

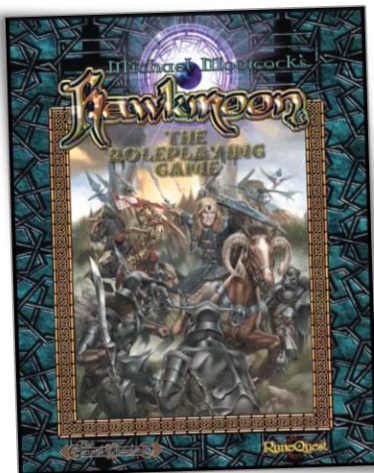
MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S  
**HAWKMOON: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME**

GARETH RYDER-HANRAHAN/MONGOOSE PUBLISHING 2007

Those who dare swear by the Runestaff must then benefit or suffer from the consequences of the fixed pattern of destiny that they set in motion. Some several such oaths have been sworn in the history of the Runestaff's existence, but none with such vast and terrible results as the mighty oath of vengeance sworn by the Baron Meliadus of Kroiden the year before Dorian Hawkmoon van Koln set foot into the pages of this ancient narrative.

AS IT IS WRITTEN IN THE HIGH HISTORY OF THE RUNESTAFF

*I've been procrastinating for weeks about the need to get started on this review, and even now I find it difficult to begin an examination of a roleplaying game that, for the shame of me, I have never actually brought to the table. However, as an accompaniment to the interview I was lucky enough to conduct with the book's author - Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan - I thought what better opportunity would I ever have to examine this game in detail? So, dear reader, please bear with me as I delve deep into the world of Hawkmoon and the Tragic Millennium and take a critical look at this rulebook both in its function as a game, and as a reflection on its source material.*



## INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Hawkmoon (or to quote its full title from the book's cover **Michael Moorcock's Hawkmoon: The Roleplaying Game**) was released in 2007 by Mongoose Publishing and arrived the same year (although slightly later) than their only other Eternal Champion game, **Elric of Melniboné**. Like its more familiar cousin, Hawkmoon utilises the venerable and well-respected Runequest ruleset - then licensed from Greg Stafford - but moves even further away from its parent mechanics as it attempts to reflect gaming in the strange and techno-magical world of the Tragic Millennium.

Written by Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan (an RPG author and novelist who is now well known and highly respected in gaming circles) this core rulebook comes in at a packed 164 pages of content and was released in both soft and hardcover editions along with a PDF version. *As a note, for this review, I've referenced both a softcover and PDF copy of Hawkmoon.*

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

We open the book with a (literal) 'flying' introduction to the world, where Gareth does a fantastic job of using fiction and the reader's point-of-view perspective to present a brief but entertaining guide to the world we are about to enter. Here we get to see glimpses of the various iconic locations detailed so vividly in Moorcock's novels - Castle Brass, the Silver Bridge and Londra, etc. - while being familiarised to the grim state of the Tragic Millennium, one that is on the verge of a great conflict (the invasion of Granbretan). Gareth's ability to provide a concise, yet entertaining, narrative over the span of only four pages demonstrates not only his understanding of the setting but also the requirement of roleplaying games to **show** the reader just how players will interact with the world they'll be gaming in. This need to provide good, exciting, and desirable examples of the roles the characters will take on is critical to sell the setting this early in the rulebook and here he most definitely delivers.

In next short section we are provided with a goodly number of suggestions of what type of campaigns can be played out in the Tragic Millennium. This covers not only the obvious, such as taking on the roles of being chosen agents of the Runestaff (the representation of the Cosmic Balance in this sliver of the Multiverse), but also offers up plenty of good examples of styles of play that might not be so immediately evident to new players or Game Masters. For example, games where the party could be the retinue of a European court, or having them become tomb raiders and treasure hunters searching out lost caches of science and sorcery, etc. What's most impressive with these suggestions is that rather than just listing out these concepts as a simple, one-line ideas, each 'sketch' is expanded with numerous illustrations and examples. This not only encourages the group to think outside the typical 'fantasy' tropes for their stories, but also offers up plenty of fodder for the Game Master to latch onto as they start to develop their own adventures or campaigns.

