

**WRITING PROMPT/EXPERIMENT #1: Lewis's "Listening to Transgress" and "Eliding Our Sounds of Freedom & Oppression"**

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**\*Due for class on Sat Week 3, and due to me as email attachment by Saturday evening, Week 3. Single-spaced and typed file please. If the forms you are playing with call for different spacing, then go for it.**

**\*This prompt is in 3 parts. Try to be done, or close to done, with Parts 1 & 2 by this Wednesday. I'll ask for volunteers to share writing that is in progress (none will be required to share).**

**\*Part 1 should take you about 20 min. per sound; take one writing session, i.e., the majority of this week's time, on Part 2. Part 3 should take about 30 min or so. Time yourself for Parts 1 & 3 if necessary.**

**PART 1: DESCRIBING SOUND MEMORIES (LEWIS WORKSHOP excerpt)**

After doing the week's readings and thinking more about the concepts that have come up so far, I suggest folks take a few minutes (five max) to free-write on Miranda Mellis's "Misapprehensions: A Mobile In Ten Parts" and on what "elision" is (literally, to omit something, which used to mean literally the omission of a sound in a word, but also more broadly its contemporary meaning for literary theory and rhetorics now is: "to speak or write around, or through, but not directly *about* something or someone")... After thinking a bit more about that discussion and the readings and doing a bit of free-writing...

--Respond to the small part of the Ultra-Red George Lewis workshop below (and in the handout "Protocols For The Sounds of Freedom" by Ultra-Red). In other words, and in Lewis's words:

**Recall, record in writing, describe:**

1) A SOUND that oppressed you

2) A sound that deceived you

### 3) A sound that empowered you

### 4) A sound that saved you

Spend 10-20 min. on each of these. Sound memories can be events ongoing, can be memories of objects, people, places. The form is up to you since this is a free-write save for the one general constraint I'd like us all to be attentive of as we do this otherwise freely-written part of the experiment: to be as descriptive as possible—that is, try to write a description only for each sound.

## **PART 2: DRAFTING YOUR SOUND-MEMORY ESSAYLETS (100 words per section)**

--In summary of the below: turn your sound-memory descriptions into sub-sections (title each sub-section) or “creative writing chunks.” Or, in the (more eloquent) words of Mellis when she describes her own writing, turn your four free-write sound descriptions into “essaylets” that EXACTLY stick to the following constraints: 1) one sound-memory per “essaylet”, i.e., four different sound-memories for each of four different pieces of writing, where 2) each “chunk” of writing is exactly 100 words in length, such that 3) these sound-memory writings of 100 words interlock/connect to make a larger whole that 4) in no place refers directly (by name, for instance) to any of the sounds you are writing in relation to. Thus you are eliding the sounds you've recalled and recorded (recall that Mellis's “essaylets” interlock with one another via various means, and the whole that forms isn't a five paragraph essay but takes formal chances—look at the piece again to see the various ways they interlock and how the whole isn't a “seamless” sort of whole you'd find in a typical essay or research paper or realist short story).

--No. 4 above is about trying to evoke something—*elide* something—rather than about trying to write *about* something, to *refer to* or *state directly* what it is! Focusing on elision and connecting of prose-paragraphs here allows us to work on these formal writing skills, both of which are seen in writing across disciplines (in the research paper, for instance, you'll need to evoke images or ideas and connect paragraphs). So take all constraints seriously, including constraint 4!

--You can use language from your descriptions – no problem. Just don't use ALL the language from the descriptions (ie, you are making new writing of 100 word paragraphs, and being as creative and unusual as possible in your use of language, and yet it'll be tempting to just “trim” or add language to get to 100 words per sound—don't).

### **PART 3: REVISING FOR MAXIMAL PERFORMATIVITY**

Revise your sound-memory writing of four 100-word essaylets ONCE but with the following purpose: use the revision process to heighten the performativity of the writing, to cast a tension or several tensions between the writing of the page and the writing off (as read aloud). In what ways, for example, can you turn this piece into the maximally performative version of itself? Go back and look at some of the week's readings for inspiration. Go back and glance at Brecht or Artuad. If you re-arrange the architecture of each sound/essaylet, or the form of one or more of the essaylets, thus allowing for an architecture that isn't four typically spaced/arranged paragraphs, and if you also (hint!) use a THESAURUS to find unusual words to make the language strange, as one would for a poem, does the writing take on a more performative quality? Does it help you, that is, locate some places where you can create some tensions between the written page and the writing as you perform it (as you read it aloud)?

--Remember: each "essaylet" (each sound-memory) must be exactly 100 words in length, but the way you structure the words on the page is up to you, so as long as the reader can easily identify where the sub-section ends and a new one begins.

--HINT: one great way to revise for maximal performativity (or to revise at all)—which in this case means maximizing the potential that the sounds you are writing in relation to are heard by the reader since you are not telling the reader outright what they are—involves RECORDING yourself READING ALOUD the first draft, reading SLOWLY, and then PLAYING BACK what you recorded, listening for the flow, the affective qualities, and overall, the performative potential of the evocations you've made via this writing. What, in hearing yourself read, can be torqued or heightened in a revision? Note that you only have one revision—so in what direction do you feel the piece desires to be revised for maximal performativity?

**“EXTRA CREDIT”**: Well, not really. But: If you do record yourself reading, the recording sounds interesting to you, perhaps you want to use it—instead of your live voice in class—to even further heighten the performative qualities of the writing, that is, the tensions or conflicts that occur within the writing and between the writing on and of the page and that writing as is performed, i.e., read live (or in this case recorded and played).

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**SUMMARY:**

### **Part 1:**

--describe/record in writing the four sounds described above and by George Lewis for his Ultra-Red workshop (this part of the workshop can be found under “B: Sound Memories” in the handout). Freely write but do so as descriptively as you can.

### **Part 2:**

--write four interlocking 100-word “chunks” or pieces, each of which is a creative “translation,” so to speak, of one of your sound-memory descriptions. Make sure to sub-title, without referring directly to the corresponding sound, each of your sub-sections. Recall that this is one piece of creative writing—not four separate pieces!

–make to sure you elide each of the sounds you described in STEP 1. Evoke – do not directly refer to the sounds you described in STEP 1 (your sounds of “freedom/oppression” that Lewis gives)...

### **Part 3:**

--Revise once for maximal performativity. Rewrite as necessary. Find ways to create tensions between writing on the page and that writing as it is performed (read aloud). Performance writing and other performative writings don’t need other artistic media to be performative—so revise in order to consider how to maximize the piece’s performative elements. Go back, read aloud the interlocking pieces to yourself: are they evoking? Do they refer anywhere directly to your sounds? If they are referring, revise. If not, revise once for other reasons you feel, upon reading the piece(s) aloud, the piece isn’t yet quite “right”...

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--Final Tip: if any one of the sounds you have chosen to describe then creatively elide is ongoing, you may, if possible, desire to record with a laptop mic or recorder etc the sound(s). Make sure that such an audio recording is not an invasion of someone else’s personal privacy, however, if you do end up deciding to make one or more field recordings.

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