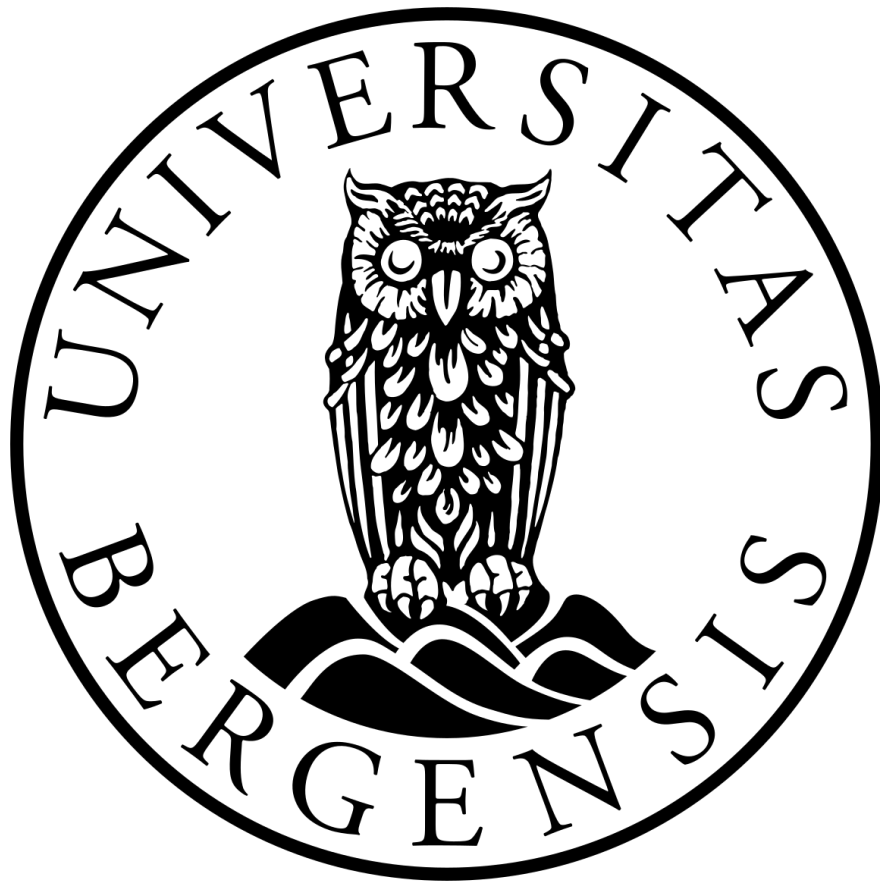# Representations of gender in *Warhammer 40,000*

Master thesis in Media and Communication Studies

Department of Information Science and Media Studies

Arne Campbell

Spring 2023

Foreword

This thesis grew out of a question which I have struggled with for a number of years – why are the seemingly genderless Space Marines of *Warhammer 40,000* all male? Within the *Warhammer 40,000* universe, if Space Marines are transhuman super soldiers so far removed from their human origins that they cannot even distinguish the age or gender of regular humans, why do they themselves have a gender at all? While the pseudoscientific in-universe lore explaining that the "zygotes" used to create Space Marines only work on "male hormones and tissue types" has been around since 1988, and the "real world" explanation has come to light more recently – it's because no one bought the female *Warhammer 40,000* models in the game's early days – I have found these explanations unsatisfactory. Beyond the ignorant pseudoscientific justifications and sales problems, it has never sat quite right with me that opportunities for diverse gender representation have gone completely unaddressed by the *Warhammer 40,000* franchise.

Considering the recent climate within the *Warhammer 40,000* community surrounding the topic of Space Marine gender, and the dearth of academic research on *Warhammer 40,000*, and indeed miniature wargames more generally, I wanted to use the relative freedom afforded by a master's thesis to explore how gender is represented through the various parts of the franchise. While this is hardly a definitive work in the field, and I have had to cut out more sections than I would care to mention, it is to date the largest study of *Warhammer 40,000* published, and represents a start in the direction of a more complete understanding of how these games work and deliver meaning, and how gender representations manifest through the game and franchise as a whole.

Many thanks to my supervisor Rune Klevjer.

Many thanks to Elias, Martijn, and Andreas, for providing access to rulebooks and other material crucial to this thesis.

Lastly, many thanks to Samantha and Maiken for ensuring that this thesis is legible to people who have not spent the past 15 years engrossing themselves in *Warhammer 40,000*.

Table Of Contents

Introduction

In 1913 the famed British science fiction author H.G. Wells published the rules for the first commercially available miniature tabletop wargame, entitled *Little Wars: A Game for Boys from Twelve Years of Age to One Hundred and Fifty and for That More Intelligent Sort of Girl Who Likes Boys Games and Books*. Wargames are strategic games of simulated combat between two or more players, and have been in popular use since at least the seventh century CE, such as the Indian predecessor of chess, chaturanga (Peterson, 2012, p. 367). In fact, wargames have a long history within European militaries as training tools for officers, a tradition which dates back to 18th century Prussia with the development of Johann Hellwig's *Das Kriegsspiel* (Ibid, p. 377). What distinguished Wells' *Little Wars* from other wargames of the time was the use of miniature toy soldiers as game pieces, rather than the more traditional abstracted playing pieces seen in games like chess (Peterson, 2012, p. 452-460; Dunnigan, 1992, p. 146). *Little Wars* included rules for simulating battles between two players using small-scale scenic terrain and miniature toy soldiers representing the infantry, cavalry, and artillery of 18th century militaries. Chiefly concerned as the game is with the simulation of wars and combat, and as the title explicitly intimates, Wells' intended audience was primarily boys and men, and secondarily "more intelligent" than average girls.

Implicit within this title are a number of gendered assumptions which reveal the biases both of the time, and of the wargaming field. Firstly, that wargaming is an inherently masculine space, in keeping with the masculine domination of war as a practice. Secondly, that boys are simply innately smarter than girls, and that their enjoyment of wargaming is due to this increased intelligence. Finally, it is only the more masculine sort of girl, elevated beyond her femininity by her intelligence, who finds enjoyment in wargaming. While Wells released *Little Wars* in 1913, the implicit biases of female exclusion are still present within the wargaming community more than a century later. As wargaming has in large part developed through military industries which have historically been hostile to women, the perpetuation of this tendency within civilian communities is perhaps no surprise (Peterson, 2012, p. 389-432, 461-479; Kline et al, 2003, p. 248; Boldry et al, 2001, p. 2). Indeed, the cross pollination between the military and games industries has influenced the design of both analog and digital games, in many ways leading to

the current games landscape being overwhelmingly focused on simulations of combat in a variety of forms (Kline et al, 2003, p. 246-268). Along with the preoccupation with war and combat came the normalization of masculinity and masculine perspectives which have permeated the games industries for the majority of the past century. This normalized masculinity has manifested in a myriad of ways, from the near ubiquity of masculine subject positions to the sexualization of female game characters (Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, 2016, p. 137-143; Stang, 2021a; Tompkins and Martins, 2021, p. 402-404; Kline et al, 2003, p. 253-256; Dietz, 1998, p. 433-437; Williams et al, 2009, p. 824-827; Downs and Smith, 2009, p. 726-729; Lynch et al, 2016, p. 573-575). Within the digital games industry, the normalization of masculine perspectives is only recently in decline, with more diverse forms of representation appearing within the past decade (Lynch et al, 2016, p. 573-574). Within analog wargaming however, and particularly within the most prominent miniature wargame *Warhammer 40,000*, this normalized masculinity and erasure of femininity and femaleness is very much present and thriving (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 199-206).

In keeping with the example set by Wells' *Little Wars*, the *Warhammer 40,000* player base has been dominated by heterosexual white cisgendered males throughout much of its history (McConnaughy, 2016a). In contrast to digital games, which have garnered more mainstream popularity in recent years, analog wargames like *Warhammer 40,000* have remained relatively niche interests (Moore, 2022, p. 36-39). Consequently, less pressure has been placed on *Warhammer 40,000* than on the digital games industry to increase the diversity of representation (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 194-197, 207-208). The franchise's storyworld is well known for its sexist and objectifying depictions of women, transphobic depictions of gender nonconforming peoples, and prolific and uncritical recreation of fascist and white supremacist ideals (McConnaughy, 2016a, 2016b; Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018; Flarity, 2022; Etherington, 2023). *Warhammer 40,000* has attempted to deflect criticism of its lacking representation by referencing its satirical undertones (Etherington, 2022, p. 70; McConnaughy, 2016b). The grim and dark tone and fascist imagery of the franchise's storyworld is claimed to be a "cautionary tale of what could happen should the very worst of Humanity's lust for power and extreme, unyielding xenophobia set in" (Warhammer community, 2021). Despite this claim to satire, the *Warhammer 40,000* player base been embroiled in scandals involving the use of franchise imagery by far right groups, players

attending tournaments adorned in nazi imagery, and numerous accusations of sexism and misogyny directed at the franchise, as well as the accompanying backlash to these accusations from within the *Warhammer 40,000* community (Way, 2021; Carter, 2021; Knows_all_secrets, 2022; Richter_Of_Flett, 2016). In many ways, *Warhammer 40,000* and its fan community serve as a microcosm for many problems faced by the games and entertainment industries at large, where casual sexism and erasure of female representation is ingrained and normalized. It is this discrepancy of gender representation which is the focus of this thesis. Through visual, narratological, and ludic analysis, this thesis explores how gender is represented throughout *Warhammer 40,000*, and the underlying biases which these depictions promote, as well as how the constituents of the game and franchise can be contradictory.

Warhammer 40,000: The face of modern wargaming

Warhammer 40,000 is a miniature tabletop wargame developed and published by Games Workshop. It has achieved such prominence within the industry that *Warhammer 40,000* has become virtually synonymous with wargaming (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 196). *Warhammer 40,000* initially began as a spin-off of Games Workshop's earlier wargame, *Warhammer: The Mass Combat Fantasy Roleplaying Game* (1983), which takes place in a Tolkienesque fantasy setting. In 1987, Games Workshop released *Warhammer 40,000* as a science fiction alternative of the wargame set in the year 40,000 CE. *Warhammer 40,000* would go on to eclipse its fantasy predecessor in both popularity and influence within the tabletop gaming landscape. It remains to this day as the most played tabletop wargame in the world, with an estimated 4.7 million players worldwide (BBC, 2021). There is also a considerable competitive community which organizes tournaments around the world, the largest of which draws in thousands of players (TastyTaste, 2023). In addition to the tabletop wargame, *Warhammer 40,000* has expanded into a popular transmedia franchise. Spanning analog and digital games, novels, animated films and television shows, and even music, *Warhammer 40,000* invites players to explore and create within its expansive storyworld. *Warhammer 40,000* takes place in the distant future of the 41st millennium, where humanity has spread across the milky way galaxy and encountered a multitude of alien races. In contrast to many popular science fiction franchises like *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*, *Warhammer 40,000* presents a thoroughly dystopic

storyworld. The main human civilization is a fascist theocracy which is slowly crumbling under the weight of its own monolithic bureaucracy and constant infighting. Every faction, alien, human, and other is constantly at war with no end in sight. It is these wars and skirmishes which players simulate on the tabletop.

At the core of the *Warhammer 40,000* franchise is the tabletop wargame which is played between two players.[1] Like Wells' *Little Wars*, *Warhammer 40,000* utilizes miniature models as game pieces. Ranging between 12 millimeters to nearly 60 centimeters tall, the models used during play represent the fantastical futuristic militaries of the game's storyworld.[2] Models are grouped together according to which of these militaries they belong to, forming a playable faction. From Lovecraftian demons and robots, to super soldiers and space elf pirates – there is an enormous range of factions for players to choose from.[3] Players construct armies from the models available to a given faction, able to customize the composition of their individual armies, which usually comprises between 30 to 70 models.[4] While players are able to customize their army, all armies within a game must be of equal strength. This is ensured through a points system, in which each army in a game is allotted the same number of points with which to "purchase" models, with more powerful models having a higher cost in points, equalizing the power which players may bring to a game. Games can vary in the number of points allotted to players, allowing for flexibility in game scale. Smaller games may allot only enough points for a handful of models, while the largest games allot points for hundreds of models. The game is played out on a tabletop ranging between 44 by 30 inches to 44 by 90 inches in size, which is decorated with miniature terrain features like bunkers, ruins, and rivers in order to create a battlefield. Once the battlefield is set up, players place their models on the battlefield in positions of their choice, and the game begins. Players then roll a die to determine who will play the first turn, and play continues with players trading turns until each player has completed five turns.

The game sequence of *Warhammer 40,000* consists of five turns for each player, with each turn comprising seven phases. In each phase, only specific actions may be taken, such as the movement of models, the casting of magic spells (called psychic powers in the game's

---

[1] While a game of *Warhammer 40,000* can include more than two players, two is considered the ideal playing experience, and is subsequently the most popular way to play (JoshFect, 2021).
[2] The shortest model is the "Brimstone Horrors" model, while the largest is the "Mars Pattern Warlord Titan".
[3] The Chaos Daemons, Necrons, Space Marines, and Drukhari factions are examples of this.
[4] The number of models included within an army can vary depending on which models a player selects for their army, with some armies consisting of a single model.

terminology), shooting, or fighting in close combat. Actions are performed by all models in a player's army simultaneously, meaning that all the models wishing to perform an action in a turn must do so within the specific phase. For example, all models which a player wishes to move must be moved during the movement phase, the same applies to shooting in the shooting phase and so on. Certain actions, such as shooting attacks, require a valid target to be within range of the action. In such cases, the distance between models is measured by laying a tape measure between two points and noting the distance in inches. Many actions require the rolling of six sided dice to determine their success. Using the example of shooting attacks, if the target of the attack is within range, players roll dice to determine the outcome of the attack – whether or not the attack hits the target and if the target is eliminated from play as a result of the attack. Each game of *Warhammer 40,000* will include a mission, which details the parameters of the game such as the total amount of points spent on army creation, and the objectives for victory. Objectives are goals which players must achieve throughout the game, such as controlling a specific point on the battlefield or eliminating a certain number of opposing models. Each objective will score the player who completes it a number of victory points. At the end of the last turn of the game, players calculate their total number of victory points, and the player who has accumulated the most wins the game.

The pastime of *Warhammer 40,000*

While the miniature wargame itself constitutes the core of the *Warhammer 40,000* experience, a large part of the game's activities are performed away from the tabletop. Before players can even engage in a game, the models must be collected, assembled and painted. In contrast to many other analog games, *Warhammer 40,000* cannot be purchased as a complete game, rather, the rulebooks, models, and terrain are sold separately.[5] The choice of which faction to play becomes a complex navigation of gameplay affordances, narrative contextualization, and the visual aesthetic of the models, necessitating that players consult the core rulebook and codexes (game books which detail a specific faction and its rules). Additionally, as a transmedia franchise, playing *Warhammer 40,000* inevitably involves players being drawn in to the many

---

[5] The exception to this being starter sets, which include a handful of models from two separate factions, and the rules to play a small scale game.

satellite texts which expand the storyworld (cf. Jenkins, 2006a, p. 101-108). Novels, films, comic books, and digital games explore and elaborate on the characters and events seen in the tabletop wargame utilizing each medium's particular affordances. Many players even describe the storyworld of *Warhammer 40,000* as being the most fascinating and engaging part of the franchise (Meriläinen et al, 2022a, p. 96; Walliss, 2012, p. 123-124; Carter et al, 2014a, p. 138).

As *Warhammer 40,000* encompasses such a disparate variety of activities, it is perhaps best categorized as a pastime (Carter et al, 2014a, p. 140). A pastime is a collection of interlinking and overlapping leisure activities and the term is often used to describe miniaturing practices (Ibid). The miniaturing pastime comprises six activities: gaming, crafting, collecting, storytelling, displaying and appreciating, as well as socializing (Meriläinen et al, 2020, p. 7-11). While the gaming and crafting activities form the core of *Warhammer 40,000*, this does not diminish the importance of the other activities. The collecting of models is in many ways central to the gaming activity. Many *Warhammer 40,000* players collect models and armies from multiple factions, with collections of hundreds or thousands of models (Meriläinene et al, 2022b, p. 67-68). Considering that model kits are priced between 30-40 US dollars with larger models costing upwards of 100 dollars, models and subsequently, collections, represent enormous investments of money and time. Likewise, displaying and appreciating these cherished collections is an important activity for *Warhammer 40,000* players. Highly detailed and elaborate models are often shared in online communities for the enjoyment of other players, and players who are skilled at crafting are held in high esteem by the player base (Meriläinen et al, 2020, p. 8-9). Socializing, both as a way of sharing personal creations, and as a way of discussing shared interests is similarly important to many *Warhammer 40,000* players. Many players have framed the pastime as an explicitly social activity where they can interact with new or existing social circles (Ibid, p. 10).The material requirements of playing *Warhammer 40,000*, such as large tabletops and terrain to decorate the battlefield, are difficult to accommodate in player's homes, incentivising organized play in clubs or local gaming stores. Finally, narrative storytelling within the *Warhammer 40,000* storyworld is an important part of the pastime (Ibid, p. 8-9). This storytelling encompasses practices seen in other transmedia franchises, such as the creation of fan fiction, but also the act of crafting models and armies within *Warhammer 40,000*'s storyworld. The crafting activity functions as a form of world building, as the models and armies which players craft are contextualized within the game's setting through play (Ibid). The

overlapping and interconnected nature of these activities preclude any easy separation of one from the whole. They are constantly interacting throughout a player's personal experience of the pastime, with the needs of one activity necessitating changes within others. Understanding *Warhammer 40,000* as a pastime is therefore essential to understanding how the game and franchise function as a unified whole, and how player activity is ingrained within the design of many of the game's constituent parts.