The chapter is rounded out with a typical, but all too brief, example of play. Unfortunately, while this does demonstrate the typical banter that might go on around a game table, it provides little in the way of any real inspiration for the reader and fails to even illustrate the workings of the mechanics and system in any detail. One can only but think that what we had here was the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the game system melding with the excellent ideas outlined above, and instead we get something that feels more like a 'tick in a box' exercise (you know, as in *all core rulebooks 'need' an example of play, so let's have one type of thing...*). Shame...

## CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTER CREATION

With the possibilities and excitement of world of Hawkmoon fresh in our minds we move on to Character Creation, where the players are guided through the process of generating their new hero. I have to say that I appreciate character generation appearing up front in any roleplaying game, as I'm a firm believer that it's the players and their heroes who should be front and centre to any play.

As mentioned Hawkmoon is built on the Runequest game system, and as such character creation follows a pattern (with a couple of twists) that is probably familiar with anyone who has played any of the numerous Basic RolePlaying (BRP) based games. In summary this process is:

- ▽ Players randomly determine their character's seven characteristics by rolling 4D6 for each and adding together the highest three die results.
- ▽ These characteristics are used to calculate other key attributes and statistics that will be used in play, such as the hero's damage bonus, number of actions they have in combat, and their Hit



Points (which, as with Runequest are divided into body locations, rather than being a single total), etc.

- ▽ Each hero has a number of starting or 'basic' skills, the initial percentages of which are again based on their characteristics and are modified by aspects such as a character's cultural background, profession and experience. These choices also allow access to more 'advanced' skills and abilities as well. More detail on skills is covered in the **Skills** chapters.
- ▽ In a final step that is unique to Hawkmoon, a player can further modify their character with non-human and mutant traits (reflecting the effects the corrupted world still has on those living in the Tragic Millennium), and with each selection gains both positive bonuses (additions to Characteristics, bonus skills, unique abilities, etc.) and negative effects (reductions in Characteristics, penalties to skills and the like).

Most of the steps undertaken in the character creation process are fairly straightforward – roll some dice, calculate some numbers, make a decision or two etc – but it's when we get to the choice of culture and profession we are provided with the most scope for diversity and difference in the individual heroes (outside of aforementioned mutations, of course).

And there are plenty of options to choose from in both of these categories, with all the major nations and states of Tragic Europe (and even some beyond) represented, and a total of thirty-five unique professions being available. Sure, the starting background selection (such as choosing to be from a Noble family, or growing up as a Barbarian or Mariner, etc.) can limit what particular professions you can choose for your character, but there are more than enough options that even with this funnelling of choice makes it unlikely you'll have any doubling up of archetypes within a single party.

Beyond these 'basics', the book provides way in which to further customise your character. The one I like the most being the option to create more experienced or seasoned characters right from the beginning of play. Not only can this be done fairly quickly by simply adding a few more skills and abilities to their hero's character sheet, but moreover - from an actual play perspective - it encourages the Game Master and players to undertake grander, more epic, adventures right from the get-go (you know, those quests that are usually only reserved for later in a hero's career or are reserved for iconic characters such as your Hawkmoons or Count Brasses). With these rules, there is no longer the need to have the Game Master throw the party through numerous meaningless scenarios before they have a reason for, say, the 'beleaguered Prince of Liege to beg them to undertake a most vital of mission on his behalf' – they are already seasoned champions with a reputation and duty to uphold, so obviously the prince would come to them for aid!

My only parting comment on this section is one on its design and the choice to split some of the character facing rules and – what I think are – vital character creation mechanics out of this chapter and spread them throughout the book. For example, skill descriptions have their own chapter, and the bonuses for cultural backgrounds appear in the **Gazetteer** section (rather than at least having a summary here). The worst offence, however – especially as they barely even get a mention in character creation - was the decision to move some of the most interesting and useful character facing mechanics, such as Fate points and the Reputation and Renown, into the **Adventuring** chapter (which is located much later in the book). These design decisions will most likely result in some overly frustrating character generation sessions, as the players flip back and forth in an attempt to locate the exact reference or mechanic they require to finish up their hero; I can imagine a lot of questions being asked of the Game Master during these sessions, such as 'what does that skill cover again' and 'how many Fate points do I have?' etc.

