

DE GRUYTER MOUTON

DOI 10.1515/css-2015-0015 — Chinese Semiotic Studies 11(3): 297-315

# George Rossolatos\*

## Double or ... Nothing

### Deconstructing Cultural Heritage

**Abstract:** This paper draws on the deconstruction(ist) toolbox and specifically on the textual unweaving tactics of supplementarity, exemplarity, and parergonality, with a view to critically assessing institutional (UNESCO's) and ordinary tourists' claims to authenticity as regards artifacts and sites of 'cultural heritage'. Through the 'destru[k]tion' of claims to 'originality' and 'myths of origin', that function as preservatives for canning such artifacts and sites, the cultural arche-writing that forces signifiers to piously bow before a limited string of 'transcendental signifieds' is brought to full view. The stench of the aeons is thus forced to evaporate through a post-transcendentalist opening towards ordinary myths' original doubles.

**Keywords:** exemplarity; parergonality; phenomenological semiotics; supplementarity

---

\*Corresponding author, **George Rossolatos:** University of Kassel, Germany, Email: georgerossolatos123@gmail.com

## 1 Introduction

The cultural and natural heritage is among the priceless and irreplaceable assets, not only of each nation, but of humanity as a whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized assets constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples of the world. Parts of that heritage, because of their exceptional qualities, can be considered to be of "Outstanding Universal Value" and as such worthy of special protection against the dangers which increasingly threaten them. (UNESCO World Heritage Center 2012: 2)

While working within the operational definition of cultural heritage that lurks behind and beneath the stipulations contained in the above paragraph from UNESCO's World Heritage Center's operational guidelines (and more explicitly laid out in Articles 1 and 2 of the World Heritage Convention [henceforth denoted as 'Convention']), we notice, first and foremost, that cultural heritage is almost equivalent to the survival of the notion of humanity

(if not of humanity from a sheer materiality point of view). Then, this heritage is priceless, and, hence, does not abide by any exchange system. The cultural sites and artifacts to be preserved are cited in UNESCO's constantly updated World Heritage List. Although this heritage is priceless, it still constitutes a form of 'asset' of 'outstanding universal value'. Thus, we are concerned with assets that do have value (and, subsequently, do abide by a certain exchange system), yet whose value is incalculable and, by implication, priceless. Evidently, we are concerned with a limit conception of value or with the value of all values, where value, at this juncture, concerns both economic and cultural capital. Economic capital concerns the financial value of cultural heritage which is in excess of calculability, whence stems the priceless nature of cultural heritage. Cultural capital concerns the universally binding axiological framework that is represented in this cultural heritage, whose gravitas is so weighty, as to endanger the sustenance of the notion of humanity should this heritage perish. The coupling of these two forms of capital does manifest an exchange system, quite remarkably an impossible one, viz., that an infinite supply of economic capital always already falls short of the value surplus that is inherent in cultural heritage. In other words, cultural heritage is always already in excess of any potential amount of money that might be offered for its purchase, by dint of the fact that this heritage only exists because it cannot be dislocated from a locus of excess where it is by definition situated in a configuration of economic/cultural forms of capital. A potential agreement on a determinate sum for its purchase would entail its devaluation and, at the same time, dislocation. Not only is cultural heritage priceless, but also immovable. It can only be preserved.

"Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity" (par.49 of the Convention). Four out of the ten criteria that must be met (at least one) in order for a cultural site/artifact to be considered as having outstanding universal value, as per par.77 of the Convention, stipulate some sort of exemplarity ("be outstanding examples..."). Furthermore, "to be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value, a property must also meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity" (par.78 of the Convention). Authenticity concerns the originality of the characteristics of the cultural heritage site/artifact and its meaning. Integrity concerns the wholeness and intactness of the cultural heritage and its attributes. In sum, the inclusion of a cultural site/artifact in the World Heritage List presupposes the incidence of global cultural significance of the concerned sites/artifacts, coupled with their exemplarity, originality and integrity.

Now, by resuming the introductory analysis of the exchange system wherein cultural heritage is by definition embedded, and in the light of the subsequent caveats about key terms, we may discern that the cultural capital that is engraved in the world heritage list must resonate with globally appealing meaning. Thus, the cultural economy that is circumscribed by the Convention essentially boils down to exchanges of meaning. Therefore, we may validly claim that the cultural sites/artifacts that are included in the World Heritage List constitute cultural signs, whose meaning consists of relationships between signifiers (or the signs' formal properties) and signifieds (or the signs' conceptual aspects), based on the traditional Saussurean semiological model. The significance of these signs as correlations between signifiers and signifieds emerges at the level of the signs' exchange for globally appealing values or a global axiological nexus that makes up, in a nutshell, humanity's 'ego ideal'. In other words, we are primarily concerned with a semiotic economy that comprises signs and axiological elements as its essential components.

The deconstructive reading of the Convention's definitional cornerstones and the accompanying World Heritage List that is offered in this article, aims at yielding a sketch map of this semiotic economy and the form of cultural capital that is definitive of humanity's cultural heritage, as enshrined in UNESCO's Convention. In greater detail, I draw on relevant textual unweaving tactics from Derrida's deconstruction(ist) toolbox, such as supplementarity, exemplarity, parergonality, with view to contextualizing the correspondingly interlocking terms of the Convention, as above laid out. Then, I consider how meaning/significance is produced for the featured sites/artifacts and what this meaning amounts to. Finally, I dwell on how the cultural meaning of the World's Heritage List is reproduced in situated meaning-making instances, as derived from secondary data about tourists' motivations for visiting cultural heritage sites, that is visitors whose primary relationship with cultural destinations neither lies within a scientific purview nor is funded by an organization for research purposes.

