the useful effect comes from the superiority of BB over BP (to move away from d4 and self-block e5). In comparison, the double-sided *contrasting effects* give **No.1** an advantage in the unity, reciprocity and intensity of the content.

As the next feature for comparison, the primary effect of **No.1** (unpinning) participates in all further solutions (*accumulation of effects*). This is not the case

in **No.2**, where the primary effect (blocking d4) vanishes in the further two phases, while the secondary effect (removal of Pd4) remains useful in tertiary phase. In this respect, **No.1** has the advantage of a perfect *continuity* of the phases, inherent to the logic of correction play.

Finally, how should a solver identify the primary phases of **Nos. 1&2**? The former offers two distinctions. The theoretical (thematic) one requires analysis: 1.S1e2 is the only B1 move that does nothing else but primary unpinning. A similar thematic distinction exists in **No.2**: 1.cd4 is the only B1 move to block d4 permanently.

The second distinction incorporated into the play of **No.1** is a practical one – obvious to all. It leads us back to the beginning of the story, and the so-called “drawback”. Don’t you think the different position of the Albino move 2.de3# helps to distinguish the beautiful “black sheep”? To my taste, the reciprocity of the WP and the WQ moves between the primary phase and the other three adds to the overall feeling of contrast and paradox.

Amazing! I know the author of **No.1** didn’t have in mind all that I have written here; my enthusiasm must be excused! However, I believe the great h# composer (very successful in #2, too!) intuitively built the perfect example of triple secondary Arrival correction.

As a journalist I learnt that the awakened interest of a single reader, or even his smile, justifies the paper. With such a criterion applied, I may say that Fadil’s **No.1** is a masterpiece of higher degree. It not only brought me a (long-lasting) smile and inspired this article; it also opened an endless sea of ideas.

Inspired by the model of No.1

My optimism concerning the hidden resources of the h#2 had been suddenly raised and the rest of this article is an attempt to “share my smile”. With **No.1** as the guiding light, I’ve been motivated to analyse several aspects of its content. The starting model was the combination of correction play and *contrasting effects* in the form of 1 + n phases – the one that works so nicely in **No.1**. This seems like a logical and original combination, one that has scarcely been explored.

In order further to distinguish the primary phase, I chose set-play form. Historically set-play is an accepted phase; it has a natural priority in the order and a natural difference in the content with a half-move less. This inherent difference makes modern h# composers more tolerant about differences between set-play and solution than about differences between the full length solutions. Besides, the set-play of the past failed to cover most of the multiphase concepts we shall discuss here.

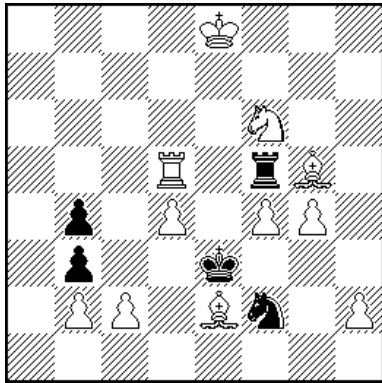
The first combination to be tried included *Departure correction* as the most distinguished form of correction play, and the *BK flight* as the *contrasting effect* that was most easy to handle. Giving freedom to the King is harmful for the outcome when you need a static BK (primary phase), but it becomes useful when you want BK to move to the flight (secondary phases).

In **No.3** you may see what we usually refer to as *Black correction*: a random departure of a piece as the primary step and the other moves by the same piece correcting the primary effect. However, it may be confusing to transfer the usual names, *Black/White correction*, from #2 to h#2. These two forms have a radically different logic within the #2, where *Black correction* accumulates useful (for the outcome) effects, while *White correction* accumulates harmful (for the outcome) effects! The closest matches for the logic of h# *Departure correction* are the #2 forms of *Threat correction* and *Black correction*. We shall use the name *Departure correction* in the rest of the article, bearing in mind that even the idea of *Correction* has different interpretations in #2 and h#2.

The main technical obstacle for the artistic presentation of h# *Departure correction* is the random move. While direct mates and the S# accept a random move as a multiple choice, the h# solution calls for a unique move. With current helpmate “rules”, a random move may be used only as a try or its effect must be demonstrated on a single square only. The latter case often makes composers limit the movements of the thematic piece in an artificial manner. When you add the set-play condition, as in **No.3**, the obstacles get even bigger, and you may have to sacrifice some of your initial ideals. In **No.3** I wanted to triple the *BK flight contrasting effects*, but the possibility of including a Cyclic Zilahi in the content made me forgive the absence of a *contrasting effect* in the 1.Rg5: move. Its harmful effect (for realizing the set mate) is based on capturing of mating piece, not on flight-giving. So we enter the land of artistic freedom with difficult choices in the search for a satisfying overall impression.

