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Fiction and common ground

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4 The workspace account

This chapter is a rewritten and significantly expanded version of sections 4 and 5 of ‘A Stalnakerian analysis of metafictional statements’ in *Proceedings of 21st Amsterdam Colloquium*. Parts of section 4.2.1 are adapted from ‘Interacting with fictions: The role of pretend play in Theory of Mind acquisition’ in *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*. The most substantial differences between this chapter and the proceedings paper include: First, an expansion of the discussion of Mattravers’ theory of fiction interpretation (section 4.2.1) and Lewis’ analysis of parafictional discourse (section 4.2.2). Second, the inclusion of a formalisation of the workspace account in DRT (section 4.4.2). Third, the expansion of the discussion of fictive opening (section 4.5). Fourth, the addition of two suggestions for possible extensions of the account (section 4.6).

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I introduce a novel Stalnakerian approach to address the basic puzzle of the study of the semantics of fiction, i.e., to model how content expressed by fictional discourse is quarantined from non-fictional content. The proposed account – the ‘workspace account’ – takes inspiration from the previously discussed unofficial common ground accounts (see chapter 3), Mattravers’ (2014) theory of fiction interpretation and Lewis’ (1978) analysis of parafictional statements.

This chapter starts with a brief introduction of the theoretical ingredients of the account that haven’t previously been discussed: Mattravers’ theory (section 4.2.1) and the Lewisian fiction operator (section 4.2.2). I will then discuss the basic ideas of the workspace account (section 4.3) and offer a formalisation of them (section 4.4). I will argue that the proposed account avoids the difficulties associated with the unofficial common ground accounts (see previous chapter). It can account for the intuition that fictional

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truths (e.g., that there is hobbit named Frodo) are only accepted temporarily *and* for the intuition that we do retain information about fictional truth somehow after engaging in fictional discourse, which allows us to engage in parafictional discourse (section 4.4.3) and properly continue with the fictional discourse after a break (section 4.5). I end this chapter with a brief discussion of two possible extensions of the workspace account: A version of the account where fiction that mentions Napoleon is de re about Napoleon (section 4.6.1) and an analysis of export of fictional truths as analogical reasoning (section 4.6.2).

4.2 Theoretical ingredients

Before discussing the main ideas of the workspace account, it will be useful to introduce two of its key inspirations: Matravers' theory of fiction interpretation (section 4.2.1) and Lewis' analysis of the fiction operator (section 4.2.2).

4.2.1 Matravers' two stage model

The workspace account is inspired by Matravers' (2014) theory of fiction interpretation. Matravers follows Friend (2008; 2011a; 2012) in criticizing the widely adopted 'consensus view' (Walton (1990); Currie (1990)) that draws a sharp distinction between fiction interpretation and non-fiction interpretation, i.e., whereas nonfictional truths are to be believed, fictional truths are to be 'imagined'. He argues that the characterizations of the cognitive attitude of imagination that are on offer (e.g., Currie (1990); Meskin and Weinberg (2006)) apply equally to non-fiction as well. For instance, simulationists characterize imagination as 'running mental states offline', which indicates an absence of direct perceptual inputs and of a motivation to act. So, when reading *The Hobbit* I use my imagination because I have no direct perceptual inputs of Bilbo and no incentives to act upon the described events. However, Matravers points out that when I read a non-fictional article about Donald Trump in *The New York Times*, I also have no direct perceptual inputs of Trump nor a direct motivation to act and hence also 'run mental states offline'. Therefore no special link between fiction and imagination is established.

According to Matravers, the fundamental flaw in the consensus view is its confusion of the distinction between engaging with fiction and engaging with non-fiction, with the more fundamental and cognitively primary distinction between engaging with ‘confrontation situations’ and engaging with ‘representation situations’. In confrontation situations, people have a direct possibility to act because their mental states are caused by perceptual inputs from objects in their immediate surroundings (e.g., a situation in which a tiger enters your house and you have the possibility to run and shout for help). In representation situations, by contrast, people have no direct possibility to act because their mental states are caused by mere representations of objects (e.g., a situation in which someone tells you about a tiger that entered your house yesterday). Engaging with either a fictional or a non-fictional narrative is simply an example of being in a representation situation (where you have no direct possibility to act). Hence, at least our primary engagement with fictional narratives (e.g., reading *The Lord of the Rings*) involves essentially the same cognitive processes as engaging with nonfictional narratives (e.g., reading a biography such as Monk’s *The Duty of Genius*). Whether a narrative is fictional or non-fictional, when we read or listen to it, we simply entertain its content by building a representation or ‘mental model’ based on the incoming discourse.¹ Hence, insofar as there is a role for the concept of ‘imagination’ in Matravers’ framework, it is something that is at play for both fiction and non-fiction.

Matravers does not discard the distinction between fiction and non-fiction entirely. In his ‘two stage’ model of narrative interpretation only the first stage (i.e., entertaining a narrative’s content) is neutral with regards to fictionality. In the second stage the distinction between fiction and non-fiction becomes apparent: “Put very roughly, simulating fiction scenarios does not result in our forming beliefs and simulating non-fictional scenarios does result in our forming beliefs.” (Matravers, 2014, p.27). In other words, while reading *The Hobbit* may involve the same cognitive processes as reading

¹In fact, there is a debate on whether ‘merely entertaining’ content is even possible (see Recanati (forthcoming-a, forthcoming-b) for a recent discussion). On ‘cancellation accounts’, understanding a proposition implies accepting it as true. This acceptance can subsequently be cancelled (e.g., in case we engaged with fiction). On a cancellation version of the workspace account, fictional and non-fictional discourse uniformly update the stable belief-based common ground directly. Fictive closure would be a cancellation operation through which the updated stable common ground is ‘cancelled’ and added to the previous stable common ground under the relevant fiction operator.

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The Duty of Genius, the reader will have a disposition to believe the entertained content in the case of the biography, and a disposition not to believe the entertained content in the case of the fictional novel. Importantly, for Matravers this is a *rough* characterization of the fiction/non-fiction divide; we cannot base a definition of fictional or non-fictional narratives on the presence or absence of a disposition to believe its content. What prevents us from doing so is the fact that fictional narratives can also contain content that we are disposed to believe (e.g., I may be inclined to learn facts about 19th century etiquette in England from reading *Pride and Prejudice*). However, at present my main aim is to define fictional and non-fictional *statements*. Such definitions do not imply anything about whether fictional *narratives* can also contain non-fictional statements or vice versa. I construe Matravers' theory as allowing for a sharp distinction here: we have a disposition to believe the content of non-fictional statements (or assertions) and a disposition not to believe the content of fictional statements.²

Before moving on it will be useful to highlight an issue the reader may see in Matravers' theory at this point. After engaging with a fictional narrative (e.g., after entertaining thoughts about Frodo and the Ring), you simply have a disposition *not* to believe the entertained content. So fictional content, unlike non-fictional content, just 'evaporates' after reading or listening to some story. This is not satisfactory. As was discussed in the previous chapter, there are two *prima facie* conflicting intuitions that a theory of fictional and non-fictional discourse should explain. Matravers' theory is able to account for the intuition that fictional truths are only accepted temporarily but it does not account for the intuition that people somehow retain knowledge about what is true in some fiction after engaging with it. After reading *The Lord of the Rings* I probably don't *believe* that Frodo was born in the Shire, but I do retain this information in some (quarantined) way. Part of the appeal of the consensus view is that it can account for this latter intuition. The cognitive attitude of imagination is supposed to function in a way that is parallel to the cognitive attitude of belief. So, after reading *The Lord of the Rings*, I do not *believe* that Frodo was born in the Shire, but this is still a part of my *imagination* (or simulated belief) based on *The Lord of the Rings*.

As discussed in the previous chapter, unofficial common ground accounts that render unofficial common grounds permanent do account for the sec-

²In section 4.6.2 I suggest a possible strategy to develop a Matraversian account of fictional and non-fictional narratives.

ond intuition. Ideally, we would have a theory that can preserve this benefit of such a theory without inheriting the difficulties discussed. The workspace account is an attempt at formulating a Stalnakerian theory that takes the best of both worlds and thus can account for both described intuitions. As will become clear below, the main ‘fix’ is to add to Matravvers’ framework a disposition to believe *parafictional* content based on the entertained content after engaging with fictional discourse. The next section introduces Lewis’ analysis of parafictional discourse which I adopt as part of the workspace account.

4.2.2 The Lewisian analysis of the ‘In s ’-operator

I adopt Lewis’ (1978) analysis 2 of the ‘In story s ’-operator. Lewis treats this operator as an intensional operator, i.e., as quantifying over possible worlds. Below is a simplified representation of this operator’s semantic definition:

“In s, ϕ ” is true iff in all possible worlds compatible with s, ϕ is true

The obvious question now is what makes a world “compatible” with some fiction. In his seminal paper ‘Truth in Fiction’ (1978), Lewis goes through several analyses of this notion.

