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Author

Kamuf, Peggy

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THE HAUNTS OF SCHOLARSHIP

Peggy Kamuf is a professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California.

The presentation and then publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* in 1993 was an event in more than one regard. One measure of its impact would be the number of scholarly conferences, colloquia, anthologies, and so forth that has been devoted to several of its central themes: to its defense of Marxism, a certain spirit of Marxism, to be sure, but also, as we can attest here, to the condition it recognized under the name spectrality¹. No doubt whatever echoes signaled *Spectres de Marx* as an event in scholarly milieux and to some degree beyond them can be attributed in part to Derrida's immense and well-deserved reputation as an agent of intellectual ferment. All of his work has provoked and continues to provoke writing, thinking, speaking, teaching, and reading, in other words, all of those activities that go on within the scholarly milieu. But *Spectres de Marx* and the ideas explored there have had, if I'm not mistaken or exaggerating, an impact unlike work of his published before or since.

It may be, however, that I was merely in a better position to sense more of this book's effects here and there, since I was responsible for or guilty of its English translation. Be that as it may, I've formed the hypothesis that this reaction can be traced to the fact that the book provoked scholars and scholarship quite explicitly. Indeed, it exhorted them to take up speaking with specters, ghosts, phantoms, spirits, and by so doing, to question the limits on what they do as scholars. The exhortation to speak with specters is repeatedly sounded throughout the work and

even given a place of prominence there: the final words of the text quote once again Marcellus's plea in *Hamlet*: "Thou art a scholar: speak to it, Horatio." This command to the scholar is threaded throughout the book and begins in its first pages where Derrida asserts the necessity to speak with the phantom: "Il faut parler *du* fantôme, voire *au* fantôme et *avec* lui, dès lors qu'aucune éthique, aucune politique, révolutionnaire ou non, ne paraît possible et pensable et *juste*, qui ne reconnaisse à son principe le respect pour ces autres qui ne sont pas...là, *présentement vivants*."² The necessity is thus an ethical one, or rather it is of the order of justice. It is therefore a necessity of scholarship as well, at least if we believe scholarship must also serve justice. In other words, the exhortation calls upon the scholar's sense of justice, which must be made ever more acute, ever more just. Such might even be taken as the first purpose of scholarship, which it cannot lose sight of without losing its way. In this sense, the exhortation to the scholar, exemplarily, to speak of, even to and with specters, is to call them to their greatest purpose.

To the extent that Derrida's scholarly readers recognized that they were being called upon in this way, they might have also realized quite spontaneously the apparent contradiction into which they were being led. In any case, this contradiction will not have gone unnoticed because it is laid out explicitly a few pages into the book:

Théoriciens ou témoins, spectateurs, observateurs, savants et intellectuels, les *scholars* croient qu'il suffit de regarder. Dès lors, ils ne sont pas toujours dans la position la plus compétente pour faire ce qu'il faut, parler au spectre...Il n'y a plus, il n'y a jamais eu de *scholar* capable de parler de tout en s'adressant à n'importe qui, et surtout aux fantômes. Il n'y a jamais eu de *scholar* qui ait vraiment, en tant que tel, eu affaire au fantôme. Un *scholar* traditionnel ne croit pas aux fantômes—ni à tout ce qu'on pourrait appeler l'espace virtuel de la spectralité. Il n'y a jamais eu de *scholar* qui, en tant que tel, ne croie à la distinction tranchante entre

le réel et le non-réel, l'effectif et le non-effectif, le vivant et le non-vivant, l'être et le non-être...à l'opposition entre ce qui est présent et ce qui ne l'est pas, par exemple sous la forme de l'objectivité. (33)

So, if the scholar, as such, *en tant que tel*, is someone who, essentially, necessarily, and by definition, upholds these strict oppositions, then he or she can have nothing to do with phantoms. Consequently, when exhorted to speak about, to, and with specters, Derrida's scholarly readers have effectively been pushed up against the wall of these apparent limits on what a scholar does or does not do. In my working hypothesis, the result will have been to provoke at least some of these readers to consider how taking account of the general condition of spectrality has to displace the limits on scholarship and even redefine altogether the role of scholars.

