

7 Other Explananda for a Theory of Quotation

Thus far we have distinguished quotation from mentioning and explained various linguistic phenomena manifest in our practices of sentential and sub-sentential quotation, using tools drawn from the theory of pictures. These tools include the two ‘directions’ of quotational reference—representation and exemplification. Although they refer simultaneously without conflicting, in interaction they give rise to some puzzling phenomena. In the first part of this chapter (§§ I–III), I address these cases.

In the second half (§§IV–VII), I will review additional phenomena involving inverted commas. Some of these examples have been raised by various theorists as problems for other theories of ‘quotation’—keeping mind that ‘quotation’ is generally not distinguished from ‘mention.’ I will not review this literature, especially that focused on mentioning. But the examples prompt the question of how to identify individual utterances surrounded by q-marks (including pauses and intonation patterns as well as inverted commas) as instances of quotation distinct from mentioning.

I. ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ Quotation

Imagine an exchange in which Jack asks: “Will Trump lose in New Hampshire in 2020?,” Bill answers: “Yes,” and Mary next asks: “What did Bill say?”¹ Of course, I can report what Bill said by indirect discourse: “Bill said that Trump will lose in New Hampshire in 2020.” But if I want to quote Bill, capturing his own way of expressing the content in words, how can and should I express myself? Suppose I say

(1) Bill said: “Yes”

or

(2) “Yes” was spoken or said by Bill.

Whether either of these quote Bill or merely mention his word ‘Yes’ will depend on the context. Imagine Mary and I entered in the middle of the conversation between Jack and Bill, and neither of us was party to Jack’s question when Mary asked me: “What did Bill just say?” All I could answer is what I heard: “Yes.” But in that scenario, either I am just *mentioning* the word he used or, if I am *quoting* him, the only representational content I can attribute to him is the bare affirmative meaning of ‘Yes.’ On the other hand, in order to truly quote Bill’s utterance “Yes” with its content responding to Jack’s question, I cannot say “Bill said: ‘Trump will lose in New Hampshire in 2020,’” because he never uttered a sentence that is even roughly a replica of this quoting phrase. The only way it seems I can quote Bill’s utterance as an answer to Jack’s question is by saying “Bill said: ‘Yes,’” where that one-word quoting phrase expresses in my quoting context the representational content that Trump will lose in New Hampshire in 2020, and where my token of ‘Yes’ exemplifies the property or representation instantiated by Bill’s utterance. Further evidence that I am attributing to him that elliptical representational content (answering the question) is that I can add, after reporting Bill’s answer “Yes” to Jack’s question:

- (3) “but he is still as confident of winning as he ever was” (where the antecedent of ‘he’ is ‘Trump’).

In sum, in examples like this, the representational and exemplificational contents of the quoting phrase do not *prima facie* match up and require context to resolve their differences.

II. Nonconstituent Quotation

Maier (2014a) cites sentences like

- (4) She allowed as how her dog ate “strange things, when left to its own devices” (Abbott 2005),²

whose quoting phrase belongs to no well-formed grammatical constituent (motivated on syntactic grounds), as evidence of the “transparency” of quotation. What he means by ‘transparency’ is neither Quine’s “referential transparency” nor Kulvicki’s notion of pictorial transparency. What Maier means is that the interpretation of the quoting phrase does not “see the quotation marks.” ‘Strange things’ is the NP object of the verb ‘ate’ in the VP

‘ate strange things,’ but it is the whole VP that is modified by ‘when left to its own devices.’ Thus the inverted commas in (4) do not mark off the relevant grammatical constituent for the intended interpretation, from which Maier concludes that we interpret (4) as if there were no inverted commas—or despite them. Another of his examples is

(5) The menu says that this restaurant serves “breakfast at any time” (Maier 2014a),

whose quoting phrase can be given an interpretation but not the intended one, namely, the meaning on which ‘at any time’ modifies ‘serves,’ not ‘breakfast.’ If we want to give the sentence that intended interpretation, the quoting phrase ought to be “serves breakfast at any time.” Again, we see through or ignore the inverted commas to get the intended interpretation.³