First, we cannot simply take worlds compatible with s to be worlds where the plot of s is enacted. A basic problem with this analysis is that the actual world could be one of those worlds but in the actual world s is a *fictional* narrative. This relates to Kripke’s (1980) well received point that, even if – purely by coincidence – our world turned out to have included someone named ‘Sherlock Holmes’ who solved crimes in 19th century London, still the name ‘Holmes’ as used by Arthur Conan Doyle would *not* refer to this person. Doyle wrote his novels as pure fiction and never met this real-life Holmes. Hence it is false in our world (one of the worlds where the plot of the Sherlock Holmes novels is enacted) that the name ‘Holmes’ in s refers to someone. But surely it should come out true in the world of the fiction that the name ‘Holmes’ in s refers to someone!

Lewis argues that to overcome these difficulties we must consider a fictional narrative not as an abstract set of propositions but as something that involves an act of story-telling (and hence a story-teller). We thus arrive at Lewis’ first attempt at an analysis of truth in fiction:

Analysis 0: “In s, ϕ ” is true iff in all possible worlds where s is told as known fact (rather than fiction), ϕ is true

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Although all worlds where s is told as known fact are worlds where the plot of s is enacted, the actual world is not amongst these worlds. Hence we avoid the difficulties described above.

Analysis 0 gets basic facts concerning *explicit* truth in fiction right. For instance, it is explicitly stated in the Sherlock Holmes novels that Holmes smokes a pipe and so this is true in all worlds where the story is told as known fact. Hence the analysis rightly predicts that it is true in the Sherlock Holmes novels that Holmes smokes a pipe. However, Analysis 0 disregards *implicit* fictional truths, i.e., things that are not explicitly stated in the fiction but that we nevertheless consider to be true in it. For instance, it is true in the Sherlock Holmes novels that water is H_2O , that whales are mammals and that “Holmes does not have a third nostril” (Lewis, 1978, p.41). Such fictional truths are ‘imported’ into the fiction as part of the background information that we assume when engaging with a fiction. However, none of these things is actually stated in the Sherlock Holmes novels, nor do they follow from what is explicitly stated. This means that there are possible worlds where the Sherlock Holmes stories *are* told as known fact but where the above things are false! Hence it is not true in *all* worlds compatible with the Sherlock Holmes novels that water is H_2O , that whales are mammals and that Holmes does not have a third nostril. Implicit fictional truths therefore do not come out as true in the fiction on Analysis 0.

Lewis argues that in order to incorporate background information into the analysis fictional truth, we have to analyse the fiction operator as a counterfactual, i.e., what is true in s is what would be true if s were told as known fact. In other words, we take the actual world as our ‘starting point’ and see what it would be like if s were told as known fact in our world. On Lewis’ (1973) analysis of counterfactuals, a statement of the form ‘If ϕ , then ψ ’ is true iff some possible world where ϕ and ψ are true is closer to the actual world than any world where ϕ is true but ψ is not true. A world is ‘closer’ to some other world if it is more similar to it. Hence, a counterfactual ‘If ϕ , then ψ ’ is true iff ψ is true in all ϕ -worlds that are closest (most similar) to the actual world. Application of this analysis of counterfactuals to the case of fiction gives us Analysis 1:

Analysis 1: “In s , ϕ ” is true iff in all possible worlds where s is told as known fact that are closest to the actual world, ϕ is true

Worlds where the Sherlock Holmes novels are told as known fact *and* water is H_2O are closer to the actual world than worlds where the Sherlock Holmes

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novels are told as known fact and water is *not* H₂O. Hence, Analysis 1 correctly predicts that implicit fictional truths are true in the fiction. Lewis thus incorporates a version of the Reality Principle (see section 3.3.1) into his analysis of fictional truth, i.e., when engaging with fiction assume the fictional world to be as much like our own world as the text allows.

Last but not least, Lewis discusses one final complication; Analysis 1 makes little-known and even unknown facts relevant to fictional truth. On Analysis 1, whatever is actually the case will also be true in the fiction (unless explicitly contradicted by it). But, given that it is the case that Trump won the elections in 2016, is it then also true in the Sherlock Holmes novels that Trump wins the elections in 2016? Admitting this would force us to admit that what is true in a fiction is subject to constant change (as what is *really* true is subject to constant change). Whether or not we want to allow (the constant) importation of such ‘remote’ and irrelevant fictional truths is a matter of debate (see e.g., [Friend \(2017\)](#)). However, as Lewis argues, sometimes little-known facts can be detrimental to the plot (as it was envisioned by the author) of a fictional narrative. This can lead to counterintuitive results. For instance, in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, Holmes claims to have solved a murder case by showing that someone has been killed by a viper that climbed up a bell rope. [Gans \(1970\)](#) has argued that, since vipers cannot actually climb ropes, either it’s true in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* that the snake reached its victim some other way, or Holmes has not solved the case at all. This is not intuitive; Holmes is always right!

If we want to resist Gans’ conclusions (i.e., want our analysis to predict that it is true in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* that Holmes was right about the viper climbing the bell rope), truth in fiction should not depend on little-known facts. Doyle (and his readers) didn’t realize that vipers cannot climb ropes and hence this doesn’t come out as true in the fiction. On Lewis’ final analysis 2, fictional truth depends on what was general common belief when the fiction was written:

Analysis 2: “In s , ϕ ” is true iff in all possible worlds where s is told as known fact that are closest to the community of origin’s overt conception of the actual world, ϕ is true

Here the “community of origin’s overt conception of the actual world” consists in the overt beliefs about the actual world in the community of origin of the relevant fiction. The ‘overt beliefs’ of a community are the

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beliefs that are generally and openly shared, i.e., general common beliefs. Analysis 2 allows us to still import truths such as that water is H₂O. This is overt belief in the community of origin of the Sherlock Holmes novels, i.e., generally common belief between Doyle and his readers. However, information such as that Trump wins the election in 2016 or that vipers cannot climb ropes will not be imported into the fiction. Although a single reader of the Sherlock Holmes novels may personally believe either of these things (and it may even become overt belief after the fiction has been published), it is *not* part of the community of origin's overt beliefs about the actual world and hence *not* part of what is true in the Sherlock Holmes novels.

4.3 Workspaces

Now that I have introduced its main theoretical ingredients, I will turn to introducing the workspace account. I will start with an informal discussion of the account's key components in this section and then turn to formalisations in section 4.4.

The workspace account incorporates a concept similar to Stokke's (2013; 2018) temporary unofficial common ground: A 'workspace'. As in Stokke's unofficial common ground account, a distinction is drawn between the stable (official) common ground and a temporary common ground. The stable common ground between any group of people contains their shared presuppositions concerning actual states of affairs. This common ground can (for now) be construed as belief-based (e.g., it is stable common ground between Tolkien and myself that Paris is the capital of France because we both believe this, believe that the other believes this, etc.). It is 'stable' in so far as content that enters the common ground remains common ground persistently unless and until possible belief revision forces us to revoke it (e.g., Tolkien and I persistently believe that Paris is the capital of France).

The workspace is a temporary common ground that contains all shared presuppositions between a speaker and hearer while engaging with some specific discourse. In line with Matravets' theory of narrative interpretation, the starting assumption of the workspace account is that our primary engagement with a fictional discourse (e.g., reading or listening to a story) involves the same interpretative processes as engaging with a non-fictional discourse. Hence, unlike Stokke's unofficial common grounds, the workspace

is neutral with respect to fictionality.³ I assume that what is part of the workspace between a speaker and his hearers at the onset of a new fictional or non-fictional discourse is a copy of the current stable common ground. For non-fiction this just embodies the central tenets of Stalnakerian context dependence and presupposition satisfaction. For instance, I can start a new non-fictional discourse and felicitously assert something about terrorist attacks in Paris because it is stable common ground between us what Paris is. Hence the workspace will also contain this information and hence my assertion will be interpretable to my interlocutor. For fiction this amounts to an implementation of the Reality Principle, i.e., that when we engage with a fiction we understand it against a background or importation of factual information about the actual world. This workspace is then updated with the propositions that are expressed in the discourse, i.e., the propositions that are entertained (or used in ‘mental model building’) by speaker and hearers while engaging in the discourse.⁴ For instance, while reading *The Lord of the Rings* it is temporarily common ground between Tolkien and myself that Frodo was born in the Shire. Likewise, while reading Monk’s biography of Wittgenstein *The Duty of Genius*, it is temporarily common ground between Monk and myself that Wittgenstein was Austrian. The workspace is construed as acceptance-based; when updating the workspace we are merely entertaining this content, not believing it. Thus Tolkien and I temporarily commonly *accept* that Frodo was born in the Shire and Monk and I temporarily commonly *accept* that Wittgenstein was Austrian, i.e., we both temporarily accept this while engaging with the discourse, temporarily believe that the other accepts this, etc.⁵

³The term ‘workspace’ is also used by Nichols and Stich (2000) in their cognitive approach to pretend play. Their account incorporates a ‘Possible World Box’ which is a ‘workspace’ (that is kept separate from our beliefs) in which our cognitive system builds and temporarily stores representations of possible worlds. However, unlike my account’s workspace, this possible world box is only operational in the case of pretend play (e.g., fictional discourse) and related tasks. Non-fictional interaction (e.g., non-fictional discourse) operates on the belief box.

