

# Para-s/cite

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## Introduction: Parasites and citations

- (i) When does a repetition (not) become a difference?
- (ii) And when does a repetition/difference become something else altogether, indifferent to that repetition and difference? What are they semiotics of such becomings, this stepping aside and outside of oneself?

The first question (i) is the question of the *parasite*, the second (ii) of what I call the *paracite*. The first part of this two-part essay addresses the first question, the second the second.

Part I, “The Parasite,” explores the role of the parasite in Jacques Derrida’s engagement with speech act theory; in particular, his discussion of *citationality* in *Limited Inc* (1988). I suggest that the criterial feature of the citation—its reflexivity about what Derrida calls citationality—, while not talked *about* by Derrida, is poetically, even performatively, demonstrated by his text. Focusing on the reflexive semiotics of the citation, I argue that the performative entailments of parasites and citations turn on their ability to decenter and bracket, even as they embrace and re-present, that which they cite/parasite. And further, that through this double motion new social horizons of semiotic possibility are opened up.

Part II of the essay explores the paracite, that act alongside and beyond citation, a citational act which splits and doubles itself, as citational and yet not-quite citational. Paracitations perforate and exceed the semiotic enclosure of the citation, its play on sameness and difference, identity and alterity. To explore the semiotics of the paracite I discuss Tamil youth’s engagements with (“counterfeit”) global brand garments. In conclusion I suggest that ethnography affords avenues of exploration of these paracites and the performativities they make possible in ways that other methodologies may foreclose.

## Part I. The Parasite

### The party crasher – Derrida beside, beyond, but with Austin

Parasite – one who eats at another’s table, who trades flattery for food, a mooch, the person at the table who inevitably doesn’t put in enough money to cover their share of the bill, the party crasher of the potluck.

Jacques Derrida’s (1988) famous engagement with John Langshaw Austin’s discussion of performativity, and his infamous (non-)confrontation with John Searle (1977), turns on a particular passage in Austin’s (1962) *How to Do Things with Words*, a passage which itself turns on the question of the parasite: on the relationship between a “performative”—an act which doesn’t simply describe some state of affairs but instates it by virtue of having successfully taken place—and its citation, between the original and its repetition, between the father and his (il)legitimate heirs, the state and the pirate. Reading Derrida’s (1988) reading of Austin (1962) and his response to Searle’s (1977) *Reply* to his reading I explore the following questions: what is a parasite/citation? Under what conditions does it “take place”? And what does it do? I focus on Derrida’s issue with, and re-issue of, the parasite in Austin’s text and its relationship to what Derrida calls *iterability*—that quality manifested by citational acts that alters, marks and re-marks that which is cited, decentering and undoing, usurping and throwing into question the “original” from which the citation seemingly derives/arrives.

What is a citation such that it could perform this parasiting? What is a parasite such that it could throw into question its host’s claims on originality and propriety? I argue that Derrida’s text poetically performs the “felicity condition” (Searle 1979:44)—that condition, or conditions, that must hold for a particular act to be felicitously pulled off (Austin 1962:12–24)—of this citational performative, even if he doesn’t articulate it in the propositional content—the sense and reference—of his text: namely, the criterial feature of the citation, and the parasite, is its *reflexivity*. (More generally, we might suggest that propositionality always parasites poetics; or, as they also say, and as I re-cite below, the recipe’s proof is in the pudding.) Focusing on the reflexive semiotics of the citation, I argue that the performative effects of citational acts turn on their ability to metacommunicate the decentering and bracketing of that which we they embrace and re-present, that is, that they typify themselves as citations. To show this, I examine Derrida’s engagement with speech act theory, on what that engagement does to said theory, and what that tells us about citationality and parasitism more generally. This discussion sets up the second part of this essay, on the limits and trespasses of citationality, of its own parasiting, or rather, what lies beyond the parasite and the citation.

Let us turn to the passage in question. Having introduced performatives, in the second lecture of *How to Do Things with Words* Austin (1962:12–24) discusses the various ways such performatives might go sideways, or become infelicitous or “unhappy,” as he terms it. For example, a marriage vow might “misfire” because the groom is already married, or a promise might be “abused” if said insincerely. Some infelicities, Austin suggests, reveal something essential about performatives. Others infelicities, however, are common to many acts besides performatives (e.g., many acts are “void” if done by accident or under duress), or they are trivial (e.g., a promise that happens not to be heard by one’s interlocutor). Such infelicities, Austin tells us, are to be excluded from consideration, if only temporarily, because they don’t get to the unique (conventional) properties of the performative *as* performative. It is in this context that Austin writes the passage that Derrida takes issue with. As cited and re-marked by Derrida in “Limited Inc a b c,” re-citing “Signature Event Context” citing Austin, I hereby cite and re-mark:

Derrida: “Limited Inc a b c”

I will have to cite again from *Sec*, at length and adding emphasis:

“... a paragraph from the Second Lecture:

Derrida: “Signature, Event, Context” (*Sec*)

Austin: *How to Do Things with Words*

“(ii) Secondly, as *utterances* our performances are *also* heir to certain other kinds of ill, which infect all utterances. And these likewise, though again they might be brought into a more general account, we are deliberately at present excluding. I mean, for example, the following: a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not *seriously* [my emphasis, J. D.], but in many ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiologies* of language. All this we are *excluding* from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances” (pp. 21-22). . . .” (p. 16). (Derrida 1988:87; my marginal brackets, C. V. N.)

In this passage, Austin’s excludes “etiologies” of language, performative acts rendered “hollow or void” because they are not uttered in “ordinary circumstances.” Such acts are non-serious.

