

SHADOWS OF CENTRALIS MONTHLY MAGAZINE[®]

#45



Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine: Issue #45 (January 2026)

Writers: John Wombat, Ruth Moreira & Rick Priestley

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ISBN: 9798241808240

Product number: SOCMM45

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Issue: #45 (January 2026)

Welcome to the January 2026 issue of Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine, the essential old school publication for players of Space Battles and Shadows of Centralis, as well as enthusiasts of pulp and the golden age of fantasy, science fiction, and horror.

The year ahead will see Wombat Wargames expand the Shadows of Centralis and Space Battles range of games, as well as adding to our respective collections of H.G. Wells and Poul Anderson books. Working with one of fantasy and science fiction's most prolific and well-respected artists, we will also be releasing a very special collection of books, full details of which will soon be announced. Furthermore, working with world-renowned rulesmith Rick Priestley, 2026 will also see us release a very special, retro-fuelled, new tabletop wargame. All this and more lies ahead for the year of 2026!

Meanwhile, among the features included in this month's magazine, as part of an extensive Coffee Mutterings article, there is a focus on Bram Stoker, Edgar Allan Poe, and Hieronymus Bosch. Of particular interest to players of Shadows of Centralis, other features this month include some lore pieces for the Damned.

Huzzah!

John Wombat



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"Beware the Shadows..."

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Wombat Wargames: Fusing old-school rules mechanics with innovative new features, while drawing on literary and aesthetical inspiration from the classic age of weird fiction and pulp publications, Wombat Wargames is an independent publisher of wargaming rules, books, and magazines. In homage to the wonderful wargaming and pulp worlds of yesteryear, every one of our A5-sized publications have a distinctive and unashamedly old-school feel to them.

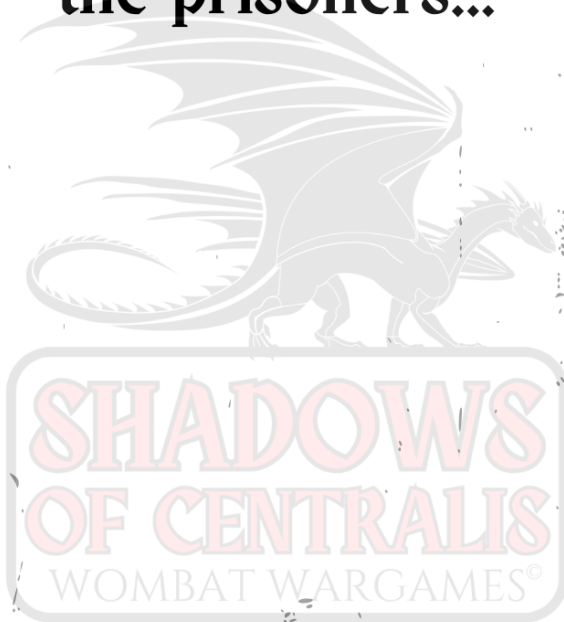


Making our products available for worldwide purchase via Amazon, as well as specially selected stockists, while working with some of the best figures in the wargaming hobby, Wombat Wargames offer retro-inspired, high-quality products. Among our most recently released titles are Space Battles: A Spacefarers Guide, Shadows of Centralis (3rd Edition), Pulp Fiends Volume I: Seabury Quinn, Starfarer: An Authorised Biography of Poul Anderson (2nd Edition), Poul Anderson Collected Works: Volumes I & II, Wargaming Interviews: Volumes I, II & III, and Blanche: The Rise of Grimdark.

Monthly Magazine: Released on the 1st of each month, Shadows of Centralis Monthly Magazine is an A5-sized, 114-page, full colour, premium paperback magazine which covers Wombat Wargames' flagship system, Shadows of Centralis, along with Space Battles, the exciting retro-fuelled spaceship tabletop wargame by world-renowned rulesmith, Rick Priestley. Including detailed interviews, we regularly feature a host of wargaming personalities. Further to this, as we champion the golden age of pulp publications, the monthly magazine also includes special features on classic science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

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**The demoniac laughter echoed
down the twisted corridors,
throwing fear into the hearts of
the prisoners...**

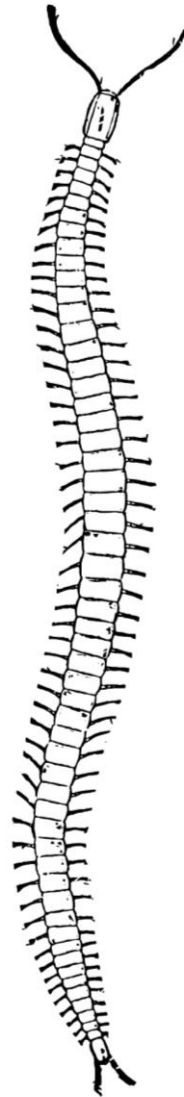


SHADOWS OF CENTRALIS: **PUTRIDUM ANGELUM**

Deep within the stinking bowels of the rat-infested, shrine-strewn labyrinthine Sanctuarium Ultionis, down stygian stairwells of unsettling angles which echo with chanted prayer spoken by poisoned tongues, beyond corridors innumerable, twisting and tenebrous, rests the loathsome and repugnant Putridum Angelum; T'Zor's first gift to his cherished children, the Damned.

It was soon after the appearance of man upon the Orb, a race lost to conceit, greed, and persecution of the weak almost as soon as it had formed, that Putridum Angelum, a winged, multi-armed, cloven-footed, towering esoteric champion of T'Zor, heralded the coming vengeance of his god as he gathered the first legion of the Damned.

Serving as the Orb-walking saviour of the persecuted, it was Putridum Angelum who began the creation of the Damned's subterranean sanctuary, Sanctuarium Ultionis, and offered solace to the world's sick and suppressed, disturbed and destitute. Teaching the ways of T'Zor as he sought vengeance for the wronged, Putridum Angelum was merciless and unforgiving when in conflict with opponents of the Damned. As the planet's unwanted were fashioned into a force of fighters, Putridum



Angelum waged war with ceaseless rage. Of those who had contributed to the mistreatment of his flock, no matter how minor their role, none were spared as Putridum Angelum levelled towns and destroyed cultures. As he wreaked vengeance and delighted in disease, his following of the persecuted grew. Such was the overwhelming juggernaut that the Damned became under his charge, Putridum Angelum was feared and reviled by the Orb's other rulers.

Such times of glory for Putridum Angelum and the Damned were long ago. While at the zenith of his power, during a pitched battle with an army of Elves, Putridum Angelum was gravely wounded. Under the instruction of the Daughters of Disease, his personal attendants, Putridum Angelum was taken to recover in the Dwelling of Disease, his personal chambers within Sanctuarium Ultionis. Since then, none but the Daughters of Disease have seen T'Zor's gift to the Damned. So it is that now the Daughters of Disease control the narrative of Putridum Angelum's words, while looking to promote their own agenda.

Many years after his arrival on the Orb, his great victories now but a distant dream-like memory to him, Putridum Angelum is a shadow of his former supernatural self. With his inflated, misshaped and malodorous mass resting upon an oversized, creaking cathedra, immense and immobile, rancid and vile, Putridum Angelum is in a state of perpetual decay. Unable to move, speaking a tongue now comprehensible only to the Daughters of Disease, who choose to understand or ignore as they see fit, Putridum Angelum is a being transformed. Once supernaturally strengthened through sickness, fortified through disease, Putridum Angelum is now a wreck, crippled by the 'care' of his attendants. Taking from him the energy that would rejuvenate him, holding him in an effective state of stasis-come-slavery, the Daughters of Disease harvest T'Zor's champion as a farmer would his field of corn.

Boasting three arms to the right of his oversized torso, and one to the left, each groaning with foul, pulsating buboes beneath, sprouting from his thick upper body are four malformed appendages. Bound in shackles, each arm is now adorned with all manner of tubes and cables as he undergoes endless bloodletting and tests. Meanwhile, his

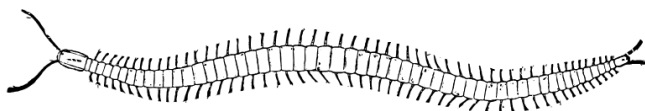
fleshy, overhanging torso rests upon an inflated, pockmarked stomach which writhes with infection. His glazed, yellow eyes swim with a confused sadness as he considers why his god T'Zor, a loving father to all his children, has abandoned him to the very ones he championed. Once a vision of vengeance, with his life force harvested at the hands of the Daughters of Disease, his words heeded only should they fall in line with his attendants-come-captors' desires, Putridum Angelum is a stagnating slave whose sight prompts disgust and pity in equal measure.

"Listen, my children, listen as my words strengthen your broken bodies and breathe fresh life into your crushed spirits. Listen as I tell you that the weak shall strengthen, unite, and avenge their suffering.

Those who once bled under the hand of the torturer, their flesh ripped and muscles torn, their cries of suffering jeered, shall rise up and wreak vengeance. Taunters and torturers alike will be as wheat to our scythes. No sin against us will go unpunished.

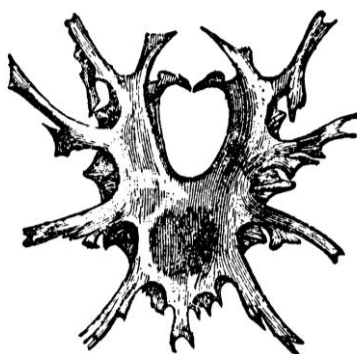
For you, the downtrodden and dispossessed, the diseased and disfigured, the sick and 'insane', you, my persecuted children, shall rise like leprous towers as we show that to be diseased is to be blessed, a body contorted is one of strength. My children, my Damned, rise up!"

The whispered words of T'Zor, spoken during The Uprisings: Birth of the Damned.



SHADOWS OF CENTRALIS: DAUGHTERS OF DISEASE

Semi-deified by large sections of the Damned, operating within the highest echelons of their diseased society, transforming the words of T'Zor's champion, Putridum Angelum, into a doctrine better suited to their own ambitions, the Daughters of Disease are masters of manipulation and machines of Machiavellianism.



Both distrusted and revered by the other members of the Court of the Damned, it is the Daughters of Disease's belief that they are the most loyal of T'Zor's Orb-dwelling servants; they consider themselves the true voice of T'Zor's prophet, Putridum Angelum. However, through a combination of conceit and warping of their minds, the Daughters of Disease, referred to by some within the Court of the Damned as the Daughters of Deceit, creatively convert the teachings of T'Zor.

While holding to T'Zor's words of "To be diseased is to be blessed," the Daughters of Disease consider the most diseased to be the most blessed. By harvesting innumerable plagues of the body and diseases of the mind, growing contaminated lifeforms of inherent corruption which hold their genesis in the immobilised Putridum Angelum, while surreptitiously bestowing a multitude of maladies upon the Orb's other societies, the Daughters of Disease believe themselves to be T'Zor's true self.

It is true that the Daughters of Disease were once named the 'Chosen Ones' by Putridum Angelum, though this was long before T'Zor's champion fell to the hellish incarceration of which his attendants now hold him. Shackled in what were once his sacred chambers, with tubes and wires extracting from his body his otherworldly life force, buried deep within the bowels of Sanctuarium Ultionis, Putridum Angelum is harvested and tested upon.



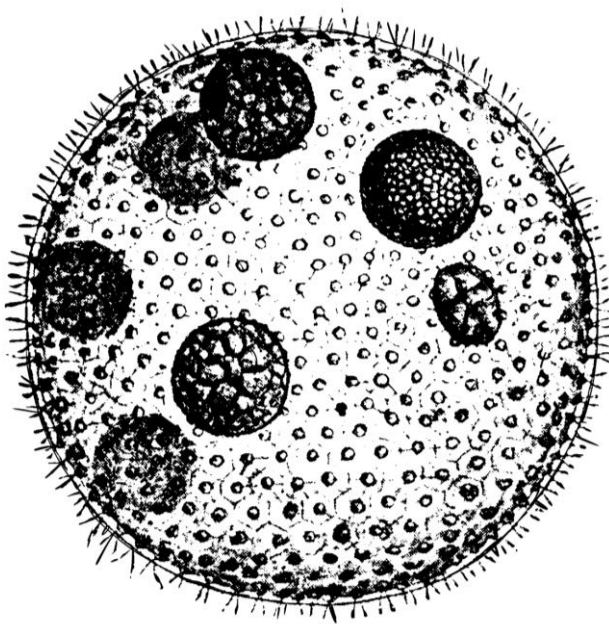
Tireless and tenacious, driven in the desire to create their version of the Damned, their New Wave, the Daughters of Disease are unflinching and without compromise when it comes to the levels of pain which they inflict upon Putridum Angelum. Should their secret projects come to light, it is likely the Daughters of Disease would be condemned by the wider sections of the Damned as heretics, traitors to T'Zor, torturers of Putridum Angelum. Such accusations levelled at the Daughters of Disease would astonish them, however, for they see their task as sacred, they believe *themselves* to be the true essence of T'Zor.