## 2 The authentic supplementarity of cultural heritage

### 2.1 Deconstruction as toolbox of reading tactics

As explicitly stated by Derrida, deconstruction “inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition, but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos. Particularly the signification of *truth*” (Derrida 1997: 11). A deconstructive reading is primarily concerned with laying bare fundamental presuppositions that permeate a textual corpus. Derrida’s adamant preoccupation with the pervasive metaphysical binarisms that underpin classical philosophical texts of the Western tradition, and with the demonstration of their originary character, has been abundantly reflected in non-philosophical fields that have been borrowing deconstructive concepts/rhetorical stratagems (as reading tactics), such as ‘metaphysics of presence’ and the repeatedly misused ‘différance’. In the context of cultural analysis, deconstruction(ist) discourse’s active engagement with key semiotic concepts renders it particularly apt for critically addressing the invisible relationships between different levels of cultural meta-narratives (such as the above-quoted one by UNESCO) and experiences, such as those involved while visiting tourist destinations. Additionally, deconstructionist concepts and tactics are particularly useful for re-contextualizing consumption drivers behind manifest responses in cognitivist research. Thus, the intuitive employment of terms, such as ‘motivation’ or ‘authenticity’, that are customarily employed in this type of research, may be interpretively expanded towards more phenomenologically inclined territories, of which deconstruction partakes (in a wider sense; see Lawlor 2002 and Watkin 2009 for approaches to the relationship between deconstruction and phenomenology). This re-contextualization is effected by tracing the use of fundamental concepts throughout the history of philosophical texts, including the ‘cogito’ itself, and, subsequently, by submitting them to incessant criticism as regards their mode of textual constitution and their criteria of legitimacy.

### 2.2 The supplement at the origin

The explicit stress in the Convention on the globally appealing significance of the listed cultural heritage sites and artifacts, alongside their mandated

originality, are affirmative of the incidence of authenticity and originality as necessary conditions of human existence or as originary loci whereupon the notion of humanity is edified. From a deconstructive point of view, authenticity and originality are untenable concepts or are as feasible as utopian Platonic Idea(l)s. As explicitly argued by Derrida throughout variable writings, at the origin lies the process of redoubling [*dedoublement*], while the second, the copy, actually antedates (in a *different* temporality than linear time) the first, the original. This seemingly paradoxical position underlies the ironically paradoxical title of this Section ('authentic supplementarity'), "if this absurd expression [originary supplement] may be risked, totally unacceptable as it is within classical logic. Rather, the supplement of origin: which supplements the failing origin and which is yet not derived; this supplement is, as one says of a spare part, of the original make (or a document, establishing the origin)" (Derrida, 1997: 313; also see Nesselroth, 2007).

The supplement is used throughout Derrida's writings in a similar sense to terms, such as trace, remainder, cinder, mark (Wortham, 2010). How is this thesis established, and what are the repercussions for the necessary conditions of cultural heritage and, subsequently, the 'survival' of humanity?

Redoubling- the word is itself double, saying again in its prefix the repetition, reproduction, that is said in doubling. Its sense too is double: it means both to double and to double again, hence, a doubling itself subject to doubling, reiterable without a controlling limit, doublings [...] To begin will always be (or prove to have been) redoubling- which is to say no beginning at all (Sallis, 1992: 120), or, nothing.

Thus, in the beginning of a cultural order we do not encounter 'original' sites/artifacts, as signs, but doubles or no beginning at all. Repetition/reiteration lies at the heart of the production of signs (linguistic or in any other modality signs may be produced). And insofar as the cultural economy of heritage, as argued in the preceding Section, essentially boils down to a semiotic economy, we are concerned, at the origin, with the repetition of signs or with the signs' redoubling. If repetition antedates the original, then positing originality as a necessary presupposition for listing a site/artifact in the World Heritage List is untenable. But, still, it is not clear why repetition antedates and grounds originality. In order to elucidate this cryptic remark let us consider Derrida's arguments for the untenability of originality, and hence for the originary redoubling of signs.

Derrida's arguments for the lack of originality and in praise of redoubling are interspersed throughout various works, from *Grammatology* to *Dissemination* to *Margins of Philosophy* (to name a few) which do not even constitute works, in the 'proper' sense, but, more often than not, collections of

essays, thus works within works (and this extends to intentional juxtapositions of different, stylistically dissonant ‘works’, as is the case with *Glas*). Concomitantly, they are framed in different argumentative contexts, while engaging with different philosophical/literary/psychoanalytic texts at a time. For the sake of consistency with the previous argumentation and with the wider argumentative contours of this paper, I shall consider strictly arguments that relate signs to redoubling. By extension, the argumentative focus will expand towards the relationship between originality and supplementarity (which constitutes a reiteration of the relationship between ‘originary’ signs and their doubles). The first incidence of the relationship between signs and redoubling that I will consider concerns Derrida’s reading of Husserl’s *Origin of Geometry* from *Speech and Phenomena* (1973), while the extension to the related discussion between originality and supplementarity which addresses more narrowly the problematic that is raised in this Section, will take place by recourse to *Of Grammatology* (1997).