Existing literature

As many scholars argue, the study of games and games culture is vital for understanding the ways in which patriarchal power structures are perpetuated through lacking representation in media (Williams et al, 2009, p. 818-820; Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 194-197; Stang and Trammel, 2020, p. 731-732). In digital games research, a seminal early study of gender representation is Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins' *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games* (Cassell and Jenkins, 1998). As Cassell and Jenkins observe, the study of "gender" within games and other media is often used to denote the study of women and girls, both in their experiences and representations (Ibid, p. 4-6). Much like the implication of Wells' *Little Wars* title, men and boys are often assumed to be the "default" experience within games culture, from which girls and women deviate. Indeed, much of the academic research on gender representation in digital games is about the normalization of masculine perspectives and subject positions within the digital games industry (Dietz, 1998; Kline et al, 2003; Carr, 2006; Thornham, 2008; Williams et al, 2009; Tompkins and Martins, 2021). Femaleness and femininity is often depicted as Other within games and games spaces, contrasted with the ubiquitous male player and player character. Following Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, many scholars have noted the ways in which the depiction of female digital games characters have been hyper-sexualized, a tendency which does not apply to male characters (Downs and Smith, 2009; Lynch et al, 2016; Clough, 2018; Tompkins et al, 2020). While there are some examples of transgressive gender representation within digital games, such as female characters inhabiting traditionally male roles and occupations, or male characters who fail at performing the hegemonic masculinity seen in many other digital games, they are very much in the minority (Kennedy, 2002; Kirkland, 2009). In more recent years, the study of gender representation in

digital games has expanded beyond the traditional binary gender divide to include androgynous, gender variant, and transgender characters, though transphobic tendencies are very much present in these depictions (Adams, 2018; Thach, 2021). Additionally, in the wake of the #Gamergate movement of 2014 studies have also focused on how the erasure of marginalized representations in digital games can be linked to real world violence towards marginalized communities (Grey et al, 2017).[6]

While analog games present a much smaller corpus of academic research than digital games, many studies observe similar trends of representation between the two mediums. Like digital games, masculine subject positions are prevalent throughout the analog games industry, with the majority of female characters relegated to secondary or tertiary roles. In particular, the Othering of femininity and femaleness within fantasy analog games through sexualization and monstrosity has received considerable academic scrutiny (Trammel, 2014; Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, 2016; Stang and Trammel, 2020; Stang, 2021a, 2021b). Research more specifically within analog wargaming, however, is far more sparse. Indeed, studies detailing the history of wargames overwhelmingly tend to neglect the past forty years of development. While the development of wargames from the 18th century to the mid 20th century has been extensively investigated, most studies end their explorations of the field with the release of *Dungeons and Dragons* in 1974 (Dunnigan, 1992; Peterson, 2012; Shoemaker, 2020). As many of the wargames surveyed within these studies focus on historical warfare, gender very rarely enters the discussion beyond the implicit understanding that the playing pieces represent male soldiers.

It is therefore unsurprising that gender has been minimally studied in the wargame *Warhammer 40,000*. In fact, studies about *Warhammer 40,000* in general are limited, and the few extant studies examine the game and franchise from a diverse range of perspectives. Some of the earliest studies focused on the *Warhammer 40,000* player base itself, both how players relate to the brand as a form of community building, as well as how players relate to the established canon of the storyworld when creating their own narrative fiction (Cova et al, 2007; Walliss, 2010, 2012). Other studies have presented ludic analyses of the wargame itself, exploring the complex dynamics of army construction, how players contextualize losing games, and the function of the

---

[6] #Gamergate was an online harassment campaign targeting women and minorities within the digital games industry in 2014 (Dewey, 2014).

game's material components as representations of in-game action (Carter et al, 2013, 2014a, 2014b; Tobin, 2018). The multiple activities of *Warhammer 40,000* – the crafting of models, creation of narrative fan fiction, and playing of the wargame – have also been studied, with a focus on how these activities interact and overlap to form a greater experiential whole (Meriläinen et al, 2020, 2022a; Kankainen, 2016; Williams and Tobin, 2022). *Warhammer 40,000* as a transmedia franchise as also been a focus of study, with research exploring the themes, character types, and many historical references of the storyworld, as well as how satellite texts support the tabletop wargame (Baumgartner, 2015; McAuley, 2019; Ni, 2020; Ryder, 2021; Wenskus, 2021; Johnson, 2022). Additionally, *Warhammer 40,000* has been studied in relation to its position within the analog wargaming market, and how Games Workshop's marketing strategy has developed throughout the company's history (Sturrock and Wallis, 2016). While the gendered nature of both the game and player base is implicit in many of these studies, as many mention the predominance of male players as well as male characters, only three publications regard gender representations as their central focus. These studies predominantly regard the narrative and visual depictions of characters within *Warhammer 40,000* and how women are excluded from positions of prominence within the franchise, focusing especially on the popular Space Marines faction (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018; Flarity, 2022; Etherington, 2023). Very little attention within this research is directed at how gender is represented through gameplay, or how the narrative representations interact with other parts of the franchise such as the collecting and crafting of models, or fan created narrative fiction.

Why study *Warhammer 40,000*

As evidenced by the survey of research studying *Warhammer 40,000* there are considerable gaps in the academic understanding of the game and subsequently on how gender is represented throughout the franchise. Firstly, the material components of play – the dice, terrain, and models – are elements of analog games which are often overlooked and devalorized by academic research in general.[7] Models in particular are vital to *Warhammer 40,000*, as they represent an unprecedented degree of fan interactivity with the franchise's storyworld

---

[7] See Peitz et al, 2005; Lundgren, 2006; and Bakker et al, 2007 for examples of early analog game studies which devalue material game components.

(Meriläinen et al, 2022a, p. 87-89). While the visual design of digital game characters has been studied in some depth, and with a focus on depictions of femaleness and femininity, the particularities of *Warhammer 40,000*'s models present fascinating differences from the existing research.[8] In particular, the ability for players to customize their models, and the degree to which this customization is allowed and contextualized within *Warhammer 40,000*'s storyworld marks a departure from the static designs of digital game characters. Secondly, how the *Warhammer 40,000* transmedia franchise functions in relation to fan creations and how narrative representations of characters relate to their in-game counterparts remains grossly understudied, despite the fascinating implications for transmedia studies this carries (Baumgartner, 2015, p. 48-50). Thirdly, how gender is represented through the ludic elements of *Warhammer 40,000* is wholly understudied. Gameplay is the primary point of differentiation between games and other mediums, and many scholars argue that it is the most important element of study within games research (cf. Juul, 1998; Aarseth, 2004, 2012; Newman, 2004). Considering the centrality of gameplay to *Warhammer 40,000*, as well as games studies at large, analysis of how gender is manifested through the ludic elements of the wargame further presents a fundamental gap in the available research. Addressing how gender manifests within gameplay is essential not only to studies of miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000*, but arguably also to digital and analog games more broadly.

Being a miniature tabletop wargame, *Warhammer 40,000* has many distinct affordances and particularities which differentiate it from both digital games and other analog games. While these particularities present a number of challenges to analysis, they also present fascinating objects of study. The great breadth of phenomena within *Warhammer 40,000* necessitates an equally broad set of analytical tools. Encompassing a wargame, a transmedia franchise and storyworld, and customizable material models, *Warhammer 40,000* defies a static ontological category. Additionally, gender representations within *Warhammer 40,000* present a fascinating object of analysis due to the many disjunctions and contradictions which exist within the franchise. Many of the sexist and masculine normative tendencies observed within digital games are present within the franchise's representations of gender. *Warhammer 40,000* is rife with the sexualized and Othered feminine characters, normalized and idealized hegemonic masculinity,

---

[8] See Dietz, 1998; Kline et al, 2003; Carr, 2006; Thornham, 2008; Williams et al, 2009; and Tompkins and Martins, 2021 for studies of the visual design of female digital game characters.

and masculine subject positions which permeate the digital games industry (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 199-206; Tompkins and Martins, 2021, p. 407-411). However, while female and feminine models and characters are sexualized and objectified within the visual depictions of the models and the narrative contextualization of the franchise's fiction, within the gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000*, they are not devalorized as are many female characters in digital games. Indeed, within the combative framework of the tabletop wargame, female and gender variant models are the equal of their male counterparts in power and combat prowess. The interaction between the models, narrative fiction, and gameplay nuances many of the game's gender representations.

Chapter overview

Any analysis of *Warhammer 40,000* faces a number of difficulties. Firstly, the vast scale of the franchise and the media texts contained within presents a challenge to corpus selection. Secondly, the multiplicity and diversity of mediums, in addition to the lack of prior research on analog games in general, present a challenge in the selection of appropriate analytical tools. Finally, the interconnected and overlapping nature of the franchise as a whole complicates any clear and simple division of franchise constituents. These factors complicate an analysis of gender representation within *Warhammer 40,000* as a whole, as such representations can be found in a myriad of mediums and forms, from gameplay and mechanics, to narrative fiction and visual art. This thesis therefore utilizes a tripartite analytical approach, in order to explore the various forms of gender representation throughout the *Warhammer 40,000* wargame and transmedia franchise. This approach is based on Kirkland's observation that meaning in games is formed at the intersection between visual design, narrative context and gameplay (Kirkland, 2009, p. 164). These analyses are divided between the visual representation of the models, the narrative contextualization of characters within the transmedia franchise, and the gameplay affordances of the playable factions, with each analysis chapter including a case study of one of the game's playable factions. While the structure utilized in this thesis is by no means a definitive solution to many of the challenges presented by *Warhammer 40,000*, focusing each chapter on a single locus of information allows for deeper analysis of how gender is represented within each constituent part of the wargame and faction case study. As a consequence of the lack

of research on wargames specifically, analytical tools from digital games, analog games, and wargames studies are utilized in order to explore gender in *Warhammer 40,000*. Analyses are not limited by gender identity, including representations of male, female, and gender nonconforming characters and models, with each chapter's case study focusing on a single represented identity.

Chapter 1: The Models explores gender representations within the models of *Warhammer 40,000*. Because models are a miniature visual representation of a character, a material artistic object, and a game piece, they present a unique visual language distinct from that seen among digital games characters. There are however many similarities between models and digital games characters, particularly as it pertains to the sexualization and objectification of female characters. This chapter discusses the design necessities of models as game pieces and crafting objects, as well as comparing the depiction of female *Warhammer 40,000* models with existing research on female digital game characters. The case study of this chapter is the franchise's most overtly sexualized, feminized, and exotified faction, the Daemons of Slaanesh. The Slaaneshi daemons exemplify many tendencies of female and feminine characters within both *Warhammer 40,000* and digital games through their deliberately sexualized costumes, exaggerated secondary sexual characteristics, and feminized appearances.

Chapter 2: The Fiction explores gender representations within the narrative fiction of *Warhammer 40,000*. The narrative storyworld of the *Warhammer 40,000* wargame has been expanded through numerous mediums and forms, including novels, digital games, comic books, and even music. *Warhammer 40,000* is unique among transmedia franchises for its ludic center, and emphasis on player-made additions to the storyworld. This chapter discusses the characteristics of the *Warhammer 40,000* transmedia franchise and how male fan fiction writers relate to the established canon of the franchise in their own creative works. The case study of this chapter is *Warhammer 40,000*'s most popular and prominent faction, the transhuman super soldier Space Marines. The Space Marines faction typify the erasure of women from the franchise, as well as highlight the ways in which canon lore is used to gatekeep the acceptable gender representation within the community.

Chapter 3: The Gameplay explores gender representations within the gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000*. As a tabletop miniature wargame, *Warhammer 40,000* is concerned exclusively with the simulation of combat between the futuristic militaries of the franchise's storyworld. War and combative action has historically been connoted as a masculine domain,

both within real world militaries and within media texts which depict such activities. Within the combative ludic framework of *Warhammer 40,000*, all subject positions, regardless of model gender, are implicitly coded as masculine. This masculine coding serves as a kind of equalizing of the factions across the gender spectrum, as all factions are equally equipped to perform violence against the opposing models. However this equality is complicated by the numerous contextual elements of individual faction's gameplay characteristics. This chapter discusses the ways in which gameplay has been gendered within analog and digital games, and how factions are gendered through the gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000*. The case study of this chapter is the game's only all female faction, the Sisters of Battle. The Sisters of Battle's participation in the combative framework of *Warhammer 40,000* highlights the game's inherently masculine gameplay, while the faction's proficiency within the traditionally masculine domain of warfare exemplifies the normalization of military masculinity within the wargame and franchise.

Chapter 1: The Models

The miniaturing pastime is so integral to the game of *Warhammer 40,000* that the two terms are virtually synonymous. While one can engage in miniaturing without engaging with *Warhammer 40,000*, one cannot engage with *Warhammer 40,000* as a game without engaging in miniaturing, which by extension necessitates engagement with models. Models serve as expressions of the player on the tabletop, but they are also the aspect of the game which players will likely interact with the most. Players may spend multiple hours assembling and painting a single model, which is multiplied hundreds of times when considering the number of models required to play some armies. In fact, many players spend far more time engaging in the crafting of miniatures than they do the actual gaming (Meriläinen et al, 2020, p. 8). Beyond the time that players spend crafting, the player will also spend the majority of their time while gaming directly interacting with the models. While rulebooks, a table, and terrain pieces are necessary requirements to play a game of *Warhammer 40,000*, the focus of player activity is always on the models: where they are, where they can go, what they can see, and who they can kill.

As such, the models take on a huge role in both the *Warhammer 40,000* game, and the franchise more broadly. As Brown and Watherhouse-Watson argue, analog games rely on their material components, cards, tokens, and miniatures, to convey a great deal of their narrative elements such as character and setting (Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, 2016, p. 135). Such characterization includes visual depictions of a model's gender. Models in *Warhammer 40,000* become a visual language which conveys the game's thematic immersion, the crafting skill of the player, and the capabilities of the models and factions in gameplay. Therefore, as a visual medium, the discussion of gender in this chapter will focus on the visual signifiers of gender, what Butler calls "the surface politics of the body" (Butler, 1990, p. 184). Given the importance that models play as crafting objects, as player subject-positions, and as the main mediating objects between the player and the gameworld, it becomes clear that a study of models is paramount to a study of gender representation in *Warhammer 40,000*. This chapter seeks to explore the ways in which models are gendered in *Warhammer 40,000* by examining how models represent a distinct visual language, and how the visual depictions models are objectified

through the male gaze. Finally, this chapter concludes with a case study of the franchise's most explicitly sexualized and Othered subfaction, the Daemons of Slaanesh subfaction.

The visual language of models

Miniaturing has often been associated with children's play with toys, though this association is not one which many miniature enthusiasts appreciate, as it is seen as devalorizing the pastime (Meriläinen et al, 2020, p. 11-12). Many miniature enthusiasts even avoid speaking publicly of their hobby activities for fear of drawing such associations (Ibid, p. 12). Miniaturing has also not garnered much academic attention, with only a handful of scholarly works engaging with the topic in recent years (cf. Meriläinen et al, 2020, 2022a, 2022b; Carter et al, 2014a; Kankainen, 2016; Cova et al, 2007). Much of the current research on miniatures engages more with the pastime in general, the components which make it up and how players relate to the pastime, rather than an analysis of the models themselves (Meriläinen et al, 2020, 2022a, 2022b). This is indicative of a general tendency within game studies to forgo scrutiny of material components in analog games. Analog games have historically been underrepresented within games research leading to fundamental gaps within the field (Wake, 2019). Not only have the material components of analog games been understudied, but many material components such as dice have been framed as tedious and unnecessary components which would be improved by digital augmentation, leading to a general devalorization of the materiality of analog games (Peitz et al, 2005; Lundgren, 2006). Within *Warhammer 40,000* however, materiality is central to the playing experience (Carter et al, 2014a, 2014b; Meriläinen et al, 2020, 2022). The primary affordance of miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000* which differentiates the medium from digital wargames and other analog wargames alike, is the ability for players to craft and customize their material models.

Though the lack of theoretical tools for models and material game components presents a challenge to analysis, parallels can be drawn between *Warhammer 40,000*'s models and the visual design of digital game characters. The visual design of characters in digital games must perform a number of functions (Sloan, 2015, p. 31). Firstly, they must give an indication of what purpose they serve in gameplay and what capabilities they may have. Secondly, they must be recognizable and distinct from the environment and from other characters. Thirdly, they must

convey the relationship that the character has to other characters, such as the role that they play within a social or organizational dynamic. Lastly, they must be aesthetically pleasing, not necessarily beautiful or attractive, but "interesting" to look at (Ibid, p. 31-33). Despite the difference of medium between digital games and miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000*, there are similar principles at play in the design of models. Models are a similarly visual medium, and many of the same functions fulfilled by characters in digital games are fulfilled by models in miniature wargames.

Firstly, like digital game characters, models too must indicate visually what they do, both in terms of gameplay, as well as thematically (Ibid, p. 32). How far a model may move during gameplay, known as the models' "movement characteristic", is incorporated into their design. For example, models with a high movement characteristic are often depicted as riding vehicles, having wings for flight, or by posing them in a moment of dynamic movement.[9] Likewise, models which are rounded and bulky are likely to have a lower movement characteristic than models which are slender and spindly, which are likely to have a higher movement characteristic.[10] The choice of a model's equipment has a similar function. For example, if a model is equipped with a large gun, it can be assumed to have a powerful ranged attack (being able to shoot in the shooting phase), whereas a model which has no ranged weaponry can be assumed to have no ranged attack.[11] The visual depictions of models also informs the imagined actions on the tabletop and in the minds of the players. *Warhammer 40,000* models function as "props", objects which prescribe that we imagine them in a specific way (Walton, 1990, p. 13-28; Bateman, 2011, p. 81). These imaginings are chiefly informed by visual aesthetics of the model. A model which represents an ork must have a visual depiction which prescribes that imagining – in other words, it must *look* like an ork. Similarly, it would not be prescribed that we imagine that the orc model, which lacks wings or other suitable flying device, takes flight during gameplay. The ork's stumpy legs instead prescribes that we imagine it wedding and running across the battlefield in a slightly comedic manner.[12] Models therefore can be seen as a visual

---

[9] Examples of these include the Space Marines "Outriders" squad riding futuristic motorcycles, the Aeldari "Swooping Hawks" unit, whose wings feature prominently on the models, and the Harlequins "Solitaire" character, depicted as vaulting over an obstacle.

[10] This is well exemplified in the Death Guard faction's large and bulky "Plague Marines" models, which have a full three inches less of movement characteristic than the Drukhari faction's slender "Wyches" models.

[11] As exemplified in the T'au Empire faction's "XV88 Broadside Battlesuit" model with its enormous shooting railgun, as opposed to the World Eaters faction's "Eightbound" models with their chainsaw swords and axes, unable to shoot.

