

Strategic Monsters and Symbolic Monsters

by Harrie Grondijs

The word Monster derives from the Latin word *monere*: to show. On one of our earlier expeditions we drew up a preliminary classification of Monsterdom, and have never left off inquiring after their 'Reasons to be'.

In this INSTALLMENT THE SOMANIETH of our Monster Tale we first chase after a few Monsters that evidence a strategic idea, and then we have a series of Symbolic Monsters that want to unite form and content in self-reference.

Strategic Monsters (reconsidered)

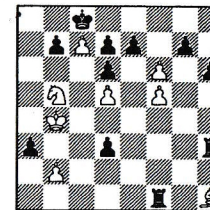
Strategic Monsters are like the Dinosaurs they put on display in *Musea* and *Travelling Shows*: it is all bones, but you can see their construction perfectly well. You can learn from them.

Most Monsters of this kind are born from the wish to maximize some strategic, if you wish logical, chess idea.

And if the composers just don't succeed with the toolkit that Gurwich and Herbstmann compiled for them, they start throwing pawns at it.

Mr. Marwitz, who is probably best characterized as Master of MUTUAL EN-PRISE occasionally threw his dire principles out of the window for a finger exercise.

MONSTER THE FIFTYFIFTH



J.H. Marwitz, Ceskoslovensky Sach, Hon. Mention 1961, +, 611.58

1. **Ka5** (simply threatening 2. **Kb6** and 3. **Na7 #**) and now:

a. 1. ... **Rh2** 2. **fxg7 Rg1** 3. **Bg2 +-;**

b. 1. ... **Rh4** 2. **fxe7 Re1** 3. **Be4 +-;**

c. 1. ... **d2** 2. **Bf3** and if:

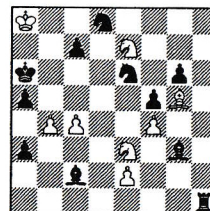
d. 2. ... **d1Q** 3. **Bxd1 Rh2** 4. **fxe7 Re1** 5.

Be2 +-; or;

e. 3. ... **Rh4** 4. **fxg7 Rg1** 5. **Bg4 +-.**

'A five-fold "Plachutta". Probably a record.', our Dutch pride adds in his *EINDSPELKUNST*. The previous record had also been set by him in an 17 men setting dating back to 1938. We'll reprint that one 'some other time' (maybe).

MONSTER THE FIFTYSIXTH



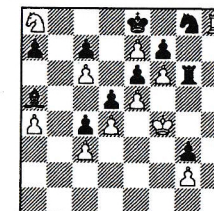
C.M. Bent, *En Passant*, 1987, =, 378.45

1. **b5+** **Kb6** 2. **N7d5+** **Kc5** 3. **Be7+** **Kd4** 4. **Bf6+** **Ke4** 5. **Ng2** **Be1** 6. **Ba1** **Bh4** 7. **Bh8** (not 7. **Be5?** **Nxf4**) 7. ... **Be1** 8. **Ba1** **Bh4** 9. **Bh8** positional draw.

This composition has conveniently been equipped with a mirror. The mirror

reflects a strategic idea (a *Valve*: a single black piece opens one line and it closes another in the same move) at an angle of 90 degrees (the bottom rank becomes the h-file). Using just a few pieces on each side (a white bishop, a black rook and bishop). All the other pieces are sitting on the gilded frame.

MONSTER THE FIFTYSEVENTH



O. Bläthy, *Vielzügige Schachaufgaben*, 1890, +, 434.77

'White can only win by forcing Black to play in the given position. The manoeuvre has to be repeated (Tattersall 2, #654).'

1. **Ke3** **Rg4** 2. **Ke2** **Rg6** 3. **Kd2** **Rg5** 4. **Kc2** (steps from the playground) **Rg6** 5. **Kc1** **Rg4** 6. **Kd1** (steps in again on the right position) **Rg5** 7. **Kd2** **Rg6** 8. **Ke2** **Rg4** 9. **Ke3** **Rg5** 10. **Kf3** **Rg6** 11. **Kf4** a6 (11. .. **Bb6** 12. **Nxb6** **axb6** 13. **Ke3** etc.) 12. **Ke3** **Rg4** 13. **Ke2** **Rg6** 14. **Kd2** **Rg5** 15. **Kc1** **Rg6** 16. **Kc2** **Rg4** 17. **Kd1** **Rg5** 18. **Kd2** **Rg6** 19. **Ke2** **Rg4** 20. **Ke3** **Rg5** 21. **Kf3** **Rg6** 22. **Kf4**.

