

A Cognitive-narratological Analysis of Counterfactual Historical Fiction in *Warhammer*: The Metaphor of Im/Possible Blends

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Introduction

Our imagination is limitless. It does not bind itself to the rules of nature or the confinement of reality, so human beings can easily create fantasy worlds without any effort or trouble. Despite the body's confinement in the physical world, it can envision endless worlds and scenarios beyond the parameters of its tangible existence (Hume 2007). It is through the magic of language that these worlds come to life as it offers a model for inventiveness and enables us to construct texts encompassing both our real world as well as many other imaginary realms (Gavins and Lahey 2016). Indeed, language is an endless resource for both reporting authentic events and conveying metaphorical representations of the imaginary.

In a work of fiction, ontology, i.e., the nature of the being of characters and objects, can be confusing (Ryan 2006). Enactors (Emmott 1997) or different manifestations of the same character, can occupy more than one spatial or temporal domain simultaneously. Hence, an enactor can move from one level to another, resulting in two unlikely blends of the same character (Ryan 2006). The process of blending is essential to human thought. Although it is a complicated function of the mind, it is still utilized in the conception of even the most straightforward ideas (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). In many works of fiction, blends can result in a clash (Pavel 1981). Hence, they create unusual results, ones that are unfamiliar in the real world. Recently, narratology and cognitive poetics have witnessed abundant research in the areas of literary production and reception, as well as other genres. To engage with narratives, the readers' role is exceedingly important since reading and appreciating literature is a challenging task (Neurohr and Stewart-Shaw 2019) that requires sophisticated blending processes.

In the seventies, *Games Workshop*, a company specializing in board games, created a fictional universe, which they named *Warhammer*, from which I selected data for this study. It utilizes different media of gaming, e.g., tabletop games, role play ("Timeline" n.d.), and recently immersive online games ("Warhammer 40,000" n.d.). Quickly, the game became a major success, as it ushered in an era in which players waged wars against each other. These games command a wide audience, with a strong presence all over the world. Thus, it possesses an ardent fan base, and strong, heated online debates. *Warhammer* is described as a game of magic and enchantment, with running themes including mutated historical events, wars, and

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chaos (“Warhammer Wiki” n.d.). Enthusiasts around the world play the game, purchase merchandise, assemble and colour miniatures, read novels, and dedicate fan pages and wikis (verkadeshoksnnyder 2017).

In real life, history and fantasy are two seemingly paradoxical terms; the two elements do not usually exist in the same domain. Fantasy constitutes an unequivocal dismissal of reality while history provides documented accounts of past events. Historical fiction indicates a relation to history in a somewhat accurate sense (Schanoes 2012); however, *Warhammer* creates a phenomenon that can be seen as an intense *narrative hybridization*. This blend destabilizes the nature of readers’ expectations and violates the agreement in relation to the nature of the text (French 1996). Thus, it is very challenging to make sense of a genre comprised of such conflicting elements.

One of the fundamental building blocks of fantasy is magic, which exists and operates according to certain laws. Simply put, magic accomplishes the impossible through certain rites or incantations. In certain narratives, magic can exist inherently or instinctively like gods of magic or magical symbols. Evidently, magic can serve the purposes of good or evil (Clute and Grant 1997). In *Warhammer*, magic is the root cause of chaos.

This paper aims to execute a cognitive-narratological analysis of counterfactual elements in *Warhammer*. These fictional worlds are markedly inspired by the history of our world; hence, there is a connection between its textual world and the real world. I content that the active role of readers is rudimentary in understanding the text and also in distinguishing the inconsistency between historical events and the ones they deviate from in texts. I argue that knowledge of history is a major factor in the interpretation and reception of such texts, specifically when readers detect a divergence from history. Since readers cross-reference the fictional text and real-world events (Raghunath 2020), the active role of readers is emphasized to arrive at the innovative blends in this universe. In addition to the employment of Possible World Theory (henceforth PWT), this paper also resorts to Conceptual Blending Theory (henceforth CBT) in order to examine the conceptual integration and blending of the various counterfactual elements in the *Warhammer* universe.

