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Humanities
Philosophy

Jardine, Alice. **At the risk of thinking: an intellectual biography of Julia Kristeva**, ed. by Mari Ruti. Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 401p index ISBN 9781501341342, \$90.00; ISBN 9781501341335 pbk, \$26.95; ISBN 9781501341359 ebook, contact publisher for price.

Review:

Jardine, professor of women, gender, and sexuality studies and of Romance languages and literatures (Harvard Univ.), was Julia Kristeva's doctoral student during the latter's first appointment to Columbia and has written a wonderfully informative biography—the first. A self-styled "contestatory" cosmopolitan public intellectual, Kristeva is a Bulgarian/French philosopher, political theorist, linguist, social activist, clinical psychoanalyst, and polymath. Author of over 50 books and hundreds of papers, she has lectured all over the world. Moving to Paris from the Soviet bloc in the 1960s, Kristeva was soon a figure among the avant-garde literati, marrying the founder of *Tel Quel* (Phillipe Sollers), with whom she has a disabled son who lives with them. The author shows how Kristeva's life events vigorously inspire her famously complex writings on language, alienation, love, despair, motherhood, the disabled, the foundations of belief, and individual subjectivity. As told here, Kristeva writes theory "by day" and novels "by night." For her, "writing is living, and living is writing." Jardine conveys the joys, pains, and struggles of this supremely creative life, animating for the reader a compassionate, brilliant woman, in her own words "an energetic pessimist." This book is a great read, most illuminating for anyone interested in this outstanding and fascinating woman and her formidable contributions.

--R. H. Balsam, Yale University

Summing Up: Highly recommended. All readers.