



endpaper: *for an anthology of texts by Elaine Barkin**

e: a reading

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Texts speaking about not so much as speaking to... for... of..... someone; sometimes, anyone; sometimes, oneself. Not what's written about but who written by, who written to, who written for, who written of. Not so much where it's coming from as who's coming from there. Wanting above all, above all in some acute particularity, to be known not renowned but in the sense of you know someone rather than you know who someone is. Nor so much the views held as by whom and why and with what meaning for giving and getting access to knowing and being known. Idiolectics are to identify, color the talk person-particular not so much to sharpen as to intropersonalize a point. (Yiddishisms don't much clarify: but they do much shmooze.) To identify with: celebrate, probe, provoke, invite, color, inflect, engage: relatedness. not so much reflection as action: texts which aspire for you to dance with them (though something sharp might nip you it's still always a mode of intimacy). Intimacy: is the pervading model of mind-mind exchange, the paradigm of engaged energy, creative-discursive passion. Love is the interlocutory ethos. Also to identify as: you are perceived as being by what you are perceived as caring about; your person-identity your composing-yourself self are the output of its assertion. Speaking about and speaking views about are located there, here. An (existential) odyssey not a (disciplinary) essay: her own private revolution, her radical enactment of self-liberation in her own name, to her own account, on her own terms, in the space of the face of whatever social Establishment it was she was nominally obligated to for having, nominally, produced her.

Read (One): free play in composing discourse modes releases her from that self-effacement intrinsic to conventional discourse rhetoric. Liberates the materialization of all sorts of text-things, free of the strange illusion that there's an Idea (or a Meaning) behind. So it's not some professor or other, but Elaine herself, in person, challenging Charles Rosen's discourse hygiene with teasing Lewis Carroll one-liners. (Charles could have found it kind

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of an interesting scolding if he wasn't too tweaked by its sauciness.) Whether or not it makes the text more fun, it does make it imaginable that such a text might be an occasion for fun (why go deeper, is it clear there is someplace deeper to go?). The White Knight's "new way of getting over a gate" coming as the punch line of her summing up of the book's analytic-systematic contortions is notably hilarious; and gentle, because it leaves no doubt that it's at play rather than at war (more a Godard irony than a Buñuel cruelty). And the three-way conversation (the two Charleses and Elaine), where everyone gets a lot of ink space (even if it's all under her control) lets you do your own reading: the quotes from Rosen's Schoenberg book on 'dissonance' give (for my reading) a vivid portrait of a writer (Charles R.) struggling hard to articulate: to discover something lurking (and evidently— under Elaine's hardassed exposure—remaining buried) in the depths of unarticulated intuition.

Read (Two): probing to evolve modes of description that capture what music really does sound like and what it really does mean to her progressively leads her out from under the coercive logic of reasons. you come face to face with her growing, sometimes gnawing, awareness that things don't happen for reasons, anyway...maybe they (reasons) intensify (things), make things real for experience, draw things close to you...or, too, maybe, they relieve too much intensity by fencing things around, making loopholes within too-hot spots and exemptions from uncomfortable implications, making safety zones for you to be where threats can be savored without becoming threatening, where unwanted intensities are kept at a distance, where you can get a zing but don't risk getting enveloped. but get past reasons and you have what happens and you can see how when $x < y$ happens as it happens, is as it is, by virtue of x but not that it 'happens because of' x except in the extra-experiential 'logic of reasons' space—where it gets an excuse for happening but not necessarily a meaningful eventfulness. You get her on collision course with herself asserting truths and consequences about Webern that add up to sense but not to interest and intuiting fictions in no particular way supported by those truths but suggesting some intensely interesting bodylinguistic choreography going on between her and that incoming sound, like how "interiors invert to exteriors" and eventually how it puts you though turning "outside-in and inside-out"—a small metaphor for an interesting possible contortion of the listening organism in receiving these sounds, against the backdrop of a



weirdly perverse composition game (incremental chromatic expansion in complementary temporal directions) which might incavate an astounding proposal about multilinear time experience, but Elaine doesn't let herself fall into that abyss: she just lays out the moves of this game as if it weren't a cosmic contradiction of the law of contradiction itself but just a pretty neat way of composing some music or other.

