

# REVIEWS

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## **Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy**

Katerina Kolozova

Foreword by François Laruelle

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New York City, New York 10023. USA. [www.cup.columbia.edu](http://www.cup.columbia.edu). 2014. 208 pp. HB. \$50. ISBN 9780231166102.

This book pioneers a feminist reading from the non-philosophical perspective. François Laruelle's path-breaking paradigm is situated within the gender studies' context by himself in his foreword while defining 'sexed gender' as a 'non-standard conception, which is a truly generic conception of "gender" itself, which recognizes the mark of the real' (xi). Laruelle sets the tone for this rigorously exacting volume by giving precedence to experience over everything else: 'It seems possible to us in this way to extract the nuance of the queer from its traditional philosophical context—to remove it from that frame and bring it back to a humane or generic level' (xvi). Katerina Kolozova critiques the 'postmodern or poststructuralist philosophy' for abandoning 'any attempt to think the real by proclaiming it unthinkable' (5). Kolozova follows Laruelle to align 'rigorous theory ... with the real' (*ibid.*).

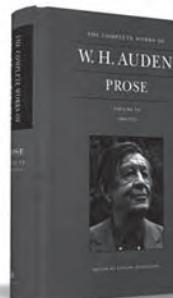
Kolozova envisions a coming together of the one and the multiple: 'The instance of continuity in its immanence functions as a unifying force for the self or the subjective processuality' (47). The core theme of gender studies or feminist debates is the either/or of sex and gender. The author succinctly clarifies this dichotomy: 'The dichotomy between sex and gender reflects and reproduces the opposition between the real and the unreal' (52). Analysing Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Kolozova holds that Butler's text 'is symptomatic of the dichotomy of the real and fiction' (54). However,

Kolozova is happy with *Undoing Gender* (2004) as here Butler's 'thinking seems to be relieved of this unnecessary burden' of 'the real and the imagined' (77). Juxtaposing Laruelle with Deleuze, Kolozova prefers the former due to his preference to the 'determination in the last instance' (63).

This work is an intersection of gender studies, philosophy, culture studies, with pertinent aspects of subjectivity. Anyone interested in any of these fields or connected with the humanities should read this book to understand that the 'non-philosophical discourse implies a constitutive entanglement of the real with the transcendental' (146).

Editor

Prabuddha Bharata



## **The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose: Volume VI, 1969–1973**

Ed. Edward Mendelson

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. [www.press.princeton.edu](http://www.press.princeton.edu). 2015. 808 pp. HB. \$65. ISBN 9780691164588.

A *Certain World*, which inaugurates this volume of Auden's prose is 'a map of ... [Auden's] planet' (3). He quotes Simone Weil: 'To pray is to pay attention to something or someone other than oneself.' Two other gems from this section are important for understanding the hitherto unknown religious Auden, *Nature of Prayer*: 'Tell me to what you pay attention and I will tell you who you are' (Ortega y Gasset) and 'To pray is to think about the meaning of life' (Ludwig Wittgenstein) (235). Auden's choice of the mystic Weil, the deeply transcendental phenomenologist Gasset, and the deeply Catholic Wittgenstein, shows the value he put on the *vita contemplativa*. Yet in classrooms where Auden is taught—mostly his *Musee des Beaux Arts*—students are not sensitised to Auden's religious quest. A

*Certain World* sparkles when compared to Thomas Merton's voluminous *Journals*. While Merton is cynical and mostly without wit, Auden laughs at himself and the world: 'If the rich could hire other people to die for them, the poor could make a wonderful living' (Yiddish proverb, 203). Unlike Merton's nagging soul-searching, Auden promised us to 'let others, more learned, intelligent, imaginative, and witty' tell his life story. Letting others speak throughout, Auden has revised the genre of the autobiography here. *A Certain World* is in the tradition of the early modern commonplace book. His oeuvre both as poet and prose-writer shows a continuum with what is now neglected in literary studies—the study or reading of literature itself. Like literature, there is nothing *certain* about Auden.

There is nary a better introductory essay on George Herbert than Auden's *Introduction* to Herbert (562–7). Rosemond Tuve and Helen Gardner pale in comparison to Auden's assessment of Herbert, being only equal to T S Eliot's understanding of Herbert. Auden's genius in understanding Herbert is borne out by his statement that Herbert's poems 'cannot be judged by aesthetic standards alone', since 'all of Herbert's poems are concerned with the religious life' and they are 'the counterpart of Jeremy Taylor's prose' (564). Three points emerge from these observations on Herbert: Auden was convinced that there are standalone aesthetic standards which are sufficient for a work of art to exist *sui generis*—since *poetry makes nothing happen*—religion can produce beautiful literature which surpasses Chaucer's caricatures of religion and Jeremy Taylor's prose is art.

Edward Mendelson needs to be better known among English literature students than Roland Barthes, Jonathan Culler, and Terry Eagleton. Literature is hard back-breaking work having little to do with reading snappy papers using presentation software or commenting on what Derrida might have thought of Auden. It has everything to do with understanding Robert Browning's *A Grammarian's Funeral*. If Mendelson's clarion call does not convert self-professed literature scions, nothing will.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Psychoanalyst

Assistant Professor of English  
Ramananda College, Bishnupur



### **Interdisciplining Digital Humanities: Boundary Work in an Emerging Field**

Julie Thompson Klein

University of Michigan Press, 839 Greene Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104-3209. USA. [www.press.umich.edu](http://www.press.umich.edu). 2015. 218 pp. HB. \$70. ISBN 9780472072545.

The best way to test scholarship is to remove paywalls and put up one's academic work online. Plagiarists and snobs will scoff at these suggestions. Hence Julie Thompson Klein had to write *A Culture of Recognition* (144–51). The histrionics regarding the value of web scholarship she documents at the Modern Language Association and the Council of the American Historical Association are worth noting. Thompson Klein's book is the single most important book on the subject of web scholarship available now and should complement the *MLA Handbook*. Is it believable that in this era of webinars and countless online tools for academics, one needs to beg donors from the 'developed' countries for doles to study the humanities in their nations? One should get rid of seminars—huge wastes of money—all sorts of 'prestigious' scholarships and halt the demeaning culture of begging. It does an academic no good to beg to read a paper at some conference at an 'established' university. As Klein mentions, what we need is the *computational turn* in the humanities (63). Those who still go to libraries to study in original some medieval manuscripts are potential dangers to their own domains. What if one spoils the manuscript? Why not use digital tools to study it from one's own laptop? A thorough study of Klein's text will hopefully open some perennially shut eyes.

Andy Engel's *Resourcing* at the end of the book is valuable to beginners who want to learn the techne of doing digital humanities.

The cultural work of Klein is to chronicle and even inaugurate a new era in reading, scholarship, and interdisciplinary collaboration. After Gutenberg's press, the Internet is the biggest event in the world. Her book will be remembered