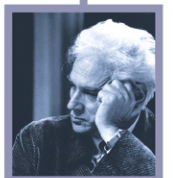
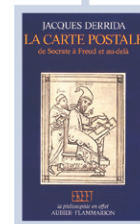
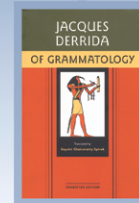


Derrida / Translating / Derrida



April 2002 - October 2002

Main Library • Muriel Ansley Reynolds Exhibit Gallery
University of California, Irvine

Derrida / Translating / Derrida

An exhibit in
the UC Irvine Main Library's
Muriel Ansley Reynolds Exhibit Gallery

April 2002 - October 2002

Curated by
Dragan Kujundzic

Foreword

Welcome to the UC Irvine Libraries' spring 2002 exhibit, *Derrida/Translating/Derrida*, which celebrates the extraordinary scholarly career of Jacques Derrida. Professor Derrida is both one of the pre-eminent philosophers and theorists of our time and one of UCI's most renowned faculty members. The Libraries take particular pride in the fact that the Critical Theory Archive in our Department of Special Collections and Archives is home to Professor Derrida's scholarly papers, from which the materials in the exhibit were selected.

I am especially pleased that this exhibit has been planned in tandem with two related academic conferences at UCI at which Professor Derrida is among the featured speakers: *Inaugurations: An Opening Celebration of the International Center for Writing and Translation* (School of Humanities, 4-5 April), and *Derrida/Deleuze: Psychoanalysis, Territoriality, Politics* (Critical Theory Institute, 12-13 April). Each conference includes in its schedule a reception in the Main Library giving conference participants an opportunity to view the exhibit and celebrate the many contributions Professor Derrida has made to the UCI academic community over the past two decades.

Derrida/Translating/Derrida was curated by Dragan Kujundzic, Associate Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature and Acting Director of the International Center for Writing and Translation. His many years of association with Professor Derrida as both friend and colleague have given him the necessary insights to craft an exhibit that will be illuminating not only to Derridean students and scholars, but also to others interested in understanding the development and contributions of the philosopher widely known as the most prominent proponent of "deconstruction."

On behalf of both the Partners of the UC Irvine Libraries and the entire staff, please enjoy this exhibit and return to view others in the future.

Gerald J. Munoff
University Librarian

Derrida / Translating / Derrida

“An archive has always been a *pledge*, and like every pledge, a token of the future.”

—Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive / Archive Fever*

Writing avant la lettre, can Derrida ever be translated?

Those who know the work of Jacques Derrida will recognize “Writing avant la lettre” as the title of the first chapter of his 1967 master work *Of Grammatology*. This chapter title was translated into English faithfully as “Writing before the letter,” which fails to render the plurality of meanings implied by the French “L’écriture avant la lettre.” What is not revealed in English (unless, in order to underscore the foreignness of Derrida’s writing, the phrase is presented in two languages and therefore not translated at all) is that *Writing avant la lettre* has several meanings: writing that is before the letter; writing anticipatory and open to the readings to come; writing that is precipitated. Or, if seen as a frame of the ensuing text of *Of Grammatology*, writing, that of Jacques Derrida, that will be forever, as we say in English, *avant la lettre*: precipitated, premature, before its time, rushed, in need of pause and of the translation that will always come too soon, too late. Writing that marks the end of the book which it exceeds, and which will never be able to contain it. Writing that begins by translating itself; writing that begins with translation.

The books and manuscripts from the Jacques Derrida archive exhibited here testify to this fascinating yet impossible demand to translate Derrida. From the beginnings of his writing, as early as high school, Derrida’s teachers were exasperated by his penchant for “too much philosophy, and bad [hand]writing,” criticisms that have followed him throughout his life. Who cannot marvel at the rushed, precipitated handwriting of Derrida that he himself at times cannot decipher when faced with his archive? Who cannot be amazed at the enigmatic ciphers from which his books develop, as if from a shibboleth, a secret word that spins entire traditions?

For example, many of the note cards that accompany his manuscripts contain only one word or name, such as “Benjamin,” “Heidegger,” “ontology,” or “translation” (as if he could have forgotten about them!).