[12] As seen in the Ork faction's "Ork Boyz" model kit.

language which at once prescribes the imagined actions of the tabletop, as well as aids players in understanding the game state.

Secondly, as with characters in digital games, models must be identifiable and distinguishable from the tabletop environment and from other models (Sloan, 2015, p. 31). This is particularly important in miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000* considering the small size of models and the distance from which they are viewed during play. *Warhammer 40,000* miniatures are cast in a scale that is generally referred to as 28-32mm. What this means is that a miniature representing a human who is 180 centimeters tall would be roughly 28 to 32 millimeters tall in miniature (Alkony, 2022; Wells, 2021). *Warhammer 40,000* tabletop battlefields range from between 44 by 30 inches to 44 by 90 inches, meaning that a player can regularly be viewing a model from over two meters away (Cruddace, 2020, p. 281). In order for both players to have an accurate picture of the game state, models must stand out from the tabletop. Additionally, the tabletops of *Warhammer 40,000* are not only adorned with models, but also feature miniature terrain pieces, such as buildings, ruins, bridges, and bunkers. Considering that these terrain pieces can often be elaborate and complex, covering large portions of the tabletop and obscuring the players' sightlines, models must clearly stand out from their environment.

Thirdly, like digital game characters, models must inform the player of how they relate to other models, both between factions and within an individual faction (Sloan, 2015, p. 31). Again, this has both thematic and gameplay considerations. Each faction within *Warhammer 40,000* has overarching gameplay capabilities and play styles which are shared between all models in a faction's range. The T'au Empire faction for instance has a propensity for long ranged combat, a trait which is present in nearly all the faction's models. This play style is not only telegraphed through the faction's rules in gameplay, but also through the visual design of the models. In the T'au Empire faction this is exemplified through the ubiquity of ranged weapons like guns, and a general lack of melee weapons like swords or axes within the faction. The visual design of the T'au Empire's large guns signals to players that their weaponry has more firepower than other factions. In addition, within individual factions models must signify how they differ from their fellows. While models within a faction will incorporate common design cues in their visual appearance, variations within those common designs, such as changes in equipment or size, demarcate the differing roles which models play within the larger faction ecosystem. In the T'au

Empire faction, the "Fire Warrior Strike Team" and the "Fire Warrior Breacher Team" models are similar in their design but differentiate in their armor and weaponry. The lighter armor and longer weapons of the former denote the model's role as long-range skirmishers, whereas the heavier armor and shorter, chunkier weapons of the latter denote their role as short-range assault troops. Despite these differences, both model kits maintain shared design principles, such as the angular paneling of their armor and the repetition of the T'au Empire symbol on armor and weaponry. Thus the model is immediately identifiable as belonging to the T'au Empire faction, but maintains enough distinctiveness to identify their role .

Lastly, much like characters in digital games, models must be aesthetically pleasing to look at (Ibid). Indeed, the necessity of this function is arguably heightened by the crafting activities of miniaturing. Models are more than pre-created objects within a virtual world which players interact with during gameplay, they are art pieces in and of themselves which players have a hand in creating (Meriläinen et al, 2022a, p. 95). The need for models to be visually engaging and evocative is increased due to the crafting activity required to play the game, as players will spend as much, if not more, time assembling and painting their models as they do gaming (Meriläinen, 2020, p. 8). In fact, the minority of players who do not paint their models are often shamed by other Warhammer 40,000 players (cyd0nian, 2012; tjk911, 2013; YJET44, 2013; Karlash08, 2021). Unpainted models are seen as such an issue within the community that the term "pile of shame" has been coined to refer to model kits which players have collected, but not yet painted, or even assembled (Meriläinen et al, 2022b, p. 58). As Williams and Tobin argue of the practice of Oldhammer, a subculture of miniaturing focused on retro models, the mere collection of miniatures does not fulfill the miniatures proper use, they must be painted and played with (Williams and Tobin, 2022, p. 584). There is even a market within the miniaturing community of professional painters who craft and paint models for a commission. The price of a single painted model can be as high as two hundred and fifty dollars, far exceeding the price of the models themselves (Den of Imagination, 2023; Paintedfigs, 2023). Considering the number of models which are required to play certain factions, the total cost of a professionally painted army can escalate exponentially. Interestingly, the increased cost and effort involved in painstakingly painting entire armies of models has no effect in gameplay. There is no added mechanical benefit to players who have spent hundreds of hours crafting over those who leave their models partially or fully unpainted. Indeed, the painting of models is purely aesthetic,

solely for the viewing pleasure of the players, and it is ingrained as a fundamental part of the game's culture (Cruddace, 2020, p. 283; Games Workshop, 2021a). This demonstrates the importance of models' visual appeal, making it arguably the most significant function of models in *Warhammer 40,000*. As the rest of this chapter explores, however, the emphasis on visual appeal bears interesting ramifications for visual gender signifiers in both models and game characters at large.

Objectification and the male gaze in digital games

As demonstrated thus far, like characters in digital games, *Warhammer 40,000* models have a distinct visual language which communicates not only the gameplay characteristics of the model, but also their thematic contexts. When this visual language is applied to representations of gender however, a number of clear patterns emerge. In designing visually appealing characters in digital games, designers often recreate existing gendered stereotypes that appeal to an assumed male audience (Tompkins and Martins, 2021, p. 407-408). As several scholars have remarked, the visual design of female characters overwhelmingly tends towards sexualized appearances (Kennedy, 2002; Lynch et al, 2016; Tompkins and Martins, 2021; Downs and Smith, 2009; Stang, 2021b; Stang and Trammel, 2020; Cassel and Jenkins, 1998; Kline et al, 2003). In a 2009 study of the 60 most popular digital games at the time, female characters were found to be four times more likely than male characters to wear sexually revealing clothing, ten times more likely be portrayed as either partially or fully nude, and twelve times more likely to display unrealistic body proportions (Downs and Smith, 2009, p. 728). These findings are congruent with Lynch et al's study of over 500 games featuring playable female characters released over a period of 31 years (Lynch et al, 2016, p. 573-577). This tendency towards sexualization and objectification is all the more troubling given that female characters in digital games are underrepresented and far outnumbered by male characters (Dietz, 1998; Williams et al, 2009; Downs and Smith, 2009; Lynch et al, 2016).

The sexualization of female characters, as well as their lacking representation, has been linked to Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze (Lynch et al, 2016, p. 567; Tompkins and Martins, 2022, p. 401). The male gaze theorizes that classic Hollywood film presupposes an active heterosexual male perspective (Mulvey, 1975, p. 135-142). This male perspective

accounts not only for an assumed male audience, but also an assumed male subject-position. Working from Freudian perspectives of scopophilia, fetishism, and voyeurism, Mulvey theorizes that a film's male characters and the assumed male audience are subsumed into a single entity which is the bearer of the look. The receiver of the gaze, that which is looked at, are the female characters, who are objectified for the viewing pleasure of the male character-audience. Female characters therefore become passive figures who function only as objects of desire for the male gaze (Ibid). In digital games studies, the male gaze has been similarly used to identify the passive and sexualized roles of female characters (Tompkins et al, 2020, p. 7; Tompkins and Martins, 2022, p. 401; Lynch et al, 2016, p. 567).

      According to digital game designers themselves, there are numerous reasons why these practices persist within the industry (Tompkins and Martins, 2022, p. 407-408). One explanation is the male dominance of the industry, which inclines male designers to create games (and consequently, game characters) which they themselves find appealing, a sentiment which has seemingly lingered within the industry (Ibid, p. 407). The assumption of a male perspective which designers must cater to has become so normalized within the industry, that even female designers may uncritically perpetuate the sexualization and objectification of female characters (Ibid, p. 412). Technological affordances and limitations can also influence the portrayal of female characters. For example, characters donning skintight clothing are easier for hardware to simulate than characters swathed in larger and flowing costumes, this being used as justification for sexualized female costumes (Ibid, p. 407). Designers also implement gender ideals into character design, though these ideals inevitably originate from a heteronormative male perspective. For female characters, this involves ideals of attractiveness and power, which appeals to male players as objects of the male gaze, and supposedly appeals to female players as role models. For male characters, these ideals involve heroism, power, and control (Ibid, p. 408).

      The ways in which a heteronormative male gaze is normalized within the digital games industry, and how it is unquestioningly justified by both male and even female designers, is emblematic of the industry's symbolic violence towards women (Tompkins and Martins, 2022, p. 412-413; Gray et al, 2017, p. 5). Symbolic violence, as defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), is a social violence which is practiced with the complicity of the victim. This complicity is contingent on the victim not recognizing the violence as such (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 167-168). The continuous underrepresentation of female characters and the objectification and

sexualization of those that exist constitute an unquestioned violence directed towards women in games spaces. For all the justifications of technological limitations and gender ideals, the fact that gendered character depictions inevitably return to male characters as powerful and heroic, and female characters as powerful in part due to their attractiveness, highlights how the male gaze has permeated the games industry so completely that it is no longer perceivable as cultural violence, but instead as normalized.

Gendered models

Like digital games characters, models are designed to be visually appealing to players. As the player is assumed male, the search for aesthetic appeal inevitably becomes entangled within heteronormative gender stereotypes which objectify and sexualize female characters. While there are considerable differences between digital games and miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000*, many of the same tendencies towards gendered erasure and objectification persist within models. Of the twenty four playable factions in *Warhammer 40,000*, only twelve contain models which are identifiable as female. Even within these twelve factions, female representation is minimal, with only a handful of female models each.[13] The female models which do exist are sexualized and objectified, much like the tendencies among female digital game characters (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 199-206). Indeed, the skin-tight or form-fitting uniforms and armor, excessive busts, slim waists, and partial or full nudity observed within digital games are all well represented in *Warhammer 40,000*'s female models (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 199-206; Downs and Smith, 2009, p. 728-730; Lynch et al, 2016, p. 571).[14] This is in stark contrast to the game's male models. Unlike their female counterparts, male models are presented with a far greater range of body types, from the sleek and slender Aeldari, Drukhari, and Harlequins, to the bulky and excessively muscled Space Marines.

While male body types have a greater degree of variation, *Warhammer 40,000*'s model designs are nonetheless permeated by heteronormative masculine ideals. *Warhammer 40,000* models are sculpted with "heroic proportions", meaning that the proportions of the model are

---

[13] The notable exception to this rule is the all female Sisters of Battle faction, where this dynamic is reversed. The Sisters of Battle are discussed further in Chapter 3: The Gameplay in this thesis.

[14] Examples of this include the Aeldari faction's "Howling Banshees" models, the Sisters of Battle's "Repentia Squad", the Officio Assassinorm's "Callidus Assassin", and the Drukhari's "Lelith Hesperax".

exaggerated compared to what would be realistic for such a scale, such as the hands, weapons, and faces of models being enlarged, and their musculature more pronounced (Alkony, 2022). While this design approach is applied to both male and female models, it is the most prominent amongst the male models. The physique of the male models in *Warhammer 40,000* are more comparable to Frank Miller's 1986 comic book rendition of Batman in *The Dark Knight Returns*– square, burly, broad, and cartoonishly muscular (Miller, 1986). This applies to both the post-human characters like the Space Marines, as well as the "normal" human characters like the Astra Militarum, especially evinced in the Rambo-inspired Catachan model range.[15]

Unlike the exaggerated body proportions of female characters, however, the uber-muscled male characters do not bear the same hypersexualized connotations. Indeed, within the male gaze of digital games, exposed muscles are not erotic displays but rather displays of masculine strength and dominance (Clough, 2018, p. 9-10). Mulvey herself states that men cannot be the receivers of the sexually objectifying gaze, as the assumed heterosexual male audience which the male gaze presupposes does not derive the same pleasure from gazing at the male body (Mulvey, 1975, p. 138). As explained previously in this chapter, like digital characters, all models must be aesthetically pleasing, however the aesthetic pleasure derived from the exaggerated physiques of male *Warhammer 40,000* models is one of an inhabited power fantasy. In digital games, playable characters function as avatars, proxies for the player which allows them to interact within the gameworld (Klevjer, 2012, p. 17-18). Models in *Warhammer 40,000* function in a similar way, though with the player's agency dispersed throughout the entirety of their army rather than localized within a single figure. During gameplay, the player is invited to inhabit these characters, envisioning themselves in the role of these hyper-capable soldiers. The display of muscular physique then is divorced from the eroticizing of the male gaze, as the model-player instead becomes the bearer of the gaze, the locus of viewing power. The exaggerated bodily proportions of male and female characters in *Warhammer 40,000* therefore achieve two separate purposes. The prominent chests and slim waists of female models serve as receivers of the straight male player's gaze, whereas the broad and muscular male models serve as inhabitable power fantasies.

---

[15] The influence of the *Rambo* franchise (1972-) on this model range is most explicit in the "Sly Marbo" model, a clear reference to actor Sylvester Stallone's nickname "Sly", alongside "Marbo", an anagram of Rambo.

While *Warhammer 40,000* and digital games share many tendencies when it comes to the depictions of gendered characters, the materiality and crafting of *Warhammer 40,000* models pose unique challenges and ramifications when it comes to gender representations. Indeed, the scale, tangibility, and customizability of miniature models influence how gender is portrayed within the medium. Given that *Warhammer 40,000* models must condense the entirety of a person to the scale of 28-30 millimeters, some form of visual shorthand is arguably inevitable. While digital game designers may justify the skintight clothing of female characters as being due to hardware limitations, a similar argument can be made regarding the technical challenges posed by the scale of *Warhammer 40,000* models. In designing 28-30 millimeter models, designers may lean towards exaggerated gender signifiers easily recognizable at a small scale and from a distance, such as prominent chest pieces for female characters and flat plates for male characters. In fact, for some models, the chest piece is the lone distinguishing element between male and female models. *Warhammer 40,000* models are sold as multipart kits, meaning that each individual piece of the model is separate and must be glued together – no model can be purchased fully assembled. Many of these kits include interchangeable parts, options from which the player can select when crafting, including male and female chest pieces. For models such as the Drukhari faction's "Wyches" and the Harlequins faction's "Harlequin Troupe", the male and female models from top to toe have the exact same pieces, except for their chest pieces, the sole distinct piece. Chest pieces can therefore become an immediately identifiable signifier of gender within *Warhammer 40,000*.

The interchangeability of gender signifiers presented on models calls into question the very relevance of these signifiers. There is debate among players within the *Warhammer 40,000* community as to whether separate female and male models are even necessary to begin with (Majorkill, 2020). Indeed, with factions like Space Marines or Leagues of Votann, wherein characters are encased in many layers of armor, the need for distinct "chest pieces" delineating genders perhaps becomes irrelevant. However, such arguments fail to address the existing objectifying depictions of female models within *Warhammer 40,000* and the lack of female representation at large. The assumed irrelevance of gender exposes the underlying masculine norm, both within the franchise and within the community, wherein femaleness and femininity are devalorized and erased (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 198-206). The objectification of feminine characters in *Warhammer 40,000* is further exacerbated when

considering non-binary characters, best exemplified in the franchise's most overtly sexualized faction, the Daemons of Slaanesh.

Demonized queerness: The Daemons of Slaanesh case study

As with many science fiction and fantasy franchises, *Warhammer 40,000* is filled with a vast array of non-human characters and species, from Tolkienesque orcs, elves, and dwarves, to incomprehensible Lovecraftian monstrosities from beyond space and time. The Chaos Daemons faction serve as the franchise's primary antagonists, and is composed of four distinct subfactions, one of which being the Daemons of Slaanesh. Bearing both male as well as female sexual signifiers, the Daemons of Slaanesh can best be described as non-binary. All Slaanesh models currently sold by Games Workshop feature a half male and half female chest, with the left side of their torso being exposed to show a smooth surface, and the right side having either a single covered breast, a single uncovered breast, or even multiple uncovered breasts, as exemplified in the "Seekers of Slaanesh" and "Fiends" models who possess a row of breasts on the right side of their underbelly. Here again the "chest piece" becomes the primary signifier of gender among *Warhammer 40,000* models, denoting a gender nonconforming identity in the case of the Daemons of Slaanesh.

The non-binary depiction of Daemons of Slaanesh and their position as one of the primary antagonists within *Warhammer 40,000* adds them to the extensive list of problematic portrayals of gender nonconforming characters in the games industry at large. Gender nonconforming characters have been depicted in a number of digital games, both as protagonists and antagonists (Adams, 2018, p. 147). In digital games, the most common gender nonconforming protagonists are androgynous male characters, who lack any prominent secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts, hip to waist ratios, or facial hair (Ibid, p. 149). Within the masculine focused games industry however, what is perceived as androgynous, is often merely the lack of feminizing gender signifiers. Masculinity is perceived as the default "neutral" state of games, from which femininity and femaleness deviates (Ibid). Androgynous protagonist characters instead are merely male characters which are not *as* masculine as the industry standard. On the hand, nonconforming characters who are antagonists are more often

depicted as blending gender signifiers (Ibid, p. 155). Particularly pervasive are ostensibly "male" characters who "masquerade" as women in an attempt to "trick" men into sex (Ibid).

These problematic connotations between gender nonconformity and villainy are very present within the Daemons of Slaanesh, most specifically in their clothing. The Daemons of Slaanesh's eclectic costumes draw from a variety of influences. Their clothes are reminiscent of courtly costumes of Renaissance Europe, Orientalist loincloths, and BDSM fetish-wear. Despite their multi-gender chest piece, the Daemons of Slaanesh are nonetheless feminized and sexualized through the plunging necklines, high leg slits, thigh garters, and form-fitting corsets of their costumes. The presence of these feminizing signifiers denote the deviance of the Daemons of Slaanesh from the masculine norm of *Warhammer 40,000*. Additionally, the loincloths, veils, and capes evoke Orientalist harem fantasies in western media (Ali, 2015, p. 35-37). This eroticized exoticism further Others the Daemons of Slaanesh.

