

Steve Harvey: If you don't get into old school, you done missed it. See, I'm a '74 brother to the bottom of my heart Glennville Highschool, Cleveland, Ohio 1974 when music was music. We had songs back then, as soon as you hear them, your ass just lit up. See, me, I'm an Earth, Wind, and Fire Man.

(Earth, Wind, and Fire "Would to Mind")

Steve Harvey: Come on y'all. You can't tell me that don't feel good. Everybody! If you feelin' those lyrics, goddamn it sing 'em!

(Audience singing along)

Steve Harvey: That's music y'all. That's good music right there. See, if your ass ain't feeling this, I really don't give a damn. If you ain't feeling it, then damn it, this aint for you. We had songs back then, when you heard the very beginning your ass damn near blew up.

(The Ohio Players "I Want to Be Free")

Steve Harvey: Come on y'all. You ever been with somebody your ass wanted to get away from? This song is for you. God dang it! I want to be free! If your lovin' wasn't so good, if your smile wasn't holding me back, I swear to god I'd leave your ass. Goddamn it right now I got to stay, but goddamn it, I want to be free.

The one I am going to give you now is one of the strongest love songs ever sung to a woman before. This—this motherfucker has some feelings so deep for this woman, this mother fucker cried through the whole goddamn record. This one here is the greatest love song ever.

(Lenny Williams "I Love You")

Steve Harvey: You oughta stand the fuck up! Everyone stand up! If you don't stand, I swear to God! Awe, shit! Sing it!

Boy, this motherfucker singing this song. See, that's what songs used to be about. You used to tell a woman how you felt about her, but the problem now is you don't ever tell your woman how you feel about her, but you want her ass to stay around with you and hang on to your sorry stankin' ass, but you need to tell your woman goddamn it, I love you. My god! Come on, Lenny, come on!

I done heard enough. Did somebody—did somebody throw their drawers up here?

(Audience cheers uproariously)

You can't tell me Lenny Williams didn't mean that shit!

(Audience singing along)

Ben: Alright. Hey y'all. So when I ended last week's lecture by talking about Bank's "old-school aesthetic," I was not thinking about Steve Harvey, the old school ethos, or back in the day narratives—I wasn't thinking about Chapter 3 at all—but that ending really worked out as a transition for today's topic, which is awesome! But before we get into any of this good stuff, we should probably do some housekeeping.

First, y'all's sonic reflections have been great. I have been trying to keep up with grading those, and what you've created has been really cool, so keep up the good work heading towards Sonic Reflection 9. Now, I'll point out that Sonic Reflection 9 is a weird one, but I hope you all stay with me here because it has the possibility to be really cool. In the prompt, I ask you to, "Show, don't tell me, how access to technology enables us to share knowledge and the repercussions of this sharing." My inspiration for this came from the Diva Delight SupaShout that starts on page 148. In this section, Banks says:

Thus, for Mitchell, and for her persona Princess TamTam, multimedia writing allows for the reinsertion of not only the narratives and experiences of black women but the forms of knowledge and the epistemologies that emerge from the oral tradition. These possibilities help to counter the erasure of black women's experiences, histories, and the complex connections to be found in reading those experiences and histories diasporically. 149

See, Banks is arguing that the multimodal aspect of Princess TamTam's writing—the way that she mashes written language with visual image, sound, gestures, and layout—is an integral part of her project. These modes of expression are not merely stylistic choices but rather create different epistemologies—or methods of knowing. Multimodal writing allows Princess TamTam to communicate thoughts, ideas, histories, experiences, and ways of being in the world that the written word just could not do on its own. It could probably get close, but standard textual writing could not convey the same exact information with the same exact emotional resonances as the multimedia writing. This is because, as Marshal McLuhan famously argued, "the medium is the message."

