## Melodic Transformations in Johanna Beyer's Early Compositions: A Gendered Interpretation

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#### ABSTRACT

Johanna Beyer (1888–1944) composed over fifty pieces between 1932 and her early death in 1944. Despite her prolific output, scant research has been dedicated to her music, and it has rarely been performed. The existing scholarship on Beyer acknowledges her ultramodernist roots and the influence of dissonant counterpoint on her musical style; however, most sources make general observations about her compositional tendencies or focus their analyses on one particular piece of music rather than codifying any specific melodic or harmonic processes present across her oeuvre as a whole. In this dissertation, I develop an analytical system that elucidates Beyer's ultramodernist compositional style, informed by her gendered experiences.

I interweave two strains of methodology. The first is a formalist approach guided by the philosophies of transformational theory. I propose a set of five melodic transformations that account for the sense of constant metamorphosis and cohesion in Beyer's four earliest compositions. In three separate chapters, I apply this transformational methodology to single-line melodies in movements from the Clarinet Suites (1932), two-part textures in movements from the *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite (193?), and four-part textures in movements from String Quartet No. 1 (1933–34) in order to demonstrate the ways melodies evolve over the course of a movement, and the ways in which multiple melodies in one movement, or across movements, share similarities that are otherwise not obvious on the surface of the score.

The second strand of methodology is rooted in critical theory and cultural analysis, specifically feminist and queer theories. I seek to connect the narratives uncovered by the melodic transformations to Beyer's life and the ways she negotiated her gender identity. As a woman, immigrant, ultramodernist composer, Beyer experienced ostracism from her contemporaries, and overtly misogynistic comments about her ability to compose from her mentors and audience members attending her concerts. In reaction to these criticisms, Beyer incorporated aspects of masculinity and femininity into her concert appearances and her interactions with colleagues. I suggest that Beyer's complex subjectivities impacted the musical structures she created and can be heard in the music that she wrote.

The contributions of this research are twofold. First, the transformational model I propose provides more detailed insight into the melodic processes common in much of Beyer's oeuvre. Second, the results of my analyses will contribute to a fuller, more well-rounded understanding of modernist music in America. They will reveal the various ways Beyer's multiple marginalized identities influenced her compositional style, and the ways in which she adhered to and departed from the dissonant counterpoint practice to express her own unique voice. This work provides a starting point for future exploration of Beyer's music at large and prompts a rethinking of gender in the analyses of ultramodernist music as a whole.

### ABRÉGÉ

Johanna Beyer (1888–1944) a composé plus de cinquante pièces entre 1932 et sa mort prématurée en 1944. Malgré sa production prolifique, peu de recherches ont été consacrées à sa musique, et elle a rarement été jouée. Les études existantes sur Beyer reconnaissent ses racines ultramodernes et l'influence du contrepoint dissonant sur son style musical. Cependant, la plupart des sources font des observations générales sur ses tendances compositionnelles ou concentrent leurs analyses sur une pièce en particulier plutôt que de codifier des processus mélodiques ou harmoniques présents dans l'ensemble de son œuvre. Dans cette thèse, je développe un système analytique qui clarifie le style de composition ultramoderne de Beyer, informé par ses expériences genrées.

J'entremêle deux types de méthodologie. La première est une approche formaliste guidée par les philosophies de la théorie transformationnelle. Je propose un ensemble de cinq transformations mélodiques qui expliquent le sens de métamorphose et de cohésion constantes dans les quatre premières compositions de Beyer. À l'intérieur de trois chapitres distincts, j'applique cette méthodologie transformationnelle à des mélodies à une voix dans des mouvements de la suite pour clarinette I (1932) et de la suite pour clarinette IB (1932), à des textures à deux voix dans des mouvements de la suite pour piano *Dissonant Counterpoint* (193?), et à des textures à quatre voix dans des mouvements du quatuor à cordes no. 1 (1933–34). Ainsi, je démontre comment les mélodies évoluent au cours d'un mouvement et comment plusieurs mélodies d'un même mouvement, ou sur plusieurs mouvements, partagent des similitudes qui ne sont pas évidentes à la surface de la partition.

Le deuxième volet ma la méthodologie est ancré dans la théorie critique et l'analyse culturelle, en particulier les théories féministes et queer. Je cherche à relier les récits révélés par les transformations mélodiques à la vie de Beyer et à la manière dont elle a négocié son identité de genre. En tant que femme, immigrante et compositrice ultramoderne, Beyer a subi l'ostracisme de ses contemporains et des commentaires ouvertement misogynes sur sa capacité à composer de la part de ses mentors et des membres du public qui assistaient à ses concerts. En réaction à ces critiques, Beyer a intégré des aspects de la masculinité et de la féminité dans ses concerts et lors des interactions avec ses collègues. Je suggère que les subjectivités complexes de Beyer ont eu un impact sur les structures musicales qu'elle a créées et peuvent être entendues dans la musique qu'elle a écrite.