Acts like promises on stage or in poetry, or the “mockery” of marriage to a monkey (Austin 1962:24), are parasites, derived from “normal use” but in no way essential to that normality. They give nothing back, but only take. Such acts run alongside, and thus externally, to the conventions that they trope upon. The promise said by an actor in a play, for example, resembles an “ordinary” promise but in key ways doesn’t and can’t quite count in the same way as it.<sup>1</sup> Given all this, Austin argues that such infelicities be excluded from analysis, as a secondary phenomenon to the more basic, and primary, order of performativity.

Derrida’s take on Austin takes issue with this exclusion. For Derrida (1988:93), this passage is symptomatic of a larger tendency within Western philosophy, a “metaphysics of presence” (Derrida 1976) that privileges the self-same, the self-contained, the origin(al), the pure and present over the different, the dependent, the copy, the impure and the absent. Such hierarchically ranked binaries, Derrida argues, act to instate and protect that center of gravity (the self-same, present, origin, etc.) around which parasites menacingly orbit, satellites that never come close enough to land on its surface, enthralled but repelled, repellent. Such binaries are the familiar coordinates for the normative organization of most all Western philosophy, linguistic theory, legal thought, not to mention our everyday common sense:

standard	/ nonstandard,
serious	/ unserious,
normal	/ abnormal,
proper	/ improper
authentic	/ inauthentic
literal	/ metaphoric,
identity	/ difference
transcendental	/ empirical,
presence	/ absence
speech	/ writing

To this list Derrida adds host/parasite.

“Parasite,” however, is not simply a term within this hierarchically ordered grid of binaries, not simply another symptom of the metaphysics of presence that Derrida’s project aims to critique. It is also an analytic within Derrida’s reading of that grid. “Parasite” is a token/instance of a Derridean type/series of analytical concepts: writing, mark, trace, step [*marche*], margin, *différance*, graft, supplement, *pharmakon*, hymen, *parergon*. In “Signature, Event, Context” (Derrida 1988), “parasite” is taken from Austin’s discourse, used as the analytic wedge of Derrida’s “deconstruction” of that very discourse. Deconstruction as a method of critical reading (and re-writing) aims to inhabit or, following Mikhail Bakhtin (1982), “voice” the binary oppositions that organize philosophical thought/texts. But it inhabits in a particular way, voicing to particular effect: deconstruction plucks such terms from the texts in question and uses them so as to draw out their internal contradictions, aporias, and absurdities, citing them so as to displace them. Derrida appropriates the parasite from Austin, he pulls it off the tip of Austin’s tongue and breathes life into it with his own hot breath, hoping to burst Austin’s balloon, or at least, set it adrift to float away.

Derrida’s deconstruction of Austin proceeds by showing how in the heart of the “ordinary” performative, and in fact, of *all* signs, resides an exteriority, something foreign to it, and yet, paradoxically of it. In its heart resides a constant murmuring that the “ordinary” disavows: the fake, the improper, the surrogate, the citation. If we follow Derrida’s argument, the citation is already anticipated by the cited event that precedes it; that is, the parasite is always

already *in* the host. It is precisely this outside-on-the-inside that provokes and justifies the policing of this border, the expiation of the *pharmakon* from the city (Derrida 1981), the anxious need to protect and reconstitute what is always impossible, the host without its parasites. That which defines the excluded—its parasitism, imitativeness, derivativeness, deviation, impropriety—is, so Derrida argues, what defines that which the act of exclusion was meant to protect: in speech act theory, the host and his property, the author and his logocentric account of performativity.

Derrida (1988) articulates this argument in the essay “Signature, Event, Context,” or *Sec* as he “dryly” refers to it. In *Sec* Derrida performatively baptizes this outside–inside of the sign its *citatoriality*, or rather, its *iterability*. Derrida argues that all signs are, as signs, iterable. They are repeatable across contexts. Iterability presupposes what Derrida calls a “code” (what Peirce [1998] called a *type* or *legisign*), that is, some principle of trans-contextual identity that makes every iteration (what Peirce [1998] called a *token* or *replica*) the “same.” And yet, this identity enables, and in fact demands, the “same” sign to be able to be “grafted,” or recontextualized into other contexts (Briggs and Bauman 1992). This transportation, Derrida argues, necessarily generates novel meanings, singular token-level configurations of signs whose meaning in context exceeds the general “code” of the sign (also see Voloshinov 1973:99–108). Iterability, then, points to the paradoxes of the token–type distinction, how for every sign to be recognizable *as a sign* presupposes that it be both sensitive and insensitive, pliable and resistant to its contextual surround, partaking of sameness and difference, identity and alterity. That a sign can become determinate also necessitates that it is, at any particular moment, inherently indeterminate, and thus, that it can become determinate in one way *or/and* another. This splits the sign so that it can be what it is (out of context and across contexts) and not that (in any particular context). This splitting is the sign’s criterial design feature.

While iterability is a quality of all signs, it is the citation that materializes this property of iterability in discrete localizable form. Any sign *can* be cited, transported into some other discourse, given other accents and meanings by being quoted (also see Bakhtin 1982; Voloshinov 1973). Derrida writes:

Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be cited, put between quotation marks; in doing so it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. . . . This citatoriality, this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly, it is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could not even have a function called “normal”. What would a mark be that could not be cited? Or one whose origins would not get lost along the way? (Derrida 1988:12, my underlining, C. V. N.)