And I am asking you to pay attention to media in this reflection both in your content—you are talking about your media use—and in your presentation—you should use the affordances of the media you are writing in to uniquely craft your argument. Put differently, I don't want you to simply make an argument; I want you to perform your argument. I want the argument to be styled so as to demonstrate the claim you are making. And that's really not so crazy—Banks does it in Chapter 4 when he chooses to layer, sample, repeat, and juxtapose sources to iteratively come to his own conclusions instead of writing a standard written argument like he does in Chapter 3. The beauty of Chapter 4 is that Banks is performing the methodology of the mixtape as he advocates for mixtape as a methodology. It's fucking beautiful—not so much because it's clever but because it enables him to demonstrate the methodology and its ethical implications. So, yeah, do that, or something like that. Just, you know, give it the old college try.

Aside from that, next week is personal conferences. I am still going to be posting an abridged lecture to D2L on Wednesday to cover the last chapter of the book, but most of our energies will be spent meeting one-on-one to talk about Audio Essay Three. If you have an idea for your essay and have done some research, that would be ideal, but if you just want to talk through some ideas and come up with something, we can do that too.

The week after that we will not have lectures or meetings. Instead, you will all post your audio essays to *Slack* by 12:30 on Tuesday afternoon and sometime between then and that Friday at 11:59pm, I want you to comment on each other's work. Just like last time, I am not going to give you much guidance here. In your comments, feel free to ask questions, critique the author's writing, praise their ideas, talk about your emotional or intellectual reactions; whatever seems to fit for that essay is fine. I just ask that you keep everything courteous and professional. And, just like last time, this will become a part of your in-class writing grade along with the personal conferences.

After that, we have another double duty week. We are talking about the introduction to Byron Hawk's book and having personal conferences to help you prepare for your final projects . . . and as I type this sentence, I kind of think that's a stupid idea. On the one hand, I want to talk about Hawk's book because it is a banger. It talks about sound as a material phenomenon, which is both really interesting and really generative. It also has great moments like:

Sound . . . is a process of emergence from energetic movements that generates a material encounter, emits a vibratory force, and is then experienced by and extended through other bodies—energy circulating through my body rises up to force my hands together, generating a wave through air molecules that is then experienced by another body, everything from skin and ears to walls and electronics. These material relations can then be transformed into larger relational practices, whether musical, social, or cultural. Sound is part energy, part material force, and part relational exchange.

Isn't that awesome! But on the other hand, you might benefit from just having that week off to work on your final projects. I mean the final project is a fairly demanding assignment that requires thorough research and serious design skill to do well. It also makes up thirty percent of your grade, so maybe the time would be better spent working on that.

I dunno, last night I created a *Slack* channel called hawkreading where we can talk about it. Let me know there whether or not you want to read the Hawk or if you want the week off or whatever. It's up to y'all really. The only thing not reading the Hawk would throw off is Sonic Reflection 11, but I could just come up with another prompt. So yeah, use the new *Slack* channel and let me know what you think.

Anyway, the week after that, final projects will be due on Tuesday May 5th at 2:15pm, and I will once again be asking you to listen to each other's work and comment on it as part of your in-class writing

grade. I will give you two days to do it—though I assume most of you will just do it during your final exam time. Nevertheless, those comments will be due Wednesday May 7th at 2:15pm. After that, we are done for the semester, and most of y'all can go graduate.

Now that's a lot, but I don't think it will be too bad spread out across four weeks. However, if you have any questions, comments, concerns, whatever—please contact me. I mean that sincerely, helping you do well in this class is literally my job. But, for now, let's just listen to some music and let all that sink in.

For this break I chose the Mad Professor's remix of Massive Attack's song "Bumper Ball Dub." I chose this because Banks, citing the work of Eduardo Navas, argues that this is an excellent example of a reflexive remix—a remix that "challenges the aura of the original, and claims autonomy, even when it carries the name of the original" (90). It's about six minutes long, so if you are not into the music, just skip ahead. See you soon.