⁴A similar idea is developed in Kamp’s (2018) mentalistic framework. Kamp introduces a compartment (K_{dis}) for the neutral place where we build representations of the content of the current discourse before forming judgements about the truth of the propositions expressed by K_{dis} .

⁵Actually, in these non face-to-face cases, hearer and speaker do not simultaneously engage in the discourse and hence do not have the relevant (temporary) attitudes simultaneously. See section 2.3.1.

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Unlike the stable common ground that exists permanently and unlike Stokke's unofficial common grounds, the workspace is truly temporary. It remains in use and existence solely for the purpose and solely for the duration of a specific conversation. In other words, speaker and hearer only accept the propositions expressed by a particular discourse as long as they are engaging in it. For instance, as soon as I stop reading *The Lord of the Rings* and hence stop entertaining the propositions expressed by it, I stop accepting the propositions of the discourse. Hence the content of the workspace evaporates and it stops to exist. Thus we can speak of one single workspace coming into existence and disappearing again (or, alternatively, becoming active/accessible and non-active/inaccessible again) rather than speaking of several independent unofficial common grounds for different fictions.

Assertions and fictional statements are defined as proposals to update the workspace and stable common ground in a three-step algorithm where, conform Matravets' theory, the first two steps are uniform for fiction and non-fiction. The first step is opening a temporary workspace alongside the stable common ground at the start of the discourse. The second step is updating this workspace with the content of the (fictional or non-fictional) discourse. The workspace that came into existence with the first update (i.e., with the first proposition we are entertaining) remains accessible and in existence during subsequent updates caused by the same, possibly multi-sentence, discourse. In other words, when entertaining propositions from some narrative (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Duty of Genius*), a workspace is created with the first update and we continue to further update this workspace with subsequent assertions or fictional statements. When speaker and hearer stop entertaining propositions from this discourse (i.e., as I stop reading or listening), the workspace loses its content and evaporates. As I subsequently engage in a new discourse (e.g., I start chatting to my neighbour or start reading the *Harry Potter* series), I again update, and thereby activate, a new workspace (with possibly different interlocutors).

In the third and final step of the algorithm the difference between assertions and fictional statements becomes apparent. The difference consists in how, as soon as the discourse ends, the quarantined content in the workspace is brought back to update on the stable common ground. I propose two distinct closure operations on workspaces; what differentiates assertions from fictional statements is whether the relevant speech act is a proposal to,

at the end of the possibly multi-sentence discourse, perform ‘assertive’ or ‘fictive closure’.

If we were to simply transfer Matrovers’ theory to a Stalnakerian framework this would entail that in the case of assertive closure the content of the workspace is believed – and hence added to the stable common ground – and in the case of fictive closure it is not. However, to do justice to the intuition that fictional content does not simply evaporate after engaging in fictional discourse, the workspace account includes a parafictional update at fictive closure. The entertained propositions are retained as being true ‘in the fiction’. More specifically, after engaging with a story s , the content of the workspace ϕ is added to the stable common ground under the relevant Lewisian fiction operator, i.e., as parafictional information of the form ‘In story s , ϕ ’.⁶ So, even though after reading *The Lord of the Rings*, you do not believe that Frodo was born in the Shire (and this does not become common ground between you and Tolkien), you *do* believe the embedded statement that in *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire and this becomes common ground between you and Tolkien.⁷

Placing the content of the workspace under Lewis’s Analysis 2 fiction operator at fictive closure fits neatly with the assumption that a new un-updated workspace is a copy of the current stable common ground.⁸ The propositions that are true in worlds where some fiction s is told as known fact that are most similar to the community of origin’s overt conception of the actual world coincide with the propositions that are part of the stable common ground between an author and his readers that is updated with propositions expressed by s .⁹ For instance, it is part of the workspace while reading the Sherlock Holmes novels that water is H₂O. This information was stable common ground between Doyle and myself (and his other readers)

⁶Interestingly, in their cognitive approach to pretend play Nichols and Stich (2000) come to a similar conclusion. Their account involves a belief update of the form ‘if pretence premise p were true, then q ’, where q is the content in the possible world box. They use this update to explain how people come to exhibit pretend behaviour.

⁷The proposed account of the common ground updates caused by fictional discourse resonates with some elements of Nichols’ and Stich’ (2000) account of the cognitive structures required for pretend play (see footnotes 6 and 3). See Semeijn (2019) for a Matroversian account of pretend play and its role in Theory of Mind development.

⁸See also Zucchi (forthcoming) who combines the notion of a Stalnakerian common ground with the Lewisian fiction operator for a similar purpose.

⁹I thus abstract away from ‘hearers’ that do not share the overt beliefs of the relevant community of origin.

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and is hence copied into the workspace at the first fictional update. Likewise, it is part of the workspace while reading the Sherlock Holmes stories that Holmes smoked a pipe since this is part of the propositions expressed by the fiction and hence the workspace is updated with this information. Last but not least, it is *not* part of the workspace while reading the Sherlock Holmes novels that Trump won the election in 2016. This information was never stable common ground between Doyle and myself (and his other readers), nor was it part of the fictional narrative and hence it does not enter the workspace.

In sum, assertions are defined as proposals to open and update a workspace and as a result of that trigger assertive closure. Fictional statements are defined as proposals to open and update a workspace and as a result of that trigger fictive closure. In other words, whether we are engaging in fictional or non-fictional discourse, the propositions expressed are temporarily common ground (i.e., part of the workspace) while engaging in the discourse. At the end of the discourse this temporarily accepted content becomes stable common ground. In the case of non-fiction it is added to the common ground directly. In the case of fiction it is added to the common ground embedded under the relevant fiction operator. Fictional content is thus effectively quarantined; firstly in the temporary workspace and secondly embedded under a fiction operator.

4.4 Formalisation

I will now provide two formalisations of the three step algorithm involved in assertions and fictional statements. First, by representing common grounds as sets of propositions (section 4.4.1) and second by representing common grounds in DRS's (section 4.4.2).

4.4.1 Sets of propositions

Opening up a workspace

The first step when engaging in a new discourse is opening up or bringing to existence a new workspace. This step is uniform for fiction and non-fiction. Both the first assertion of a non-fictional discourse and the first fictional statement of a fictional discourse will trigger this. I model this step as an

operation on an ordered pair consisting of a stable common ground (C) and the empty set, resulting in an ordered pair of the same stable common ground and a new workspace that is active and accessible for updating:

$$\langle C, \emptyset \rangle + p = \langle C, C \rangle + p$$

As in the unofficial common ground accounts (see previous chapter), I assume that what is common ground between a speaker and his hearers at the onset of a new fictional discourse is a copy of the current stable (official) common ground. Hence, the new unupdated workspace (created in the first step of the algorithm) is a copy of the current stable common ground (C).

Updating the workspace

Once we have our initial workspace (W) set up, we start updating with the incoming information in the second step of the algorithm. This step is also uniform for fiction and non-fiction: fictional statements and assertions alike update the workspace with the propositions that they express:¹⁰

$$\langle C, W \rangle + p = \langle C, W * p \rangle$$

The workspace that came into existence with the first statement of a particular discourse is subsequently updated by the statements that follow and that are part of the same discourse.

Assertive and fictive closure

As discussed, what differentiates assertions from fictional statements is how, at the end of the discourse, they update the stable common ground. Assertions trigger assertive closure, fictional statements trigger fictive closure. In the representations below, both closure operations take an ordered pair $\langle C, W \rangle$ containing a stable common ground and an updated, active workspace, and return an ordered pair with a new stable common ground and the empty set.

In the case of assertive closure, the updated workspace is adopted as the new stable common ground. Because a new workspace is a copy of

¹⁰As in the formalisation of the unofficial common ground accounts (see section 3.3.1), we assume that the $*$ operator unionizes sets if they are consistent and otherwise resolves the inconsistency appropriately.