Theoretical Framework: Possible World Theory and Conceptual Blending

According to PWT, the world could have been something else. Thus, it accounts for a *real* or *actual world*, in which reality as we know it exists, and different worlds in which fiction thrives. Alongside the real world, there are many scenarios; therefore, many *possible worlds* can exist. These worlds come to life through imagining them or by simply reading about them. A significant difference between these worlds is materiality. While the real world has a physical existence, possible worlds have a cognitive or abstract presence. By extension, real-life people differ from fictitious characters on an ontological level – a stand, however, that not all philosophers agree upon, and which is known as moral realism (Ryan 2018).

This view posits that our seemingly unique world is not that unique after all, for many other worlds exist. Because of its proximity to us, we tend to conceive of it as the actual world. The term *actual* here is related to our deictic centre, which is highly context-dependent. Hence, our shift between the two worlds is deictic. Conforming to this view, possible worlds are not only linguistic manifestations, but they exist in the physical world (Lewis 1978). Indeed, they are anything but empty or inferior to the actual world because a fictitious text can be heavily loaded with prospects and meaning (Eco 1979). The universe in which possible and actual worlds exist is ranked based on a hierarchy, the emphasis is on the actual world with many possible worlds at the margins of this structure. Kripke proposes a model constructed of a group of possible worlds and the actual world, governed by automatic connections (Kripke 1963).

No matter whether the world is actual or possible, it must encompass a few world-building elements (Werth 1999). These elements make up the canvas upon which characters, space, and time are placed. They are applicable to fictional worlds and are self-sustaining and autonomous. Therefore, fictional worlds are fuelled by fictional realities telling stories of fictional worlds (Ronen 1994). A work of fiction brings to life a textual universe, which in turn, encompasses an actual textual world. While this actual textual world includes the reality of its characters, other textual possible worlds can accompany it.

Generally speaking, PWT examines the text-as-world metaphor. This metaphor emphasizes the cognitive labour we must perform to understand a work of fiction. It also helps us to distinguish between our experiences in the real world and our journey as we read fiction. The textual world essentially implies that receivers of the text inventively use language to construct fictitious objects, characters, and places. Real-life experience, as well as information from other texts, contain the building blocks required to understand the text under question (Gavins and Lahey 2016). A literary work builds worlds, or at least bits of worlds, by appealing to the human senses.

When fiction uses history as its building material, strange occurrences usually come to life (Raghunath 2020). This form of counterfactual fiction predicates on an unreal basis, which stems from changing a real-world event and creating a result that contradicts historical events as we know them (Dannenberg 2008). This kind of fiction has countless potential outcomes. As a result, counterfactual historical fiction revolves around fictional worlds that encompass historical accounts that run contrary to actual world history (Raghunath 2020). Historical events play a role in envisioning a unique plot of counterfactual fiction (Ryan 2006). Thus, counterfactual history examines different historical periods or eras, the continuance of time, and the relation between different periods in history. Interestingly, the genre highlights one person's ability to change the course of history.

A significant incident takes place in this kind of fiction in which the plot is dislocated from actual history. This event is referred to as a juncture of deviation (Raghunath 2020). It leads to a negation of the relation between counterfactual history and history itself (Duncan 2006). This divergence creates an alternate world, which is a point distinguishing between counterfactual history and other types of

literature (Ryan 2006). Thus, the point of divergence is seen as the time in the plot which deviates from the real historical events and adds imagined, unreal events (Singles 2013). This is also perceived as the time of the collapse (Hellekson 2001). This nexus point is a point in the real world, but sci-fi authors construct divergent plot lines or twists to the degree that the point of nexus becomes unrecognizable.