Note the play of modality and tense in this passage. Derrida’s innovative move is to say that this “can be” implies a form of necessity, a definitional “is” (of the universalist, transcendental, “nomic” [Silverstein 1993] variety), a “could” that “would,” and by implication “will.” As Derrida later puts it, there is a “necessary possibility” (1988:15) of citatoriality. Because every sign *can* be cited, every sign prefigures this possibility *necessarily*. Even if never actually split, the fault line lies in waiting, trembling before the shake. As Charles Sanders Peirce (1998) would put it, citatoriality is the Thirdness of a First, the law that all signs must be *able* to be cited, even if they happen, in any particular context, not to be.

The host, it seems, is already ready for the parasite: the table is set, the door open, extra party provisions specially set aside for his arrival. Every host must so plan her party, for one never knows who all is going to come, who all is going to eat or drink more than their fill. And without this possibility of excess, even this eventuality, it wouldn't, in fact, be a party at all. A party—or at least a good one, even of the most exclusive, cliquish variety—must be prepared for this contingency.

Derrida's point is that Austin's exclusion is premature, for if performatives are always citable, then a precondition of performativity is citationality. The performative is designed so as to be citable, and thus is (pre-)marked by citationality (Nakassis 2013). The performative is already "contaminated" by its citation, always comprised and compromised by "a perpetually possible parasitism" (Derrida 1988:70). Derrida writes the following:

It should also be remembered that the parasite is by definition never simply external, never simply something that can be excluded from or kept outside of the body "proper," shut out from the "familial" table or house. Parasitism takes place when the parasite (called thus by the owner, jealously defending his own, his *oikos*) comes to live off the life of the body in which it resides—and when, reciprocally, the host incorporates the parasite to an extent, willy nilly offering it hospitality: providing it with a place. The parasite then "takes place." (Derrida 1988:90)

What then are we to make of the status of speech act theory's performative exclusions (i.e., that Austin more or less says: "I hereby exclude from consideration . . ."), acts that talk *about* excluding the citation and the other infelicities that trouble performativity? And what are we to make of their actual exclusion, the total disappearance of questions of infelicity by the end of Austin's lectures? Stripped of its arguments of logical or temporal priority, Derrida aims to reveal speech act theory as normative and prescriptive, political and moral even (Derrida 1988:39, 71, 93, 97, 122, 135). Speech act theory, Derrida argues, proceeds by fiat, by performative fiat in fact. Indeed, note how Austin's exclusions proceed through performatives (which I have underlined):

. . . a paragraph from the Second Lecture:

(ii) Secondly, as *utterances* our performances are *also* heir to certain other kinds of ill, which infect all utterances. And these likewise, though again they might be brought into a more general account, we are deliberately at present excluding. I mean, for example, the following: a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not *seriously* [my emphasis, J. D.], but in many ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiologies* of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances (pp. 21-22). (Derrida 1988:16; my underlining, C.V.N.)

But what happens to performativity beyond, and beside, these acts of exclusion? What happens when we welcome the parasite in, when we forget the tab and forgive the debt, when we think the performative *through* the citation?

### **Ethics of Terminology**

Derrida has performed a sleight of hand, slightly. Deconstruction picks at a contradiction or tension in a text, an itch identified by a symptomatically ambivalent term—the parasite/citation in Austin, *supplement* in Rousseau, *pharmakon* in Plato—that must be excluded and disavowed by the to-be-deconstructed text so as to prop up its arguments (e.g., about the nature of performativity, the nature of language, etc.). Seizing up on this term, compulsively repeating, citing, and interrogating it, Derrida divines from it a quality, a quality that infects the text’s arguments and the binaries through which it presents itself, undermining their authority. The sign of this seizure Derrida inscribes in his own text through the constant use of the refashioned term. The reminding term remains, but marked with a difference that indexes Derrida’s impurifying voice, his deconstructive intervention. Hence, from “writing” Derrida baptizes “generalized writing,” from “origin” “arche-origin,” from “citation” “citationality,” and the like. But what is the status of this difference that is also an abstraction? And what are these modifying elements: “generalized,” “arche-,” “-ality”? Are they not the explicit citational diacritics, the metamarks of difference that indicate that this is not the word/concept-in-itself but a re-presentation/repetition of it? Are these marks not mile markers of the movement from a token-moment in a particular text (*How to Do Things with Words*, *Confessions*, *Emile*, *The Phaedrus*, etc.) to a transcendental property of semiosis as such?

But if the logic of Derrida’s argument about iterability proceeds from possibility to necessity, what do we make of the counter movement, the way the *method* of his argument proceeds from actuality (of a text and its arguments) to generality (of semiosis)? And if analytic terms like parasite, citation, trace, supplement, and the like are sites of contradiction and aporia, if they are symptoms of a problematic metaphysics of presence, why does Derrida keep them in play as analytics at all?

Through his deconstructions, Derrida makes such terms speak in two tongues, and by taking on this polyphony, splits his own. (Hence irony, ambiguity, and ambivalence are dominant tropes in Derrida’s writings.) This split echoes another split, a split between the denotational content of his analyses and the rhetorical, or poetic, quality of his texts. This split of denotation and poetics is also a split, and gap, between *theory* and *method*.<sup>2</sup> The recipe’s proof is in the pudding, which is to say that while what Derrida says *about* citationality and parasitism lacks a critical ingredient (reflexivity), *how* he says what he says about citationality and parasitism has it plenty. In any case, you don’t eat the recipe.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike his more serious admirers, Derrida’s texts are poetic, irreverent, full of double meanings, jokes, and ironic barbs. (As with Austin and his “heirs,” here the father comes first as farce and only later, incarnated as his sons, as tragedy.) Take *Limited, Inc*, for example, the book that contains Derrida’s major writings on citationality. While *Limited Inc* is perhaps not the canonical text to consult regarding deconstruction, by functioning as a discourse about *and* as a demonstration of the work of deconstruction it offers a useful place to interrogate this split of theory and method, content and poetics. This doubling *as* and *as about* characterizes all of Derrida’s texts, of course, though they reach a fever pitch in *Limited Inc* (and, in particular, its second essay, “Limited Inc a b c”).