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the current common ground, asserting a proposition p thus boils down to updating the stable common ground C to $C * p$ (as in the traditional Stalnakerian framework):

$$\text{Assertive closure: } \langle C, W \rangle \rightarrow \langle W, \emptyset \rangle$$

Fictive closure returns an ordered pair in which the updated workspace is added to the original stable common ground as parafictional information, i.e., under the relevant fiction operator. In the formalisation below I assume that we are keeping track of n fictions $(1, \dots, n)$. The ‘In fiction i ’-operator (\Box_i) takes as its argument the proposition $\cap W$, which is the intersection of the propositions in W (i.e., the information that corresponds to how we have interpreted the story) and it gives the set of worlds in which it is true that worlds compatible with i are those in $\cap W$. Note that the fiction operator \Box_i is thus taken semantically in this context, i.e., as a function from sets of possible worlds to sets of possible worlds:

$$\text{Fictive}^i \text{ closure: } \langle C, W \rangle \rightarrow \langle C \cup \{\Box_i(\cap W)\}, \emptyset \rangle$$

So after engaging with some fictional discourse i , the stable common ground will contain parafictional information concerning i and the workspace evaporates. Because we normally engage in different fictional discourses (and know other people to do so as well), a typical stable common ground between any group of people will contain (apart from information about the actual world) parafictional information about several distinct fictions under different ‘In fiction i ’-operators. In this sense there are in fact multiple different fictive closure operators related to different fictional works.

4.4.2 Discourse representation structures

Below, I illustrate the updates on workspaces and stable common grounds triggered by assertion (1) and Tolkien’s fictional statement (25) taken from *The Lord of the Rings* in the box notation of DRT:¹¹

- (1) C.S. Lewis was born in Belfast.
- (25) Frodo had a very trying time that afternoon.

¹¹See also [Maier \(2017\)](#) and [Kamp](#) (forthcoming) for modern semantic implementations of the consensus view, in a rather different, purely mentalistic version of DRT.

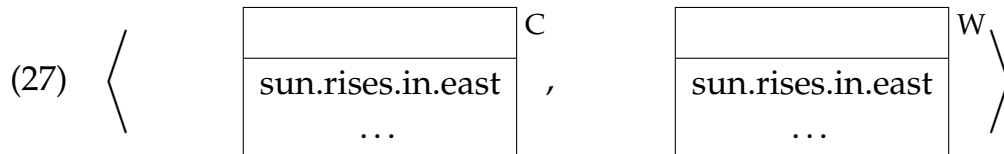
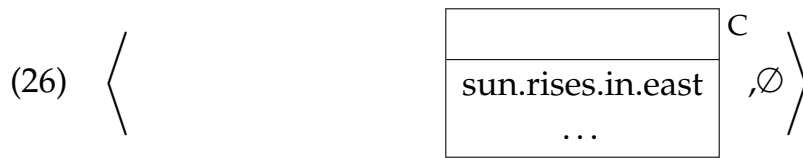
In order to do so we require a version of the Lewisian fiction operator that operates on DRS's:

For any DRS K and any story s , $\Box_s K$ is a well-formed DRS condition and $\llbracket \Box_s K \rrbracket^{f,w} = 1$ iff in all possible worlds w' compatible with $f(s)$, $\llbracket K \rrbracket^{f,w'} = 1$

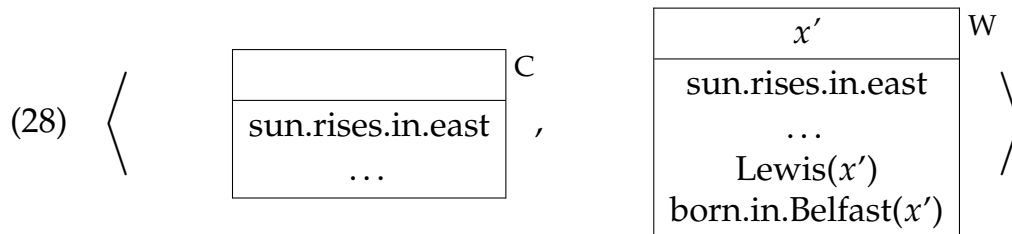
For example, a DRS may contain a DRS-condition of the form $\Box_{lotr} K$ where a sub-DRS K is embedded under the *Lord of the Rings* fiction operator. This condition may then be verified in a model or not. For instance, if a main DRS contains a sub-DRS that is embedded by the *Lord of the Rings* fiction operator and that sub-DRS contains the information that Frodo was born in the Shire, then the main DRS is verified if it is true in *The Lord of the Rings* that Frodo was born in the Shire.

Assertions

First, a simplified representation of assertion (1) defined as a proposal to open and update a workspace and, as a result of that, perform assertive closure. First, a new workspace is opened which is a copy of the current common ground (in this case it already contains, amongst other things, the information that the sun rises in the east):

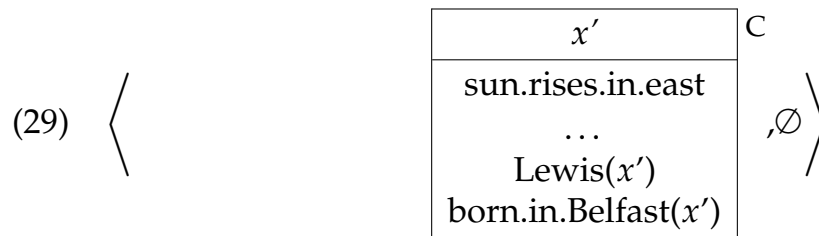


This workspace is then updated with the proposition expressed by (1). I use primed discourse referents (x', y', \dots) to represent the content of workspaces:



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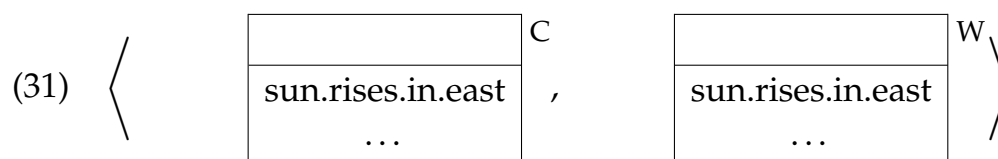
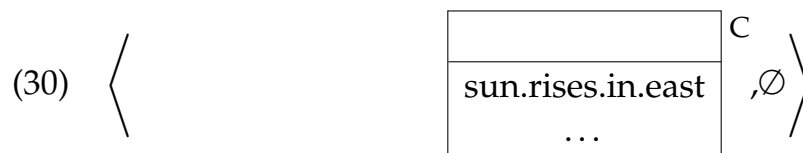
As soon as the non-fictional discourse ends, assertive closure is triggered, i.e., the content of the common ground is replaced by the content of the workspace, leaving us with a new common ground that contains the information expressed by (1) and an evaporated workspace:



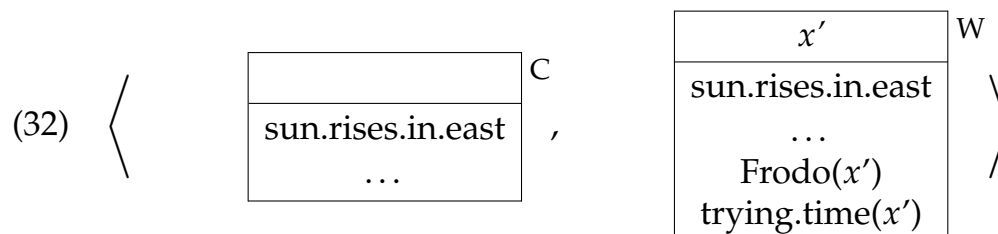
The net result of this algorithm is thus exactly the same as for standard DRT updating on the common ground without opening and closing workspaces. The payoff of adding a workspace update lies in the way it allows us to model the essential similarities and dissimilarities between non-fiction and fiction.