Read (Three): ideas and stories; maybe of just one listening/thinking episode; certainly of just one person's experience, free therefore in rhetoric and thought from presumption or obligation to universality or arguable definitiveness: experience of experience not authority of authority. makes room for fantasmic psychedelias of musichearing, true enough as report, sharable enough as either story or user's manual, but intense and real mostly as accessing an irretrievable singular moment of music-induced ontological transcendence: "...no particular chord-shape can be easily construed as the basic shape for the entire etude; nor does Debussy indiscriminately stack one sixth upon another sixth....I begin to hear...as if the interval between successive patches were a stretched or contracted, slightly misshapen or distorted "prime": as if the same pitch-letter name appeared for many of these patches, thus conjuring up a sensation, a feel quite distinct from the one in which the shifted (or displaced) interval would be apprehended as a minor or major second..." ... some music by Arthur Berger whose behavior she materializes not so much as a sensible assemblage of musical data but as the manifestation of an odd consciousness, not so much telling as experiencing its own stories, the stories of itself, starting over again and again from scratch with new (but maybe not even different) versions of who it was, a sharp take on a quintessentially eccentric time-flow personality.... ...a valentine to Earl Kim and Earl Kim's *Earthlight* that finally permits itself an eruption into the very mode of cold eroticism transfusing metastatically over the KimBeckett soundflow and sealed tight in her afterfeel metaprocessing of it. If you need to tell *the* story, swarms of musical data which probably will support for argument's sake any damn story you want to tell are probably key; but *this* story gets told best by drastic focussed reduction to relevant particulars—like, telling a story. (Musical data themselves make a serious comeback in a far superior form as comical but very contentful graphic rescorings of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, though. And maybe the furthest reach of music-evocation strategy is her unuptight imaging of Milton Babbitt's



conversational workflow and body language in the very body language of her own verbal-language flow, gathering into one capsule a cameo of his music and person as a simultaneity.)

Read (Four): textstyle-mode experimentation merges into, reflects, maybe even creates, awareness and anxiety and speculation and exploration in her intellectual, aesthetic, sonic-cultural, presentation-cultural, colleague-cultural, creative-lifestyle modes. texts here put you through some of these agonies; come up, appropriately, ambivalent. because in all these regions of personal identity and activity, choosing exploratory lifestyle modes has profound consequences: liberation and marginalization are an invariant dyad, and then there's still always the problem that your story still wants, if only secretly, to be everyone's, or at least someone else's, story too, and also there's the even more secret yearning to soak up everyone's (or at least someone's) stories into (as) yours. Elaine notices she's discontent with business as usual, finding the details of compositional and academic life always imagined as paradigmatic suddenly lodging as strange and disturbing, then she metastasizes this into a multifaceted crusade for and against things on a big variety of issues, but always steadfastly insisting on the public advocacy of private experience. with gratifying tact and sophistication she tells a roomful of Yale musicologists and theorists: "My voice is not your voice; your voice is not my voice; yet I remain hopeful that our distinctive voices can speak to and hear and benefit from one another as, presumably, do the voices of our music...." ...personal problems of being a composer become (plausibly) problems of being a woman and a composer/professor hierarchized with intense discomfort in both directions (down as well as up: hence teaching becomes learning, of course, but also collaborating and real-time playing/composing with colleagues and students both). And gender issues, like issues of native-culture identity, cut confusingly different ways: "Is it...OK for some women composers to buy into the 'patriarchal power structured, hierarchical system of domination' on account of they've been denied power in the past, now want a piece of the pie, of the action? Those 'some', those 'Others'? Yet if so many of us—as so many of us do—express dissatisfaction with entrenched, unyielding, and alienating intransigencies, how come more of us haven't come up with alternatives instead of succumbing? Alternative from within as well as from without? Surely we can do it; with all our un-attended-to social problems, Americans are still the *most* able to desist, to resist. What is



