Consonance, Dissonance, and Gender: A Queer-Theoretical Approach to Johanna Beyer's
Clarinet Suites (1932)

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Example 1. Charles Seeger's definition of consonance and dissonance.

	Tension (+) Dissonance	Tonicity, Rest (=) Poise	Relaxation (-) Consonance		
The tone becomes	Higher	Remains the same	Lower	Pitch	Larger than an 8ve
	Louder	Remains the same	Softer	Dynamics	pp – ff
	"Warmer"	Remains the same	"Cooler"	Timbre	
The beat becomes	Faster	Remains the same	Slower	Tempo	
	Stronger	Remains the same	Weaker	Accent	
	Divided	Remains the same	Prolonged	Proportion	
	Detached	Remains the same	Legato	Articulations	3:2, 4:3, 5:4

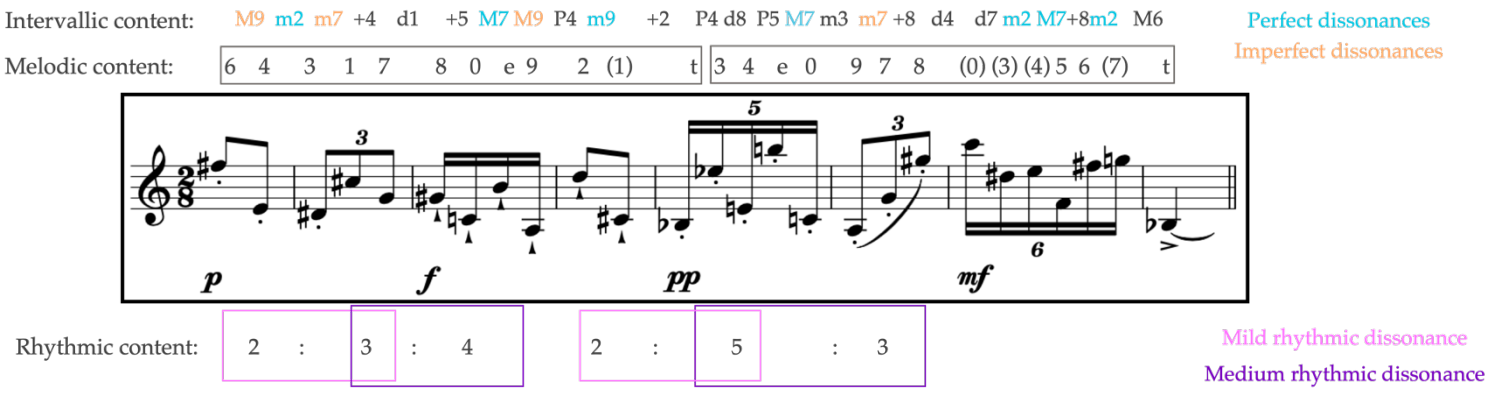
Example 2. Seeger categorizes pitch and rhythmic dissonances into categories that are "more" or "less" dissonant.

Categorization of Consonant and Dissonant Intervals	
Perfect Unison	Perfect consonances
Perfect Octave	
Perfect 5th	
Perfect 4th	
Major 3rd	Imperfect consonances
Major 6th	
Minor 3rd	
Minor 6th	
Tritone	"Practically consonant"
Major 2nd	Imperfect dissonances
Minor 7th	
Major 9th	
Minor 2nd	Perfect dissonances
Major 7th	
Minor 9th	