Fictional statements

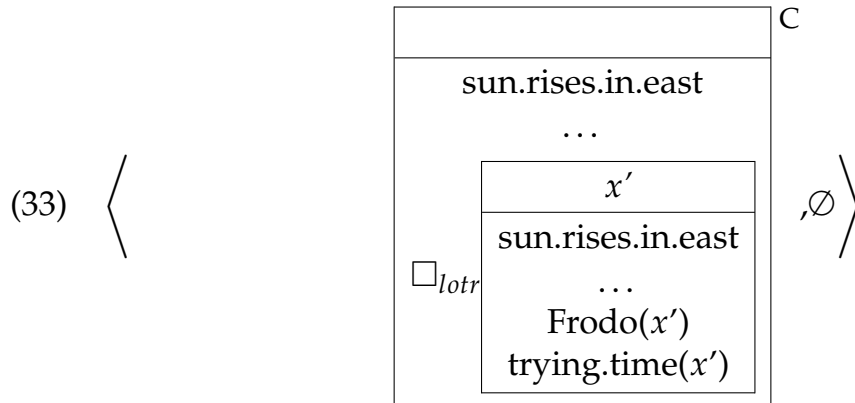
Next, a simplified representation of fictional statement (25) defined as a proposal to open and update a workspace and as a result of that perform fictive closure. Again, a new workspace is opened up which is a copy of the current common ground:



This workspace is then updated with the proposition expressed by (25):



As soon as the fictional discourse ends, fictive closure is triggered, i.e., the content of the workspace is added to the common ground as parafictional information under the relevant fiction operator. This leaves us with a new common ground that contains the information that in *The Lord of the Rings* the proposition expressed by (25) is true, and an evaporated workspace:



4.4.3 Parafictional discourse

As we have seen, the parafictional update at fictive closure operates on the stable common ground, i.e., a hedged or modalized proposition becomes part of the stable common ground. Likewise, if we engage in a discussion on the content of some fiction (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings*) and someone utters an implicit or explicit parafictional statement such as (19) or (20), these update the stable common ground with a hedged proposition:

(19) Bilbo is Frodo's cousin.

(20) In *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo is Frodo's cousin.

In line with the Currie/Zucchi/Ninan analysis of parafictional discourse, parafictional statements are analysed as modalized assertions about actual states of affairs (i.e., the content of particular novel) and hence are proposals to update the workspace with a modalized proposition and trigger assertive closure.

Concretely, any arbitrary parafictional proposition p consists of an 'In fiction i '-operator related to some fiction i (\square_i), and some proposition (q): $p = \square_i q$. In the earlier set theoretic representation we can thus represent the updates caused by parafictional statements by substituting p for $\square_i q$ in the three-step algorithm for assertions. After opening up a new workspace we

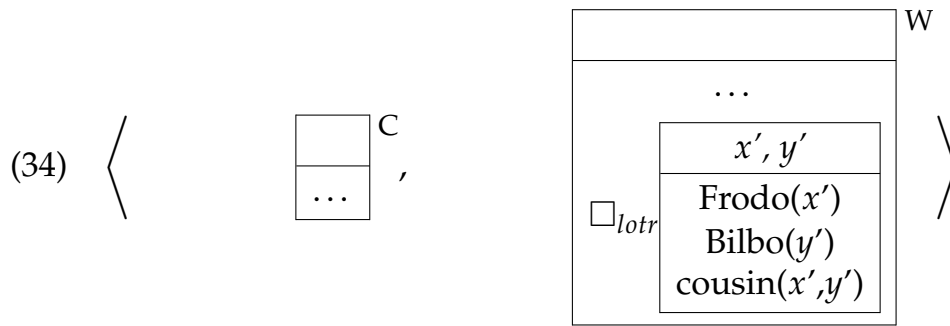
4 The workspace account

thus update that workspace with $\Box_i q$:

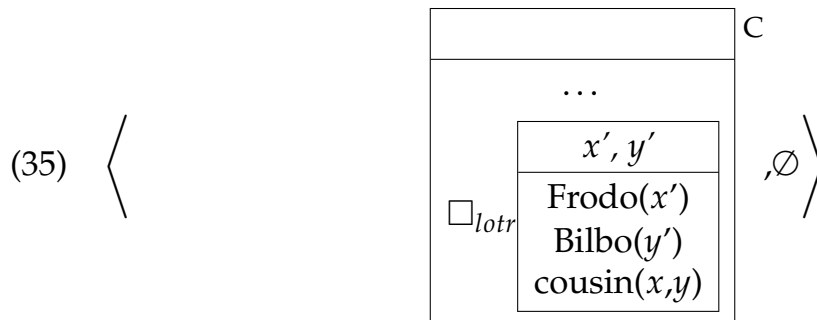
$$\langle C, W \rangle + \Box_i q = \langle C, W * \Box_i q \rangle$$

At the end of the (possibly multi-sentence) parafictional discourse about the content of fiction i , we perform regular assertive closure: $\langle C, W \rangle \rightarrow \langle W, \emptyset \rangle$. The updated workspace is adopted as the new stable common ground (which now also contains $\Box_i q$).

As an illustration we can represent the updates caused by (20) (or (19)) in DRT. After opening up a workspace (that is a copy of the current common ground), the hedged parafictional proposition updates the workspace directly, i.e., it is temporarily common ground that in *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo is Frodo's cousin:



At the end of the discourse assertive closure is triggered, i.e., the common ground is replaced by the current workspace:



Hence the stable common ground now also contains the parafictional information that in *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo is Frodo's cousin.

There are thus basically two ways to update the common ground with parafictional information. Either you engage in fictional discourse s (e.g., reading *The Lord of the Rings*) or you engage in parafictional discourse about the content of s (e.g., engaging in a discussion about the content of *The Lord of the Rings*). Either discourse results in updates of the stable

common ground with parafictional information concerning *s*. The intuitive difference between the two processes lies in what kind of propositions you entertain (i.e., update your workspace with) during the discourse; whether you entertain propositions such as “Bilbo is Frodo’s cousin” or propositions such as “In *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo is Frodo’s cousin”.

The analysis of parafictional discourse as hedged assertions allows me, unlike Stokke (2013; 2018) and Eckardt (2014), to ascribe truth-values to parafictional statements such as (19) and (20) just as we do with regular assertions. Moreover, the workspace account avoids the difficulties with unofficial common ground accounts that treat fictional and parafictional discourse on a par. In the workspace account, after engaging in a fictional narrative such as *The Lord of the Rings*, the fictional content of our workspace evaporates; we accept propositions such as that wizards exist only temporarily. However, this and other fictional content does not evaporate completely. After the fictional discourse it becomes part of the stable common ground as parafictional information. Thus, after engaging in *The Lord of the Rings* it is stable common belief that (in *The Lord of the Rings*,) Bilbo is Frodo’s cousin. This explains how we can, after engaging in a fiction, engage in parafictional discourse. When engaging in parafictional discourse, we make regular assertions that rely on, and update the common ground with, hedged propositions and therefore no ‘permanent’ unofficial common ground or workspace related to *The Lord of the Rings* is called for.

However, the workspace account does not yet explain how the parafictional update of the stable common ground allows us to continue with some fictional discourse after taking a break. I turn to this issue in the next section.

4.5 Fictive opening

4.5.1 Picking up where we left off

Up until this point I have presented a *tabula rasa* interpretation of fiction where nothing is common ground between speaker and hearer about what is true in the fiction before starting to engage with it (except that the fiction – any fiction – conforms to the common ground based version of the Reality Assumption). Obviously this isn’t always the case when engaging with fictional narratives. Most importantly, people can take breaks while engaging with fictional discourse. For instance, I may have read *The Lord of the Rings*

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yesterday, entertained some of its content, stopped engaging with it (and hence performed fictive closure), bookmarked the page where I stopped reading, engaged in all sorts of other non-fictional and fictional discourse, and today pick up the book where I left off. In this case it is already common ground between Tolkien and myself that some things (e.g., that there is a hobbit named Frodo) are true in *The Lord of the Rings* before I start to engage with it (again).¹²

A feature of the workspace account, as it is presented above, is that after engaging in a fictional narrative and entertaining its content, all that we are left with in our common ground is parafictional information. Hence, if we would – when returning to our fictional discourse after a break – create a new workspace by making a copy of the current stable common ground, we would start ‘from scratch’. All previously introduced discourse referents for fictional objects would become inaccessible because they are embedded under a fiction operator in the common ground and hence also in the new workspace. It thus becomes unclear how I could for instance interpret a fictional statement such as (17) when getting back to *The Lord of the Rings*:

(17) Gollum [...] held aloft the ring.

What ring is Tolkien referring to? Who is Gollum? If the content of the previous updates caused by the fictional discourse of *The Lord of the Rings* is inaccessible, I cannot answer these questions. In order to account for such anaphoric links, the new workspace will have to contain all the propositions that were included in the original workspace just before fictive closure (e.g., a description of some unique ring). Hence the workspace account is in need of some further mechanism to explain how we are able to retrieve the the final state of the relevant earlier fiction workspace as our current active workspace.¹³

¹²Conversely, while writing *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien most probably took numerous breaks. Whenever he would return to the writing table and continue the fictional discourse it would already be common ground between him and his readers that certain things are true in *The Lord of the Rings*.

¹³This problem does not arise with breaks in non-fictional discourse because with assertive closure we adopt the updated workspace as the new stable common ground. Hence, when continuing in a non-fictional narrative, the new workspace will contain (at least) all propositions that were included in the original workspace. Moreover, this problem does not arise in unofficial common ground accounts that construe unofficial common grounds as non-temporary.