The issue (or, at least, one among the issues, of primary relevance to our argumentation) that is examined in *Speech and Phenomena* with regard to Husserlian phenomenology, concerns the prevalence of speech over writing (which is also examined in *Of Grammatology*) in the constitution of subjectivity. This prevalence in Derrida’s reading of Husserl’s argumentation is attributed to a structure of auto-affectation whereby the subject hears itself speaking and, hence, becomes present to itself by dint of this auto-affective relationship. “In the voice the signifier effaces itself for the sake of the presence of the signified meaning; such effacement is possible only because the signifier never really escapes self-presence, because in the voice self-presence is preserved” (Sallis, 1992: 129). This seemingly contradictory statement points to the primacy of the subject as speaking subject that retains an originary presence to itself precisely by virtue of what is preserved in the voice. This preservation is enabled by Husserl’s well-known model for memory, as a structure of protentions carried forward from previous utterances in the flow of speech and retentions of signifiers from previous utterances, that is as a “doubling of the previous nows (or the nows to come) in the present now, that is as retention (or protention); and as a doubling, an unlimited repetition, of the now as such, in its ideality, as the ideal form of presence” (Sallis, 1992: 135). However, this doubling is more originary, as Sallis remarks, than the phenomenologically originary itself. In other words, the subject’s presence to itself in a spoken utterance is guaranteed by the repetition of signs (correlations between signifiers/signifieds), and not merely signifiers, as Sallis’s reading suggests, that are retained from previous moments and at the same time protained, that is carried forward in speech. Memory needs signs in order to recall the non-present. “The reason for this is

straightforward enough. Precisely because the past is no longer present, no longer accessible as a presence in itself, it must have been inscribed as a mark that can be repeated from one time to another” (Hagglund, 2008: 51). Hence, the subject is not the ordinary locus of its utterances, but it is constituted in the flow of nows as repetitions. The subject’s origin is its double. It is also worth noting that for A. Schutz, Husserl’s student whose sociological adaptation of phenomenological theory and constant quest for endowing sociology with firm philosophical rootings managed to carve unique directions in social phenomenological research, the concepts of symbol and sign have been instrumental, especially in terms of his later writings on the lifeworld. In this context “symbols as part of our social stock of knowledge enable us to indirectly communicate experiences of everyday transcendent realities – like religion, science, politics, etc. – within the reality of everyday life; through symbols the multiple realities are represented within the reality of everyday life and through communication these realities can become intersubjective and objectified and therefore can influence human action” (Dreher, 2003: 143). The overcoming of such transcendences (e.g. religion, politics), as called by Schutz, in the intersubjectively constituted lifeworld of the ‘we’ is afforded by symbols through the mechanism of appresentation. “The crucial argument within Schutz’s sign theory is the assumption that appresentative references are a means to overcome experiences of transcendence” (Dreher, 2003: 143). Again, in line with our interpretative focus, it merits highlighting that regardless of Schutz’s opening up of appresentation to an intersubjectively constituted lifeworld in an attempt to eschew his master’s charges of solipsism, the concept is still rooted in a metaphysics of presence paradigm that prioritizes presencing (i.e. appresentation as ‘ideational’ presencing of non-objectively perceptually present objects in the now of an experiential flow; cf. Drummond 2007: 39-40; Schutz and Luckmann 1974, Schutz and Luckmann 1989) as apocalyptic horizon.

Let us now turn to the arguments for repetition and supplementarity as formulated in *Of Grammatology* (1997). “In the second part of the book, Derrida examines Rousseau’s notion that writing forms a ‘dangerous supplement’ to speech. For Rousseau – and, indeed, the entire metaphysical tradition before and after him, from Plato to Saussure to Husserl and beyond – speech constitutes itself as the immediate expression of living presence. Writing, in contrast, is viewed as merely a technical, auxiliary and extrinsic form of representation. The ‘supplement’ of writing is ‘dangerous’ to the extent that it threatens to usurp speech, corrupt the living word, and divide and deaden language. Derrida, however, reinhabits the ‘text’ of Rousseau in order to show how writing augments speech not just as a mere ‘extra’ laid on top of an already fully present and self-sufficient ‘thing’, but as a crucial addition which

compensates for a certain shortfall in speech itself. Writing, then, is not merely an inessential appendage, but becomes instead the indispensable supplement without which speech could not constitute itself in the first place” (Wortham, 2010: 203). “In each case, the supplement adds itself to an ostensibly ideal or original presence in the form of exposing the lack and self-difference at its very origin” (p. 204). Thus, Derrida overturns the primacy of speech over writing in favor of the latter, which is posited as the necessary supplement without which speech could not point to the phantasmatic self-presence of the subject.