Clearly, a literary work can form a *new actual world*. Thus, Ryan puts forth a theory of three structures: the actual universe, the textual universe, and the referential universe. These structures are equivalent to three real-world domains. The first structure is comprised of the real world, and in this world, the author of the text exists. The second structure is comprised of any of the realms created by the text at hand, and its focus is the textual actual world. The third structure is the referential universe, which is the represented organization (Ryan 1992). This textual universe is comparable to the construction of reality as we perceive it (Bell 2010). Thus, the framework attempts to disentangle the different natures of these structures.

According to CBT, blending or conceptual integration is a fundamental practice of the human mind. Thus, it is a mental process that occurs naturally in the brain like understanding taxonomies or the mental construction of entities (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). Additionally, mental spaces are one-sided constructions of an idea. For blending to work, a fractional pairing between two input mental spaces functions to carefully arrange the inputs to create a new blend, which is another mental space and can give rise to an emergent structure (Fauconnier and Turner 2003). Hence, conceptual blending starts with a generic space, which includes common features between input spaces. Furthermore, the blended space is the product of the generic space, the other inputs, and mappings. These mappings function as connections or wires between spaces, and they vary between being real and metaphorical. The blend further includes an emergent structure, which is a novel product. This provides connections that were not in the initial inputs (Fauconnier and Turner 1998). This emergent structure is fundamental to the execution of rationalizing the two initial inputs. These blends are essential to the human mind, as we engage in our daily lives (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). Whether we are aware of it or not, we go about the world operating on a conceptual blending capacity.

Exploring Im/Possible Worlds in the *Warhammer* Universe *Time and Historical Events*

The *Warhammer* fantasy world has a main calendar, which is a timeline to mark events in this parallel, counterfactual world and the most used one is the imperial calendar. Much like the purpose of our calendars in the real world, they count days, mark momentous events, and record history. Time measurement is the essential aim of the imperial calendar, and its organization divides the year into 400 days, which are divided into twelve months that can either be 32 or 33 days long. Like us, they measure time with weeks. However, their weeks are composed of eight days. The stark resemblance between this calendar and the real ones cannot be missed, as it is composed of the same measuring units: years, months, weeks, and days, albeit with

many deviations that exist in the textual world of Warhammer, which are clear departures from our actual world. The suffix *day* which marks the ending of days in our weeks, e.g., Saturday, Sunday, Monday, etc. is a manifestation of morphological borrowing (Gardani, Arkadiev, and Amiridze 2014), which happens as a result of derivational affixation, as in the Warhammer universe, names of days end with the German word for day *tag*

Moreover, much like real-world's calendars, agriculture is accounted for in the imperial calendar as well. Our four seasons are marked in it, which also facilitates agricultural activities. The distinct cultures and different races of this universe exchange traditions to help them make sense of time, which is also applicable to human history, in which different variations of one calendar are used across the world. Thus, players/readers of the universe of Warhammer are presented with historical calendars resembling their own, yet they can easily see the deviations. The game enables players to use the calendar to create an endless number of possible worlds generated by the inhabitants (gamers) of the actual world. The calendars used by players are very similar to the genre of calendars we have in the real world. They are also designed and distributed in a manner reminiscent of wall-mounted calendars.

Alongside calendars, main historical events from the real world have inspired many events in Warhammer. One main recurring theme in relation to magic is the historically recorded witch-hunts that occurred across Europe. Witchcraft was the subject of legal trials in the past. These practices have been deemed a menace and were condemned by both the church and the legal system (Ewen 2011). Those who were convicted or even presumed to practice magic or witchcraft were hunted and executed. These trials took place in many European countries like France and Italy, and the influence even extended to European settlements in America (Levack 2013). The punishment was severe, as those who were suspected to take part in any act of sorcery would be executed (Ewen 2011).