4.5 Fictive opening

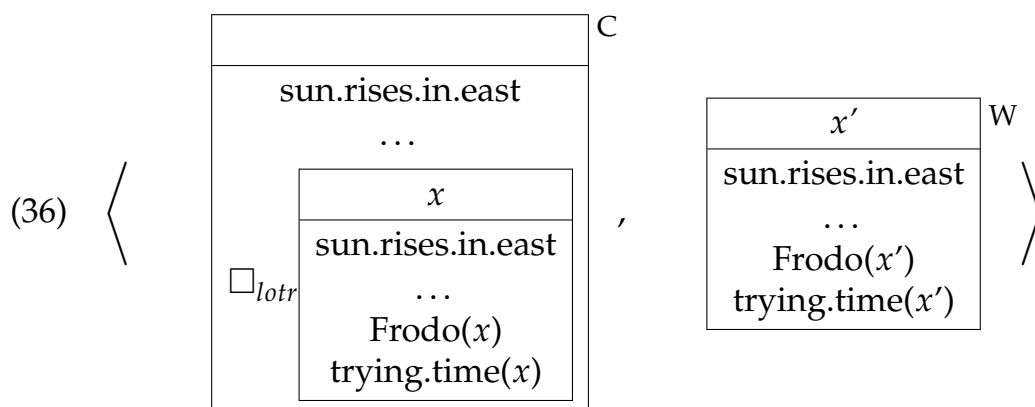
A possible solution is to claim that, apart from adding parafictional propositions to the stable common ground, fictive closure also involves retaining a copy of the updated workspace (which is adopted as new workspace when continuing in the same narrative). This results in a theory resembling Stokke's (2013; 2018) and Eckardt's (2014) accounts (see chapter 3), involving (something akin to) unofficial common grounds. However, this move invites the problems concerning temporality associated with the unofficial common ground accounts; if we maintain that readers of *The Lord of the Rings* hold onto a *The Lord of the Rings*-workspace containing propositions such as that wizards exist, we no longer account for the intuition that we accept such fictional propositions only temporarily.

A more promising solution is to introduce a mechanism that explains how we, when continuing in a familiar narrative, fill in our workspace based on the available parafictional propositions in the common ground. At first sight this seems like a straightforward task. In fictive closure you copy the updated workspace in its entirety and add it to the stable common ground under an 'In fiction *s*'-operator. So, when you continue to engage in a fictional narrative after taking a break, you simply reverse the fictive closure, i.e., perform 'fictive opening': identify the relevant fiction-operator and copy everything that is under this operator to the workspace.

The need for a fictive opening mechanism shows why the DRT box syntax – which brings out the occasionally criticized 'representational character' of DRT – is not only a visually efficient tool but also theoretically relevant. It is not possible to define a fictive opening operation if we represent common grounds as sets of propositions (which in turn are sets of possible worlds). The difficulty with this formalism is that the individual propositions in the common grounds are presented as having no structure. When we perform fictive closure we update the stable common ground with parafictional information and thus simply add a new set of possible worlds (e.g., we add the set of worlds in which in the novel *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is a hobbit, Frodo inherits the Rings, etc.). In other words, there is no 'parafictional *The Lord of the Rings*' marker in the stable common ground and hence no straightforward mechanism to select the appropriate propositions to perform fictive opening.

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We therefore need a framework that does place such a structure on the information in the common ground. DRT does exactly this.¹⁴ Information in the common ground is represented in DRS's which are complex structures involving fiction operator conditions on DRS's. These fiction operator conditions can function as parafictional markers that allow us to select the appropriate propositions to perform fictive opening. So, for instance, when opening up a workspace after taking a break in reading *The Lord of the Rings*, the content under the *The Lord of the Rings* fiction operator in the stable common ground is adopted as new workspace:



¹⁴An alternative framework that also places the necessary structure on propositions and hence allows for parafictional markers, is the so-called 'structured propositions' framework (see for instance Soames (1985) and Cresswell (1985)). Propositions are not sets of possible worlds, but complex entities with a structure similar to the sentences that expresses them and with constituents that carry the semantic values of expressions occurring in these sentences. For example, in Soames' neo-Russellian approach the sentence "Scott does not run" expresses the following proposition:

$$\langle NEG, \langle \langle s \rangle, R \rangle \rangle$$

Here, s is Scott, R is the property of running and NEG is the truth function for negation. Thus, the negation operator is a distinct constituent of the proposition expressed. We can analyse the 'In fiction i '-operator in parafictional statements in a similar fashion. The following is a simplified representation of the proposition expressed by parafictional statement (20):

$$\langle \square_{lotr}, \langle \langle b, f \rangle, C \rangle \rangle$$

Here, b is Bilbo, f is Frodo, C is the property of being someone's cousin and \square_{lotr} is the 'In *The Lord of the Rings*'-operator. In this way we place structure on propositions that allows for parafictional markers and hence enables us to perform fictive opening.

Hence we can re-create the last known state of the workspace, K , from a parafictional condition of the form $\Box_s K$, generated in the stable common ground after fictive closure.

4.5.2 Genre conventions

Another way the common ground can contain parafictional information before engaging with a fictional narrative is through what Lewis calls ‘inter-fictional carry-over’ of fictional truth. Additional fictional truths may derive from prior knowledge about what is true in other fictional stories. This can for instance happen because the narrative is part of a larger canon that deals with the same fictional world (e.g., the Harry Potter book series, the Star Wars Expanded Universe), though, arguably, such narratives can also be construed as simply a continuation of the same fictional discourse. However, more general genre conventions can add fictional truths as well:¹⁵ In a typical fairy tale about a knight going on a quest to slay a dragon, we may anticipate that the dragon breathes fire, even if that has not (yet) been stated explicitly. The question is how the information that dragons breathe fire enters the workspace since it is neither stated explicitly in the text, nor part of the stable common ground (assuming that it is common ground that there are no dragons).

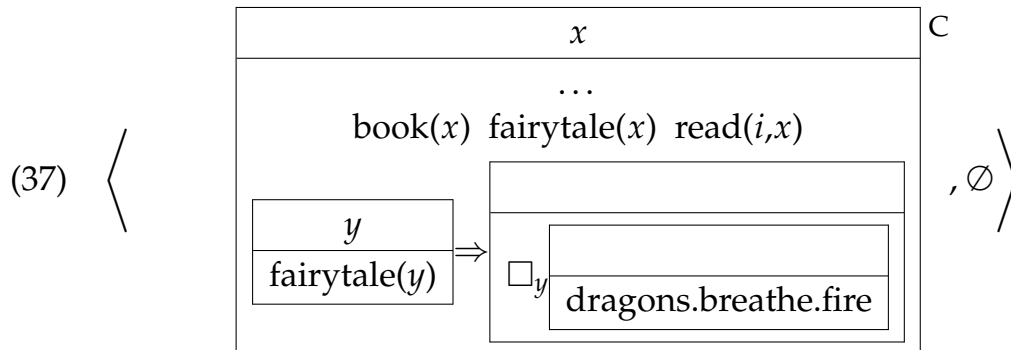
I propose that genre conventions are imported in a way similar to fictional truths derived from previous engagement with a fiction, i.e., through fictive opening. As mentioned above, when I continue reading a fictional narrative after a break that triggered fictive closure, I re-create the last known state of the workspace, K , from a parafictional condition of the form $\Box_s K$ in the stable common ground. Genre expectations may be stored in the common ground in terms of parafictional conditions as well.¹⁶ Consider the unknown fairy tale from before. I pick up the book, and on the basis of the cover picture and first few lines (“Once upon a time in a faraway land there lived a knight. . .”) I decide that I’m dealing with a fairy tale. At the same time, it’s

¹⁵Genre conventions may also influence whether fictional statements are judged reliable and how they update the workspace (see chapter 8).

¹⁶Here I only consider conventions related to different genres of fiction. Non-fiction ‘genre conventions’ (e.g., In a news report, a family taking tea at their dining-room table means that the family is ‘normal’) are analysed as unprefixated stereotypic knowledge in the common ground. See [Matravers \(2014\)](#) and [Zucchi \(forthcoming\)](#) for a uniform treatment of fiction and non-fiction genre conventions.

4 The workspace account

common ground that ‘in fairytales, dragons breathe fire’ or, in other words, that if some y is a fairytale, then it is true in y that dragons breathe fire:



The workspace that we open to represent the story at hand should be a copy of the common ground, as usual, but also contain the information that holds in stories of this type, as stored in quantified parafictional statements like in (37). We can define the fictive opening mechanism to take care of continued reading and genre assumptions uniformly: when starting to interpret a story s , make a copy of the stable common ground and merge that with all K such that $\Box_s K$ is part of (or can be inferred on the basis of, as in (37)) the stable common ground.