Les contributions de cette recherche sont doubles. Tout d'abord, le modèle transformationnel que je propose fournit un aperçu plus rigoureux des processus mélodiques communs à une grande partie de l'œuvre de Beyer. Deuxièmement, les résultats de mes analyses contribueront à une compréhension plus complète de la musique moderne en Amérique. Ils révèleront les diverses façons dont les multiples identités marginalisées de Beyer ont influencé son style de composition et les façons dont elle a à la fois adhéré et divergé de la pratique du contrepoint dissonant pour exprimer son propre style. Ce travail fournit un point de départ pour l'exploration future de la musique de Beyer et incite à repenser l'influence du genre dans les analyses de la musique ultramoderne dans son ensemble.

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### INTRODUCTION

"Don't be such a god-damn sissy, when you hear strong music like this, get up and use your ears like a man!" - Charles Ives, referring to music by Ruggles<sup>1</sup>

The first half of the twentieth century was a particularly difficult time to be a woman composer in America. During this period, many composers began to search for a uniquely "American" sound, ultimately turning to dissonance as the main building block of their musical practice to negate their European heritage steeped in tonality. European tonal music of the nineteenth century was viewed as feminine and overly emotional, whereas dissonance was viewed as strong, learned, and virile, so for many associated with what became known as the ultramodernist<sup>2</sup> movement in New York, including Henry Cowell, Charles Ives, Charles Seeger, Carl Ruggles, Edgard Varèse, and Dane Rudhyar, the shift toward dissonance and the compositional practice of dissonant counterpoint also had gendered implications. Cowell, Ives, and Seeger were outspoken about their beliefs that dissonant counterpoint was a masculine domain in which women could not partake. Ives was particularly infamous for his gendered

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This quote comes from an anecdote in the draft of an unpublished New Yorker article written by Lucille Fletcher. The draft, with Ives' comments and corrections penciled in, can be found in the Charles Ives Papers at the Yale University Music Library Archival Collection, MSS 14 Box 29/08. It is included as Ref. #090 in the appendix of Patrick K. Fairfield's dissertation, see Fairfield, "Representations of Gender and Sexuality in the Music and Writings of Charles Ives" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2000): 358.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Scholars are divided on the spelling of "ultramodern" with some, such as Straus (1995), Oja (2000), and Spilker (2010), choosing to hyphenate ("ultra-modern," "ultra-modernism") and others, such as de Graaf (2008), Lumsden (2012), and Boland (2022) omitting the hyphen ("ultramodern," "ultramodernism"). In this dissertation, I will use the unhyphenated spelling, which is more prevalent in recent scholarship. See Joseph N. Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); John D. Spilker "Substituting a New Order': Dissonant Counterpoint, Henry Cowell, and the Network of Ultra-Modern Composers" (Ph.D. diss., The Florida State University, 2010); Melissa de Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers': Gendered Reception in the New York Composers' Forum, 1935–1940," *American Music* (Fall 2008): 277–308; Rachel Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge: Johanna Beyer's String Quartet no. 2 (1936) and Vivian Fine's *The Race of Life* (1937)" (Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 2012); and Marguerite Boland, "Imagination and Method: J. M. Beyer's String Quartet no. 2, "in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music, 1900–1960*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022): 192–228.

outbursts and commentary—the quote above comes from a concert performance of Ruggles's *Men and Mountains* (1924), during which audience members were booing and hissing before Ives intervened, demanding that they use their ears like men.<sup>3</sup> Gendered rhetoric of this kind was commonly used to alienate and exclude women from all aspects of music-making, from composing to performing and even to attending concerts.

And yet, women composed. In her work on the Composer's Forum concert series, Melissa de Graaf lists all of the composers associated with the New York Forum between 1935 and 1940, dividing the list into four sections: female professional composers, female student composers, male professional composers, and male student composers. Sixteen women are listed as professional composers, including Alda Astori, Jessie Baetz, Marion Bauer, Amy Beach, Johanna Beyer, Rebecca Clarke, Ulric Cole, Ruth Crawford, Vivian Fine, Mildred Gardner, Ethel Glenn Hier, Rosalie Housman, Mary Howe, Eda Rapoport, Rosy Wertheim, and Mabel Wood-Hill. A further forty-two women are listed as "Female Student Composers."<sup>4</sup> Of this list, Crawford has certainly received the most scholarly attention with several books and articles dedicated to her life and work. In the past two decades, however, more consideration has been given to other women associated with this movement and the contributions they made to modernist music in America. This dissertation aims to contribute to this body of knowledge by providing the first large-scale, close analytical study of compositions by one of these women: Johanna Beyer (1888–1944).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Several scholars have examined Ives's use of gendered language and misogynistic ideology. See, for example, Patrick K. Fairfield, "Representations of Gender and Sexuality in the Music and Writings of Charles Ives" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2000); Judith Tick, "Charles Ives and Gender Ideology," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, Ruth Solie ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020): 83–106; and Frank R. Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America* (New York: Liveright 1975).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Melissa de Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers," 301-303.