*Limited Inc* is comprised of an essay on citationality (*Sec*), an essay about Searle’s *Reply to Sec* (“Limited Inc a b c” which gives an 83 page “d”-[for Derrida?]-to-“z” refutation of Searle’s 11 page *Reply*), and an Afterword interview about all of the above. But not simply about citationality, the weave of the text is fundamentally citational, made of up citations to other texts (from direct quotations to cryptically implicit allusions), to itself, and to its own citations of other texts and itself, not to mention the citation-fractions (phrases and words plucked from other texts) that are constantly being incorporated into Derrida’s own discourse, almost always in drippingly sarcastic “scare quotes.” Beyond the citation “proper”—very improperly treated, even “abused,” by Derrida—the text (“Limited Inc a b c” in particular) is also jam packed with other plays on language. Such plays share that quality that Derrida, through his repetitions and repeated reflections on repetition, elicits from and imputes to the citation. The point of such citations and word plays is to push citation/language to its limit, to explode it. Derrida aims to turn his citational text into citationality as such, to re-iterate linguistic forms (quotations or otherwise) until they are forced, through their self-difference, to materialize the play of iterability that Derrida lays out in *Sec*.

To get a sense of this citational excess, let me describe and re-produce, perhaps in excessive citational detail, some examples. *Limited Inc* (1988) proliferates with plays on:

- the contextual under-determination and ambiguity of deixis,
- personal pronouns and personal names, and
- the ambiguity between token and type.

“Who, me?” “Here. Where? There?” (pp. 21, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37; see Figures 1–2)  
 “my emphasis—J.D.”, Derrida’s initials foregrounding the shifty nature of personal pronouns (pp. 6, 16, 21, 54, 87; also see p. 33 on explicit reflections on this practice)  
 “Might it be sufficient to repeat *this . . .*” (pp. 19, 31; also see Figure 1)

(Remark: the—written—text of this—oral—communication was to be delivered to the *Association des sociétés de philosophie de langue française* before the meeting. That dispatch should thus have been signed. Which I do, and counterfeit, here. Where? There. J.D.)



J. DERRIDA.

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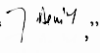
**Figure 1. Derrida’s (1988:21, 33– 34) “signatures**

I am

not speaking here of its multiplication in thousands of printed “copies,” nor of the capitalized proper name that supports it, rendering it legible and capable of being authenticated, nor of the infinitely complex relations in which they are

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LIMITED INC

involved, but rather of the “first,” handwritten instance of the form “,” the reproduction of which can be read “here.”

The text is peppered with:

- reflections on etymologies and
- metacommunications about the (to-be-translated-)text(-that-has-been-translated) to its translator .

“communication” (p. 1), “iteration (pp. 7, 62),  
“parasite” (p. 90)  
“I could have simulated what in French is called a  
“*faux départ*” (I ask that the translator retain the  
quotation marks, the parentheses, the italics, and the  
French)” (pp. 29; also see similar such remarks on  
pp. 36, 39, 44, 47, 73, 101, 108).

The text is organized around recurring motifs and catch phrases (e.g., of the “crucial” “importance” of “being serious”; the “from/to-*Sec*”/“it-reapplies” argument; the reflections on the © of the text and limited liability [see Part II]). Visually, near every page of the text is peppered with quotation marks, italics, parentheticals, hyphens, off type-setting and the like (Figure 2).

