

Volume
140

A bimonthly audio magazine
of contemporary culture
& Christian conviction

Journal 140
Published August 2018

more on

Reading and orality

Matthew Rubery's *The Untold Story of the Talking Book** (2017) is published by Harvard University Press. Literary critic Sven Birkerts, in his *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age** (Faber & Faber, 1994), reflects on various aspects of the joys of reading and the numerous threats to that experience, social and technological. In one essay, "Close Listening," Birkerts describes his initial experiences listening to an audio book. "Even given my Luddite disposition, I find that the medium has a number of attractions. . . . But once we grant the audio book its attractions, we are still confronted with its *whatness*. . . . Listening is not reading, but what is it?" His ambivalence seems to be finally overcome by the sheer power of well-written prose well enunciated. The history of talking books is a subset of the history of books, and Robert Darnton — until recently the director of the Harvard University Library — has written extensively on this topic. In addition to his many narrowly focused studies on French publishing, see his *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future** (Public Affairs, 2009). Three essays in his anthology *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History** (Norton, 1990) are also relevant: "The Forgotten Middlemen of Literature," "First Steps toward a History of Reading," and "What Is the History of Books?" Alberto Manguel took more than a few steps in completing *A History of Reading** (Penguin Books, 1997). Henry Petroski provided readers with a history of the ways books (and scrolls) have been stored in *The Book on the Bookshelf** (Knopf, 1999). If Petroski's angle of vision is attractive, you may like his earlier books, including *The Evolution of Useful Things: How Everyday Artifacts – From Forks and Pins to Paper Clips and Zippers – Came to be as They Are** (Knopf, 1992) and *The Pencil: A History of Design and Circumstance** (Knopf, 1989). During the interview, mention was made of Walter Ong's book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word** (Routledge, 1982). See also Marshall McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man** (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1962).

more on

Transhumanism

James Herrick's *Visions of Technological Transcendence: Human Enhancement and the Rhetoric of the Future** (2017) is published by Parlor Press. In his book, Herrick engages an article by bioethicist Jeffrey Bishop, a forthcoming guest on the *Journal*. That article is "Transhumanism, Metaphysics, and the Posthuman

Part 1

1 Introduction

- 2 **Matthew Rubery**, on the history of the "talking book," and on how reading a book differs from listening to it being read
- 3 **James Herrick**, on the "post-human" aspirations of the transhumanist movement, and how its plausibility is established by stories
- 4 **Jack Baker & Jeffrey Bilbro**, on lessons that universities should heed from Wendell Berry's essays, poetry, and fiction about commitment to living in a place

Part 2

- 1 **Timothy Gloege**, on the influence of business methods on 20th-century evangelicalism through the shaping of Moody Bible Institute
- 2 **David Hollinger**, on how the sons and daughters of mid-20th-century missionaries to Asia came back to the U.S. and influenced government, journalism, and the academy
- 3 **Barrett Fisher**, on the themes of the challenge of faithfulness as presented in Shusaku Endo's *Silence* and in Martin Scorsese's film version

God" (*Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 35: 700–720, 2010). Ollivier Dyens, in *Metal and Flesh — The Evolution of Man: Technology Takes Over* (MIT Press, 2001) writes: "Using technologies, we attempt to dissolve ourselves into intelligence. In fact, technologies are mirrors of our longing for intelligence. In technology, we yearn for liquid and hybrid bodies, made as much by organic as by intelligent matter. This, in fact, is the ultimate goal of our recent forays into biotechnology. Biotechnology allows us to bypass some [of] our most fundamental physical absolutes. Without them, the inescapable prison of organic matter crumbles. Biotechnology grants us the power to completely dissolve into intelligent matter." Software guru Jaron Lanier, in *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto** (Knopf, 2010), is quite critical of colleagues who "want to live in an airtight reality that resembles an idealized computer program, in which everything is understood and there are no fundamental mysteries. They recoil from even the hint of a potential zone of mystery or an unresolved seam in one's worldview."

more on

Other books mentioned

*Wendell Berry and Higher Education: Cultivating Virtues of Place** (2017) by Jack Baker and Jeffrey Bilbro is published by the University Press of Kentucky. Timothy Gloege's *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism** (2015) is published by the University of North Carolina Press. David Hollinger's *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America** (2017) is published by Princeton University Press.

The **MARS HILL AUDIO** *Journal* is produced at our studio in rural central Virginia, outside of historic Charlottesville. The *Journal* is one of several audio products we distribute, all of them intended to encourage greater wisdom about interaction with contemporary culture.

If you would like more information about our work, consult our website at marshillaudio.org.

Sound.
Thinking.