Beyer was a prolific composer, writing at least fifty-six pieces in a twelve-year period

between 1931 and her death in January 1944.<sup>5</sup> She also had many connections to figureheads of the ultramodernist movement—she took lessons with Rudhyar, as well as Crawford and Seeger, with whom she also developed a close personal friendship; and she was close friends with, and a strong advocate for Cowell, especially during the years he was incarcerated in San Quentin State Prison. Despite these achievements and connections, her legacy has been almost entirely forgotten in the history of ultramodernism and the New York music scene in the first half of the twentieth century. As biographer Amy C. Beal writes:

When one surveys [Beyer's] professional correspondence and the number of people who knew her as a pianist, composer, copyist, teacher, organizer, and advocate, it is baffling to realize how thoroughly she disappeared from the historical record. Judith Tick's exhaustive biography of Ruth Crawford Seeger (1997) mentions Beyer only once, though the women apparently knew each other well for a number of years. Michael Hicks, in his detailed account of Cowell's prison years (1991) and in his thorough biography, *Henry Cowell, Bohemian* (2002), makes no reference to Beyer, though her eleven-year friendship with Cowell constituted one of her (and, arguably, his) most important relationships. Leta Miller's 2006 article on the connections between Cowell and John Cage between 1933 and 1941 mentions Beyer only in passing, despite her importance as a pioneering composer of percussion ensemble music during exactly those years. Joel Sachs's recent biography of Cowell (2012) includes several brief mentions of Beyer, but only mentions once in passing that she was a composer in her own right.<sup>6</sup>

Beyer's obscurity is likely due, at least in part, by the lack of existing records containing information about her life and her compositional practice. A CV from her 1937 Guggenheim Fellowship application, 115 letters she wrote to Cowell during his imprisonment, notes in her roommate's diary about her, and transcripts from the Composers' Forum concert series are the only extant primary source information that give insight into how Beyer the composer, and Beyer

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> While fifty-six manuscripts survive in the Johanna Beyer archives in the Music Division of the New York Public Library, Beyer claimed, in a letter written to Henry Cowell in 1941 that she had written over 100 pieces during this thirteen-year time period. See Amy C. Beal, *Johanna Beyer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017): 86. <sup>6</sup> Beal, *Johanna Beyer*, 6.

the woman, viewed the world, how she thought about music and composition, how she interacted with other people, and what she was like as a person. A lack of accessibility to these materials further complicates the issue: all of these materials remain unpublished, existing in various archives at the New York Public Library for Performing Arts and the Music Division of the Library of Congress.

The way Beyer was remembered by those who knew her also conflicts with the information available in these documents, further complicating her legacy. Interviews with John Cage, Lou Harrison, William Russel, Otto Luening, and others, conducted by John Kennedy and Larry Polansky in 1988, revealed that these composers "knew her, but hardly knew her":

She struck people as someone determined in her convictions, but strange and difficult to know. She is described as having been tall, angular, awkward, and self-conscious. Her pianism and musicianship are recalled as being excellent, and her musical training in Germany as traditional and solid. Otto Luening remembers Beyer as being devoted to the cause of contemporary music and active in the community... He recalls that others viewed her as 'problematic'—unsure whether her compositions were deliberately primitive or lacking in 'technique.' Though her English was very good, she is remembered as being extremely quiet, almost painfully shy. From those interviewed and from all published reports, it seems likely that she was not close to many in the New York City music scene. She told others she had no family and did not maintain ties to relatives in Germany.<sup>7</sup>

Beal's biography, on the other hand, paints a picture of Beyer as very social and an active participant in the music scene, complicating this narrative.

Virtually nothing is known about Beyer prior to her immigration to the United States from Germany in 1923, when she was already thirty-four years old. Her CV from the Guggenheim Fellowship indicates she sang in the Leipziger Singakademie for three years and "graduated at the 'Verband der Direktoren Deutscher Konservatorien und Musik Seminare

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> John Kennedy and Larry Polansky, "'Total Eclipse': The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer: An Introduction and Preliminary Annotated Checklist," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 720.