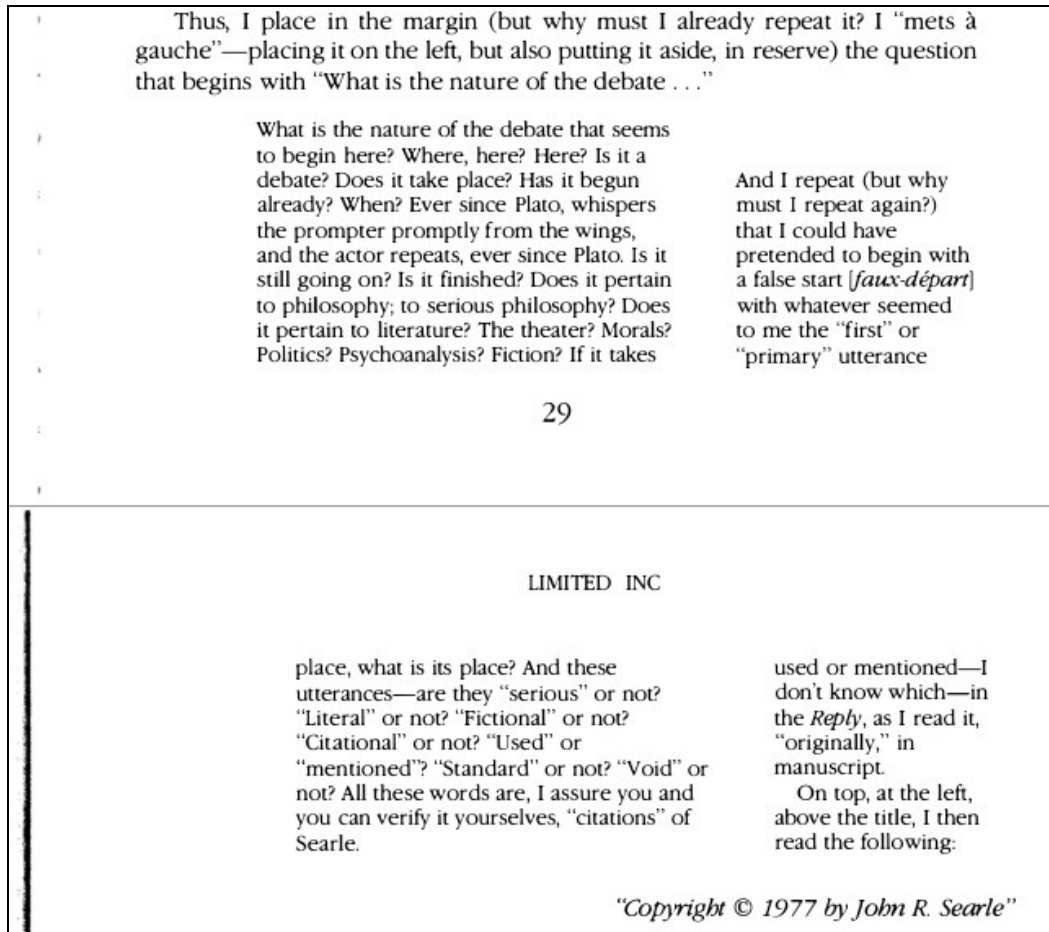


Figure 2. Digitally scanned iteration of parts of pp. 29–30 from “Limited Inc a b c”

And perhaps most of all, it is filled with puns. The most emblematic example is the title of the second essay “Limited Inc a b c” (also of the book, *Limited Inc*). This title is a citational reference to Derrida’s clowning, and schooling, of Searle. Undermining Searle’s authority and copyright as an individual, intentional author, Derrida (1988:36, 84–85) re-renders his “proper” name as *Sarl*, the French equivalent of Ltd. (“s.a.r.l.”), the limited liability corporation that



Derrida wishes, through performative re-baptism and sheer repetition, to erase/replace Searle with. Derrida sticks with this appellation, and its attendant metaphorical extensions, throughout the text. Other notable puns and macaronic double-meanings include, but are not limited to (indeed, in addition to my intentional omissions, I'm sure some puns were lost on me, and others simply lost in translation):

- “*disparition*” [playing on the double-meaning of ‘disappearance’ and ‘demise’, commenting on the nonpresence of the author of writing] (p. 8);
- “writer . . . underwriter” [*du souscripteur*: the signatory; playing on the theme of signatures and iterability] (p. 8);
- “[Austin’s] lateral insistence . . . off-handedness [*lateralisant*]” [commenting on Austin’s exclusions of citations] (pp. 16, 87);
- “Signature Event Context” . . . *sec* [commenting on his essay as ‘dry’] (p. 20); relatedly, “*aussi sec*” (pp. 39, 40, 48, 62, 99), “*objection à-Sec . . . Sec dry up! . . . Dried-out-objection*,” (p. 47);
- “*mystery*” [alluding to earlier discussion on Searle’s compulsive attributing of various kinds of *mis*(-takes, -understandings, -statements, -readings) to Derrida, see pp. 39–47] (p. 47);
- “cited by Sarl although without much presence-of-mind . . . (had we both been together in Montreal while I was reading *Sec*, I would surely have sent off a note to help Sarl’s wandering attention, despite this slight tendency to *absentmindedness*, what is “most important” might still not be missed; had *Sec*, now, been a shopping list, we would have to conclude that Sarl had forgotten to buy the necessary items for what in French is called the “*plat de résistance*”” [commenting on Searle not understanding Derrida’s point about the absentability of the sender/receiver in written communication, and doing so by citing Searle’s (1977) example of the shopping list] (p. 51);
- “fake-out . . . contre-pied” [commenting on Searle’s egregious misunderstanding of *Sec* by describing it both as a “fake-out” and as “following the tracks in the wrong direction,” both of which are connoted by “contre-pied”] (p. 73);
- “*propre*” and “*oikos*” [punning on economics, household, property, propriety in relation to his ongoing punning on “parasite”] (p. 76);
- “It is the nerve of the demonstration in *Sec* and it takes nerve to raise it as an objection to *Sec*” [commenting on Searle’s misreading of the basic premise of *Sec*] (p. 77);
- “What must be included . . . [is] *corruptability* . . . and *dissociability*, traits tied to *iterability* . . . . That can only be done if the “-bility” (and not the *lability*) is recognized from the *inception* on [des *l’entame*] as broached and breached [*entamée*] in its “origin” by *iterability*” [commenting on Austin’s exclusion of the citation] (p. 78);
- “alphabetic . . . the *a b c*’s” [commenting on speech act theory’s phono-centrism, and also punning on the essay’s name, “Limited Inc a b c”] (p. 79; also see pp. 86, 100);
- “*hante* . . . *hantise*” [play on the double meaning of ‘haunt’ and ‘obsession’; commenting on the necessary possibility of the parasite, its obsessive haunting of its host] (p. 82);
- “It is imprudent to assimilate too quickly, more quickly than one can, what is not easily assimilable. Otherwise, what is liable to result is what certain psychoanalysts call incorporation without introjection: a sort of indigestion more or less desired by the unconscious and provoked by the other or alien body which cannot yet be assimilated” [commenting on Searle’s claim that Derrida “assimilates” two different senses of “parasitism”] (p. 102);
- “Where? There. J.D. . . . I have, in other texts, devised countless games, playing with “my name,” with the letters and syllables *Ja*, *Der*, *Da*. Is my name still “proper,” or my signature, when, in proximity to “There. J.D.” (pronounced, in French, approximately *Der. J.D.*), in proximity to “Wo? Da.” in German, to “Her. J.D.” in Danish, they begin to function as integral or fragmented entities [*corps*], or as whole segments of common nouns or even of things?” [commenting on the

translatability of proper names, on their transformation and blurring into other categories of language] (pp. 32, 33).