This need to translate, even within his “own” French language (which his writing infinitely embraces and renounces at once), has motivated Derrida’s writing from the very beginning and continues to the present as a leading impetus of his entire oeuvre. The earliest stage of his public career was marked by his translation of Edmund Husserl’s *The Origin of Geometry*, accompanied by Derrida’s own introduction to this text. It seems natural to open this exhibit with this work, which began a new epoch in philosophy, literary studies, and critical theory. Derrida’s work on Husserl is followed by two later works that are themselves acts of translation: *Of Grammatology* and *The Post Card*. These works converted entire traditions of writing, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, ontology, and so on, into a language that would be dismantled of its metaphysical premises or bereft of the received meanings. And therefore, also in some ways rendered not understandable, into a language that will require deciphering, reading, and translation to come.

Jacques Derrida, Professor of Humanities at the University of California at Irvine, is one of the most translated and influential contemporary philosophers in the world. His work challenges and expands the borders of philosophy, literary theory, and virtually all other disciplines in the humanities.

This exhibit reveals the creative process in Derrida’s writings, from its inception on note cards, in scribbles and ciphers, into manuscripts, both handwritten and typewritten, and finally into galley proofs and published books. The further trajectory of his writing is traced as it is launched into numerous translations, interviews, and lectures presented worldwide that follow this most global, most traveled, most visible of philosophers. These translations of his work into dozens of languages and cultures seem to be anticipated by the very nature of Derrida’s writing.

The exhibit also implicitly reminds its viewers of our good fortune that Derrida is annually in residence here at the University of California at

Irvine, and that for almost two decades, literally thousands of students and scholars have come to UCI to participate in his seminars. The exhibit is, therefore, also an attempt to translate Jacques Derrida’s annual residence and his many lectures, meetings, friendships, and other academic events at Irvine into these archived traces. An impossible task, really, since his work at UC Irvine continues to leave infinite sets of imprints on our campus. These imprints are forever in need of translation, reading, deciphering, translating.

Writing avant la lettre, can Derrida ever be translated?

Materials in *Derrida / Translating / Derrida* are from the Jacques Derrida Papers in the Critical Theory Archive, which is within the Department of Special Collections and Archives of the UC Irvine Libraries. Several items were generously loaned by Peggy Kamuf. The exhibit was curated by Dragan Kujundzic, Associate Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature and Acting Director of UCI’s International Center for Writing and Translation, who thanks Jessica Haile for her contributions and assistance. The opening of the exhibit on April 5, 2002, is celebrated as part of the Inauguration of the Center.

1. **Portrait of Jacques Derrida, 1970s.**
Photograph by Havalı.
2. **Traduire.**
Definition by Jacques Derrida,
English translation by Dragan Kujundzic.
Holograph manuscript and annotated typescript.
3. **Published translations of Derrida’s writings in 25 languages, from Arabic to Turkish.**

L'Origine de la géométrie / The Origin of Geometry

It is useful to remind ourselves, as the fragile and yellowed pages of his manuscript do, that Jacques Derrida's first major publication was a *translation*, and that the vocation of translator is the one that he has continued to cherish and praise throughout his career. In his recent essay "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" (2001), for example, Derrida writes that he recognizes "an infinite debt in its service, an admiration for those men and women who, to my mind, are the only ones who know how to read and write—translators."

This "jealous and admiring love" for translation no doubt inspired his first major work. His simultaneous declaration of an intellectual debt to Edmund Husserl, an act of translation of a text in many ways impossible yet necessary to translate, and a first movement of a loving contestation of phenomenology, as expressed in Derrida's translation and introduction, have since marked the entirety of his career.

4. **Holograph manuscript of Derrida's translation of Edmund Husserl's *L'Origine de la géométrie*.**
5. **Galley proofs with mailing envelope.**
6. **Revised galley proofs in leather portfolio.**
7. **First edition**
(Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).
8. **English translation by John P. Leavey, Jr.**
(University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

De la Grammatologie / Of Grammatology

The history of writing unfolds as an attempt, as Derrida tells us in *Of Grammatology*, "to enclose writing into a supplementary and instrumental function." This explains his attempt in this book, published in 1967, to unsettle the primacy of speech and to effect a reversal of hierarchy. Writing, the non-teleological movement of inscription, precedes what seems self-present to itself, and primary, speech.