The outfits of the Daemons of Slaanesh also signal deviation through their invocation of BDSM fetish-wear. The leather studded corsets, harnesses, whips, and body piercings imply a preoccupation with sexualized pain. This pleasure in pain motif is both masochistic, like in the piercings which hold up the stockings of the "Fiends" model, but also sadistic, best exemplified by the "Infernal Enrapturess" model. In this model, a Daemon of Slaanesh is seen playing a harp implanted in and fused to the back and arms of a kneeling, downcast male prisoner. The grotesque body horror of the harp, teamed with the Daemon of Slaanesh stepping on the kneeling man to gain better access to play it, connote the pleasure which the Daemon derives from the torment of their male prisoner. This sadism on the part of the Daemons of Slaanesh connects them to the transphobic fears present in many gender nonconforming villains (Addams, 2018, p. 155; Reitz, 2017, p. 1-2; Thach, 2021, p. 29-31). Characters with nonconforming gender identities have historically been depicted as mentally ill murderers, both in film and television, as well as in digital games. Characters like Buffalo Bill from the 1991 *Silence of the Lambs* film adaptation, and The Psycho from *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* (2002) are transgender figures whose mental illness and violent behaviors are directly tied to their gender identity (Reitz, 2017, p. 2; Thach, 2021, p. 29-30). The Daemons of Slaanesh being the only gender nonconforming models within the entirety of *Warhammer 40,000* makes the implications of their monstrosity troubling. This in addition to the general underrepresentation of female characters presents an

erasure of non-masculine figures from the franchise (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 206-208).

Sexualization and objectification

As discussed in this chapter, models represent a distinct visual language which conveys both the aesthetics, thematics and gameplay possibilities of the pastime. However, the depictions of female models in *Warhammer 40,000*, as with female characters in digital games, has historically fallen into existing tropes of heteronormative notions of gender ideals. The necessity for models to be visually pleasing brings differing requirements for male and female models. Male models must be powerful and strong, effective power fantasies for the assumed male player to inhabit during gameplay. Female models on the other hand must be pleasing to the male gaze, to be sufficiently sexualized and objectified. The Daemons of Slaanesh in particular exaggerate the sexualization and Othering of non-male models beyond what is present in other factions, and in so doing perpetuate harmful stereotypes of gender nonconforming identities. While the sexualization and objectification of femaleness and femininity in *Warhammer 40,000* is most overt within the visual representations of the models, heteronormative gender tropes nonetheless prevail in the franchise's other expressions. As will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, the erasure of femininity within *Warhammer 40,000*'s transmedial storyworld is not only present within the published fiction, but also within the fan activities of the pastime, best exemplified in the franchise's most iconic faction, the Space Marines.

Chapter 2: The Fiction

As some scholars have argued, narrative is of secondary importance within the study of games (Juul, 1998). Games are fundamentally playable objects, simulations of space and time in which the player has agency to act, which can be fundamentally contradictory to a plot's structured sequence of events (Juul, 1998; Aarseth, 2012, p. 1-2). It may therefore be difficult to ascertain what bearing a chapter on prose and background fiction has on an analysis of a game. After all, *Warhammer 40,000* is an analog game played with plastic models on a tabletop, its fiction is delivered through entirely separate artifacts in an entirely separate medium. Indeed, tabletop wargames lack many of the narrative interruptions and interjections of digital games, such as cutscenes, which are so ardently disfavored by ludologically inclined games scholars (Klevjer, 2002, p. 191-193). A study of *Warhammer 40,000*'s novels, short films, and the background lore published in gamebooks is arguably a study of an entirely different subject, one which cleaves more closely to traditional literary studies than contemporary games scholarship.

Such a perspective however, ignores the importance that the fiction and storyworld of *Warhammer 40,000* has on both the playing of the game, and on the creative and social activities of the pastime. Beyond merely contextualizing the tabletop wars which players engage in, the *Warhammer 40,000* fiction provides a breadth and depth of possible avenues for crafting, storytelling, and socialization. The fiction provides a structure and context for player creativity which is sufficiently indeterminate to allow for extensive player creations without contradiction, but it is also detailed enough for players to engage with existing fiction in new and interesting ways. This applies not only to the armies and characters which players spend countless hours crafting, but also the extensive fan fiction.[16] As a transmedia franchise, *Warhammer 40,000* forms a symbiotic relationship between the games, rules, fiction, and fan creations, in which, like the plastic glue used by players to craft their models, the fiction works to bind together the disparate mediums of the *Warhammer 40,000*. A discussion of *Warhammer 40,000* which disregards the fiction would ignore the full potential of the pastime's activities. As such, this chapter explores how *Warhammer 40,000* functions as a ludically centered transmedia franchise,

---

[16] Black Library, the *Warhammer 40,000* publishing house, is even known for publishing selected fan fiction, as well as hiring fan fiction writers to write official *Warhammer 40,000* novels and short stories (Walliss, 2012, p. 129-130).

and how its fiction and storyworld are deliberately designed to allow for the narrative creations of players. Additionally, this chapter examines how both established canon and player created narrative fiction reproduce an erasure of women and girls from the franchise and storyworld, exemplified in the case study of the game's most popular and prominent faction, the Space Marines.

The narrative fiction of *Warhammer 40,000*

The narrative of *Warhammer 40,000* is conveyed through a vast and sprawling variety of mediums and texts, with no concrete locus. The game's core rulebook includes the background lore of the storyworld and introduces the game's playable factions. Individual faction codexes (gamebooks which include the rules for playing each faction) further elaborate on the origins, military history, and societal structure of specific factions. The *Warhammer 40,000* franchise has also been expanded into tabletop roleplaying games where players are invited to inhabit various characters within the setting, and the gamebooks of which describe the more domestic politics and mundane civilian life of the factions. Separate from the gamebooks are the many novels and short stories set in the *Warhammer 40,000* storyworld published by Black Library, *Warhammer 40,000*'s official publishing company. Much like how the *Star Wars* films were expanded upon in numerous novels after the end of the original trilogy, *Warhammer 40,000* has been embellished and detailed by numerous authors since 1990 (Guynes, 2017, p. 145-147).[17] While the background lore found in gamebooks provide an overview of historical events, the novels instead focus on the personal experience of individual characters. Similar character-oriented perspectives are found in *Warhammer 40,000*'s film and television series, both live-action and animated.[18] Games Workshop even has its own subscription based streaming service, Warhammer+, on which these television series can be found (Warhammer-community, 2021). *Warhammer 40,000* has also expanded into digital games of a variety of genres, from first person shooters to real

---

[17] 1990 saw the release of the first full length *Warhammer 40,000* novel, *Inquisitor* by EIan Watson (Watson, 1990).

[18] Animated works set in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe include the television miniseries *Hammer and Bolter* (2021-)*, Angels of Death* (2021-), and *Interrogator* (2022-), and the feature length CGI film *Ultramarine: A Warhammer 40,000 Movie* (Pick, 2010; Shipley and Neal, 2021-; Modine and Boylan, 2021-; Story Forge, 2022-). There are also two live action television series in production with Big Light Productions and Amazon Studios (Warhammer-community, 2019; Kit, 2022).

time strategy, whose narratives contribute to the greater body of the franchise.[19] The narrative of *Warhammer 40,000* is even explored through music, such as British death metal band Bolt Thrower's 1989 album *Slaves to Darkness*, which featured tracks recounting characters and events within the storyworld (Snipe and Wib, 2019).

Additionally, the storyworld of *Warhammer 40,000* is designed to allow for extensive player creations through its considerable and deliberate indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is a literary term used to describe how readers conceptualize fictional worlds in their minds based on clues given in the text (Iser, 1971, p. 4-45). The image of these conceptualized worlds in the readers' minds can never be complete, as any representation of a storyworld will inevitably be incomplete – it is impossible to encompass every detail of a storyworld within the confines of a text (Ibid). Interestingly, *Warhammer 40,000* capitalizes on this indeterminacy, and actively encourages players to fill in these narrative gaps, not only in their mind when reading, but by filling them with their own material and fictive creations. This is accomplished by leaving certain elements of the storyworld blank, inviting players to create their own armies, fan fiction, or specific character models to fill these large narrative gaps themselves. For example, within the lore of the Space Marines faction, two of the original 20 Space Marine Legions have only ever been indirectly referenced, in contrast to the other 18 which have received detailed explorations. The absence of detail not only serves as an intriguing mystery for players to ponder and discuss, but also as an opportunity for players to decide for themselves who these characters are and how they might operate on the tabletop. The broad spatial and temporal scope of *Warhammer 40,000*'s storyworld further cultivates a wide range of narrative possibilities for player creation. The setting spans over ten thousand years of imperial history and covers an entire galaxy as well as several other dimensions, leaving enormous room for players to create.

In addition to the sprawling scope and deliberate gaps of the narrative, published fiction tends to contradict one another, destabilizing any notion of a fixed "canon" for the franchise. The fiction included in game books and novels is meant to be in-universe historical accounts passed down through time, and which have been edited, redacted, and degraded over time to give an incomplete, deliberately biased, or false account of events, which also accounts for the numerous retroactive changes made to previous work that proliferate in the published fiction (Ars Technica,

---

[19] Digital games set in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe include the first person shooter *Warhammer 40,000: Darktide* (2022) by developer Fatshark, and the real time strategy series *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War* (2004-2017) by Relic Entertainment.

2021). The lack of an official canon again allows players to engage more freely in the overlapping activities of miniaturing, as players may create freely without concern for their creations contradicting published works. More than merely fitting in, player creations have as much validity in being "canonical" within the storyworld as those that are created by Games Workshop. If the published fiction is unreliable, and authors and designers deliberately leave blank spaces for players to fill in, then whatever the player decides to put there may have equal claim to canon as any officially licensed product (Ibid).

Transmedia storytelling in *Warhammer 40,000*

This dispersal of narrative information across multiple works and mediums is characteristic of transmedia franchises, as it encourages audiences to explore the many expressions in order to gain a more complete understanding of the world, themes, and characters (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 101-108). Indeed, the storyworld and fiction of *Warhammer 40,000*'s transmedia franchise have been noted by many fans as being the core appeal of the franchise (Meriläinen et al, 2022a, p. 96; Walliss, 2012, p. 123-124; Carter et al, 2014a, p. 138). As each text contributes to the worldbuilding of the franchise, *Warhammer 40,000* players are rewarded for interacting with the vast array of material in the transmedia universe. However, *Warhammer 40,000* differs from many other transmedia franchises in that it lacks both a central plot as well as protagonists. In many other transmedia franchises, such as *The Matrix* (1999-2019) franchise, transmedial storytelling is utilized to expand upon a core plot with a common cast of characters (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 101-108). While *The Matrix* film trilogy presents a comprehensible sequence of events, certain details of these events, such as how a character came to know some piece of information, or how some ancillary task was achieved, is described in "satellite" texts rather than in the films themselves (Ibid). In order to understand the complete sequence of events of Neo's fight against the machines and Agent Smith, the audience must therefore engage with the animated works, digital games, and webpages in *The Matrix* franchise (Ibid). In *Warhammer 40,000* however, there is no central plot or cast of characters. While there are plots and characters within each individual work and some of which may appear in other entries within the same series, there is no overarching plot shared by the franchise as a whole. The plots within *Warhammer 40,000* fiction instead detail a sprawling number of disparate settings and events

which are unified by their shared universe. The same can be said of the franchise's characters. While there are factions and characters which would be described as "fan favorites", none of these fulfill the role as overall franchise protagonists.[20] With over 24 factions and their accompanying models, there are countless characters within the franchise's many expressions. *Warhammer 40,000* can therefore be described as a ludic centered transmedia franchise (Baumgartner, 2015, p. 38). The "core" of the franchise is instead the tabletop game itself, with the narrative expansions detailing the factions, characters, and storyworld in which the wargame's action takes place (Ibid, p. 41-42).

As a ludically oriented transmedia franchise, however, *Warhammer 40,000* is unique due to its analog components. While digital games include both audiovisual representations, gameplay, and narrative within a singular artifact, *Warhammer 40,000* disperses its constituent components across multiple mediums. In *Warhammer 40,000*, the visual representations are presented through the models and terrain used to play, the game's rules are written in the gamebooks, and the narrative is expressed throughout a wide variety of texts, everything from novels, background lore, video games, to song lyrics. This dispersal necessitates that players engage with the franchise's transmedial expansions in order to gain a narrative comprehension of the storyworld to a far greater extent than franchises that center on digital games. A player of the digital game *Halo: Combat Evolved* (2001) for example, does not need to read one of the many *Halo* novels in order to understand the world, characters, and events, as they are presented within the game itself. Reading such novels may grant a deeper or more detailed understanding of the narrative elements, but it is not fundamental to a basic understanding of the game or storyworld. *Warhammer 40,000*, on the other hand, requires that players have read the background lore, novels, or other similar transmedial satellites in order to understand the setting and characters which they are playing on the tabletop.

Warhammer 40,000 is also distinct from other ludic transmedia franchises due to its nature as a pastime. Indeed, the overlapping activities of the miniaturing pastime have interesting implications for the franchise's transmedial expansions. As discussed in the previous chapter, *Warhammer 40,000* models are sold unassembled and unpainted, requiring players to engage in the models' crafting. Since gaming with unpainted models is highly discouraged by the

---

[20] Examples of fan favorite factions are the numerous variations of Space Marines such as the Blood Angels or Space Wolves Chapters.

community and is prohibited within organized events, players must therefore decide how to paint the highly elaborate and complex miniature models. In so doing, players are inclined to consult sources of inspiration, such as the novels, digital games, or even other fan creations of the franchise. By choosing specific colors and styles for painting, as well as playing the crafted models in games of *Warhammer 40,000*, players inevitably interact with the greater intertextual canon of the franchise, priming them for further interaction with the storyworld. This foregrounding of narrative renders *Warhammer 40,000* distinct not only from digital game franchises, but even from analog game expansions of other transmedia franchises. Take for instance the *Pokémon* franchise's most popular analog expansion, the *Pokémon Trading Card Game* (1996-). The *Pokémon Trading Card Game* is one of the most popular collectible card games in the world, with over 43.2 billion cards worldwide (The Pokémon Company, 2022). The game invites players to assume the role of a Pokémon trainer and battle one another's Pokémon in a manner similar to the battles seen in the franchise's digital games. While a game of the *Pokémon Trading Card Game* can be contextualized narratively, as the players representing competing Pokémon trainers within the Pokémon storyworld, the importance placed on this contextualization is far less than in *Warhammer 40,000*. Since *Pokémon Trading Card Game* players collect ready-made cards, the crafting activity is not present within the game, eliminating the necessity of consulting transmedial expressions in order to craft, therefore decreasing the necessity of player interaction with the overarching storyworld.

Narrative fan creation in *Warhammer 40,000*

As a pastime, *Warhammer 40,000* incentivises player engagement with its storyworld through the crafting and storytelling activities. These player activities, along with the deliberately indeterminate nature of the storyworld, incentivise player creation along two parallel paths: ludic and narrative. While the models, armies, and terrain can be defined as ludic creations, those which are intended for use in gaming, narrative player creations focus on the storytelling activity, rather than the crafting activity, as their center. These narrative player creations are the fan-produced textual or cinematic fiction which take place within the shared storyworld of

Warhammer 40,000, often referred to as fan fiction within community and academic discourse.[21] While fan fiction has historically been applied to literary works, the term can be applied more broadly to fan created works within multiple mediums (cf. Ryan, 2015, p. 10-12). When it comes to studies of fan fiction, gender differences have been a central topic of discussion, and their relevance has only increased as the field has developed. Much of the academic study of fan fiction has focused on marginalized writers, typically female or queer fans, and the ways in which they have transformed the source material to better address the needs and views of marginalized audiences (Walliss, 2012, p. 120-121). As many scholars have noted, female audiences confronted with the masculinized perspectives of many media texts, particularly those within fantasy and science fiction genres, are inevitably forced to identify with the male characters and masculine perspectives of the text (Jenkins, 1992, p. 115; 2006b, p. 44). To combat this, many female fan fiction writers reinterpret and transform their favorite texts to include themes which they find more appealing, such as a focus on sexuality and gender politics (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 51). This stands in contrast to male fan fiction writers, who are better able to identify with the male protagonists and perspectives of the text. Fan fiction by male writers subsequently tends to be less transformative and re-interpretive than that of female writers, focusing instead on technical details or fiction in line with the "essence" of the original storyworld (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 43-44; Walliss, 2012, p. 119-121; Rehak, 2008, 2016, p. 325-326).

More recently, scholars have questioned these gender essentialist differentiations between male and female fan activity, arguing that they reify heteronormative conceptions of value within fan spaces (Russo, 2008). When examining *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction however, these gender essentialist differentiations are very much present (Wallis, 2012, p. 127-130). Being a predominantly male dominated pastime, *Warhammer 40,000*'s fan fiction is unsurprisingly dominated by male creators (Hern, 2019, Walliss, 2012, p. 119-130, Carter et al, 2013, p. 4). Much of the *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction aligns with that seen by male fan creators in other franchises, such as the dedicated compilation of facts and details. This is perhaps best encapsulated in the *Warhammer 40,000* "lore channels" found on Youtube, where dedicated male fans compile information from novels, gamebooks, digital games, and even other fan fiction. These Youtube videos, often spanning for multiple hours, offer entertainment and information for

---

[21] Scholars have used multiple differing terminologies to refer to fan created works, such as fan participation or interaction, or user generated content (Guerrero-Pico, 2016, p. 77; Ryan, 2015, p. 10-12). The term fan fiction is used here in keeping with the prior use of the term fiction throughout this thesis.

other fans, as well as working as vehicles for speculation for future narrative developments and possible expansions of the franchise.[22] The preoccupation with franchise "canon" seen in these videos is mirrored in the franchise's fan created prose fiction. Despite the franchise's deliberately indeterminate storyworld and destabilized canon, many *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction writers view fidelity to the established canon as paramount to the fan fiction practice (Walliss, 2012, p. 123). For these fan fiction writers, the lore of the storyworld and canonical depictions of characters serve to dictate the permissible bounds of fan fiction expressions. Given that the overwhelming majority of these writers are male, this further reinforces the divisions between male and female fan activities seen in other franchises. The masculine adherence to canon in *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction is evinced in community forums, where fan fiction writers who deviate from the official canon are attacked by other fans for failing to "respect" the franchise (Ibid, p. 129). Some community forums even enforce canon adherence through official posting rules which explicitly ban fiction which goes against or "corrupts" the official source material (Ibid, p. 122).