Such was the case in our actual world. Similarly, in the Warhammer universe, witch-hunts take place systematically. While the Imperial College of Magic is the driving force behind the Realm of Sorcery, those who practice magic outside it are brought to imperial justice. The task is assigned to imperial witch hunters, who prevent people from practicing *dark art* (Staufer, Luikart, and Earl 2006). From the actual world, real events of witch-hunting inspired this counterfactual world, and the creators of this world have used them as building blocks for the fabric of this world. In the Warhammer universe: "Witch hunters and preachers did their best to rally the people against these followers of the Old Dark, and there was open warfare in the streets." Witch Hunter General Bernhardt van Hal proclaims, "I will burn every inhabitant of the Empire if I have to!" ("Witch Hunter" n.d.). This echoes the actual world's history of England, which is rich with stories of witch-hunting, condoned by kings and queens who reigned England at the time. Evidently, the reign of King James I was vastly different; it was a time in which the hunt was aggressive and brutal. The similarities between the previous extract from the textual world of the realm of Warhammer and King James' laws in the actual

world, which were drafted to prevent any form of sorcery and witchcraft are clear. King James executed any individual who:

Use[s], practice, or exercise[s] any invocation, or conjuration of any evil and wicked spirits, or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed or reward any evil and wicked spirit to or for any intent or purpose, or take up any dead man, woman or child out of his or her or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone, or any other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or Enchantment; or shall use, practice, or exercise any witchcraft, Enchantment, charm, or sorcery whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in his or her body, or any part thereof; then that every such Offender or Offenders, their Aiders and Abettors and Counselors, being of any the said Offenses duly and lawfully convicted and at tainted, shall suffer pains of death as a Felon or Felons, and shall lose the privilege and benefit of Clergy and Sanctuary. (“1604: 1 James 1 c.12: An Act against Witchcraft” 2018)

The resemblance between the declaration of war on witchcraft in the real world and the textual world is evident. For instance, in the Warhammer universe, the use of the noun *followers* is like King James’ declaration’s use of the nouns *aider* and *abettor*. They all indicate proximity, affinity, and practice of magic. Morphologically, they all include the suffix *er* or its variations; this word-forming element constitutes an agent noun ending. This indicates aggression towards anyone who might be practicing magic. Furthermore, in Warhammer, magic is described as the old dark, which is parallel to King James’ description; this is evident in the use of *evil* and *wicked spirits*. There is a closeness between *dark* and *evil* in connotation, as they both evoke negative feelings and are used in the same semantic domain. Finally, in both scenarios the convicted person will face a similar fate: either being *burnt* or suffering the *pains of death*.

Settings

The Warhammer universe is spatially-anchored in a map inspired by the real world as well. Much like J. R. R. Tolkien’s works (e.g., *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*), many cultures and civilizations encompass counterfactual fiction works. In the Warhammer universe, these civilizations and even continents make up the old worlds, e.g., the Badlands, the Southlands, the far east, the new world, and the Under Empire. As for the fantastical elements, they stem from the chaos that runs amok and disturbs the world and its inhabitants. Furthermore, Warhammer’s empire is very similar to the Holy Roman Empire, which was a very powerful political state which spanned most of Europe. The historical period also extended over a long time, from the early Middle Ages to the 1800s (Bryce 2019). This is evident in many works of art in the universe of Warhammer. Although the correspondence between the historical events of the Warhammer empire and the Holy Roman Empire is strong, there are fantastic and magical elements that set it apart.

German influences are clear as they are manifest in the Empire, which is modelled after The Holy Roman Empire. The impact is related to not only Germany but also Austria and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For instance, Altdorf is the base for magic teaching in the empire, the word is German for “old village,” and the names of other cities are borrowed from many real-world cities across Europe (“Switzerland” 2018). The province Drakwald is believed to be inspired by the German city Drachenwald (Adamant 2016). The morphological resemblance between the fictional and the real city is apparent.

Moreover, Bretonnia is clearly a deviation from Brittany; and is located in the same geographical area of modern France on the actual world’s map. Like the old Celtic Breton, the provinces and cities bear French names. Moreover, the city Couronne (translated from the word crown in French) is one of many cities that are clearly inspired by France. Additionally, the province LAnguille (a name derived from the French word eel) is used as well.