The problem to which Maier is pointing is a real problem for theories that presuppose that the semantic values of quoting phrases (sentential and subsentential) belong to semantic types that directly correspond to syntactic constituent categories.⁴ On our account, the ‘transparency’ of nonconstituent quoting phrases reflects their representational contents, the truth conditions or contents of their words as they would be *used* in the indirect discourse report of what was said in the subject’s quoted context. On this representational interpretation, the quoting phrase is not segregated from its linguistic context and its categorial structure. On the other hand, as an exemplifying object, the quoting phrase is indifferent to grammatical category so long as it can serve as a sample of a property or representation that need not correspond to a syntactic category. Hence, the quoting phrase can be a syntactic nonconstituent in its sentential matrix. Nonetheless, there is dissonance between our knowledge of the constituent structure underlying that representational content and our awareness of its lack of constituent structure *qua* exemplifier. Hence, we recognize the word play or humor in, say, (5)—in contrast, say, to the completely prosaic

(6) The menu says that this restaurant “serves breakfast at any time,”

which lacks any tension between the representational and exemplificational contents.

III. Do Quotations Block Wh-movement?

In chapter 2 (E), I raised the question whether quotations block wh-movement given the fact that we can quantify into them. Maier (2014a) cites

(7a) *Who did John say Mary “loves”?

(7b) *What did Quine say quotation “has”?

as evidence that mixed (subsential) quotations block wh-movement which supports their opacity.⁵ These examples contrast in turn to the indirect discourse sentences

(8a) Who did John say Mary loves?

(8b) What did Quine say that quotation has?

that allow wh-movement. However, later in the same paper he cites counterevidence such as

(9a) Who did Mary say that she would “never underestimate ever again”?

(9b) Who did Mary say that she would “never forgive ever again”?⁶

Both of these appear to the contrary to admit wh-movement, implying that mixed (subsential) quotations are transparent.⁷ To resolve this contradictory evidence, Maier employs Shan’s (2011) idea of unquotation—the use of square brackets to temporarily suspend the scope of a quotation to show editorial adjustments to the original—together with the claim that underlying, say, (9b) is

(10) Mary said that she would “never forgive [who] ever again.”

Here the unquoted ‘[who]’ is an editorial adjustment to Mary’s quoted phrase that would have included a name as the object of the transitive verb; its presence in the underlying (10) in turn allows for wh-movement. Maier then explains:

Unquote movement first places the wh-object out of the quote, from where a subsequent wh-movement can take it to the front. As a result [9b] presupposes that Mary used the construction *never forgive . . . ever again* to refer to a two-place relation *R*, and asks who Mary said she bears *R* to. (Maier 2014a, 58)

The idea of unquotation nicely captures the idea that a quoter—the speaker making the quotational attribution to the quoted subject—is not merely someone who mechanically reproduces the quoted phrase but more like an editor sensitive to their author, their audience, and to changes in context.

However, Maier's application of unquotation to (9b) raises the obvious question why we cannot also apply it to (7a, b). Thus, underlying each of them would be

(7c) John said Mary "loves [who]?"

(7d) Quine said quotation "has [what]?"

Like (9b), (7a) presupposes that John used the construction 'loves . . .' to refer to a two-place relation R, and asks who John said Mary bears R to; similarly for (7b). In sum, we are still left with inconsistent data about wh-movement from quotation contexts.

The data concerning wh-movement out of direct, or sentential, quotations are much clearer:

(11a) *Who did Mary say: "I will never forgive ever again"? (cf. Maier 2016, 10)

(11b) Who did Mary say that she will never forgive ever again?

(12a) *What did John say: "I put there"? (K. Davidson)

(12b) What did John say he put there/where? (K. Davidson)

However, this does not help my theory, since I view the difference between (11a) and (12a), on the one hand, and (7a, b), on the other, as no more than the difference between sentential and subsentential quotation. What holds of one ought to hold of the other.

