THE BEAST & THE SOVEREIGN II
The Beast & the Sovereign

Volume II

Jacques Derrida

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The University of Chicago Press  Chicago and London
Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was Directeur d’études at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, and professor of humanities at the University of California, Irvine. He is the author of many books published by the Press, including Writing and Difference; Dissemination; and The Work of Mourning.


Ouvrage publié avec le soutien du Centre national du livre–ministère français chargé de la culture / This work is published with support from the National Center of the Book–French Ministry of Culture.

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
© 2011 by The University of Chicago
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Printed in the United States of America

isbn-13: 978-0-226-14430-6 (cloth)
isbn-10: 0-226-14430-5 (cloth)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Derrida, Jacques.
[Bête et le souverain. English]
The beast and the sovereign / Jacques Derrida; translated by Geoffrey Bennington.
p. cm. — (Seminars of Jacques Derrida; v. 1)
Translation of: Séminaire: la bête et le souverain.
isbn-13: 978-0-226-14428-3 (cloth; alk. paper)
isbn-10: 0-226-14428-3 (cloth: alk. paper)

© This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).
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When the decision was made to edit and publish Jacques Derrida’s teaching lectures, there was little question that they would and should be translated into English. From early in his career, in 1968, and annually thereafter until 2003, Derrida regularly taught at U.S. universities. It was his custom to repeat for his American audience the lectures delivered to his students in France the same year. Teaching first at Johns Hopkins and then at Yale, he read the lectures in French as they had been written. But from 1987, when he began teaching at the University of California, Irvine, Derrida undertook to lecture in English, improvising on-the-spot translations of his lectures. Recognizing that the greater part of his audience outside of France depended on translation was easier, however, than providing an ad libitum English version of his own elegant, complex, and idiomatic writing. In the circumstance, to his evident joy in teaching was often added a measure of suffering and regret for all that remained behind in the French original. It is to the memory of Derrida the teacher as well as to all his students past and still to come that we offer these English translations of “The Seminars of Jacques Derrida.”

The volumes in this series are translations of the original French editions published by Éditions Galilée, Paris, and will in each case follow shortly the publication of the corresponding French volume. The scope of the project, and the basic editorial principles followed in establishing the text, are outlined in the “General Introduction to the French Edition,” translated here. Editorial issues and decisions relating more specifically to this volume are addressed in an “Editorial Note.” Editors’ footnotes and other editorial interventions are all translated without modification, except in the case of footnoted citations of quoted material, which refer to extant English translations of the source as necessary. Additional translators’ notes have been kept to a minimum. To facilitate scholarly reference, the page numbers of
the French edition are printed in the margin on the line at which the new page begins.

Translating Derrida is a notoriously difficult enterprise, and while the translator of each volume assumes full responsibility for the integrity of the translation, as series editors we have also reviewed the translations and sought to ensure a standard of accuracy and consistency across the volumes. Toward this end, in the first phase of work on the series, we have called upon the advice of other experienced translators of Derrida’s work into English and wish to thank them here: Pascale-Anne Brault, Michael Naas, Elizabeth Rottenberg, and David Wills.

Geoffrey Bennington
Peggy Kamuf
October 2008
The complete edition of Jacques Derrida’s seminars and lectures will give the reader the chance of an unprecedented contact with the philosopher’s teaching voice. This edition will constitute a new part of his oeuvre, to be distinguished from the books and other texts published during his lifetime or revised by him before his death, and with a clearly different status. It is not certain that Jacques Derrida would have published the seminars as they stand: probably he would have reorganized or rewritten them. Taken as a whole, but also in their relation to Derrida’s philosophical oeuvre, these lectures and seminars will constitute an incomparable research tool and will, we believe, give a different experience of his thinking, here linked to his teaching, which was always, both in France and abroad, a truly vital resource of his writing.

