

## University of Groningen

### Fiction and common ground

Semeijn, Merel

DOI:  
[10.33612/diss.177806543](https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.177806543)

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2021

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Semeijn, M. (2021). *Fiction and common ground: a workspace account*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. University of Groningen. <https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.177806543>

#### Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

#### Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

# Fiction and Common Ground

## A Workspace Account

Merel Semeijn

Fiction and Common Ground  
A Workspace Account  
Merel Semeijn 2021

This publication is part of dr. Emar Maier's Vidi project *The Language of Fiction and Imagination* (276-80-004) which is financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

Cover: Leandra du Pau  
Printing: Ridderprint | [www.ridderprint.nl](http://www.ridderprint.nl)



rijksuniversiteit  
 groningen

# **Fiction and common ground**

A workspace account

## **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de  
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
op gezag van de  
rector magnificus prof. dr. C. Wijmenga  
en volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties.

De openbare verdediging zal plaatsvinden op

maandag 30 augustus 2021 om 9.00 uur

door

**Merel Semeijn**

geboren op 27 juni 1993  
te Waddinxveen

**Promotor**

Prof. dr. J.W. Romeijn

**Copromotor**

Dr. E. Maier

**Beoordelingscommissie**

Prof. dr. L.C. Verbrugge

Prof. dr. F. Recanati

Prof. dr. L.B.W. Geurts

*Dedicated to Aletta Henriëtte Jacobs*



# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	The goal . . . . .	1
1.1.1	The puzzles . . . . .	2
1.1.2	Theoretical ingredients . . . . .	4
1.2	Overview of dissertation . . . . .	5
1.2.1	Summary of each chapter . . . . .	5
1.2.2	How to read this dissertation . . . . .	8
1.3	Previous publications . . . . .	8
<b>2</b>	<b>Common ground: <i>In sensu composito</i> or <i>in sensu diviso</i></b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Introduction . . . . .	11
2.2	Common ground . . . . .	13
2.2.1	Common ground and assertions . . . . .	13
2.2.2	Traditional definitions of common ground . . . . .	14
2.3	Real-life communication . . . . .	17
2.3.1	Steps towards a functional notion of common ground	18
2.3.2	Communication without acquaintance . . . . .	23
2.4	Redefining common ground . . . . .	28
2.4.1	Generality <i>in sensu composito</i> and <i>in sensu diviso</i> . . . . .	28
2.4.2	<i>In sensu composito</i> common ground . . . . .	29
2.4.3	<i>In sensu diviso</i> common ground . . . . .	32
2.5	Comparison . . . . .	37
2.5.1	Felicity and counterfactual success . . . . .	37
2.5.2	The shy acquaintance . . . . .	39
2.6	Conclusions . . . . .	41
<b>3</b>	<b>Unofficial common grounds</b>	<b>43</b>
3.1	Introduction . . . . .	43
3.2	Unofficial common grounds . . . . .	45
3.3	Formalisation . . . . .	47
3.3.1	Sets of propositions . . . . .	47