By way of a small contribution to this task of redefinition, I propose to excavate somewhat a part of the history of scholarship that has determined or at least reinforced the state that Derrida ascribes to the scholar and that we can so easily confirm to be in force for scholarship everywhere today. Before getting to that, however, I'd like to attempt to make clear what it is we are talking about when we take up this condition of spectrality, at least as Derrida has proposed to understand it. This term and those it naturally attracts—ghost, phantom, spirit, specter, spook, apparition—have a certain frightening or gothic allure and thus a power to shock. Yet, although the ghost of Hamlet's father has more than just a walk-on part in *Spectres de Marx*, the terms specter, ghost, phantom, etc. are not in the least reserved there for such imaginary materializations of dead loved ones—or unloved ones—come back to haunt the living. To recall the brief passage I cited earlier, specters (phantoms, ghosts, etc.) are defined in the most general terms as “ces autres qui ne sont pas...là, *présentement vivants*.” Now, when you think about it, the category of “others who are not there, presently living” is quite large: it includes, as Derrida underscores, all those “qui ne sont plus ou...qui ne sont pas encore là, *présentement vivants*, qu'ils soient déjà morts ou qu'ils ne soient pas encore nés.” It

includes, in other words, all the dead and all the still-to-be born (or hatched or cloned?). Now, if we allow the term to have this semantic range of the not-presently living, well, then we could easily point out how scholarship, *in the main*, has in fact always been concerned with spectrality and with specters. There are even whole, important areas of scholarship that are concerned with nothing but specters. What else have historians been doing, for example?

Yet, one should not stop there because this category of the not-*presently*-living can be shown to be still larger if we bear down on the sense of the “presently,” a term that Derrida certainly does not throw out casually (moreover, it is in italics). What is the “present,” what makes the present present? It is not simply a temporal distinction—present, as distinct from past and future. Presence, in both idealist and materialist traditions (for Hegel, but also for Marx), implies first of all a presence to (it)self, a self-presence and a return to self. Spectrality would thus be the condition of that which returns without presence, without present or presentable presence, without a present life, present-to-itself. Self-presence, the dream of self-presence, excludes from the circle of the *presently living* whatever does not return to its *own* life, to its *own* present. “Presently,” I am suggesting, thus implies this quality of “own-ness,” of *le propre*, as one would say in French. Which is to say that by “specters” we should try to understand not just the class of beings no longer or not yet living—the dead, the yet-to-be born—but all beings, all others, whose “own-ness” is “not mine.” Spectrality would thus be no less a contemporary condition than the condition of our relation to non-contemporaries.

One can make contemporary spectrality appear or materialize by appropriating some basic tools of discourse analysis. I may very well acknowledge the presence of all sorts of other beings. These are, by all objective criteria, present with me at the same time. We are thus what is commonly called contemporaries. But do we not count many who might be specters among our contemporaries? I am really here and so are you—as for him or her, well, that’s another story. The third person is used to speak of whoever is not there. According to

linguists like Emile Benveniste, third-person pronouns should not even be called personal pronouns, unlike “you” and “me.”³ They refer to those who are not there when we speak of them. In effect, we speak of them as non-persons because, at that moment, the moment of speech or *énonciation*, they are not there—*pas là, présentement vivants*—and thus they cannot be addressed or address us, as we say, in person. Yet, Benveniste, who is one of the greatest scholars of our age, would no doubt have balked at calling this non-person/non-thing a specter, ghost, or phantom. And he would have insisted on the simple impossibility of address to the third non-person, whose absence from the discursive space of enunciation is what is being marked by the pronomial distinction. A specter would be the impossible thing that could never appear on the horizon of the linguist’s world: someone, something to which one addresses oneself and by which one is addressed even though it is *pas là*.

