

Scratch & ReMix Machine,

Paik in Amerika

Craig Saper

Cybernated art is very important, but art for cybernated life is more important, and the latter need not be cybernated.

-- Nam June Paik (quoted by Mark Amerika)

Using a type of grammatological approach to run an experiment with Mark Amerika's discussion of Nam June Paik, de-sediments the multimedia video vectors on paper and in pdfs. As Derrida explains in *The Paper Machine*, 'The page remains a screen. . . . by carrying us beyond paper, the adventures of technology grant us a sort of future anterior; they liberate our reading for a retrospective exploration of the past resources of the paper, for its *previously* multimedia vectors' (Derrida, 2005: 47). The new media technology allows the mechanized vectors of reading to appear. The turntablist de-sediments listening. Listening has grown scaled-over and practically deaf through habits of how to spin a record, and this reading/scratch/remix machine does the same for the reading that only appears in retrospect as always already there. So, using an excerpt from M.A. on Paik and running it through two overlapping algorithms, allows for the physical activity or performance of reading to become generative, inventive, to allow creativity in the pre-literate foundation that we usually refer to as illegible.

Scratching, a [turntablist](#) technique, produces a distinctive [sound](#) by moving a [vinyl record](#) back and forth on a [turntable](#) while simultaneously manipulating the [crossfader](#) on a DJ mixer. Much scholarship has examined the strategies and impact of re-mix. For various reasons, it is more difficult to talk about *scratch-effects* because it concerns 'reading the illegible,' a phrase coined by Craig

Dworkin to describe visual poetry experiments (Dworkin, 2003).

To appreciate reading outside of literacy, we need to run an experiment: deconstruct what we think of as natural reading. There is a risk here—with all the concern about literacy it is heretical to suggest learning to read scratch effects, learning to untangle reading from its naturalization—and a parodic effect easily missed.

This essay thinks of the various machines involved in reading from codex bound book to e-readers, and draws the explicit line from scratch techniques to de-reading; that is, scratch is not an ornamental value distorting the text, but rather a crucial way of reading, uncovering the ghosts of meanings lurking in plain sight. The turntablists are sometimes thought of as producing something to dance to rather than a poetics or demonstrating how to read. In large part, because of scratching's beginnings at basement parties, and the later controversies over copyright, effaced the fact that scratching puts the music under erasure and processing it both beyond recognition, when the music plays backward at a high rate, and as a citation and repetition of recognizing a piece of music, when the music repeats small fragments over and over again. Certain musical parts seem stressed through the repetition, and others seem transformed when played backward.

What if instead of learning to read the 'natural' way, one learned by scratching? What if those musicians spinning vinyl records were the future of literacy efforts?

Recently, our culture has produced electronic reading machines, but forcefully banish any turntablist techniques at least at the level of the individual line. One can electronically flip the pages to produce a flickering, but the effects are limited. We do not yet have a turntablist of e-readers. To find a corollary to the scratching in music, we need to study avant-garde experiments that sought to use scratching as reading. That's the overlap with Mark Amerika's research in *remixthebook* both in his drawing on Paik, Dick Higgins, and a Fluxus sensibility and his allusion to Max Bense's concrete and visual poetry.

My readies.org project simulates a reading machine designed by Bob Brown. He hoped to process all texts to be read for his machine.

The simulation machine started as a database to make accessible a rare manuscript of important modernist poets and writers including Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, F. W. Marinetti, Kay Boyle, Nancy Cunard, Eugene Jolas, and many others. Each of these contributors had sent works prepared for Bob Brown's machine, and he called the prepared texts readies. The processed texts used em-dashes to scratch out "unnecessary" words that slowed the pace of reading. Punctuation now represented an illegible and non-representational, visual cue rather than a direct link to the phono-centric pauses and stops that are more commonly represented by punctuation. The futures of reading using new devices, like e-readers, will have consequences for the definition and practice of what we call reading Paik in Amerika.