If we take into account exemplification, there may be a different reason why quotation should block wh-movement. Suppose that (10) underlies (9b). For the quoting phrase in (10) to quote John, it must exemplify a representation instantiated by John's quoted utterance. But John presumably uttered a sentence containing a proper name as the object of the verb 'loves,' say, 'Harriet,' and no utterance of 'loves [who]' or of 'Mary loves [who]' can exemplify the representation 'Mary loves Harriet' that John's quoted utterance instantiates. If this is on the right track, it is not, then, opacity that blocks wh-movement but the conditions for exemplification that are essential to yielding the quoted phrase we attribute to John. But note that if the wh-word 'who' in (10) is part of the quoting phrase that exemplifies the property or representation, then it is not only concrete surface-like utterances of words spoken by the speaker that exemplify, but also more abstract structures containing traces or wh-words. It also remains a puzzle whether the data that seems to *admit* wh-movement (as in 9a, b) can be somehow reconciled with this condition.

IV. Recanati's "Open" and "Closed" Quotations

According to Francois Recanati (2001, 2011), theorists have misdirected their attention on one special case: "closed" quotations, which refer to their enclosed words like singular terms. The more general and paradigmatic class is what he calls "open quotation": linguistic acts or speech performances that *show* or *depict* other utterances, which he also calls 'demonstrations' (Clark and Gerrig 1990; Wade and Clark 1993).⁸ This sense of 'demonstration' is not that of an ostension, gesture, or presentation that accompanies or completes a (pure) demonstrative 'this' or 'that' (Kaplan 1989). Rather, it is any act that shows or manifests how one performs (a token of) a type of act, like waltzing, riding a bike, or doing the backstroke and, in turn, enables "others to experience what it is like to perceive the things *depicted*" (Clark and Gerrig 1990, 765, my emphasis). Recanati takes Clark's use of 'depict' literally. When we quote someone, we do not merely demonstrate and thereby show *how* she said what she said—the words she used and sometimes her accent, intonation, or pitch. We produce "something like a picture" of the quoted utterance in virtue of their resemblance (as we said in ch. 4) and what we *show* (as opposed to *state*) when we quote something is its "pictorial meaning" (Recanati 2011, 247; cf. 229). In a related vein, Recanati also says that the quoting token "echoes" and "mimics" the quoted token—which presumably means that the one 'imitates' the other. But Recanati also emphasizes that open quotations (or "quotations in general") do not "refer to what they picture. . . . Open quotations merely picture" (231). That is, he resists assimilating open quotations to linguistic noun phrases or singular terms. Only in the special case when the open quotation is "recruited" (230) as a referential term, that is, when it "acquires the grammatical function of a singular term within a sentence in which it fills a slot [for a referring or singular term]" (231), does it acquire a "referent" or "referential value" (230–231).⁹

On the surface, Recanati's open/closed distinction and my quotation/mention distinction may seem similar. However, Recanati takes so-called direct (i.e., sentential) quotations to be closed, that is, NPs or singular terms, and mixed (subsential) quotation to be a paradigm of open quotation, while I take both to be quotations as opposed to mention-expressions. Second, while he agrees that their constituent words have their ordinary meaning (which he opposes to the Tarski–Quine position), Recanati's reason for taking direct

(sentential) quotations to be closed is that they are “*segregated from*” (234) the linguistic meaning of their matrix sentence—contrary to the evidence of chapters 2–3 that all quoting phrases, subsentential and sentential, anaphorically and quantificationally interact with their matrix quotation-sentences. Of course, both Recanati and I give central place to the picture/quotation analogy. But our two general projects are opposed to a significant degree. Recanati is interested in quotation because (1) it is a phenomenon that has been treated in the past as a semantic explanandum, whereas he claims that it is pragmatic; (2) he thinks it involves general rational interpretation that is not language specific; and (3) it is evidence for him of pragmatic contextual intrusion into the determination of truth conditions.¹⁰ I am interested in quotation insofar as it lies on the border between products of linguistic and extralinguistic symbolic skills; by identifying what is nonlinguistic (e.g., exemplification) we can therefore put into relief what is properly linguistic in our understanding of quotation in particular and speech in general.