E.V"" in Germany in September 1923, only a couple of months before she moved to New York.<sup>8</sup> Beyer's name first appears in her roommate's diary in 1927, and it is from this point through to her death in 1944 that the most clear picture of her life can be reconstructed.

It is not known for sure when Beyer had her first interactions with the ultramodernist composers. Beal outlines several musical events in New York in the spring of 1931 that could have initiated Beyer into the ultramodernist community:

In February, Léon Theremin demonstrated his eponymous new instrument at the New School (Cowell would present his Rhythmicon there nearly a year later); that same month conductor Nicolas Slonimsky gave a Pan-American Association of Composers concert that included music by Cowell, Ives, Ruggles, Henry Bryant, and Alejandro García Caturla; on March 31, Cowell gave a piano recital at the New School. In May 1931, the Greenwich Village Music Festival offered a program of compositions by Marion Bauer and other New York-based composers; Charles Seeger of the New School for Social Research spoke on Paul Hindemith's utilitarian concept of *Gebrauchsmusik* at the Greenwich House Music School.<sup>9</sup>

This period coincides with Beyer's earliest known compositional activity: in February of 1931, she composed a waltz for piano that is now part of her *Cluster Suite*, and her CV also lists several

performances of original compositions during this time, some of which were for dancers at the

Dorsha Hayes Theater of Dance.<sup>10</sup>

The first confirmed connection between Beyer and any of the ultramodernists were her lessons with the Seegers in the early months of 1931. Beal's biography references the diary of Bertha Capen Reynolds, Beyer's close friend and roommate. Reynolds's diary mentions Beyer over a hundred times, providing important details about Beyer's life that were otherwise

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Beyer's CV from her Guggenheim Fellowship can be found in the Serge Koussevitzky Archive housed in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., Box 6, Folder 15. A photocopy of the CV can also be found in the Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, also in the Music Division of the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., Box 131, Folder 16. Her CV is discussed by Rachel Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge," 18–21, and Beal, *Johanna Beyer*, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Beal, Johanna Beyer, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Beal, Johanna Beyer, 13.

unknown. One of these obscure facts that was clarified by Reynolds's diary entries involves the timeline for when Beyer met and took lessons with the Seegers. Beal writes:

Our earliest direct knowledge of Beyer's compositional work occurred in 1931; by January 1932 she was sharing her new work with her Sunnyside friends. Between February and May of that year, Reynolds documented three important facts—particularly significant for reviving Beyer's biography because her connection to the Seegers has long been discussed as a fact without any concrete evidence: "10 February: Johanna had interview w. Charles and Ruth Seeger—teachers of modern composition. They will give her lessons. 10 March: Johanna giving German lessons to Seegers to pay for comp. lesson every week. 12 May: Johanna composing."<sup>11</sup>

This connection with the Seegers and her early days as a composer soon led Beyer to Cowell, with whom she had the most significant relationship of her life. In the 1933–34 school year, Cowell was teaching at The New School for Social Research, including classes on "Contemporary American Music" and a "Work Course in Music: New Possibilities of Piano Playing." Beal proposes that while Beyer does not officially appear on the student list for either of these classes, there is evidence to believe she visited them, including appointments in Cowell's pocket calendar on several occasions throughout the fall of 1933, and a performance of her *Three Songs for Soprano, Piano, and Percussion* at the New School on October 25 of the same year. Beyer's name does appear on the roster for Cowell's class in fall 1934, entitled "Creative Music Today."<sup>12</sup>

Over the course of her short life, Beyer wrote music for nearly every genre, including works for piano, string quartet, various chamber groups, percussion ensemble, choir, and even several large-scale orchestral pieces. While much of her music is clearly influenced by her work with the Seegers and Cowell, Beyer's personality and unique compositional voice also shines through in many respects. As Kennedy and Polansky write:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Beal, Johanna Beyer, 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Beal, Johanna Beyer, 15–16.