The point here is to say that *Limited Inc*, like Derrida's other texts, is artful. It is funny. It is often catty, even juvenile. But above all else, it is reflexively so. It is poetic, in Roman Jakobson's (1960) sense, that is, the text functions to draw attention to its form as such, a form whose content is about just that. The text compulsively points to what it is doing, constantly reflecting on it, commenting on it, describing it, interrogating and joking about it. Not simply content to cite, it always re-marks those citations with interjections (Derrida 1988:5, 6, 16, 21, 41, 45, 50, 54, 60, 87, 95, 96), italicizations (pp. 16, 41, 47, 58–59, 61, 68, 74, 75, 78, 87, 90, 91, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102), and side-comments (pp. 50, 58, 86, 87) that color the cited discourse from within it. This even includes reflections and explanations by Derrida on his own practices and modalities of citation (pp. 82, 86, 100), often staged as for the patronizingly pedagogical benefit of *Sarl* (pp. 51–52, 56). Derrida is constantly drawing our attention back to what he is doing, and saying, in the text, and to how he is doing it, namely, citing and re-citing, again and again. We might even say that Derrida's text has the very structure of an explicit performative: a book-length act that describes what it does in the very act of doing it, and vice versa, containing within its reflexively-calibrated theoretical description its own demonstration (Nakassis 2013).<sup>4</sup> The name of this performative "speech act" is "deconstruction." It is a particular brand of performative, to be sure. As method (if not theory), deconstruction, more than anything else, is marked in the academic trade by its reflexivity to its own citational/parasitic practices. That is, if citationality is that quality that Derrida elicits from the citation so as to try to make the more general point about the "necessary possibility" of the sign's iterability, what makes this point felicitous is *not* the inherent iterability of all signs (as Derrida says), but rather the reflexive work that Derrida does. In other words, what puns, citations, allusions, graphic re-markings, and the rest share is not (just) their iterability, it is their reflexivity, their poetics, their performativity.

It seems to me, then, that the citationality of deconstruction is, above all else, strategic. But if strategic, it is also ethical and political. Citationality is, we might say, Derrida's "ethics of terminology." This ethics—or "paleonymics," as Derrida (1981:3; 1988:21) neologically calls it—requires us to reiterate, to keep the very terms of the discourses under deconstruction. Each Derridean reading of a text, thus, generates its own analytic from that very text, incessantly repeating the term, stretching its meanings, opening the gaps that its ambivalences betray. To deconstruct *is* to cite and reiterate, for, as Derrida argues, to write, to read, and to critique are already caught by the sign's citationality and iterability. The way outside the problematics of the text being deconstructed (if there is, indeed, an out) requires doubling down, a moving further inside (if indeed, there is an in), which is also to say that there is no absolute outside that can simply be arrived at by simply shedding the terms we have diagnosed as problematic. To think otherwise is to not have left the enclosure at all; it is to simply be unaware of this fact (Derrida 1981:5; 1976:13–14). Derrida writes in *Of Grammatology*:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the

enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. (Derrida 1976:24; also see 1988:100–101)

### The reflexivity of citationality

The above observations about the poetics of Derrida’s texts are perhaps obvious to anyone who has read him. What is less obvious, it seems to me, is that his poetics stand in for/at an odd absence in the “what” (i.e., the theoretical content) of his writings. The theory seems to miss the key feature of the method, and hence of itself: namely, the importance of reflexivity to both citationality and deconstruction as an actual practice of reading texts. Even as Derrida’s texts abound in quotations, puns, double-meanings, parodies, mimics, and other reflexive acts, *what* Derrida has to say about citationality, supplementarity, *différance*, and the like is silent about the question of reflexivity. In Derrida’s description of it, citationality is the inherent, always already inscribed, fact about *all* signs: *every* sign can be cited, and thus, in some sense, already has/will have been cited. Such an account of citationality, ironically, runs counter to his over-the-top reflexive style of writing.

This tension between theory and method points to an important fact about citationality that I have argued in detail elsewhere (Nakassis 2012, 2013): not all signs are reflexive about the fact that they are iterable. Not all facts metacommunicate their citationality. Some do and some don’t. To be a citation means that the act’s citationality is reflexively (re)marked as such, that the act is seen/typified *as a citation*. This is not simply a question of possibility, but of actuality. (Which acts? When? Why? How? To what ends and with what effects? For whom?) Consider again the following quotation:

. . . Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not *seriously* [my emphasis, J. D.], but in many ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiologies* of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances (pp. 21-22). (Derrida 1988:16, 87; my underlining, C.V.N.)

Let us begin with the obvious: the above discourse is not authored by me. It is a re-animation of some other voice(s). It is a re-presentation of another event of discourse, a re-presentation that is marked as not-quite what it presents (that other’s discourse). Of course, it isn’t quite not-quite my discourse either. My voice is mingled in it. And not just mine. It is a multiply embedded quotation: I am quoting (myself quoting) Derrida (quoting himself) quoting Austin. Each voice has left its mark on the utterance, marking it as not the words of its animator. And yet, how do we know this? Among other ways, we know it from the reflexive, metacommunicative marks that are inscribed in its very material form and its surrounding co-text, a materiality that, for this to be a citation, must be construed by the parties to the act as such. (One can always misconstrue a citation *as* a statement [in which case, in a sense, it is no citation at all], just as one can always not get a reference. Indeed, we might see “Limited Inc a b c” as the explanation of all the references that *Sarl* didn’t seem to get in *Sec.*) In this example, what are some of these reflexive marks which allow us to see this stretch of text as a citation and not something else?