4.6 Possible extensions

Now that I have presented the basics of the workspace account I will end this chapter with a brief discussion of two potential extensions of the account: a de re version of the account (section 4.6.1) and an analysis of export as analogical reasoning (section 4.6.2).

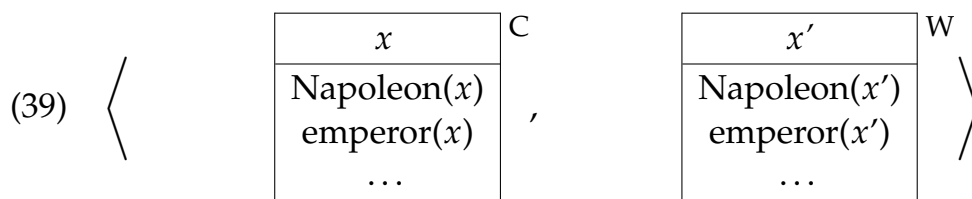
4.6.1 Fiction about non-fictional objects

What the DRT formalisation makes apparent is that, as it is formalised above, the workspace account is ‘descriptivist’, i.e., all content in the workspace (discourse referents and conditions) is placed under a fiction operator at fictive closure. The account thus adheres to a ‘fictional substitute’ analysis of fiction, i.e., fictions that make reference to non-fictional objects (e.g., historical fiction) are analysed as not being de re about a real life person or thing but rather about a fictional substitute of it. Consider Tolstoy’s fiction

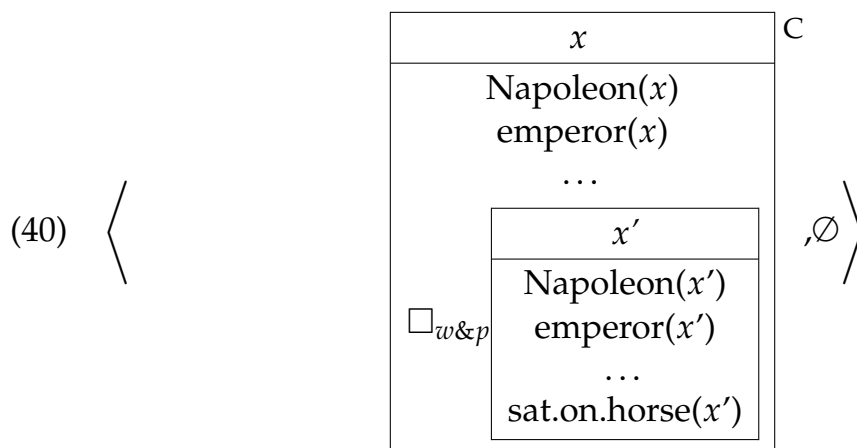
novel *War and Peace* that features Napoleon as one of its characters. *War and Peace* contains fictional statement (38):

(38) Napoleon [...] sat on his small gray Arab horse a little in front of his marshals.

Assuming it is already stable common ground between Tolstoy and his audience before engaging in the fictional discourse who Napoleon was, there is a discourse referent for the real world Napoleon in the stable common ground. Alongside the rest of the common ground, this discourse referent is copied into the new unupdated workspace at the beginning of the fictional discourse:



Hence a new discourse referent is added to the workspace that is separate from the discourse referent for Napoleon in the stable common ground. The workspace is then updated with the proposition expressed by fictional statement (38). At fictive closure this workspace is added to the stable common ground under the *War and Peace* fiction operator:



In this stable common ground there is a discourse referent x in the main DRS for the real world Napoleon and the conditions in the main DRS express that x was an emperor etc. There is also a discourse referent x' for the fictional substitute Napoleon in the embedded DRS. The conditions in the embedded DRS express that the fictional substitute of Napoleon was an emperor but

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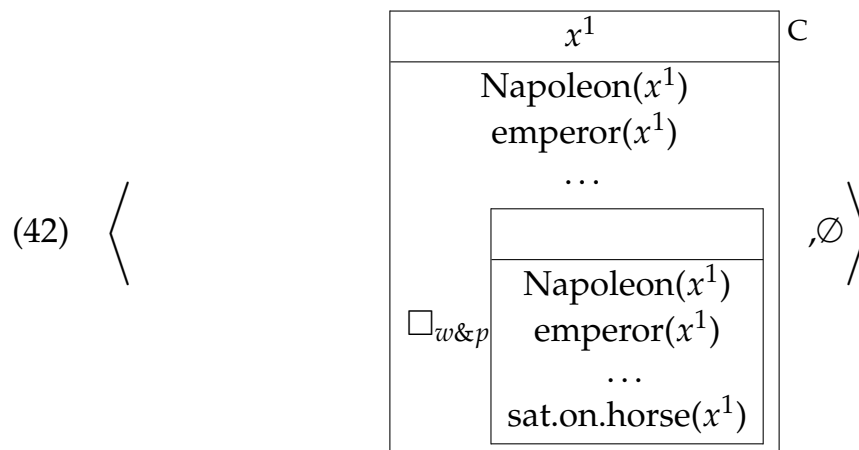
also that he sat on his small gray Arab horse a little in front of his marshals. So, after reading *War and Peace* it is stable common ground that in *War and Peace*, there is an entity that is called Napoleon, was an emperor, etc. Thus, strictly speaking, *War and Peace* is not really de re about the real world Napoleon but about a fictional substitute (i.e., something with a lot of the same properties as Napoleon – but also some fictional ones – that exists in a fictional world). The idea that fictions that make reference to non-fictional objects are strictly speaking about their fictional substitutes is in line with for instance [Wieland's](#) (forthcoming) proposal but against the dominant view that such fictions are literally de re about the real world objects they make reference to (e.g., [Friend \(2011b\)](#) and [Maier \(2017\)](#)).¹⁷

The workspace account can, however, be made compatible with the intuition that historical fictions are literally de re about the relevant real world objects. We can add an additional mechanism that links or anchors (cf. [Maier \(2017\)](#)) discourse referents that are copied to the workspace to their real counterparts in the stable common ground:

$$(41) \quad \left\langle \begin{array}{|c|} \hline x^1 \\ \hline \text{Napoleon}(x^1) \\ \text{emperor}(x^1) \\ \dots \\ \hline \end{array} \right\rangle^C, \quad \left\langle \begin{array}{|c|} \hline x^{1'} \\ \hline \text{Napoleon}(x^{1'}) \\ \text{emperor}(x^{1'}) \\ \dots \\ \hline \end{array} \right\rangle^W$$

At fictive closure all discourse referents in the workspace that have substitute discourse referents in the main DRS are then replaced by these non-fictional substitutes when the content of the workspace is added to the common ground embedded under the relevant fiction operator. Hence the common ground after fictive closure triggered by statement (38) will look as follows:

¹⁷As far as we consider adherence to a non-dominant view a problem, it is one that is shared by the unofficial common ground accounts. Unofficial common grounds are separated from the official common grounds and are independently updated. In order to appropriately engage with a fiction that makes reference to a non-fictional object, the relevant unofficial common ground needs to copy discourse referents and conditions on them from the official common ground. For instance, to properly interpret a fictional statement such as (38) we copy a separate discourse referent for the fictional substitute of Napoleon into the *War and Peace* unofficial common ground. See also [Semeijn and Zalta \(2021\)](#) who argue that explicit parafictional statements are ambiguous between a de re and a de dicto reading.



Here there is only one discourse referent for the real world Napoleon. It is common ground that he is called Napoleon and that he is an emperor. Moreover, it is common ground that in *War and Peace*, he (the real world Napoleon) was called Napoleon, was an emperor and sat on his small gray Arab horse a little in front of his marshals. Such an approach seems intuitive but does raise familiar questions concerning ‘quantifying in’ (see e.g., [Quine \(1956\)](#); [Kaplan \(1968\)](#)), e.g., can *War and Peace* ‘know’ or represent Napoleon under multiple different guises (through different acquaintance relations) and hence express contradictory de re information about him?

In the following chapters I will assume the basic descriptivist version of the workspace account. This choice will not play a role in subsequent discussions with the notable exceptions of chapter 6 and 8. In chapter 6 we will return to the issue of fiction about non-fictional objects and see that one of the central strategies to deal with ‘metafictional’ discourse seems to force a move away from a simple descriptivist account anyway. In chapter 8 we assume there is at least some kind of linking or anchoring between discourse referents for real life entities and their fictional counterparts.