Let’s now look at Recanati’s examples of open quotations to see whether they are indeed a different species of quotation that has been hitherto ignored. Recanati introduces:

(13) . . . And then Greta Garbo said, ‘*I want to be alone*’ (2011, 224)

to illustrate how a quotation can depict a “target” (= the quoted utterance) by demonstrating various properties, such as Garbo’s words, accent, intonation, and accompanying bodily pose. The “depiction is effected through properties shared by the displayed token and the target” (224), that is, depiction is a function of resemblance, which is understood here as a matter of sharing properties. He adds that the speaker is not referring to Garbo’s utterance; he is depicting it in the sense of mimicking, that is, imitating or simulating it. Now, inasmuch as open quotations by definition are not singular referential terms, one would presume that (13) is an open quotation. However, Recanati next says that the demonstration in (13) is grammatically “recruited” to be a singular term, hence, a closed quotation, apparently because it occupies an argument or NP position as a relatum of the ‘said’ relation. This implies—contrary to what we might have thought—that ‘open’ and ‘closed’ are not mutually exclusive contraries. A closed quotation is an open quotation that in addition is recruited grammatically to serve as an NP or referring term. This leaves open the question of whether there are any open quotations that are not closed.

Nothing about Recanati's description of open quotation need conflict with our characterization of quotation as the attribution to a subject of a quoted sentence by means of a quoting sentence—although we would disagree that the quoting sentence in (13) is a denoting singular term or NP. Even if the speaker uses the quoting sentence with the extralinguistic intention to mimic, that is, imitate, the quoted utterance, that is not incompatible with it being syntactically and semantically an attribution to Garbo of the quoted phrase and of its manner of utterance (intonation, accent, etc.). To use an attribution to mimic its subject is simply an additional extralinguistic motive for the utterance of the sentence, a perlocutionary act.

Recanati's second example of an open quotation is

(14) Stop that John! 'Nobody likes me,' 'I am miserable'. . . . Don't you think you exaggerate a bit?

which he contrasts with

(15) John keeps crying and saying 'Nobody likes me.'

Recanati takes (15) to be a closed quotation because the quotation fills the slot for a singular term as the object argument of 'say.' But because (14) has no verb of saying, its quoting sentences do not occupy a referential position and simply serve to depict John's utterances.

However, it is equally possible that (14) is elliptical for the closed quotation

(14a) Stop *saying* that, John! "Nobody likes me," "I am miserable." . . .
Don't you think you exaggerate a bit?

which in turn is synonymous with

(14b) John, stop saying: "Nobody likes me" or "I am miserable." . . . Don't you think you exaggerate a bit?

or

(14c) Stop that John! *You say* "Nobody likes me," "I am miserable." . . .
Don't you think you exaggerate a bit?¹¹

After all, if 'stop' in (14) is not elliptical for 'stop saying,' how would John know what he is to stop doing? Moreover, Recanati himself admits that the quoting sentences in (14b)–(14c) occur in the position of singular terms (as arguments for 'says'), suggesting again that it is closed notwithstanding (or in addition to) its open depicting character. The moral I draw from

Recanati's own exposition is that (14) is an elliptical sentential quotation, though—in agreement with his conclusion, albeit for a different reason—I would also argue that the quoting sentence is not a singular term or noun phrase but a sentence used with its ordinary meaning. In any case, I see no hitherto ignored “new kind” of quotation here that is not already explained by our theory.

Recanati next turns to mixed (i.e., subsentential) quotations—beginning with Davidson's “Quine said that quotation ‘has a certain anomalous feature’”—which he identifies as open quotations because, as Davidson first observed, they cannot grammatically occur as singular terms (or NPs).¹² Recanati also calls them ‘echoic’ (or mimetic) because they share properties with the target. But having included standard mixed (subsentential) quotations among open quotations, it is a short step for Recanati to extend them to improper or scare quotations like (16)–(18), which not only mimic their target in the sense of imitate, but also mimic in the sense of “mock” or “ridicule.” On his view, the inverted commas serve to “disassociate” (Recanati 2011, 240) speakers from the words they are using.¹³

(16a) Jay: I am presenting my dissertation at the paper session. (where he should have said ‘poster’ section)

(16b) Jay said that he is presenting his dissertation at the ‘paper’ session.

(17a) Harry: Quine there hates meanings. (where Harry uses ‘Quine’ to refer to an acquaintance who acts as if he were Quine)

(17b) Harry said that ‘Quine’ there hates meanings.

(18a) Maria: Quine is a philtosopher. (C&L 1997, who say the predicate is gibberish)

(18b) Maria said that Quine is a ‘philtosopher.’