Artist, Medium, Instrument (— **Nam June Paik Remix**)—Accessing — **Source Material Everywhere**—not — ideas — things —but — intertwined agitations — force—
 collectively composing — organism— makes this life possible—I am reminded — — series — events—and/— aesthetic encounters— catapulted ~~myself into chaos (pulsing~~ —
 — mind bank network)—Perhaps one — — most significant events occurs—upon landing — ~~Basel — 1975/76/77/78/79~~ — **Frieder Nake**—Nake has recently — experiencing
 — second wave ~~of digital art (video art) — computer-generated imagery/graphics—resulting~~ — Stuttgart — 1965—where works — computer-generated imagery/graphics—resulting
 from painstakingly long algorithmic processes —are said — have first — witnessed inside — art gallery—This all happened ~~at the end of the 1960s (Nake began to work with video in 1964)~~
~~at the end of the 1960s (Nake began to work with video in 1964)~~ **VERY VERY FAST**— I threw my bags into — car —and we **darted off** — — ~~at the end of the 1960s (Nake began to work with video in 1964)~~
 @jahreveokunst.de —which basically translates — 40 Years — German Video Art —(— title suggests — *all-encompassing* exhibition—since — far — — art historical
 retrospective on video art goes—it doesn't get any older than 40 years—and —'s because for all practical purposes—it can — said — video art started — Germany—around 1963 —
 Nam June Paik's now notorious—"Exhibition — Music - Electronic Television" gallery show — — small town — Wuppertal) —Speeding through — normal weekend traffic —at
 dusk on this otherwise uneventful evening—would seem unnecessarily risky for — two — us—especially given — fact — — 40jahreveokunst.de exhibition —will — running during
 my entire stay for — week ahead—but there — — special event about — take place at — Kunsthalle—and Frieder prides himself on being punctual—which my slightly late arrival
 has made near impossible— we approach — downtown area and use our Ouija-like —extra sensory perception — find — parking space — — *simply not there* but opens up
 for us nonetheless —we immediately hop out — — car and dash —toward — museum — ~~finding Nake's work in the museum (Nake's work is in the museum)~~
 — ~~finding Nake's work in the museum (Nake's work is in the museum)~~ — — un— able— — move —eventually—coming — — complete —halt. .