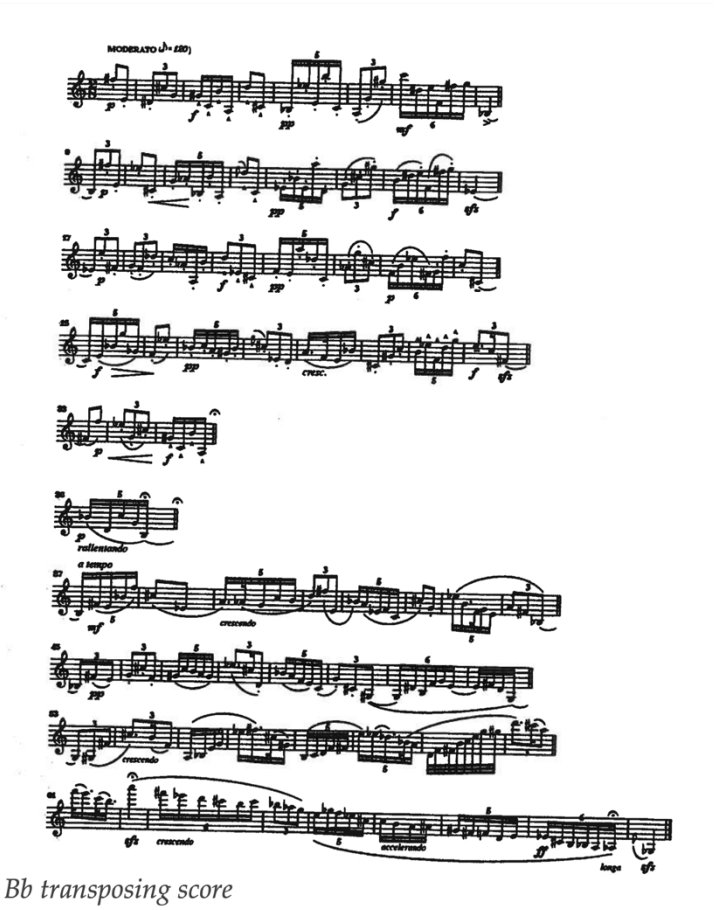
Less dissonant ↑ ↓ More dissonant

Categorization of Rhythmic Proportions	
2:3	Mild dissonances
3:2	
2:5	
2:7	
2:9	
3:4	Medium dissonances
4:3	
3:5	
4:5	Strong dissonances
3:7	
4:7	
3:8	
4:9	

Example 3. Analysis of the opening melodic line of *Suite for Clarinet I,* movement 3 (mm. 1–8, Bb transposing score).



Example 4. Initial dissonant melody gradually becomes a more consonant final line in *Suite for Clarinet I,* mvmt 3.



