

Call Me an Ambulance

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will address the question of the syntax of proper names. Although there are vast quantities of philosophical literature on proper names, little of it addresses the issue from the syntactic point of view. If we re-evaluate the standard theories of proper names in this light, we can come up with two major proposals:

- (i) Proper names are directly referring **rigid designators** (Kripke (1980)), or **indexicals** (Recanati (1997), Pelczar and Rainsbury (1998)). Under this view, they are necessarily syntactically simplex.
- (ii) Proper names are **definite descriptions** (Frege (1983), Russell (1911), Searle (1958), Kneale (1962), Burge (1973), Katz (1977, 1990, 1994), Geurts (1997), Elbourne (2002), Liu (2004), etc.). These definite descriptions can be then viewed as syntactically simplex or complex.

I will provide arguments for a proposal fitting the second description based on the behavior of verbs of naming (1), which, I claim, are essential for the understanding of the syntax and semantics of proper names. The syntax of naming constructions argues that proper names are essentially predicates, whose contents mention the name itself (thus requiring a quotation theory, cf. Geurts (1997)). In argument positions proper names become indexical due to being internally complex.

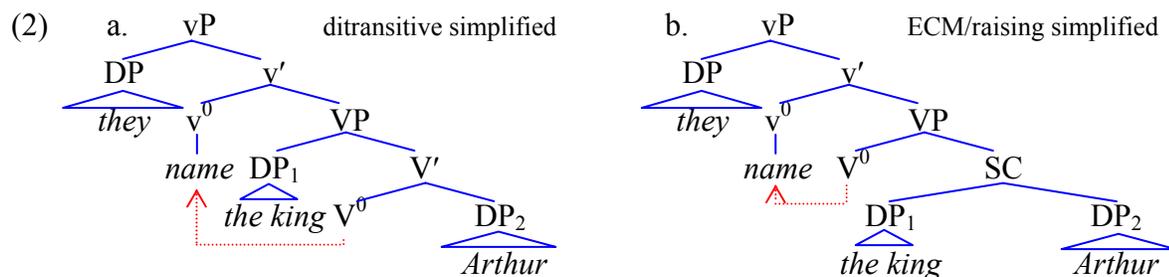
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|-----|----|---------------------------------------------------|----------|
| (1) | a. | Arthur was named the king of all England. | argument |
| | b. | The king of all England was named Arthur . | ? |

The structure of the argument is as follows. Although the first impression given by verbs of naming is that they have the ditransitive structure, represented in (2a), I

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will provide a list of arguments that verbs of naming take a small clause complement, having the structure as in (2b). This means that proper names enter syntax as predicates.



We will then turn to proper names in argument positions, where they behave as definite descriptions (Geurts (1997)), and show that they also have the internal syntax of definite DPs. The indexicality of the proper names (*rigidity*, according to Kripke (1980)) can then be compositionally derived from their semantics in naming constructions.

2. Verbs of naming and nomination

The first impression given by naming constructions is that of a ditransitive, with the first DP (DP₁) being the GOAL and the second one (DP₂) being the THEME.¹ However, this first impression does not withstand an encounter with facts. Reasons of space do not allow me to present all evidence against the hypothesis that verbs of naming are ditransitive, and I will constrain myself to one:

2.1. DP₁ is not the GOAL, DP₂ is not the THEME

It is a general property of English that to passivize, a DP has to start out as the object of a verb (or of a preposition, in pseudo-passives). GOAL and THEME can both do so:

- (3) a. **Marie** was given a book. GOAL
 b. A book was given to Marie. THEME

However, in naming constructions only DP₁ can passivize, which means that DP₂ does not behave like the THEME object in English (see also Hornstein and Weinberg (1981) for a note on the difference between naming constructions and ditransitives):

- (4) a. I was called/christened/named/baptized Al.
 b. * Al was called/named/baptized me.

A similar argument can be drawn from Dutch (Eddy Ruys, p.c.). In Dutch double object constructions, only the most internal argument (Accusative, though it is not Case-marked) can be passivized:

- (5) a. het Marie/ ? een meisje gegeven boek double object
 the Marie/ a girl given book
 'the book given to Marie/to a girl'
 b. * het *Anna Karenina*/een boek gegeven meisje
 the *Anna Karenina*/a book given girl

¹ The second noun phrase in naming and nomination constructions can be indefinite in nomination constructions. I use DP₂ to designate it for the sake of simplicity.