. — — — Standing — — first gallery — — Kunsthalle Bremen—there — — eerie feeling — entering another space — time—not like seeing — Rembrandt — Cezanne
hanging on — wall—where you know you are — — museum — treats—ancient works — oil paint like animals — — zoo—but something more — — realm — autohallucination—
— if time-tripping into another electronic era——— *40jahrevideokunst.de* exhibition — Bremen—— part — — five city network — exhibitions—each city representing — different
decade over —— 40 year span — video art creation—— — extra one for contemporary video art et al—and Bremen — where it all starts: — *Sixties*——I am halted — my VERY
VERY FAST momentum—because this first gallery inside — museum—opens — exhibition — — same artwork —— — shown — Wuppertal — — early Sixties——— fantastic
collection — Paik's —magnetically distorted and delayed video footage ——participatory TV (created — drawing —on — table surface — microphones — — stylus) ——tape loops
and — beginnings — what —we would soon call video sculpture——*all — it coming into view at once* ——not — mention — long thin glass case—where contained within its archival
borders—like some now extinct specimen — — early life form—there resides — sequence — pieces — paper—handwritten — — freestyle artist poetics —— Nam June Paik
himself—~~Upstairs — inside Paik's apartment (halfway down a long hallway) — I immediately become aware — — fact —— Paik — here — this succession — mental~~
jottings—initializing his emergent video art theory —— writing:—— — — different from B—— but not—— — — better than B—— ~~some things — some things~~
~~(With the — 60s — 70s — 80s — 90s — 2000s — 2010s — 2020s — 2030s — 2040s — 2050s — 2060s — 2070s — 2080s — 2090s — 2100s — 2110s — 2120s — 2130s — 2140s — 2150s — 2160s — 2170s — 2180s — 2190s — 2200s — 2210s — 2220s — 2230s — 2240s — 2250s — 2260s — 2270s — 2280s — 2290s — 2300s — 2310s — 2320s — 2330s — 2340s — 2350s — 2360s — 2370s — 2380s — 2390s — 2400s — 2410s — 2420s — 2430s — 2440s — 2450s — 2460s — 2470s — 2480s — 2490s — 2500s — 2510s — 2520s — 2530s — 2540s — 2550s — 2560s — 2570s — 2580s — 2590s — 2600s — 2610s — 2620s — 2630s — 2640s — 2650s — 2660s — 2670s — 2680s — 2690s — 2700s — 2710s — 2720s — 2730s — 2740s — 2750s — 2760s — 2770s — 2780s — 2790s — 2800s — 2810s — 2820s — 2830s — 2840s — 2850s — 2860s — 2870s — 2880s — 2890s — 2900s — 2910s — 2920s — 2930s — 2940s — 2950s — 2960s — 2970s — 2980s — 2990s — 3000s — 3010s — 3020s — 3030s — 3040s — 3050s — 3060s — 3070s — 3080s — 3090s — 3100s — 3110s — 3120s — 3130s — 3140s — 3150s — 3160s — 3170s — 3180s — 3190s — 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stopped — music — — middle — — performance —reprimanding — third violin for being out — tune — ~~stupidly in the Black and white — not a lyric — H.H.P. — voice — a — line — not — a — word —~~ door —
 him becoming — visual artist — (this transition — then elegantly encapsulated — — title — — his first gallery show — — "Exhibition — Music – Electronic Television" — — one
 now reenacted — — gallery I had just passed through) — More stories were told — — Paik once applied for — Rockefeller Foundation grant — and — — section — asked what he
 wanted — money for — he wrote " — destroy all national television" — — when he — speaking before — group — politicians — who were focusing their discussion on
 Communism/Marxism — Paik silenced — crowd — asking — — "But this brings up — very important question, — and — —, what happens when you cannot — find — parking
 space?" — — Fortunately for me — one had suddenly opened up — upon our arrival into downtown Bremen — — I believe I referred — it — — "our Ouija-like extra sensory perception —
 — find — parking space — — — *simply not there* — but opens up for us nonetheless" — — Sitting — — auditorium I could not help but wonder — if — artist who loses sight —
 themselves while creating — — not also — impetus for — alternative vision — — what it means — reinvent — general economy — — Somehow this also relates — how Paik's
 handwriting — — — help me crystallize my own thoughts — on what it means — — — artist-medium — one who transforms into — instrument — — ACTS on whatever ground —
 available — — **Electronic Television -- / -- extra-sensory perception -- / -- eternal presence -- / -- unconscious momentum** — — his handwritten "loose ghost" poetic style —
 Nam June Paik's notes on "Experimental Television" — are situated inside — gallery — — original art work — from his first-ever 1963 video art exhibition — Wuppertal — — These
 notes feature — excerpt — truly connects — — my recent discoveries — — emerging fields — — hyperimprovisational new media art & performance — where — artist —
 postproduction medium — taps into — unconscious flow detonated — — trigger-inference — *before* conscious thought steps — — derails — ones signifying momentum . . . — —
 "Experimental Television" Paik refers — — word "ecstasy" (which — held up — at — top — — page — clawing quotes) — — writing immediately below it — — — go out

