

**Book Review: Chess Problems – Out of the Box, by Werner Keym.** 184pp, 500+3 diagrams. Nightrider Unlimited, 2018. €10.

A month or so ago I asked the Editor how many essentially different positions look like r3k2r/8/8/pPppPppP/pPPpPPpP/8/8/R3K2R. (Two positions are different if a sequence of moves could occur in one, but not in the other. The answer is 200!). He replied opportunisticly, “If you’re interested in that sort of thing, you really should review this book by Werner Keym for *The Problemist*...” and so here we are.

The book is a substantially updated version of the 2010 German publication *Eigenartige Schachprobleme*, which is now out of print. It is packed with 500 problems, usually with some retro-content, with frequent reference to castling and en passant. There are no fairy pieces, and only rarely unusual stipulations. The solutions appear on the same page as the problems, in a manner convenient for the casual browser without forcing themselves unwanted upon the diligent solver. Occasional reference is made to specific problems available in an online database.

The author is an expert in the field, and the book contains about the right number of his own compositions. Apposite quotations fill blank spaces. The English is unusual (*eigenartig*?) in places, only partly due to the author’s style, but the book has been well proof-read and I could only find a few misprints. Occasionally it seems to drift slightly and could benefit from some overall narrative.

The problems are arranged in loose themes with brief notes. While the majority are retros, there are a variety of genres, for example the study 106. The solution is not hard: **1.g4 1.h8Q? Qf4! 1...hgx3 e.p. 2.h8S+! 2.h8Q? Qf2+ 2...Kf5 3.0-0+ (necessary as 3.Rf1+? Kg4! 4.Rxf8 g2 5.Kf2 Kh3 6.Kg1 g4! wins) 3...Kg4 4.Rxf8 wins.** The author believes this to be the first *correct* (no cooks or major duals) endgame study to show the Valladao task.

There are, for example, sections on joke problems, AUW, the \$100 double excelsior, symmetry, retro records, retractors, proof games, illegal clusters and many more. Sometimes retroanalytic details are omitted from the solutions and the reader must work to understand the more complex problems, but I prefer this style to possibly turgid spoon-feeding. Position 410 is explained well in the text. The solution **1.Ra5** is easy, but why is 1.0-0 not possible? The reason is very surprising – the Rh1 must have moved in order to allow the white-squared bishops to get past each other on their way to g8 and f5.

The author explains the subtleties of the codex, and the different retroanalytic categories and conventions. His own composition 351 illustrates some of the complexities. In the diagram all 4 castling moves may be legal, but retroanalysis involving the Ba7 and the a/h pawns promoting to rooks, indicates that White and Black can only castle on opposite wings. The solution is paradoxical – White never uses his castling rights! If White can castle Q-side then Black cannot and **1.Rf1 any 2.Qxc6**. If White can castle K-side, then Black can only castle Q-side and so **1.Rd1 any 2.Qg6**.

I read this book quite quickly to prepare for this review, which was perhaps not ideal. Inevitably, individual problems can suffer when surrounded by so many related works. There are not many ways one can force a retro en passant. It’s a bit like going to an exhibition of 500 Still Life paintings – when one starts to feel “Oh no, not another bowl of fruit!” it is time to take a break, lest one loses sight of the constructional achievements. Also, an important part of the appeal of standard problems with retro-content is the element of surprise to the solver. This is hard to achieve in a retro-cornucopia!

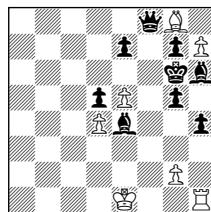
I would certainly recommend this book to anyone interested in or wanting to understand retro-problems. The more general reader will tend to dip into it rather than read cover to cover as I did, but he/she will find much to enjoy. There are many fantastic problems in this well-researched compendium.

**Jonathan Mestel**

(To purchase this reasonably priced book go to:

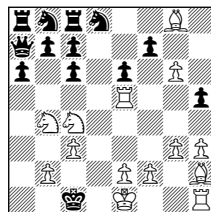
<http://www.nightrider-unlimited.de/> - Ed.)

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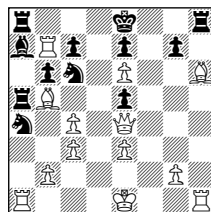
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**410 Michel Caillaud**  
1 Pr I.Vereschagin Ty  
*Zadachy i Etyudi* 2006



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**351 Werner Keym**  
1 Pr *Die Schwalbe* 2008



#3