In sum, all mixed quotations, proper and improper (or scare), are open quotations because none of them are singular terms and they either echo, and thereby identify the speaker with the quoted subject, or disassociate, and thereby disidentify, them.¹⁴ However, there is a difference between the a and b cases in (16)–(18) that Recanati does not mention. Only the b's occur in explicitly reportative or attributional contexts with a subject and verb of saying. On my view, (16b)–(18b) are examples of subsentential quotations that attribute a quoted phrase to a subject via the quoting phrase and, in addition to their attributional structure—and here I agree

with Recanati—also involve “disassociation” or “disidentification,” a point to which we will return in chapter 9.

Recanati discusses two additional examples that are not improper but still raise interesting questions.

(19) *‘Comment allez-vous.’* That’s how you say ‘How are you’ in French.

Of the two phrases enclosed in inverted commas, Recanati takes “How are you” to be a closed quotation since it occurs as the argument for ‘says’ (230), leaving *‘Comment allez-vous’* as a demonstration—hence, an open quotation—that in turn is demonstratively referred to by the immediately following ‘That.’ But if ‘is’ is the identity sign (whose second argument is ‘How are you’ or “how you say ‘How are you’ in French,” then *‘Comment allez-vous’* also ought to be a singular term or NP referring to its contained words and thus a closed quotation. In our terms, (19) simply mentions both constituent phrases enclosed in inverted commas.

Recanati (2011), among others (e.g., Maier 2016, 19), also assimilates (19) to examples like (18a, b) and (20):

(20) A doctor tells him he is like a “vielle femme hystérique.” (De Brabanter 2010),

Because (19) and (20) quote foreign words and (18a, b) nonwords, Recanati attempts to explain them all by a (monstrous) shift in the language parameter of the context of utterance (see chapter 5). However, it is not at all clear that language-salad sentences (like (20) and (19)) should be treated on a par with nonwords or misuses of words like (18), because the former imply, or implicate, that the speaker disassociates or disidentifies himself from the subject. Speakers competent in two or more languages, and certainly those with a literary bent, often mix languages in one sentence and context, especially where as in (20) the speaker is also alluding to a well-known description of Flaubert.

Recanati’s second example:

(21) A ‘fortnight’ is a period of fourteen days,

seems to me to defy easy characterization on any theory. On the one hand, it seems to be synonymous with

(21a) ‘(A) Fortnight’ designates a period of fourteen days,

which is an obvious instance of mentioning. On the other hand, it *prima facie* has the same truth conditions as the nonquotational

(21b) A fortnight is a period of fourteen days.

It is not clear, then, what difference it makes whether we are dealing with use or mention, although the inverted commas serve to highlight the fact that we are defining the term.¹⁵

V. Allusion

Among his examples of open quotations, Recanati (2011) also includes examples like

(22) The object demonstrated is the ‘*Bedeutung*’ (“reference”) of the demonstration and its appearance is its ‘*Sinn*’ (“sense”)¹⁶

(23) John is very ‘cool,’

which he argues “do their normal semantic work” in the sentence “while at the same time echo some other person’s use of the same words” (240). The question is how to understand ‘echo.’ On our view, quotation essentially involves *attribution* of a quoted phrase to a subject as part of its propositional content; these sentences, like the a’s in (16)–(18), contain no explicit subject or verb of saying. One might, however, argue that (22) is “elliptical” for (22a):

(22a) The object demonstrated is, in Frege’s words/as Frege would have said, the “*Bedeutung*” (“reference”) of the demonstration and its appearance is its “*Sinn*” (“sense”).¹⁷

But unlike (16)–(18), there is no reason to posit an elliptical or implicit subject and verb *as part of the content* of (22), because there is no one from whom the speaker is disassociating or disidentifying themselves. Hence, rather than take the elliptical subject and verb as part of the content *asserted* by the utterance (or what is called its “at-issue” content), I would propose that utterances of sentences like (22) *presuppose* as common knowledge that the quoted expressions are to be attributed to a subject whose identity is also presupposed to be known. For example, philosophers will (or should) immediately recognize that the speaker of (22) echoes Frege’s words without explicitly mentioning either his name or the fact that he used (or would have used) these words for this purpose. Likewise, Recanati proposes that the speaker of (23) “echoes” an (unidentified) “certain group of people” whom “we assume” use ‘cool’ in a culturally loaded sense.¹⁸