## CHAPTER THREE: GAZETTEER OF THE TRAGIC MILLENNIUM

Along with the **Introduction** and the later chapter on the **Deeds of Hawkmoon**, the Gazetteer of the Tragic Millennium is one of the best sections in this rulebook. A comprehensive and enjoyable summary of the world as it exists in the Moorcock novels, we are provided with a detailed look at the various city states, nations, and independent kingdoms within Europe and beyond. This is mostly set in the period just prior to the invasion from Granbretan and we are given just enough detail in each to understand the cultural and geopolitical nature of Hawkmoon's world (from the constantly feuding Belgic provinces through to the more stable, but none less mysterious, lands of Espanya and Muscovia). It's difficult to be certain, but everything presented here seems to be an insightful combination of Moorcock's own

descriptive prose as well as Gareth's own perceptive extension to this canon. Brought together we are presented with more than enough background to provide literal years of play at the gaming table.

Beyond this core of the chapter, is the relatively short – but nonetheless important – section on introducing and managing the worlds of the Multiverse within the Tragic Millennium setting. It is good to see this aspect of the Hawkmoon canon discussed, especially as almost the entirety of the second series of novels (*The Chronicles of Count Brass*) takes place in these alternate timelines.

As hinted at above, this content is some of my favourite from the book (although I know I've just skimmed over it) and it is obviously one of the places Gareth was allowed to create and flesh out the world as he saw fit. After reading through the various city state and nation descriptions, a Game Master should feel well armed in bringing the Tragic Millennium to life, while never feeling burdened with the weight of what might be canon or not.

*'When I fought the Dark Empire, I soon realised that there was no way to overcome it by direct confrontation, but if one sought weaknesses in the leaders, and made use of those weaknesses, then they could be defeated. That is what I learned in the service of the Runestaff.'*

THE CHAMPION OF GARATHORM

## CHAPTER FOUR: SKILLS

As mentioned previously, skills, their descriptions and mechanics have been separated out to their own chapter in this rulebook. While I'm personally not a great fan of this approach, I do see the advantage of having these critical mechanics appear in isolation from the rest of character creation.

Here, we are provided with an explanation as to how skill tests work in the game system, as well as managing variable difficulties and outcomes, such as critical successes and failures; nothing you've likely not seen before. One particular topic worth pointing out among these rules are the suggestions on how Game Masters might handle the slightly more abstract actions characters may attempt in play – those that are a little harder to reflect in a simple percentile system (i.e. when a single task needs to be undertaken by the whole party, or when characters might want to assist each other on specific skill check, etc). Having this sort of advice provided in the core rules is good for a couple of reasons a) it shows examples of how to handle such unique situations and b) it encourages Game Masters – especially those who may not be as confident in managing players – to think outside the box when dealing with more dynamic events.

Moving onto the actual mechanics themselves, skills in Hawkmoon are divided into two types – Basic and Advanced.

- ▽ Basic Skills cover the abilities everyone – no matter how talented or experienced they might be – will reasonably know; this includes common skills such as Athletics, Lore and Sing amongst a dozen others.
- ▽ Advanced skills on the other hand reflect a specific knowledge, training or learning a character might have acquired prior to embarking on their new life as an adventurer, and this includes skills such as Crafting, Martial Arts and Pilot Ornithopter, for example.

All of the skill descriptions – basic or advanced – are quite brief, with only a few getting any decent examples or details on their specific uses and/or the types of results one might see in play. This is a little disappointing, but I suppose very few really need to much explanation.

The chapter is wrapped up with a list of weapon skills, although this is presented in just a simple table, with no details provided on what such skills encompass (I mean I can guess, but it would be good to be explicit).