3.Marjan Kovačević

1.Pr. Chepizhniy 80 JT 2014



h#2* 3.1.1.1. 11+5

1.R~? (Rd5:? Rg5:? Rf6:?) Bd1 2.R~ f5#

*1... Bd1 2.Re5+! fe5#

1.Rd5:! Bh4! (Bd1?) 2.Kd4: Bf2:#

1.Rg5:! Re5+! (Bd1?) 2.Kf4: Sd5#

1.Rf6:! c3! (Bd1?) 2.Ke4 Re5#

Black Departure correction, Cyclic Zilahi.

My next goal was to achieve this missing purity by using one and the same *contrasting effect* in all phases. It's not difficult to do it with *BK flight* in a 1+2 form, based on capturing of white pieces. There is a small paradox: the highly appreciated effect of capturing white pieces is the easiest one for handling *contrasting effects*! Other methods, such as closing white lines, offer more resistance in achieving an acceptable form.

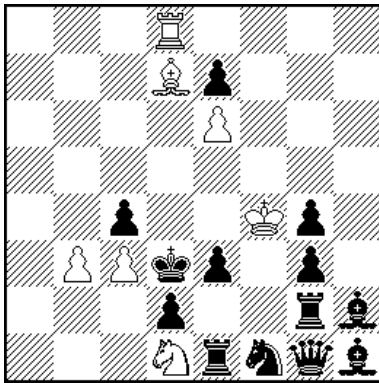
I was more inspired to reject the *BK flight* and use a more original *contrasting effect* in all phases. The possibility of an *attacking white battery line* seems

quite intriguing. There is a logical combination of battery transformation in **Nos.4&5**, with close White & Black cooperation: Black avoids attacking the initial battery when it fires the last shot (W2 in the set-play) but needs to step onto this same battery-line when the front piece of it moves away in W1.

This time, Black Arrival correction – with different pieces coming to a single square – promised more purity in all thematic aspects of **No.4**:

4. Marjan Kovačević

Die Schwalbe 2014



h#2* 2111 7+13

***1... b4 2.Rce2! Ba4# (2.Rge2? Ba4+ 3.Bd5! 2.e2? Ba4+ 3.Qd4!)**

1...Be8+? 2.?? Bg6# 1...Bc6+? 2.?? Be4#

1.Rge2! Be8+ (b4? Bc6+?) 2.Bd5! (g2?) Bg6#

1.e2! Bc6+ (b4? Be8+?) 2.Qd4+! (Se3?) Be4#

Black attacks white battery line, Black Arrival correction.

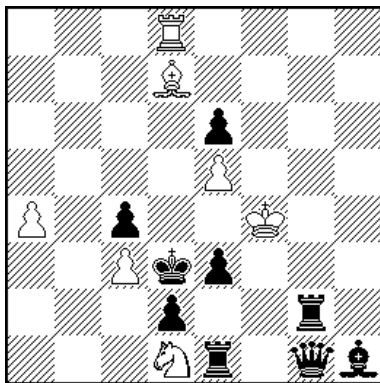
Unlike **No3**, here we find the *continuity* of the primary effect (blocking e2) through all 3 phases and the *accumulation* of effects. The harmful and useful effects are identical up to the B2 moves. For instance: 1... b4 2.Rge2? Ba4+ Bd5! and 1.Rge2! Be8+ 2.Bd5! Bg6# reminds us of the #2 Dombrovskis theme! Besides, the purity of the black play asked for additional dual-avoidance in the

choice between Be8+ and Bc6+. As the price to pay, the black cluster in the SE corner made the position unpleasantly crowded.