(10) Cross-linguistic uniformity

The structure that verbs of naming (and nomination) project is invariant across languages.

Since we know that verbs of nomination are ECM (Stowell (1991)), if they form a natural class with verbs of naming, the latter take small clause complements as well.³ We will now show that naming and nomination constructions share multiple properties that are characteristic of ECM constructions.

2.3. DP₂ is a predicate

2.3.1. Interrogation and anaphora

The first, relatively minor argument, comes from the behavior of naming and nomination constructions with animate subjects. For those, the interrogative is *what* rather than *who*:

- (11) a. What/*who was Caesar nominated?
b. What/*who did they christen the boy that Mr. Earnshaw found?

Likewise, anaphora of the name can be expressed by the pronominal predicates *so* and *that*. No other pronoun (and in particular no anaphor like *itself*) can appear as DP₂.

- (12) Latimeria is called latimeria/that/so/*it/*itself after Marjorie Courtney-Latimer.

If the structures involved were ditransitive, these facts would be unexpected, but if DP₂ is a predicate, we do not expect animacy marking in interrogation and anaphora.

2.3.2. Bare definites

A strong similarity between naming and nomination constructions becomes apparent in languages other than English. To see this, we must first observe with Stowell (1989) that verbs of nomination can appear with a bare nominal predicate, as in (13b):

- (13) a. Anne's death made George (the) king of England.
b. The queen appointed her lover treasurer of the realm.

The nomination construction in (13b) is undistinguishable from the unambiguous small clause structure in (13a), and both license definite article omission, on the condition of there being only one individual satisfying the predicate at every given moment.⁴

- (14) We named him public enemy *(number 1)/*enemy of the state.

In languages or dialects where proper names in argument positions require a definite article, it disappears with verbs of naming, unless modification is involved:

³ Two more things need to be noted. (1) The verb *call* may be special, in English and in other languages, allowing many more uses than the others. We will not base any conclusions on its properties alone. (2) I will be leaving aside cases where the DP₁ or DP₂ is introduced by a (Dative) preposition (e.g. Hebrew *k-r-h* 'call', English *promote*), though this might be too much of a simplification.

⁴ The same pragmatic condition may explain why superlatives allow article drop relatively easily (cf. Borthen (1998, 2003) for Norwegian).

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- (15) a. Ich habe den Karl gesehen. Bavarian German (Nina Rothmayr, p.c.)
I have the-Acc Karl seen.
'I have seen Karl.'
- b. Ich habe ihn (*den) Karl genannt
I have him-Acc the-Acc Karl called
'I called him Karl.'
- c. Die Polly wird *(die) neue Mary Poppins genannt
the Polly was *(the new Mary Poppins called
'Polly was called the new Mary Poppins.'

Same facts hold for the Uto-Aztecan language Pima (Marcus Smith, p.c.), some dialects of Italian, and European Portuguese. In colloquial Icelandic, Northern Norwegian and Northern Swedish argument proper names are also preceded by a definite article (Delsing (1993), p. 54). In Northern Norwegian, this *preproprial article* takes the form of a 3rd person pronoun (examples by Peter Svenonius, Øystein Alexander Vangsnes, p.c.):

- (16) a. ho Marit så han Øystein
she Marit saw he Øystein
'Marit saw Øystein.'
- b. han Øystein så ho Marit
he Øystein saw she Marit
'Øystein saw Marit.'

In naming constructions (as well as some others, such as vocatives, play-acting and sometimes possessives) the preproprial article disappears (Delsing (1993)):

- (17) a. Dæm dømte barnet (*ho) Marit naming
they baptized child.the (she) Marit
'They baptized the child Marit.'
- b. Han heter (*han) Øystein.
he is-called he Øystein
'He is called Øystein.'

