



# The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age

By Sven Birkerts

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In our zeal to embrace the wonders of the electronic age, are we sacrificing our literary culture? Renowned critic Sven Birkerts believes the answer is an alarming yes. In *The Gutenberg Elegies*, he explores the impact of technology on the experience of reading. Drawing on his own passionate, lifelong love of books, Birkerts examines how literature intimately shapes and nourishes the inner life. What does it mean to "hear" a book on audiotape or decipher its words in electronic form on a laptop screen? Can the world created by Henry James exist in an era defined by the work of Bill Gates? Are books as we know them? volumes printed in ink on paper, with pages to be turned as the reading of each page is completed? dead?

At once a celebration of the complex pleasures of reading and a bold challenge to the information technologies of today and tomorrow, *The Gutenberg Elegies* is an essential volume for anyone who cares about the past and the future of books.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

What hath the inexpensive personal computer, the portable cassette player, and the CD-ROM wrought? Are books as we know them dead? And does--or should--it matter if they are? Birkerts, a renowned critic, examines the practice of reading with an eye to what the future will bring.

#### From Publishers Weekly

In his jeremiad, literary critic Birkerts predicts that the information superhighway will lead to an erosion of language and a diminishing of sustained critical thought.

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#### From Library Journal

Birkerts, the author of three books of criticism (American Energies, LJ 6/1/92), has written a collection of 14 essays discussing the changing role of reading as "culture has begun to go through what promises to be a total metamorphosis." However, unlike Richard Lanham in his optimistic *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts* (LJ 1/94), Birkerts is more pessimistic about the future of reading as seductive technologies transform the reader-writer relationship. Through these essays, the author chronicles his passionate relationship with books and ventures into considerable depth on the demise of textual traditions and values. While acknowledging that millions of readers still read books, he is particularly concerned about the loss of readers of true literature. A good complementary volume to Lanham; recommended for academic collections.

*Robin P. Peek, GSLIS, Simmons Coll., Boston*

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### Users Review

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##### James Ames:

The feeling that you get from The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age is the more deep you digging the information that hide into the words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to know but The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age giving you thrill feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in certain way that can be understood by simply anyone who read that because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This kind of book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age instantly.

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**Mike Hart:**

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