

## How We Read

### An analysis of Sven Birkerts' "Reading in a Digital Age"

#### (PAGE 1)

Changes posed by technologies are largely invisible in their operation  
Reading is incessant—based on screen & "news" sources

#### (PAGE 2)

Human brain adapts itself to **creating** gap free stories  
Human brain is narrative machine—makes stories out of chaos  
The digital is a paradigm (but of what?)  
Narration is sequence that claims significance  
Human narration is events and sequences arranged for meaning  
What is the relationship between consciousness and narrative? (unanswered)  
Contemplative thought and Analytic Thought (opposed)  
Contemplative thought is endangered, according to article on Google in *Atlantic*  
Contemplative thought is different from Analytic  
Contemplative is intransitive and experiential in its nature  
Reflective thought is its own end  
Reflective thought tests and refines the subject's relation to the world  
Reflective thought presents information in context  
Analytic thought is transitive thought  
Transitive thought is goal directed; information is a means, building blocks to synthesis and explanation  
Analytic thought isolates needed facts  
Analytic : Contemplative :: Internet : Novel

#### (PAGE 3)

Novel is a field for thinking, a space that is condensed and parallel to ours  
Novel does not communicate; rather, it engages the sensibility  
Novel is antidote to the internet  
Technologies enhance and reflect an instrumental approach to the world  
Technologies condition us, Pavlov-ian-ly, [in ways we can't resist or control-implied]  
Novels support two styles of reading:  
(1) A message driven way (where the novel has contents that can be explicated)  
(2) & an experiential way, where neat sounding stuff can happen (read the paragraph!)  
Reading a Novel involves a "double transposition": cognitive switch and adaptation  
First we "plunge inward," then we "agree to the givens"  
The first step requires willingness or intent of reader  
This first step is what is threatened by the internet, which conditions us to "not focus"

#### (PAGE 4)

Something is altered—either the conditions of reading have changed, or the reader herself  
A surfeit of information induces a "light grazing"  
Novels do not provide bankable instruction, but rather an inner experience & activity  
Novels work like parenthetical part of a sentence—they are parentheses to our lives  
(Read that paragraph on how he reads—it's vague and imprecise, but beautiful!)  
Reading provides "tonal memory" and not direct information

#### (PAGE 5)

We know without knowing that, or what, we know  
Novels bring us "aesthetic bliss"

#### (PAGE 6)

Reading requires a synchronization of our reflective reason to the work  
The reader adjusts to the author  
The reader takes in the "resonance" created by the author, deliberately  
The reader who skims, or reads quickly, fails the task of reading