If in naming constructions proper names are used predicatively here, they present an obvious analogue of bare predicate definites in (13) (see also article drop with nominal predicates in French (Kupferman (1979), Pollock (1983), Boone (1987), Longobardi (1994), Chierchia (1998), Roy (2001), Matushansky and Spector (2004), among others), Dutch (de Swart, Winter and Zwarts (2004)) and German.

The same is true for Catalan (Louise McNally, p.c.). That the effect is not due to some syntactic ban on definite DPs in that position is shown by the fact that modified proper names necessitate the definite article in naming contexts:⁵

- (18) a. Va resultar que *(en) Joanet el van anomenar *(en) Jonathan
go-3sg turn-out that the Johnny him go-3pl name the Jonathan
'It turned out that Johnny had been named Jonathan.'

⁵ The definite article varies, depending on whether it appears with a bare proper name (*Joanet*) or with a modified proper name (*Lord Nelson*). See Longobardi (1999) for some discussion of Catalan and Campbell (1991) as cited by Delsing (1993) on the subject of special preproprial articles in Malagasy, Maori, and Tagalog.

- b. Li diuen *(el) Lord Nelson francés.
 him call-3sg the Lord Nelson French
 ‘They call him the French Lord Nelson.’

2.4. Case-marking

The strongest argument for a small clause analysis of verbs of naming and nomination is given by languages with morphological Case-marking. The Case on DP₂ is predicative.

2.4.1. Predicate case

In Hungarian (Veronika Hegedüs, p.c.), DP₂ in naming and nomination constructions bears Dative, which is the predicative Case:

- (19) a. a la’ny-om-at Mari-nak nevezt-em el
 the daughter-1sg-Acc **Mary-Dat** named-1sg PREVERB
 ‘I named my daughter Mary.’
- b. a la’ny-om-at elnök-nek jelölt-em
 the daughter-1sg-Acc **president-Dat** nominated-1sg
 ‘I nominated my daughter president.’
- c. okos-nak tart-om a la’ny-om-at
clever-Dat keep-1sg the daughter-1sg-acc
 ‘I consider my daughter clever.’

The same happens in Syrian Arabic, where the predicate Case is Accusative (Nisrine Al-Zahre, p.c.) and in Russian, where the predicate Case is Instrumental (Bailyn and Rubin (1991), Bailyn and Citko (1999), Pereltsvaig (2001), etc.). These facts are suggestive, but not conclusive.

2.4.2. Case-doubling

Case-doubling is a phenomenon whereby a nominal (or adjectival) predicate bears the same case as that assigned to the subject of predication. It is a characteristic property of small clauses (especially in secondary predication, even in languages that don’t have it in primary predication).⁶ One example of case-doubling is Latin small clause complements of ECM verbs: the Case on DP₂ is the same as that on DP₁:

- (20) a. Ciceronem clarum habent. Latin SC
 Cicero-Acc famous-Acc consider/hold
 ‘They consider Cicero famous.’
- b. Cicero clarus habetur Latin SC (passive)
 Cicero-Nom famous-Nom consider/hold-Pass
 ‘Cicero is considered famous.’

When passivization renders DP₁ Nominative, this is reflected in the Case of DP₂ (here an AP). Case-doubling also happens with verbs of naming and nomination, and the

⁶ Case doubling also occurs in Japanese and Korean with inalienable possession. This might be relevant: Massam (1985) and following her Cho (1998) argue that Korean Case doubling involves ECM. This is suggestive when one recalls that possessives is one of the environments in Northern Norwegian where the prepositional article disappears).

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same effects obtain in German and in Modern Greek (though this is harder to show for the former, since proper names do not decline).⁷

- (21) a. Filium meum Lucium voco. verb of naming
 son-Acc my-Acc Lucius-Acc call-1sg
 ‘I call my son Lucius.’
- b. Meus filius vocatur Lucius passive
 my-Nom son-Nom call-Pass Lucius-Nom
 ‘My son is called Lucius.’
- (22) a. Ciceronem consulem creat verb of nomination
 Cicero-Acc consul-Acc make
 ‘S/he makes Cicero consul.’
- b. Cicero creatur consul passive
 Cicero-Nom is-created consul-Nom
 ‘Cicero is made consul.’