## CHAPTER FIVE: EQUIPMENT

This chapter opens with an overview of the role of technology in Tragic Europe and more importantly how currency, wealth and status are viewed in the world. While, as expected, each state or country has its own form of coin, a standard system of currency (starting with copper 'pennies', silver 'eous' and finally the humorously named 'pundstarleen') has arisen as the basis of economic trade and wealth in the world. It is good to see a summary of the cost-of-living expense expected of those characters of status or whom might have specific obligations to cover (I mean it makes sense that your status reflects an increased expectation to cover the costs of managing an appropriate household, etc.), I was also pleased to note that some of the higher status roles also list the cost of their ransom – should such a citizen be captured. Sure, such a table might never be needed, but it definitely highlights the 'real value' of life in the Tragic Millennium.

The rest of the section covers weapons, armour and transport, the usual things you'd expect to see in any roleplaying game, although it was interesting to see the addition of what is called 'Exceptional Item Effects' – special attributes for weapons and armour (such as increased armour values, damage potential, or other in game abilities). Like magical effects in other fantasy roleplaying games, these help to reflect unique abilities of specific technology/sorceries in the Hawkmoon setting and should act as a bit of an example for Game Masters thinking about creating similar items (as player rewards or scenario goals, etc.).

*'The stable door was swept back from within by a giant paw. Then, a head emerged, larger than an ox's, fiercer than a tiger's; a snarling cat's head with slanting yellow eyes and long yellow fangs. As it padded out, a deep growling sound coming from its belly, its glaring yellow eyes regarding them calculatingly, they saw that its back was lined with a row of foot-high spines of the same colour and appearance as its fangs, running down to the length of its tail which, unlike that of an ordinary cat, was tipped with barbs.'*

### THE MAD GOD'S AMULET

## CHAPTER SIX: COMBAT

I'm not going to say much about combat in Hawkmoon, as this section is probably – as one would hope – is the most straight forward and structured of all in this rulebook. The mechanics of combat in Hawkmoon are very similar to those of its parent game, Runequest, which is a ruleset that does add a few layers mechanical complexity when compared to the relatively simple rules used in games like Chaosium's Stormbringer or other BRP systems.

As a player and Game Master I've always been in two minds as to whether the addition of things like combat actions, reactions and location-based damage were a good thing for gaming, as in general I have always preferred fast, lean combat mechanics where the detail comes more from the narration provided by those around the table, more than, say, the mechanics. That said, the additional time required to calculate Precise Attacks modifiers or Strike Ranks shouldn't slow you down too much, especially if you are familiar with them, so I suppose each reader's mileage will vary in this regard.

That all said, it is good to see specific forms of combat like mounted and vehicle conflict getting their own (albeit brief) mention and rules, but in regard to completing this review, very little else stands out to me across this chapter.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: ADVENTURING

While much of the game's mechanics have been scattered throughout the rulebook, it is in the Adventuring chapter that we get all 'spot rules' and additional material to ensure the system reflects the world of Dorian Hawkmoon. In addition to the standard and familiar mechanics - such as rules on 'Falling Damage' and 'Suffocation', determining the structural strength of inanimate objects and management of encumbrance, etc. - we also discuss two key unique concepts - Fate (the mechanic that allows heroes to stand out from regular citizens), and Reputation & Renown.

Fate is an interesting subsystem that provides characters with an edge over the randomness of the percentile dice system, allowing them to ensure success in a task, avoid death, or even seal an enemy's 'doom'. While mechanically very similar to many other systems that utilise 'rerolls', 'bennies' or 'luck points' to reflect the heroic nature of the player-characters, in Hawkmoon this is taken a step further, with the size of character's Fate pool being tied directly to the number and importance of their motivations, statuses and oaths. In other words, as an emerging hero becomes better known and takes on more responsibilities (or you could say, are burdened with the same), they gain more Fate. Ipso Facto, the more Fate a character has, the more they can influence the world, and in bigger and more impressive ways.

