

an invisible hourglass.

"A second passes./ A second second./ A third./
But they are three seconds only for us."

So, time is a human invention, a human contraction. Time both limits us and also, paradoxically, liberates us from its confines by enabling us to contrast it against and thus conceive of timelessness; it draws edges and boundaries to shape to our mortal existence, and by doing so defines for us the great Beyond. We measure the span of our lives by human hours and seconds, and also in terms of memories and remembering which are products of our exercise of filing time into timeless images and symbols. Without imagining Time we would not be able to appreciate the idea of Eternity, that most poetic of concepts. (If we accept the confining concept of Death, the final frontier of human time-span, then there has to exist its anti-thesis, Eternal Life, the source from which Time emerged!). The human consciousness is the greatest poet, life's great composer.

But, the question still nags soundlessly: apart from ourselves, who views us from across the floorless, shoreless lake, calls us human? When one of us passes away into the great oblivion, does someone receive that news, or not?

"Time has passed like a courier with urgent news,/ But that's just our simile./ The character is invented, his haste is make-believe,/ his news inhuman."

Once, I would translate 'inhuman' as neutral. I could bear to think of nature as being indifferent; I could walk under a sky 'by nature skyless', whose blind, inverted bowl only I humanly identified as 'sky' but which provided no shelter. Today, I read 'inhuman' as that mysterious unknown which I do not hesitate to call divine.

Perhaps, we have indeed invented the character of Time, and perhaps, life arriving and departing on its wings is only an illusion. But instead of the terror of the void, I feel that we are enfolded not in a blank, inhuman abstraction, but in an element that in spite of being sightless, colourless, shapeless, soundless, odourless, painless, shoreless, floorless, skyless and timeless, is a loving Eternity. Perhaps, life and death are but grains of unsifted sand in a boundless desert or a limitless beach "in which the sun sets without setting at all." At least this is my translation of Szyborska's poem 'View with a Grain of Sand', translating it not from Polish into English but from the poetry of words into the poetry of both our essential mortality and immortality. ■

Time Out

Stuck abroad

Chess

PROFESSIONAL chess players have a rather nomadic lifestyle. In the past, they used to travel from one place to another like the members of an opera troupe. They often travelled by train and played in four or five big tournaments in a year. There were tournaments in Baden Baden, Bad Pistyan, San Remo, Monte Carlo and many other beautiful places in Europe.

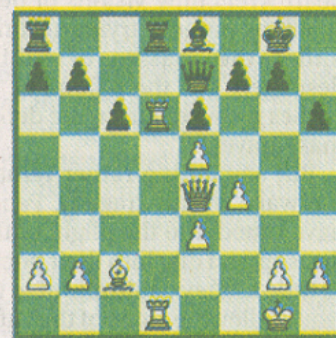
Things have changed a lot since the days of Lasker, Capablanca or Alekhine. The players have a very busy schedule today since the number of tournaments has increased manifold. There are various types of tournaments for players of different categories. So in a category 20 tournament, only the supermasters are invited to fight against players of roughly equal strength. And even the beginners have tournaments where they face other newcomers. There is no need to be trounced by a far stronger player and quit the game once and for all! Chess is not an 'unjust' game in our times.

A chess player's life is usually peaceful. But one must not forget that they, too, are influenced and affected by major global events. All the national teams of Europe travelled onboard the same ship on their way to Buenos Aires in 1939. The chess olympiad was held at a time when the threat of the Second World War was looming large on the horizon of Europe. The players were stuck in Argentina when Britain declared war on Germany on September 3. Many of them could not return to their country after the olympiad was over. This had happened before the First World War also. Frank Marshall and some other masters had to leave their baggage at a Mannheim hotel, as they rushed out for the first train going out of Germany.

Miguel Najdorf, the Polish master, was in Buenos Aires when the bad news came. He had to wait for six years before he could return to Warsaw. Najdorf was not lucky like Marshall. It was no longer the city that he had known; his home had been razed to the ground. There was no trace of life! Where had his wife and beautiful little daughter gone? Najdorf never got an answer to his question. He went back to Argentina and stayed there for the rest of his life.

Here is a game played by Najdorf.

White-M Najdorf
Black-D Yanofsky [D61]
Buenos Aires Ol, 1939
1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5 Be7 5. e3
00 6. Nf3 Nbd7 7. Qc2 c6 8. Rd1 Re8 9. Bd3
dxc4 10. Bxc4 Nd5 11. Bxe7 Qxe7 12. 00
N5f6 13. Bb3 h6 14. Ne5 Nxe5 15. dxe5 Nd7
16. f4 Nc5 17. Ne4 Nxe4 18. Qxe4 Bd7
19. Rd6 Red8 20. Rfd1 Be8 21. Bc2 g6
22. Qd3 Rxd6 23. exd6 Qd7 24. e4 c5 25. Qc3
b6 26. f5 exf5 27. exf5 Kh7 28. Qf6 Rb8
29. Ra1 g5 30. Re7 Qc6 31. Qg6+ 1-0



Position after 21. Bc2

-PATZER