That the Daughters of Disease are most loyal to the god T'Zor, there is no doubt. However, a consequence of religious mania fused with the meddlesome and manipulative whispers of the Orb-imprisoned Centrais Portas, what divides the Daughters of Disease from the rest of the Damned is their belief that *they* are actually the true soul of T'Zor. This has led to the Damned, through the surreptitious control of the Daughters of Disease, restricting their own progress. Instead of Putridum Angelum serving the Damned as he once did, a powerhouse of vengeance, he is now no more than the experimental plaything of his own attendants.



Putridum Angelum is aware of the veiled directing of Centralis Portas, the original creator of the gods; while whispering into the ears of the Daughters of Disease, Centralis Portas mocks and taunts the enslaved Putridum Angelum through barbaric psychic attacks. A soul contorted in agony, Putridum Angelum questions why his god T'Zor, for whom he descended to the Orb so that he could spread his teachings, has abandoned him.

For T'Zor, a most generous deity, a god who takes joy in lavishing upon all of his beloved children gifts of disease and disfigurements, as he seeks vengeance for the suffering they have endured, the situation with the Daughters of Disease is one which leaves him saddened, angered, and greatly torn. The god's love for his progeny is unbounded, so he forgives the Daughters of Disease their hubris, he sees within their corrupted thinking the whispered interference of the Orb-imprisoned Centralis Portas, but the suffering of Putridum Angelum tears at the deity's soul. Furthermore, the god also sees the potential danger of the Damned imploding through infighting. Observing all from his astral plane, it seems unlikely that he will not eventually act.



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While the game can be played and greatly enjoyed as a generic system, Space Battles also includes a dynamic backstory and range of unique factions. Each with their own individual playing style, five different factions are detailed within this book; the Federation, the Dahlians, the Orzo, the Anthozoans, and the Xixan. There is also the mysterious Spectral Fleet, an esoteric force of spacefarers who slip in and out of corporeality. In addition to his reputation as one of the finest wargames writers of all-time, Rick Priestley is also regarded as one of the greatest creators of backstories and lore, this is clearly evident in the unique universe he has created for Space Battles.

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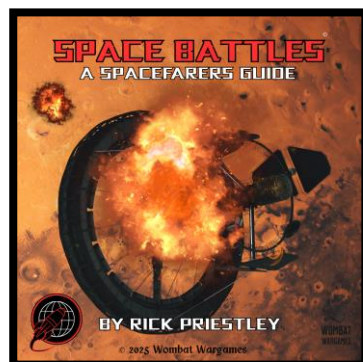
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Space Battles: A Spacefarers Guide, written by Rick Priestley.

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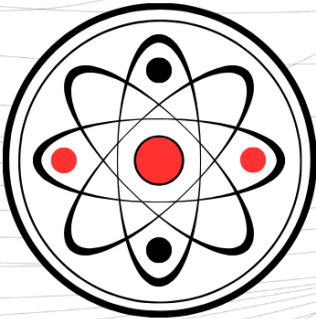
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COFFEE MUTTERINGS

There are three special features within this month's Coffee Mutterings. First, we focus on one of the masters of the vampiric novel, the creator of the infamous Count Dracula, Bram Stoker. Then, we cover a pensmith whose dark and brooding stories of suspense, terror, and gothic horror have influenced a swathe of other writers, the master of the of the macabre tale, Edgar Allan Poe. Finally, we focus on medieval artist Hieronymus Bosch.

Abraham Stoker was born in Clontarf, Dublin, Ireland, on November 8, 1847, to parents Abraham Stoker and his wife Charlotte Mathilda Blake Thornley. A sickly child, Stoker was educated at home for much of his early childhood. He then attended a private school, Bective House, before entering into Trinity College, Dublin.



As well as being a studious academic, Stoker was also a keen sportsman. During his time at Dublin's Trinity College, as well as performing as a solid all-round athlete, Stoker especially excelled in rugby, playing for the university's team. Meanwhile, Stoker was also the president of the University Philosophical Society. Furthermore, while at university, Stoker developed a keen interest in the theatre, and worked as a freelance journalist.

Following in the steps of his father, who was a civil servant, Stoker entered in to a career with the Irish Civil Service. During this time, linking to his interest in the theatre, along with his writing skills, Stoker also worked as a theatre critic for the Dublin Evening Mail. In addition to his journalistic projects, Stoker also began to pen his own stories, a number of which he submitted to periodicals such as London Society and The Shamrock.

“The picture represented a road through a moor to a village, seen lying some distance away, with the spire of its church shadowed by a passing cloud. The moor was bleak, with, in the foreground, a clump of blasted trees, and in the distance a ruined house. On the road two travellers were journeying, both seated on the same horse – a sorry nag. One of them was booted and spurred, and wore a short cloak, a slouched hat, under which the lineaments showed ghastly, for the face was that of a skull.”

Taken from *The Primrose Path* by Bram Stoker, first published in the February 6, 1875 issue of *The Shamrock*.

Stoker’s short story, *The Crystal Cup*, appeared in the September 1872 issue of *London Society*. A few years later, in 1875, Stoker’s debut novel, *The Primrose Path*, was serialised across issues of *The Shamrock* magazine. Later that year, the Irish publication included further of Stoker’s writings, including his stories *Buried Treasures*, and *The Chain of Destiny*. In addition to the release of several novels, throughout his literary career, Stoker regularly saw his work feature in various newspapers and magazines.



“The pagans whose imagination wrought into existence the whole theology of Olympus, had a subtle insight into the human heart when they showed the familiar figure of Cupid shooting his sweetly poisoned arrows at them that slept.”

Taken from *The Shoulder of Shasta* by Bram Stoker, first published in 1895.

In 1878, Stoker married Florence Balcombe, daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel James Balcombe and his wife Phillipa Anne Marshall. Soon afterwards, the couple moved from Ireland to England, settling in London. Here, Stoker began working for Henry Irving, serving as business manager to the actor, as well as managing his Lyceum Theatre. Meanwhile, in 1879, Stoker's wife gave birth to the couple's son, Irving Noel Thornley Stoker.

Compiling several of Stoker's short stories, presented as an illustrated collection, featuring the illustratory efforts of W.V. Cockburn and William FitzGerald, *Under the Sunset* was published in 1881.

Novels by Bram Stoker

The Primrose Path (1875)

The Chain of Destiny (1875)

The Snake's Pass (1890)

The Watter's Mou' (1895)

The Shoulder of Shasta (1895)

Dracula (1897)

Miss Betty (1898)

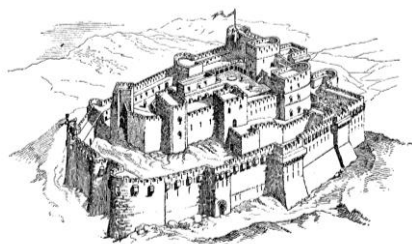
The Mystery of the Sea (1902)

The Jewel of Seven Stars (1903)

The Man (1905)

Lady Athlyne (1908)

The Lair of the White Worm (1911)

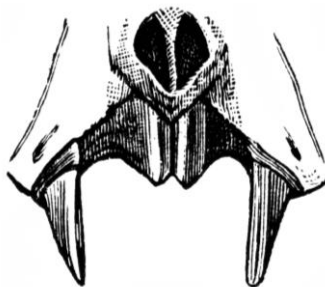


In 1890, Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* novel was published. Over the immediate years that followed, further works of Stoker were printed in different newspapers and magazines, such as *The Man from Shorrox*, which appeared in *The Pall Mall Magazine* (February 1894). In 1895, two different stories of Stoker's were published as standalone novels, *The Watter's Mou'*, and *The Shoulder of Shasta*. Then, the novel for which Stoker would become most well-known, *Dracula*, was published in 1897.

"Between two great mountains of grey and green, as the rock cropped out between the tufts of emerald verdure, the valley, almost as narrow as a gorge, ran due west towards the sea. There was just room for the roadway, half cut in the rock, beside the narrow strip of dark lake of seemingly unfathomable depth that lay far below between perpendicular walls of frowning rock."

Taken from *The Snake's Pass* by Bram Stoker, first published in 1890.

Though *Dracula* was published in 1897, Stoker had embarked on preparatory work for the novel several years earlier, as he extensively researched history, folklore, and European geography. Then, over the years that followed, Stoker set about structuring and writing the novel.



Dracula was not the first vampiric novel. Published in 1819, for many, John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* takes this accolade. Furthermore, expanding the works of vampiric literature, other novels followed, such as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), as well as Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak* (1884), among others. However, it was Stoker's epistolary *Dracula* which truly propelled the popularity of the vampiric novel. The Gothic-styled *Dracula* is a multi-textured exploration of the human condition, which draws on religious themes and legends of yore.

Constructed through a series of different letters and diary entries, Dracula tells the story of the forever cursed-come-blessed Count Dracula, a vampire of Transylvania. The tale begins by describing the entrapment of Jonathan Harker, a visitor to Count Dracula's Transylvanian castle. There follows the Count's travels from his lair in the Carpathian Mountains, as he journeys to England, seeking his prey. Hunting him down, Dracula is pursued by the determined Professor Van Helsing.

"Then a wild desire took me to obtain that key at any risk, and I determined then and there to scale the wall again and gain the Count's room. He might kill me, but death now seemed the happier choice of evils. Without a pause I rushed up to the east window, and scrambled down the wall, as before, into the Count's room. It was empty, but that was as I expected. I could not see a key anywhere, but the heap of gold remained. I went through the door in the corner and down the winding stair and along the dark passage to the old chapel. I knew now well enough where to find the monster I sought."

Taken from Dracula by Bram Stoker, first published in 1897.

Throughout his literary career, Stoker regularly saw his work feature in various newspapers and magazines. Over the course of the late-1890's, as well as his stories appearing in the print of periodicals, another of the writer's standalone novels was published, in the form of Miss Betty (1898).



"I even began to dread Aunt Janet's Second-Sight visions or dreams. These had a fatal habit of coming so near to fact that they always made for a danger of discovery. I had to realise now that the Lady of the Shroud might indeed be a Vampire – one of that horrid race that survives death and carries on a life-in-death existence eternally and only for evil."

Taken from *The Lady of the Shroud* by Bram Stoker, first published in 1909.

The 1900's saw the publication of several of Stoker's novels; *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902), *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), *The Man* (1905), *Lady Athlyne* (1908), and *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909). Furthermore, among other publications, there was also the 1908 release of *Snowbound: The Record of a Theatrical Touring Party*, a collection of interconnected short stories inspired by Stoker's time working for Henry Irving.



Complete with full-colour illustrations by Pamela Colman Smith, Stoker's novel *The Lair of the White Worm* was published in 1911. This novel was Stoker's last. Following a series of strokes, aged sixty-four years old, Stoker died in London, on April 20, 1912.

"It all seemed so real that I could hardly imagine that it had ever occurred before; and yet each episode came, not as a fresh step in the logic of things, but as something expected. It is in such wise that memory plays its pranks for good or ill; for pleasure or pain; for weal or woe. It is thus that life is bitter-sweet, and that which has been done becomes eternal."

Taken from *The Jewel of Seven Stars* by Bram Stoker, first published in 1903.

Though Stoker left behind a considerable literary legacy, comprising many short stories and several novels, the writer's most notable work is *Dracula*. Over the many years since its publication, *Dracula* has served to influence a swathe of books, films, and more. One of the first pictures to take its lead from *Dracula* was a German



silent film called *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*, which was released in 1922. Directed by F.W. Murnau, with screenplay by Henrik Galeen, the film loaned extensively from Stoker's *Dracula*. Indeed, Stoker's widow Florence sued for infringement of copyright, winning the case, and seeing the court order the destruction of all copies of the film. However, regardless of the court's ruling, not all copies were destroyed. As such, the film has gone on to become a cult classic.

“His face was a strong – a very strong – aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.”

Taken from *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, first published in 1897.

Since its 1897 publication, with *Nosferatu* being just one example, *Dracula* has been adapted hundreds of times, as the story's tragic villain Count Dracula endures as an ever popular anti-hero. Other notable film adaptations include Universal Pictures' 1931 picture of the same name, which stars Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula. Furthermore, released between 1958 – 1974, British film company Hammer Film Productions developed a series of nine *Dracula*-based films, typically featuring, either separately or alongside each other, Christopher Lee (as Dracula) and Peter Cushing (as Van Helsing).

"I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer – nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the super-sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited – waited with beating heart."

Taken from *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, first published in 1897.

Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Poe was born on January 19, 1809, in Boston, Massachusetts, to parents David Poe Jr. and his wife Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins Poe. David and Elizabeth had married in 1806, and had their first child, Edgar's brother, William Henry Leonard Poe, the following year. Edgar's sister, Rosalie Poe, was born in 1810, by which time the father of the family had abandoned the home.