(The Mad Professor "Bumper Ball Dub")

Ben: Alright, let's do this. Banks starts Chapter 3 by talking about generational gaps—the tensions that exist between people of different age groups. Tensions that Banks says can often lead to, "silence as young people and elders often talk *about* each other . . . but rarely *to* each other" (86). He then goes on to explore how these tensions manifest in what he refers to as "back in the day" narratives, stories about how things used to be, stories that crystalize in the form of the old-school ethos—an identification with the long forgotten values of a romanticized past. For Banks, the back in the day narrative is not just about old people jawing; rather these stories are about, "deeply rooted anxieties about black culture, identity, and activism in a digital age" (87). Banks argues, "The 'back in the day' narrative not only is a form that reflects generational tensions and a communities anxiety's about a difficult age but also is a form that represents powerful collective memory at work that helps point the way forward into that new age" (87). In other words, the "back in the day" stories are not about the past, they are about the present and the future. And, unsurprisingly, Banks argues that the DJ's remix—particularly the "old school/new school remix"—can help us point the way to that future. This is just another way in which the DJ functions as a griot.

But before he gets into this argument, Banks defines his terms and gives us three definitions of the *remix*. First, he gives us the definition from his discipline, composition and rhetoric. This definition is rooted in play, invention, a desire for genres beyond the academic essay, and the need to trouble the academy's sole focus on "originality"—especially in the composition classroom. The second definition he gives comes from his own life, growing up in 1960s Cleveland. This definition is rooted in music and the way that tracks are remade in order to fit different context: "changing the beat (as in the case of a dance remix), extending the original (as in the case of a radio version being remixed as an Extended Play . . .), and/or edits to the language to make edgier songs more palatable for radio

play or more funky and more irreverent for audiences who didn't like the sanitized radio edit" (89). The third definition comes from Eduardo Nava, who runs a blog called *Remix Theory*. Nava provides us with a general definition, remix is "the global activity of the creative and efficient exchange of information made possible by digital technologies that is supported by the practice of cut/copy and paste" (90).

And these three definitions of remix, but mostly Nava's, are important for Banks because he sees this practice as a way of linking the old school and the new school. He sees this practice as:

a synchronizing of generational commonalities and tensions that allows, even demands, innovation while remaining linked with histories and traditions. The sample as a form allows this same kind of synchronizing (many people already know that the songs of James Brown and Parliament-Funkadelic are still the most sampled in all of the following generation's Hip Hop), but the remix hits the blend differently. It maintains more focus on the original text and demands a coherent response, an overall plan to the re-visioned text. (90)

And, in my opinion, this is where things start to get interesting because Banks leaves the realm of music and starts asking what it would mean to use remix as a method of synchronizing concerns in other forums. He actually gives us two examples of rifts he thinks need to be healed, synchronized, reworked to make something new.

The first example Banks gives is a dispute between the scholar Eddie Glaude and the civil rights advocate Al Sharpton at the 2007 State of Black America Forum. Glaude was arguing against Sharpton's critique that young people were not as committed to the cause of Black liberation as the older generation, and in the end, Glaude called Sharpton a "hustler." The other example comes from a personal interview between Banks and Katie Cannon in which the former [sic] said that she did not know how to talk to young people.

For Banks, this inability for generations to talk to each other informs the "back in the day" narrative—the stories about important times in the recent past—that he began the chapter talking about. These stories are all about how "we must do a far better job in passing on the history, knowledge, and traditions of our past to our young people; [the narratives argue] . . . that we have somehow lost something significant even as so many other things have changed for the better" (93). And that is why telling "back in the day" narratives is not just an old people thing. Young people do it too, either critiquing those younger than them or separating themselves from their generation because the "back in the day" narratives aren't about how things were back in the day; rather, these narratives are about the struggles of the present and the communal values—what Banks terms the old school ethos—that will be needed to overcome them:

The "back in the day" narrative is an intentional remixing of history, undertaken in the attempt to create a common interpretation of the past, to enable arguments about how to

move forward through the ruptures and dislocations that make the current moment and to set an agenda for future action . . . black people are asking themselves what knowledge, values, and experiences should be packed for the interplanetary, intergalactic trip that Parliament-Funkadelic told black people (and other audiences, too) to prepare for with their “mothership” metaphor.