Bb transposing score

becomes

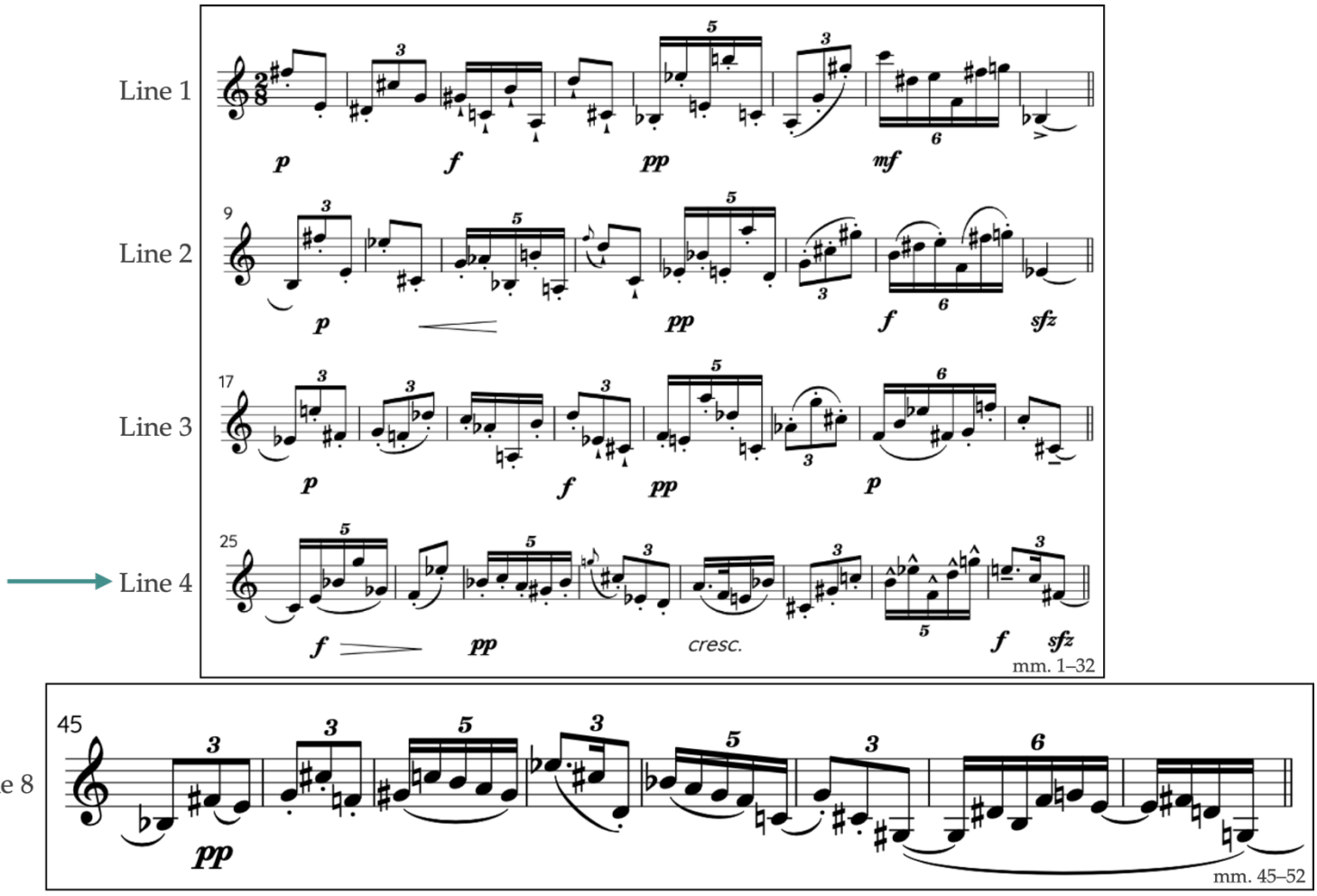
Dissonant initial melody

- Large leaps (many dissonant m7, M7, m9, M9 intervals) that often change direction
- Sudden, drastic contrasts in dynamics
- Complex ratios between number of notes in subsequent measures
- Detached articulations

Consonant final line

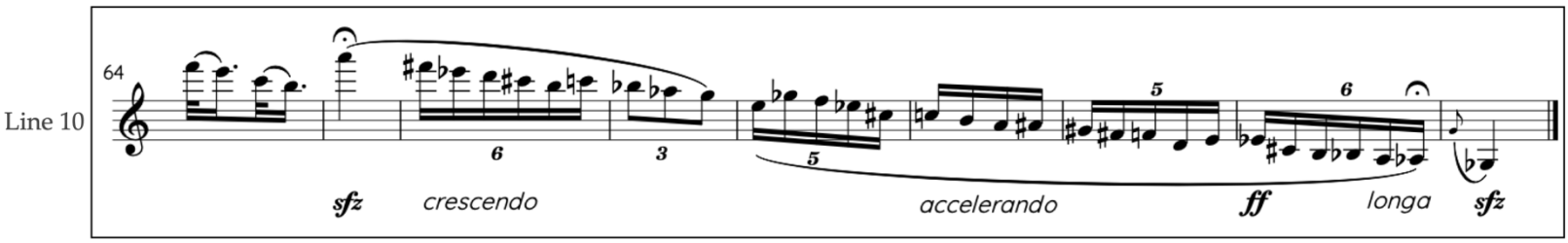
- Mostly stepwise line that descends
- Gradual crescendo stretches over entire system
- Slurred articulations

Example 5. Line 4 of *Suite for Clarinet I*, mvmt 3 is simultaneously less dissonant than the preceding three lines of music *and* more dissonant than the music that follows, such as Line 8.



Example 6. Line 10 of *Suite for Clarinet I,* mvmt 3 features a consonant melody, consonant articulations, and consonant dynamics. These surface consonances are contrasted with a dissonant rhythmic structure.