Both of Edgar's parents were actors, with his mother having been involved with the stage since her childhood. Meanwhile, Edgar's father had been drawn to acting upon seeing a teenage Elizabeth on stage, prompting him to veer away from the career in law which was expected of him, and joining the theatrical troupe of which Elizabeth was part of. By the time of Edgar's birth, the Poe family was struggling financially, a situation not helped by David Poe Jr.'s heavy drinking and fiery temper. In a continuing downwards spiral of fortunes, both of Edgar's parents were dead by 1811, and so the three Poe children were parted to live with different families.

Poe, now Edgar Allan Poe, was raised from infancy in Richmond, Virginia by John and Frances Allan. A wealthy merchant, John Allan took the family to live for a short time in the United Kingdom. John Allan was keen for Poe to continue in his education, so during his time in the United Kingdom Poe was schooled first in Irvine, North Ayrshire, Scotland, and then London, England. By the time Poe was eleven years old, however, the family had returned to the United States, where the young boy continued his education in Richmond.

Such was the wealth held by successful businessman John Allan, Poe grew up in affluent surroundings. However, as Poe grew into adulthood, frustrated with how his ward elected to spend his generous allowance, often gambling and drinking his way through it, John Allan removed his support. It was because of his financial issues that Poe's time at the University of Virginia was cut short. Adding further to his stresses, Poe's turbulent time at university coincided with the failure of his relationship with his teenage love Sarah Elmira Royster, a young woman Poe had intended to marry.

Now living in Boston, and distanced from the financial support of John Allan, Poe turned to the United States Army as he enlisted as a private. It was whilst serving in the United States Army, in 1827, that Poe, using the name of “a Bostonian,” self-released his first book, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Taking inspiration from, amongst others, Lord Byron, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* received a very limited print run, which Poe himself paid for, and made very little impact on the literary world at the time.

*“Oh! that my young life were a lasting dream!
My spirit now awakening, till the beam
Of an Eternity should bring the morrow.
Yes! tho’ that long dream were of helpless sorrow
’Twere better than the cold reality
Of walking life, to him whose heart must be,
A chaos of deep passion, from his birth.
But should it be – that dream eternally
Continuing – as dreams have been to me
In my young boyhood – should it be thus given,
’Twere folly still to hope for higher Heaven.”*

Taken from *Dreams* by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1827.

Two years after the release of *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, Poe’s second book of poetry, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems*, was published. Whereas Poe’s first book of poetry had failed to gain any sort of critical reception, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems* did, though the typical response was less than positive.

During a period of temporary reconciliation, John Allan assisted in securing Poe an early release from his time with the United States

Army. Indeed, John Allan was encouraged to see Poe gain admittance to the U.S. Military Academy of West Point. However, the guardian's hopes were soon dashed. Refusing orders, failing to attend class, and deliberately belligerent, Poe soon achieved the expulsion he aimed for. There followed, in 1831, the publication of Poe's third book of poetry, *Poems*.

"One tempestuous night, Metzengerstein, awaking from a heavy slumber, descended like a maniac from his chamber, and, mounting in hot haste, bounded away into the mazes of the forest. An occurrence so common attracted no particular attention, but his return was looked for with intense anxiety on the part of his domestics, when, after some hours' absence, the stupendous and magnificent battlements of the Palace Metzengerstein were discovered crackling and rocking to their very foundation under the influence of a dense and livid mass of ungovernable fire."

Taken from *Metzengerstein* by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1832.

Telling the story of Frederick, Baron of Metzengerstein, and the feuding rivalry between the Metzengerstein family and the Berlifitzing family, Poe's short story *Metzengerstein* featured within the pages of the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*. Poe had submitted the piece, along with a number of his other works, to the publication's writing competition. Though *Metzengerstein* failed to win the competition, the periodical did still print the story in January 1832.

Metzengerstein is a significant milestone in the literary career of Poe, as it was the first of the writer's short stories to be printed. The following year, this time securing himself a monied prize, Poe's short



story *MS. Found in a Bottle* was published in the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor* (October 1833).

Over the course of the 1830's, Poe saw many of his poems and short stories in print via publications such as the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*, *Southern Literary Messenger*, *American Museum*, *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, and *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, among others. Notable works from this time include Poe's short stories *Morella* (*Southern Literary Messenger*, April 1835), *Ligeia* (*Baltimore American Museum*, September 1838), and *The Fall of the House of Usher* (*Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1839).



MS. Found in a Bottle

MS. Found in a Bottle tells the tale of a ship's passenger (the story's narrator) on board a vessel which is beset with ferocious storms, and which leaves only himself and an old Swedish man as survivors. Events run from bad to worse as the strange conditions, which take on an increasingly supernatural nature, are described. The ship then collides with a huge black galleon, sinking the ship, while throwing the unfortunate passenger onto this hulking and otherworldly sailing machine.

Deeply evocative, the story continues with the seafarer discovering his new ship to be manned by a crew which are unable to see or hear him. Further weirdness is added to the story as the mysterious aspects of the vessel and its holdings are described. Suggestions of other spiritual planes and dimensions are spoken of as the story grows with mounting tension and suspense, "All around us was horror and thick gloom." The story ends with this strange ship failing victim to a huge whirlpool.

Going on to influence a number of his later writings, Virginia Clemm was one of Poe's cousins. In 1835, Poe gained a licence for their marriage, which followed soon afterwards. At the time of their marriage, Poe was twenty-seven years old, while his wife was in her early-teens. 1835 also saw Poe working on a play called *Politian*, a

work centred around the murder of American lawyer and politician, Solomon P. Sharp. Poe later abandoned project, leaving it incomplete.

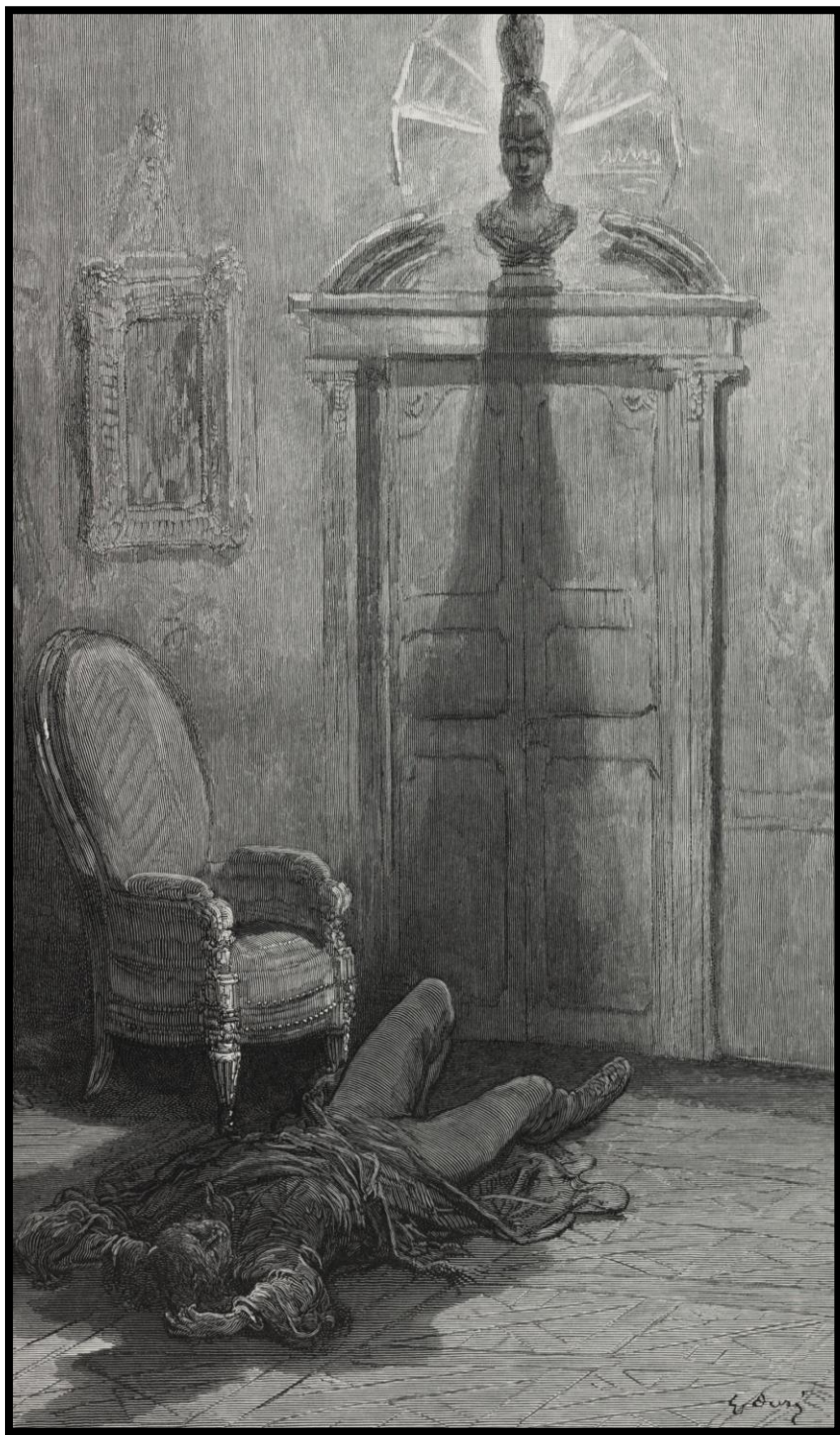
In 1838, Poe's first novel, his sea-tale, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, was published by Harper & Brothers. The work had been partially serialised in 1837 via the Southern Literary Magazine, a periodical for which Poe was working at the time. However, Poe left the publication before the novel was fully printed. It was only after he left the Southern Literary Magazine that Poe completed the writing of the work.

"During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was – but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible."

Taken from The Fall of the House of Usher by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1839.

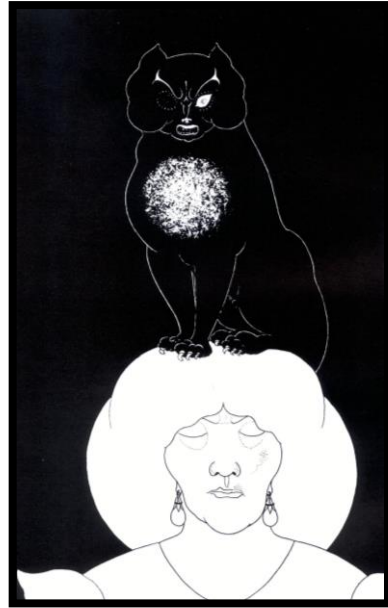
Though Poe had intended to write a second, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket is the writer's only complete novel. Poe's novel The Journal of Julius Rodman was partially serialised in 1840 via Burton's Gentleman's Magazine, for which Poe was working at the time. However, in a similar situation which impacted his first novel, Poe parted ways with Burton's Gentleman's Magazine, and did not complete the work.





Gustave Doré's illustration for Edgar Allan Poe's The Raven.