Linguist-scholars, however, are not the only ones to reflect on the condition of this non-presence or non-personhood of the grammatical third person. Maurice Blanchot has placed that figure at the core of his reflection on fiction, or rather on what he prefers to call simply writing, without making any generic division but also, more importantly for our concerns here, without invoking distinctions between real and non-real, being and non-being, fictional and non-fictional. Blanchot’s reflection on this figure cannot therefore be situated strictly within the boundaries of scholarship that we’ve just recalled. This thinking occurs rather as a *passage* across those boundaries. That is, it is concerned with the passage beyond the limits of the present first-person to the third-person who or which is *pas là*. “Ecrire,” writes Blanchot, “c’est passer du ‘je’ au ‘il’... cependant le ‘il’ substitué au ‘je’ ne désigne pas simplement un autre moi.”⁴ The “il” designates not another “me” but what Blanchot calls the neuter or the neutral, the non-person whose absence speaks in writing. This absent speech or speech of absence or of the absent is precisely what the linguist-scholar has to exclude from the possibility of real speech or discourse, that is, the speech possible only between those who are present to

themselves or each other as I and you, two me's, me and another me.⁵

What if, however, the scholar must also thereby exclude the very possibility of the dialogue between you and me, the "I" and the "you"? The possibility of the present possibility of speech? It is such a question that has to disturb the scholar's confidence in the distinction between *là* and *pas là*, the elemental, differential distinction of the *pas*.⁶ At issue would be the very possibility of naming, that is, of figuring in names and in language whatever experience you and I are trying to share or to invent with our dialogue. Such at least is a conclusion to be drawn from the written dialogue that closes a section in the book by Blanchot we've been holding open for the last few moments, *L'entretien infini*. It is inaugurated by the question about the name given or chosen for the impersonal or non-personal source to which writing returns, a return that, because it returns to no one, is what we are calling the spectral. Blanchot, however, speaks not of spectrality but of neutrality, or simply the neutral. But why this name? Thus the dialogue begins:

"Pourquoi ce nom? Et est-ce bien un nom?"

—Ce serait une figure?

—Alors une figure qui ne figure que ce nom.

—Et pourquoi un seul parlant, une seule parole ne peuvent-ils jamais réussir, malgré l'apparence, à le nommer? Il faut être au moins deux pour le dire.

—Je le sais. Il faut que nous soyons deux.

—Mais pourquoi deux? Pourquoi deux paroles pour dire une même chose?

—C'est que celui qui la dit, c'est toujours l'autre."⁷

The necessity evoked here—"Il faut être au moins deux pour le dire," "Il faut que nous soyons deux"—could take us back directly to the necessity, injunction, or exhortation to which Derrida gives voice in *Spectres de Marx*: "Il faut parler *du* fantôme, voire *au* fantôme et *avec* lui." The two speakers or two *paroles*⁸ represented in Blanchot's text each affirm that they speak or name only in the space opened up by the other who or which figures only in or as a name: "une figure qui ne figure que

ce nom.” This is, I would suggest, what is also figured by the specter or the name specter, that is, by that which returns not to the same or to the self, to some me or other; rather, there is a figure of return without presence or without present being.

At the end of *Spectres de Marx*, the necessity we have been evoking will be articulated one last time and, as in Blanchot’s written dialogue, it is the very possibility of addressing and being addressed by the other, any other, that is made to turn on the spectral figure, on that which is being called specter, ghost, phantom. I cite from the last lines of Derrida’s book:

Peut-on, pour le questionner, s’adresser au fantôme? À qui? À lui? À ça, comme dit encore et prudemment Marcellus? “Thou art a Scholler; speake to *it* Horatio [...] Question *it*.”

La question mérite peut-être qu’on la retourne: peut-on *s’adresser en général* si quelque fantôme déjà ne revient pas? Si du moins il aime la justice, le “savant” de l’avenir, l’“intellectuel” de demain devrait l’apprendre, et de lui. Il devrait apprendre à vivre en apprenant non pas à faire la conversation avec le fantôme mais à s’entretenir avec lui, avec elle, à lui laisser ou à lui rendre la parole, fût-ce en soi, en l’autre, à l’autre en soi: ils sont toujours *là*, les spectres, même s’ils n’existent pas, même s’ils ne sont plus, même s’ils ne sont pas encore. Ils nous donnent à repenser le “là” dès qu’on ouvre la bouche...