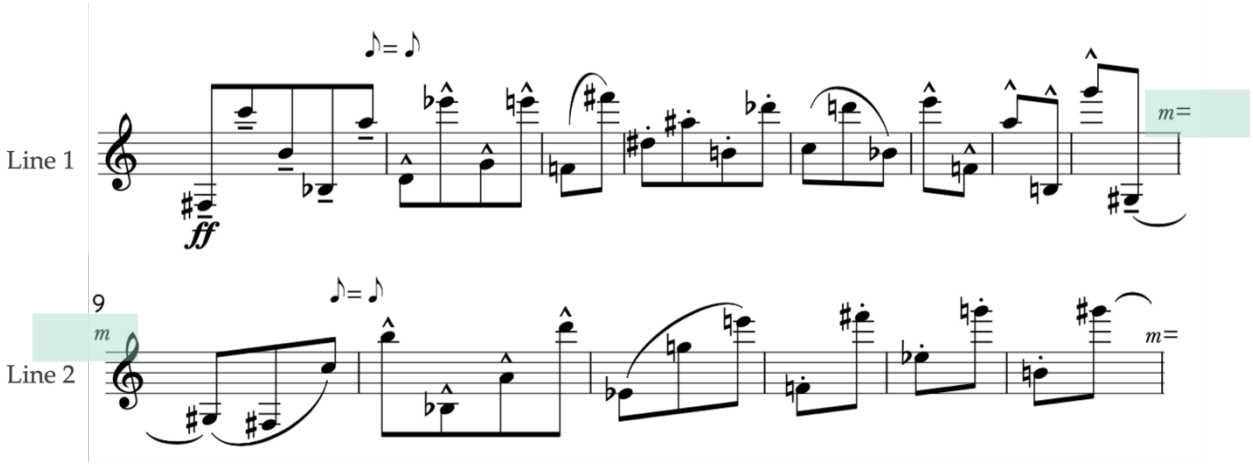
Consonant melody: mostly conjunct, descending line
Consonant articulations: many notes slurred together
Consonant dynamics: crescendo stretches over entire system



3 : 5 : 4 : 5 : 6

Dissonant rhythms: complex ratios between number of notes in successive measures create "medium" and "strong" dissonances

Example 7. The opening two lines of *Suite for Clarinet IB,* mvmt 4, features a dissonant, disjunct melody. A tempo modulation (m=m) occurs at the end of each line of this movement.



mm. 1–14

Example 8. All tempo modulations that occur throughout the movement, including the line number where the modulation occurs, the modulation proportions, and the calculated tempo of eighth notes (rounded to the nearest integer) following each modulation. The tempo slows down between Lines 3–4 and Lines 8–9 and otherwise speeds up. Modulation proportions of 3:2 are less dissonant than the 3:4 modulation, but are more dissonant than the consonant 4:2 and 2:6 modulations.

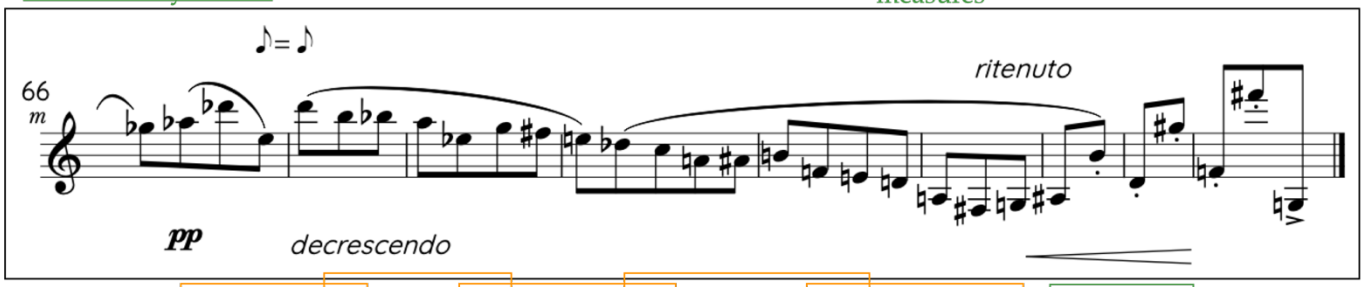
Line #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ratio of tempo modulation	1:1	3:2	3:2	2:6	3:2	3:2	3:2	4:2	3:4	4:2	3:2	4:2
Calculated tempo of eighth notes*	56	84	126	42	63	95	142	284	213	425	638	1276

* tempos rounded to nearest integer

Example 9. The final line of *Suite for Clarinet IB*, movement 4 begins with a consonant melody, consonant articulations, and consonant dynamics contrasted with dissonant rhythmic structure. In the final three measures, a reversal occurs: the melody and articulations become dissonant while the rhythms become consonant.