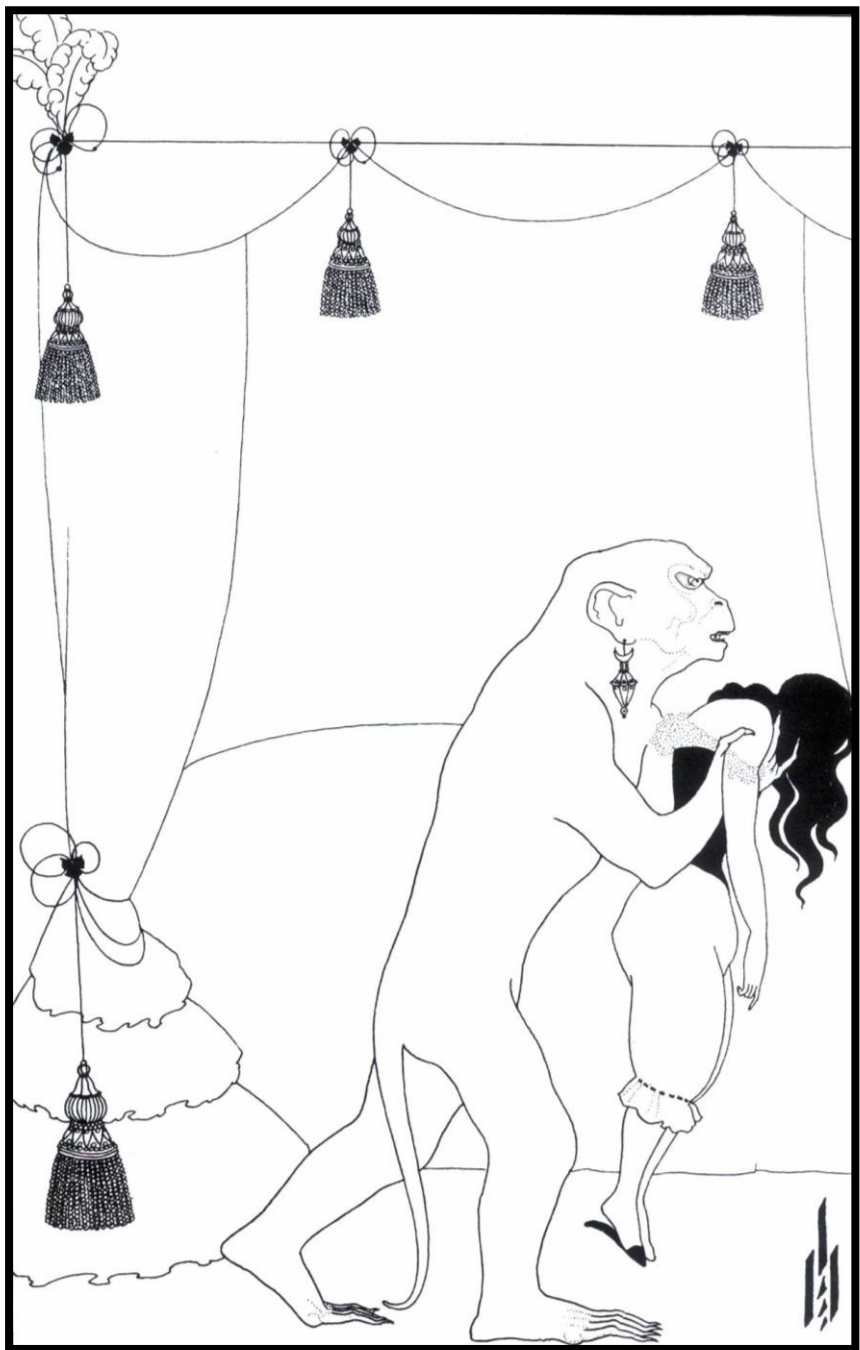
In 1840, Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, a two-volume collection of his short stories, was published. Meanwhile, the 1840's continued to see a swathe's of Poe's poetry, short stories, as well as several essays, in print, as the works featured in periodicals such as *Flag of Our Union*, *Graham's Magazine*, *Southern Literary Messenger*, and *Dollar Newspaper*. Indeed, some of Poe's most notable short stories were printed at this time, including *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (*Graham's Magazine*, April 1841), *The Masque of the Red Death* (*Graham's Magazine*, May 1842), *The Tell-Tale Heart* (*The Pioneer*, January 1843), *The Gold-Bug* (*Dollar Newspaper*, June 1843), *The Black Cat* (*United States Saturday Post*, August 1843), *The Oblong Box* (*Godey's Lady's Book*, September 1844), and *Hop-Frog* (*Flag of Our Union*, March 1849).



Aubrey Beardsley's illustration for Edgar Allan Poe's The Black Cat.

“Distinct, coldly, calmly distinct, fell those few simple sounds within my ear, and thence, like molten lead, rolled hissing into my brain. Years – years may pass away, but the memory of that epoch – never! Nor was I indeed ignorant of the flowers and the vine; but the hemlock and the cypress overshadowed me night and day. And I kept no reckoning of time or place, and the stars of my fate faded from heaven, and therefore the earth grew dark, and its figures passed by me, like flitting shadows, and among them all I beheld only – Morella.”

Taken from *Morella* by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1835.



Aubrey Beardsley's illustration for Edgar Allan Poe's The Murders in the Rue Morgue.



Daniel Vierge's illustration for Edgar Allan Poe's The Murders in the Rue Morgue.

"... the ape approached the casement with its mutilated burden, the sailor shrank aghast to the rod..."

Taken from *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1841.

In 1845, Poe's poem *The Raven* was published in the New York newspaper the *Evening Mirror*. Using the pseudonym of Quarles, Poe's poem was also published in *American Review: A Whig Journal*. It was at this time in his life when Poe achieved his greatest public appreciation as a writer, though, as he had throughout his adult life, he maintained a financially precarious position. For all the plaudits it gained him, the publication of *The Raven* earned Poe very little financial remuneration.

The Masque of the Red Death

Published for the first time in May 1842 via *Graham's Magazine*, *The Masque of the Red Death* sees Poe describe the downfall of an arrogant and insensitive protagonist called Prince Prospero. While outside his castle-like abbey the country is gripped in the horror of a painful, fatal plague, Prince Prospero secures himself from the pestilence behind welded-shut gates and thick stone walls. Outside, sufferers of the disease, the 'Red Death', are convulsed in fits of agony, before meeting their demise.

Well provisioned, surrounded by one thousand privileged guests, in defiance of the contagion which strips outside life of its vitality, Prince Prospero delights in the pleasures of merriment and safety as he holds an extravagant masquerade ball. Poe details the interior decoration for Prince Prospero's grand and lavish event, describing seven different coloured chambers; blue, purple, green, orange, white, violet, and black. The writer also explains Prince Prospero's "love of the bizarre" as he talks of the abbey's sharp-turning corridors, gothic, stained-glass windows, and tripods holding braziers of illuminating fire.

On the hour, an ebony clock strikes the time, causing all to pause and take note; the chimes instilling within the guests a feeling of dread where there had previously been unfettered joy. It is on the stroke of midnight, as guests are strangely held in thrall of the clock, that a tall, gaunt, masked figure is noticed for the first time. The mask is said to resemble that of a "stiffened corpse," while about its body is the appearance of blood. Outraged by this intrusion, Prince Prospero runs at the figure with a raised dagger. Upon drawing near to this ghastly abomination, the figure turns, prompting the blade-wielding aristocrat to drop dead. As guests rush to seize and unmask this figure they are astonished to find beneath its mask and clothing a void of all tangible presence. Then, one by one, falling prey to the 'Red Death', as scarlet afflictions ravage their bodies, all of Prince Prospero's guests drop dead, "... darkness and decay held illimitable dominion over all."



Odilon Redon's illustration for Edgar Allan Poe's The Masque of the Red Death.

*"No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous.
Blood was its Avatar and its seal..."*

Taken from The Masque of the Red Death by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1842.

In 1847, Poe's wife Virginia died of tuberculosis, a condition she had been battling for a number of years. The depth of tragedy felt by Poe upon the death of his wife triggered a wild spiralling of alcoholism and despair.

"A feeling, for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul – a sensation which will admit of no analysis, to which the lessons of by-gone time are inadequate, and for which I fear futurity itself will offer me no key. To a mind constituted like my own, the latter consideration is an evil. I shall never – I know that I shall never – be satisfied with regard to the nature of my conceptions. Yet it is not wonderful that these conceptions are indefinite, since they have their origin in sources so utterly novel. A new sense – a new entity is added to my soul."

Taken from MS. Found in a Bottle by Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1833.

During the final years of his life, Poe became engaged to poet Sarah Helen Whitman, though the two parted before any marriage took place. Then, resuming his relationship with Sarah Elmira Royster, his teenage sweetheart, Poe was again engaged to be wed, though again marriage did not follow, as Poe soon passed away. Aged just forty years old, just a few days after being found in a distressed, dishevelled, and much disorientated state, Poe died on October 7, 1849, in a hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. Much speculation and conjecture has been applied to the reasons for Poe's death, with likely causes attributed to heart-related issues, complications through alcohol and substance abuse, and neurological disorders.

Assigned the unofficial title of The Light-House, considered one of his final writings, Poe left behind an unfinished piece of work, one which is centred around the feelings of isolation and paranoia felt by the story's lightkeeper, "My passion for solitude could scarcely have been more thoroughly gratified. I do not say satisfied; for I believe I should never be satiated with such delight as I have experienced to-day..."

Hieronymus Bosch

Jheronimus van Aken, better known as Hieronymus Bosch, was a painter born in 's-Hertogenbosch, Brabant, Burgundian Netherlands, in around 1450, to parents Anthonius van Aken and Aleid van der Mynnen. With his grandfather, Johannes Thomas van Aken, a painter, and his father an artistic adviser with links to the Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady, Bosch stemmed from an artistic family. It is thought that these individuals played a significant role in the development of Bosch's painting skills.

Though little detail is known of Bosch's life, it is believed he spent most of it within the picturesque town of his birth, 's-Hertogenbosch, a place which contributed to the artist's name. Bosch married his fiancée Aleyt Goyaerts van den Meerveene, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, around 1479. Once married, the two moved to the nearby town of Oirschot. Deeply religious, and with a keen interest in nature and wildlife, throughout his life Bosch was a well-respected artist, gaining commissions from across Europe until died in 1516.

With his artworks typically considered part of the Flemish Primitives school, Bosch was a deeply creative visionary whose paintings are often viewed as an insight into the human condition, with an emphasis on desire and death. Setting himself apart from the Renaissance style of painting, which was a popular genre of the time, Bosch pioneered the introduction of abstraction and surrealism. He was also a strong advocate for the use of symbolism in art.

Founded in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1318, centred around the town's St John's Cathedral, the Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady was a devoutly religious organisation of which Bosch was a prominent member. Other notable members included William the Silent, often referred to as William of Orange, leader of the Dutch Revolt.

Inspiring a range of emotions, meaning different things to different people, art is open to interpretation. In the case of Bosch's paintings, interpretation becomes more divided as no letters or diaries offering any explanations of his work can be traced back to the artist. Typical themes of Bosch's works include religion, morality, nature, fantasy, and esoterism. Meanwhile, Bosch's go-to creative materials

comprised of heavy oak panels and oil paints, though he did also design stained-glass windows, worked with brass, and embroidered.

Such are the many of exaggerated, non-conformist scenes depicted in Bosch's paintings, including images of unabashed debauchery, some have considered the artist to have held heretical beliefs, while others have questioned the painter's potential use of hallucinogens. Given Bosch's religious convictions, the idea of him experimenting with mind-altering substances seems unlikely, though still possible. More likely, though, given the scenes of Hell and relentless punishment of suffering sinners which tend to fill his works, is that Bosch was looking to promote the virtues of God. Another aspect to consider when looking at Bosch's paintings are the dramatic experiences the artist lived through, such as the huge fire which destroyed much of 's-Hertogenbosch when he was young.

The Garden of Earthly Delights



Measuring 205.5 cm × 384.9 cm, Hieronymus Bosch's The Garden of Earthly Delights is housed at Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Believed to have been completed between 1490 – 1510, and generally considered his most well-known work, The Garden of Earthly Delights is a large triptych painted by Bosch. Intended to be viewed from left to right; the left panel of this triptych shows a scene of the Garden of Eden, the centre panel depicts a scene of eroticised wild abandon, while the right panel shows a picture of Hell.

The Garden of Earthly Delights – Left panel:

In an otherworldly paradise, in which both mythical and exotic creatures reside, Adam is introduced to Eve. With the painting including pictures of animals such as elephants and giraffes, Bosch reflects his interest in the recently explored southern section of Africa. Meanwhile, the terrain of this utopian wonderland is a fusion of esoteric sculpture, luscious grasslands, and many varied trees.

Upon closer inspection, the viewer can see a plethora of creatures emerging from water sources. Several of these beasts, again some real, others fantastical, are shown in conflict with each other. It could be argued that these creatures represent an evil teeming into the Garden of Eden. Another key point to note is the inclusion of a small owl in the hollowed centre of an ornate and strangely designed fountain. At the time, owls were widely associated with witchcraft, scheming, and foolishness.



The Garden of Earthly Delights triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1510. Left panel. Painting housed at Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.



The Garden of Earthly Delights triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1510. Left panel detail, showing Adam, God, and Eve. Painting housed at Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

The Garden of Earthly Delights – Centre panel:

Completely uninhibited, with lustful and playful desires, many naked male and female figures cavort with each other, as well as with a range of real and fantastical creatures. As with the left panel of the triptych, owls are again featured, in addition to a selection of other avian creatures. At the time, birds were often linked to spirituality and prophecy.

Though the humans of the piece are depicted in states of obvious abandon, the painting is not gratuitous in reflecting this. Symbolising copulation, fruit is featured throughout, while shellfish, at the time used to reference venereal disease, is included, too.



The Garden of Earthly Delights triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1510. Centre panel. Painting housed at Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

The Garden of Earthly Delights – Right panel:

In sharp contrast to the left and centre panels, the right panel of the triptych is dark, yet still vivid, as it shows all manner of torture and suffering. In painting his version of Hell, Bosch explores the nuances of horror.

A vision of tenebrous hopelessness, the lugubrious backdrop of this panel shows the final destination for the travellers of Hell. With only faint suggestions of their detail, the domain's infernal pits of damnation are aglow with menace, adding to the sense of abject hopelessness and horror.