“Ils sont toujours *là*, les spectres.” If so, then we have every reason to be astonished that scholarship seems yet to have discovered this fact and, with it, the necessity to transform its ontological presuppositions into hauntological ones.

Under the impulse of this reawakened astonishment, I’d like to return to one of the key scenes in the history of modern scholarship, so as to interrogate what happens to the specters “qui sont toujours *là*.” The scene I have in mind is even an inaugural moment of sorts in the history we’re talking about. If,

at least, we take scholarship not only in the sense current in modern usage of the traditional, classical, research scholar, in other words, the literary scholar, philosopher, or scientist who would advance knowledge by producing, discovering, or inventing new knowledge, but also in the sense of the one who is in school, the pupil, student, or apprentice for whom scholarship is a matter of learning what it has been possible for the human race to know already. Well, in this latter sense at least, much of what we today understand by proper schooling or education of the young was inaugurated by Rousseau's *Emile*, as I think we could quickly agree. We could agree, that is, that Rousseau's novel treatise (which is more novel than treatise) laid down, if not for the first time, then in the most forceful fashion to date, many of the principles that remain the touchstones of modern pedagogy, even if these are nowadays rarely traced back explicitly to the formulation they received from Rousseau's pen.

One needn't, however, be a scholar working on the original texts of pedagogical theory or its history to recognize the ways in which the notion of natural education becomes the tutelary idea of education in the democracies that were trying to emerge in Europe or North America. One way they tried—and are still trying—to emerge, that is, to give themselves a future, was, of course, through the adoption of universal, state-sponsored, secular instruction.⁹ It is well-known that the educational reformers of France's Third Republic frequently invoked the name of Rousseau and the spirit of "rousseauisme," to the point that his spirit, along with Voltaire's, could be thought to have presided, at least in France, over the passage into state-mandated, universal and compulsory primary education.

Whether or not we consider ourselves still scholars or still in school, we have all at some time been touched, shaped, formed, if not educated, by this historical invention, which has yet so largely to be invented or realized: universal literacy instruction. For the rest of this lecture, I want to try to address questions to what I've just called the tutelary spirit of modern pedagogy. This return to *Emile* was induced, for me, by interests I've been pursuing lately in various phenomena of reading, for instance, in what I've come to call the reading sciences or

lexologies, but also in so many current and perennial debates about the pedagogy of reading, testing for reading skills, and the experience of reading as communicated—or not—to those whom we compel into our schools. In the midst of this, *Emile* began clamoring to be revisited not only because it will have been inaugural of a certain pedagogical scene, the scene of natural education or an education by nature, that is, by the very nature of things as they are, which is the most fitting education of a free citizen, who submits only to those constraints that result from the nature of life and never to the arbitrary constraints imposed unjustly by fellow men. Not only, then, this general scene, so powerfully evoked or invented by Rousseau, led me back to his text, but also the very specific place given or denied in its pages to books, reading, literacy, or simply scholarship, in the more classical sense of the term. For it was this classical model of learning from books that *Emile* famously sought to replace with its model for a non-scholarly, natural education.

So, let's reread moments from that very familiar elaboration in *Emile*, the one concerning all the pernicious effects of reading to which the traditionally schooled young have long been exposed, all that from which Rousseau plans to protect his pupil by putting off teaching him to read and learning what books are for until, *as it were*, he learns to read for himself, naturally. We will pick up the thread of this "as it were," as it were. That is, we will try to follow, *to read* how it could happen that anyone ever learned to read naturally, as it were, for or by himself/herself. Will there not have to have been some spirit or specter of another, some other than the apprentice reader, present, *as it were*, at this initiation into a repetition, at this repetition of initiation, or at this initiating repetition by which *Emile* comes to read, finally? We must be prepared to scrutinize how this moment of a natural reading education gets figured in the text when it is time for it to occur. And we will be on the look-out, so to speak, for the specters that *Emile* is going to have to conjure up in order to teach its pupil to read.

