Toward a semantics for name-name-blends

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While regular blends such as *brunch* or *motel* have received some attention regarding their formal morpho-phonological and semantic properties, little is known about name-blends of the kind in (1) (from iWeb and google.com):

(1)   a. **Sarkoleon** Bonaparte: Waging war to save his job - Has Nicolas Sarkozy succumbed to Napoleonic dreams?

          b. **Brangelina** are true globetrotters, but have settled down in the vineyards of France…

          c. Aniston - also confirmed what felt obvious " that **Brangelina** happened behind her back.

Building on a database of more than 1.000 English and German attestations, we show name-blends to be productive and to pose intricate semantic questions. For example, they allow for polysemy and (can) encode a variety of semantic categories, such as similative, endocentric, left-headed structures as in 1a. or exocentric cases in 1b/c. (the referent is neither B. Pitt nor A. Jolie). As in 1c., name-blends frequently give rise to eventive readings, where *Brangelina* appears to denote the romance rather than the couple (see the verbal predicate *happen*), a fact that does not allow for trivial answers due to the lack of semantic structure of names. Assuming a form of social ontology (e.g. Anderson & Löbner 2019; Searle 1995), we argue that the most frequent readings in our data can be analyzed in terms of "counts-as"-relations, i.e. particular statuses assigned by the speech community. We suggest that it is the morphological process itself that triggers certain eventive readings, and that these readings are highly context-bound but restricted to a smallish set of structures that call for multiple participants that encode the same roles.