Additionally, the Warhammer universe devised the name Nippon to replace the actual world’s Japan, Cathy for China, Estalia for Spain, Tilea for Italy, Kislev for Russia, Nehekhara for Egypt, Araby for the Arabian Peninsula, and Norsca for Scandanavia (Finwaell 2018). The actual world has inspired numerous settings in the actual textual world of Warhammer, linguistically the differences between the textual world and the actual world cannot hide the deviation.

Nonetheless, the elements of magic and enhancement are added to make this universe’s textual *actual world* different from our actual world. In the following extract, the creation of this world is clearly manipulated by chaos: “A Creator arises from the darkness, and life follows him. His family quarrels, blows are exchanged, and the Dark Gods pour in through the wounds. The world, once so vibrant, collapses under the weight of Chaos” (“Warhammer World” n.d.). This story of the beginning of creation is similar to many mythological stories in our actual world. In fact, the biblical story of Genesis is not very different. *According to the Bible*, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:1-3 King James Version). The noun *darkness* is used in both extracts: in the biblical context, it represents the actual world and the extract from Warhammer represents the textual world. The noun *creator* in the Warhammer’s textual world seems to be derived from the verb *create* in the biblical verse. *Chaos*, however, is a lexicon of choice for the Greek’s beginning of creation (“The Creation” n.d.). Evidently, the biblical world is seen as harmonious, yet Warhammer’s universe is marred with chaos from the beginning. This is a clear point of departure that distinguishes Warhammer from the real world. It replaces harmony with chaos.

Characters

Like real-life people, characters in fiction are multi-faceted. This is even more evident in the Warhammer universe since a character is the product of more than one author. In fact, characters are designed to fit many different imaginations and media. Warhammer characters are fluidly and diversely presented in novels (“List of

Warhammer Fantasy Novels” 2022), tabletop miniature games (“The Paints of Mini War Games” n.d.), video games (“List of Games Workshop Video Games” 2022), TV channels (“Warhammer TV” n.d.), etc. Such a variety of media and platforms make the nature of characters easily transmutable. Nevertheless, the characters’ essence is kept intact, as there is usually a way to honour a character as envisioned by its original creator(s). This vision is usually about a unique race or ability granted to a certain character or a group of characters who are pictured at odds with the natural rules or laws according to which human beings abide by in the real world. This fictionally created world does not restrict the quality of being a character to human beings: On the contrary, it is filled with many imaginary creatures and races. Thus, this universe is brimming with many different nations that possess minds, perception, autonomy, and agency (Ryan 2018), which is applicable to all Warhammer’s races.

Perhaps one of the most important characters in the Warhammer universe is Karl Franz, who delivers an inspiring speech to his armies, “if we die, we will die wielding our swords, for there is no better death for a warrior. We will sit at Sigmar’s banquet like the heroes of old and our names will be remembered in the songs of our people till the end of time!” (“Karl Franz” n.d.). He is viewed as the ultimate protector of the magical empire. This textual world, invoked by his speech to his soldiers, is, in turn, created by other textual possible worlds, namely, the one created by his speech of hope for a dignified death, to be accepted by God (Sigmar), and to be remembered by their nation. Fans have drawn comparisons between Karl Franz and Adolf Hitler since they are both German (or seemingly so) leaders with imperialistic tendencies and a thirst for murder (javlarm8 2020).

In fact, this speech is remarkably similar to Adolf Hitler’s Memorial Address (1941), which is a speech that exists in the actual world. The noun “warrior” in Franz’s speech is synonymous with the word “soldier”, mentioned seven times in Hitler’s speech. Both the real and imagined characters reference God and the preferred ways they follow to please him. The word “heroes” (and “heroism”) appear in both speeches. Furthermore, both leaders use the verb “remember” (and the noun “memory”). They both motivate their soldiers using the notion of remembrance after death. It is evident in Hitler’s concluding part of the speech that his journey was always for the good of his people. “It is quite immaterial what part of the earth or in which sea or in what air space our German soldiers fight. They will know they battle for fate and freedom and the future of our people forever” (“Adolf Hitler Memorial Address (March 1941)” n.d.). The lexicon used here is from the same semantic fields as Franz’s speech. Both “battle” and “swords” are words from the semantic field of war. Also, they both use the same word “people” to justify their actions. They also use the “end of time,” “future,” and “forever” from the domain of time to emphasize perpetual commitment and loyalty to the cause. Clearly, the creators were inspired by Hitler.