Many of Beyer's works share a determined austerity and brevity, with a conscious sense of understatement. Even when daringly experimental, her work has a strong sense of formal coherence, along with a unique sense of humor and whimsy. What appeared to some as primitive is more accurately described as a disciplined focus on the development of single ideas and overall shapes, and an economy of scale and tools that is an early example of a minimalist approach... Some of her works betray a sardonic sense of humor and a hint of embittered mockery... Her most interesting scores show a sense of internal discipline and conscious definition of limits, strongly suggesting a consistent and well-thought-out intention regarding the nature of her work. Also evident, over the course of the ten years or so of her extant work, is a sincere commitment to experimentalism and innovation, as seen in her radical structural ideas and in her many works for percussion and ensemble.<sup>13</sup>

Kennedy and Polansky also note that, despite Beyer's output and her connections within the ultramodernist movement, "rarely did she have the opportunity for feedback or the trial-anderror learning process of having works performed."<sup>14</sup> In fact, of all of Beyer's compositions, only a handful were ever performed during her lifetime, and only one was published.<sup>15</sup>

Beyer's lack of performance opportunities and mentorship in general were likely due, at least in part, by the fact that she was a German-born woman in a heavily male-dominated, American-nationalistic movement. In her work on the Composers' Forum concert series, de Graaf paints a rather woeful picture of the experiences of female composers in the early decades of the twentieth century, with a particular focus on Beyer. Unlike her male contemporaries, Beyer was subject to various attacks from the audience during her participation in these concerts, many of which targeted her gender.<sup>16</sup> One audience member during her first appearance in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Kennedy and Polansky, "Total Eclipse," 725.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Kennedy and Polansky, "Total Eclipse," 725.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The lack of performance opportunities frustrated Beyer, as seen in one of her last letters to Cowell, written in 1941: "Above all, I ought to hear at least one work once. With all these festivals and goings on and I belonging to two composers organizations since years etc. etc. and having written over 100 works anyway, 6 symphonic works and no chance to hear one of them!" Quoted in Beal, *Johanna Beyer*, 86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Beyer's music appeared on the program of two Composers' Forum concerts in New York: a concert in May 1936 included her Movement for Two Pianos, dedicated to Cowell and performed by one of her students, Jessie Baetz; Suite for Soprano and Clarinet, consisting of three songs on texts by Beyer ("Total Eclipse," "Universal Local," and "To Be," dedicated to Rosario Mazzeo, who performed the clarinet part); String Quartet no. 1; and excerpts from the Piano Suites which, de Graaf suggests, were likely a combination of movements from what are now *Gebrauchs-Musik* and *Dissonant Counterpoint*. A year later, in May 1937, the program included Beyer's Sonata for Clarinet and

concert series, for instance, asked "Miss Beyer, you seem to have gone your male preceptors one better in search for strange and ineffective tonal combinations. Have you consciously adopted Rudyard Kipling's statement, 'The female of the species is deadlier than the male' as a guiding principle in your composition?"<sup>17</sup> Another, after her second appearance, asked "whether Beyer's works were 'mere brain children' or whether they 'emanate[d] from the heart."<sup>18</sup> Overall, de Graaf notes that while male ultramodernist composers were also subject to criticism during the concert series, the attacks on Beyer (and other women who took part in the series, such as Beyer's student, Jessie Baetz, and Crawford herself) stand apart due to the level of sarcasm present in their comments. These women composers, then, were often stuck in a double bind: they could either continue to write in a "feminized" way (smaller forms, tonal music, etc.) but relinquish respect as a composer, or they could write in a more "masculine" way (larger forms, dissonant style) in an attempt to be taken seriously as a composer but be accused of "seeking after virility"<sup>19</sup> By deciding to write in a more "masculinized" way, Beyer was ostracized from the mentorship, feedback, and opportunities to hear her work performed that were afforded to her male contemporaries.

As an immigrant writing in a style that was, at its core, an attempt at distinguishing itself from European compositional traditions and establish an "American" way of composing, Beyer found herself even more on the margins of the circles from which she desired acceptance. Although she eventually became an American citizen and was fluent in English, Beyer's arrival in America coincided with the rise of Hitler in Germany and an era of hostile and contemptuous

Piano, again dedicated to Mazzeo and Nicolas Slonimsky; Suite for Clarinet and Bassoon; Suite for Violin and Piano; Quintet for Woodwinds; and again, excerpts from Piano Suites, performed by Beyer herself. See de Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers," 292.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Quoted in de Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers," 294.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> De Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers," 295.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> De Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers," 287–288.

attitudes toward Germans in America. No explicit evidence of prejudice against her nationality exists; however, several of Beyer's letters to Cowell reveal an underlying sense of ambivalence about her background and, at times, a suspicion that not being "100% American" was excluding her from opportunities. In an aggravated letter to Cowell, she writes:

Tell them that some of my forefathers fought in the Civil War of America, some are English and that I have alive native close Irish-English relatives walking around in Washington today. My own father lived for a number of years in France and England, his coming back to Germany was merely accidental! Why do I mention this now? Perhaps because you brought out the 100% American too often. All those percentages make me laugh!<sup>20</sup>

In another letter, she writes: "I have not heard back from Boston about the contest, perhaps I made a mistake by asking whether it was only open to natives. I shall write again from New York and simply ignore my being born in Germany."<sup>21</sup> Evidently, Beyer felt her German heritage was being held against her, even by Cowell himself.