Or rather to let *Emile* teach himself to read when the time comes, For *Emile* learns to read, by himself, only once its usefulness to him has been made felt, "renduë sensible." Before

this can happen, the child will be spared the great misery of reading:

En ôtant ainsi tous les devoirs des enfans, j'ôte les instrumens de leur plus grande misère savoir les livres. La lecture est le fléau de l'enfance et presque la seule occupation qu'on lui sait donner. A peine à douze ans Emile saura-t-il ce que c'est qu'un livre. Mais il faut bien, au moins, dira-t-on, qu'il sache lire. J'en conviens: il faut qu'il sache lire quand la lecture lui est utile; jusqu'alors elle n'est bonne qu'à l'ennuyer.¹⁰

Rousseau here reiterates in effect the main tenet or pretense of this pedagogy, namely the principle of freedom from arbitrary constraint. This principle is famously represented in the earliest pages of the book by the protest against the practice of swaddling newborns. Let their limbs be free, cries Rousseau, do not bind them. In this passage from Book II, the instruments of binding are books, which are like swaddling clothes inasmuch as they bind the child's body to the sole activity of the mind, an activity moreover which is as yet useless to the child, or so it is implied here. In other words, it is assumed, rather than argued, that this utility appears only with a certain delay in childhood. In the place of any argument, we are merely shown or told that Emile, the imaginary pupil, does not naturally learn to read before the age of twelve. The natural delay, in other words, is introduced into the narrative through the example of its principal fiction (or prosopopeia), who or which is called Emile. Naturally, Emile will not have learned to read by age twelve.

At this point, however, Rousseau's *gouverneur*/narrator is called upon to respond to an intervention from a faceless, rhetorical "on" who articulates a certain necessity. "Mais il faut bien, au moins, *dira-t-on*, qu'il sache lire." The fact that the *gouverneur* recognizes this necessity without delay ("J'en conviens") suggests there is no need to question whether it is a necessity of reason, of natural reason, or a necessity of men, imposed by men, thus, whether it is imposed as a constraint of nature, the facts of life and death, or as an artificial constraint. This question is not explicitly posed but it is implicitly answered

for Emile who will learn to read, naturally by himself, without the misery of constraint. Rousseau moves to preempt the apprenticeship of reading under the reign of necessity or constraint, that *fléau* of childhood, when he rearticulates the law laid down by the other, the neutral, faceless, dare I say spectral “on” who or which pronounces: “il faut qu’il sache lire.” “J’en conviens,” responds the *gouverneur* to this ghostly intervention; il faut qu’il sache lire quand la lecture lui est utile.” Instead of a painful necessity, there would be desire to appropriate what is useful.

How, then, is writing/reading useful? Rousseau will supply a general definition of the utility of this art, but he will also insist that this utility can be made “sensible” at any age. Thus, it would seem, at any age a child can be made to feel the utility of writing, for or by himself, and therefore be able to learn the art more or less painlessly, without inflicting the kind of torment Rousseau deplures. But the text does not draw this latter implication, which makes for something of a problem in the logic of the passage we’re trying to read. Specifically, the idea that writing’s utility can be sensed, grasped at any age challenges the other assumption made here to which we’ve already pointed. It is the assumption concerning the natural delay affecting the appearance of this utility to Emile. But, granting the other assumption, and if one may naturally learn to read at any age, then it is neither more nor less natural to learn by age four than by age twelve. None of these problems is allowed to derail what has been put in motion here once the necessity to learn to read has been made felt as desire. Emile learns to read naturally, without constraint and under the sole tutelage of his own desire, which naturally is the desire to appropriate something to himself, to interiorize it, or more simply, as we will see, to eat it.

Here is the continuation of the passage:

Si l’on ne doit rien exiger des enfans par obeïssance, il s’ensuit qu’ils ne peuvent rien apprendre dont ils ne sentent *l’avantage actuel et présent* soit d’agrément soit d’utilité; autrement quel motif les porteroit à apprendre? L’art de parler aux absens et de les entendre, l’art de leur

communiquer au loin sans médiateur nos sentiments, nos volontés, nos desirs, est un art dont l'utilité peut être rendue sensible à tous les âges....