A week before the deadline for this article, I sent it to David Shire, an individual thinker in both #2 and h#. His response was enthusiastic and highly creative; it made me review my ideas and accept new possibilities. David didn't need a set-play form to convince him; furthermore he found it less convincing for solvers. He suggested the form of 3 solutions, with the use of tempo instead of set-play in the primary phase:

4a. Marjan Kovačević & David Shire

Die Schwalbe 2014 (version)



h#2 3111 7+9

1.Ree2! a5 (Be6:+? Bc6+?) 2.Qe1! Ba4#

1.Rge2! Be6:+ (a5? Bc6+?) 2.Bd5! Bf5#

1.e2! Bc6+ (a5? Be6:?) 2.Qd4+! Be4#

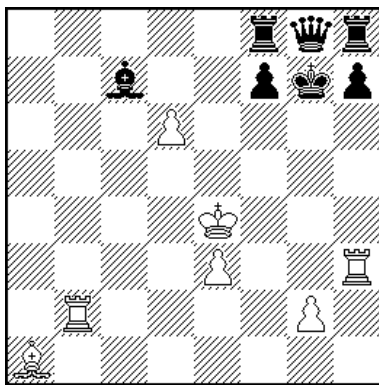
I see two “thematic drawbacks” of the new version: the “wild set-play” 1...a5 2.Ree2 Ba4#, and the use of the thematic BQ for the tempo move. On the other hand, we have a convincing economy of the thematic black pieces and W&B Follow-My-Leader effects (on a4&e1) to distinguish the primary phase from the

pair of pin-mate solutions. Once again, we are dealing with artistic freedom and choices – precisely what this article is intended to address.

When I tried to execute the combination of **No.4** with Black Departure correction (rather than arrival correction), another initial idea had to be discarded to reach the even lighter position of **No.5**.

5.Marjan Kovačević

Orbit 2014



h#2* 2111 7+7

***1... Kf5 2.Bb8! Rb7#**

(2.Bd6:? Rb7 3.Be5!)

(2.Bd8? Rb7 3.Bf6!)

1.Bd6:!! Rb6+ (Kf5?) 2.Be5! Rg3# and 1.Bd8! Rb5+ (Kf5?) 2.Bf6! Rg5#

1.B~ (Ba5)? Kf5?/Rb6+?/Rb5+?

Black attacks white battery line, Black Departure correction, 3 pin mates.

In comparison to **No3**, the thematic BB is not restricted to the thematic squares anymore. The elegant primary effect of 1...Bb8 (hide-away) avoids attacking the battery line but the correction moves are each now supported by one more useful effect: 1.Bd6: opens the 6th rank, while 1.Bd8 leads to the self-block on

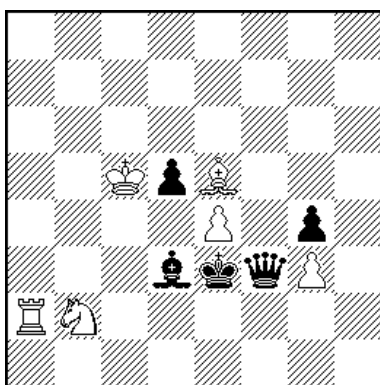
f6. You may treat this as an impurity but you may also read it as a thematic extension of the Departure correction. There are BB moves to a5 & b6 that match the logic of *Secondary correction* in the #2: they attack the battery line, but not in a sufficiently useful way. So, the correct attacks of 1.Bd6: and 1.Bd8 may be perceived as the *Tertiary correction*. The freedom of final evaluation is yours; what matters is the new possibility to form the main content. As for the other comparisons with **No.4**, the dual-avoidance in W1 and the continuity of primary effect (removing BB) are lost, while 3 pin-mates are gained.

David had suggestions for all my set-play problems to convert them into multi-solution form. In **No.3**: to move BPb3 to c3, and remove BPb4, with the tempo-solution: 1.cb2! Bd1 Te5+ fe5#. It is slightly more economical, but my love for set-play prevailed. His inspired proposal for **No.5**, to add a BSb8, was quite tempting. This would avoid a “wild set-play” and include an attractive solution with two successive hide-away effects (primary phases in Correction play): 1.Sa6! (S~?) Kf5 2.Bb8! (B~?) Rb7#. The economy of the original position removed any doubts in this case, but David’s suggestions permanently opened my eyes to these kinds of alternative approaches.

Combining White & Black forms of the main theme (correction play with *contrasting effects*) makes a real challenge. The only combination I managed to achieve includes White Departure correction (*Check to BK* as the *contrasting effect*), and Black Arrival correction (*Unblock* as the *contrasting effect*), in **No.6**:

6.Marjan Kovačević

Sp. Pr. Moscow T. 2014



h#2*

2111

6+5

*1... Sa4! (Sc4+? Sd1+?) 2.de4! (Be4? Qe4?) Bd4#

1.Be4:! Sc4+! (Sa4?) 2.Kd3 Rd2# and 1.Qe4:! Sd1+! (Sa4?) 2.Kf3 Rf2#

Check to BK in White Departure correction + Unblock in Black Arrival correction.