And its important to realize here that the version of the past that the ‘back in the day’ narrative describes—a past where black people were politically united, kids played outside, neighborhoods were safe, and there were strong neighborhood leaders—never existed. Or at least it never existed in the uncomplicated way that the “back in the day” narrative would have you believe. For example, Banks points out that there has always been political disagreement in the Black community—even during the civil rights era—and there have always been stories about troubled youth. However, we idealize and romanticize the past so that people can take on those values in the present and create a better future. The “back in the day” narrative and the old school ethos are productive fictions that synchronizes the past, present, and future.

And this is where the DJ comes back in because the DJ, as a digital griot, is able to address these tensions in ways that are palatable to all generations

By sampling funk and soul rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and lyrics, in its incessant layering, in its disruption of the linear narrative, Hip Hop—especially through the work of the DJ—helps heal the disruptions of black experience. The digital griot, in that same kind of constant searching that Nelson ascribes to Papa LaBas, remixes history to ensure that the soul and funk, Stax and Motown, getting paid and seeking change, civil rights and Black Power, Malcolm [X] and Martin, stay alive and part of African American collective consciousness in way that don’t condemn us to either/or approaches. (103)

However, and one of the things that I love about this chapter, is that the DJ is not enough. Rather, Banks says that we all need to be doing this kind of synchronizing work, “Like the DJ lining up the beats and adjusting the equalizer before hitting the cross-fader, we must begin to line up the theoretical, ethical, and linguistic grooves to the questions of a changing same era to ensure smooth blends in the remix that is to com.” (104). And he argues that one way we can do this is by following the lead of the scholarly movement eBlack, which offers a vision of scholarship that synchronizes innovation with tradition by asking new questions in solidarity with and in relationship to what has come before (109).

So, yeah. That is a lot. I’m going to take a break and leave you with a song—but not a remix—but a song I think does a really good job merging the old school and the new school. Anderson .Paak’s song “The Dreamer” was released in 2016 on his album *Malibu*, but it has a 70s style, alludes to old-

school figures, and is in its own way a “back in the day” narrative that pushes towards a new and better future. So, yeah, enjoy.

Oh, and it’s a little shy of six minutes so if you want to skip the music, I would suggest five and a half minutes.

(Anderson .Paak “The Dreamer”)

Ben: Cool, let’s do Chapter 4. This chapter is actually pretty hard to break down in my usual way because its not really a linear argument. I mean it is, but it’s not. Banks seems to be performing his mixtape methodology as he explains it; so, instead of articulating clear claims and evidence and linking them to claims in the standard Western—read white—academic style, Banks is layering ideas, juxtaposing conversations, and using examples as reoccurring motifs. This is a really cool argument, but one that can be difficult to follow.

So, after a brief discussion of Bernie Mac, Banks starts this chapter by asking who composition serves. That is, what are the ethical commitments of teaching writing. And if you are a future writing teacher who has not yet asked yourself this question and come up with, at least, a personal answer—ya best get on it. Then, almost out of nowhere, Banks starts talking about being a kid in Cleveland listening to the Hip Hop radio program *Club Style* on Saturday nights on WDMT 107.9 and taping his favorite songs. He talks about how he and his friends would make their own arrangements—mixtapes—of the songs they recorded off the radio. This segues to a discussion of how Hip Hop DJs took this to another level by creating innovative works of art based on “the elements chosen, how they’re mixed and layered, and how they build and speak to various conversations and communities inside the DJ and Hip Hop game” (115). Then, almost blindingly, Banks switches to a discussion of Black Theology, a movement that attempted to synthesize Martin Luther King’s ideology of integration with Malcolm X’s ideology of Black nationalism. This conversation links to his original question about composition’s ethics, especially in the references to the scholar Bradford T. Stull, but it still seems shocking, and then he gives us this explanation:

