Chapter 13: How to and Why We Remix

Sampling plays with different perceptions of time. Sampling allows people to replay their own memories of the sounds and situations of their lives. Who controls the environment you grew up in? Who controls the situation with which you engage? At the end of the day, it’s all about reprocessing the world around you, and this will happen no matter how hard entertainment conglomerates and an older generation of artists tries to control the processes.

-That Subliminal Kid

Sampling is detournment (reworking produced elements to create new meanings) it is making new gestures out of old. It is deconstruction, it is a process by which we recreate what we have already produced and it is profoundly postmodern. In this regard it is also ancient and profoundly academic. In order to look forward we must also look back, way back, or perhaps not that far back. As our collective memories are getting shorter due to technological processes that mimic memory we are not looking as far back for inspiration. For Paul Miller, DJ Spooky AKA That Subliminal Kid, to DJ is to write and to write is to DJ. There is something to be learned from the advent of the DJ and the rise of sampling culture. In our contemporary world where we are overloaded with texts, beats, rhythms, loops, and vocals the turntable is out selling the guitar. Sampling practices are epistemologically incorporated into a techno-corporeal discourse. We are playing with texts and we are altering environments. How do you change your physical environment through textual manipulation?

Recalling McLuhan, Miller states “Saying people are literate means that they have read widely enough to reference texts, to put them in a conceptual framework. They are capable of creating an overview” (56). What are at stake for McLuhan, is the overview, the master narrative, and the linear structure of the ‘literate human.’ Instead we create and recreate, perform and re/perform our own overview. Going forward by going back into history to find out what is lost. Locate a textual discourse you are interested in and ask, what is left out? A REMIX PROJECT will be to re/insert this element and re/create a new overview.

In this postmodern landscape everything is symbolic, political, and discursive in that reality contains meaning within a context of power. In turn all of these symbolic narratives, material objects, and conceptual positions are available for consideration in consumption, use, re-use, and re-interpretation or remix. It’s the remix…and…it goes a little something…like…this.

Locate an artifact, work of art and way of doing things, common situation, particular outlook, and/or daily practice. Recognize the medium by which you encounter this image, sound, clip, theme, bite, and/or moment and read it. Understand it, interpret it, view it, sit with it, absorb it, and re-interpret it’s meaning in relation to your viewing. Think about the way we internalize external texts, the way we memorize lines, identify with fictional characters, and partially become the symbolic nature of our surroundings.
Finally fuse the medium with a message to create a new artifact, scene, situation, image, video, meme, text for further viewing and remixing.

*Image* (symbol, meme, flag, logo, mascot, monument)

*Song* (lyrics, beat, chorus, sample)

*Video* (television, music video, film, commercial, vine, clip, news)

*Print* (advertisement, signage, magazine, pamphlet, newsletter, stationary)

*Internet* (website, app, blog, screen, text)

*Everyday Life* (situation, event, movement, dwelling, interaction)

According to Gregory L. Ulmer, researchers and intellectuals have been influenced by various pictographic arts as much as they have been by textual or metaphysical argument (*Heuretics* 3); we will utilize both within the scope of research and production. Ulmer’s search for a new genre of writing within academe that more effectively utilizes electronic media at all levels of discourse arises “out of a matrix crossing French poststructuralist theory, avant-garde art experiments, and electronic media in the context of schooling” (*Heuretics* xi).

Following a similar path, I integrate multi-textual forms of learning in both teaching and research, which grounds theory in action and respond to Ulmer’s call for an equivalent to the analytical essay based on an electronically situated research practice. In his book *Hueretics*, Ulmer outlines a theoretical approach to inquiry that emphasizes the process of invention offered by video and other electronic means, rather than using these mediums merely as modes of dissemination. Arguing that the screen is replacing the page and the database the library, his work is a productive way to negotiate this transition (*Heuretics* 17). Ulmer introduces a framework that is a move beyond “conventional pedagogy and a pedagogy for an era of electronic media” (*Applied* 157). While his theories connect liberal arts schooling, specifically the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic) with electronic means of production, he notes that this type of inventive writing or REMIXING should not be medium specific (*Heuretics* 17).