The manuscript itself consists of numerous fragments and notes reminding us of post cards of uncertain and untraceable origin or destination, thereby illustrating the attempt to unchain writing from this pragmatic and instrumental goal. It is a useful reminder that what follows as a book has these uncertain destinations as its indelible support. Derrida's writings are only temporary holders of an infinite movement of writing that preceded them and that will unfold from them or follow them, in reading, interpretation, and translation that never cease.

9. **Holograph manuscript with typescript insertions.**
10. **Holograph note cards.**
11. **Annotated typescript.**
12. **Annotated galley proofs.**
13. **First edition**
(Editions de Minuit, 1967).
14. **English translation by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**
(Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

La Carte postale / The Post Card

During a visit to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England, in 1978, Derrida came upon a post card depicting Plato teaching Socrates how to write. *The Post Card* was thereby conceived through this chance encounter of a postal substrate, a post card, which is, in principle, always open to public inspection. (The writing on the post card is open, not hidden, and is therefore exposed to multiple destinations and addressees). The post card depicts the reversal of the philosophical tradition. Socrates, the one who does not write, is taught how to do so by his student Plato.

Numerous interpretations of this document follow in the text of *The Post Card*, asking themselves constantly (“going postal” or mad with questions, we might say), “What does the card want to say to you? On what condition is it possible?” The archived material contains a stunning reversal of the very procedure of writing. Derrida did not first write a book and then seek an illustration for it. He found the post card first, then himself schematized and drew versions of what became the book’s dust jacket; only then did he write the text.

The book begins with the reproduction of an ancient manuscript, with a copy of a copy, and proceeds as a translation of that reproduction, forever challenging any attempt to authenticate writing or find its certain origin, including the writing of *The Post Card*. This reversal, marked by the history of the manuscript, reinforces the theme of the book and its parodic drive, the polemical challenge to psychoanalysis (mostly that of Jacques Lacan) to claim a privileged access to Freud in a firm and undisputed filial genealogy.

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15. **Cover artwork, including original postcard.**
 16. **Dust jacket for first edition**
(Aubier-Flammarion, 1980).
 17. **Holograph manuscript.**
 18. **German translation by Hans-Joachim Metzger**
(Brinkmann & Bose, 1982).
 19. **English translation by Alan Bass**
(University of Chicago press, 1987).
 20. **Letter to Derrida from publisher of
the English translation, June 18, 1987.**

Derrida on Derrida

Over the years Derrida has been asked to give numerous interviews, in many languages and on many types of occasion. Some of the best known include “Heidegger—Philosopher’s Hell,” “‘Eating’ Well, Or the Calculation of the Subject,” “The Derridean View,” “Choreographies,” and others. Selected interviews were later collected and published in *Points ... Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford University Press, 1995).

In being interviewed, Derrida often takes up the problem of the interview genre itself, including the notions of confession, simplification, “impoverishment, distortion, displacement of argument by symptom ...” (says Derrida in an interview titled “Between Brackets”) in order to point out the invariably simplistic and hurried nature of these encounters.

Indeed, his interviews often challenge the very nature of the interview genre. Derrida is presented in dialogue with his interlocutors, speaking “in several languages,” or in *dialangues* or *dialanguages*, as he puts it. The interviews problematize the very nature of this kind of public exchange. The scene of interview becomes the site of plurality of voices, giving itself over to play, debate, discussion, and translation, with a dispersed and uncertain destination beyond the phantasm of the self-present, confessed living speech.

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21. **“The Derridean view: An inter-view with Jacques Derrida.”**
By Edward Marx; translated by Mary Ann Caws.
Published in: *BM* (4 September 1988).
Annotated galley proofs.
 22. **“Choreographies.”**
By Christie V. McDonald.
Published in: *Diacritics* vol. 12 (1982).
Annotated galley proofs.
 23. **“Deconstruction in America: An interview with Jacques Derrida.”**
By James Creech, Peggy Kamuf and Jane Todd.
Published in: *Critical Exchange* no. 17 (Winter 1985).
Offprint.