Confusion and misinformation shroud Beyer's legacy through to the final days of her short life. According to diary entries made by Reynolds, Beyer was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1941, which Reynolds later cited as the cause of her death; however, according to Beyer's death certificate, she died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease), a diagnosis which she apparently received as early as 1938. Furthering the confusion, Beyer wrote to Cowell in 1936 stating that she had cancer.<sup>22</sup> Without medical records, it is difficult to say which of these diagnoses were accurate. What can be said for sure, however, is that Beyer suffered tremendously from pain and deterioration leading to her death in 1944: she mentioned in a letter to Cowell in 1940 that "things have been difficult" and that composing was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Quoted in Beal, Johanna Beyer, 86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Quoted in Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge," 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Beal, Johanna Beyer, 82.

a challenge due to her being "physically hindered."<sup>23</sup> Her final completed composition, *Sonatina in C*, is dated June 1943, around the same time she entered a hospital in the Bronx, the House of Holy Comforter. Beyer remained in the hospital until her death in January 1944. Her remains are buried in the grave for those who died in the hospital, marked by a gravestone on which her name is spelled incorrectly: Johanna M. Bauer.

#### Methodological Approach and Chapter Overview

This dissertation interweaves two strains of methodology in order to analyze and understand the melodic processes and musical structures in Beyer's four earliest compositions that survive, Suite for Clarinet I (1932), Suite for Clarinet IB (1932), *Dissonant Counterpoint* (193?), and String Quartet no. 1 (1933–34).<sup>24</sup> The first methodology is a formalist approach guided by the philosophies of transformational theory. The second strand is rooted in critical theory and cultural analysis, specifically feminist and queer theories, to ascribe meaning to the narratives uncovered by the formalist analyses informed by Beyer's lived experiences as a woman, immigrant composer writing in an American-nationalist musical style dominated by men. These two approaches, though distinct, are irrevocably intertwined: Beyer's gendered subjectivities and the criticisms she endured as a woman, immigrant composer necessarily impacted the musical structures and melodic processes she wrote into her compositions. Only through both a close reading of the music and an understanding of Beyer's biography, I believe, can one fully grasp Beyer's impact on modernist musical practices.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Quoted in Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge," 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> These four pieces are the earliest dated pieces found in the Johanna Beyer Archives at the New York Public Library for Performing Arts Music Division; however, they show a remarkable amount of skill and refinement suggesting that they were likely not her earliest attempts at composition. If Beyer wrote any student pieces or juvenilia, either before she arrived in the US or predating her lessons with the Seegers in the early 1930s, they have been lost.

#### **Chapter 1: Charles Seeger and Dissonant Counterpoint**

In this chapter, I provide a thorough overview of Seeger's treatise, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," as well as his "Manual for Dissonant Counterpoint." My analyses of Beyer's music in the following chapters rely heavily on terms and concepts devised by Seeger. Since Seeger's compositional theory is not well-known and he occasionally uses familiar terms in unfamiliar ways, this chapter provides the requisite theoretical framework and historical context for the remainder of the dissertation. A few aspects of Seeger's theory that are particularly important for my work on Beyer's music are brought to light in this chapter, including his unique conception of consonance and dissonance, the notion of the neume in avant-garde music and the method of neume transformations, his reframing of the term "heterophony," and his theorization of the process of "dissonation."

#### **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology**

Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the literature on ultramodernism. I begin with those who have made connections between Seeger's treatise and Crawford's compositional output, as well as introduce those who have discussed Beyer's music and its connections to her mentors. Following the literature review, I identify the gap in scholarly knowledge that my dissertation aims to fill: a close reading of Beyer's earliest compositions and a theoretical framework that can be applied to other pieces in her oeuvre. I introduce the dual strands of my methodology, that is, the transformational approach I use to explain the melodic processes occurring in Beyer's four earliest compositions, and my use of feminist and queer theories to provide an interpretation of the narratives I uncovered in her musical structures. These feminist and queer narratives are shaped in and through my subjective and intersubjective encounters with Beyer, the historical figure, and with her music. As will be explained in greater detail below, the methodology I propose here is one of analysis and interpretation ("esthesic discourse" according to Jean-Jacques Nattiez), rather than one focusing on the composer's intentions (Nattiez's "poietic discourse").<sup>25</sup> Seeger's theory of neume transformation put forth in the Manual of Dissonant Counterpoint was certainly intended to be a compositional process—conscious and deliberate choices made by the composer—and Beyer does explicitly communicate an intentional "transformational attitude"<sup>26</sup> in her Clarinet Suites, noting on the third movement of Suite for Clarinet I a process of "modulation from skippy + twist neume... to steppy + line neume"; however, I have seen no evidence that the specific transformation categories I propose were compositional tools used intentionally in this piece or in any others. These categories arose from my own close reading of several of Beyer's scores, reflect the common connections between repeated musical phrases that I observed, and are intended as an analytical method rather than ascribing authorial intent.