- The reader’s familiarity with Austin *and* with Derrida’s reading of Austin. Such familiarity would allow the reader to identify this as a quote even without any other marks;
- The preceding metapragmatic sentence “Consider again the following quotation:”;

- Similarly, the fact that this appears in an essay about citation and repetition which has already cited this quote earlier;
- The quotation's indentation;
- The italics Derrida added are marked by a parenthetical: “[my emphasis, J. D.]”;
- The underlining that I added is marked by a parenthetical “my underlining, C.V.N.” (itself, of course, a citation of Derrida's initialing, a play on his play on his quasi-signature);
- The reference information, in Derrida's citation “(pp. 21–22)” and in my citation of Derrida “(Derrida 1988:16, 87).”
- The shifted and non-coreferential first person deictics; i.e., the first-person pronominal forms “my emphasis, J. D.,” “we are excluding,” and “my underlining, C. V. N.” all refer to different “I”s, each framed by a different reflexive mark such that their indexical origos, and thus their references, are kept distinct.

Through each of these devices, that which is repeated is marked *as a repetition*. And by doing that a difference is introduced through this sameness: a difference of reference, of voice, of meaning, and pragmatics. To be a citation, then, an act must *actually* be reflexively framed and taken up as such, an actuality which materializes in and is anticipated by the semiotic form of the act.

The necessary possibilities of citation, and of deconstruction, then, are necessarily mediated by, and emergent from, actual reflexive social practices. Put otherwise, for a party to be crashed, for the host to have been mooched off of, some guests must have been reflexively typified *as parasites*, just as the event must have been constituted as a “party.” Why is this guest a parasite, and not that guest? And why “parasite” (or “guest”) and not some other designation? What does it mean to be a parasite and to be a host in that time and place, for those people? I re-cite a passage I cited earlier in this essay:

the parasite is by definition never simply *external*, never simply something that can be excluded from or kept outside of the body “proper,” shut out from the “familial” table or house. Parasitism takes place when the parasite (called thus by the owner, jealously defending his own, his *oikos*) comes to live *off the life* of the body in which it resides—and when, reciprocally, the host incorporates the parasite to an extent, willy nilly offering it hospitality: providing it with a place. The parasite then “takes place.” (Derrida 1988:90; my underlining, C.V.N.)

“By definition” . . . Under the cover of an etymological pun Derrida here confronts this fact of performative typification: the parasite is only ever a parasite relative to some actual moment of reflexive semiotic activity, having been once “called thus by the owner” (note its citationally performative baptism, itself retroactively rendering the ambiguous adverbial phrase “by definition” a baptismal performative: “by my definition here and now . . .”). While the importance of such reflexivity is not commented upon by Derrida, we ask: what is a definition but a performative, a citational moment of language about language whose taking place performatively constitutes the intensional meaning of the word? Such reflexivity isn't simply an issue of possibility or necessity (that is, that citations are “necessarily possibly” reflexive), but of actuality: citations are actually reflexive, otherwise they aren't citations. A “parasite is by definition . . . [X, Y, or Z]” only if such an act of definition takes place, is taken up and upheld. The actuality and the uptake of Derrida's reflexive acts—his definitions, citations, and other citational plays—must actually hold, in fact, for Derrida's whole analysis to unfold successfully.

For speech act theory to be deconstructed, certain felicity conditions must be met. Why is *this* excluded by Derrida’s text?

As with performatives, citational acts are achievements. Hence all the work that Derrida has to put into making his point about the necessary possibility of citationality through his citational poetics. Not all (types of) signs—even if necessarily possibly iterable/citational—actually, if ever, manifest that play of iterability/citatoriality (and that, in some cases, as a fact of their social definition), which is equivalent to saying that not all signs are (self-) reflexively framed as iterations or citations. (There is an economy of citationality, an actual social distribution that deconstruction requires for its distinction and value in the academic field.) Further, not all citational signs cite similarly or to similar effect. There are, as Derrida (1988:18, 59) himself notes in passing, many flavors of iteration/citation. What makes a citational act citational is a function of this reflexivity, of the actual ways in which it plays with, inflects, diagrams, and is oriented to what Derrida calls iterability/citatoriality. Deconstruction as a *method* of reading/re-writing texts is an example of a flavor of citationality, a type of citational practice that cannot be understood outside of the actual texts it cites, outside of an actual metaphysics of presence which it undermines, or outside of the actual reflexive machinery it brings to bear on those texts (i.e., its citational poetics). The point here is that to follow Derrida’s arguments *about* citationality lead us in a very different direction than his citational poetics, towards the necessary, the possible, and the general and away from the reflexive, the actual, and the particular. When we attend to deconstruction as practice and method, however, citationality cannot be thought outside of the actual, the reflexive, and the particular.

### **The unnameable(?) glimmer beyond the closure**

Citational acts are not only reflexive about their status as citations, pointing to their play on token and type. They are also reflexive in the sense of being purposively attuned to their context of use. They are metapragmatic (Silverstein 1993), strategic gambits to do something in the world by figurating their relationship to that world. As I suggested, deconstruction is a prime example of this—it is a citational practice that is purposively reflexive (and reflexively purposive) about its particular project, namely, corroding Western philosophy’s metaphysics of presence from the inside out.

