This book analyses Derrida’s investigating, and unpicking, of the assertion of a gulf between man and the animal, and the attribution of qualities (both relatively desirable such as reason, and undesirable such as cruelty) to man alone. The contentious term ‘man’ (which may or may not include women) and ‘animal’ (which belies the heterogeneity of animals) are used to highlight the power play in the texts in question. The major source is Derrida’s late seminars, The Beast and the Sovereign, and especially the tracking of the wolf in this work, but there are a range of other important references across his oeuvre. This defining of man against animal has a critical relationship not only to the killing and mistreatment of animals, but also to the relationship between those considered as truly men and subaltern human beings. Two of the examples analysed are taken from the Enlightenment Americas: savages and slaves. This context is particularly important both for the philosophers and poets Derrida focuses on in the first year of the seminars, and also for Robinson Crusoe, one of his main intertexts in the second year. The third, and essential, supplement to bring to Derrida’s writing on (the) animal(s) is the question of sexual difference and of women writers – including Cixous, an intertext he evokes, and then more unexpectedly: Carter, Darriuessecq, Le Doeuff, Duffy, Haraway, Hearne, Ndiaye, Tsvetaeva, Vivien, and many more. The dialogue with feminism is both implicit and significant, invited by Derrida’s own phrasing.
This book is a full-length study of hospitality in the writings of Jacques Derrida. Hospitality is critically important in Derrida's writings, and his insights in this have been influential across a range of disciplines from geography, politics and sociology to literary studies and philosophy. It functions as a way of both thinking about relations between individuals, and analysing the (often inhospitable) reception of outsiders, such as refugees or migrants, by the community or state. Still also follows the thread of sexual difference in Derrida's writing in order to shed light on his exploration of the complex and delicate, strange yet familiar, political, and ethical dilemmas of how to be those impossible things, a good host and a good guest. This book sets Derrida's work in a series of contexts including the socio-political history of France, especially in relation to Algeria, and the writing on hospitality of other key thinkers, most importantly Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Emmanuel Levinas.