There is no accepted theory of Case-doubling, but while “copying” the Case of the subject onto the predicate can be viewed as a kind of agreement, no relation is commonly assumed to exist between two internal arguments of a ditransitive verb that would permit to connect their Case-marking.

2.5. Other predicate positions

Proper names can be small clause predicates with ECM/raising verbs (including copula) as well as secondary predicates. In our first example proper names appear as a secondary predicate and in a small clause complement of a raising verb. ECM verbs other than *seem*, *consider*, etc., are also possible, and we correctly predict the existence of raising verbs of naming (Eddy Ruys, p.c.):⁸

- (23) Born [PRO **Charles Lutwidge Dodgson**], the man who would become **Lewis Carroll** was an eccentric and an eclectic.

- (24) zij heet Marie Dutch
 she be-named Marie
 ‘She is named Marie.’

Although *heten* appears with the *have* rather than *be* auxiliary (as does the raising verb *seem*), it patterns with other unaccusatives in that its passive participle can function as a reduced relative on the AGENT:

- (25) a. de gevallen jongen Dutch
 the fallen boy
- b. *de gedanste jongen
 the danced boy
- c. ? het Marie geheten meisje
 the Marie be-named girl

⁷ This means that German does have ECM, though not with propositional attitude verbs.

⁸ The reason why proper names cannot appear with verbs like *seem* or *believe* has to do with a scalarity constraint on their complement (Matushansky (2002)).

We conclude that proper names can be predicates with verbs other than verbs of naming. However, what do we make of the fact that while some verbs of nomination (as in (26)) allow infinitival, indicative or subjunctive complements (though sometimes with a subtle change in meaning), verbs of naming do not?

- (26) a. They proclaimed Arthur to be the king of all England. nomination
 b. The prince declared that the war was inevitable.
- (27) a. Earnshaw named the foundling Heathcliff. naming
 b. * Earnshaw named the foundling to be Heathcliff.
 c. * Earnshaw named that the foundling is/be Heathcliff.

At least two possible explanations can be easily imagined. The first, a syntactic one, is that verbs of naming c-select an xNP predicate in their complement, which is what other ECM verbs do (cf. Stowell (1981)). An alternative is that a verb embedded under a verb of naming would introduce an event argument, which would be incompatible with the semantics of naming verbs.

2.6. Use vs. mention

Kripke (1980), p. 62, fn, suggests that ‘Sloppy, colloquial speech, which often confuses use and mention, may, of course, express the fact that someone might have been called, or not been called, ‘Aristotle’ by saying that he might have been, or not have been, Aristotle.’ If so, the examples introduced in section 2.5 should be treated on a par with the following:

- (28) a. ‘Arthur’ starts with an *a*.
 b. ‘Guinevere’ is a pretty name.

Though mention could account for article omission with proper names in naming constructions discussed in section 2.3.2 (attributing it to their non-referentiality there), it cannot explain why they behave as predicates with respect to Case-marking (section 2.4). Moreover, unlike a genuine mention, which can normally be replaced by an explicit “the linguistic expression X” or something similar, in naming constructions the name cannot be substituted with *the name of* (and the same is true for nomination):

- (29) a. They named him (*the name (of)) Heathcliff.
 b. The Senate nominated him (*the office/function/duty... (of)) consul.

The following potential counter-example is due to Roger Schwarzschild, p.c.:

- (30) She called him every name in the book.

Since (30) can be interpreted literally, we seem to be in trouble: a predicate can’t be universally quantified. However, (30) is actually an argument in favor of the theory, since it can be construed as an instance of *have/be* alternation (Partee (1987) answering Williams (1983)):

- (31) This house has been every color.

Although we should not rely on *call* for our conclusions, (30) is still compatible with our proposal that in naming constructions proper names are predicates.