"L'art de parler aux absents et de les entendre" designates reading as spectral art, as place of possibility of address to and by the absent ones. This spectral dimension is clearly delineated here but it is even more clearly dispatched, swallowed up, in the rush of desire to appropriate an "avantage actuel et présent." These absent ones may be *au loin* but no distance is allowed to open up that does not arouse desire for an "avantage actuel et présent," meaning, present to the reader or to the one reading. There is no misery to be brooked because misery is not useful, that goes without saying. Children cannot want to learn to read if it is a misery, if it makes them miserable, if it is bad news. And by misery we must now understand whatever makes itself felt as the *absence* of a present advantage to the one reading, the one who is learning to read because he wants to, because he wants it for himself, to himself, and all to himself. The address to and from absence produces only misery if it cannot be appropriated as and by this presence-to-itself, all to itself. Rousseau will thus extoll reading as a source of pleasure and not misery, but in so doing he appears merely to apply the lesson being taught here, which is that children will learn naturally to read as soon as they see reading's usefulness.

Here is where we must perhaps acknowledge the continued force of *Emile's* example in a basic principle that still guides pedagogy today. The pleasure principle is the tutelary *gouverneur* that watches over or guides *Emile's* appropriation of the art of reading. And reading pedagogy has largely remained, I would argue, within the scope or under the sway of this governing principle.

This pleasure principle only works, however, if it ever really works at all, on the condition of that which we're now calling spectrality. The appropriation to the present one or to (the) one's presence is haunted from the first and in principle by a certain absence that opens up along with or simply as the possibility of communicating it and with it. The pleasure of

appropriation is in principle or necessarily haunted by that inappropriability called specter, ghost, phantom. Which is why Rousseau's text cannot entirely conjure it away. We've already remarked the figure it assumes here, the figure of the third person pronoun, the faceless, rhetorical *on*.

This spectral pronoun figures prominently in the culminating act of this non-drama, this natural scene of reading's pedagogy. A note arrives, in fact many notes or *billets*. They are to Emile, addressing Emile, who because he cannot read them must show them to another. Since the pleasure principle is presiding, the *billets* bring no misery. On the contrary, all of them arouse desire for some pleasure or gratification, ultimately for food, for what can be internalized and appropriated. Emile learns to read as a natural extension into space and time of his desire to appropriate something to himself.

Something or someone: *quelqu'un* or simply *on*. In this passage, one has to pay attention to what is going on with *on*. Its referent is shifted rapidly around in a quick succession of scenes and sentences, now this one, now that, now absent, now present, and finally at once absent and present, but just one reading, as it were, by or for himself. I cite a subsequent paragraph:

L'intérêt présent, voilà le grand mobile, le seul qui mène sûrement et loin. Emile reçoit quelquefois de son père, de sa mère, de ses parents, de ses amis des billets d'invitation pour un dîné, pour une promenade, pour une partie sur l'eau, pour voir quelque fête publique. Ces billets sont courts, clairs, nets, bien écrits. Il faut trouver *quelqu'un* qui les lui lise; ce *quelqu'un* ou ne se trouve pas toujours à point nommé, ou rend à l'enfant le peu de complaisance que l'enfant eut pour lui la veille. Ainsi l'occasion, le moment se passe. *On* lui lit enfin le billet, mais il n'est plus temps. Ah! si l'*on* eut su lire soi-même! *On* en reçoit d'autres; ils sont si courts! Le sujet en est si intéressant! *on* voudrait essayer de les déchiffrer, *on* trouve tantôt de l'aide et tantôt des refus. *On* s'évertue; *on* déchiffre enfin la moitié d'un billet; il s'agit d'aller

demain manger de la crème...*on* ne sait où ni avec qui...combien *on* fait d'efforts pour lire le reste!

With one exception, the *on* here is each time poor Emile, who must find *quelqu'un* to read to him, *quelqu'un* who may not be where he or she is supposed to be, or who may be avoiding just such importunities. Someone or rather *on* reads the note to him at last, too late. The scene then consists in *on* learning to read in the place of *on*. *On* is on its own only so long as it can read from the place of the other *on*. *On* can read to himself, or he can “lire soi-même” as Rousseau puts it, only if he reads as another and as another does, and only because one *on* can comprehend and be comprehended by another. *On* within *on*. Each one within the other. But also each without the other, each exterior to and inappropriable by the other.