Of particular interest is a specific form of writing which Derrida terms ‘arche-writing’. “Arche-writing should not be confused with the empirical concept of writing or be placed in opposition to speech. Rather, Derrida’s argument is that a number of traits associated with empirical writing – such as the structure of representation, intrinsic finitude, and the relation to an irreducible exteriority – reinforce the conditions of possibility for experience and life in general, which is thus characterized by an arche-writing” (Hagglund, 2008: 51). Arche-writing not only conditions the transcendental subject and, by implication, the empirical subject that is conditioned by the transcendental subject (in Husserl’s terms), but contains the key terms that permeate western philosophy and hence animate and perpetuate the tradition of western metaphysics. These terms, by virtue of their originary nature, thus constitute, one might say, ‘master-signifiers’ (e.g. the word ‘Psyche’ or ‘Soul’) that are correlated with ‘master-signifieds’ (e.g. an invisible force that animates the body). Master signifieds have been called transcendental by Derrida in a rather pejorative fashion with view to highlighting their illusory presuppositional and non-sign dependent status outside of the tradition that is called western metaphysics (e.g. the transcendental signifier ‘God’; cf. Rapaport, 1989). I am employing the terms master-signifiers and master-signifieds strictly within the culturological context of this analysis in order to highlight the function of sites/artifacts of ‘outstanding value and significance’ in a cultural semiotic economy.

Arche-writing is originary as a Book of Life that animates a tradition. By analogy, the arche-book of culture consists of an archetypical iconography that produces its transcendental signifieds as effects of meaning [*effets de sens*], as an involutory path among the master-signifiers that constitute the Book’s rhetoriconatural<sup>1</sup> topoi, as sites of inscription of cultural heritage. And insofar

---

<sup>1</sup> I am employing the newly coined neologism ‘rhetoriconatural’ in order to emphasize that the cultural sites that are included in the World Heritage List may be natural locations, as referents,



as cultural heritage is thus preserved in its arche-writing as the Book of Cultural Life, the tourist's movement that maintains the Book's omnipresence, constitutes neither a progression (towards an always to come revelatory moment, as Being's self-presencing; cf. Nancy, 2008), nor a regression (as the presencing of an always unsublatable trace of the primary movement of *différance* that conditions the movement of the Spirit, in Hegelian terms), but as what may termed 'ingression' within the rhetoriconatural province of the Book of culture. The tourist is destined to wander in the Book, without being conditioned either by an impending presence, or by an unsublatable absence, save for a constant re-location among its loci.

Now, if the lived experience is equivalent to speech as the subject's self presence to itself and if arche-writing, based on Derrida's subversion of the primacy of speech over writing, conditions life and animates it as its 'supplement' at the origin, then the arche-book of culture 'in fact' antedates and conditions the actual living of a tourist experience. Indeed, in order for a cultural artifact to assume value and significance, it must be adequately transformed into an entry in UNESCO's list of cultural heritage. The artifact does not exist outside of the Book (insofar as existence is equivalent to preservation according to the rules stipulated by the institutional discourse of the organization). Hence, the actual experience of a tourist destination of cultural heritage amounts to the enactment of what is already inscribed in the arche-book of culture, thus affirming Derrida's prioritization of the importance of writing over speech in maintaining cultural memory, by virtue of supplementing the lived experience, as the origin of cultural life. The lived experience, then, is destined, since the beginning, to re-trace the iconography of its supplementary origin which origin, literally, is nowhere to be found, as it is always already its double. The self-referential double-entendre of a tourist destination as destiny, as givenness of the plenum of the Book's topoi from which one must chose, constitutes the absolute semiotic constraint on the tourist's 'free choice' as being destined to return to the Book's rhetoriconatural topoi (also see Rossolatos, 2015). The Book's destinations constitute the tourist's destiny. Again, return amounts, in this context, to a re-enactment of an originary myth of origin or to a consumption of the myth of return through its double: free choice. Free choice is the double of compulsion to repeat as return. Hence, choosing to visit is doubly removed from actually arriving at one's destination, which impossibility of arrival conditions and fuels the desire to

---

yet they assume their value and significance within the rhetorical semiotic structure of UNESCO's Convention as Book of Life (cultural life, that is).

proliferate the destinations as cultural attractions. “One wishes to go back from the supplement to the source: one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source” (Derrida, 1997: 304). “Man allows himself to be announced to himself after the fact of supplementarity, which is thus not an attribute – accidental or essential – of man. For on the other hand, supplementarity, which is *nothing*, neither a presence nor an absence, is neither a substance nor an essence of man. It is precisely the play of presence and absence, the opening of this play that no metaphysical or ontological concept can comprehend. Therefore this property [*propre*] of man is not a property of man: it is the very dislocation of the proper in general” (Derrida, 1997: 244).

The supplementarity of/at the origin posits significant constraints to the legitimate use of the term ‘authentic experiences’. If originality rests with supplementarity and the cultural Book of Life is a repository of traces, then authenticity amounts to re-tracing. “For Derrida, every original must in fact be a derivation; everything is because of the ‘bad infinite’ of contamination” (O’Connor, 2010: 88). And insofar as retracing implies repetition and reiteration, quite oxymoronically, it cannot be authentic. Thus, another metaphysical veil has been lifted, that of experiencing authentically, rather than retracing.

### 2.3 The pyramid is not the sign, the sign is the pyramid

The signs that make up the cultural Book of Life or its iconography, then, constitute the inscriptions of traces that await to be brought back to life. The pictures and the architectural designs of monuments of ‘outstanding significance and cultural value’, such as pyramids, do not portray in absentia the original sites/artifacts of value, but the simulacral manifestations of traces that condition the potential experience of pyramids as the referent of the Book’s contents: “the trace simultaneously traced and erased, simultaneously living and dead, and, as always, living in its simulation of life’s preserved inscription” (Derrida, 1982: 24). The pyramid preserves the mirage of immortality, which simply means that it re-presents immortality, where what is presented in this representation is the mirage at the origin or an originary instance of a cultural formation that must be preserved throughout eternity in order to legitimate the non-contingent nature of cultural life; yet, this non-contingency is incumbent on a mirage.