2.7. Summary

From various cross-linguistic evidence available we conclude that verbs of naming take a small clause complement (like verbs of nomination, which are clearly ECM). Our major arguments are as follows:

- The preproprial definite article that appears with unmodified proper names in argument positions is dropped in naming constructions
- Case-marking of the proper name is that of a predicate (dedicated predicative Case or Case-doubling) in naming constructions
- Proper names can function both as primary predicates with standard raising and ECM verbs (except for verbs of propositional attitude, with which proper names are excluded for independent reasons) and as secondary predicates

By Occam's razor names in argument positions have to incorporate the meaning that names have in predicate position. This would follow automatically if we assume that proper names in argument positions are definite descriptions – not only semantically but also syntactically, because then they would behave just like definite argument DPs, which incorporate the meaning of corresponding NP predicates.

However, we still have not proposed a semantics for proper name predicates. The meaning that we will give for them in the next section will also allow us to account for modified and complex proper names in a way parallel to modification inside DPs.

3. Analysis

If proper names are predicates, do they have the standard predicate type $\langle e, t \rangle$ or are they more complex? Various definite description proposals where an artificial predicate $\lambda x . x = Alice$ is created will not result in the correct truth conditions in naming constructions. Moreover, apart from the standard argument slot for the subject, proper names must also include an argument for a particular kind of contextual dependency:

- (32) $\llbracket Alice \rrbracket = \lambda x \in D_e . \lambda R . x$ is a referent of $[æIɪs]$ by virtue of the naming convention R

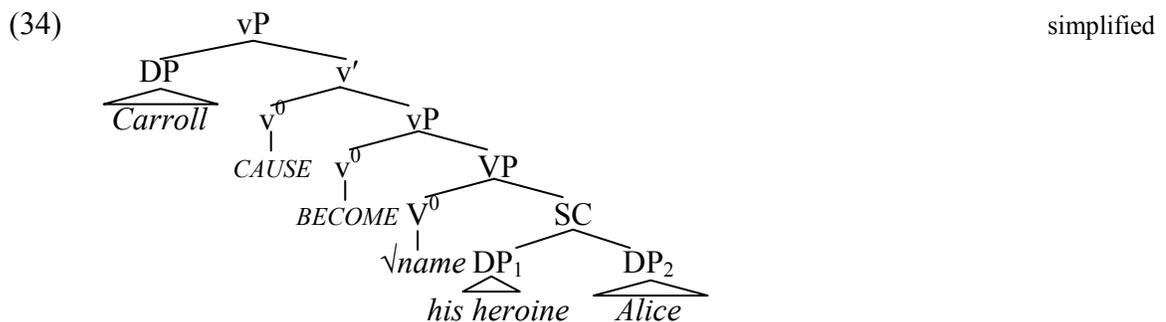
Given that the contents of the name quotes the (phonological form of) the name itself, our approach fits into the more general framework of a quotation theory of proper names (Geurts (1997)).

3.1. Predicate names

The reason for the non-simplex lexical entry in (32) is the fact that we want to obtain compositionally the interpretation in (33), where the contribution of the verb of naming is correctly incorporated into the truth conditions and yet makes it possible for a naming small clause to be interpretable as a complement of verbs like *be* and *become*:

- (33) $\llbracket \text{Alexandra is nicknamed Al} \rrbracket \approx \text{Alexandra is a referent of } [æI] \text{ by virtue of (the naming convention of) } \textit{nicknaming}$

The naming verb (actually its root) is then an argument of the proper name, even if the small clause with the proper name predicate is structurally its complement. This explains why naming verbs are incompatible with predicates that are not proper names.



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- b. Every woman who has a husband called John and a lover called Gerontius takes only Gerontius to the Rare Names Convention.

Like definite descriptions, proper names can be used generically (Geurts (1997)):

- (38) The light bulb/Coca Cola was invented by an American.

Geurts (1997) provides many more arguments in favor of unifying proper names and definite descriptions, but apart from similarities there are also differences, of which the most glaring is the absence of an overt definite article in languages like English. This means that there has to be at least some syntactic or semantic difference between proper names in argument positions and definite descriptions. We suggest that argument proper names contain an indexical:

- (39) $[[\text{the Alice}]_c = \lambda x . x \text{ is a referent of } [\text{æ}lɪs] \text{ by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker }_c \text{ and the hearer }_c$

This proposal therefore consists of two parts: (a) the existence of a particular type of an indexical and (b) saturation by an implicit argument. With respect to the latter, it is independently known that argument positions can be saturated by a contextual indexical:

- (40) a. The airport is close (to here).
b. She is a close friend (of mine).