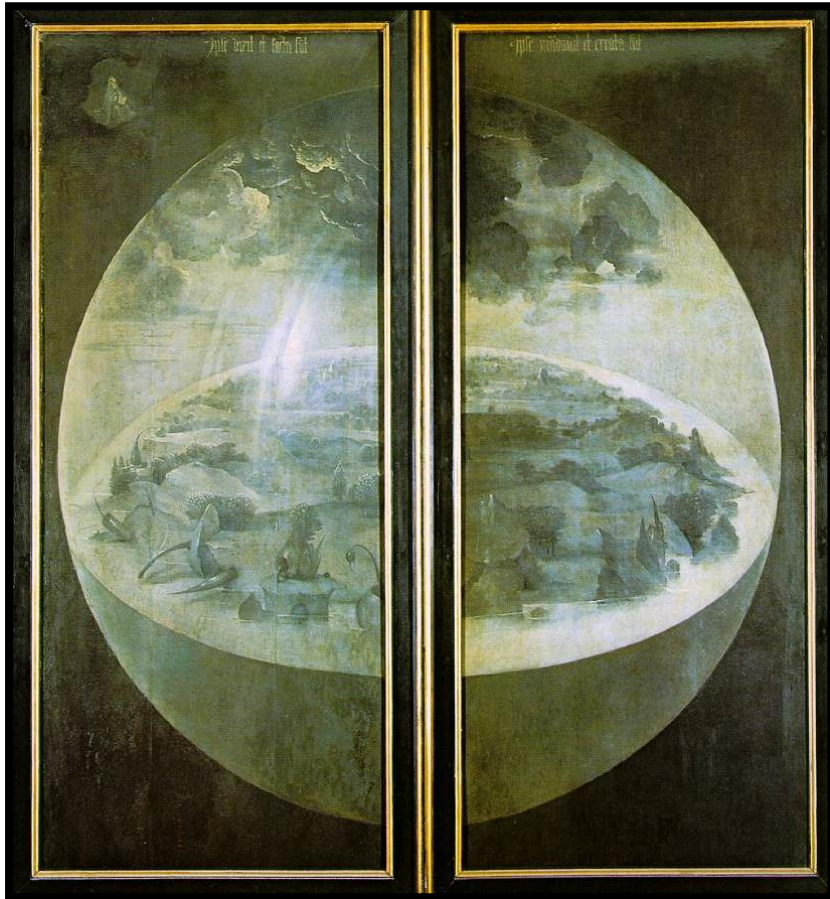
Abstract and outrageous in presentation, at the forefront of the right panel, all manner of demons torment and torture Hell's guests. Those who once revelled in unshackled delight, absorbed in pleasures of the flesh, now suffer on a multitude of levels. Here, Hell is not just a place of physical pain, it is a place of extreme mental and emotional anguish, an example being the depiction of demons gambling for the souls of the punished. Bosch, whilst appearing to demonstrate what awaits foolish and lustful sinners, also points out hypocrisy of the Church, as a habit-wearing pig secures the soul of one of Hell's victims. Bosch's vision of Hell is awash with death and suffering.



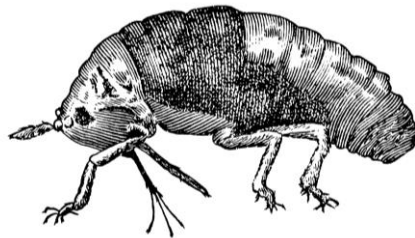
*The Garden of Earthly Delights triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1510.
Right panel. Painting housed at Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.*

The Garden of Earthly Delights – Outer Panels:

With Bosch choosing to use only a limited colour palette, the outer wings of The Garden of Earthly Delights, when closed, show Earth in a state of partial completion. Many consider the picture to represent the biblical Third Day.



The Garden of Earthly Delights triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1510. Outer panels. Painting housed at Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.





Ascent of the Blessed (part of the Visions of the Hereafter polyptych) by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1505 – 1515. Painting housed at Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy.



Terrestrial Paradise (part of the Visions of the Hereafter polyptych) by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1515. Painting housed at Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy.





Allegory of Intemperance (or Allegory of Gluttony and Lust) (taken from The Pilgrimage of Life triptych) by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1500. Painting housed at Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, U.S.A.

The Pilgrimage of Life

The Pilgrimage of Life is a triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Not all parts of the completed work survive. Of the parts that have survived are the left panel (The Ship of Fools), right panel (Death and the Miser), and the outer panels (The Pedlar, or Wayfarer). Labelled Allegory of Intemperance, or Allegory of Gluttony and Lust, the lower part of The Ship of Fools (shown beneath the ship) is a scene which depicts, and condemns, the acts of gluttony and lust.

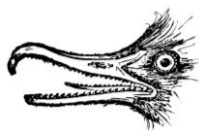




Death and the Miser (taken from The Pilgrimage of Life triptych) by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1490 – 1515. Painting housed at National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

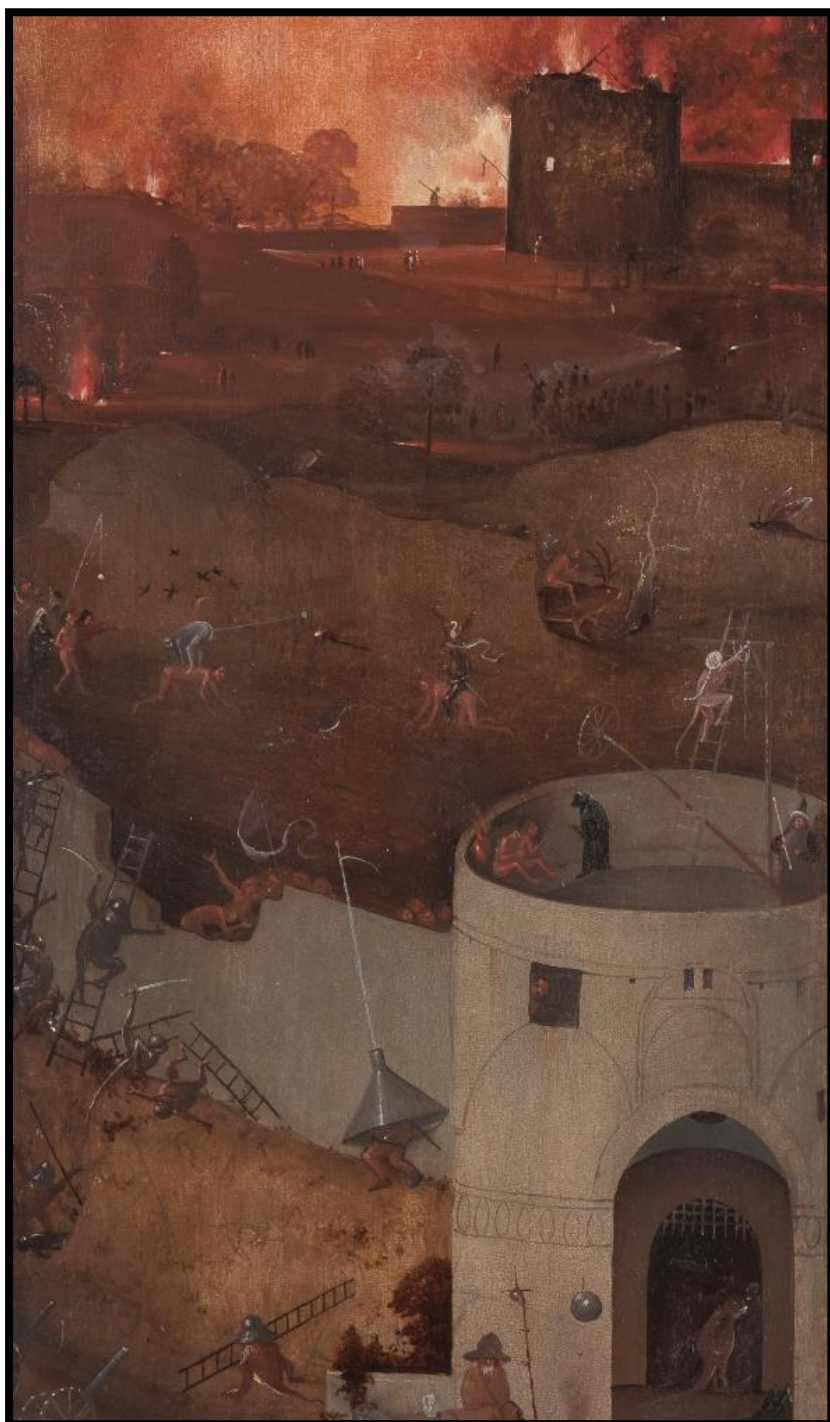


Saint John the Evangelist on Patmos by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1489. Painting housed at Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany.





The Last Judgement triptych by Hieronymus Bosch/ Hieronymus Bosch's workshop. Circa 1486. Centre panel. Painting housed at Groeningemuseum, Bruges, Belgium.



The Last Judgement triptych by Hieronymus Bosch/ Hieronymus Bosch's workshop. Circa 1486. Right panel. Painting housed at Groeningemuseum, Bruges, Belgium.

Horror Abounds

Painted around the same time, a triptych which shares similarities with *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is *The Last Judgement*, a painting attributed to Bosch, his workshop, or a collaboration between parties. Meanwhile, a triptych whose authorship is directly linked to Bosch is *The Haywain* triptych, which also bears similarities with *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. With its inclusion of Hell and religious overtones, Bosch's *The Hermit Saints* triptych can also be considered closely linked to the artist's most famed masterpiece.

Dating from around 1490 through to 1515, Bosch produced a series of four paintings; *Terrestrial Paradise*, *Ascent of the Blessed*, *Fall of the Damned into Hell*, and *Hell*. This religious polyptych, labelled *Visions of the Hereafter*, is resplendent in trademark Bosch details and awash with the painter's characteristic warnings of sin.

It is within Bosch's visual descriptions of Hell that the artist's visions of horror are most prolific. Fusing beasts with humans, adding in aspects of absurdity and, sometimes, medieval armour, his demons stalk the unhallowed plane with relentless menace and an unquenchable desire for the souls of sinners.



The Haywain triptych by Hieronymus Bosch. Circa 1516. Right panel. Painting housed at Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

ILLUSTRATING FANTASY: **PAUL MCGRATH**

Paul's art ventures deep into the perilous realms of fantasy and science fiction, inspired by classic themes within Fighting Fantasy, tabletop RPGs and miniatures games. Paul's work evokes the style and imagination within these genres that has lured so many with the promise of adventure.

First thanking Paul for making time in his busy schedule, we began our interview with the in-demand artist by asking him to detail a little about where he grew up, while also querying if he had been an especially keen reader during his early years, and if there had been any particularly important influences, literary or illustratory.

Paul McGrath: I was born in the town of Ennis, which is in the County of Clare, Ireland, in 1980. I grew up in Ennis and spent most of my younger years and teens there, until I went to Art College in Limerick City, in 1999.



Goblin © Paul McGrath.

My early love of reading was thanks to my school teacher Ms. Kennedy, as she encouraged us to take books home. I read Roald Dahl a lot, and Enid Blyton tended to take up a lot of the fold-out library cupboard in her class. But strangely, out of all the books she had, I did find *The Citadel of Chaos* by Steve Jackson. That was an eye-opener, mostly for the artwork of Ian Miller and Russ Nicholson,

which was amazing – not that I realised who they were at the time. To be honest, being just eight years old, I found the book a bit odd and had to take it out several times to get to grips – I had never encountered anything like it before.

The impact of *The Citadel of Chaos* really stuck with me. Then, some years later, when I was in college, I discovered Warlock, *Fighting Fantasy's* magazine. A friend of mine brought his well-worn copy of *HeroQuest* back to his student digs for us to play, and I remember that he also had several old copies of Warlock. It kind of all came flooding back once I realised it was the same Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone.

Growing up, Tolkien was a given, thanks to my brother Colin who bought me six cassettes of *The Mind's Eye* radio production of *The Hobbit*, so for me Thorin Oakenshield will always be from Texas! But I progressed to the books, *The Lord of the Rings* I read throughout art college, right before the films came out, good fun. So, I have always loved reading and stories based in fantasy have always been with me, they have certainly influenced me over the years.

Following him mentioning his early exposure to artwork by the likes of the wonderful Ian Miller and Russ Nicholson, we wondered if Paul could expand a little on the extent of the influence of these respective artists.

Paul McGrath: I remember being very attracted to Ian Miller and Russ Nicholson's work in the *Fighting Fantasy* books, and it was my first real introduction to that kind of fantasy art. My older siblings, Colin and Martina, were both Tolkien fans, my brother bought a book called the *Tolkien Bestiary* by David Day in the late-1980's, that certainly caught my attention. There were illustrations by a number of artists in it, but Ian Miller's work certainly stood out once more. Roger Garland was another artist I quite liked, it was his cover of the Unicorn publication of *The Silmarillion* that my sister owned, the one with *Teleri Swan Boats* on the cover, it just seemed so mysterious to me. I remember getting my own copy of *The Hobbit* with Roger Garland's work on it, of Smaug breathing fire on the Lonely Mountain, that really summed up Middle Earth for me. A little later on, I discovered Jim Fitzpatrick's art at school, they had a number of

Irish Mythology books which he had illustrated. For me, Jim Fitzpatrick's stuff went hand-in-hand with that of Ian Miller, Russ Nicholson, and Roger Garland.



Abyssal Man. © Paul McGrath.