Paradoxically, this faithfulness to official *Warhammer 40,000* canon among male fan fiction writers does not extend to the use of characters (Ibid, p. 124). As previously stated, there is no official overarching "protagonist" or main cast of characters within *Warhammer 40,000*. The tendency among official *Warhammer 40,000* texts is to create new characters for each individual text, as opposed to re-using established characters. Interestingly, this tendency is reflected in the fan fiction as well, in contrast to the fan fiction of many other franchises, which expand or transform the depictions of established characters (Walliss, 2012, p. 125-126; Jenkins, 1992, p. 165-171). *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction writers instead create original characters for their texts, rather than continuing or expanding on characters and events within the official canon (Walliss, 2012, p. 125-126). The creation of original characters is not considered as "going against" the official canon, and is instead framed positively by *Warhammer 40,000* community forums, who appreciate this particular kind of originality within the franchise (Ibid). This contrasts starkly with the punitive measures faced by fan fiction creators whose texts deviate from canon in any other way other than developing new characters (Ibid, p. 127).

---

[22] Many such lore channels have multiple hundred thousand subscribers, with the most prominent examples being Lutin09, 40K Theories, and Oculus Imperia.

This leniency towards characters may be explained by the general tendency of *Warhammer 40,000* characters to conform to broad transmedial character types. While a character is a specific entity within a text, such as Legolas from *The Lord of the Rings* films (2001-2003), a character type is instead a grouping of characters which share common characteristics, such as "an elf character" from the same franchise (Thon, 2019, p. 184). Within *Warhammer 40,000* these character types can be drawn broadly along faction lines, with the character types defining who characters are. For example, the Ork character type is expected to be dumb, brutish, and violent, whereas the Space Marine character type is expected to be stoic, hyper-competent, violent, and (importantly for this chapter's case study) male. These character types help explain the leniency towards inventing new characters in *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction – as long as a character conforms to their character type, they are seen as permissible. The unquestioning reproduction of these character types, and the fidelity towards canon within the *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction writing community, can however recreate the problematic issues of representation inherent in the established fiction. Given that *Warhammer 40,000* as a transmedia franchise represents a masculine perspective, and that the overwhelming majority of its fan base is male, the underlying biases within the franchise are perpetuated within both the fiction and community at large. When these underlying assumptions are questioned by fans seeking more diverse representation within the franchise and community however, players have historically, and perhaps predictably, reacted violently towards those upsetting the status quo, best encapsulated by the controversy surrounding the Space Marines faction and their gender representation.

Transhuman, but still male: The Space Marine case study

It is perhaps no surprise that the most popular and prominent faction in *Warhammer 40,000* is also its most hyper-masculine. Space Marines are in many ways the very embodiment of western hegemonic masculinity, a characterization which has led both to their widespread appeal among *Warhammer 40,000*'s male dominated player base, as well as some of the most significant controversies in the franchise's history (Etherington, 2022, p. 70-71). Space Marine variants make up nearly half of the game's total playable factions, and also make up over half of the total number of armies seen in organized play, cementing their status as the most popular

faction and model range among *Warhammer 40,000* players (Goonhammer, 2023). This prevalence is also reflected in the transmedia franchise's official narrative expansions, as Space Marine characters are featured in the majority of Black Library novels, and in nearly all *Warhammer 40,000* digital games. Within the *Warhammer 40,000* storyworld, Space Marines are genetically engineered super soldiers fighting for the Imperium of Man, the human centric fascist theocracy which has come to dominate the majority of the universe. While there are numerous variations of Space Marine within the storyworld of *Warhammer 40,000* which differ from one another in terms of history and culture, most of the overarching characteristics of the Space Marine character type emphasize their masculinity and maleness. According to the official lore, Space Marine candidates must be prepubescent males, as the genetic enhancements used to turn regular humans into Space Marines only work on male anatomies before the natural production of puberty hormones (Priestly, 1988, p. 16).

The genetic enhancements of Space Marines in many ways form the core of their identity, both on the tabletop and in the franchise's narrative expressions. Their lack of emotion, their prowess in combat, their mental and physical hyper-capability, and their nigh immortality are all derived from the body modifications which elevate them above regular humans. The traits which the Space Marine creation enhances however, are not neutral – they conform to western ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Traits such as emotional and physical invulnerability, physical strength, stoicism, and the ability and willingness to commit violence in defense of one's home or family are often valued within hegemonic masculine ideals, traits which are very much present within the Space Marine character type (Connell, 1995, p. 64, 76-78; Etherington, 2022, p. 71-76). Indeed, not only can one read Space Marine characters as examples of hegemonic masculinity, but given the exaggeration of these traits seen in Space Marine's narrative depictions, one can even argue that Space Marines are represented as idealized masculine paragons.

The exaggeration of maleness and masculinity is similarly evinced within the Space Marine faction's historical and pop cultural references. Space Marine culture is characterized as a combination between monastic and knightly orders. Individual Space Marine armies, called Chapters, function as feudal lords of particular areas of space, allowed to collect tithes and dictate laws within their fiefdom. These segregated nation states allow the Space Marines to distance themselves from the rest of the relatively egalitarian Imperium, forming enclaves in which the masculine Space Marines have sole sovereignty (Etherington, 2022, p. 75-76). Similar

parallels can be found to Catholic priesthoods (Flarity, 2023, p. 60-72). Indeed, the entirety of *Warhammer 40,000*'s Imperium of Man evokes notions of medieval Catholicism. From the many cathedrals which decorate their cities and spaceships, the episcopal hierarchy of the Imperium's state church, to the use of "High Gothic" (pidgin latin) as the Imperium's lingua franca, Catholicism serves as a common inspiration for much of the Imperium's depictions. The evocation of Catholic imagery and practice, along with the insistent exclusion of women from Space Marine brotherhoods forms clear parallels to monastic orders (Ibid, p. 60). Space Marines' lore and structure draw further reference from the Roman Catholic church, such as their organization into Chapters which operate within specific regions of space centered on a Fortress-monastery, or the strict regime or prayer which Space Marines must engage in throughout the day (Chambers, Johnson, and Thorpe, 1998, p. 48).

Canon vs. reinterpretation

While some *Warhammer 40,000* players, who are accustomed to the casual erasure of women and girls from games spaces, have unquestioningly accepted the exclusion of all but cisgender men from the franchise's most prominent faction, other players have criticized the lack of representation and the rigidity of its in-universe justification (Moore, 2022, p. 44). Throughout the years, online debate has ensued regarding the inclusion of women among Space Marines (Call_me_ET, 2013; Richter_Of_Flett, 2016). Not only have players called for more diverse representation amongst Space Marines, but players have also argued for the inclusion of female Space Marines through a reinterpretation of the lore (The Templin Institute, 2023; OneMindSyndicate, 2023). These players argue that given Space Marines' transhuman nature, Space Marine characters are effectively removed from a gender binary altogether (Ibid). In such a case, the original gender of a Space Marine candidate becomes irrelevant once they become Space Marines, effectively positioning Space Marines as non-binary (Ibid). Indeed, such a reading is supported by many texts within the franchise's official canon, as Space Marine characters are regularly depicted as finding the concept of binary genders incomprehensible due to the enhancements they receive alienating them from their humanity (Dembski-Bowden, 2010, 2016, 2018).

In many ways this reinterpretation is reminiscent of the more transformative fan fiction tendencies connoted with female fan fiction writers (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 43-44; Walliss, 2012, p. 119-121; Rehak, 2008). In the case of female Space Marines however, it is not only female players who are advocating for this reinterpretation, but a significant portion of the male player base as well. This contrasts starkly with the fidelity to canon of male *Warhammer 40,000* fan fiction creators in other regards. The acceptance of this gender reinterpretation can be explained in large part by how seemingly inconsequential such a change would be to the rest of the canonical depictions of Space Marine characters. Space Marine characters are irreversibly alienated from their human origins by the process of their creation (Johnson, 2022, p. 159-160). By the end of their enhancement and training, Space Marines are uniform in capability and mentality, meaning that a female or male Space Marine candidate would be virtually indistinguishable after their enhancement. The core characteristics of Space Marine characters, which are derived from their enhancements and which exaggerate the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, could be maintained despite the change in a Space Marine's original biological sex. Removing the exclusionary requirement for Space Marine candidates would therefore result in relatively few changes to their depictions within the franchise's fiction otherwise. Additionally, Space Marine models are adorned in multiple layers of armor which mask any identifying features. A change to the gender of Space Marine candidates would necessitate no change to the factions model range, as Space Marines are adorned in multiple layers of armor which mask any identifying features, which is often referenced by players in favor of this reinterpretation (The Templin Institute, 2023; OneMindSyndicate, 2023).

While this reinterpretation proposes relatively small changes to the franchise's established lore, and despite the flexibility of player creation allowed by *Warhammer 40,000*'s narrative indeterminacy, Games Workshop has seemingly marked Space Marines gender as a fixed point within the canon. The first text which details the necessity of male candidates for Space Marine enhancement was published in 1988 (Priestly, 1988, p. 16).[23] In 2022, despite (or perhaps as a result of) the many years of debate within the community, Games Workshop republished the lore requiring Space Marine Candidates to be cisgender males (Games

---

[23] The first mention of Space Marine candidates being exclusively male was published in 1988 in Games Workshop's *White Dwarf* magazine (Priestly, 1988, p. 12-17)

Workshop, 2022, p. 31).[24] Many *Warhammer 40,000* players saw this as a reaffirmation from Games Workshop that Space Marines *must* be male, and that the reinterpretations were officially deemed invalid. The timing of Games Workshop's repudiation of female space marines also coincided with controversies surrounding the presence of far right groups within the *Warhammer 40,000* community. A 2021 *Warhammer 40,000* tournament in Spain received widespread criticism for the failure to evict a player who was openly wearing nazi imagery during the event (Dicebreaker, 2021). Though Games Workshop did release a statement condemning any hate groups within the *Warhammer 40,000* community, players nonetheless criticized the company for their official rejection of female Space Marines only shortly after. Many players subsequently saw Games Workshop as enabling the toxic elements of the community despite Games Workshop's assertions to the contrary (Moriarty, 2022).

Since the 2022 Space Marine controversy, Games Workshop has made no updates or amendments to the official lore, creating a disharmony between the players and the narrative fiction. In many ways, the case of female Space Marines is emblematic of the challenges faced by transmedia franchises at large. Fan engagement is pivotal to any transmedia franchise (Jenkins, 2009a, 2009b). Given *Warhammer 40,000*'s status as a pastime, fan engagement through crafting activities gain an increased prominence and importance (cf. Meriläinen et al, 2020, 2022; Carter et al, 2014a). As such, fans must consult the narrative expansions of the *Warhammer 40,000* transmedia franchise precisely for inspiration in their crafting. Indeed, *Warhammer 40,000*'s appeal is predicated on the storyworld's indeterminacy, but as Games Workshop has repeatedly proven, there are limits to the validity of certain player creations. In the instance of Space Marines, these limits specifically regard the validity of gender representations within the faction. The complete absence of women from *Warhammer 40,000*'s "fan favorite" faction relegates women to essentially secondary figures within the franchise. This in conjunction with the hyper-masculine depictions of Space Marine characters and their status as autonomous patriarchs within the greater political structure of the Imperium of Man leads to the *Warhammer 40,000* storyworld being, in the words of one fan, "100% mansauce" (Walliss, 2012, p. 130).

---

[24] This was included in the second edition of the spin off *Horus Heresy* wargame, published in 2022 (Games Workshop, 2022).

Indeed, Games Workshop's reliance on decades old lore to justify the continuing exclusion of female Space Marines mirrors the arguments advocated by the Roman Catholic church for the exclusion of women from the priesthood (Flarity, 2023, p. 62-66). Indeed, as the Space Marines strongly connote medieval Catholicism in their culture and traditions, this shared rhetorical practice finds striking resonance.The argument that the monastic Chapters of the Space Marines *must* be male due to assertions made in a 1988 article in *White Dwarf* magazine is similar to how Catholic priests *must* be male due to decrees made at the Council of Laodicea in the 4th century (Ibid, p. 60-63). The appeal to a higher authority in the form of ancient scripture functions to relieve Games Workshop and the Roman Catholic church both from any personal responsibility for their beliefs or actions (Ibid, p. 62-66). Games Workshop's engagement in this practice allows the patriarchal structure of the community to persist despite the changing social and political climates which demand an increase in diverse representation (Ibid, p. 71-72). While Games Workshop has made some moves towards increased diversity within the franchise, such as the increased diversity of body shapes and armor options available to female models, the lacking representation within the *Warhammer 40,000*'s most prominent and popular faction represents a line which the company is seemingly unwilling to cross, despite their aspirational claims of inclusivity.[25]

Female erasure

The importance of the narrative expansions of the *Warhammer 40,000* transmedia franchise to the tabletop wargame can not be understated. As is stated by many players, the fiction and lore is one of the main draws of the franchise (Meriläinen et al, 2022a, p. 96; Walliss, 2012, p. 123-124; Carter et al, 2014a, p. 138). Not only does *Warhammer 40,000*'s fiction represent an engaging transmedia franchise in and of itself, but as a ludically centered franchise, there is an added emphasis on fan engagement through creation. However, the indeterminacy of the *Warhammer 40,000* storyworld is not used by its male fan fiction creators in transformative ways. Indeed, many *Warhammer 40,000* players see the established lore as a "Bible" dictating

---

[25] Recent characters such as "Lord Castelan Ursula Creed" of the Astra Militarum faction and the newer depictions of the Sisters of Battle faction represent a change away from the highly sexualized depictions of female characters within the franchise.

the acceptable parameters of player creativity (Walliss, 2012, p. 123). This fidelity to franchise canon does not seemingly extend to the creation of new characters, but instead to the recreation of well known character types (Thon, 2019, p. 184). As long as the core characteristics of the character type are present, new and innovative additions to the storyworld are permissible. This is perhaps true of no other character type as much as the franchise's most popular faction, the Space Marines. The core of Space Marine characters within *Warhammer 40,000*'s fiction is their transhumanity, which heightens and exaggerates traits of hegemonic masculinity. While some fans have reinterpreted the transhumanity of Space Marines as a justification for increased diversity, publications by Games Workshop have seemingly rejected this practice. Considering the erasure of female representation elsewhere in the franchise, the persisting exclusion of women from *Warhammer 40,000*'s flagship faction is indicative of tendencies within the games industry at large. Much like within the digital games industry, the lack of prominent representation clearly signals *Warhammer 40,000*'s intended audience, cisgendered men and boys (Tompkins and Martins, 2022, p. 412-413; Gray et al, 2017, p. 5; Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 206-208). Despite Games Workshop's assertion that "Warhammer is for everyone" (WarhammerOfficial, 2020), their insistence on maintaining the exclusionary and limiting narrative expansions strongly delineates who is and who is not welcomed within the *Warhammer 40,000* community. The Othering of women within the franchise represents a form of soft exclusion, not a direct disallowance, but rather a discouragement of female presence within the *Warhammer 40,000* community (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 195-196). As this thesis has demonstrated thus far, while the normalization of masculinity is pervasive throughout the franchise, it manifests in diverse ways. While *Warhammer 40,000*'s model range typify the way femaleness is sexualized throughout much of the games industry, and the narrative fiction exemplifies the erasure of femininity, *Warhammer 40,000*'s gameplay equalizes the game's factions and characters within a militaristically masculine framework, independent of gender, as will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Gameplay

As discussed in this thesis, *Warhammer 40,000* is composed of multiple constituent parts. The miniature models represent a distinct visual language conveying theme and gameplay affordances, and serve as the focal point of players' imaginative exploration of the gameworld. The narrative fiction of the transmedia franchise presents players with a deep and sprawling storyworld, which through its indeterminacy is deliberately designed to allow for player creations. While both of these constituents serve as interesting and compelling forms in their own right, their primary function is ultimately to contextualize the *Warhammer 40,000* wargame. The miniature wargame is the core of *Warhammer 40,000* as a transmedia franchise as well as a pastime (Baumgartner, 2015, p. 39-41; Meriläinen et al, 2020, p. 7). The needs of the miniature wargame dictate the form of the entire franchise, from the flexibility and customizability of the models, to the indeterminacy of the storyworld and beyond. An analysis of how gender manifests through gameplay is therefore central to a discussion of gender representations within *Warhammer 40,000*.

In both digital and analog games, gendering has historically been the most prominent in the visual depictions of characters and their narrative contextualization (Kirkland, 2009; Kennedy, 2002; Stang and Trammel, 2020; Carr, 2006; Stang, 2021a). However, as several researchers of digital games have noted, analyzing the visual and textual representations in games alone is often insufficient in accounting for the experience of playing (cf. Carr, 2017; Kirkland, 2009; Bryce and Rutter, 2002). Given that games are primarily defined, and differentiated from other cultural forms like literature and film, by their playability, analyzing only the visual depiction of the characters and their context within a games narrative would be missing the critical affordance of interactivity that is inherent in games. When it comes to academic studies of gender representations in games, both digital and analog, the majority focus primarily on visual and narrative analyses, with far fewer studies regarding gender in ludic analyses (cf. Tompkins and Martins, 2021; Dietz, 1998; Williams et al, 2009; Downs and Smith, 2009; Lynch et al, 2016). This chapter therefore explores how gender manifests through the gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000*. By examining how mechanical representations of gender have appeared within digital, analog, and wargames, and with consideration to the militarized

masculinity which pervades much of the games industry, this chapter explores the complex nuances of gender representations as they appear in *Warhammer 40,000*'s gameplay, focusing on the game's only all-female faction, the Sisters of Battle.