The pyramid as tomb is also defined in the *Pit and the Pyramid* (in Derrida, 1982: 82) as what “shelters, maintains in reserve, capitalizes on life by marking that life continues elsewhere”. This ‘elsewhere’ is not some sort of phantasmatic after-life, but the very province of the sign as container of immortality. The

pyramid as sign resists time and temporalizes forever (immortalizes) its referent. The sign, then, is the pyramid (Derrida, 1982: 84), while its referent (the physical pyramid) is its shadow. “If signs are monuments in which immortalized living souls reside, then one can see the pharaonic grave - the pyramid - as the sign of all signs” (Sloterdijk, 2009: 55). Subsequently, visiting the pyramids merely amounts to casting a shadow on the signs that are the true carriers of immortality (the Book’s, that is).

What is most remarkable about the symbolic form of the pyramid and concomitantly about its relationship with the structure of meaning it substantiates, is the involutory path whereby the pyramidal structure assumes meaning as self-contained form. The flow of immortality’s meaning, thus, is enacted as a passage from the surface to the bottom of the pyramid, from the visible to the invisible side of this self-contained whole, as noted in Derrida’s reading of the respective passage from Hegel’s *Aesthetics* (Derrida, 1982: 85).

## 2.4 We hope you enjoyed your visit to the supplement

Having, thus far, analyzed the logic of supplementarity, as constitutive (and absent, in terms of the self-presence of referents in their materiality) traces of originary loci, let us now further consider some crucial implications for the meaning of ‘authentic tourist experiences’, given that authenticity constitutes a key motivation (Poria et al., 2006) for undertaking a trip to a tourist destination in the ‘first place’.

Although, in this instance, we are concerned with a visit to a singular space, the very conditions that foreground consumption still abide by the rationale of the double, insofar as the desire to consume has been instigated by televisual, internet images, by memorabilia, such as postal cards, etc. That is, the original locus has already been re-inscribed in numerous copies, in various formats that triggered the desire to consume the ‘origin’ in the ‘first place’. But also, proof of having consumed a tourist experience usually resides in take-aways, such as postcards, t-shirts, etc. The actual locus is absent from the re-collection; what is present is a set of doubles that condition ‘its’ recollection. Moreover, given the minutely photographed, videoed and e-produced textuality of ‘originals’ nowadays, by dint of amply available and easily accessible production and editing means, and their dissemination in blogs, such as YouTube and Pinterest, the actual visit to an original locus in fact constitutes a re-enactment of memories that have been inscribed by virtue of the presence of a series of doubles. In this sense, the double not only is synchronous with the origin, as

suggested by Derrida, but antedates and conditions the consumption of the original. In fact, the model is the double, insofar as satisfaction conditionals about the quality of the tourist experience rest with comparisons between the expectations that were nurtured by the double and the actual encounter with the double's 'origin'. "We do not have an undivided origin of signification, governed by a presence, but an origin which is itself already doubled by dint of the nature of the sign" (Johnson, 1993: 123).

An army of signifiers has been recruited for bringing about the in vivo experiencing of a master-signified of origin, while being responsible for bringing about as their effect its lived experience. Hence, the lived experience of an originary locus constitutes a re-collection that in fact stems from myriads of dispersed supplements that add ever ramifying twists to the meaning of the locus as always narratively mediated and not as brute, unmediated fact (contrary to what Chronis [2006: 283] calls sensory authenticity) or as physical sites/artifacts *simpliciter*.

### 3 The rhetorical topography of exemplary cultural sites

In the process of deconstructing 'original myths of origin' in the preceding Section, allusion was made in passing to transcendental signifieds and to the intended employment of the terms 'master signifiers' and 'master signifieds'. Let us now dwell further on how transcendental signifieds come to pass and what such signifieds may be in the context of UNESCO's institutional discourse of cultural heritage. This discussion will deploy against the background of another seminal textual unweaving tactic in the deconstruction(ist) toolbox, viz., that of exemplarity. Let us, then, begin with an overview of the meaning of exemplarity in Derridean discourse and then proceed with contextualizing it in the face of the concerned corpus.

"In some respects one could argue that Derrida's work has from its inception never been concerned with anything *other* than exemplarity" (Harvey, 1992b: 194). Exemplarity is the textual operation that is responsible for the production of the 'excess' of meaning that emerges from transcendental (master) signifiers and signifieds. Exemplarity may be said to be akin to the rhetorical figure of synecdoche (as sub-type of metonymy), insofar as both are concerned with pointing to wholes via the employment of parts. Exemplarity, just like synecdoche, urges us to imagine the presence of a semantic class in its entirety, with just part of the whole being actually given in a sentence (e.g. sail for ship).

The difference, of course, as with all instances where Derrida's neologisms *differ* from existing rhetorical operations and figures, is that exemplarity functions at a deeper level of the production of textuality, than the relationship between particular/universal. "In turn, the simple movements from particular to general, or from general to particular, must be rethought, rearticulated, and redescribed as a result of the complex structures of exemplarity" (Harvey, 2002: 260).