Consonant melody: mostly conjunct, descending line
Consonant articulations: many notes slurred together
Consonant dynamics: decrescendo stretches over five measures

Dissonant melody: large leaps (most 8ve+) that change directions
Dissonant articulations: staccato notes
Consonant dynamics: crescendo stretches over two measures



4 3 4 5 4 3 2 2 3

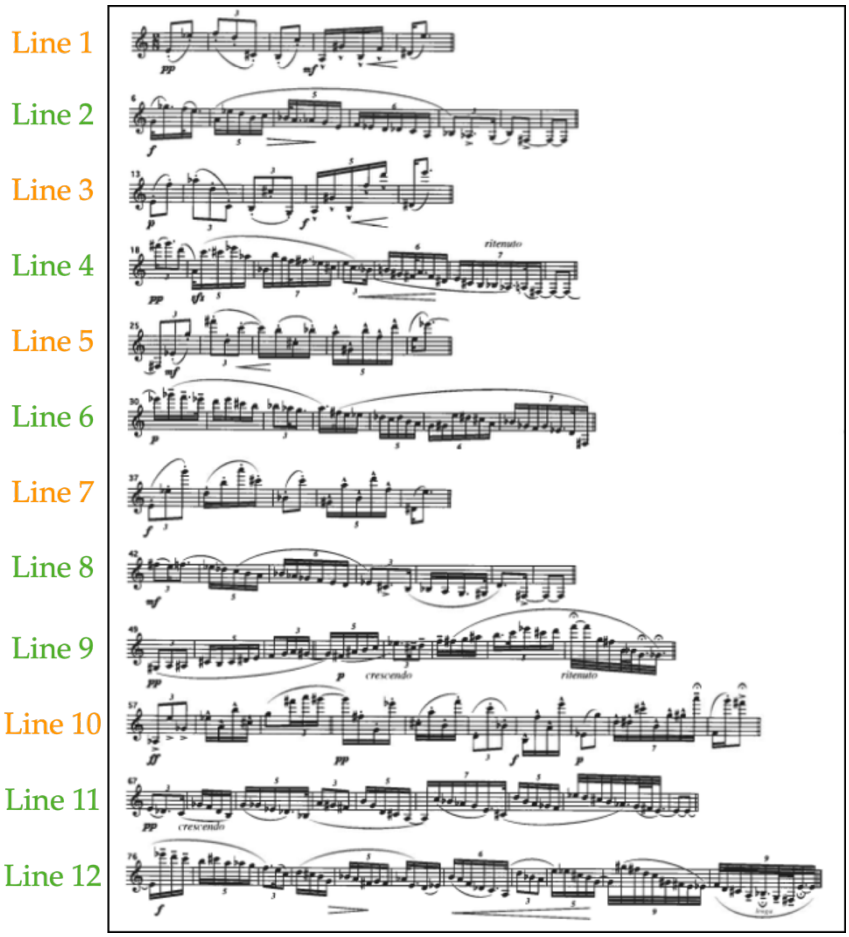
Dissonant rhythms: complex ratios between number of notes in successive measures create "medium" and "strong" dissonances

Consonant rhythms: simple ratio (2:2) between mm. 72–73

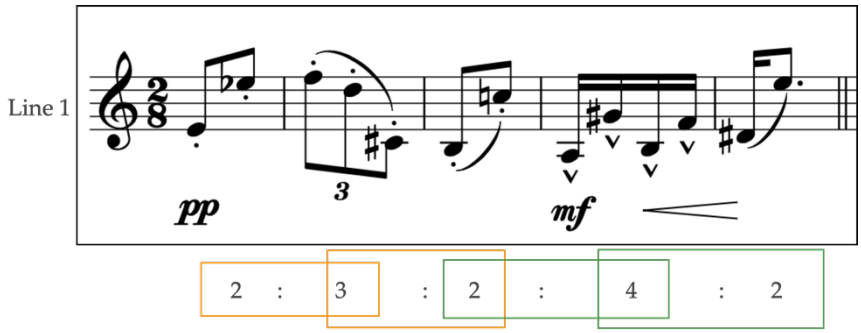
Example 10. *Suite for Clarinet IB,* mvmt 3 features consonance and dissonance on alternating lines of music,

Dissonant Lines
- Large leaps
- Detached articulations
- Sudden dynamic contrasts

Consonant Lines
- Mostly stepwise motion
- Legato articulations
- Gradual dynamic changes (cresc. and decresc.)



Example 11. The first line of *Suite for Clarinet IB,* mvmt 3 has dissonant pitch material, dissonant articulations, and dissonant dynamics. This dissonance, however, is undermined by an equal number of rhythmic consonances as there are rhythmic dissonances.



Example 12. The sixth line of *Suite for Clarinet IB*, mvmt 3 is consonant in terms of its pitch material, dynamics, and articulations, but has a very dissonant rhythmic framework.