The corpus we are preparing for publication is vast. From the beginning of his teaching career, Derrida was in the habit of completely writing out almost all his lectures and seminars. This means that we have at our disposal the equivalent of some fourteen thousand printed pages, or forty-three volumes, on the basis of one volume per academic year. This material can be classified according to a variety of criteria. First, according to the place where the teaching took place: the Sorbonne from 1960 to 1964; the École normale supérieure in the rue d’Ulm from 1964 to 1984; the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) from 1984 to 2003. Then

1. We need to add the American places too: from fall 1968 to 1974 at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, then as visiting professor in the humanities from 1975 to 1986 at Yale University, where he gave each year, in the fall or spring semester, a regular seminar. From 1987 to 2003, Derrida taught regularly at the University of California (Irvine), and at the New School for Social Research, the Cardozo Law School, and New York University (1992–2003). This American teaching (which, with a few exceptions, repeated the Parisian seminar) was given at first in French, but after 1987 most often in English: Derrida would improvise during the session an English version of his text, which he had previously annotated for this purpose.
according to the type of teaching: classes with a very variable number of sessions (from one to fifteen) up until 1964; what he always called “seminars” thereafter. Finally—and no doubt most relevantly for the editorial work—according to the tools used: we have handwritten sessions from 1960 to 1970; typescripts, with manuscript annotations and corrections, from 1970 to 1988; electronic files and printouts from 1988 to 2003.

Derrida’s seminars, which already had their own style and already attracted a broad and numerous following at the rue d’Ulm (where the choice of subjects and authors, if not the way they were treated, was constrained by the program of the Agrégation),2 take on their definitive character at the EHESS where, on Wednesdays from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., a dozen times a year, Jacques Derrida, sometimes improvising a little, would read before a large audience the text of his seminar, entirely written out for each session as the year proceeded. (Add to that a few improvised sessions, sometimes around a reading, and a few discussion sessions.) Henceforth free in his choice of subjects, Derrida launched research projects over periods of several years, which link together in explicit, coherent, and gripping fashion. The great question of philosophical nationality and nationalism (1984–88) leads to that of the “Politics of Friendship” (1988–91), and then to the long series of “Questions of Responsibility” (1991–2003), focusing successively on the Secret (1991–92), on Testimony (1992–95), Hostility and Hospitality (1995–97), Perjury and Pardon (1997–99), and the Death Penalty (1999–2001), with the final two years devoted to “The Beast and the Sovereign” (2001–3).

Jacques Derrida was in the habit of drawing on the abundant material of these seminars for the very numerous lectures he gave every year throughout the world, and often, via this route, parts of the seminars were reworked and published. Several of his books also find their point of departure in the work of the seminar: Of Grammatology (1967), for example, in large part develops sessions of the 1965–66 seminar on “Nature, Culture, Writing”; the seminar on “Hegel’s Family” (1971–72) is picked up in Glas (1974). Politics of Friendship (1994) is explicitly presented as the expansion of the first session of the 1988–89 seminar, and there are traces in it of other sessions too. But in spite of these partial convergences and correspondences, the vast majority of the pages written from week to week for the seminar remain unpublished and will incomparably complement the work already

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2. [Translator’s note:] The Agrégation is the notoriously competitive qualifying examination taken by prospective higher-level teachers in the secondary and university systems.
published. Whenever a session was later published by Jacques Derrida, in modified form or not, we will give the reference. We do not consider it appropriate for the edition of the seminars themselves, as original material, to offer a comparative reading of those versions.

As we have already pointed out, the editorial work varies considerably according to the mode of production of the text. For the typewriter period, many handwritten amendments and annotations require a considerable effort of decipherment; the more so for the seminars entirely written in Jacques Derrida’s handsome but difficult handwriting, which require laborious transcription. So we shall begin by publishing the seminars of the last twenty years, while beginning preparation of the rest. In all cases, our primary goal is to present the text of the seminar, as written by Jacques Derrida, with a view to speech, to reading aloud, and thus with some marks of anticipated orality and some familiar turns of phrase. It is not certain that Jacques Derrida would have published these seminars, although he occasionally expressed his intention of doing so, but if he had taken up these texts for publication, he would probably have reworked them, as he always did, in the direction of a more written text. Obviously we have not taken it upon ourselves to do that work in his place. As we mentioned above, the reader may wish to compare the original version presented here with the few sessions published separately by Jacques Derrida himself.