Symbolic Monsters

To emulate another art form through chess there are two modes:

Image composition: one actually perceives an object, be it a house or an animal or plant, or the picture of a number or sign. This type of composition flourished in problem composition in the 19th century in the slipstream of the Gothic novel and

then withered away. What images can such Monsters be showing? Something from 'the other side', a manifestation of one of our ancestors, perhaps? Or a thought that cannot be expressed in any other way, something unspeakable that sends shivers down the spine (like a composition forming the text: 'It's Me!?!'). The Magician that can set life to such creatures must yet be born.

Metaphor composition: the play rather than the configuration of pieces on the board evokes an image or vision.

The metaphor composition is much more abstract. In the case of an image composition it is not impossible that somebody unknowing of the rules of the game might actually recognize the picture that has been drawn from the diagram of the starting position. But this is plainly impossible in the case of the metaphor composition when all hinges on the form of the solution.

Oddly enough we think we find this type of composition back in ancient sources, but it remains unknown whether indeed the Arabian composer Ad-Dulabiya (Al-Lajlaj) had a water-wheel in mind when he set out in 1140 A.D. for MONSTER THE TWENTYNINTH.

A chess game normally evokes a struggle, depicted sometimes in an endgame study composition.

But if a chess composition can depict such battles, then why do we take recourse to an epic description of the two knights engaged in mortal combat, and don't we just show it *through the constellation of the pieces*? The validity of the solution signifies the validity of what you are seeing. However, this proves to be a bit too complicated today and therefore we settle for an initial: the L as in Lancelot and the A as in Arthur. Progressing from there we tried for a castle and ended up in a shack.

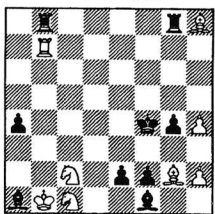
A Cook-book of symbolic composition

The image composition has always retained some of its popularity because it lends itself so well for dedicatory pieces (somebody's initials, or stylized shapes).

Cook has created a body of works in this respect, featuring ao. the LOG CABIN that goes up in fire, THE HARP and the FIREDOG IN PERSPECTIVE (Firedogs were trained animals of a high pedigree, that would race ahead of the speeding fire-engines!). Evocative and instructive works all, but ... problems.

MONSTER THE FIFTYEIGHTH

The Circus



E.B. Cook, Chess Players Chronicle, 1852, =, 782.42

1. Nd3+ Kf5 2. Ne3+ Ke6 3. Nf4+ Kd6
4. Nf5+ Kc5 5. Ne6+ Kc4 6. Nd6+ Kd3
7. Nc5+ A] Ke3 8. Nc4+ Kf4 9. Nd3+ Kf5
10. Ne3+ Ke6 11. Nf4+ etc., or B]
7. ... Kd2 8. Nc4+ Kd1 9. Ne3+ Ke1
10. Nc2+ Kd2 11. Ne4+ Kd3 12. Nb4+ Kc4
13. Nd2+ Kc5 14. Ne4+ Kc4 15. Nd2+ etc. drawn by perpetual check.

Dr. Keidanz⁴ points out the symbols to us.

'The square bounded by c3-f3-f6-c6 represents the circus ring in which the two "trained horses" chase the black king, while the two "clowns" (Bishops g2 and h8) guard the innermost square (center of the ring, which is formed by

d4-e4-e5-d5) and keep the black king away from them'. That Keidanz was not the only one 'seeing things' is shown by another expert of his days: 'Stanley wrote about this facetious composition: "Black's king is being driven round and round the board in a circle, after the fashion of the popular entertainments daily given at the Hippodrome". (KEIDANZ, page 218).'

Yes, this is 'beyond Strategy'. Strange though it may seem to normal people, if one has played enough of chess in one's lifetime, this picture of a circus is seen, not a phantasy, but a real drawing of the real thing. It is like Hofstadter's reasoning Ants-heap, like the Dormouse's Tale in Carrol's book. It is an abstract circus.

MONSTER THE FIFTYNINTH

The Treadmill



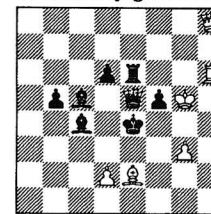
E.B. Cook, Illustrated News, 1855, =, 3874.45

1. Nf3+ exf3 2. Bf5+ Ke5 3. R1xd5+ Rxd5
4. Re6+ Kd4 5. Re4+ Kc5 6. Rc4+ Kd6
7. Rc6+ Ke5 8. Re6+ Kd4 9. Re4+ etc. =.

"Curious and ingenious" Staunton called this drawing combination in his noted chess department of the "Illustrated London News". In an essay, entitled "Among the Immortals" of the Canadian chess magazine "Checkmate", January 1903, p. 77, a certain Hobart mentions Cook's composition, but, strange to say, ascribes it to Paul Morphy. The motif may be generally called a "repetition-theme"..... After the three

incipient moves, the "Tread-Mill" is set in motion. The squares e5, d6, c5 and d4 represent the threshing floor, the black king the wheel and the white Rook d6 the motive power. Cook's composition which is to be reckoned amongst the best symbolic compositions ever produced is included by Miles in his "Chess Gems", Fakenham 1878 as No. 672, by Halpern in the second part of his "Symposium", 1905, p. 115 and by Tattersall in his collection of "A Thousand End-Games", Leeds 1911 as No. 986 (KEIDANZ, page 228).'