In lining up the beats, lines, melodies, harmonies, tracks, and traditions that I’m arguing can lead to a new conception of both composition and African American rhetoric in a new era (a digital era that leads us to believe that we are always in a new era), the loopings and layerings I advocate seem arbitrary or undisciplined, an attempt to throw everything into the gumbo, or the mixtape, to maintain this chapter’s metaphor and frame. To some extent, this is an intentional stylistic move, an argument for eclecticism, for range as well as depth, in scholarly work. But just as the mixtape imposes order on the chaos through the particular cuts and blends and arrangements it uses, understanding Black Theology as a mixtape movement can help to allay these concerns because its intentional synthesizing of important tensions as a guiding principle and postures of careful reflexivity and self-critique do not result in a stasis-

eroding, strong postmodern relativism that—for me, at least—erodes rhetorical agency. After all, no matter how complex the questions or ranging positions or issues, one must ever, always take a stand. (116)

And really that whole paragraph is worth studying, even though I only quoted half of it. This is really significant stuff juxtaposing composition to Black Theology. It ends with a strong call to pledge our commitment to “stand in solidarity with the oppressed and develop theoretical and activist agendas that serve the broader society even while working to transform it to foster freedom and equality for those who have been denied them” (117). For Banks, teaching writing isn’t about teaching the grammatical rules established by those in power, it’s about liberation.

From here, Banks moves onto something of a literature review, discussing how scholars in composition and rhetoric—mostly Geoffrey Sirc and Jeff Rice but also Stuart Selber and Johndan Johnson-Eilola—discuss ideas of mix, remix, and the ethos of cool; however, Banks doesn’t seem impressed by any of this scholarship. He actually seems to find it lacking in understanding the Black culture and context that created the remix, the mixtape, and *The Birth of The Cool*. For Banks, the mixtape has meant more and can mean more than mere play or arrangement. In fact, he ends the section by saying:

I believe that the mixtape—when connected to a conversation about the ethical dimensions of the practice and the folk culture that led us there through the oral tradition and the DJ’s griotic, technological perspective [sic] of and intervention in that tradition—offers us a framework for navigating the difficult binaries and tensions inherent in the task of writing in digital spaces and offers at least the possibility for the kind of emancipatory composition Stull argues for. (119)

Banks then moves on to discuss something that the Afrika Bambaataa said to the writer/DJ/film producer Jeff “Chairman” Mao. Bambaataa argues that rapping killed Hip Hop when it went mainstream because it abandoned the beliefs of the African American cultural underground. Except, it’s more complicated than selling out; rappers were caught between the poles of the underground and the major label—between resistance and participation. And Bambaataa argues that the DJ was better able to navigate between these poles neither resigning themselves to obscurity nor selling out. The DJ was able to go worldwide while still staying true to its roots.

And then, scratch. Banks pivots to the field of composition where scholars are pulled between community work, public intellectual work, and academic work—not really having a home in any of those spaces. Scratch. He talks about Black America looking for new civil rights leaders but often having to settle for making a deal with a corrupt social, economic, and political structure. Scratch. He offers Black Theology as:

one movement that takes us beyond the polemic, that offers a model of synthesis that is not simply a matter of Hegelian agonistic postures leading to a new idea but a blending and layering of the many ideological tracks of black freedom struggle into a coherent, committed whole—a mixtape movement that offers a new lens for examining some of the ethical issues at the center of writing and writing instruction in a digital, multimedia age. (122)

In other words Black Theology—a movement focused on synthesizing Martin Luther King’s integrationist rhetoric and Malcolm X’s black nationalist rhetoric into a coherent whole—demonstrates mixtape methodology—a set of guiding principles and questions—that can guide research and thinking about writing and writing instruction in the twenty-first century.

So, Banks starts with Black Theology, which is an offshoot of liberation theology, which is type of Christianity that believes God is on the side of the oppressed and wants these people to be free. This is not a church focused merely on prayer and the afterlife; it is a church focused on action and fighting for change. This is the Christianity of Martin Luther King, and as Banks explains, it has a social gospel focused not only on heaven but also on earthly justice (127). James Cone, who Banks quotes, goes as far as to say, “When we make it contemporaneous with our life situation, Jesus’ message is clear enough. The message of Black Power is the message of Christ himself” (quod. in Banks 128). Cone’s articulation here is a merger of the Black Power message of Malcolm X and the Christianity of Martin Luther King, and it has four main principles: 1) God is on the side of the of the oppressed; 2) one must choose sides between oppressed or oppressor; 3) the salvation promised by Christianity is not merely individual, it is communal; and 4) suffering people have the right to fight against their oppressors (130).