Not simply showing the citational nature of performative acts, Derrida’s great coup is to convert Austin’s observation about stage performatives into a first principle about the performative power of citational acts more generally: citing both captures *and* denudes something of that which is cited. It is part prophylaxis and part appropriation (Nakassis 2013; Taussig 1993). By bracketing that which is cited—the performativity of a promise—the actor on stage opens up new horizons of performativity. To name the most obvious, “acting” and, thereby, promising in a diegetic world, a promise whose indexical anchor is not in the act of acting, but in the transposed world of the character (Derrida 1988:89). By decentering and bracketing that which it cites, the citation draws attention to some otherwise unremarked quality of the cited act, repurposing it, eliciting/creating some latent potentiality in it.<sup>5</sup> And in doing so, the citational act opens up new worlds, fictive and real (Nakassis 2013).

Consider Derrida’s and my own marks in the multiply embedded quotation below. Each iteration has refashioned the cited propositions so as to open up some other kind of possibility, doing so by educating other, otherwise potential, qualities out of the cited discourse, an elicitation materialized through italicization, underlining, and marginal markings. Let me re-cite it again, for a final time:

I will have to cite again from *Sec*, at length and adding emphasis:

Derrida: “Limited Inca”

“ . . . a paragraph from the Second Lecture:

Derrida: “Signature, Event, Context” (*Sec*)

Austin: *How to Do Things with Words*

“(ii) Secondly, as *utterances* our performances are *also* heir to certain other kinds of ill, which infect all utterances. And these likewise, though again they might be brought into a more general account, we are deliberately at present excluding. I mean, for example, the following: a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not *seriously* [my emphasis, J. D.], but in many ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiologies* of language. All this we are *excluding* from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances” (pp. 21-22). . . .” (p. 16). (Derrida 1988:87; my marginal brackets, C. V. N.)

Note what Derrida’s citational marks *do* to the underlined performatives in Austin’s original text. Derrida’s italicization, his quotational framing of Austin’s original text brackets their performative effect. Indeed, not only are we *not* to exclude such infections, not only are we *not* to “mean . . . the following,” not only are we *not* to see them as not serious, or “understand” them to be “issued in ordinary circumstances,” we are to understand and mean the opposite! Further, note how in my citational framing of Derrida, his own citation is bracketed, harnessed to a different end: to comment and critique Derrida, to elicit a different quality of citationality out of this text, namely, the reflexivity of citationality. To repeat is not simply, then, to alter or decenter, it is also to elicit some otherwise immanent quality, to open up a new horizon of possibility.

So here is the important point: citing something decenters it. It brings newness to the world. It transports, transposes. It shifts. And in doing so it enables other performative acts. Deconstruction is the name of one kind of citational performativity among many. It cites that which it deconstructs so as to open up new worlds, or as Derrida puts it in the introduction of *Of Grammatology*, to “designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed” (1976:14). The as yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure is a social horizon of performative possibility, that which isn’t actual yet but is a possible future, a potentiality waiting to be brought into actuality through the citationality of deconstruction. But what is this limit and why is it yet unnameable, beyond, only ever glimpsed, deferred? Or put differently, what might we actually find on the other side of the citation, beyond the event of citing and beyond that which is cited, beyond the parasite and beyond its host? Is it only ever a fantastical regulative ideal? What is this citational act that is beside and beyond citation, resembling it and derivative from it, which touches the citation on its thither side, this “glimmer beyond the closure”? And might a turn beyond the artefactual text to the ethnographic texture of social life offer more than just a glimpse? What happens when the parasite actually crashes the potluck, not as a thought experiment but as an actual event? And how might we empirically study that? It is to these questions that I turn in part II of this essay, “The Paracite.”

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## Notes

1. In this way, the stage promise's relationship to the "normal" promise is akin to the performative's relationship to the statement, in that the performative also "masquerades" (Austin 1962:4) as a statement but without counting as an instance of it (see Nakassis 2013 for more discussion).
2. Both binaries—denotation/poetics, theory/method—call for deconstruction, of course. All the more surprising to find them operative in structuring Derrida's texts.
3. Ultimately, however, one might argue that this split, and tension, in Derrida's text between its poetics and denotation poses no problem to his arguments. Indeed, we might see Derrida's point (1988:45) being precisely to say that the fetish of the "content" of an argument is just that, a fetish. It is not simply incomplete or partial, but ideological (in the sense that linguistic anthropologists use the term, see Woolard 1998). To point out this tension between content and poetics is simply to say, then, that Derrida's account of citationality is not to be found in *what* he has to say about it, but in *how* he says what he has to say (in performative concert with *what* he has to say), a tension which also problematizes the binaries of content/form, denotation/poetics. (It is here, of course, that we see Derrida as sympathetic to Austin who, despite what he says, often does what Derrida advocates doing.) My point here, then, is to offer a critique of any account of citationality, and any reading of Derrida, which does not account for this poetics. But perhaps such non-accounting of reflexivity by those who cite Derrida is itself inscribed in, and motivated/anticipated by, the poetics of *Sec*—that text which is the touchstone for all others' discussions of citationality—, for is it not one of the less poetic of Derrida's deconstructions?
4. See Derrida 1988:43 which poses this very point as a question: "Does the principal purpose of *Sec* consist in being *true* . . . And what if *Sec* were *doing something else*?" (emphasis in original)
5. Of course, to be "latent" or "in" it is a retroactive effect of the performativity of citation. It is a power to create that frames such creation as drawing out what was "already" there (see Derrida 2002).

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