Geoffrey Bennington
Marc Crépon
Marguerite Derrida
Thomas Dutoit
Peggy Kamuf
Michel Lisse
Marie-Louise Mallet
Ginette Michaud

The seminar entitled “The Beast and the Sovereign” was the last seminar given by Jacques Derrida and the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris, from fall 2001 to spring 2003. This second volume corresponds to the year 2002–3 and follows on from the first volume (2001–2) published (in French) by the Éditions Galilée in 2008 (and in English by the University of Chicago Press in 2009). In his presentation of the seminar intended for his American audience in spring 2003, Derrida recalls the outline of his argument and announces the guiding motif of the second year of the seminar:

Under this title we are pursuing the research from previous years around the sovereignty of the nation-state and its onto-theologico-political foundation. This research was made necessary for us by the question of capital punishment which always implies the right, for a sovereign power to have the life and death of its subjects at its disposal (the right of pardon for example).

But this reflection on sovereignty will be inflected this year toward the great questions of animal life (that of man, said by Aristotle to be a “political animal,” and that of the “beasts”) and of the treatment, the subjection, of the “beast” by “man.”

We shall ask questions about the literary or rhetorical history of the forms and genres (figures, tropes, metonymies, metaphors, allegories, fables, theater, etc.) which propose “animal representations” of the political. Hobbes’s Leviathan or La Fontaine’s Fables would only give two examples among many. The question of gender and sexual difference will cross all the others.

We shall also analyze, through the history of the concept of sovereignty

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1. On March 26, 2003, during the tenth session, Derrida twice implies that it is his intention to pursue his seminar “next year” (see session 10 below). It is worth noting that Derrida’s seminars at the EHESS were of variable length, from one year to three years.
(Bodin, Hobbes, Rousseau, Schmitt, etc.) what tends to associate and dissociate the figure of the sovereign and the beast (which is not exactly the animal). Both indeed seem to stand above or at a distance from the law. Both are, in different ways, of course, but in common, outlaws. What then is the law? And right? The sovereign, says Schmitt, is the one who has the right to suspend right.

Referring frequently to the contemporary situation and to the problems of globalization, that affect the logic of nation-state sovereignty, we shall also address the question of rogue states and their leaders who are often, in the political rhetoric of the most powerful states, compared to “beasts.”

At stake here, naturally (long before 9/11 which we shall however discuss), are the concepts of war—international or civil—according to European law, of cruelty, of terror and (national and international) terrorism, etc.

What was thus begun last year (2002) will be pursued this year with a different inflexion, especially in the latter weeks of the seminar. We shall begin conjoined readings (sometimes parallel, sometimes intersecting) of Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe on the one hand, and Heidegger’s seminar (1929–30) on the animal on the other (The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude).

In the EHESS yearbook for 2002–3, Derrida again specifies what is at stake in the reflection carried on in this second year of “The Beast and the Sovereign” seminar:

Following and developing the premises of the research begun the previous year, we focused all our efforts toward the reading and interpretation of two texts that appear in all respects to be as heterogeneous as possible: Robinson Crusoe on the one hand, and a famous seminar of Heidegger’s on the other (The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude), and in it more especially the 1929–30 lecture course, which constitutes Heidegger’s most systematic and rich treatise on animality, and more precisely on the world for the animal.

For it is in this seminar that we find the three famous “theses”—problematic theses to our eyes, and extensively questioned in our seminar (“the stone is without world [weltlos], the animal is poor in world [weltarm], man is world-forming [weltbildend]”).

Sometimes intersecting, sometimes in parallel, these readings aimed at a common focus: the history (especially the political history) of the concept of sovereignty including, inseparably, the sovereignty of man over animal in the pre-colonial England of Defoe (with its religious background studied in Robinson Crusoe) and throughout the many diverse and gripping readings of Robinson Crusoe through the centuries (Rousseau especially, Kant, Marx and many nineteenth-century political economists, but also Joyce, Virginia
Woolf, Lacan, Deleuze, etc.) and in Heidegger’s modern Germany (the beginning of the 1930s).

These two books are also books on solitude, on the so-called “state of nature,” on the history of the concept of Nature (especially in Heidegger) in which we began to study the quite essential lexicon (often associated with *physis*), seldom remarked upon and so difficult to translate, of *Walten* (*Gewalt, Umgewalt, Übergewaltigkeit*, etc.) which will flood Heidegger’s texts from 1935 onward, and which designates an archi-originary force or violence, of “sovereignty”—as it is sometimes translated—beyond the onto-theological, i.e. beyond the philosophico-political as such; which is obviously never the case in either Defoe or in the rich philosophical, political and religious context that determines his book.