Apart from humans, other races exist in the Warhammer universe, e.g., Asuryani, Tau rely, Astra Militarum, Inquisition, Chaos Daemons, tyrannids, Orks, C’tan, The

Elves (The Eldest Race), Araby (“Araby” n.d.), and vampires living in Renaissance Europe (Finwaell 2018). Such races are modelled upon real people and real cultures (e.g. the pharaohs and Arabs), yet there are fictional influences as well (elves, orcs, zombies, and vampires). Whether these characters are influenced by the real world or other fictional characters, they are still depicted in a way that suits the Warhammer fantasy universe. They usually have magical powers which are used in battle.

Objects and Symbols

Symbols can take different forms and they convey connotations beyond their physical shape. They can provide the intended meaning effortlessly, and they are usually accepted by a group of people sharing a certain culture and, thus, can have a national significance or even a religious one (Meyer 2008). In Warhammer, magic is ubiquitous, especially in Nehekhara, a land inspired by ancient Egypt. In ancient Egypt, in other words, the real world, *ushabti* figurines were symbolic of magic and servitude. They were created as minions to help and care for the departed in the afterlife (Teeter 1998). In Warhammer, *ushabti* statues are described as figurines that “stand staring into the sun for eternity, the physical embodiment of the everlasting gods” (Crudace 2011, 27). There is a difference between the Egyptian *ushabti*, as they are believed to be servants who answered the wishes of the deceased in the afterlife, while in Warhammer, they are depictions of gods. Priests can bring these statuettes to life using incantations to summon through them the souls of the gods.

Whether for the sake of servitude or for warfare, in both ancient Egypt and the Warhammer universe, *ushabtis* are thought to magically become animate. In the above extract, lexical choices like “stand”, “stare”, “sun”, “eternity”, etc., come from a textual world set in a land of magic. This textual magical world stems from the actual world of the pharaohs who are known for their magical powers and also for their reverence of the sun, as a god who “made creation possible and every act of magic was a continuation of the creative process” (Pinch 2006, 10). Thus, diverse blends arise. There is a blend in which Egypt of the real world may have practiced magic, which is another possible world or a blend of magical beliefs playing a significant role in ancient Egypt. Conversely, there is the blend of Warhammer, in which magic is a crucial element.

