Proper name constructions, quotation marks, and the use-mention distinction

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The use/mention distinction is a key issue in philosophical and linguistic approaches to quotation (Davidson 1979, Recanati 2001, Cappelen & Lepore 2007), with quotation marks being the most prominent linguistic means to mark this distinction. While it has been pointed out early that there are other linguistic means beyond quotes (Klockow 1980), the complex mechanisms of, e.g., phonetic, graphematic, or gestural means in signaling quotation are not fully understood yet. What is more, it is only recently that the role of special lexical and phrasal constructions and their interaction with quotation marks have come into focus (Finkbeiner 2015, Härtl 2018). In this talk, I will be concerned with the proper name construction as illustrated by (1)–(3).

(1) Maria „Floh" Lindermaier-Färbinger (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 21/22 Apr 2018)
(2) Johanna „Hanni" Steinbrenner (Frankfurter Rundschau, 17 Feb 2017)
(3) Ralf „Möfpf" Meyer (Frankfurter Rundschau, 22 Feb 2017)

In examples (1)–(3), taken from death notices in German newspapers, a linguistic expression – a common noun, a proper noun, or even a non-word – is inserted into a proper noun construction and enclosed within quotation marks, typically receiving the interpretation of an additional, inofficial name of the person referred to by the proper name construction. There is also a variant of the construction in which the additional name is enclosed within round brackets, cf. (4).

(4) Peter (Colt) de Kort (Frankfurter Rundschau, 21/22 Jan 2017)

In my analysis, I will start from the hypothesis that in examples such as (1)–(4), the quotation marks (the brackets) interact with the proper name construction, together signaling a special kind of quotational interpretation. This raises a number of questions, including (i) What type of quotation (pure, scare, mixed, …) are we dealing with?; (ii) What is the semantic content and the pragmatic function of the quotation marks?; (iii) What semantic or pragmatic differences are there between quotation marks and brackets?; (iv) What are the linguistic characteristics of the proper name construction, and what is its role in the quotational interpretation?; (v) How is the interaction between quotation marks (brackets) and the proper name construction to be characterized? The aim of the talk is to discuss these questions in the light of recent theorizing on the role of constructions at the semantics/pragmatics interface.

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References: Cappelen, H. & E. Lepore (2007). Language Turned on Itself: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Metalinguistic Discourse. Oxford. Davidson, D. (1979). Quotation. Theory and Decision 11(1), 27–40. Finkbeiner, R. (2015). "Ich kenne da so einen Jungen… kennen ist gut, wir waren halt mal zusammen weg." On the Pragmatics and Metapragmatics of X ist gut in German. In J. Arendholz et al. (Eds.), The Pragmatics of Quoting Now and Then. Berlin, 147–176. Härtl, H. (2018). Name-informing and distancing 'sogenannt' ('so-called'): Name-mentioning and the lexicon-pragmatics interface. Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft 37(2), 139–169. Klockow, R. (1978). Linguistik der Gänsefüßchen. Untersuchungen zum Gebrauch der Anführungszeichen im gegenwärtigen Deutsch. Frankfurt. Recanati, F. (2001). Open quotation. Mind 110(439), 637–387.