— oneself...——and then continues — — following—bullet-pointed words and phrases:—— * completely filled time— * — presence — eternal presence— *
 unconscious, — super-conscious— * -- some mystic forgets himself (goes out — oneself)— * abnormal— * — world stops for three minutes!——where — trick for
 stopping — world —(and this — — exact same phrase used—— Carlos Castenada's *Journey — Ixtlan* —where — trickster-shaman Don Juan advises —his young disciple on how
 — "trip"/drift through life)—— — always stay — half — second ahead — — game—creating on—fly DO-IT-YOURSELF MANIPULATIONS —— all — — source material you have
 at your disposal —(— phrase *DO-IT-YOURSELF MANIPULATIONS* comes —from — typewritten notes/theory — Paik's contemporary —— Fluxus artist Wolf Vostell whose art and
 writing —— also exhibited — — same large gallery room —at Kunsthalle Bremen along — Paik's Wuppertal show)——[DO-IT-YOURSELF MANIPULATIONS video art
 manipulations ——what — YouTube mashup culture if not exactly —?]——After Paik tells us "— world stops for three minutes!" —he has — aside — reads:—— "Dostoevsky
 before — spasm — Epilepsy" ——which reminds me — — "physiological spasm" —— Allen Ginsberg spoke about when discussing —his best poetry (according — Ginzy these
 spasms occur—when — body — — poet gets "lost — space" —i.e. totally immersed — other-worldly body chanting —instead — just talking *per se*)——This full body spasm —
 ejaculates Creativity—— — first principle — novelty—— something all artists can relate — ——But what about this *before* — Paik — referring —?——What low deep rumbles are
 stirring — — body—renders into vision its next great explosion?— —Are — moments — before-spasm already indicative —— fuse well-lighted — — it just — sign — "being
 chill"?——Speaking — students about this we often discuss —how one gets into this ex-static state — mind—unconsciously triggering — Next Version — Creativity—— whatever
 glorious field — composition —we happen — — moving our bodies — ...——Think — it — creating — active unconscious momentum—where — proprioceptive artist-medium
knows —where they are going without ever having — there before——"Video — part — my body; it's intuitive and unconscious."—[Bill Viola]——Voila!—— imagine — artist-

medium playing out —their aesthetic potential via — *innate body intuition*—*flushed* — — *illogic* — *sense (data)*—*operating on autopilot*—— this what it means — stop — world for three minutes?!——Don Juan says — Castaneda's persona:——I am teaching you how — *see* — opposed — merely *looking*, and *stopping* — *world* — — first step — *seeing*.—

—*Stopping* — *world* — not — cryptic metaphor — really doesn't mean anything. And its scope and importance — one — — main propositions — my knowledge should not — misjudged.— —I am teaching you how — *stop* — *world*. Nothing will work, however, if you are very stubborn. — less stubborn, and you will probably *stop* — *world* — any — — techniques I teach you. Everything I will tell you — do — — technique for *stopping* — *world*.— — sorcerer's description — — world — perceivable. But our insistence on holding on — our standard version — reality renders us almost deaf and blind — it. I'm going — give you what I call 'techniques for stopping — world.'—— this what Paik means — "— go out — oneself..." —— way "some mystic forgets himself"? ——This — my state — mind too —— I automatically generate fictional personas —— shareware while circulating — — networked —space — flows (think — it — experientially tagging —and/— remixologically inhabiting — socially-infused data —— always floats throughout — electrosphere)——But how "— go out — oneself...— way — mystic forgets himself"? ——Acconci suggests we would need — shift our attention—away from specific media and disciplines—and "turn — 'instrument'" —— focus on *becoming* — instrument —— acts on whatever ground — available——which resonates — — Ornette Coleman quote:——I didn't know you had — learn — play — play. —I thought you had — play — play.——said — great jazz man——which oddly resonates — something Miles Davis —another great jazz man once said i.e.——Sometimes you have — play — long time —— — able — play like yourself.—— on—fly remixologist——making—would eat those quotes up — — spoon and—feed — totally "ill" version back into — set:——I didn't know you had — learn — go out — yourself — go out — yourself.—I thought you just went out.

Sometimes you have — go out — yourself for — long time, — way — mystic forgets himself, — — able — reach ecstasy.——Playing your unconscious instrument—on whatever