An Application of Conceptual Blending Theory to Warhammer’s Im/Possible Worlds

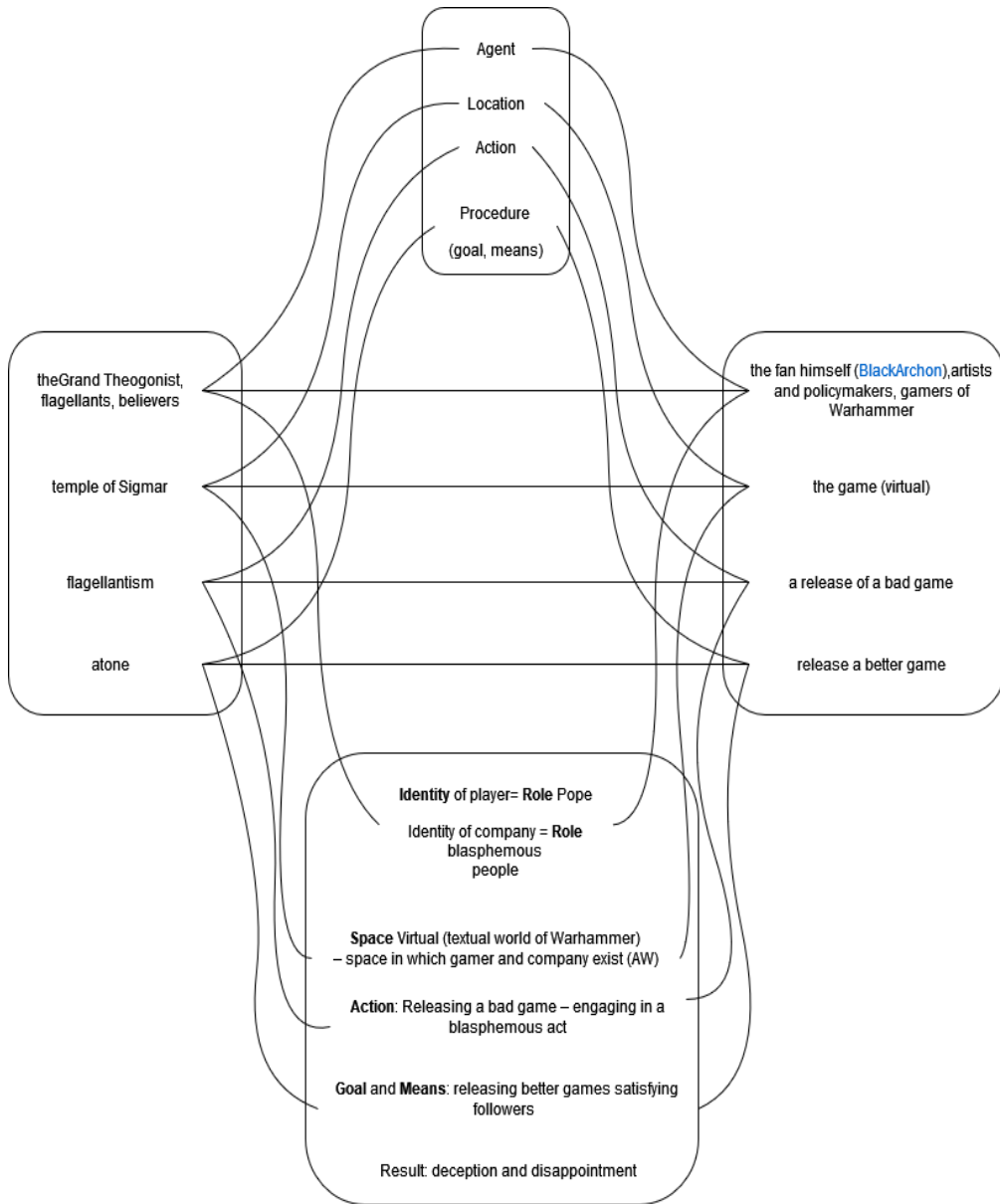
Perhaps the very idea behind Warhammer mirrors some truth about the real world. The main premise of the game/literature *chaos* seems to be a reaction to the notion of gods in our actual world in countless religions (Habel 1985). This chaos manifests itself in the form of sins like greed, gluttony, or envy. In Warhammer, the textual universe does not only include novels, but it also contains rulebooks for games, fan fiction, fan-powered communities, wikis, Reddit, video games, TV shows (Warhammer+), etc. As previously explained, this textual universe exists and is inspired by our actual world. It has also created many possible worlds through the imitation of history albeit a counterfactual one.

This world mixes the fantastic, which usually includes otherwise nonviable narratives, with sci-fi elements, which, in turn can be quite farfetched yet aspires to be scientifically sound (James and Mendlesohn 2003). The response to this world varies between readers and gamers, while some of them literally live the game, a wise reader/gamer is aware that characters are not real, and that they are made of linguistic cues, or, as in the case of this game, language, miniatures, and animation. The following conceptual blending analysis sheds light on the reception of one angry fan about the new policies of the company. It is one worth examining, as it is loaded with several metaphorical implications. In a post on Reddit, BlackArchon posts/sends “A missive to CA, from the True Believers that you owe your existence to” (BlackArchon 2022), which results in several metaphorical mappings, as well as brilliant blends. He, too, mixes the real world with the fictional one.