Another strategy to treat these examples is not as quotation proper but as what literary scholars call ‘allusion.’ ‘Allusion’ is notoriously difficult to

define but, as a rough stab, we can use the OED definition: “covert, implied, or indirect reference,” where ‘reference’ is not naming, describing, or demonstrating but the looser idea of drawing our attention to something.¹⁹ However, what is central to allusion is that its function is not simply to draw our attention to some statement or author but also to elicit or activate further associations with the alluded thing. For example, in (22) ‘*Bedeutung*’ alludes not just to Frege but to his general theory of reference and sense, his puzzles, and his attempt to solve them. Likewise, ‘cool’ in (23) alludes to the entire culture that cultivates and develops the trait of ‘coolness.’ For a word or phrase \emptyset to allude to another \emptyset^* , then, it must be presupposed that participants are acquainted with \emptyset^* and its associations and can draw upon them. In contrast to quotation, which asserts that some phrase is to be attributed to a subject, allusion presupposes knowledge and information attributed to or associated with the phrase to which it directs us. Another way in which it differs from quotation is that allusion is often (though not always) ‘covert.’ Authors of literary works often employ allusions in order to *test* their readers’ ability to recognize the alluded item. Indeed, they do not put the alluding item in inverted commas or italics in order to conceal the alluded item. So, if (22) and (23) are really allusions rather than quotations, it is a good question whether the alluding items like ‘*Bedeutung*’ should be in inverted commas.

VI. Nonlinguistic Quotables

Another live question about explananda for a theory of quotation concerns the question of whether we can quote nonlinguistic events, objects, or signs, such as doodles, scribbles, smiley faces, noises or natural sounds, and pictures. As we would expect by now, most discussion of this question has focused on mention rather than quotation. Jonathan Bennett (1988, 405) denies that one can properly ‘quote,’ that is, mention, the nonlinguistic; C&L (2007, 23–24, 147–159) assert “uncontroversially” that we can ‘quote,’ that is, mention, units that are not part of “the language or sign system we typically use.”²⁰ But whatever position one takes on the *mentionability* of the nonlinguistic, it is another question whether we can *quote* the nonlinguistic. On the one hand, if quotation *always* consists in attribution of a quoted phrase to a subject where the utterance of the quoting phrase has its ordinary semantic values and meanings, it would seem impossible to

quote things that have no semantic value or meaning.²¹ On the other hand, many languages (like English) possess dedicated verbs to report nonlinguistic sounds (as well as symbolic or demonstrational actions like (29)–(30)) made by humans and nonhumans (some of which *cannot* take propositional objects, e.g., (28b, c)). These verbs framing the report of nonlinguistic sounds parallel but differ distributionally from the quotational ‘says’ and its cousins.²² Consider, for example, the use of ‘go/went’ in (24)–(28a) in contrast to (28b, c):

(24) When she got news of the prize, Mary went: “Wow”/“Ahhh.”

(25) Morry aimed the toothbrush at David and went ‘[æ? æ? æ? æ?’] (Par-tee, 1973)

(26) So he went blah, blah, blah again, and finally he got them to come out. (De Brabanter 2017, 244)

(27) The piano went ‘plonk’ and the guitar goes ‘twang.’ (De Brabanter 2017, 244)

(28a) I asked her if she wanted to read my paper and she went “Yuck.”

(28b) *I asked her if she wanted to read my paper and she went that she didn’t, in no uncertain terms. (Ginzburg & Cooper 2014).

(28c) *I asked her if she wanted to read my paper and she went: “I definitely do not want to,” in no uncertain terms.