Derrida's employment of the textual unweaving tactic of exemplarity is intended to demonstrate how excess of meaning for master signifiers and signifieds is produced not as a determinate relationship between a particular and a universal, but between a determinate particular (the example) and an indeterminate universal that is posited (presenced) as its a-textual Other (e.g. God). Exemplars are examples, but not just any examples; they are outstanding examples of what they aim at exemplifying, and, hence, they are particularly pertinent for our case, which is concerned with cultural sites/artifacts of 'outstanding value and significance'. Exemplarity may demonstrate how this 'outstanding' meaning (an outstanding synonym of exemplary, indeed) is produced within the institutional discourse of UNESCO's guidelines. At the same time, the adoption of a deconstructive reading affords to lay bare what is suppressed in the process of evoking specific examples of outstanding cultural heritage as exemplary, and, subsequently, of the contingent nature of any claims to exemplarity and the de-inflation of the 'inflated' transcendental signifieds that sustain this exemplary discourse.

"The question of the surplus hidden within the examples entails a system that Derrida calls another logic. This is the logic of parergonality. Namely, the condition of the possibility of reading examples otherwise hinges on a certain untamed and untameable, non-masterable excess" (Harvey, 1992a: 60). "The question of the inflation of examples into Exemplars is concerned with a certain transformation of *value* that inhabits this movement [...] The Exemplar is thus not only a better example than the example, but also becomes an example for example" (p. 65).

With regard to Kant's third Critique (*Critique of Judgment*) whereupon Derrida draws in his argumentation for exemplarity/parergonality, it becomes evident that the ultimate criterion for accepting the exemplary status of a spectacle (e.g. a waterfall; cf. Kant, 1987: 286) vis-à-vis an aesthetic judgment of the Sublime as the 'excessive' element in a judgmental structure that yields community bonding pre-reflectively, and yet, with a transcendental force that is only available to Reason *de jure*, is the enshrinement of the example within the transcendental idealist contours of Kantian discourse. It is the philosophical context that permits the catapulting of example to exemplar and hence forces the signifier of a waterfall to function as a master signifier that allows us to

glimpse the Sublime as excess (transcendental signified) in the example. Again, we are not confronted in this instance with the employment of just a rhetorical figure (e.g. a hyperbole). Whereas a hyperbole contains manifest linguistic elements that render it apt for functioning as such, the exemplar only contains invisible traces of another logic (parergonality) that render the example apt for being recognized as exemplary. The same holds for the Book of Culture or UNESCO's list of Cultural heritage, a list that includes (outstanding) exemplars of cultural value and significance that are exemplary by virtue of their inclusion in the Book. The transcendental signified (sublime as aesthetic judgment in the Kantian third Critique or outstanding as aesthetic judgment in UNESCO's Book) is instituted performatively in a rhetorically constituted assertion or hyperbolic judgment about the exemplar's excess *tout court*. This remark affords to elucidate the inflationary movement from example to exemplar. Furthermore, this position suggests that there is no teleology in the cultural site/artifact or the tourist attraction, in this respect, that render them apt for being labeled as 'original' or authentic, but a system of determined positions in a global cultural map of the origin, of which they partake as toponyms or rhetorical sign-posts. Otherwise, we are confronted with "the purity and nothingness of the artwork [site/artifact], and also the randomness of the artwork [site/artifact]. There is no teleology of the artwork [site/artifact]" (Stocker, 2006: 160). Hence, each consumption act of an 'original' cultural site/artifact is tantamount to a re-enactment, and thus repetition<sup>2</sup>/revisiting of a topos that is part and parcel of a given global cultural economy. "Inflating a particular case to make it not only a particular, but paradigmatic, the law of itself and all others (like itself) has its foundation and authorization only in this web of unexamined exemplarity. The foreclosure is reinforced by leaving the issue outside of the text – outside of the bounds of relevance, as if it also "goes without saying" (Harvey, 2002: 199).

Harvey (2002) assimilates examples to enthymemes, thus affirming the topical nature of exemplarity. By the same token, we may assert that exemplary tourist destinations as sites and artifacts of superior cultural heritage constitute material instantiations of rhetorical topoi. By extension, the cultural arche-writing as the Book that contains them and that legitimates their managers to lay claim to originality as their 'proprius' is equivalent to a rhetorical arche-

---

<sup>2</sup> "Despite this, repetition, in Derrida's model, does not imply repetition of the same, a second apparition identically doubling the first; this too is death. The repetition of the sign is a differential repetition which refers to the same only through a system of other signs, as Derrida argues in 'Ellipse'" (Johnson, 1993: 56).

topography (also see Harvey, 2002a: 68 on the rhetorical topography of exemplarity).

## 4 Debunking the exemplary status of UNESCO's world heritage list

As our last destination in this tourist meta-cartography, let us endeavor to deconstruct the exemplary status of the sites/artifacts that populate UNESCO's World Heritage List. As above noted, exemplarity is posited in examples as a semantically excessive element that is constitutive of the very transcendental of transcendental signifiers (e.g. God), but also of judgments that copulate hyperbolic predicates with master-signifiers, such as 'outstanding', as their master-signifieds. Nevertheless, in the majority of instances where such master-signifiers/signifieds are posited in cultural discourses, we experience the incidence of alternative signifiers/signifieds that have been cunningly suppressed by the employed arche-rhetorical topography.

