The Modern English
Volume 2: 1.c4 c5, 1...Nf6, 1...e6

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The Modern English Volume 2: 1...c5, 2...d6f6, 2...e6
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Many grandmasters claim that the best answer to 1.c4 is 1...e5. If you consider only the chances this move offers for complex fight for all three results, that may be true. However, for a theoretician, the symmetric answers always present the biggest challenge. They are notoriously not just “balanced”, but often bluntly drawish.

I devoted two thirds of the book on the Symmetrical 1.c4 c5. While plans with further ...g6 or ...b6 generously cede space to White and were fun to explore, the most restraining scheme with 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.e3 e6 5.d4 d5 was the toughest nut to crack.

In Chapter 2 I analyse 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Qb5, where we generally learn how to play around an isolated and hanging pawns. In Chapter 3 the roles are reversed – 6...Qxd5 7.Qd3 puts us on the other side of the barricade, but the extra tempo does matter. White has several ways of obtaining a lasting initiative. The good news is that Black does not have forced draws and should work strenuously to keep the balance.

The other symmetric in spirit system is the Slav. One of the most attractive features of the English Opening is that it assures White of an initiative after 1...c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Qf6 4.c3 g4 5.cxd5!?

5...Qxf3 6.Qxf3 cxd5 7.Qb5+ Qc6 8.Qxc6+ bxc6 – Chapter 9.

White’s task is more complicated in the Meran set-up. Five years ago the plan with g2-g4 inspired big hopes, but today we know that it is effective only against ...b6. That should not sound discouraging, as the quiet development Qe2 is not deprived of venom.

Our Anti-Grünfeld Chapter 6 offers several very different systems.
In my youth I was strongly influenced by the instructive game Karpov-Kortchnoi from the world title match in Merano 1981:
1.c4 \f6 2.\c3 d5 3.cxd5 \xd5 4.\f3 \xc3 5.bxc3 g6 6.d4 \g7 7.e3 c5 8.\b5+ \d7 9.0-0 0-0 10.a4 a6 11.\d3 b6 12.\f1 \b7 13.e4 \c7 14.e1 e6

15.e5 h6 16.h4 with a nice clear plan. I even followed in Karpov’s footsteps 20 years later against Krasenkow. However, since then Black has discovered that he should play ...\d7 instead of ...\bd7, with decent chances to equalise.

15.e5 h6 16.h4

Therefore, our main dish is the hot line 1.c4 \f6 2.\c3 d5 3.cxd5 \xd5 4.\f3 c5 5.e4!? (instead of the above-mentioned 5.e3 g6 6.\b5+)

We have discovered several interesting ideas to make Black work hard over the board.

The Anti-Nimzo approach again gives you a choice. If you are a hardcore fan of the Carlsbad structure in the QGD, you should choose 1.e4 \f6 2.\c3 e6 3.e4 – Chapter 8. Although we hide some trumps up our sleeve, I believe that 3...d5 should be balanced.

AlphaZero’s choice is 3.\f3! \b4 4.\c2, and it is the subject of Chapter 7.

You might ask, what about 3...d5? Well, my personal opinion is that the best you can do is to enter the main lines with 4.d4. However, throughout the chapters on the Symmetrical English we often had to deal with e3, followed by a queen’s fianchetto. So we added Chapter 11, where we discuss the Anti-QGD approach.

The final chapter called “Odds end Ends” briefly cover our strategy against the King’s Indian, the Modern Defence and the Dutch. In short, my advice is: go into the main lines! I only explain how to reach them through the English move order 1.c4 \f6 2.\c3.

When reading the book, please do not skip the “Main Ideas” sections, but always start with them! They often offer examples and explanations which you would not find in the “Step by Step” sections.

Kiril Georgiev
March 2019
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2.\(\text{\&f3}\) (2.\(\text{\&c3}\) 10) 2...\(\text{\&f6}\) (2...\(\text{\&c6}\) 3.e3 11) 3.\(\text{\&c3}\) \(\text{\&c6}\) (3...g6–Ch.5) 4.e3 g6 (4...d5 12) 5.d4 cxd4 6.exd4 d5 7.cxd5 \(\text{\&}x\text{d5}\) 8.\(\text{\&}b3\) 14

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4.e3 d5 (4...a6 31; 4...\(\text{\&}c6\) 31; 4...b6 33) 5.cxd5 exd5 6.\(\text{\&}b5+\) 33 (6.b3 33) 6.d4 a6 35 (6...c4 35) 6...\(\text{\&}c6\) 7.\(\text{\&}b5\) a6 37 7...\(\text{\&}d6\) 39 7...exd4 40
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\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board1.png}
\end{center}

1.\textit{c}4 c5 2.\textit{f}f3 \textit{f}f6 3.\textit{c}c3 e6 4.e3 d5 5.cxd5 \textsc{xd}5 (6.\textit{c}4 64)
6.\textsc{xd}5 64
6.d4 \textsc{c}6 (6...cxd4 7.exd4 \textsc{xc}3 67) 7.d3 \textit{e}7 8.0-0 0-0 9.\textit{we}2 (9.\textit{e}1 69;
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\begin{center}
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\end{center}

1.c4 c5 2.\textit{f}f3 \textit{f}6 (2...b6!? 84) 3.\textit{c}3 b6 4.e4 d6 5.d4 cxd4 6.\textsc{xd}4 \textit{b}7
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7..xd5 8.d4 b6 241
8...c6 241

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