regrettable is that many of the discontented, for whom smaller and appreciative communities are their real cup of tea, are afraid *not* to seek and, hence, not to gain the approval of and recognition from institutional officialdom—whose approval they basically (or so they often say) don't respect.....the woman composer in the academy who chooses to discover her own musical ethos may find herself uncomprehended by her male colleagues; yet imagine the far worse fate awaiting those males who have chosen to overturn their 'own' ("phallogentric patriarchal") inheritance! Those of them who have chosen to no longer be in competitive powertrip mode are viewed with incredulity and alarm as are all those of us—female and male—who have sought counter/mainstream/cultural alternatives in the pursuit of private worlds and idiosyncratic languages." You can feel how her anger at Susan McClary (I don't mean her differences of opinion with her) erupts from the loneliness of feeling drastically ontologically alienated from the moral certainties and assumptive allegiances of one who would speak for, even advocate for, Elaine and her women colleagues. Or feeling more sad than angry at finding her hope for spiritual kinship with another, woman, improviser, third-world culturecrosser, meditative seeker, unfulfilled; but poignant to follow a meditation on her uningratiating experience of the live-active presence of Pauline Oliveros as it leads her to a devastating compassionate self-analysis beginning "on the way to becoming, we try others on..." ("What to do, I wondered as I wandered back downtown, when you've gotten to admire aspects of the work of someone and then discover that you've confused yourself insofar as you've made equivalents of incompatibles"...) Defending and appreciating male colleagues with whom she does feel spiritual affinity (me, say, and Jim Randall) begins to take on a special urgency in the politicized space which is precisely complementary to the energy of her particular, and very woman-particularized appreciation of Virginia Gaburo and her *Notations* book at an earlier moment, of Diamanda Galàs and her *Plague Mass*, at a later one so then all the exuberant freewheeling swashbuckling adventurous optimism that produces such dividends of expanded appreciation of music aesthetically and in detail, unlimited music-creative activity, social-cultural interaction, uninhibited active self-composition, encounters the devastating downside of unredeemable Outsiderhood symbolized (strangely) in the depressive brown-study netherworld of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, and expressed (curiously) in the elusive fragmentation of a diary-entry structure subtly distancing its content of nonlinear ruminations and a series of quotes from and



stories about a villagefull of (mostly) women and (a couple of) men: Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, Judy Lochhead, Deborah Stein, Richard Feynman, Octavio Paz, Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Brenda Romero, Muriel Rukeyser, Fred Maus, Judith Butler, Christine Battersley, Suzanne Cusick, Luce Irigaray, Donna Haraway, Alexandra Pierce, Marion Guck, Emily Dickinson, Jim Randall, Frank Swan, Sarah Weiss, Tildy Bayar, and of course Elaine, surfacing and submerging through a revolving stereopticon of subjects and topics all ironically (with a perhaps weary sophistication of purpose) gathered under the rubric of 'feminist music theory': jury duty longueurs, real-world horror statistics of women-abuse, psychic confusions of being a woman in some man'sworld business, origins of the need for deviations in general, survival value of distinguishing, being able to distinguish, difference, struggling with history, Balinese psychotherapy, self-empowerment by withholding knowledge, patterns of gender behavior likened to Japanese theories of sound and silence, the connection of body awareness and openness to fragmentary structures, genitally determined ontological difference, politics of interpersonal expressive communication, public utterance in the register of intimacy, what's significant to persons about music, blurring the boundaries of discourse and artwork, sexism in the California legal system, out-of-control behavior of female Javanese *gender* players, ergonomics of composing-spaces, the potential for bonding rather than competing in artistic/discursive utterance and expression...

Read (Five): a story of one's own: at the meeting in Montreal of the society for which she wrote and read her Virginia Woolf text, someone asked Elaine if she was concerned whether her work was influential, whether it had attracted a following. I said (don't remember if I waited for Elaine to answer) that founding a 'school' was antithetical to the most fundamental nature and spirit of her work; and that that was an outcome well worth what it had taken to get there.

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