These, broadly put, are the stakes that guided us in readings that were as minute as possible, sometimes appealing to other works by these two authors.²

This edition reproduces the written text of the seminar read by Derrida during the sessions that took place at the EHESS in 2002–3. As always, all the sessions of this seminar are entirely written out on computer.³ This second volume is made up of ten unpublished sessions, with the exception of a fragment of the seventh session, which was used as a lecture at the conference “Maurice Blanchot, Récits critiques,” later reprinted with a few changes in the enlarged edition of *Parages*.⁴

The reference text for this edition, which we shall refer to using the word “typescript,” is the printout of this seminar as kept by Derrida in his files. There are two copies deposited in the Jacques Derrida archive at the Institut mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC, Caen): the first (yellow folder) is comprised of the dated sessions numbered 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9; on the cover of the file one can read the following handwritten annotation: “Missing (SF) 3, 4, 10.” The second copy (red folder) that Derrida used for his American seminar⁶ is complete and is comprised of ten sessions, continuously numbered.⁷ Apart from these ten sessions, Derrida also

3. Derrida had entitled each of the files of the seminar “hei/foe,” followed by the number of the session. See below, session 2.
5. This abbreviation no doubt corresponds to “Séminaire français.”
6. Only a few sessions of the seminar were finally given at UC Irvine in March 2003.
7. On the cover of the folder, along with the abbreviated title, “BS—2002-03 (3),” and an illegible crossed-out word, is this handwritten phrase: “ma peur de la mort, désormais sa souffrance [my fear of death, henceforth his or her suffering].” The word “sa” is circled.
devoted two sessions that year to discussions with the participants of the seminar: these took place on February 19 and March 19, 2003. We have not, any more than for the first volume, and for the same reasons, attempted to transcribe these discussions, following the usage most often adopted for the Cerisy conferences and the major conferences devoted to the work of Jacques Derrida.

In the typescript of the seminar, bibliographical indications were usually clearly marked, in abbreviated form; we have specified them and also completed those that were missing. A certain number of the texts quoted were not copied out in the typescript: they appear in it as photocopied pages of books (French texts, translations and texts in the original language), placed by Derrida between the pages of the typescript where he intended to quote and comment on them. These photocopies comprise numerous traces of reading (underlined passages, circled words, various marginal annotations) used by Derrida during the sessions when he was commenting on or translating these passages; we have chosen not to signal these. As with the edition of the first volume of the seminar, we resorted to the recordings of the sessions, to clarify how these passages were broken up, before reinserting them, because in reading them out Derrida often intercalated passages of the original version and the translation of the texts quoted: because of this interweaving of languages that testifies to a sustained interest brought to bear on the question of translation throughout the seminar (especially as regards the analysis of the Heidegger text), we have decided on several occasions to insert these intercalations on the basis of the recording of the session and signaled each of these additions in a note. Otherwise, we have


9. [Translator’s note:] In the French edition, the “Editorial Note” adds the following: “... completed those that were missing, each time marking that fact by adding ‘(NdÉ) [note des éditeurs, editors’ note].’ All other editorial interventions are similarly marked.” This convention is not followed in the English edition, in which all the notes other than those supplied by the translator, which are marked as such, are either simple references (based by the editors on those given in the body of Derrida’s typescript, which contains no footnotes), or editors’ notes.
used Derrida’s own books whenever it was possible to find them in the library at his home in Ris-Orangis. In cases of uncertainty or where we were unable to track them down, we turned to the editions usually thought to be the most reliable. We have checked and where necessary corrected the quotations given by Derrida, rectifying, without marking the fact, what seemed to us to be obvious errors of transcription. On the other hand, we have systematically pointed out — referring to the pages of the published versions — modifications he made to the translations, as these modifications turn out to be particularly significant in the context of this last seminar where the two principal texts analyzed — Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Heidegger’s 1929–30 seminar — are respectively in English and German: the standard annotation “translation modified by . . .” here covers Derrida’s many interventions, be they minor (modification, displacement of a word or punctuation mark, addition or removal of italics, etc.) or more consequential. Finally, to close these remarks on references, throughout the seminar Derrida often refers to his earlier work, whether already published or not: we give references when the citation is explicit, even when it refers to the still unpublished corpus of the seminars themselves.