Gendered gameplay in digital games

Historically, gendering in games has been most prominent in the visual depictions of characters and their narrative contextualization (Kirkland, 2009; Kennedy, 2002; Stang and Trammel, 2020; Carr, 2006; Stang, 2021a; Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, 2016). Within both analog and digital games, characters have predominantly been gendered in ways which conform to the male gaze, with sexualized female characters and aggressive and hegemonically masculine male characters (Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, 2016, p. 137-143; Stang, 2021a; Tompkins and Martins, 2021, p. 402-404; Kline et al, 2003, p. 253-256; Dietz, 1998, p. 433-437; Williams et al, 2009, p. 824-827; Downs and Smith, 2009, p. 726-729; Lynch et al, 2016, p. 573-575; Clough, 2018, p. 9-10). Similarly, the majority of female characters within digital games are relegated to secondary roles within games' narratives, while the player-controlled protagonist roles are most frequently occupied by male characters (cf. Dietz, 1998; Williams et al, 2009; Downs and Smith, 2009; Lynch et al, 2016). Within gameplay, while explicit gendering is less prominent and far less studied, it is no less prevalent. As many scholars argue, the gameplay mechanics of many games are designed within traditionally masculine activities, such as combat and exploration (Kirkland, 2009, p. 164-167; Kennedy, 2002; Stang and Trammel, 2020, p. 130-132). The proliferation of these masculine coded mechanics is often attributed to the male dominance within the games industries, as male designers create games which they themselves find enjoyable (Tompkins and Martins, 2022, p. 407-408; Kline et al, 2003, p. 256-258). Some attempts have been made to address this implicit masculine bias within gameplay, such as the digital "girl games" of the 1990s, which focused gameplay to more "feminine" activities, such as exploring female relationships or designing clothes and costumes for digital characters (Kline et

al, 2003, p. 259-264).[26] Despite these attempts at designing "female friendly" games, the majority of modern digital games retain a thoroughly masculine bias within their gameplay.

Even within the implicitly masculine ludic framework of many digital games, the gendering of gameplay itself can take on nuanced qualities. The *Silent Hill* survival horror franchise (1999-2014) for instance, features male protagonist characters which break with the hegemonic masculinity of many digital games (Kirkland, 2009, p. 170-177). While many digital games genres feature frightening or horrifying enemies, the combat capabilities of the player avatar in many games often negate any feeling of dread when these figures are confronted, as the player is always more than capable of defeating them. This tendency is subverted in the *Silent Hill* games, where player avatars are deliberately disempowered in order to evoke feelings of fear in the player when confronted by the game's monstrous enemies. The abilities which *Silent Hill* protagonists have to combat the game's enemies are both clumsy and unimpactful, and escape is often the only viable option to avoid death. Rather than conquering the environments and enemies of the gameworld, the disempowerment of *Silent Hill*'s male protagonists effectively emasculates them, rendering them helpless, vulnerable, and trapped (Ibid).

Another way that the implicitly masculine gameplay framework of many digital games has been subverted is through the empowerment of female characters within masculine activities. This is exemplified in the *Tomb Raider* franchise (1996-2018) which features a female player avatar in the figure of Lara Croft. *Tomb Raider* has been a controversial title within digital games since its release, with many condemning the game's depiction of its protagonist as oversexualized and misogynistic, while others praise the franchise for having a capable female character in the lead role (Kennedy, 2002). Croft's visual design is heavily feminized and sexualized, with exaggerated secondary sexual characteristics of femininity – slim waist, excessive bust, long legs, and large eyes and mouth (Ibid). She is also described within the games' narratives as explicitly female, and much of her dialogue and mannerisms are meant to appeal to the male gaze of the player. Simultaneously, Croft is a female character engaging in traditionally masculine gameplay activities, exploring and conquering tombs while battling the various animals, mercenaries, and monsters encountered along the way. There is therefore a discrepancy between the hyper-sexualization and feminization of Croft's visual and narrative

---

[26] Games such as the *Rockett* series (1997-1999) and *Secret Path* series (1997-1999) developed by Purple Moon, or *Barbie Fashion Designer* (1996) published by Mattel are examples of such "girl games" (Kline et al, 2003, p. 259-264).

depictions, and the masculine gameplay of the character. As Kennedy argues, this discrepancy of a female character within the masculine gameplay landscape of the action adventure genre transgresses the gendered norms within digital games (Ibid).

Mechanical gender in analog games

Within analog games, gameplay is similarly gendered albeit in differing ways. While many analog games retain the underlying masculine bias within their gameplay, this manifests primarily through distinct character compositions for male and female characters. Early gameplay additions to the tabletop roleplaying game *Dungeons and Dragons* provided several methods for differentiating between male and female characters. One such supplement, "Notes on Women & Magic – Bringing the Distaff Gamer into D&D" (1976), changes the fundamental makeup of *Dungeons and Dragons* characters depending on their gender (Trammel, 2014). Instead of having a Charisma score as is the standard in the core rules of *Dungeons and Dragons*, female characters instead possess a "Beauty" score. This "Beauty" score is used when performing specific actions only available to female characters, such as "charm men", or "seduction" (Ibid). The supplement also includes alternate level progressions for female characters, effectively making femaleness a separate class, with level names taken from derogatory terms for women, such as "wench", "hag", and "succubus". In this gameplay framework, female characters are depicted as being mechanically inferior to their male counterparts in combat, but are mechanically superior when weaponizing their appearances (Ibid).

Another way in which male and female *Dungeons and Dragons* characters have been differentiated is the distribution of their abilities and physical characteristics. In another early *Dungeons and Dragons* supplement, "Weights & Measures, Physical Appearance and Why Males are Stronger than Females; in D&D" (1977), gender is similarly an essential element of a character's mechanical abilities. Rather than replacing characteristics based on character gender, female characters instead receive bonuses to their constitution and dexterity characteristics, neither of which are used when engaging in direct physical combat. Such gameplay changes were justified by developers at the time as being founded in real life research which asserts that women are more dextrous due to their smaller frames, and more resistant to disease (Ibid). These

gameplay changes have received criticism for their biological essentialism, reducing knowledge of the body to explicitly "scientific" measurements (Ibid). As is overtly stated in the supplement's title, these alleged empirical measurements inevitably reinforce the existing stereotype that women are physically weaker than men. While ostensibly rooted in "scientific" fact, the suggested change to female character's mechanical makeup again shifts their gameplay capabilities away from the combat focus which prevails among male characters.

The stereotype that women are physically weaker than men is also exemplified in the rules of board games like *Talisman* (1983), as seen in characters' statistical abilities (Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, 2016, p. 140). In *Talisman*, each playable character has two main statistics for engaging in combat: strength, used for physical combat, and craft, used for magical combat. The two playable female characters in *Talisman* both have a starting strength of two, the lowest possible strength score of any character in the game. As Brown and Waterhouse-Watson argue, the fact that no female character is stronger than any male character reveals the underlying gendered assumptions of the game – even the weakest man is at least as strong as all women (Ibid). The gameplay of *Talisman* is based on defeating enemies in combat encounters and progressing along the board, gaining new abilities and equipment along the way. This places women characters at a distinct disadvantage in *Talisman*, as the majority of combat encounters in the game are strength based, meaning that they are less likely to succeed early in the game, allowing male characters to accumulate advantages at a faster pace (Ibid).

Both *Talisman* and the early *Dungeons and Dragons* supplements provide mechanical representations of gender based on existing stereotypes of what female characters should and should not be capable of. These changes not only reinforce underlying gender biases, but also change the gameplay affordances of female characters. By redefining the mechanical makeup of a female character, the affordances of female characters in gameplay similarly change. Fascinatingly, within *Warhammer 40,000*'s gameplay, no such gendered differentiations are present. While the models and fiction of the franchise perpetuate many gendered stereotypes, and there are far fewer female models available from Games Workshop, the gameplay experience nonetheless presents a more equal playing field. Among the female models within *Warhammer 40,000*, there is no gendered differentiation in units' basic statistical characteristics, such as a "Beauty" score, nor are there any gender specific actions exclusively available to female characters, such as "charm men" or "seduction". All units across all factions can perform the

same basic actions such as shooting, moving, and fighting in melee combat. The sole instance of what can be considered gendered gameplay comes in the Daemons of Slaanesh subfaction, which has a handful of abilities that allow them to impose penalties on enemies in combat based on the Slaaneshi Daemon's mesmerizing allure.[27] These abilities do not come at the cost of Slaaneshi units' physical combat prowess, but rather in addition to it, and are not discriminating in what units they may affect with these abilities. There is no stipulation that such abilities work only on male models, or even on models that have any kind of gender identity – the Daemons of Slaanesh are alluring to everyone equally, even other Slaaneshi Daemons. The ability for Slaanesh models to inhibit enemy models' attacks with their allure has problematic connotations, considering the historical tendency to depict gender nonconforming characters as "tricking" straight men into sex (Adams, 2018, p. 155). As the Daemons of Slaanesh comprise only one quarter of a single faction out of 24 playable factions, their gendered abilities are nonetheless an anomaly within the gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000*, which presents an otherwise masculine coded framework.

The militarized masculinity of wargames

With their focus on hyper-violent conflict, wargames like *Warhammer 40,000* align with the notion of "militarized masculinity" (Kline et al, 2003, p. 253-256). Militarized masculinity refers to the ways in which the video game industry has focused on masculine coded violent gameplay, themes, and subject-positions, specifically within the context of military conflict (Ibid). In design, marketing, and target audience, the video game industry has a masculine preoccupation with combat (Ibid, p. 248-253). While the term was originally used to refer to the digital game industry, the tendency of militarized masculinity can be readily seen in analog games, and particularly in miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000*. The development of the modern tabletop wargame shares video games' roots in the military industry (Kline et al, 2003, p. 257; Peterson, 2012, p. 363-506). Miniature wargames themselves were adopted by eighteenth century militaries in Europe as training tools for officers, a tradition which later led to the digital simulations of the twentieth century which would inform much of digital games' early history (Peterson, 2012, p. 390-506; Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2016, p. 331-351). This relationship between the

---

[27] The Daemons of Slaanesh subfaction is discussed in Chapter 1: The Models.

military and games industries is still very much present into the modern day, as is evinced by the cross pollination of developers between the two industries, and the continuing focus of modern digital and analog games on military conflict (Kline et al, 2003, p. 179-183, 247-268).

Militarized masculinity permeates the entire *Warhammer 40,000* franchise. The models depict only the soldiers and warriors of each faction, and the fiction inevitably centers on some kind of physical confrontation between warbands, militias, or armies. No other aspect of *Warhammer 40,000* encapsulates militarized masculinity as well as the gameplay, which exclusively offers simulations of fantastical and hyper-violent conflict. While both the models and fiction may occasionally contain depictions of domestic life in the *Warhammer 40,000* storyworld, the gameplay only allows for conflict. There is no possibility for peace or pacifist action in a game of *Warhammer 40,000*, only the elimination of enemy combatants, the capturing of strategic objectives, or the control of territory by force through gameplay. Within this context, the activities which models engage in are inherently coded as masculine, regardless of the gender represented through the models' visualization or contextualization in the game narrative (Shoemaker, 2020, p. 47-49).

Joan of Arc in space: The Sisters of Battle case study

The lack of gendered differentiation within the game's mechanics alongside the emphasis on militarized masculinity are exemplified in gameplay of the Sisters of Battle faction, the only all female faction within *Warhammer 40,000*. The Sisters of Battle are a human sorority of religious zealots who form the militant arm of the Imperium's state church (Games Workshop, 2019, p. 32).[28] Within the background lore of the Sisters of Battle codex, the Sisters of Battle are only one wing of a much larger organization, the Adepta Sororitas. The Adepta Sororitas is a collection of orders whose auspices range from scholarly writing and research, to translation and serving as advisors for diplomats and noble households (Games Workshop, 2022, p. 38). Out of all of the orders within the Adepta Sororitas it is only the Sisters of Battle, the explicitly military orders, which are playable within *Warhammer 40,000*. This selectiveness is no coincidence, as the Sisters of Battle, being the only orders which engage in direct combat, are the only orders

---

[28] The Imperium is the main human faction of the *Warhammer 40,000* storyworld, which is led by the God Emperor of Mankind.

which fit within *Warhammer 40,000*'s combative gameplay. There is no need for the scholars and translators of other Adepta Sororitas orders on the battlefield, only the soldiers, military leaders, and battlefield medics of the Sisters of Battle are rendered as playable models.[29]

Much like Lara Croft of the *Tomb Raider* franchise, the Sisters of Battle present discrepancies between their visual and narrative depictions, and their gameplay capabilities. All of the playable models are female, as rendered explicit by their chest pieces and costume choices. Within the narrative fiction of the franchise, the Sisters of Battle are similarly characterized as female by their pronouns and contextualization (Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018, p. 200). In gameplay, however, the Sisters of Battle take on the same position as all other factions: soldiers fighting a war. Unlike the female characters of *Talisman*, the Sisters of Battle are not only capable of engaging in physical combat, but excel within this masculine field. Indeed, in their mechanical characteristics and combat prowess on the tabletop, the Sisters of Battle are equal, if not superior, to their male counterparts. When compared to the only other human faction, the Astra Militarum composed of primarily male models, the Sisters of Battle are superior in every way. The Sisters of Battles' attacks are more accurate, stronger, and deal more damage than nearly any faction in the game. Even when compared against the hyper-masculine super soldier Space Marines, Sisters of Battle models are comfortably able to defeat them, transgressing the norms of female characters within both digital and analog games. This subversion indicates that, as a wargame, *Warhammer 40,000* is less interested in reproducing the stereotypical depictions of femininity and femaleness witnessed in previous digital and analog games (cf. Trammel, 2014; Kennedy, 2002; Kirkland, 2009; Kline et al, 2003). Instead, all factions, regardless of the gender prescribed by their models, are equally capable of performing within the wargame's hyper-masculine combative framework, firmly entrenching all factions within militarized masculinity.

The gameplay style of the Sisters of Battle also bears interesting connotations for their gender representation due to their iconography and association with Christian religious institutions. While these associations are present within the faction's visual design, such as the nun-like habits and fleur-de-lis motif which appears on many models, and their narrative contextualization as the military arm of the Imperium's state church, their religious fervor is

---

[29] *Warhammer 40,000*'s preoccupation with fighting is so pervasive that even the Sisters of Battle's medics not only heal wounded soldiers, but also partake in combat themselves, exemplified in the "Hospitaller" model (Games Workshop, 2022, p. 107).

strongly connoted through their gameplay as well. The Sisters of Battle are defined by their religious fervor and their combat abilities evoke notions of divine might and purifying flame. Combat abilities such as Divine Intervention, Defenders Of The Faith, and Holy Rage allow the Sisters of Battle to revive models from death and charge across great distances in order to engage their enemies in close combat (Games Workshop, 2021b, p. 66, 68). The faction's secondary objectives, ways of scoring victory points which can be selected at the start of a game, are named the likes of Slay the Heretic, Sacred Ground, and Defend the Shrine, representing the Sisters of Battle army's selection of strategic gameplay objectives based on defending their faith from threats (Ibid, p. 80). The faction's most prominent abilities, Acts of Faith and Miracle Dice, provide a Sisters of Battle army with a pool of pre-rolled dice which can substitute nearly any die roll in the game, representing the Sisters of Battle models calling upon the divine favor of their deity to perform miracles on the battlefield (Ibid, p. 91). Similarly, most models within the faction can select flamer and melta weapons, ranged weapons which utilize heat and flame to destroy their targets, as well as a number of models being equipped with powerful flaming swords (Ibid, p. 94-120).

The Sisters of Battle's faith based abilities, along with the proliferation of flame weapons and equipment, evoke notions of the historical persecution of accused witches and heretics. Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, millions of individuals, particularly women, were accused of and murdered for suspected witchcraft by both the Catholic and Protestant churches (Pratt, 1982, p. 175). These patriarchal institutions saw the egalitarian, or even matriarchal structures of many pagan belief systems, such as the English witch cults, as a threat to male dominance in society. In an attempt to reinstate patriarchal control, an estimated nine million people were burned, hanged, or drowned at the hands of scholars and clergymen during the renaissance and age of reason (Ibid, p. 173-175). The Sisters of Battle serve a similar role to these patriarchal institutions within the storyworld and gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000*. This is made apparent by the faction's preoccupation with combating psyker models, the magical practitioners of the *Warhammer 40,000* universe.[30] The Sisters of Battle's role as the hunters of witches and heretics is even rendered explicit in the game's third edition (1998-2004), as their rules were included in the *Witch Hunters* codex alongside the rules for the Ordo Heretics, the

---

[30] This focus on combating psykers is exemplified by the Witch Hunters subfaction ability, and the Suffer Not The Witch stratagem, both of which aid Sisters of Battle models in attacking psyker models (Games Workshop, 2021, p. 65-66).

Imperium's secret police tasked with seeking out and destroying mutants, witches and heretics (Hoare and McNeill, 2003).

The Sisters of Battle's gameplay associations with attacking magical practitioners is even more interesting considering the historical and literary association between femininity and magic. Female magical practitioners have historically been considered a threat to patriarchal norms. Within fantasy literature and games, both digital and analog, this trope has perpetuated throughout much of the genre, with monstrous or Othered magical feminine figures serving as adversaries to protagonists and player characters (Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, 2016, p. 140; Trammel, 2014; Stang and Trammel, 2020, p. 739-740; Stang, 2021a; Heritage, 2022, p. 6-7). Within both digital games and tabletop roleplaying games, empowered female characters are often made monstrous in both appearance and nature as a metaphorical representation of their rejection of patriarchal social norms, necessitating that players defeat these female antagonists in gameplay in order to win the game and reestablish the status quo (Stang, 2021a; Stang and Trammel, 2020, p. 739-740). In *Dungeons and Dragons* for instance, the game's many bestiaries (game books which provide rules for monsters and enemies which players can combat in game) include numerous examples of feminine monsters who use their magical abilities to deceive and trick men, or steal the children of nearby towns and villages for their food or rituals (Ibid). The player of *Dungeons and Dragons* is given the task of slaying these monstrous feminine figures, and in so doing players reinstate the patriarchal power structures which the female monsters threaten (Ibid).

When considering the history of feminine magic being perceived as a threat to patriarchal social norms, the gameplay role of the Sisters of Battle takes on fascinating connotations. The Sisters of Battle are a sorority of women within a science fiction fantasy genre who outright reject the common association between femininity and magic. Indeed, the faction's gameplay abilities highlight their physical combat prowess and ardent hatred of any and all magic. In this way, the Sisters of Battle's gameplay subverts feminine stereotypes within fantasy games and literature. Instead, the Sisters of Battle, through their historical references and position as church military, take on the role of these historical patriarchal institutions reinstating their control over empowered female magic practitioners. Considering the fact that the faction comprises only female models, this positioning creates further division between the Sisters of Battle's visual depictions and their gameplay actions. They are women in a masculine role, one which positions

them against the feminine coded witches and heretics of the gameworld. In this way, the Sisters of Battle represent a further masculinization of female characters seen in other digital and analog games. Like Lara Croft they are female characters within a masculine gameplay framework. However, the Sisters of Battle go beyond the normalized masculine gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000* to become the enforcers of hegemonic masculine dominance itself, the Defenders Of The Faith are equally the defenders of patriarchal society.