#### **Chapter 3: Consonance, Dissonance, and Gender in the Clarinet Suites**

The third chapter focuses on the applicability of the melodic transformations in singleline, dissonant melodies. While "dissonant counterpoint" seems to imply music with two or more parts, Seeger advised those practicing this compositional technique to begin writing music for a solo instrument. Three movements from Beyer's Clarinet Suites (1932) begin with a dissonant, disjunct melody that is transformed over and over again resulting in a final line that descends,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Nattiez writes, "Description can evoke the *poietics* of a work—how it was composed—as well as the *esthesics* of a work—how it is heard by a given listener." See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, translated by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 169–182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> This phrase is borrowed from David Lewin's seminal book on transformational theory, in which he compares a static, "interval-as-extension" way of thinking ("what is the interval from S to T?") with a more dynamic,

<sup>&</sup>quot;transformation-as-motion" interpretation ("if I'm at S and wish to get to T, what characteristic gesture... should I use to get there?"). The "transformational attitude," as he explains it, "is by and large the attitude of someone *inside* the music, as idealized dancer and/or singer. No external observer (analyst, listener) is needed." See David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 158–159.

mostly stepwise, to a final note in the clarinet's lowest register. I apply my methodology of gradual melodic transformation to uncover how these movements lead from a melody that features large leaps, *staccatos*, and sharp contrasts in dynamics—all elements of a dissonant melody as described by Seeger—to a more consonant one featuring a stepwise, *legato* line with gradually changing dynamics. The small group of melodic transformations I propose show Beyer upholding the ultramodernist preference for variety over repetition while simultaneously creating a narrative trajectory that goes against the dissonant counterpoint style and is, as far as I am aware, unique to Beyer's compositions within the ultramodernist tradition: a larger musical design that moves from a state of relative melodic disjunction and dissonance to a state of relative melodic smoothness and consonance.

In addition to uncovering the melodic processes present in these movements, I show how consonance and dissonance are blended across a variety of parameters (including pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulations, and tempo) on multiple levels of musical structure, with fluid motion between more or less consonant and dissonant moments through the use of melodic transformations. I argue that consonance and dissonance in the Clarinet Suites align with aspects of queer theory by transcending a binary classification, instead operating as continuous variables on a spectrum and heard simultaneously in different domains. Ultimately, I interpret these movements as a musical portrayal of Beyer's complicated and complex subjectivities as an isolated "body out of place,"<sup>27</sup> constantly negotiating her gender identity to be accepted among her colleagues and audiences. Unlike Crawford, who aligned herself with dissonance as her act of feminist agency, I see mixing consonance and dissonance and transcending the binary as Beyer's subversive and queer assertion of independence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> This phrase comes from Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 61, to be discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

#### **Chapter 4: Queering Heterophony in Dissonant Counterpoint**

Chapter 4 introduces Seeger's concept of heterophony and dissonant counterpoint. According to Seeger, the goal of dissonant counterpoint was for the complete independence of lines that sound simultaneously in a polyphonic texture. He proposes that dissonance is the foundation of heterophony—only by combining two (or more) melodies in such a way that they create primarily dissonant intervals, dissonant rhythms, or dissonant dynamics, can one ensure that the lines are mutually exclusive and "sound apart" from one another. The only relation between the parts, according to Seeger, should be their mere proximity in space and time. In this chapter, I analyze three movements (movement 1, 7, and 8) from Beyer's earliest piano suite, aptly named Dissonant Counterpoint, and show how the melodic transformations apply in a contrapuntal framework. I demonstrate that, while on the surface, the two parts of these movements (i.e. the melodic content played by the right hand and that played by the left) "mutually repulse"<sup>28</sup> each other through unique and contrasting characters, dissonant vertical intervals, dissonant rhythms and metric structures, and contrasting ranges, one element consistently binds the parts together: the use of the melodic transformations proposed in Chapter 2. Not only do the same five melodic transformations occur independently within each part, creating a common thread between the two lines, but these transformations also reveal that the melodic content of both parts is not as different as it seems on the surface. In fact, I show how the melody of one hand can be understood as derived from that of the other through the use of the melodic transformations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> I borrow this phrase from Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger*, 80.