As illustrated in Figure 1, this missive has created two inputs, one of them is represented in the textual world of Warhammer (input space 1) and the other is the actual world (input space 2). The first input space is populated by a Grand Theogonist for the Temple of Sigmar and a few blasphemous, cowardly flagellants (textual world). The second input space is occupied by actual world people, including the angry fan, artists, authors, and policymakers of the company. In this blended space of a counterfactual world, the game goes under unnecessary, unwelcome modifications. The result is a blended space with many mappings in which the fan plays a role of a pope, who speaks on behalf of all gamers and *followers* of the game/cult. The company consists of blasphemous people. The act of releasing a low-quality game is coated with qualities from the domain of prayers, sermons, and church. Through this blend, the delivered feeling is disappointment.

This disappointed, highly metaphorical post both fictionalizes the actual-world fan and company and carries them into the textual world. This prompts readers/viewers to travel into the universe of Warhammer and perceive occurrences from a blended point of view. This has led to a phenomenon of mental transportation or recentring (Ryan 1991), which is paramount for the experiential and immersive nature of textual worlds. It causes us to move from our deictic centre (outside the text) into the text itself.

Figure 1 Conceptual blending in Warhammer universe (a fan's version) BlackArchon 2022



Discussion and Conclusions

Since the Warhammer universe is a part of the genre of sci-fi, elements of fantasy abound in it. History is also a fundamental building block of this universe. Furthermore, Warhammer allows for the creation of fictional wars using real-life armies to give rise to countless textual worlds and textual possible worlds, with actual rulebooks governing the creation of these worlds. Warhammer universe is

made up of textual and visual discourse so unique that it can be called a genre in its own right.

This study has explored players/readers' creation of many possible worlds (and as a result blends). I contend that this world is far removed from our world than other works of fiction, because other works of fiction might necessitate less mental labour than the sci-fi world of Warhammer. On an ontological level, viewers, players, and readers build the world of Warhammer by referencing actual-world entities, but they also need to add alien species like gods of chaos, orcs, elves, etc. This has resulted in a blend of the Earth's physics, as well as its natural order and organization. These ontological rules dictate the nature of the texts and the characters and objects occupying them. This leads to a certain distance governing access to the actual world. Therefore, readers and players of this game and genre exert a mental effort to perceive (and create) such worlds.

This genre prompts people from diverse backgrounds to engage in discussions through several platforms to decipher this world's sometimes hidden meanings and symbols. In the players' posts, their knowledge of history varies, and different interpretations are provided. This is a growing body of pop culture, which is determined by fans and gamers. Fans are challenged to make sense of the historical material hidden in Warhammer. Readers and players share a responsibility with authors and content makers to construct the Warhammer stories. Thus, this renders the genre and game unique, complex, and popular.

To make sense of Warhammer, I argue that one must scavenge hunt the real story by attempting to differentiate between documented history and the fictitious, counter-historical aspects of the game. The aim is to put together evidence and pinpoint divergences and disruption of several nexus points. Historical counter-fictional plots are thus the product of active reading and active inference made to connect two worlds. These activities, marking the differences between real-life experience and counterfactual historical events, are the main aim of engaging with this genre.

I conclude that this game has created a state in which players play and live (clear in using both miniatures and virtual reality). This paper has attempted to examine an impossible blend between a game that exists only in the real world as miniatures made of plastic on the one hand, and fictional characters that exist in an (im/)possible world on the other. By applying both PWT and CBT, the metaphor of many worlds is made clear. It is worth noting that applying CBT alongside PWT has resulted in a rich third unexpected blend. For alongside the real world (space 1) and the possible world (space 2), there exists a third space (or spaces) which is populated by people's different understanding and knowledge of history, which I argue, can result in countless other blends determined by the reader's knowledge of history. Future research is vital in how counterfactual fiction can create several blends in sci-fi as well as other genres. An examination of their similarities and differences, as well as the readers' experience as per their different knowledge, is also paramount for future research. It is important to examine the level of labour: Thus engagement; players of

miniatures vs. video games in virtual reality enjoy the game as they delve into the Warhammer universe.

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