

*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.

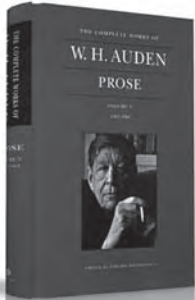
The best way to test scholarship is to remove paywalls and put up one's academic work online. Plagiarists and snobs will scoff at these suggestions. Hence Julie Thompson Klein had to write *A Culture of Recognition* (144–51). The histrionics regarding the value of web scholarship she documents at the 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 academician 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

as one of the first texts to chronicle the inevitable. Everyone can now study and network with like-minded scholars. Nepotism, political favouritism, and all sorts of cronyism in getting published, crucial for tenure, are going to be eased out through the Internet.

*Subhasis Chattopadhyay*



**The Complete Works of  
W. H. Auden: Prose:  
Volume V, 1963–1968**  
Ed. Edward Mendelson

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. [www.press.princeton.edu](http://www.press.princeton.edu). 2015. 608 pp. HB. \$65. ISBN 9780691151717.

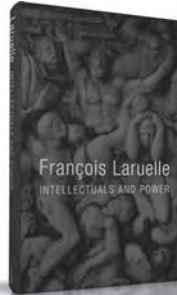
It is fascinating to read Auden's opinions on Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (7–8). Both Browning and Auden have been forgotten by Indian humanists. Auden's huge prose-corpus is unknown to even admirers of his poetry. Edward Mendelson and Princeton University Press have done literature a big service by publishing the prose of Auden in these definitive volumes.

Auden, like every great writer, engages with that one problem which matters most according to the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev. This is the problem of evil. Auden's 'Good and Evil in *The Lord of the Rings*' (331–5) is worth careful reading to understand fairy tales, to understand the role of the family in creating stable societies, and the dialectics of the Kantian good and the bad. Auden's prose in this essay takes on a universal sheen.

Auden's prose is a plea against xenophobia, ethnic cleansing, and fascism. He celebrates the family as a locus for self-actualisation; indeed of agape.

Research scholars and general readers will be swept away by Auden's range of reading and Mendelson's scrupulous editing. This definitive volume should be in all English departments throughout the world.

*Subhasis Chattopadhyay*



**Intellectuals and Power**

François Laruelle  
in conversation with  
Philippe Petit

Polity Press, 65 Bridge Street, Cambridge CB2 1UR. UK. [www.politybooks.com](http://www.politybooks.com). 2015. xxvi + 155 pp. PB. \$19.95. ISBN 9780745668413.

Are we not all tired of the endless rantings of 'intellectuals' in the electronic media at the slightest act of injustice? To what end do these 'guardians of knowledge' express their opinions? These and many other questions are critically explored in this volume, which is the outcome of long conversations of Philippe Petit with François Laruelle.

The translator Anthony Paul Smith tells in his preface that 'Laruelle marks a difference between what he terms dominant intellectuals, who carry various adjectives like engaged, humanitarian, right-wing, left-wing, etc., and what he terms the determined intellectual. ... The determined intellectual is an intellectual whose character is determined in the sense of conditioned or driven by his or her relationship to the victim' (xiv–v). It is this attempt to relate to the victim that propels him to 'undertake ... a philosophical re-contextualization of the intellectual' (5). He ventures to classify intellectuals 'on a philosophical basis, a true *intellectual function*' (7). He is concerned with the overarching 'mediatization' of the intellectual.

This book aims to see how the victim and the 'identity of the Real' are wedded to philosophers and intellectuals. Towards this aim Laruelle does not 'leave philosophy to its own authority' just as he does not 'leave theology or religious beliefs to their own authorities' (119). A militant activist related to the victim is Laruelle's vision: 'The non-humanitarian intellectual is not necessarily someone who would refuse to go to demonstrations, someone who would refuse to sign petitions. He looks for another usage. He can absolutely participate in these things, but he will not limit his own action to the belief that sustains them' (131). Anyone concerned with the suffering needs to dive deep into this book.

*Editor*

Prabuddha Bharata