The inappropriable absence of the other: this is what has to be learned and this is what reading teaches again. One has already learned it, for otherwise one could not learn it again. What we call reading in the proper sense or *à la lettre* would be but the passage through the narrow stricture of that little word *on*. Like everyone, Emile must learn to read *on* for himself, to “savoir lire soi-même” in Rousseau’s formulation that also makes “soi-même” into a direct object here, dividing the *même* within/without itself. Within itself without itself, one that comprehends another one, not the same one but the same *on* all the same. The haunted “on” of an ontology that will forever be troubled in its accounting on the basis of the one and only one. It will always be an ontology haunted by the spectral *on* within and without everyone.

Rousseau’s paragraph leaves Emile struggling “pour lire le reste.” Not enough time remains to read this remains of a word, which here designates all that Emile must strive yet to read and to appropriate if he is to have the desired *crème*, tomorrow: “il s’agit d’aller demain manger de la crème...*on* ne sait où ni avec qui...combien *on* fait d’efforts pour lire le reste!” Not enough time remains to read this *reste* because we needed some rather long preliminaries if we were to have a chance to be once more astonished at what is, after all, the most natural scene in the

world, or so we continue to teach ourselves to believe. Now perhaps we can begin both to recognize this scene as naturally spectral and to admit that there is nothing really astonishing at all about that. For *ils sont toujours là, les spectres*. And they are always teaching someone to read, which is to say, to live with specters. This is the secret of our pedagogy. One day, perhaps, we as scholars will admit to this thing we know, for having also learned it from some ghost, for example, the one we call by the name Rousseau.¹¹

If there had been more time remaining, I would have proposed that we try, despite the difficulty, to read the *reste*. That is, to read a little more of this letter, which promises such pleasures to pupils like Emile that it has kept them learning to read naturally and painlessly for two and a half centuries at least. Or so we profess to believe as scholars. This pedagogical pleasure principle remains the creed of those who learn or teach to read and who must presume such a thing is simply possible, a possible thing, as if it were a thing rather than the specter or specterization of all things possible. And yet of course we also *know*, somewhere, consciously, unconsciously, that specters are there, always, “as soon as we open our mouths,” whether or not to ingest some cream. The desire to speak with specters, to do what Rousseau calls “parler aux absents et les entendre,” this is what causes to yawn open that figure of self-presence encased in the bodies of the presently living, my body or yours, always someone’s, the proper and appropriated body of someone living, thus not a specter of himself or herself. But already, all the same, this living one, this reader, for instance, is specterized for being able to “parler aux absents et les entendre.” Scholars know this as well but still must believe, so very absurdly, that no specters can assist them in their work, the work of a life or of living.

Because I began by pointing to the event that was *Spectres de Marx*, let me conclude by returning to that text or letting it return, like a specter. The opening lines of the first chapter, “Exorde,” describe or inscribe the trace of this text’s own event in or through another, through another’s coming forward and speaking, *as it were*. This opening phrase, the *incipit*, is a spectral event, neither fictional nor non-fictional,

performative, would one say if that did not imply somewhere a self-knowing self-presence. The phrase comes, *as it were*, from nowhere, *quelque part, de quelqu'un qui dit*. I had not recalled precisely that the phrase opens with a series of pronouns, beginning with the third person indefinite pronoun: *quelqu'un*. "Quelqu'un, vous ou moi..." are the first words of this first chapter. What I had not specifically remembered is this order of pronouns: third, second, first, which reverses the ordinally numbered series but preserves, perhaps, the division between the non-personal third and personal first/second pronouns (to recall Benveniste's distinction). It depends how one interprets the play of commas, the spectral punctuation of "Quelqu'un, vous ou moi, s'avance et dit: *je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin*." A specter has begun to speak, from the first word, as soon as some mouth opens and says: "Quelqu'un/vous ou moi...*je*. The opening sentence opens itself to this event whereby another, another you or me but also still another other, comes forward in or as desire that calls forth something. "Quelqu'un, vous ou moi" begins to speak, begins to write, begins to give this text to be written when he, she, or it comes forward and says "I/*je*" "*je voudrais*," "*je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin*."