While considering these suppressed signifiers, as Labadi (2007) remarks, three categories of cultural heritage are posited for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List: the most typical sites (European religious properties), typical sites (non-European religious properties) and under-represented sites (industrial heritage). Not at all surprisingly, the metaphysical discourse that underpins UNESCO's view on outstanding value and significance is materially reflected in the signifiers that disproportionately populate the World Heritage List, that is religious sites. By definition, the preservation of humanity walks hand in hand with the leveling of differences (Walsh, 1992), both in terms of surface elements of the signifier and in terms of a limited set of signifieds. In this instance, we may notice an utter undervaluation (in this impossible exchange system of priceless sites/artifacts) of popular culture artifacts, such as the first electronic music record or sites, such as the first club where House music was played.

The Heritage list assumes latently, yet utterly arbitrarily, a valuation/cultural evaluation hierarchy, where religious sites are more important than popular culture sites, and hence exemplary of what is worth being preserved in order to avoid the risk of humanity's cultural extinction. Of course, this (e)valuative excess is constituted and legitimated strictly within the self-referential discourse of UNESCO's criteria for inclusion in the Book, while being hardly reflective of a globally binding, and not segment-specific cultural ethos.

Finally, as regards the transcendental signified, “outstanding universal value is a notion that raises many theoretical issues in relation to the concept of values and of the representation of the past. One particularly complex issue concerns the notion of universalism. Universalist frameworks, including that of the World Heritage Convention, have been increasingly criticized in the past few decades. These themes and frameworks were usually Eurocentric. Indeed, as of July 2006, 50% of all the sites on this list were located in Europe” (Labadi, 2007: 152). “Universalist frameworks have been criticized for creating ‘epistemological injustices’ through the marginalization of the voices, experiences and histories of minority groups” (Labadi, 2007: 153). In addition to the universalist framework that is used for framing the master signifieds that have been posited as a prioristic (transcendental) criteria for the inclusion of sites/artifacts in the World Heritage List, specific transcendental signifieds are regularly assumed by researchers as being universally binding. As, hopefully, demonstrated in this paper, a deconstructive reading may aid in unearthing such latent presuppositions. For example, Wong (2014; also see Poria et al., 2006) draws an a priori distinction between staged and non-staged tourist experiences, while identifying authenticity with a sense of non-stageness. “Many scholars agree that authenticity of objects can be classified into two forms: those that have been mediated or commodified and those that pertain to their indigenous integrity (MacCannell, 1973). The former correspond to staged authenticity, which is a synthetic or re-created version of the true culture or heritage. They represent contrived tourism products that are meant to serve tourists for leisure, entertainment, and commercial purposes. The latter correspond to real indigenous culture or heritage that is unmediated and reflects an objective reality of a destination” (Wong, 2014: 4). Obviously, this distinction is oblivious to the supplementarity at the origin, by virtue of which positing authenticity as a transcendental signified for tourist attractions is untenable. Subsequently, this distinction is oblivious to the inherent non-difference between mediated motives and unmediated ones. The distinction also assumes tacitly a (by now largely abandoned in cultural studies) divide between high and low culture, while identifying arbitrarily high culture with ‘indigenous’ culture and low culture with the entertainment business. “Based on the cultural tourist typology (McKercher, 2002), these tourists can be classified as incidental and casual cultural tourists if they merely look for a shallow cultural experience and focus more on entertainment based cultural appeals. On the other hand, purposeful and serendipitous cultural tourists search for deeper and more genuine cultural experience that possesses educational value” (Wong, 2014: 4). Against what transcendental aesthetic criteria and defunct metaphysical binarisms of civilization/culture (in a nostalgic Adornian vein) are we legitimated in a post-



post modern cultural predicament that is defined by eclecticism (Walsh, 1992), experimentation and pastiche, rather than by a pious endorsement of immobile transcendental signifieds, to confer judgments of superior (outstanding) value for an artifact, such as a Michelangelo painting, as against a Kraftwerk record? Or for a cultural site, such as Notre Dame, as against a dance club, such as Hacienda?

Again, such distinctions only afford to perpetuate myths of origin, such as the origination of transcendental signifieds from nationally demarcated territories (“the importance of heritage as a concept is linked directly to that of modernist nationalism and the nation-state remains pre-eminent in the definition and management of heritage; UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites, for example, are nominated by national governments” [Graham, 2002: 1005]; “in a process of establishing and strengthening modern national subjectivities, tourist sites become institutionalized platforms for collective remembering” [Chronis, 2006: 293]), rather than from the rhetorical arche-topography of the Book, as World Heritage List; and by mistakenly identifying entertainment with doubling (in a pejorative fashion as part of a latent hierarchy), in oblivion of the very double at the heart of originality and originary cultural loci.