There is the effect of *continuity* in both corrections: blocking e4 and opening the second rank participate in all the phases (*accumulation*). Unfortunately the purity of 1.Qe4: is spoilt by an additional harmful effect: guard of the mating square d4. All else works perfectly, but the straight-forward character of both *contrasting effects* hides the complexity of intention and leaves a somewhat mechanical impression. This is part of the excitement of such adventures: you never know whether the destination lives up to your travel plans!

David's suggestion was to add BPa4 for the attractive solution 1.a3! Sa4! 2.de4! Bd4#. This time I could argue that the passive role of the WSa4 in the mating position was easier for me to accept in a set-play than in a solution.

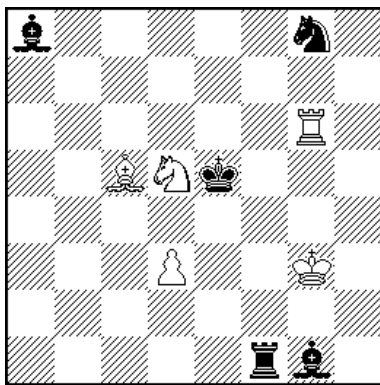
This discussion of artistic differences between David and myself was the best feed-back for which I could hope; I will let readers make their own judgements. David had the solver in mind when he opted for a tempo solution rather than set-play. He thinks a contrasting solution may be more interesting to find than the set-play in the short form of h#2. My solving experience leads me back to the times when it was necessary to find and record the set-play in the helpmates of early WCSC competitions. While the solver may ignore #2 set-play as an illusion, in the h# it becomes the "real thing". Most of all, I appreciate h# set-play as a symbol of tension, paradox and technical difficulty. This is often missing in many h#2s!

However, I had to give up the set-play phase in order to multiply some *contrasting effects*. There was an especially long struggle to double the *contrasting effect* of *White closing a black line*. It's easy to present a single effect, while surprisingly difficult to cut twice a single black line by a single white piece. In **No.7**, I gave up many starting goals: set-play, 1+n construction, and the standard forms of correction play, while using the additional help of an unusual h#1.5 form.

Instead, I used the still undefined type of Departure correction that I call *Mini Correction*: a single move of a piece makes a primary effect, while another move by the same piece corrects it. It limits the possibilities of repeating the primary effect, but it gives the chance to unite several thematic pairs.

7.Marjan Kovačević

Gravure 2014



h#2 0411 5+5

1... Sc7 (Sf4?) 2.Rf5 Re6# and 1... Sf4! 2.Sf6 (2.Rf5?? Re6#) Rg5#

1... Se7 (Se3?) 2.Bd4 Bd6# and 1... Se3! 2.Be4 (2.Bd4?? Bd6#) d4#

White closes a black line in two pairs of *Mini Corrections*.

At first, this “2+2” construction looks like the “usual” HOTF form, but there is an internal hierarchy inside both pairs. There are two analogue primary effects (guard of e6 & f5) and two analogue *contrasting effects* (closing lines of BRf1 & BBg1) as corrections. The standard helpmate language would use the term dual-avoidance instead of corrections. We may say the primary phases prevent white duals in W1: 1... Sc7 (Sf4?) 2.Rf5 Re6#. The secondary phases add useful black line closure and prevent black duals in B2: 1... Sf4! 2.Sf6 (2.Rf5?? Re6#) Rg5#. As a whole, this combination reminds very much of #2. It uses the same

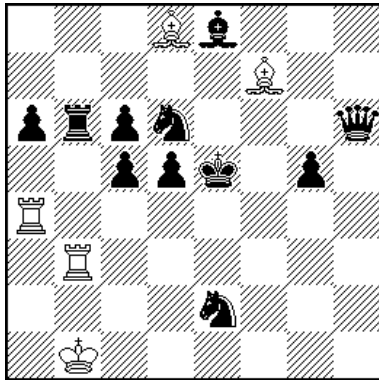
length of 3 half-moves, but the content of double-sided *contrasting* effects is impossible in #2.