As counter to this, however, gaining too much Fate bestows a destiny or 'doom' on the hero, representing the idea that they are on a path to becoming yet another pawn in the never-ending battle between Chaos and Law; to be used and discarded by powers that care little for any individual. In my opinion, this is a great way of reflecting the importance of a character in the setting, while also provide that defined future that will be fulfilled as part of the game's storyline (I mean doesn't that just summarise the fate of every single Eternal Champion?).

Another great addition noted in this chapter is the introduction of Legendary Abilities. These, almost 'rule-breaking', talents can be purchased as part of character improvement, and they are honestly some of the best yet simplest ways of reflecting truly heroic talents in a game that otherwise attempts to ensure its mechanics remain balanced. I also like that these range from making a character an out-and-out killing machine (by taking such abilities as *Duellist* or *Armoured Titan*) through to those that are focused more on reinforcing the roleplaying aspects of the game (anyone interested in having a *Legendary Love* or the *Madness of Granbretan*, for example?). That all said my favourite just has to be *Wall Leaping*, the ability to bypass almost any obstruction in a fight!

Back to the content in general, however, one thing I did find interesting were that the rules for Healing and general Character Improvement were also included in this section. Given they are just sort 'plonked' here amid other rules, they do get a bit lost amid the other mechanics and subsystems found in this chapter (again, none of this is helped by the layout of course - see below for my thoughts on that) and too be honest I'd have expected them to be better served in the **Combat** or **Character Creation** chapters.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: SCIENCE & SORCERY

If there is one unique thing about the Tragic Millennium - an aspect that sets it apart from other fantasy settings - then it must be the use of sorcery (or in this case, technology so advanced as to be essentially indistinguishable from magic) and the use of science. The Hawkmoon novels are jammed packed with the weird and wonderful, so much so that it makes one imagine that just about any pseudo-techno device or power



is possible with the right about of magic/science in this setting!

Therefore it's a real shame that if there is one section of the book that really doesn't meet my expectations that it had to be this one. While the mechanics of using magic are laid out simply enough, there is nothing in these rules that reflects – at least in my opinion - the uniqueness of sorcery as demonstrated in Moorcock's novels. Sure we get a sentence or two on the risks of 'madness' and 'degeneration' but these are more to introduce the mechanics of using Constitution and Charisma points to get more 'focus' (i.e. spell) points mechanically. Honestly, It really feels that a trick has been missed here, and that the desire to lump the concepts of 'science' in with 'magic' has resulted a solution that is neither satisfying nor reflective of either concept in the Tragic Millennium. Sure, we get specific artifact spells, and rules on using 'focus points' to magnify or modify castings, but it all seems a bit flat and generic.

It's sad to say, but the only topics that stand out in this chapter are those on few unique items that we know from the novels. These artefacts – *The Mirrored Helms*, *The Red Amulet* and the *Sword of Dawn* - are essentially game-changing pieces of equipment (as really only fit for the titular hero of this game) and while acting as good examples of the type of special gear heroes might acquire in their more epic adventures, they are hardly going to be everyday rewards for a typical adventuring party.

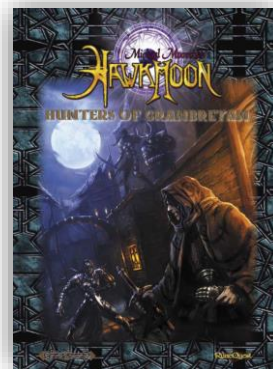
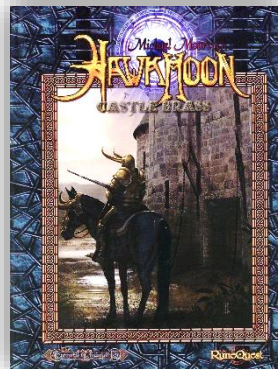
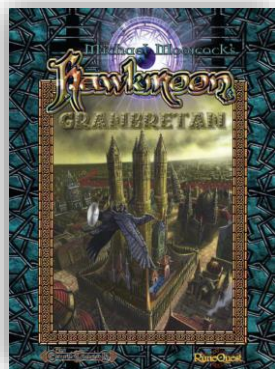
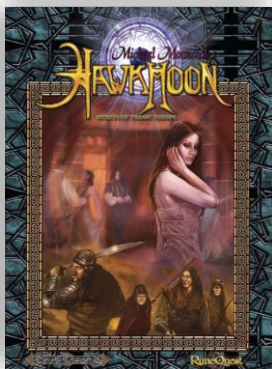
At the risk of repeating myself here, I was really hoping to see more from this chapter and its sad we didn't get some new and fun mechanics or new creative equipment out of this section.