Moreover, it has been proposed before that proper names contain an indexical: for example, Burge (1973) argues that the meaning of proper names contains a demonstrative (*that Alice*), while Larson and Segal (1995) propose that the null *that* is present in the syntax. Elbourne (2002) offers some arguments against this view and in favor of the usual view that that proper names are just definites. The two positions are reconciled by Recanati (1997) and Pelczar and Rainsbury (1998), who introduce the special indexical of *the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer*, and Liu (2004), who makes use of *the relevant linguistic community*.

In these latter approaches, as well as in ours, proper names can denote a unique individual because of the hidden (or overt) definite article. As a result, there can be more than one person with a particular name, as long as we consider only the universe of the discourse – in the same way as we can refer to someone as *the doctor* as long as there are no other doctors in the discourse.

The contribution of our proposal is not only to provide independent evidence for a definite description analysis with a “quotation” predicate, but also to make it follow from compositionality.

We can now return to the question of article absence with proper names. As might already be clear from the discussion above, we would like to maintain that proper names are lexically specified to license a null definite article (or to not phonologically realize the definite article). A confirmation for this view comes from the fact that modified proper names always appear with articles (except when modification is by evaluative adjectives (*poor Mary*) and possibly some others – see Borer (in press)):

- (41) a. the *(French) Mary Poppins restrictive
b. the *(young) Mozart
c. the *(incomparable) Callas non-restrictive

This means that article omission (however realized formally) is a morphological property of a class of lexical items, which can be blocked by modification (or by plural morphology: *the Clintons*). Additional confirmation of this view comes from the special preproprial articles in Catalan, etc.: it clearly shows that proper names can affect the choice of the article and that modification can influence this choice.

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- (47) c. The unique individual who is Alice by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker c and the hearer c is named Alice.

Since the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer is not necessarily the same as the naming convention established by the verb *name* (e.g. the namer(s) may not be the same), (47a) and (47b) do not have the same truth conditions.

3.5. Other determiners

Our semantics predicts that proper names should be able to combine with determiners other than (the covert) *the*, which is what they do:

- (48) a. ...but no Catherine could I detect, far or near.
b. This Rover of yours has overturned the garbage again!

(48a) is more interesting, because somehow definiteness is preserved. Again, this is not unique to proper names, since we only need to find a description that must denote a single entity, as in *There's no largest number*.

Proper names can also appear with indefinite determiners, and then two kinds of interpretation can arise:

- (49) He is **such a (typical) John** – he always has to appear as the subject of a sentence!

- (50) There are relatively **few Alfreds** in Princeton. Burge (1973)

In (49), the proper name has undergone semantic conversion to a common noun (see also Burge (1973)) and is no longer “proper”, since *John* is interpreted as *a (typical) representative of the kind defined by being named John*. If the name *John* is interpreted as we suggested above (i.e. *the unique individual who is a referent of [ʒɔn] by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker c and the hearer c*), the conversion is straightforward: (49) presupposes that there are properties that all Johns share. On the other hand, (50) involves no coercion and its interpretation results from combining an indefinite article with the proper name predicate, with no further stipulations.

4. Conclusion

We have shown that proper names in naming constructions must be viewed as predicates quoting the name and proposed a particular semantics making use of an argument slot for the naming convention. As a result, we can now easily deal with several puzzling issues about proper names in argument positions (article omission or special preproprial article, rigidity...) as well as deviations from default cases (e.g. indefinite, modified and complex proper names).

Several new issues suggest themselves as topics for future research:

- Limits of cross-linguistic variation: as mentioned in fn. 2, many languages use the benefactive structure for naming constructions (*She was given this name in honor of her grandmother*). How is this construction related to the small clause one we have examined? What does it say about the meaning of proper names?
- Default and non-default names: as Zimmermann (to appear) notes, a place or a person may have more than one name or change names over a period of time. Can our lexical entry for proper names make reference to the time of naming, in the same way common nouns are specified for a time argument?
- How similar are proper names and kind names (Kripke (1980))?

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