4.6.2 Export of fictional truth as analogical reasoning

As has been discussed, a Matraversian characterization of fictional and non-fictional statements cannot straightforwardly be extended to definitions of narratives. According to such a definition, we have a disposition to believe the content of non-fictional narratives and we have a disposition not to believe the content of fictional narratives. However, fictional narratives sometimes express content towards which we have a disposition to believe. Take the following quote from Fleming’s *Thunderball*:

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- (43) New Providence, the island containing Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, is a drab sandy slab of land fringed with some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. (Example taken from [Friend \(2008\)](#))

Although it is part of a fictional narrative, we can learn empirical facts about the real world through statements such as (43) in a process that [Gendler \(2000\)](#) calls ‘narrative as clearinghouse’. After reading *Thunderball*, I really do believe that Nassau is on the island New Providence. Hence we ‘export’ this truth from the fiction. To account for such dispositions we may opt for a so-called ‘patchwork theory of fiction’ (e.g., [Currie \(1990\)](#)): a fictional narrative can consist of both fictional and non-fictional statements.¹⁸

An alternative strategy is to go for a ‘knitwork theory of narratives’: whereas fictional narratives consist of fictional statements, non-fictional narratives consist of non-fictional statements. We can opt for such an account (on a Matraversian or on the consensus view) if we adopt the (by now) familiar idea that after engaging with a fiction, we update with parafictional beliefs about its content. According to such a definition, although we may not have a disposition to believe the content of a fictional narrative, we do have a disposition to believe parafictional information based on its content. In the following I will suggest that from a subset of these parafictional beliefs we can derive unprefixated beliefs through analogical inferencing. Hence people can have an indirect disposition to believe some of the propositions expressed by fictional statements.

The two-dimensional approach

This account is inspired by the fact that people talk about import and export principles of fictional truth as being based on assumed or perceived similarities between fictional worlds and the actual world; if a fictional story s is supposed to be realistic with respect to a certain cluster of facts and p is in this cluster, we can derive p from $\Box_s p$ and vice versa (cf. [Ichino and Currie \(2017\)](#)). We can capture this intuitive idea in terms of analogical reasoning.

To clarify the concept of analogical reasoning I adopt the terminology and schematization of Hesse’s (1966) and Bartha’s (2010) two-dimensional approach in which an analogical inference is justified if [1] a ‘source’ and ‘tar-

¹⁸See [Friend \(2011a\)](#) and [Stock \(2011\)](#) who identify several issues with such patchwork theories. See also [García-Carpintero \(2013\)](#) who avoids patchwork problems by defining fictional and non-fictional narratives in normative terms.

get system' exhibit a 'positive analogy' (i.e., similarities) and [2] the source system exhibits a 'vertical relation' of correlation¹⁹ between properties in and outside the positive analogy that can be extended to the target system, given that [3] there is no 'negative analogy' (i.e., dissimilarities) that is also relevantly correlated to the positive analogy and hence prohibits this. We can for instance represent (part of) Reid's (1785) analogical argument about the heavens as follows:

Source	Target	
P	P*	[positive analogy]
A	$\neg A^*$	[negative analogy]
Q		
		Q*
P: Earth orbits the sun P*: Mars orbits the sun		
A: Earth's radius is 6,371 km A*: Mars' radius is 6,371 km		
Q: Earth can sustain life Q*: Mars can sustain life		

So, Reid was justified in inferring that Mars could sustain life (Q*) because Earth and Mars exhibit the positive analogy of both orbiting the sun ($P \wedge P^*$), Earth's orbiting the sun was taken to be correlated to Earth sustaining life (P is correlated to Q) and the negative analogy exhibited by Earth and Mars ($A \wedge \neg A^*$ i.e., Mars being smaller than Earth) was not taken to be relevantly correlated to the positive analogy.

Analogical reasoning with parafictional beliefs

We can also provide a justification for reasoning about what is true about the real world (or at least about what the author thinks is true about the real world), based on what is true in a fictional world if we put export in terms of analogical inference. Suppose I have read *Thunderball* and have obtained the parafictional beliefs that 'In *Thunderball*, there exists a rebreather (a small device that allows you to breathe underwater)', 'In *Thunderball*, the Bahamas start East of the coast of Florida' and 'In *Thunderball*, Nassau is on New Providence' because these things are stated in the narrative. Suppose I already knew that '(Actually) the Bahamas start East of the coast of Florida'.

¹⁹Theorists differ in the requirements they put on these vertical relations (e.g., causal, predictive, mere correlation etc.). For the purpose of this dissertation I assume that vertical relations may consist in mere correlation.

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We can represent the situation as follows:

Source	Target
P	P*
A	$\neg A^*$
Q	
<hr/>	
	Q*

P: In *Thunderball*, the Bahamas start East of the coast of Florida

A: In *Thunderball*, there exists a rebreather

Q: In *Thunderball*, Nassau is on New Providence

P*: The Bahamas start East of the coast of Florida

A*: There exists a rebreather

Q*: Nassau is on New Providence

Because the *Thunderball* worlds and the real world exhibit the positive analogy P and P* (i.e., the fiction is realistic with respect to this geographical fact), properties P and Q are related (i.e., belong to the same cluster of geographical facts) and there is no relevant negative analogy (e.g., A is not in the same cluster of facts as P and Q), we are licensed to extend the vertical relation to the real world and hence infer B* (i.e., that '(Actually) Nassau is on New Providence'). In a similar way, we are licensed to infer that New Providence, the island containing Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, is a drab sandy slab of land fringed with some of the most beautiful beaches in the world from reading (43) in *Thunderball* because we perceive that *Thunderball* is realistic with respect to geographical facts (i.e., Bond does not visit made up places). We can infer this despite the fact that we have perceived *Thunderball* to not be realistic with respect to facts concerning technological possibilities and advances in the 1960s, i.e., we know the author took the liberty of make up fancy but unrealistic gadgets such as the rebreather.

Horizontal relations of similarity between the fictional and the real world concerning certain clusters of facts can be strengthened by perceived similarities (as in the example above) or by genre conventions (see Ryan (1991)). For instance, even before reading a Jane Austen novel (and hence before perceiving any similarities in clusters of facts), I already expect the novel to *not* be realistic with respect to geographical facts (I know Austen's novels sometimes contain made up villages or estates), but I *do* expect the novel to be realistic with respect to facts concerning etiquette and social practices in 19th century British upper class.

An important caveat here is that these inferences (as are analogical inferences in general) are of course not deductive but always subject to uncertainty. I can only infer that probably, Nassau is actually on New Providence from reading this in *Thunderball*. Moreover, it is difficult to systematically determine what facts belong to a particular cluster of facts (cf. Norton (2021)). For instance, Austen's novels are not necessarily realistic with respect to small and unknown geographical facts, but *are* realistic with respect to facts concerning well-known, larger cities and countries (e.g., in Austen's novels, London is in the south of England and is its capital). I leave further exploration of an analogical reasoning account of export to future research. An advantage of the envisioned account, as opposed to patchwork theories, is that it is easily extendable to other media. We don't have to posit that the composer, painter or filmmaker has somehow 'asserted' certain things in order to account for the fact that we can learn facts about the real world from their creations. Moreover, the account is easily extendable to what Gendler (2000) calls 'narrative as factory' (i.e., learning general implicit truths such as 'long exposure to excessive power can corrupt even the humblest person' from engaging with a fiction such as *The Lord of the Rings*), and easily extendable to export of presuppositional content of fictional statements (e.g., from reading "Bond rode to the airport" in *Thunderball* I can infer that there was an airport on New Providence in the 1960s). Unlike a patchwork theorist, the knitwork theorist does not have to posit that these general truths or the presuppositions in fictional statements were somehow 'asserted'. We only have to establish that they were made true in the fiction and were viable for export.

4.7 Conclusions

This chapter has introduced the key components of the workspace account. Rather than using different update rules for fictional statements and assertions (as in the unofficial common ground accounts), I propose a uniform workspace update along with distinct assertive and fictive closure operations. Assertions are defined as proposals to (open and) update a temporary acceptance-based workspace and as a result of that trigger assertive closure, i.e., the workspace is adopted as the new stable common ground. Fictional statements are defined as proposals to (open and) update a workspace and as a result of that trigger fictive closure, i.e., the workspace is added to the

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stable common ground under the relevant fiction operator. A new unupdated workspace is a copy of the current stable common ground that is merged with all information embedded under the relevant fiction operators in the stable common ground. The account thus effectively quarantines fictional content (i.e., first in a temporary workspace and then embedded under a fiction operator). I have argued that the account can account for the intuition that fictional truths are only accepted temporarily (i.e., as information in the workspace) and for the intuition that we do retain information about fictional truths even after fictional discourse (i.e., as parafictional beliefs stored in the stable common ground).

The workspace account is the basic framework that is used in this dissertation and will be applied to several puzzles present in the semantics and philosophy of fiction literature. Chapters 5, 6 and 8 present possible applications and/or embellishments of the basic account.