## Contents

3.3.2	Discourse representation structures . . . . .	49
3.4	Two conflicting intuitions . . . . .	52
3.4.1	Permanent or temporary unofficial common grounds	53
3.4.2	Fictional and parafictional discourse . . . . .	53
3.4.3	Parafictional updates on unofficial common grounds	57
3.5	Conclusions and next steps . . . . .	60
<b>4</b>	<b>The workspace account</b>	<b>61</b>
4.1	Introduction . . . . .	61
4.2	Theoretical ingredients . . . . .	62
4.2.1	Matravers' two stage model . . . . .	62
4.2.2	The Lewisian analysis of the 'In s'-operator . . . . .	65
4.3	Workspaces . . . . .	68
4.4	Formalisation . . . . .	72
4.4.1	Sets of propositions . . . . .	72
4.4.2	Discourse representation structures . . . . .	74
4.4.3	Parafictional discourse . . . . .	77
4.5	Fictive opening . . . . .	79
4.5.1	Picking up where we left off . . . . .	79
4.5.2	Genre conventions . . . . .	83
4.6	Possible extensions . . . . .	84
4.6.1	Fiction about non-fictional objects . . . . .	84
4.6.2	Export of fictional truth as analogical reasoning . . . . .	87
4.7	Conclusions . . . . .	91
<b>5</b>	<b>Lies, bald-faced lies and parafictional updates</b>	<b>93</b>
5.1	Introduction . . . . .	93
5.2	Common ground and lying . . . . .	95
5.2.1	Acceptance-based common ground . . . . .	96
5.2.2	The hearer's conception of common belief . . . . .	97
5.2.3	Comparing the acceptance-based and psychologistic strategies . . . . .	98
5.3	Bald-faced lies . . . . .	100
5.3.1	Bald-faced lies as lies . . . . .	101
5.3.2	Bald-faced lies as fictional statements . . . . .	104
5.4	Possible objections . . . . .	106
5.4.1	Non-fictional parafictional updates . . . . .	107
5.4.2	Commitments in bald-faced lie scenarios . . . . .	108

5.4.3	Disagreement with a bald-faced liar . . . . .	110
5.4.4	The point of fiction and bald-faced lies . . . . .	112
5.4.5	Blameworthiness . . . . .	113
5.5	Conclusions . . . . .	114
<b>6</b>	<b>The challenge of metafictional anaphora</b>	<b>117</b>
6.1	Introduction . . . . .	117
6.2	The desideratum posed by metafictional discourse . . . . .	119
6.2.1	The problem of the wrong kind of object . . . . .	119
6.2.2	Mixed discourse . . . . .	120
6.3	Metafictional anaphora and accessibility . . . . .	123
6.3.1	Metafictional anaphora in the workspace account . . . . .	124
6.3.2	Metafictional anaphora in the unofficial common ground accounts . . . . .	126
6.4	A comparison of different solutions . . . . .	127
6.4.1	A descriptivist approach: A description of Frodo . . . . .	127
6.4.2	Psychologistic DRT: Adjusting accessibility . . . . .	129
6.4.3	Object theory: Frodo the abstract object . . . . .	133
6.4.4	Dot-object theory: The different facets of Frodo . . . . .	146
6.5	Conclusions and further research . . . . .	152
<b>7</b>	<b>The ‘In’ and ‘According to’ operators</b>	<b>157</b>
7.1	Introduction . . . . .	157
7.2	Semantic analysis of the ‘According to <i>s</i> ’-operator . . . . .	159
7.3	The diverging behaviour of ‘In’ and ‘According to’ . . . . .	162
7.3.1	Fiction/non-fiction . . . . .	163
7.3.2	Explicit/implicit content . . . . .	166
7.3.3	Tense use . . . . .	168
7.4	Outlook . . . . .	172
7.4.1	Conclusions . . . . .	172
7.4.2	Future research . . . . .	173
<b>8</b>	<b>Unreliable narration and imaginative resistance</b>	<b>179</b>
8.1	Introduction . . . . .	179
8.2	Workspace revision . . . . .	181
8.2.1	Basic motivation . . . . .	181
8.2.2	A psychologistic turn . . . . .	183
8.2.3	Writers in fiction . . . . .	185

## Contents

8.3	Fiction updates and belief revision . . . . .	186
8.3.1	Introducing belief revision . . . . .	186
8.3.2	Belief revision in the DRT workspace . . . . .	188
8.3.3	Cautious update . . . . .	191
8.4	Interpreting fiction . . . . .	194
8.4.1	Authorial Authority revisited: face value interpretation by shielding . . . . .	194
8.4.2	Unreliable narrators . . . . .	196
8.4.3	Imaginative resistance . . . . .	199
8.5	Conclusion . . . . .	204
9	Conclusions	205
10	Publieke samenvatting	207
	Bibliography	221
	Acknowledgements	223