Derrida also utilizes the public epistolary genre, the open letter, to express his views on his own work and many other topics. For example, in the often translated and republished “Letter To a Japanese Friend” he addresses the question of translation of the word for which Derrida himself is probably most famous, if not infamous: *deconstruction*. He states that “if the difficulties of translation can be anticipated (and the question of deconstruction is also through and through *the* question of translation), one should not begin by naively believing that the word ‘deconstruction’ corresponds in French to some clear and univocal signification.”

“Letter To a Japanese Friend” represents one of Derrida’s most explicit documents on the “meaning” of the term deconstruction, as well as on the problems of translating the word within French and into other languages.

24. **Lettre à un ami japonais, le 10 juillet 1983.**
Mimeograph of typescript.
25. **Letter to Jacques Derrida from translator David Wood, November 23rd, 1984.**
Signed typescript.
26. **Letter to a Japanese Friend, July 10 1983.**
Translated by David Wood. Typescript.

In another open letter, Derrida delivers a polemical response to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon in which he declares himself on the topic of apartheid. In addition to Derrida’s typescript in French and Peggy Kamuf’s translation into English, the exhibit features handwritten additions to the manuscript, such as Derrida’s “Postscript.”

These three items are on loan from Professor Kamuf, who is Derrida’s chief translator into English. Her translations include *The Specters of Marx*, *Given Time: Counterfeit Money I*, and the forthcoming *Without Alibi* (Stanford University Press, April 2002).

27. **Lettre ouverte à Anne McClintock et Rob Nixon.**
Annotated typescript.
28. **Postscript (addendum to “Lettre ouverte”).**
Holograph manuscript.
29. **But, beyond ... (Open Letter to Ann McClintock and Rob Nixon from Jacques Derrida).**
Translated by Peggy Kamuf.
Published as: “Racism’s Last Word.”
Harper’s Magazine, February 1986.
Annotated typescript.

Beginnings, 1950–1965

Among the most intriguing manuscripts in the archive are Derrida's high school exams, some of which include his teachers' critiques of his exercises in English. "As regards language," one instructor admonishes the young student, "Your English is not idiomatic enough (if generally correct). My advice is: read a lot of English, pen in hand." Grade: 10 points out of 20. Another advises Derrida that he "must avoid the philosophical vocabulary (to mediate, etc.) ..." and further notes that "Your handwriting should be more legible." Grade: 12.5 out of 20.

Even more interesting are comments written by Louis Althusser on Derrida's preparatory exams for the official state examination called the *agrégation*. These comments, and the material that Derrida presented to Althusser, announce Derrida's distinct philosophical style, which Althusser found inappropriate for such an exam. The reader can discern, even in Althusser's well-intentioned remarks, an anxiety that Derrida's work, in its refusal to follow the beaten path, continues to present for traditional academia.

The material exhibited also includes Derrida's letter to the Director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure that accompanied his proposal for work toward the *agrégation de philosophie* on the topic of "Formal Logic and Transcendental Logic" in the work of Edmund Husserl.

30. **Essay in English on Shakespeare, 1950.**
Holograph manuscript.

31. **Essay in English on English poetry, 1950.**
Holograph manuscript.

32. **Jacques Derrida at Lycée Louis-le-Grand, 1949 or 1950.**
Photograph.

33. **Notes on psychology, 1952-1956.**
Holograph manuscripts.

34. **Induction, 1952-1956.**
Holograph manuscript.

35. **Notes on Heidegger for work on Husserl, 1953-1957.**
Holograph manuscript.

36. **L'inconscient, 1954 or 1955.**
Holograph manuscript written for Althusser,
with his comments in response.

37. **L'explication par le simple, 1954 or 1955.**
Holograph manuscript written for Althusser,
with his comments in response.

38. **Derrida and Althusser, 24 December 1981, Paris.**
Two photographs.