Normalized masculine gameplay

Warhammer 40,000's gameplay marks a distinct break from the other constituents of the franchise. The game's models present sexualized and objectified depictions of femaleness and femininity, utilizing exaggerated secondary sexual characteristics as signifiers of gender identity. Similarly, the franchise's narrative fiction erases female representation from positions of prominence, relegating female characters to secondary positions within the storyworld. *Warhammer 40,000*'s gameplay however, offers both empowerment and subjugation within the game's hyper-masculine combative framework. While digital games often relegate female characters to secondary, non-playable roles within their gameplay framework, there are no secondary roles within *Warhammer 40,000*'s gameplay, female characters are just as playable as their male counterparts. Compared to previous mechanical representations of female characters in analog games, the focus on violent combat within all of *Warhammer 40,000*'s factions and their equal capability within this activity equalizes all factions and models regardless of gender within the masculine domain of warfare. However, the complex contextualization of factions like the Sisters of Battle, with their numerous historical and literary associations, or the Daemons of Slaanesh, with their association to broader problematic trends within the representation of gender nonconforming individuals, complicates any easy reading of empowerment through gameplay. Nonetheless, the fact that factions such as the Daemons of Slaanesh and Sisters of Battle are set on equal footing as the hyper-masculine Space Marines within the masculine domain of warfare represents the degree to which *Warhammer 40,000*'s normalization of militarized masculinity has pervaded. These factions, regardless of gender identity, have equal opportunity to fight, kill, and die on the tabletop, and are equally capable of inflicting the hyper-violence which characterizes *Warhammer 40,000* as a wargame.

Conclusion

When H.G. Wells published *Little Wars* in 1913, the wargaming landscape differed drastically from what it is today. At the time, wargames were predominantly utilized for real world military applications of training and testing, limiting the player base and representation within the game exclusively to historical military personnel (Shoemaker, 2020, p. 38-39). With the expansion of wargaming to the civilian market in the early twentieth century, the exclusively male player base expanded to include more female and marginalized players (Ibid). In addition, the expansion of these wargames' scope from historical militaries into realms of fantasy and science fiction literature gave greater possibilities for representation (Trammel, 2014). Despite this potential for more diverse representation, gender stereotypes have perpetuated throughout much of the wargaming market, disincentivizing female players from engaging with the pastime (Shoemaker, 2020, p. 38-43). Consequently, the adoption of wargaming and the miniaturing pastime by these new players has been slow, and the greater wargaming market remains predominantly male (cf. Carter et al, 2014a; Muñoz-Guerado and Triviño-Cabrera, 2018; Flarity, 2023). As the most popular wargame in the world, *Warhammer 40,000* is a clear example of this tendency. The sexualization and objectification of female models, the erasure of female characters within the narrative fiction, and the normalization of militarized masculinity within *Warhammer 40,000*'s gameplay thoroughly characterize the wargame and transmedia franchise as a masculine domain.

As demonstrated in this thesis, *Warhammer 40,000* can be analyzed through a multiplicity of lenses: as a pastime, a transmedia franchise, and as a wargame. Each of *Warhammer 40,000*'s constituent parts presents unique methods for delivering information to the player, and following Kirkland's (2009) example, it is at the intersection of these constituents where the meaning of the franchise is found. The visual language of models in *Warhammer 40,000* in many ways aligns with the design of digital games characters. Similar necessities of gameplay comprehension and legibility are present, though given the small scale of *Warhammer 40,000* models, some characteristics are often exaggerated in order to be visible on the tabletop. Like digital games, *Warhammer 40,000* models tend towards recreations of stereotypical gender ideals, such as aggressive and powerful male characters with which the assumed male player is invited to

identify, compared to sexualized and objectified female characters who often serve secondary roles within the gameplay and narrative (cf. Kennedy, 2002; Lynch et al, 2016; Tompkins and Martins, 2021; Downs and Smith, 2009; Stang, 2021b; Stang and Trammel, 2020; Cassel and Jenkins, 1998; Kline et al, 2003). While female and male characters both serve a primary role as player avatars within *Warhammer 40,000*, the sexualization and objectification of female models is nonetheless present. Indeed, because of the small scale of *Warhammer 40,000* models, the exaggeration of secondary sexual characteristics such as chest size becomes one of the sole distinguishing factors between male and female models. The Daemons of Slaanesh subfaction best exemplifies the sexualization of femininity within the game's models. While not canonically female within the storyworld, the Daemons of Slaanesh are the most explicitly *feminized* of all the game's factions. Through the presentation of feminine secondary sexual characteristics on Daemons of Slaanesh models, they are Othered from the masculine norm of the *Warhammer 40,000* model range and storyworld.

A similar Othering is seen within the transmedial expansions of *Warhammer 40,000*'s narrative fiction. The transmedial storytelling of *Warhammer 40,000* spans a vast array of forms and mediums, however the core of the franchise remains the miniature wargame, a trait which impacts all the franchise's narrative expressions. While the transmedial storyworld is left deliberately indeterminate to allow for player creation, this indeterminacy has real limits in terms of the validity of certain reinterpretations of the established canon. As proven in the example of the Space Marines, Games Workshop has set clear boundaries on the character type's valid gender identity, despite the numerous fan theories and reinterpretations which allow for greater representation (The Templin Institute, 2023; OneMindSyndicate, 2023; Games Workshop, 2022, p. 31). This boundary keeping is also practiced by some fans who see the franchise's narrative canon as a "bible" for their own fiction set in the storyworld (Walliss, 2012, p. 123). The fervor displayed both by Games Workshop and by certain sections of the player base on this issue echoes similar rhetoric from the Catholic church on the exclusion of women from the priesthood (Flarity, 2023, p. 60-72). In so doing, both Games Workshop and players engage in and encourage the erasure of women from both the *Warhammer 40,000* franchise and pastime.

In a kind of subversion of the precedents set by the other constituents of the game, the gameplay of *Warhammer 40,000* presents a greater degree of equity between genders within the militarized masculine norm of the wargame format. While gendering in games has been

predominantly studied from the perspective of visual design and narrative contextualization, mechanical expressions of gender are present throughout both digital and analog games. From the emasculated everyman protagonists of the *Silent Hill* franchise, to the female character within masculine gameplay frameworks of *Tomb Raider*, many mechanical representations of gender in digital games are highlighted by how they contrast to the pervasive masculine norm within the industry (Kirkland, 2009, p. 170-177; Kennedy, 2002). This masculine norm persists within analog games, and many of the attempts to differentiate between genders have manifested through stereotypes aligning with depictions of female characters in fantasy literature (Trammel, 2014; Stang, 2021a; Stang and Trammel, 2020, p. 739-740). Interestingly, within *Warhammer 40,000*'s gameplay such differentiation barely exists. As a wargame, *Warhammer 40,000* presents a gameplay framework in which all factions, regardless of gender, are equally equipped, capable, and willing to commit acts of hyper-violence. As a result, factions like the Sisters of Battle are presented as equally appealing playing opportunities for players seeking to engage in the futuristic warfare of the gameworld. The Sisters of Battle nonetheless perpetuate the masculine hegemony within the franchise, complicating any clear reading of this gameplay framework as subverting the overall depictions of femininity and femaleness throughout the franchise.

Within the relatively small field of games studies, analog games research lags behind digital games in many respects, particularly in the understanding of the medium's affordances and how these affect the play experience. As the tripartite methodology and subject matter of this thesis indicate, numerous avenues of further research within games studies are relevant. Firstly, the medium of wargames itself presents numerous possibilities for future study. The form and function of miniature wargame's material components is deserving of critical attention. Particularly within wargaming, qualitative research on the intricacies of how players relate to their model collections both as playing pieces and as crafting objects would aid in future studies of the field. Indeed, material components within analog games more broadly and how they convey both game information and thematic immersion is an area which has gone understudied by games research for many years (Wake, 2019). Similarly, how miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000* function as ludically centered transmedia franchises and how they allow for player creativity is deserving of greater research, both within games studies and transmedia studies more broadly. Finally, given the masculine domination within the wargaming community and the military masculinity exhibited by *Warhammer 40,000*, empirical research on how male

players navigate games culture as a contested space is greatly needed in order to understand how average players contend with the increasing calls for greater diversity within these communities.

Perhaps Fine says it best in the preface to his seminal study of tabletop roleplaying games, *Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds* (1983), where he describes how scholars of leisure activities are often confronted with two accusations. Firstly, that their academic pursuits are unserious, and secondly, that they are "alchemically transforming that which is inherently fascinating into something as dull as survey research computer tapes" (Fine, 1983, p. vi). While Fine's assertion is arguably less true today in an age where digital games account for a large portion of the global entertainment industry, many of these biased assumptions remain within both academic circles and fan communities. As this thesis has demonstrated, miniature wargames like *Warhammer 40,000* do indeed offer fascinating objects of study from multiple perspectives, and are deserving of far more critical attention than they currently receive. Contrary to the accusations leveled at Fine, studies of *Warhammer 40,000* such as this one need neither lack academic rigor, nor render the object of study dull, as the representations of gender within the wargame and franchise provide an array of possible avenues for research.

Reference list

Aarseth, Espen. 2012. "A Narrative Theory of Games." In *FDG '12: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games*, Raleigh, North Carolina, May 29-June 1, 2012, 129-133. New York: Association for Computing Machinery.

Aarseth, Espen. 2004. "Genre Trouble: Narrativism and the Art of Simulation." In *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, edited by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrington, 45-55. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Adams, Meghan Blythe. 2018. "Bye, Bye, Birdo: Heroic Androgyny and Villainous Gender-Variance in Video Games." In *Queerness in Play*, edited by Todd Harper, Meghan Blythe Adams and Nicholas Taylor, 147-163. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ali, Isra. 2015. "The harem fantasy in nineteenth-century Orientalist paintings." *Dialectical Anthropology* 39, no. 1 (March): 33-46. DOI: [10.1007/s10624-015-9372-7](10.1007/s10624-015-9372-7).

Alkony. 2022. "The complete guide to miniature size and miniature scale." *Alkony*, November 24, 2022. https://alkony.enerla.net/english/the-nexus/miniatures-nexus/miniature-hobby/miniature-size-miniature-scale#the-28mm-miniatures. Accessed on May 10, 2023.

Ars Technica. 2021. "Unsolved Mysteries Of Warhammer 40K With Author Dan Abnett | Ars Technica." Youtube video, 28:16. May 5, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VchkiTUisu8&ab_channel=ArsTechnica. Accessed on May 10, 2023.

Bakker, Saskia, Debby Vorstenbosch, Elise van den Hoven, Gerard Hollemans and Tom Bergman. 2007. "Tangible interaction in tabletop games: studying iconic and symbolic play pieces." In *ACE '07*, June 13-15, 2007, Salzburg, Austria, 163-170. New York: Association for Computing Machinery.

Bateman, Chris. 2011. *Imaginary Games*. New Alresford: Zer0 Books.

Baumgartner, Robert. 2015. "»In the Grim Darkness of the Far Future there is only War«. WARHAMMER 40,000, Transmedial Ludology, and the Issues of Change and Stasis in Transmedial." *IMAGE* 22, no. 7 (3): 36-53. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/16489.

BBC. 2021. "Warhammer sales surge for Games Workshop despite shop closures." *BBC*, January 12, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/business-55629984. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Boldry, Jennifer, Wendy Wood and Deborah A. Kashy. 2002. "Gender Stereotypes and the Evaluation of Men and Women in Military Training." *Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 4 (Winter): 689-705. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00236.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Brown, Adam and Deb Waterhouse-Watson. 2016. "Playing with gender: (re-)imagining men and women in fantasy board games." In *Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Popular Fantasy: Beyond boy wizards and kick-ass chicks*, edited by Jude Roberts and Esther MacCallum-Stewart, 133-147. New York: Routledge.

Bryce, Jo and Jason Rutter. 2002. "Killing like a Girl: Gendered Gaming and Girl Gamers' Visibility." In *Proceedings of the Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference*, Tampere, Finland, June 6-8 2002, 243-255. Tampere: DiGRA.

Bungie. *Halo: Combat Evolved*. Microsoft Game Studios. PC/Xbox. 2001.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Call_me_ET. 2013. "[40k] Are there female Space Marines?" Reddit post, December 14, 2013. https://www.reddit.com/r/AskScienceFiction/comments/1suqj4/40k_are_there_female_space_marines/. Accessed on May 26, 2023.

Carr, Diane. 2006. "Gender and Games." In *Computer Games: Text, Narrative and Play*, written by Diane Carr, David Buckingham, Andrew Burn and Gareth Schott, 162-178. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Carr, Diane. 2017. "Methodology, Representation, and Games." *Games and Culture: A Journal of Interactive Media* 14, no. 7-8: 707-723. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/155541201772864.

Carter, Chase, 2021. "Games Workshop condemns hate groups after Nazi imagery appears at Spanish Warhammer 40,000 tournament". *Dicebreaker*, November 19, 2021. https://www.dicebreaker.com/games/warhammer-40000-ninth-edition/news/warhammer-40k-gt-talavera-nazi-statement. Accessed on June 1, 2023.

Carter, Marcus, Mitchell Harrop, and Martin Gibbs. 2013. "Everyone's a Winner at Warhammer 40K (or, at least not a loser)." In *Proceedings of DiGRA 2013 Conference: DeFragging Game Studies*, Atlanta, GA, USA, August 26-29 2013, 1-11. Atlanta: DiGRA.

Carter, Marcus, Martin Gibbs and Mitchell Harrop. 2014a. "Drafting an Army: The playful pastime of Warhammer 40,000." *Games and Culture: A Journal of Interactive Media* 9, no. 2: 122-147. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/155541201351334.

Carter, Marcus, Mitchell Harrop and Martin Gibbs. 2014b. "The Roll of Dice in Warhammer 40,000." *ToDIGRA: Physical and Digital in Games and Play* 1, no. 3 (2014): 1-28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26503/todigra.v1i3.20.

Cassel, Justine and Henry Jenkins. 1998. "Chess and Girls? Feminism and Computer Games." In *From Barbie® to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games*, edited by Justine Cassel and Henry Jenkins, 2-45. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Clough, Michelle. 2018. "Sexualization, Shirtlessness, and Smouldering Gazes: Desire and the Male Character." In *Digital Love: Romance and Sexuality in Games*, edited by Heidi McDonald, 3-36. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Connell R. W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Cambridge UK: Polity Press.

Cova, Bernard, Stefano Pace and David J. Park. 2007. "Global brand communities across borders: the Warhammer case." *International Marketing Review* 24, no. 3: 313-329. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330710755311.

Cruddace, Robin. 2020. *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*, 9th ed. Nottingham: Games Workshop.

cyd0nian. 2012. "/r/Warhammer, what are your thoughts on playing with unpainted miniatures?" Reddit post, May 7, 2012. https://www.reddit.com/r/Warhammer/comments/tabji/rwarhammer_what_are_your_thoughts_on_playing_with/. Accessed on May 10, 2023.

Dembski-Bowden, Aaron. 2010. *The First Heretic*. Nottingham: Black Library.

Dembski-Bowden, Aaron. 2016. *The Master of Mankind*. Nottingham: Black Library.

Dembski-Bowden, Aaron. 2018. *Spear of the Emperor*. Nottingham: Black Library.

Den of Imagination. 2023. "Painting" *Den of Imagination: Your Miniature Painting Service*, 2023. https://denofimagination.com/services/painting. Accessed on May 10, 2023.

Dewey, Caitlin. 2014. "The only guide to Gamergate you will ever need." *The Washington Post*, October 14, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2014/10/14/the-only-guide-to-gamergate-you-will-ever-need-to-read/?noredirect=on. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Dietz, Tracy L. 1998. "An Examination of Violence and Gender Role Portrayals in Video Games: Implications for Gender Socialization and Aggressive Behavior." *Sex Roles* 38: 425-442. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018709905920.

Downs, Edward and Stacy L. Smith. 2010. "Keeping Abreast of Hypersexuality: A Video Game Character Content Analysis." *Sex Roles* 62: 721-733. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9637-1.

Dunnigan, James F. 1992. *The Complete Wargames Handbook: How to Play, Design & Find Them*. 2nd ed. New York City: William Morrow and Company.

Etherington, Jordan. 2022. "Satirical Sleight of Hand in Warhammer 40K: Space Marines and Hegemonic Masculinity." *SFRA Review* 22, no. 4: 70-78. URL: https://sfrareview.org/2022/10/23/satirical-sleight-of-hand-in-warhammer-40k-space-marines-and-hegemonic-masculinity/.

Fatshark. *Warhammer 40,000: Darktide*. Fatshark. PC/Xbox. 2022.

Fine, Gary Alan. 1983. *Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games and Social Worlds*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Flarity, Jess. 2023. "Why Women Can't Be Space Marines…or Priests: Warhammer and Catholic Theology." *SFRA Review* 53, no. 1: 60-75. URL: https://sfrareview.org/2023/01/22/why-women-cant-be-space-marines-or-priests-warhammer-40k-and-catholic-theology/.

Games Workshop. 2019. *Codex: Adepta Sororitas*. 8th ed. Nottingham: Games Workshop.

Games Workshop. 2021a. *Warhammer 40,000 Grand Tournament Series*. Nottingham: Games Workshop.

Games Workshop. 2021b. *Codex: Adepta Sororitas*. 9th ed. Nottingham. Games Workshop.

Games Workshop. 2022. *Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness*. 2n ed. Nottingham. Games Workshop.

Ghamari-Tabrizi, Sharon. 2016. "Wargames as writing systems." In *Zones of Control: Perspectives on Wargaming*, edited by Pat Harrigan and Matthew Kirschenbaum, 331-354. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Goonhammer. 2023. "Games By Faction." *40Kstats*, May 22, 2023. https://40kstats.goonhammer.com/#GbF. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Gray, Kishonna, Bertan Buyukoztsurk and Zachary Hill. 2017. "Blurring the boundaries: Using Gamergate to examine "real" and symbolic violence against women in contemporary gaming culture." *Sociology Compass* 11 no. 3: 1-8. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12458.

