

## **A compositional semantics for quotation?**

**Brian Rabern**

Abstract: If quotation is treated as a genuine syntactic operation---of the form  $[[\text{Quote}][A]]$ ---its difficult to see how it could have a compositional semantics. In fact, it seems that contrary to what is often claimed most (if not all) of the extant semantics for this syntactic treatment of quotation are not genuinely compositional. I will not argue for this claim directly---by for example surveying each proposed semantic theory of quotation and outlining how it either violates compositionality or doesn't treat quotation as a genuine syntactic operation. Instead I will take a more abstract route: I will introduce a formal extension of predicate logic with a quotation operator and demonstrate what it would take for its semantics to be genuinely compositional. Doing so is instructive and interesting in its own right but, more importantly, it supports the first premise of the following master argument concerning the semantics of (pure) quotation.

1. If quotation (qua genuine syntactic operation) has a compositional semantics, then every syntactically distinct expression must have a different semantic value.
2. If every expression has a distinct semantic value, then the semantics is trivially compositional.
3. Thus, if quotation has a compositional semantics, it only has it trivially so.