Scratch. The field of composition is still not diverse enough, students of color struggle more than white students in our classes, and our professional organizations are not doing nearly enough to change this situation. We are operating like the false church, not a liberation church. Perhaps our discipline should reposition itself to care for the oppressed, take sides, and help students get free.

After further describing how Cone synthesizes Malcolm X and Martin Luther King in Black Theology, he moves onto the work of Katie Canon who disrupts the androcentric—that is overtly male, if not downright misogynistic—practices of Christianity, including liberation theology churches, by centering Black prayer in folktales, storytelling, and women’s literacies. Canon shows that traditional biblical study has been used to bolster white supremacy and masculine hierarchies as she argues for a womanist ethics (135).

Scratch:

When it comes to questions of writing and teaching writing in a digital age, in some ways there is only one ethical question after we address the question of access, the role that writing and writing instruction continues to play in keeping our universities as homogenized as they

still are—the question of how the writer, the teacher, and the theorist of writing will address intellectual property and copyright issues . . . the mixtape as Hip Hop art form calls compositionists to stand on the side of the wide range of different, everyday writing practices that have emerged from vernacular cultures into public awareness and into our students’ conceptions of what it means to write. Will we stand with a set of codes, laws, and conventions that have pushed more and more severely in the direction of huge corporate interests, or will we standing with the interests of students and a public of everyday people who have clearly shown that mixing, remixing, and mixtaping result in new text, new creations? Will we stand on the side of language policies and evaluation strategies that still dismiss the rich traditions students of color bring to the classroom, or will we accept the disingenuous argument that providing students the codes to succeed in corporate society is our only or most important goal? (137)

Banks goes on to argue that using other texts either as samples or as the basis of mixes and remixes is a form of creation, not plagiarism or theft. He shows how this has always functioned in folktales, sermons, essays, plays, animation, and music. He goes as far as to say that borrowing, interpreting, and sampling not only fuel creativity but are central to the creative act (144). However, there is a caveat. Often, when white people borrow, remix, or plagiarize, they are either lauded or able to be forgiven; however, since our society associates Black and brown bodies with criminality and theft—we are more suspicious of those writers. We taint their legacies, degrade their work, or sue them when the cut, copy, paste, or remix.

Banks argues that we, as a field of study, should be on the side of mixing; we should foster vernacular compositional practices, but he is not naïve enough to think that these practices are a good in and of themselves. Rather, he argues, “These acts must be pursued in ways that link tradition and innovation and find value and wisdom in the everyday lives and experiences of black people and other groups—regardless of the rigidly stereotypical narratives that still circulate in mainstream society—and ‘call the question’ on unequal systems of power” (146). And teaching mixtaping in this way is important for two reasons. First, in the griotic style, mixing links oral, print, and digital literacies together in the creation of canons—histories that inform the present and invite new futures. Second, mixing allows us to resist the large corporate structures who become more central to our lives as we adopt their communication technologies.

And, yeah, that’s the argument as I see it. Its super interesting, really important, and beautifully composed. I hope it gives you a lot to, pleasantly, think about this week. Other than that, I really miss teaching this class face to face—though I am having fun with these audio lectures. I hope you are still safe and healthy. I look forward to meeting you next week. Please stay well.

Oh, shit, yeah. I am going to leave you with a sample from Afrika Bambaataa's *Death Mix Live!*. This shit is awesome. I only put up a few minutes here, but I would highly suggest listening to the whole thing—its only like twenty-minutes long—it's up on *YouTube*—it's great.

(*Afrika Bambaataa "Death Mix Live!!"*)