39. **Letter to Directeur of the Ecole Normale Supérieure from Jacques Derrida outlining his proposal for his course of study toward the *agrégation* in philosophy, accompanied by the outline itself and other materials, 1965.**
Typescripts.

40. **Proposal, notes, and syllabus for *agrégation de philosophie* course on formal logic taught by Jacques Derrida, 1965-1966.**
Holograph manuscripts and typescripts.

The Seminars at Irvine

Jacques Derrida joined the faculty at UCI in 1987 and has since presented his spring seminar on an annual basis. His lectures are documented in the archive in thousands of unpublished pages, some of which have later appeared in a condensed form in a published article or book. These include “The Theologico-Political: Nationality and Nationalism” (1987), “The Politics of Friendship” (1988), and “Hospitality” (1996).

The seminars constitute an open-ended series, the texts of which cannot be read without remembering Derrida’s presentation of them in Humanities Hall, his lively and humorous interventions, and his numerous other lectures and conferences on campus. For all of us at Irvine, these lectures are also a history of the politics of friendship between Derrida and his colleagues, friends, and students.

One such friendship—one of Derrida’s most treasured—is captured in the photograph of Derrida and J. Hillis Miller. This image, an accidental double exposure, captures two scholars who have made profound and indelible contributions to the impact that UCI’s School of Humanities has had on theory, philosophy, and literary studies worldwide.

41. **Jacques Derrida in Laguna Beach, California, 1998.**
Photograph by Amy Kofman.
42. **Théologic - Politique: Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique. 1986/87 seminar. *Séance* titled “Secularizing.”**
French typescript and English translation.

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43. **Seminar handout used at UC Irvine, 1987.**
Photocopy of offprint.
 44. **Théologic - Politique: Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique. 1986/87 seminar. *Séance* titled “Eyes.”**
French typescript and English translation.
 45. **Jacques Derrida and Hillis Miller, 1995.**
Photograph (double exposure) by Marie-Louise Mallet.
 46. **Manger l’autre: Politiques de l’amitié. 1990/91 seminar.**
French typescript and holograph.

The Wellek Library Lectures

Derrida's first lectures at UCI were given in spring 1984 in the René Wellek Library Lectures series. The lectures, *Mémoires: for Paul de Man*, were, sadly, given in "a fervor of bereaved friendship." Written not long after de Man's death, the lectures are marked by the work of mourning, and by the translation of that work of mourning into a discourse of philosophy. As such they present in themselves an impossible, painful, and interminable translation.

As Derrida states at the opening of the lectures: "*A peine*—translation will continue to remain the subject of our seminars this year, as has been the case for the past five years. *A peine*: a scene is concealed within this French idiom, *à peine*, which already defies translation."

The items on exhibit include Derrida's letters to his translators of the lectures—Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, and Eduardo Cadava—and provide a glimpse of this collaborative work at a difficult moment in the author's life. In his introduction to the volume, Derrida expresses to them "a profound gratitude."

47. **Mémoires: Pour Paul de Man, 1984.** Typescript.
48. **First edition** (published in English by Columbia University Press in its Wellek Library Lectures series, 1986).
Translated from the French by Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, and Eduardo Cadava.

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49. **Letters from Jacques Derrida to his translators, December 1984-January 1985.** Typescripts.
 50. **René Wellek's copy of the French edition** (Galilée, 1988).
 51. **Italian translation by Silvano Petrosino** (Editoriale Jaca Book, 1995).
 52. **Introductory remarks presented at Wellek Library Lectures, UC Irvine, 1984.** Holograph manuscript.

The primary objective of the UC Irvine Libraries Exhibits Program is to support the research and instructional missions of UCI by interpreting and publicizing the richness, diversity, and unique strengths of the resources of the UC Irvine Libraries.

UC Irvine Libraries Exhibits Staff

Jackie Dooley, Exhibits Officer
Carrie Lee, Exhibits Preparator
Sylvia Nienhuis-Irving, Exhibits Preparator
and Publications Designer

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Sylvia Nienhuis-Irving
Library Publications Office

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