Someone: a child, a student, a scholar, perhaps, an old man, a still older woman, but, finally or first, no one at all—*on*, we would say if we were speaking French, but in English, I write or translate: "Someone, you or me," in any case, specter, and more than one.



Notes

¹ It was on one of these occasions that I read another essay, "The Ghosts of Critique and Deconstruction," which shows some

affinities with the present one, in particular with the notion of spectral scholarship. This essay has been reprinted in *Deconstruction: A Reader*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), pp. 198-213.

² Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), p. 15; *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

³ See in particular Emile Benveniste, "Relationships of Person in the Verb," in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), pp. 199-201.

⁴ Maurice Blanchot, "La Voix narrative" (le 'il,' le neutre)," in *L'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 558.

⁵ Cf. Benveniste, op. cit., p. 199: "'I' and 'you' are reversible: the one whom 'I' defines by 'you' thinks of himself as 'I' and can be inverted into 'I,' and 'I' becomes a 'you'."

⁶ See Blanchot, *Le pas au-delà* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) and Derrida, "Pas," in *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1986).

⁷ Blanchot, "Le pont de bois (la répétition, le neutre)," op. cit., pp. 581-82. Once initiated in these final lines of the section, the dialogic or polylogic form continues through the next section, "La littérature encore une fois."

⁸ We are thus reminded of Blanchot's essay "Les trois paroles de Marx," which prompted Derrida to write in *Spectres de Marx*: "J'aurais voulu citer ici tout entières, pour y souscrire sans réserve, les trois pages admirables qui portent donc pour titre 'Les trois paroles de Marx'. Avec le sobre éclat d'une incomparable densité, de façon à la fois discrète et fulgurante, leurs énoncés se donnent moins comme la réponse pleine à une question qu'ils ne se mesurent à ce dont il nous faut répondre aujourd'hui, héritiers que nous sommes de *plus d'une* parole, comme d'une injonction *disjointe*" (39).

⁹ I have written elsewhere about this development from different angles; see my *Division of Literature, or the University in Deconstruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), especially chapters 1, 2, and 5.

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, IV, *Emile, ou de l'éducation*, pp. 357-58.

¹¹ In this sense, Derrida's *De la grammatologie* undertook a hauntological or spectrological analysis of Rousseau's text (or specter). It thus inaugurated a new spectral scholarship, and not only for Rousseau scholars, of course.

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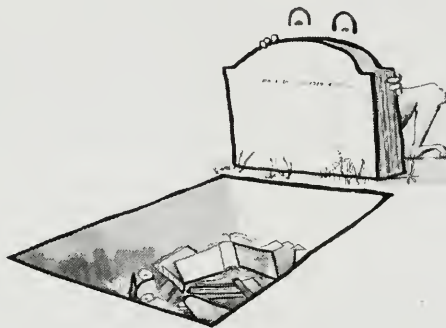
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*Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouvait ici
l'endroit où de telles paroles dégèlent.*

Rabelais,
Le Quart Livre

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	
The Haunts of Scholarship	1
Peggy Kamuf	
Who's There? —Or How Not To Keep a Secret	19
Samuel Weber	
“Le Grand Fantôme”: Actor as Specter in Diderot's Paradoxe sur le comédien	28
Heather Howard	
Chronique d'une mort annoncée: Les métamorphoses du pouvoir dans <i>Le Légataire Universel</i> (1708)	37
Martial Poirson	
Homosexualité mon amour: Derrida and the Haunting of Sodom	58
Michael Johnson	
Fantôme littéraire de Hugo: Les lendemains du <i>Dernier jour d'un condamné</i>	77
Sonja Hamilton	
Representations of Invisibility in Victor Hugo's <i>L'homme qui rit</i>	88
C. Camille Collins	
Haunting the Underworld in Nerval's <i>Les Nuits d'octobre</i>	98
Aimee Kilbane	
L'Eve Future, ou le Futur @ève de la mort apprivoisée	108
Sylvie Young	
Conference Program	123
Call for Papers	127
Ordering Information	128