All of those artists and books were definitely the most influential in shaping my interest in mythology and fantasy as a genre, not so much my art at that age, but certainly later. As for my own art, from when I could pick up a pencil I was drawing a lot of Star Wars, He-Man, Ghostbusters and TMNT. I do remember drawing Tolkien-

inspired art when I was eight or nine, as I redesigned the six cassette sleeves of the radio play version of *The Hobbit*, to reflect the story and put my own stamp on it. I did make fantasy art as a child, of course. This was mainly little school copy book comics of knights, goblins and elves. This was around the early-1990's and mostly because I was mad into Prince August fantasy miniatures – I actually used to cast my own at home, using their moulds, then making little castles and dioramas with them.



Goblin models, sculpted by Paul McGrath. © Paul McGrath.

In the mid-1990's, I discovered *Warhammer* and *White Dwarf* magazine. That really opened up the door to a whole host of art and artists, with people like John Blanche, Adrian Smith, and Ian Miller once again. It was fun to find out Ian Miller did so much for Games Workshop. I loved Adrian's work during that time and I remember trying very hard to work out his method, I absolutely adored his very early pencil work and tried and failed a few times copying his art. From that period onward I still continued to make my own art both fantasy, sci-fi and more artistic work right up until I went on to Art College and began a degree in Fine Art, which changed my approach to making art entirely.

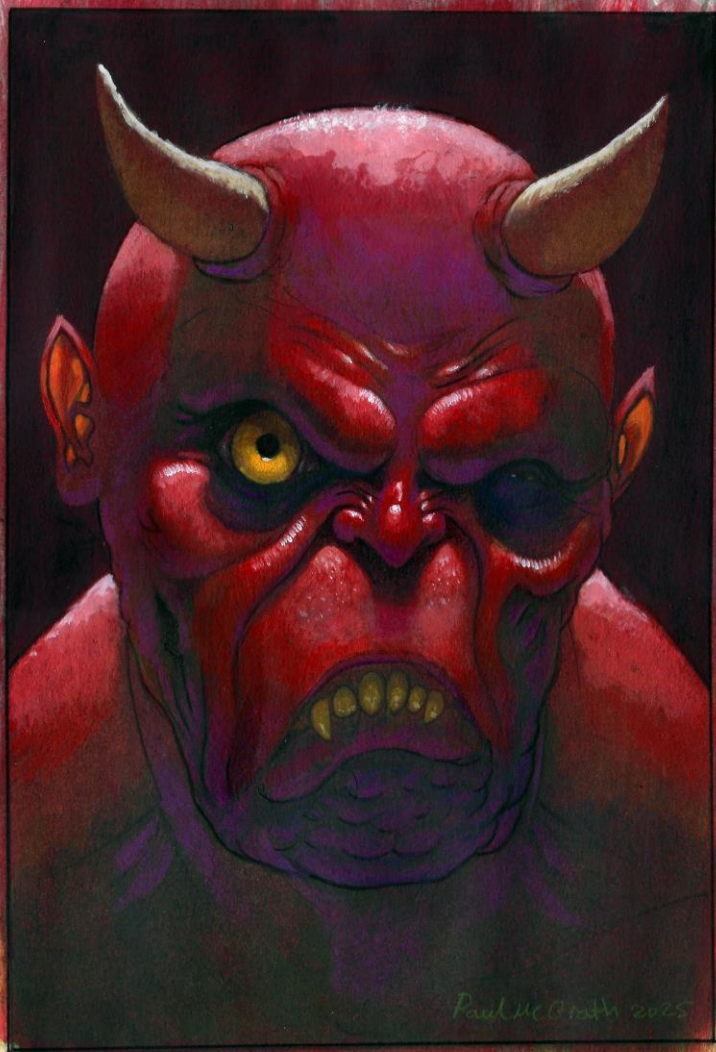
Following on from Paul's mentioning of Art College and his Fine Art degree, we asked if he could detail the chronology of his education, while pointing out any especially significant moments for him.

Paul McGrath: Starting in 1985, I attended the Christian Brothers School for boys in Ennis. Junior infants and Senior infants were the first two parts of the schooling experience – my first teacher was Mrs. Malone. I have very fond memories of her classes as she really was the first one to encourage art in her students. She got us to think about what we were drawing and also try other mediums to work in, like actual clay, which I had never used before, so it was a great time.

Then after that I went into First Class, in 1988, with Ms. Kennedy. She was great, though a bit harsh at times. Her approach was getting us to read a lot. I have a love of reading that continues to this day and that's where I found the first few Fighting Fantasy books, The Citadel of Chaos being the first. To elaborate on that, I found that the inclusion of that book was odd as it was a Christian school and the book was about magic, monsters, and adventure, all with wonderfully strange art. I found Jim Fitzpatrick's books amongst the collection my teacher had and I wasn't complaining at the time as they very much shaped my interests from then on.

Primary school was from 1989 – 1992 and that was the time I entered quite a few art competitions, winning medals and a few certificates, that was due to Ms. Kennedy, she transferred over to the main Primary building and was my teacher once again. She encouraged me to enter the competitions, which was great, and I am forever grateful she did.

Secondary school was 1992 – 1999 and that was a big step over to the Edmund Rice College building, which was just next door but always seemed such a mysterious place to me as a child, where proper big schooling happened. But it was just more of the same, though they did not have any Art classes or even any after school Art clubs when I started as the big push there was playing sports, that being 'Gaelic Games', which I found utterly tedious.





Paul McGloth 2025

But one thing that did happen halfway through Secondary schooling was I completed an extra year of work experience around 1995 and ended up at a print shop called T.M. Printing, in my hometown. That was just amazing. I got the opportunity to tackle pretty much all aspects of the profession at the age of fifteen. I did layout, typeset, image arrangement, which included my first time using Photoshop, plus I got to make acid etched print plates, running the press and using the hydraulic paper cutter. Working there was a real eye-opener and where I also discovered Warhammer, thanks to one of the older lads who worked there, it was a great time.



Goblin models, sculpted by Paul McGrath. © Paul McGrath.

Then I finished up Secondary school, which by some chance in the final year they decided to add the subject of Art to the curriculum, but it meant paying £60.00 for the year, while the Art classes were held after school. Unfortunately, the person they hired to teach it was awful and couldn't have cared less. Nevertheless, I pushed on with my own art and built up a portfolio of paintings and drawings, mostly of the heavy metal musicians which I listened to around then. The hilarious thing is I was the only student to do the Art exam. So when the exam came around, the invigilators were scratching their heads. On the day, I got to sit in a room all by myself and was even given extra time on the practical part.

Then a few short months later it was on to Art College. Strangely enough, my heavy metal-inspired art got me the full points needed to get in, I still don't know how, but there you go. I attended the Limerick School of Art and Design from 1999 – 2003. My degree was a B.A. in Fine Art, specialising in sculpture and combined media. Most of what I produced then was handmade sculptural art, very much influenced by Andy Goldsworthy and Damien Hirst. I did develop a love of photography as well, that involved actual darkrooms and making our own photographs, indeed this was something that carried on after college.



Cyber Head. © Paul McGrath.



He Didn't Eat Sweets. © Paul McGrath.

Then, after college, I moved to Bristol and from 2005 – 2007 I worked for the London Camera Exchange, which sold high-end photography equipment. It was around this time I started getting back into producing hand-drawn art. I also discovered digital art, which was a new experience for me and sort went hand-in-hand with my photography as well. By 2008, I was living in London and was working part-time as a freelance band photographer, as well as working as a studio photographer in Shepherd's Bush. Around that time, I then had the opportunity to get involved with a group who organised mass flash mobs in London to raise money for Saint Mungo's charity for the homeless. This usually involved people dressing up as zombies for 'Zombie Walks' that went through the streets of London, and it was through this that I got to meet and work for a brief time with Andy Edwards, who had started a small film company called Paranoid Android Films. He has gone on to do some exceptional work. I was doing character concepts, photography and the poster art for one of their films, Houseparty of

the Dead 6. I continued as a studio photographer for a time before going freelance fulltime. Then my partner and I had two sons, which was a big change and prompted a move to the countryside.

We ended up in Tonbridge, Kent, where my partner worked in a local Secondary school, and I fully committed to being a fulltime parent. My two sons mean everything to me and they are the ones who have rekindled my love of fantasy art, tabletop wargaming, and sculpting miniatures, as they are both mad about it. They are very creative boys and sculpt their own minis for fun, with my youngest, aged twelve, being an avid artist himself. To be honest, it was seeing the absolute joy he had making art that made me feel I should put myself out there again as I had once before, trying to meet like-minded people who might enjoy my art, miniatures and the old things I'm interested in, like old Fighting Fantasy illustrations.

From his early years, the worlds of fantasy drew Paul in, while his discovery of Fighting Fantasy books served well as a precursor to tabletop wargaming. With such interests having firmly taken root at this time, Paul described that he is still a keen miniatures modeller, as well as an enthusiastic wargamer.

Paul McGrath: I am a modeller and gamer, and have been since the late-1980's. Modelmaking was always a thing for me, and I made dioramas for the Prince August miniatures that I cast as a child. There was a model shop in my home town called Sullivans that repaired bikes at the back and sold Swiss army knives and fishing gear at the front. However, tucked away in between all of that were racks of Airfix model airplanes, enamel paints, boxes of army men, and countless boxes of Matchbox cars. My first foray into modelmaking was gluing together WWII planes, such as Spitfires, Lancasters, and Messerschmitts. The one model that I do remember giving a lot of attention to was Sir Bernard Law Montgomery's Caravan, which I made a diorama for. I had a serious interest in WWII at the time and remember watching the World at War television documentary series, though really I was probably too young to watch it.

I did get into Warhammer in the mid-1990's, but to be honest it was mostly miniature collecting and painting. I knew very few people at the time interested in playing those games and it wasn't until college, around the year 2000, that I met like-minded gamers. My best memories of this were my friends and I playing homebrew versions of HeroQuest that used more narrative-based Fighting Fantasy-style mechanics. This is when I rediscovered Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, by way of Warlock magazine, and we used the mechanics of those magazines for our games over several campaigns. I did pick up Warhammer Fantasy sixth edition at the time, but that was mostly just assembling and painting the miniatures.

Fast forward to 2011 and 2013, now I have two children, boys, and I have rediscovered a love of miniatures. During the early years of being a parent I got back into miniatures, starting with Warhammer 40K fifth edition, the Assault on Black Reach box set. The familiar joy of assembling and painting came back with a passion, but sadly, there was no one to play with.

However, when my boys were old enough I introduced them to the wonders of miniatures gaming and I am glad that I did. There are now a wealth of gaming systems and independent rulesets out there to choose from. Currently, we mostly play Sword Weirdos, Space Weirdos, and One Page Rules.



Promotional material for Houseparty of the Dead 6, written and directed by Andy Edwards. Poster by Paul McGrath.





Paul McGee 2025







In terms of my most recent ventures into modelmaking, it was during Covid that I started attempting to sculpt my own miniatures in Milliput. I really wanted to remake HeroQuest. It was during this difficult time that I found the website called Ye Olde Inn, a wonderful archive of all the resources needed to play the game. I had cards, board components, but my sculpting skills didn't quite get me there, so that project fell flat. But I kept trying and over the last few years I have improved my miniature sculpting skills and have gotten good enough at making miniatures that my children and I can use them in our games.



Dwarf models, sculpted by Paul McGrath. © Paul McGrath.

Over the years, Paul has worked with a vast range of different materials when producing his art. Though he has an appreciation for digital work, Paul described that the more tactile methods using pencils, pens, inks, and acrylics suits him best. Meanwhile, as he puts himself 'back out there', Paul is finding a highly appreciative and engaging audience online.

Paul McGrath: When I first ventured into making artwork in the early-mid-2000's, I began to work in digital as this was new to me and the technology had improved enough to produce work that captured the look I had intended at the time. I was producing zombie-themed portraits for clients because the Walking Dead TV series was huge then, this certainly caught a lot of people's attention, so naturally my art went that direction. Digital was faster, too, so that helped. My own personal art during this period explored

different facets of fantasy and sci-fi, creating various pieces both in digital and traditional materials, I was still trying to find out what worked best for me.