(29) Your legs go/went (bends and moves legs) while your arms go/went (bends and moves arms)

(30) The boy went [displays rude gesture] and ran away. (De Brabanter 2017, 244)

Whether or not we want to call these nonlinguistic uses of ‘go/went’ with nonlinguistic objects literal instances of ‘quotation’ will depend on whether we require that all quotation involves use that expresses propositional content.²³ For present purposes, I simply want to emphasize the importance of the mention/quotation distinction in addressing this question. Furthermore, we can surely *talk about* nonlinguistic signs, but it is not clear that, and how, one can use as opposed to mention such a sign. If Frege introduced inverted commas in order to avoid use/mention ambiguity, and if use/mention ambiguity does not arise for nonlinguistic signs, there is no point in adding the inverting commas. In fact, against the view that we can quote nonlinguistic objects, one might cite Frege’s comment that in

quotation “we have signs of *signs*” (my emphasis)—not just *any* object can be quoted, only a sign or linguistic entity that signifies and acts like a sign.²⁴

VII. Quoting Thoughts

As I noted in the introduction, ‘said’ is only one, and probably the thinnest, verb of saying used to quote someone. Thicker verbs, and ones that quote in all the grammatical moods, include:

(31) Romeo replied/stated/ announced/retorted/asserted: “Juliet is the sun.”

(32) Romeo shouted/mumbled/grumbled/growled: “Juliet is the sun.”

(33) Romeo asked/wondered/questioned/pleaded: “Is Juliet the sun?”

(34) Romeo commanded/told/directed Juliet: “Act like the sun!”

Given this wide range of speech act verbs that can frame spoken and written quotations, the question arises: Can one quote in thought or with mentalistic or attitudinal framing verbs? Philosophers (e.g., Kaplan 1989) frequently use indirect discourse as a model for analyzing the propositional attitudes (e.g., belief-sentences), but it is striking that ‘believe’ is not an obvious counterpart to ‘says’ for mentalistic quotations:

(35) */?Romeo believed: “Juliet is the sun”

—even while indirect belief reports, like indirect speech reports, are perfectly fine:

(36) Romeo said that Juliet is the sun.

(37) Romeo believed that Juliet is the sun.

The problem here, let me add, cannot lie in the occurrence of the inverted commas in belief contexts, because we can use them to signal mentioning in belief-sentences:

(38) Romeo believes that ‘Juliet’ rhymes with ‘duet.’

However, the problem may be specific to the lexical item ‘believe.’²⁵ We can frame quotations with all the following mentalistic or attitudinal verbs:

(39) Romeo thought/convicted himself/remembered: “Juliet is the sun.”

(40) Romeo wondered/pondered/obsessed: “Is or isn’t Juliet the sun?”

but not, however, with these others:

(41) *Romeo was concerned/disturbed/worried/scared: “Juliet might be the sun.”

in contrast to

(42) Romeo was concerned/disturbed/worried/scared that Juliet might be the sun.

One difference between (39)-(40) and (41) is that the mental predicates in (39)-(40) imply a kind of inner discourse or inner speech, such as ‘said/thought/wondered to himself’ unlike the statives in (41).²⁶

A more curious phenomenon to which linguists have given considerable attention in recent years is free indirect discourse (FID). This is a relatively recently created or discovered style of reporting speech or thought, most often employed by novelists in narrative literature. A character’s thoughts are expressed sometimes from the perspective of the speaker or narrator and sometimes from the perspective of the character, a difference that emerges in the behavior of indexicals, tense, and pronouns in FID contexts. For example:

(22) Mary was packing her bags. Tomorrow was her last day. Oh how happy she would be to finally walk out of here. To leave this godforsaken place once and for all.

The temporal and locational indexicals ‘Tomorrow,’ ‘here,’ and ‘this godforsaken place’ are all interpreted from Mary’s perspective, as if they occurred between the inverted commas in a quotation whose subject is Mary. The personal indexicals (e.g., ‘she’) and the (past) tense (‘was’) are interpreted from the perspective of the narrator or speaker in the context of utterance. Thus free indirect discourse is a hybrid of quotation and indirect discourse with a rather rigidly fixed division of labor among its deictic or context-sensitive constituents. In recent years, a number of different analyses or explanations have been proposed for this construction. Some semantic accounts appeal to context-shifting operators (monsters) to account for the temporal and locational indexicals; others posit multiple contexts for the interpretation of the different classes of constituents; and yet others are pragmatic.²⁷ I have nothing new to add on this interesting—but possibly artifactual—phenomenon. However, the fact that the different kinds of context-dependent expressions and constructions behave differently according to such a rigid division is a problem both for semanticists and pragmaticists: no one kind of theory can account for the different behaviors of the two classes of expressions.

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