## 5 That was an original experience...

The operation of supplementarity allows us to glimpse through the contradictions in UNESCO’s Convention that were pointed out in the Introduction. Most eminently, how is it possible to predicate pricelessness of cultural heritage and at the same time claim that humanity would become impoverished in the event of the loss of this heritage? How can someone become poorer by losing something that cannot be priced and hence exchanged in the first place? As suggested by the analysis that was undertaken throughout this paper, the answer lies in the irretrievable traces that condition the self-presencing of a cultural system as Book of Culture. Cultural heritage is priceless precisely due to the impossibility of pricing the differential relations among the rhetoriconatural loci that make up the Book, insofar as excessive/outstanding value for the sites/artifacts that make up the Book emerges by virtue of being included as topoi in the Book. The ‘physical’ sites are there to remind us of the process of redoubling whereby they have become enshrined (immortalized) as pyramidal signs in the Book, which constitutes their supplementary origin. The sites/artifacts that are included in the Book are exemplary of cultural heritage

due to their inclusion in the Book, wherein they will be preserved even if the actual sites perish.

The deconstruction of the exemplary status of the sites/artifacts that are included in the World Heritage List, pointed to the purely contingent criteria whereby they become immortalized, at the expense of popular cultural artifacts which, in essence, are more reflective and definitive of the post-post modern cultural ethos, but also more reflective of the acceptance of the conflation between double and original or of the double at the origin that is lacking from the metaphysical discourse that underpins UNESCO's criteria for inclusion in the World's most outstanding cultural artifacts/sites.

## References

- Chronis, A. (2006). Heritage of the senses: Collective remembering as an embodied praxis. *Tourist Studies*, 6(3), 267–296.
- Derrida, J. (1973). *Speech and phenomena and other essays on Husserl's theory of signs*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Dissemination*. London: Athlone.
- Derrida, J. (1982). *Margins of philosophy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1986). *Glas*. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- Derrida, J. (1991). *Given time: Counterfeit money*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1997). *Of grammatology*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (2001). Response to Bennington. In S. Glendinning (Ed.), *Arguing with Derrida* (pp. 52–56). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dreher, J. (2003). The symbol and the theory of the life-world: The transcendences of the life-world and their overcoming by signs and symbols. *Human Studies*, 26(2), 141–163.
- Drummond, J. J. (2007). *Historical dictionary of Husserl's philosophy*. London: Scarecrow.
- Graham, B. (2002). Heritage as knowledge: Capital or culture? *Urban Studies*, 39(5–6), 1003–1017.
- Hagglund, M. (2008). *Radical atheism: Writing and the time of life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Harvey, I. E. (1992a). Derrida, Kant, and the performance of parergonality. In H. Silverman (Ed.), *Derrida and deconstruction* (pp. 57–74). London: Routledge.
- Harvey, I. E. (1992b). Derrida and the issues of exemplarity. In D. Wood (Ed.), *Derrida: A critical reader* (pp. 193–217), Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Harvey, I. E. (2002). *Labyrinths of exemplarity: At the limits of deconstruction*. New York, NY: State University of New York.
- Johnson, C. (1993). *System and writing in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, I. (1987). *Critique of judgment*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Labadi, S. (2007). Representations of the nation and cultural diversity in discourses on world heritage. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 7(2), 147–170.
- Lawlor, L. (2002). *Derrida and Husserl: The basic problem of phenomenology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Nancy, J.-L. (2008). *Dis-enclosure: The deconstruction of Christianity*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Nesselroth, P. W. (2007). Playing doubles: Derrida's writing. *Semiotica*, 126(1/4), 427–444.
- Niall, L. (2004). *A Derrida dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Norris, C. 2002. *Deconstruction: Theory and practice*. London: Routledge.
- O'Connor, P. (2010). *Derrida: Profanations*. London: Continuum.
- Poria, Y., Reichel, A., & Biran, A. (2006). Heritage site perceptions and motivations to visit. *Journal of Travel Research*, 44(Feb.), 318–326.
- Rapaport, H. (1989). *Heidegger & Derrida: Reflections on time and language*. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- Rossolatos, G. (2015). *Semiotics of popular culture*. Kassel: Kassel University Press.
- Sallis, J. (1992). Doublings. In D. Wood (Ed.), *Derrida: A critical reader* (pp. 120–136). Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Schutz, A., & Luckmann, T. (1974). *The structures of the life-world* (Vol. 1). London: Heinemann.
- Schutz, A., & Luckmann, T. (1989). *The structures of the life-world* (Vol. 2). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Sloterdijk, P. (2009). *Derrida, an Egyptian: On the problem of the Jewish pyramid*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Stocker, B. (2006). *Derrida on deconstruction*. London: Routledge.
- UNESCO World Heritage Center (2012). Operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Retrieved from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines> (downloaded 12 February 2015)
- Walsh, K. (1992). *The representation of the past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern World*. London: Routledge.
- Watkin, C. (2009). *Phenomenology or deconstruction? The question of ontology in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Luc Nancy*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wong, I. A. (2014). A multimethod multilevel study of heritage transmission: The role of culture on tourist interest and authenticity. *Journal of Travel Research* (advance electronic publishing). 1–14.
- Wortham, S. M. (2010). *The Derrida dictionary*. London: Continuum.

## Bionote

### George Rossolatos

George Rossolatos (b. 1975) is an academic researcher and marketing practitioner. He holds a BA (Hons) in Philosophy, an MSc in Marketing, an MBA, and a PhD in Marketing Semiotics. Research interests include cultural studies and interdisciplinary cross-fertilizations between marketing, rhetoric, and semiotics. Major publications include *Semiotics of popular culture* (2015) and *Brand equity planning with structuralist rhetorical semiotics* (2012, 2014).