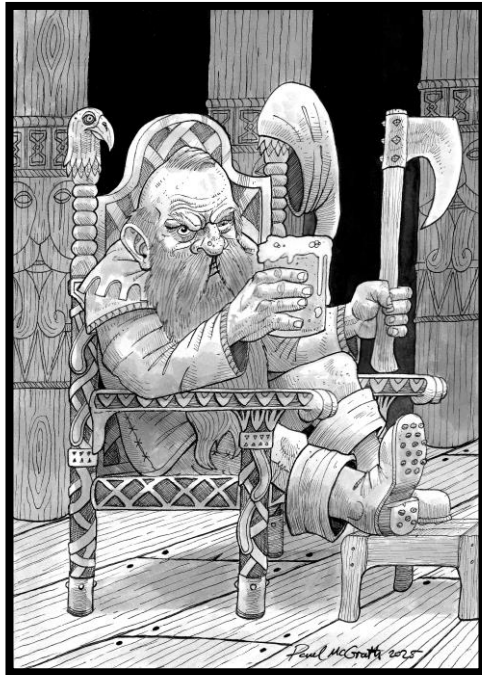
But over the years I have found myself using mainly materials like pencil, acrylic, pen, and ink as I feel it just captures something that the digital medium doesn't, even though I made digital art for quite a while. I suppose going back to traditional art was mainly due to the fact I was reconnecting with the older art styles that I loved as a child and teenager and that's what I am trying to put across in the fantasy art I am producing now. When I first went onto Instagram,

early-2025, I was posting my fantasy art just to see what kind of interest there would be in it. For a few months, not a lot happened. Before then, I was also sculpting 28mm scale miniatures in Milliput to use in games with my two sons, they encouraged me to put them onto Instagram, and when I started posting my miniatures alongside my fantasy art it all kind of exploded in the best possible way. This has been the catalyst for taking my art further, putting my own stamp on the genre and committing to being a fantasy artist fulltime. I have found the miniatures/ tabletop gaming community to be an excellent space where people still desire to have real physical art made by a person, and seeing so many other wonderful artists, including those who shaped my childhood, on Instagram has been very encouraging and inspiring.



Three Adventurers. © Paul McGrath.

Instagram has been a blessing and I have found it to be an immensely supportive platform. Because of that support I find it to be the best incentive to keep making artwork and I have been very fortunate to have started taking commissions for my art. I have produced a number of custom Old Hammer-themed army banner sets for clients, which has been great fun. My work is also on Etsy.com, which is a convenient place for those who may be interested in purchasing some of my pieces and would be a great way to support my artwork.



Dwarf. © Paul McGrath.

The one thing I have especially enjoyed creating recently are the Fighting Fantasy-inspired art pieces, featuring goblins, elves, and dwarves. I have always loved the older genre of fantasy art from the 1980's, it had a unique style, charm and I guess a level of naivety at times that just made it so appealing. Ultimately it's the black and white art of Russ Nicholson being my absolute favourite from when I was a child that inspires me the most. My goal as of now is to be able to work freelance as a fantasy artist, so I will continue to build up a body of work and improve upon it. I will in the near future start a YouTube channel to complement my online presence as well as posting on various other platforms and just keep working to get my stuff out there.

Paul McGrath

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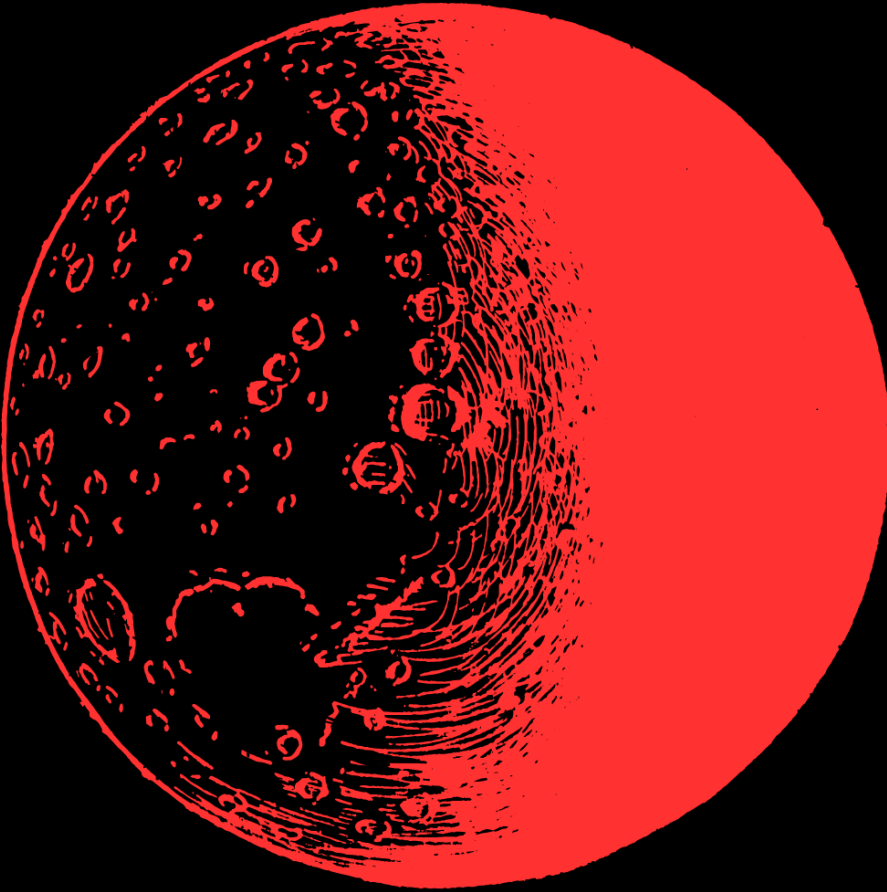


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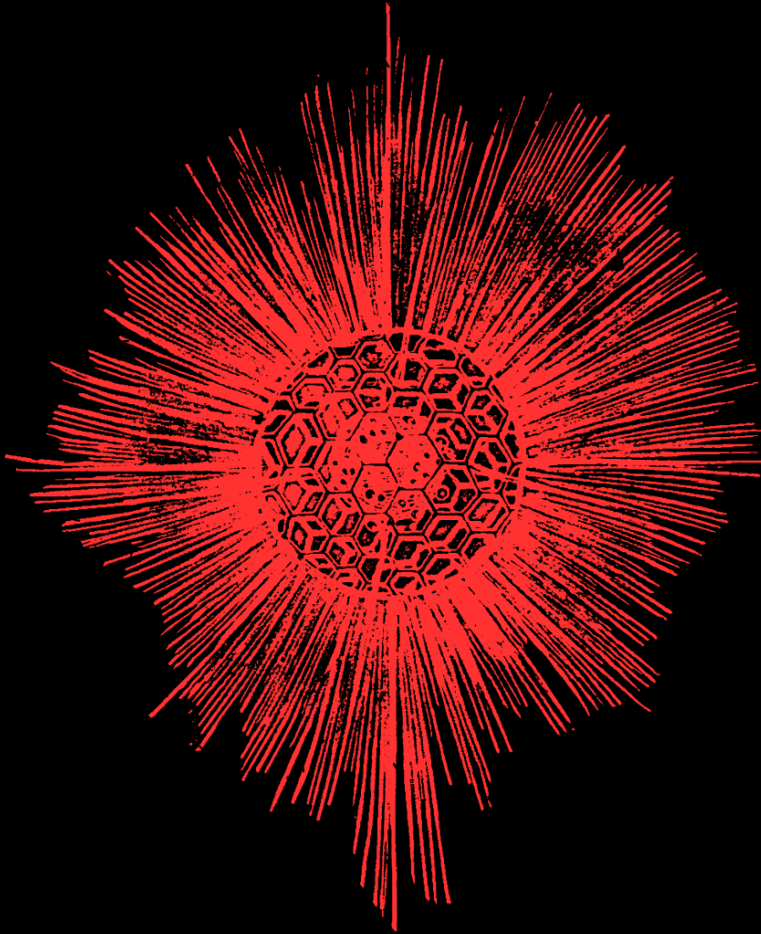
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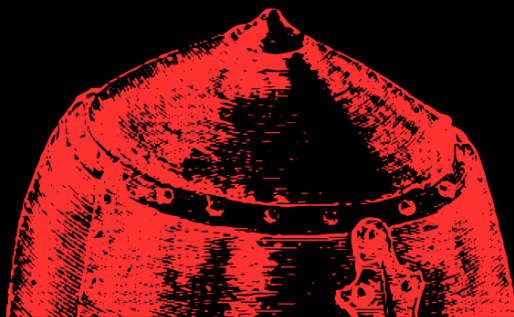


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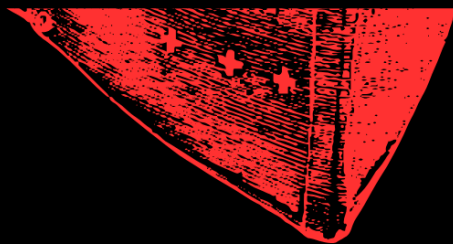
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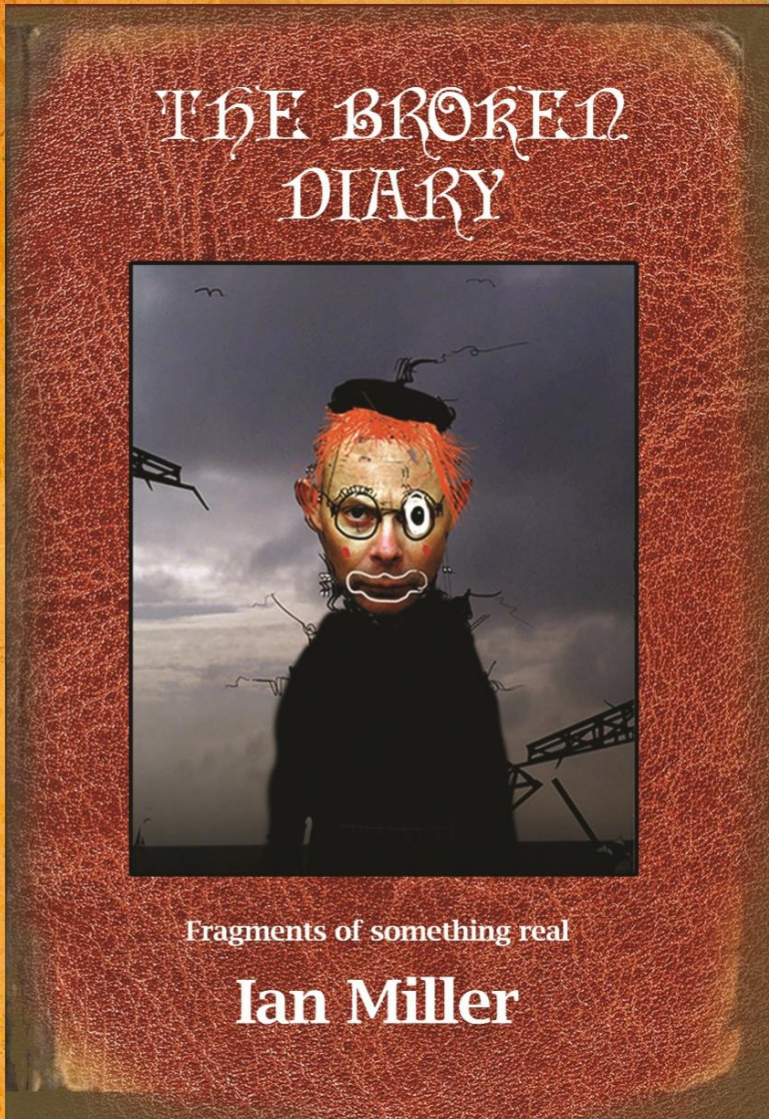
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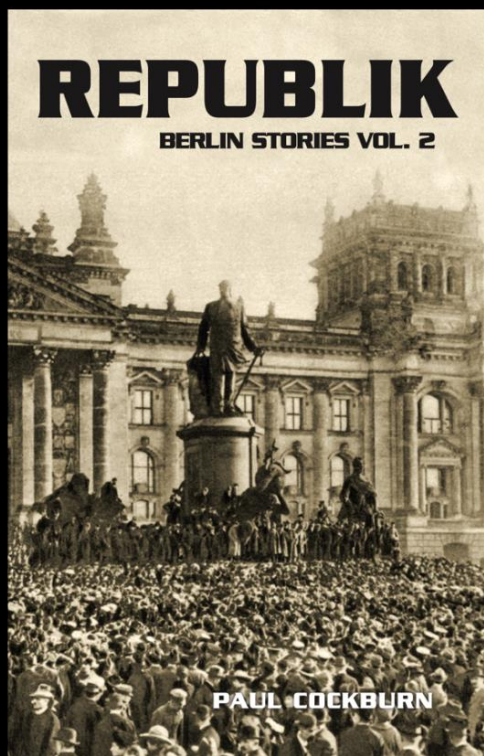
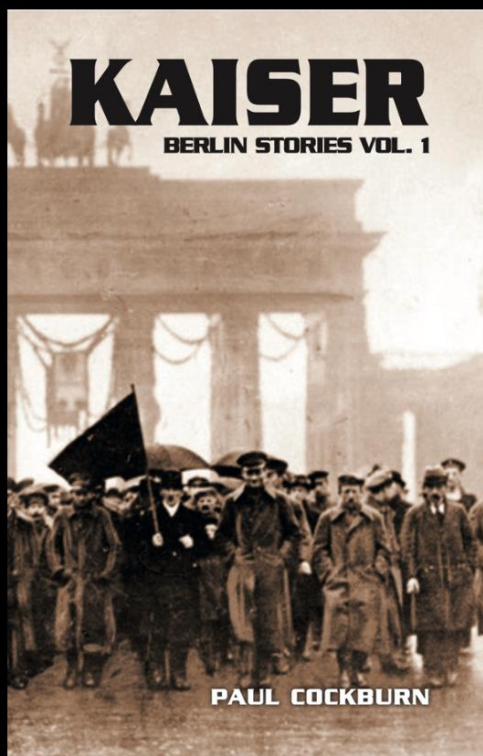
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Born in London, in 1957, Paul Cockburn entered into a career in the RPG and tabletop games industry in the early-1980's as he served as Assistant Editor on TSR's magazine, *Imagine*. He then moved onto Games Workshop, where, among other responsibilities, he was the Editor of the company's *White Dwarf* magazine. Later leaving Games Workshop, though he maintained an interest in all things gaming related, as well as history, over the years that followed he stepped away from the hobby world as he worked in marketing and account management.