The Merry-go-round

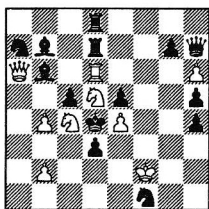


E.B. Cook, KEIDANZ, 1927, =, 4470.23

1. Rxe6 A] Qxe6 2. Qh1+ and now a) 2 ... Kd4 3. Qa1+ Kd5 4. Qa8+ Ke5 5. Qh8+ Ke4 6. Qh1+ etc. - the merry-go-round the right - or b) 2. ... Ke5 3. Qh8+ Kd5 3. Qa8+ Kd4 4. Qa1+ Ke4 5. Qh1+ Ke5 6. Qh8+ etc. - the merry-go-round the left, or
- B] 1. ... Be3+ 2. dxe3 Bxe6 3. Qh1+ Kxe3 4. Qf3+ Kd2 5. Qd3+ Ke1 6. Qd1+ Ke2 7. Qf1+ etc. =, '...a circling of the white queen round the white Bishop e2, is commemorative to the "Tread-Mill", [MONSTER THE FIFTYNINTH], Cook's neverfading flower of his youthful days (KEIDANZ, page 298).'

This menagerie suffers from underweight but I thought it would fit into the 'essential E.B. Cook' we are presenting in these lines.

MONSTER THE SIXTIETH
A Nocturne



E.B. Cook, KEIDANZ,
1927, =, 4768.46

1. Nd2 A] Bxa6 2. Ne3† Rxd6 3. Nf3† Kxe4 4. Ng5† Kany 5. Nf3/h3† etc. =, or B] 1. ... Nxd2 2. Nf4† Kxe4 3. Qxd3† Kxf4 4. Qxd2† Kf5 5. Qd3† Be4 6. Qh3† Kany 7. Qe3† Kg4 8. Qe2† Kf5 9. Qxh5† Kf4 10. Qxh4† etc. =. 'The motto indicates the form of this endgame, somber as dirge by Chopin. However, the drawing combinations, with their "perpetual checks", are bright and tuneful (KEIDANZ, page 299).'

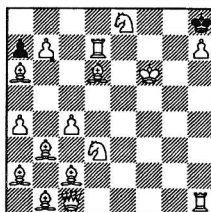
The Postman ran twice ...

And the second envoy arrived too late for STES 1,3.

'A last Mini-maxi Monster is the following astonishing study by the great problemist Bo Lindgren. Yes, there is no misprint, you are looking at four white obtrusive bishops. Thanks to those extra pieces the white forces are at the required numerical strength of 16 men. Already Black's king is in a stalemate position

and it is far from easy to see how it might be released (Alain Pallier per express mail).'

MONSTER THE SIXTYFIRST



B. Lindgren, EG 13, 1968,
+, 1262.41

1. Bb5 a5 2. Bb4 (not 2. Nb4? axb4 3. Qa3 bxa3) 2. ... axb4 3. Qa3 bxa3 4. Nb2 axb2 5. Rc1 bxc1Q - Excelsior! 6. Rd3, the only move that lifts the stalemate, warding off any threat of Black sacrificing the queen. White wins without great trouble (eg. 6. ... Qf1† 7. Ke7 Qe2† 8. Kf7 Qf2† 9. Nf6 +-). 'Mini-maxi Monster nourishes a baby princess, but she comes to no good.'

... and one Monster stands exposed!

'The solution of the riddle of MONSTER THE FIFTYFIRST (STES Journal 1,3 on page 46) is easy. The stipulation is: add White King and White draws. The king must go to b2 (king on b1 being illegal) because 1. Kxa1 any leaves stalemate (postcard received from Hans Gruber).'

1. The moves 2. Rd2 and 3. Rd4 together are a SPLIT MOVE being one of the themes for the on-going Joseph 100 Tourney organized by STES!

2. REWOS [Revised Edition of] Works of Simkhovich, H. Grondijs, 1995

3. I wish to thank Alain Pallier for sending a copy of the card in the Lamare collection.

4. KEIDANZ: The chess compositions of E.B. Cook, H. Keidanz, 1927