Guerrero-Pico, Mar. 2016. "Dimensional Expansions and Shiftings: Fan Fiction and Transmedia Storytelling the Fringeverse." *International Journal of TV Serial Narratives* 22, no. 2: 73-86. DOI: 10.6092/issn.2421-454X/6593.

Guynes, Sean. 2017. "Publishing the New Jedi Order: Media Industries Collaboration and the Franchise Novel." In *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*, edited by Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest, 143-154. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Heritage, Frazer. 2022. "Magical Women: Representations of female characters in the *Witcher* video game series." *Discourse, Context & Media* 49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2022.100627.

Hern, Alex. 2019. "'Heroin for middle-class nerds': how Warhammer conquered gaming." *The Guardian*, January 21, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jan/21/heroin-for-middle-class-nerds-how-warhammer-took-over-gaming-games-workshop. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Hoare, Andy and Graham McNeill. 2003. *Codex: Witch Hunters*. 3rd ed. Nottingham: Games Workshop.

Iser, Wolfgang. 1971. "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction." In *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, edited by J. Hillis Miller, 4-45. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006a. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006b. *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 2009a. "The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling (Well, Two Actually. Five More On Friday)." *Pop Junctions: Reflections on Entertainment, Pop Culture, Activism, Media Literacy, Fandom and More*, December 12, 2008. http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2009/12/the_revenge_of_the_origami_uni.html. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Jenkins, Henry. 2009b. "Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: The Remaining Four Principles of Transmedia Storytelling." *Pop Junctions: Reflections on Entertainment, Pop Culture, Activism, Media Literacy, Fandom and More*, December 12, 2008. http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2009/12/revenge_of_the_origami_unicorn.html. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Johnson, Ryan. 2022. "Grimdark-ian Man: The Sublime and the Grotesque in Warhammer 40,000." *The Phoenix Papers* 5, no. 1: 158-173. DOI: 10.31235/osf.io/9yr6n.

JoshFect. 2021. "Is playing with more than 2 people possible?" Reddit post, January 11, 2021. https://www.reddit.com/r/40k/comments/kv9iau/is_playing_with_more_than_2_people_possible/. Accessed on May 24, 2023.

Juul, Jesper. 1998. "A Clash between Game and Narrative." In *Digital Arts and Culture conference*, Bergen, Norway, November 26-28, 1998, 1-11. Bergen: Digital Arts and Culture.

Kankainen, Ville. 2016. "The Interplay of Two Worlds in Blood Bowl: Implications for Hybrid Board Game Design." In *ACE '16: Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on Advances in Computer Entertainment*, Osaka, Japan, November 9-12, 2016, 1-7. New York: Association for Computing Machinery.

Karlash08. 2021. "Unpainted models." Reddit post, May 23 2021. https://www.reddit.com/r/Warhammer40k/comments/nj6eii/unpainted_models/. Accessed on May 10, 2023.

Kennedy, Hellen W. 2002. "Lara Croft: Feminist Icon or Cyberbimbo?: On the Limits of

Textual Analysis." *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 2, no. 2 (December). URL: https://www.gamestudies.org/0202/kennedy/.

Kirkland, Ewan. 2009. "Masculinity in Video Games: The Gendered Gameplay of *Silent Hill*." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 24, no. 2 (71): 161-183. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-2009-006.

Kit, Borys. 2022. "Henry Cavill's Next Play: Warhammer 40,000 Series for Amazon." *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 15, 2022. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/henry-cavill-warhammer-40000-amazon-1235283251/. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Klevjer, Rune. 2012. "Enter the Avatar; The Phenomenology of Prosthetic Telepresence in Computer Games." In *The Philosophy of Computer Games*, edited by John Richard Sageng, Hallvard Fossheim, and Tarjei Mandt Larsen, 17-38. New York: Springer.

Klevjer, Rune. 2002. "In Defence of Cutscenes." In *Proceedings of Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference*, Tampere, Finland, June 6-8, 2002, 191-202. Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Kline, Stephen, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greg de Peuter. 2003. *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Knows_all_secrets. 2022. "Is the setting sexist?" Reddit post, January 25, 2022. https://www.reddit.com/r/40kLore/comments/scmicv/is_the_setting_sexist/. Accessed on June 1, 2023.

Lundgren, Sus. 2006. "Facets of Fun: On the Design of Computer Augmented Entertainment Artifacts." Licentiate thesis. Chalmers University of Technology and Göteborg University.

Lynch, Teresa, Jessica E. Tompkins, Irene I. van Driel and Niki Fritz. 2016. "Sexy, Strong and Secondary: A Content Analysis of Female Characters in Video Games across 31 Years." *Journal of Communication* 66, no. 4: 564-584. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12237.

Majorkill. 2020. "Should There Be Female Space Marines In Warhammer 40K?" Youtube video, 10:01. October 9, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NxXM2Xmoic. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

McAuley, Alexander. 2019. "The Divine Emperor in Virgil's *Aeneid* and the *Warhammer 40K*

Universe." In *Once and Future Antiquities in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Brett M. Rogers and Benjamin Eldon Stevens, 183-195. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

McConnaughy, James. 2016a. "In the Grim Darkness of *Warhammer 40K*'s Far Future, There Are Only Men, and It's Terrible." *The Mary Sue*, January 14, 2016. https://www.themarysue.com/warhammer-40k-gender-representation/. Accessed May 24, 2023.

McConnaughy, James. 2016b. "#NotMyGodEmperor: Why Are So Many Actual Fascists in the *Warhammer 40K* Fandom?" *The Mary Sue*, November 17, 2016. https://www.themarysue.com/warhammer-40k-fandom-fascism/. Accessed May 24, 2023.

Meriläinen, Mikko, Katriina Heljakka and Jaakko Stenros. 2022a. "Lead Fantasies: The making, meaning and materiality of miniatures." In *Material Game Studies: A Philosophy of Analogue Play*, edited by Chloe Germaine and Paul Wake, 83-101. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Meriläinen, Mikko, Jaakko Stenros and Katriina Heljakka. 2020. "More Than Wargaming: Exploring the Miniaturing Pastime." *Simulation & Gaming: An International Journal of Theory, Practice and Research* OnlineFirst. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878120929052.

Meriläinen, Mikko, Jaakko Stenros and Katriina Heljakka. 2022b. "The Pile of Shame: The Personal and Social Sustainability of Collecting and Hoarding Miniatures." In *Toys and Sustainability: Environmental Footprints and Eco-design of Products and Processes*, edited by Subramanian Senthilkannan Muthu, 57-77. Singapore: Springer.

Miller, Frank. 1986. *The Dark Knight Returns*. Burbank: DC Comics.

Modine, Boman and Richard Boylan, dir. 2021. *Angels of Death*. Season 1. Aired August 25, 2021, on Warhammer+. https://warhammertv.com/details/24988.

Moore, Christopher. 2022. "Fan Creator Personas in the Niche Creator Industries." In *Fame and Fandom: Functioning On and Offline*, edited by Celia Lam, Jackie Raphael, Renee Middlemost and Jessica Balanzategui, 30-46. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Moriarty, Edwin. 2022. "Editorial: Transphobic Language and the Horus Heresy". *Goonhammer*, June 29, 2022. https://www.goonhammer.com/editorial-transphobic-language-and-the-horus-heresy/. Accessed May 24, 2023.

Mulvey, Laura. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In *The Audience Studies Reader*, edited by Will Brooker and Deborah Jermyn, 2003, 133-142. New York: Routledge.

Muñoz-Guerado, Alejandro and Laura Triviño-Cabrera. 2018. "The erasure of female representation in geek spaces as an element for the construction of Geek identity: The case of Warhammer 40.000." *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2: 193-211. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs.10.2.193_1.

Newman, James. 2004. *Videogames*. 1st ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Ni, Zhange. 2020. "Reimagining Daoist Alchemy, Decolonizing Transhumanism: The Fantasy of Immortality Cultivation in Twenty-First Century China." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 55, no. 3: 748-771. DOI: 10.1111/zygo.12634.

OneMindSyndicate. 2023. "Lore Accurate Way to Bring in Female Space Marines to Warhammer 40K" Youtube video, 20:04. January 23, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWVFlvyjVMU&ab_channel=OneMindSyndicate. Accessed on May 26, 2023.

Paintedfigs. 2023. "Prices" *Paintedfigs Miniature Painting Service*, 2023. https://www.paintedfigs.com/on-a-budget. Accessed on May 10, 2023.

Peitz, Johan, Daniel Eriksson and Staffan Björk. 2005. "Augmented Board Games - Enhancing board games with electronics." In *Proceedings of DiGRA 2005 Conference: Changing Views – Worlds in Play*, Vancouver, Canada, June 16-20, 2005, 1-7. Vancouver: DiGRA.

Peterson, Jon. 2012. *Playing at the World: A History of Simulating Wars, People and Fantastic Adventures, from Chess to Role-Playing Games*. San Diego: Unreason Press.

Pick, Martyn, dir. 2010. *Ultramarines: A Warhammer 40,000 Film*. Beverly Hills: Anchor Bay Entertainment.

The Pokémon Company. 2022. "Pokémon in Figures." *The Pokémon Company*, March 31, 2022. https://corporate.pokemon.co.jp/en/aboutus/figures/. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Pratt, Annis. 1982. *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Priestly, Rick. 1988. *Chapter Approved*. In *White Dwarf* nr. 98. Nottingham, Games Workshop.

Rehak, Bob. 2008. "Fandebate Revisited: Gendered Fan Labor in New Media and Old." *Gender and Fan Studies*, April 18 2008. https://fandebate.livejournal.com/9600.html#cutid4. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Rehak, Bob. 2016. "Transmedia space battles: reference materials and miniatures wargames in 1970s *Star Trek* fandom." *Science Fiction Film and Television* 9, no. 3 (Autumn): 325-245. URL: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/641630.

Reitz, Nikki. 2017. "The Representation of Trans Women in Film and Television." *Cinesthesia* 7, no. 1 (2): 1-7. URL: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cine/vol7/iss1/2.
Relic Entertainment. *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War*. THQ. PC. 2004.

Richter_Of_Flett. 2016. "Why the obsession with female Space Marines?" Reddit post, August 2, 2016. https://www.reddit.com/r/40kLore/comments/4vpwjj/why_the_obsession_with_female_space_marines/. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Russo, Julie Levin. 2008. "The L Word: Labors of Love." *Gender and Fan Studies*, April 18 2008. https://fandebate.livejournal.com/9600.html. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2015. "Transmedia Storytelling: Industry Buzzword of New Narrative Experience?" *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 7, no. 2 (Winter): 1-19. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.7.2.0001.

Ryder, Mike. 2021. "Conscripts from birth: War and soldiery in the grim darkness of the far future." *Fantastika Journal* 5, no. 1: 47-60. ISSN: 2514-8915.

Shipley, Dylan and Ryan Neal, dir. 2021. *Hammer and Bolter*. Season 1. Aired August 25, 2021, on Warhammer+. https://warhammertv.com/details/24905?playlist_id=5.

Shoemaker, Matt. 2020. "Reframing the Domestic Experiences of War in *This War of Mine*: Life on the Battlefield." In *Feminist War Games? Mechanism of War, Feminist Values, and Interventional Games*, edited by Jon Saklofske, Alyssa Arbuckle, Jon Bath, 38-52. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sloan, Robin J. S. 2015. *Virtual Character Design of Games and Interactive Media*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Snipe and Wib. 2019. "That One Time Games Workshop had a Record Label - Codex
        Compliant." Youtube video, 14:10. August 20, 2019.
        https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VwgB1kZxVk&ab_channel=SnipeandWib.
        Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Stang, Sarah. 2021a. "The Fiend Folio's Female Fiends: Kelpies, Vampires and Demon Queens."
        Analog Game Studies 10, no. 1. URL:
        https://analoggamestudies.org/2021/10/the-fiend-folios-female-fiends-kelpies-vampires-a
        nd-demon-queens/.

Stang, Sarah. 2021b. "Maiden, Mother and Crone: Abject Female Monstrosity in Roleplaying
        Games." PhD thesis, York University, 2021. URI: http://hdl.handle.net/10315/38644.

Stang, Sarah and Aaron Trammel. 2020. "The Ludic Bestiary: Misogynistic Tropes of Female
        Monstrosity in *Dungeons & Dragons*." *Games and Culture: A Journal of Interactive
        Media* 15, no. 6: 730-747. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019850059.

Sturrock, Ian and James Wallis. 2016. "Total Global Domination: Games Workshop and
        Warhammer 40,000." In *Zones of Control: Perspectives on Wargaming*, edited by Pat
        Harrigan and Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, 603-621. Cambridge: MIT Press.

TastyTaste. 2023. "Las Vegas Open 2023 Coverage." *Blood of Kittens*, January 26, 2023.
        https://bloodofkittens.com/blog/2023/01/26/las-vegas-open-2023-coverage/. Accessed on
        June 1, 2023.

Thach, Hobby. 2021. "A Cross-Game Look at Transgender Representation in Video Games."
        Press Start 7, no. 1: 19-44. ISSN: 2055-8198.

The Templin Institute. 2023. "Female Space Marines And The Death Of Canon | Warhammer
        40,000." Youtube video, 12:21. January 19, 2023.
        https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZatVIVggl0&ab_channel=TheTemplinInstitute.
        Accessed on May 26, 2023.

Thon, Jan-Noël. 2019. "Transmedia characters: Theory and analysis." *Frontiers of Narrative
        Studies* 5, no. 2: 176-199. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/fns-2019-0012.

Thornham, Helen. 2008. ""It's A Boy Thing": Gaming, gender and geeks." *Feminist Media
        Studies* 8, no. 2: 127-142. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770801980505.

tjk911. 2013. "Usage of painted minis, thoughts?" Reddit post, April 26 2013.

https://www.reddit.com/r/Warhammer/comments/1d5w97/usage_of_unpainted_minis_thoughts/. Accessed on May 10, 2023.

Tobin, Samuel. 2018. "The Significance of True Line of Sight in Warhammer 40,000." In *DiGRA 2018*, Turin, Italy, July 25-28, 2018, p. 1-2. Turin: DiGRA.

Tompkins, Jessica E., Teresa Lynch, Irene I. van Driel & Niki Fritz. 2020. "Kawaii Killers and Femme Fatales: A Textual Analysis of Female Characters Signifying Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Video Games." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 64, no. 2: 1-19. DOI: 10.1080/08838151.2020.1718960.

Tompkins, Jessica E. and Nicole Martins. 2021. "Masculine Pleasures as Normalized Practices: Character Design in the Video Game Industry." *Games and Culture: A Journal of Interactive Media* 17, no. 3: 399-420. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120211034760.

Trammel, Aaron. 2014. "Misogyny and the Female Body in *Dungeons & Dragons*." *Analog Game Studies* 10, no. 1. URL: https://analoggamestudies.org/2014/10/constructing-the-female-body-in-role-playing-games/.

Wake, Paul. 2019. "Token Gestures: Towards A Theory of Immersion in Analog Games." *Analog Game Studies* X, no. 1. URL: https://analoggamestudies.org/2019/09/token-gestures-towards-a-theory-of-immersion-in-analog-games/.

Walliss, John. 2010. "Fan filmmaking and copyright in a global world: *Warhammer 40,000* fan films and the case of *Damnatus*." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 5. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2010.0178.

Walliss, John. 2012. "Stories by/for boys: gender, canon and creativity within Warhammer 40,000." In *Fan Culture: Theory/Practice*, edited by Katherine Larsen and Lynn Zubernis, 119-133. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Walton, Kendall L. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Warhammer Community. 2019. "Heretic, Traitor, Rogue, Inquisitor… TV Star?" *Warhammer Community*, July 17, 2019. https://www.warhammer-community.com/2019/07/17/heretic-traitor-rogue-inquisitor-tv-s

targw-homepage-post-2/. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Warhammer Community. 2021a. "The Imperium Is Driven By Hate. Warhammer Is Not."
Warhammer Community, November 19, 2021.
https://www.warhammer-community.com/2021/11/19/the-imperium-is-driven-by-hate-wa
rhammer-is-not/. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Warhammer Community. 2021b. "Introducing the Next Wave of Warhammer Animations."
Warhammer Community, March 10, 2021.
https://www.warhammer-community.com/2021/03/10/introducing-the-next-wave-of-warh
ammer-animations/. Accessed on May 22, 2023.

Warhammer Storyforge, dir. 2022. *Interrogator*. Season 1. Aired April 18, 2022, on
Warhammer+. https://warhammertv.com/details/25145?playlist_id=4.

WarhammerOfficial. 2020. "WARHAMMER IS FOR EVERYONE." Facebook post, June 5,
2020.
https://www.facebook.com/WarhammerOfficial/posts/pfbid02LibBeeZYV2BXpB6YMo
R5Uacd1DfFowAHMU51ooDihEEhAUTzVYo1b9F5dK8Km53ul. Accessed May 24,
2023.

Watson, Ian. 1990. *Warhammer: Inquisitor*. Nottingham: Games Workshop.

Way, Lyndon C. S. 2021. "Trump, memes and the Alt-right: Emotive and affective criticism and
praise." *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 25, no. 3: 789-809. DOI:
https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-3-789-809.

Wells, Robison. 2021. "What Scale are Miniatures in Wargames?" *The Wargame Explorer*,
August 28 2021.
https://wargameexplorer.com/post/what-scale-are-miniatures-in-wargames/. Accessed on
May 10, 2023.

Wenskus, Roland. 2021. "A sacred task, no cross required: The image of crusading in computer
gaming-related non-Christian science fiction universes." In *Playing the Crusades:
Engaging the Crusades, Volume Five*, edited by Robert Houghton, 12-29. London:
Routledge.

Williams, Dmitri, Nicole Martins, Mia Consalvo and James D. Ivory. 2009. "The virtual
consensus: representations of gender, race and age in video games." *New Media &
Society* 11, no. 5: 815-834. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809105354.

Williams, Ian and Samuel Tobin. 2021. "The Practice of Oldhammer: Re-Membering a Past Through Craft and Play." *Games and Culture: A Journal of Interactive Media* 17, no. 4: 576-592. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120211049577.

YJET44. 2013. "How bad is it to field unpainted minis?" Reddit post, July 10, 2013. https://www.reddit.com/r/Warhammer40k/comments/1hzm8i/how_bad_is_it_to_field_unpainted_minis/. Accessed on May 10, 2023.