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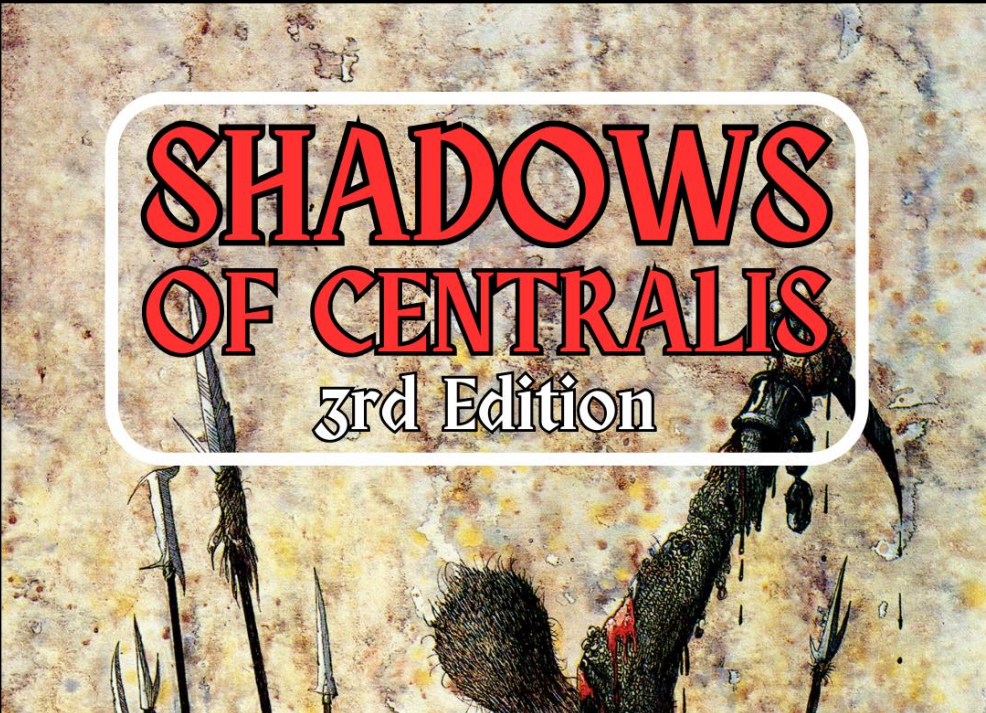
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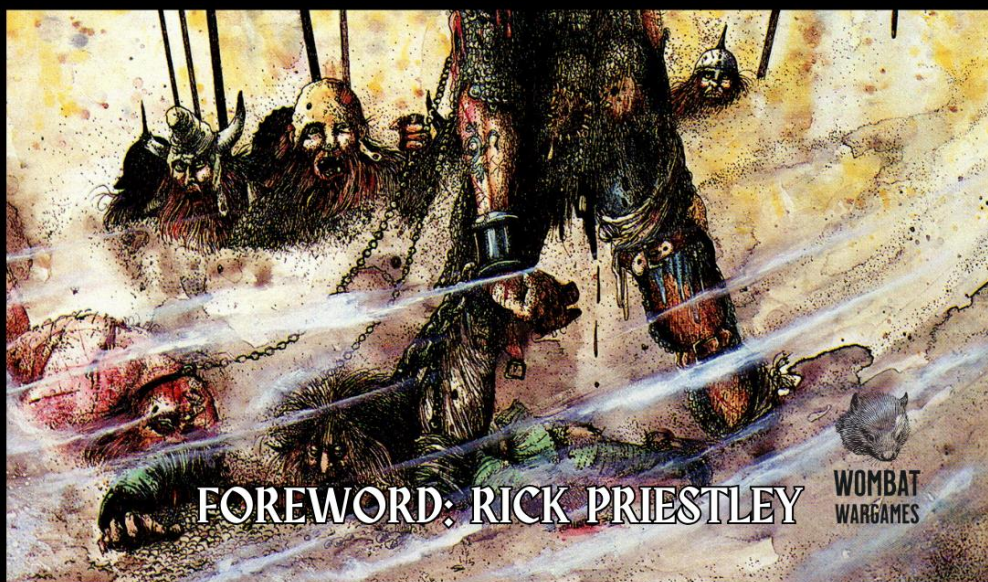
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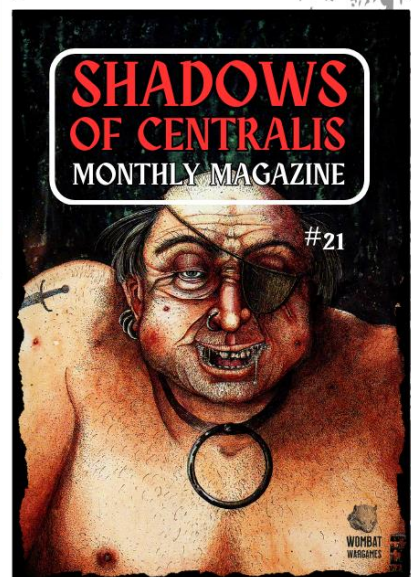
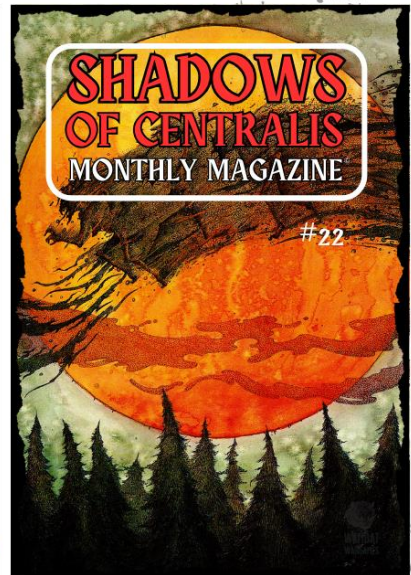
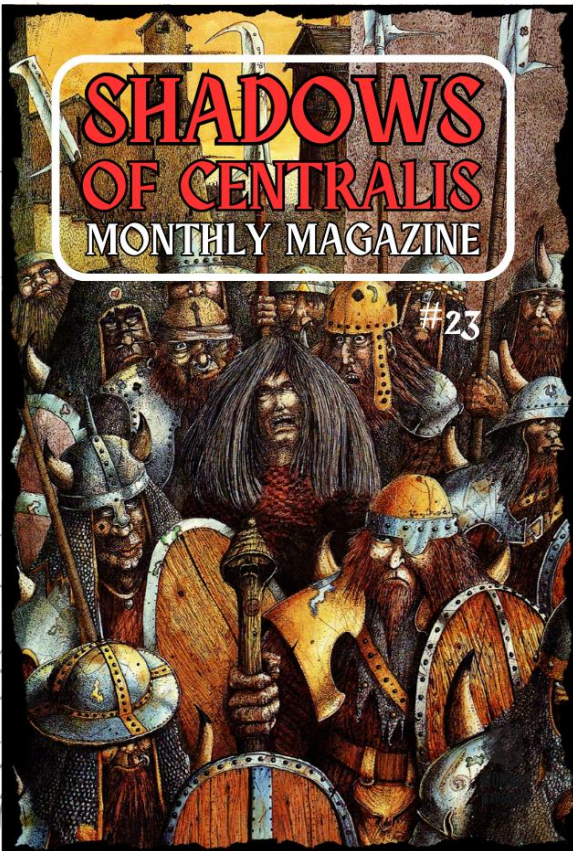


FOREWORD: RICK PRIESTLEY

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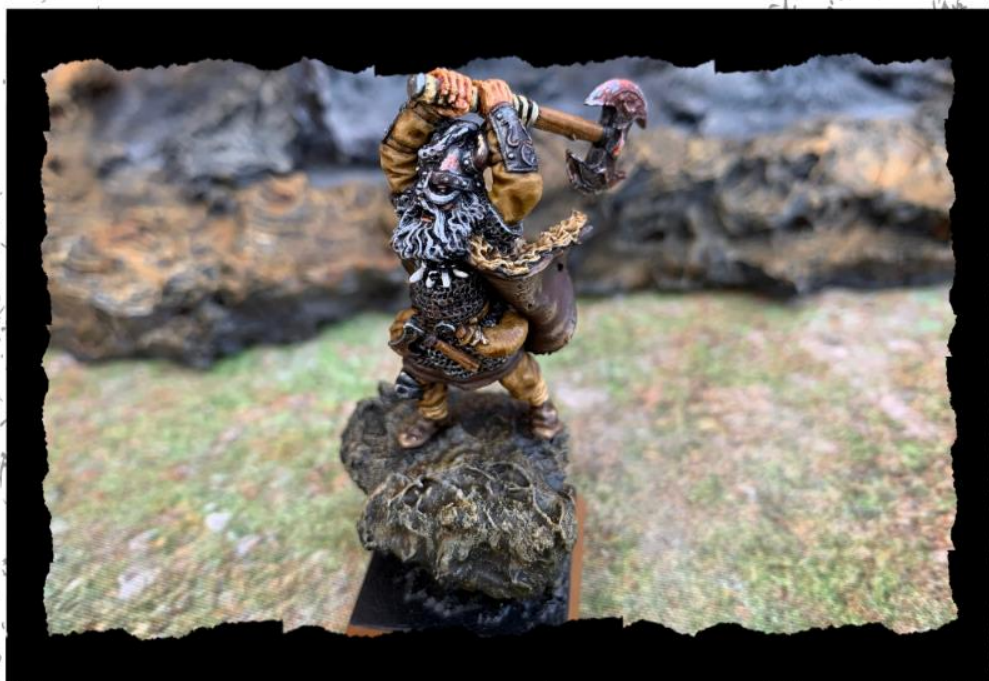


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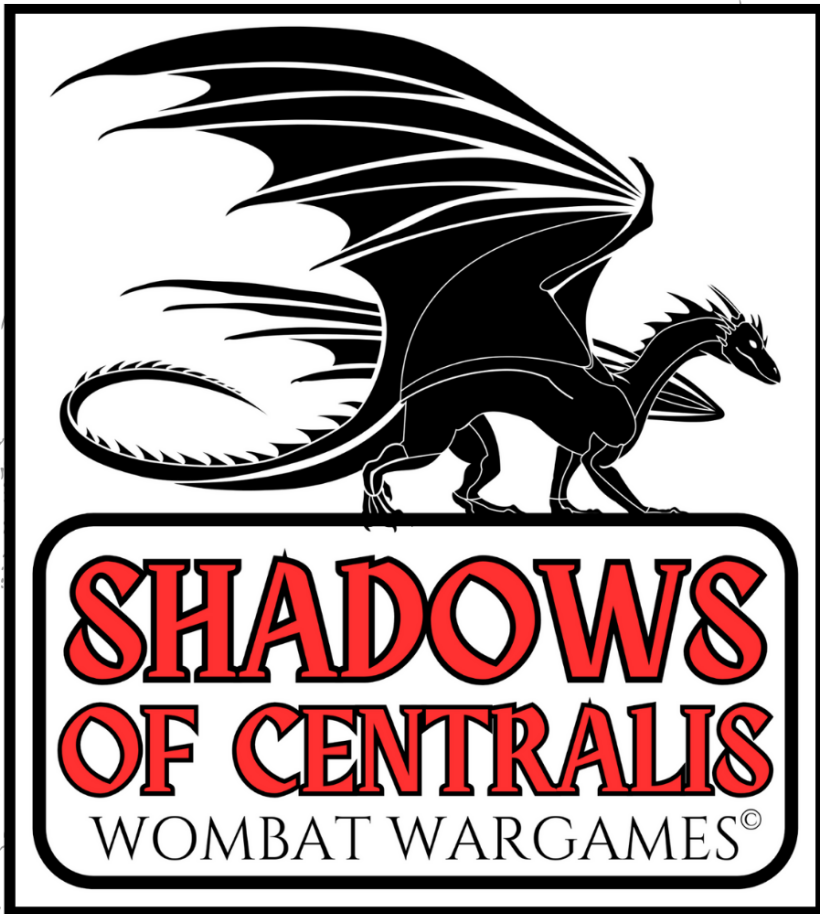
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Issue #46

Out February 1st 2026

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