

Volume

# 141

A bimonthly audio magazine  
of contemporary culture  
& Christian conviction

Journal 141  
Published November 2018

more on

### Gadgetry & utopian scientification

Grant Wythoff's *The Perversity of Things: Hugo Gernsback on Media, Tinkering, and Scientification\** (2016) is published by the University of Minnesota Press. For more of the history of this wide-eyed era, see Gary Westfahl's two books, *The Mechanics of Wonder: The Creation of the Idea of Science Fiction* (Liverpool University Press, 1998) and *Hugo Gernsback and the Century of Science Fiction\** (McFarland & Company, 2007). Also relevant are Mike Ashley's books, including *The Gernsback Days: A Study of the Evolution of Modern Science Fiction from 1911 to 1936\** (Wildside Press, 2004) and *The Time Machines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Pulp Magazines from the Beginning to 1950* (Liverpool University Press, 2000). In a talk given in 1959 to the Cambridge University English Club, C. S. Lewis commented on the shift from the term *scientification* to *science fiction* which occurred at about the same time as a "bulge in the production of such stories. In America whole magazines began to be exclusively devoted to them. The execution was usually detestable; the conceptions, sometimes worthy of better treatment." He went on to remark that in the early 1950s, there was an evident improvement in the genre: "not that very bad stories ceased to be the majority, but that the good ones became better and more numerous." That talk was published as the essay "On Science Fiction" in the anthology *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories\** (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966). In *Scientific Mythologies: How Science and Science Fiction Forge New Religious Beliefs\** (InterVarsity Press, 2008), James A. Herrick looks at how certain scientific speculation, combined with science fiction narratives and scenarios, have given birth to beliefs and aspirations that can best be described as religious. Herrick discussed that book on volume 93 of the *Journal*. Long before the Norse god Thor showed up on movie screens, Casey Fredericks reflected on the connection between popular sci-fi and more ancient stories in *The Future of Eternity: Mythologies of Science Fiction and Fantasy\** (Indiana University Press, 1987).

more on

### Tough guys and moral agency

Susanna Lee's *Hard-boiled Crime Fiction and the Decline of Moral Authority\** (2016) was published by Ohio State University Press. P. D. James, in *Talking about Detective Fiction\** (Knopf, 2009), observes that Dashiell Hammett's stories "are not about restoring the moral order, nor are they set in a world in which

### Disc 1

#### 1 Introduction

- 2 **Grant Wythoff**, on the technophilic obsessions of Hugo Gernsback, the geeky midwife of modern science fiction
- 3 **Susanna Lee**, on how the hard-boiled protagonists of crime fiction in the 1930s and 40s were replaced by more nihilistic tough guys in the 1950s and 60s
- 4 **Gerald McDermott**, on how the work of theologian E. L. Mascall can expose blind spots in contemporary Christian thought

### Disc 2

- 1 **Carlos Eire**, on how and why religion became "interiorized" in the wake of the reformations of the sixteenth century
- 2 **Kelly Kopic**, on theology's use of experience and why the Incarnation is the ground of Christian hope
- 3 **James Matthew Wilson**, on the beauty of truth and goodness, on the necessity of cultivating "intellectual vision," and on the role of education in training us to love what we ought to love

the problem of evil can be solved by Poirot's little grey cells or Miss Marple's cozy homilies, a world as innocuous as flower-arranging. Hammett knew from traumatic personal experience how precarious is the moral tightrope which the private investigator daily walks in his battle with the criminal." In *The Perfect Murder: A Study in Detection\** (University of Michigan Press, 2000), David Lehman traces the evolution of detective fiction with attention to the moral framework of the genre. Thomas Hibbs discussed the cinematic translation of the hard-boiled genre in *Arts of Darkness: American Noir and the Quest for Redemption* (Spence Publishers, 2008). In many of these films, Hibbs detected "the convergence of a dark depiction of the human condition with the religious quest." See also: Peter C. Erb, *Murder, Manners, Mystery: Reflections on Faith in Contemporary Detective Fiction\** (SCM Press, 2007).

more on

### Other books mentioned

The reprint edition of E. L. Mascall's *Christ, the Christian, and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and Its Consequences\** (1946, 2017), with a new foreword by Gerald McDermott, is published by the Hendrickson Press. Carlos M. N. Eire's *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450-1650\** (2016) is published by Yale University Press. His 1986 book, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin\**, was reissued in 2003 by Cambridge University Press. Kelly M. Kopic's *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering\** (2017) is published by InterVarsity Press. James Matthew Wilson's *The Vision of the Soul: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in the Western Tradition\** (2017) is published by the Catholic University of America 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.

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