Introduction

DAWNE McCANCE

While in Città di Castello, Italy, in July 2006, I had the good fortune to hear Peggy Kamuf deliver "Composition Displacement," a dazzling reading of Jacques Derrida's reading of the *Phaedrus* in "Plato's Pharmacy." Kamuf's paper, which has since appeared in print, approaches *composition* not only as a central theme of Derrida's essay as of Plato's *Phaedrus,* but also as a matter of composing (and compromising) with forces that would arrest or annihilate the play of writing, in her words, "the play of textuality—citationality, reversibility, anagram, displacement" (878). This thinking and practice of textual play—play as compositional, "that is, in constant compromise with all the constraints at work limiting and defining the space of its deployment"—is what defines "the deconstructive invention at its most powerful" (879-80), she suggests.

And she would know. We cannot think deconstruction today apart from Peggy Kamuf. As a translator who "keep[s] her attention pressed close to the language" ("Preface: Toward the Event" xi) of his texts and who is attuned, like no other, to the connections among them, Kamuf reads Derrida, he says in his "Provocation: Forewords" to *Without Alibi,* better than he will ever have read himself (xviii). "Peggy Kamuf will have analyzed, interpreted, x-rayed, if I may say that, replaced and displaced them [the texts gathered by her in *Without Alibi*] better than ever I could have done myself" (xxi). And as Derrida also points out, Kamuf continues to play a major role in interpreting "the strange liaison" between deconstruction and the United States:

> But everyone can attest to what is very well known, quite beyond the chance and privilege that I believe I can claim here: on an easy-to-read map, which would be not only bibliographical, the trajectories crossing through something like "deconstruction" *and* the "United States" have almost always crossed with the work of Peggy Kamuf. They have largely depended on that work, in the places of their greatest critical intensity. One could cite her many titles, her books, articles, translations, her teaching and participation in so many conferences. (xxv)

Would I had more than two pages to reflect on some ways that readers of "deconstruction" share what Derrida refers to as his "immeasurable indebtedness" (xxv) to Peggy Kamuf. She gives us to think, and to make good on, the affinity between work and opening (*oeuvre* and *ouvre*)—the kind of opening she so powerfully writes about, and makes happen, in "Béance," reading Jean-Luc Nancy's "Is Everything Political?" alongside his *L'Intrus*; the kind of opening (*béance*, gapingness) that cannot be closed into, or by, a conceptual opposition.

To the all-too-brief bio she sent us to follow the interview and two essays that open this issue, I want to add, again too briefly, that Peggy Kamuf is Marion Frances Chevalier Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. She has held appointments as Directeur de Programme Correspondant, Collège International de Philosophie; as Visiting Professor, Centre d'Etudes Féminines, Université de Paris 8, Vincennes–Saint-Denis; and as Guest Professor, Department of French, University of Nottingham, England. She has translated several of Jacques Derrida's texts, has published numerous essays and book chapters, and delivered many invited lectures. Her book publications include *Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise; Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship* (French translation, *Signatures, ou l'institution de l'auteur); The Division of Literature, or the University in Deconstruction* (Serbo-Croatian translation, *Univerzitet u Deknostrukciji, ili Podela Knjizevnosti*); and *Book of Addresses.*

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