These are all the examples of correction + *contrasting effects* I have composed. It was a short but exciting journey. I hurried to illustrate the article for the last issue of Orbit, leaving many missing combinations to other composers, or for the time when I take the next vacations from my regular #2 job. At the end of the road, I experienced how some tactical effects may be more inviting than others. The simple idea of a single white piece twice closing a single black line did not release its hold over me until I completed **No.8**.

This is an illustration of how far a composer may divert from his initial theories and plans, once the chain of ideas carries him away. At the end, I “betrayed” even those starting ideals of *correction play* and *continuity* in order to preserve only the *contrasting effects*. It is a strange construction of 1 + 1 + 2 phases, with the try logically related to the first solution and paradoxically related to the other two solutions.

8.Marjan Kovačević

Problemist Ukraini 2014



h#2v 3111 5+11

1.Sb5 Bg6?/Be6? 2.Qd6?? Re3# and 1.Sb5 Rg3! 2.Qd6 Rg5:#

1.Sc4 Bg6! 2.Kd4 Bf6# and 1.Se4 Be6! 2.Kf4 Bc7#

White closing a black line in a try and solutions

With only a single element of the initial thematic pattern, the play itself may be more interesting than in the previous examples. The first two phases include the substitution of a black blocker on d6, gate-closing effects and the *delayed* exploitation of unpin. The other two phases radically change plan with anticipatory self-pins and line closing, changing the duties of most officers.

Other *Contrasting Effects*

Each *contrasting effect* has different executive forms, each with a distinctive potential for combination with correction play. For instance, you can *unblock the BK* to multiply a *BK flight effect* mainly in combination with Black Arrival correction, while Departure correction cooperates with *BK flight* through *closing a white line*, *capturing a white piece*, and *capturing a black piece on the flight square*.

Unpinning of a black piece is a promising and demanding effect I have not yet managed. Its concept may be very simple: in the primary phase we avoid an unpin of the piece that controls the mate, but the same unpinned piece becomes active and useful in subsequent phases. Here I count on the inspiration of the masters of pin-mates, those who have enough imagination and skill to use it in an appropriate way.

Finally, instead of using the same *contrasting effect* in all phases, we may try using different effects for each of the *contrasting* secondary phases. This may lead to an organized cacophony in cases of 1 +3 or even more phases.

Orthodoxy and heterodoxy

The initial title I gave to this article (and to its summary in the mini-lecture for the Bern WCCC this year) was: “An orthodox reading of helpmate content”. I was lucky to have the help of David Shire, and not only in tidying up my English. Here is what David wrote to me:

“A long time ago the #2 was considered as orthodox and the h#2 as heterodox. Now (in the West) the helpmate has acquired orthodox status. Indeed it has its own frightening and rigid orthodoxy! My dictionary defines orthodox as ‘holding correct or the currently accepted opinions’. In my view the helpmate fraternity have left their once rebellious nature behind and have become rather narrow and conformist. What is orthodox and heterodox has become blurred! I think a better distinction is to describe your article not in those terms but in terms of *language*. The #2 has for a long time been the main laboratory for ideas and has developed its own language. Is this not more an attempt to bring the language of the #2 to the h#2? We need a language in order to formulate our ideas; language determines our thinking and to some extent this can lead to sterility if our language is limited.”

The Future

We have considered thematic differences in h# phases; differences in their tactical content and their hierarchy. What are there prospects of gaining acceptance? Even Grandmaster Petko Petkov, an influential propagator, hasn't managed to change the h# fashion with his ANI type of solutions with “anti-identical” contents.

This article proposes a specific unity and harmony of the content based on contrast and paradox. When the primary phase defines what is wrong, the secondary phases turn the rule around: they use exactly the forbidden effects. In a broader sense, this reminds us of the upside-down logic of some paradoxical #2 themes such as Dombrovskis, Caprice or the French-Soviet theme.

Correction play has its inherent unity, in the play of a single piece, or to a single square/line in all phases. Additional unifying links are welcome and needed. To incorporate them in a convincing way, you have to work out your own methods and rely on your own feelings. This is a fertile field to build entirely new constructions, from the bottom to the top. It gives us a great freedom if we are ready to embrace it.

If the direction suggested by this article acquires future credence, Fadil's **No.1** will still stand as a prominent model. Some pieces of Art are multidimensional. They allow different readings and hidden dimensions. They give us a rare

chance to project our own feelings and thoughts – to become active participants and interpreters of the object of our love.

Marjan Kovačević