As for the more technical aspects of our work, they are relatively slight. This edition is of the entire text of Derrida’s seminar as it was composed and laid out by him, notably as to its sometimes very long sentences and paragraphs. We have also occasionally corrected typing errors, most often corrected by Derrida during the session. Similarly, at a more micrographic level, the punctuation has been preserved; in particular all the brackets, which are Derrida’s own.10 We have however on a few rare occasions made some corrections or minute alterations when the proliferation of signs such as brackets, parentheses, and dashes (or else their absence) made it difficult to follow the argument.

We have kept all the signs of the seminar’s oral quality, and especially some “pickups” Derrida placed in brackets. In the same spirit, we have chosen to leave in parentheses some preparatory notes (e.g., “Photocopy all the texts”) and stage directions, such as “(Board),” “(Read and comment),” “(Reread),” “(Develop at length),” which give a sense of the rhythm of the seminar, its accents and intonations. On one occasion, at the beginning of the seventh session, we have inserted in curly brackets, on the basis of the recording, a development improvised by Derrida. The recording also allowed us to signal in the notes a certain number of additions by which Derrida made more explicit for his audience some important aspects of his

10. [Translator’s note:] Except for some translator’s glosses.
thinking. Taking account of these additions seemed to be necessary in this second volume of the seminar because, in a way that is more marked than in the first, Derrida had placed references to these complements (which are not however systematic)\textsuperscript{11} added during the sessions at many points in the typescript. We wanted to provide these additions every time they noticeably added nuance or precision to the development.

In the case of expressions that sometimes recur in the typescript with slight variations (e.g., variable use of capital letters, quotation marks, italic or roman type, optional elisions, etc.), we did not think it appropriate to undertake a systematic harmonization of these variations, insofar as they do not impede the legibility of the text.\textsuperscript{12} Also, in the typescript of this seminar, Derrida often uses abbreviations (RC for Robinson Crusoe, H for Heidegger, SZ for Sein und Zeit, etc.): we have reestablished titles and names and pointed out in a note the very rare cases in which the context did not permit a decision between two or more alternative expansions of an abbreviation—for example, in the case of RC, between the (English or French) title and the name of the character of Defoe’s novel. As for the words in angle brackets (e.g., \textless word\textgreater), they are added by us to fill in certain lacunae in the typescript, most often skipped words.\textsuperscript{13} Finally, as Derrida was accustomed to doing, there are sometimes some telegraphic notes at the end of a session as to what was to be discussed in future sessions. These are rarer than in the previous year, do not constitute a continuous text, and have not been retained in this edition.\textsuperscript{14}

We thank Timothy Bahti for having communicated to us a letter to Jacques Derrida that allowed us to clarify the beginning of the seventh session. We thank Marie-Joëlle St-Louis Savoie for her help with some bibliographical research and Stéphanie Vanasten for her help in revising some of the German passages. We especially warmly thank Georges Leroux for his careful revision of the transliterations from the Greek. On his suggestion, we decided to follow the code used by Emile Benveniste in \textit{Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes}. Finally, we thank just as warmly Cécile

\textsuperscript{11} See session 9, notes 18 and 44, and session 10, notes 31 and 41.

\textsuperscript{12} [Translator’s note:] The editors give the following examples: “Séminaire/séminaire, Walten/walten, morts vivants/morts-vivants, funérailles/funéraille, phantasme/phantasme, Robinson Crusoe/Robinson Crusoé, etc.” Not all of these variations survive the process of translation.

\textsuperscript{13} [Translator’s note:] Not all such cases are marked in the translation.

\textsuperscript{14} With the exception of two sentences indicated by Derrida to be reinserted at specific places in the third session: see session 3 below, notes 16 and 34.
Bourgignon, our faithful collaborator at the Éditions Galilée, for her as-
siduous and always thoughtful help, for the constant care and remarkable
work she has devoted to the editing of both volumes of this seminar.¹⁵

*Micel Lisse
*Marie-Louise Mallet
*Ginette Michaud

¹⁵ [Translator’s note:] The translator would also like to thank Seth Wood for his
invaluable editorial and bibliographical assistance in the preparation of the English text.