## CHAPTER NINE: DENIZENS OF TRAGIC EUROPE

This chapter provides statistics and descriptions of many of the heroes and villains you will have read about in the Hawkmoon novels. From the Eternal Champion himself, Dorian Hawkmoon, Duke of Köln, through to his companions, Count Brass, Huillam D'Averc, and like, they are all here. The antagonist section includes Baron Meliadus and Baron Kalan (among others) but is a little lighter than that of the heroes (with the text stating that other key villains will appear in the **Granbretan** sourcebook)

But really, it's the myriad of Non-Player Characters noted under the 'Rank & File' section that are likely to be the most interesting find for any Game Master. Here you can find a pretty comprehensive collection of allies and foes to throw at the player-characters, including all the typical types of guards, beasts and warriors your group will likely encounter in a session of play. As one would expect, we get a good selection of the mundane (brigands, town guards and like) as well as the monstrous (ranging from the frightening Doombat to the eponymous Baragoon).

Again there's not much more than that to say about this sort of chapter, although everything here is well written and easy to follow, and there doesn't seem to be any obvious omissions (barring those noted in the Key Antagonists section).



OTHER SUPPLEMENTS IN THE MONGOOSE PUBLISHING **HAWKMOON** LINE; **SECRETS OF TRAGIC EUROPE, GRANBRETAN, CASTLE BRASS & HUNTERS OF GRANBRETAN**

## CHAPTER TEN: THE DEEDS OF HAWKMOON

The last chapter of the book summarises the events described across the eight novels encompassing the two Hawkmoon series. This is a brilliant précis of Moorcock's stories and one of the best sections of the entire book; in eight pages you get a comprehensive overview of all the triumphs and defeats that faced Hawkmoon (and his companions) during their adventures. Most importantly, it does a lot to highlight the changes that occurred across Tragic Europe over the decade span of these novels.

I'm not quite saying that this chapter makes Hawkmoon the Roleplaying Game any better (or worse), but it's definitely an addition that ensures that anyone picking up this game for the first time can get a good, knowledgeable summary of what is going on in world, (without having to read all of the Hawkmoon novels that is!)

*Then the Earth grew old, its landscapes mellowing and showing signs of age, its ways becoming whimsical and strange in the manner of a man in his last years...*

THE HIGH HISTORY OF THE RUNESTAFF

## COMMENTS ON THE DESIGN & LAYOUT OF HAWKMOON

Okay I just needed to call this out... right from the word 'Go', and at the briefest of glances, this book exhibits many of the poor design and content choices that plagued Mongoose Publishing during this period of their production history<sup>1</sup>. Specifically in Hawkmoon: The Roleplaying Game we see these same issues repeated, with the page borders being uncomfortably thick and taking up way too much space, and the text being very poorly spaced on the page. These two design elements immediately make most of the content (the text and interior art, specifically) feel overly cramped and disorganised. This poor design is further compounded by the choice of font styles selected for the book, with the very plain, but quite readable, body text font being let down by the strange choice in header styles and its applied spacing (which is very expanded in places and too condensed in others). Unfortunately, my complaints in the area of design also extends to the game's many tables and charts, with all of them poorly laid out, inadequately labelled and just plain ugly to look at.

Sigh...

## THE ARTWORK OF HAWKMOON: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

Oh, where to begin? If I was disappointed with the layout of this book, then I'm almost angry about the book's art (especially after reading some of Moorcock's comments on the art within the old Chaosium books). I mean, the cover illustration is passable at best, (being a scene of Dorian Hawkmoon riding into battle – Count Brass at his side – against the beast helmed warriors of Granbretan) but it fails to have any emotion or thematic impact. Worse, both on the pdf and printed version, the cover's colour is muted and actually seems kind of blurry!

However, I must say the worst offence was the decision to use a moss green, etched-styled, design as a cover background. Argh! Not only does it overwhelm the cover illustration, but it really gives me a queasy feeling if I look at

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<sup>1</sup> I'm sure you'll agree Mongoose really needed a skilled designer and layout expert for their publications, although this is a problem that they might have well now remediated as I've not seen any recent Mongoose releases to judge.



it for too long. Do get me started with the fact that this design was carried on throughout the rest of the Hawkmoon line.

And things don't get any better when it comes to book's interior art either, as - when it does appear - it is of a mixed quality, size, and design. The majority of this work is a selection of simple black and white ink sketches, but these are also supplemented with a number of grey-scale drawings. While the later are of a decent quality, their detail is often lost against the interior's grey background - which does seem a little lighter in the PDF edition - making it sometimes difficult to determine what the subject of each image actually is. Most of the line drawings are a little easier on the eye, but all - except those appearing the *Denizens of Tragic Europe* chapter - are way too generic to invoke any real sense of the setting or style of Hawkmoon. The worst offence in the subject of art, however, is that all the illustrations 'feel' constrained and too small on their page. Whether this is really the case, or simply the result of the images having to contend with the overly intrusive borders and page design, I'm not sure, but whatever the reason, very few seem that relevant to the text against which they are placed.

I suppose, on top of that, I could also complain that there isn't actually that much art in the book at all, with maybe a single quarter-page illustration appearing every ten pages or so, but I've always been a quality over quantity type of person in this regard. Of course, your mileage might vary, but when you add together its appearance, poor design quality, and the general decisions made on layout and font selection, let's be honest and admit that Hawkmoon was never going to win any presentation awards...

## FINAL THOUGHTS: IN SUMMARY

It is hard on reflection, to really summarise what I think of this book, and by extension Mongoose Publishing's intentions and direction for a Hawkmoon roleplaying game. While I like parts of it and shrug my shoulders at others (especially in regard to some of the design decisions), I can't help but thinking what we might of have seen if it - like Mongoose's Elric of Melniboné - saw a more complete second edition?

In the end, I feel that this rulebook is a victim of its purpose - caught between the need to present a complete working roleplaying game (one that details, whole cloth, the rules needed to create characters and undertake adventures, etc.) while also attempting to bring a pretty unique fictional world to life for a reader who may not be too familiar with its source material. And let's be honest, making a game out of any Moorcockian series of books is never going to be straightforward task, as - by intention I'm sure - these settings are always more about presenting some big ideas and fun concepts than they are about providing an internally consistent and logical world.

With that in mind I think it does both adequately, but never really reaches the heights it should because of the challenges of its source material (both Moorcock's work and the Runequest back bone) - and of course factors such as its layout, art and design, don't help that either!

So my final thoughts on **Michael Moorcock's Hawkmoon: The Roleplaying Game** are -

- ▽ It's one ugly book, that is visually unappealing and badly designed (in fact the cover design is so bad I realised I can't read the spines of this or its sister supplements on my gaming shelf from about 3 feet away!)
- ▽ It has a great summary of the world, making it feel lived-in and alive. The writing is of a high standard, and it covers a fair swathe of the world setting and its atmosphere in a pretty concise manner.
- ▽ The structure of some of the sections is annoying, feeling disjointed in some parts as you have go flicking through the book to find specific mechanics or rules that perhaps should be together.
- ▽ There are some cool ideas presented in the book that really reflect gaming in the Tragic Millennium, but these often get lost in the chafe arising from the necessity to present a complete game in one (relatively short) book.

If I was to rate Michael Moorcock's Hawkmoon: The Roleplaying Game, I'd give it a solid 6 out of 10 (bumped up to a 7.5 if the layout and design are ignored).