I argue that the movements from *Dissonant Counterpoint* fall into queer narrative paradigms, albeit in a different way than in the previous chapter. Although Beyer explicitly characterizes some of her melodies as "feminine" and "masculine" in program notes for this piece, I argue that a clear-cut gendered description is queered through the use of common musical features in both parts, such as deriving the content of both melodies from the same source and the common use of melodic transformations in each independent line. These shared musical traits between the parts undermine the notion of heterophony, which relies on two or more unique and independent parts, as well as any binary interpretations of either line as "masculine" or "feminine." Instead, I propose that both parts might be viewed as existing somewhere on a spectrum between "the usual two" genders.

#### **Chapter 5: Melodic Cohesion and Formal Dissonance in String Quartet no. 1**

The final chapter continues to explore contrapuntal frameworks, now in a more advanced setting: Beyer's String Quartet no. 1. As with the two parts in the movements of *Dissonant Counterpoint*, the four parts of the string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello lines) all "sound apart" from one another, with the melodic transformations acting as a way of binding them together. In contrast to *Dissonant Counterpoint*, where the two parts began and ended their repetitions of melodies at the same time, the transformations applied in the String Quartet occur at different rates in each line, resulting in melodies that are constantly shifting their temporal position in relation to the other parts. In this chapter, I show how the transformations create an even deeper level of variety over repetition. While each melodic line individually is varied upon each repetition, the shifting temporal locations of each melody results in no two parts aligning in the same way twice. These shifting and overlapping phrases, I propose, create a dissonant formal design and also align with a queer paradigm: the four parts in this movement "act out of line" with one another and blur normative formal boundaries.

In addition to creating a deeper sense of variety, the melodic transformations also reveal the similarities between the four independent melodies of each movement, as they did in the *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite. In this chapter, I demonstrate an even deeper sense of cohesion, now among the movements as a whole: not only are the independent melodies of each movement generated from the same source, but the cello lines in each movement also bear striking similarities, suggesting they too are variations on the same melody. In this final chapter, then, the melodic transformations are used in three ways, on three levels of musical structure within each individual melody of a movement, between all four parts of the texture within a movement, and across three movements as a whole.

Despite Beyer's prolific compositional output, scant research has been dedicated to her music and it has rarely been performed. The goals of this dissertation are twofold. First, the analytical system I propose provides an avenue to understanding Beyer's music which has so far gone understudied. While the published literature on Beyer makes general claims about her compositional tendencies, the transformations I propose provide more detailed insight into the melodic processes common in much of her oeuvre. By applying my methodology to provide a close reading of Beyer's earliest four compositions, the results of these analyses will contribute to a fuller, more well-rounded understanding of modernist music in America that has so far focused on music by men. Second, I aim to connect the music Beyer wrote with facts from her biography in order to suggest a plausible narrative or sense of meaning in these movements. By taking a feminist theoretical approach rooted in queer theory, my analyses are informed by Beyer's lived experiences and identity as an immigrant woman ultramodernist composer in order to explore the impact of gender on the musical structures she created. In all, this dissertation provides a starting point for future exploration of Beyer's music at large and prompts a rethinking of gender in the analyses of ultramodernist music as a whole.

### CHAPTER 1 Charles Seeger and Dissonant Counterpoint

"Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music" (hereafter referred to as TENM) is Charles Seeger's "think piece" where he attempts to combine his interests in music composition, music theory, acoustics, physics, philosophy, and linguistics to explain a new way forward with composing American music.<sup>1</sup> Many sections of the treatise were worked and reworked over the first three decades of the twentieth century, beginning with the classes he taught at University of California, Berkeley through to its finalization and assembly in the summer of 1930 with the assistance of his student, Ruth Crawford. TENM was not published in its full form during Seeger's lifetime, but sections and ideas originating in this work found a home in many other places, including the articles "On Style and Manner in Modern Composition" (published in *Music Quarterly* in 1923)<sup>2</sup> and "On Dissonant Counterpoint" (in *Modern Music*, 1930)<sup>3</sup> to name just a few. The full work was later edited and published by Seeger's biographer, Ann M. Pescatello, as the first of three sections in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Although Seeger's greatest contributions to music were his intellectual musings and teaching other young composers, such as Henry Cowell and Ruth Crawford, he was also a composer. Cowell recalls Seeger's exceptional compositional style, noting his "works are short, and are all but absolute perfection. Nothing in music surpasses, for instance, his "Solo for Clarinet" in exquisite delicacy, in beauty of tracery, in unity of idea, in unbelievably developed melodic line. It is far more than an intellectual experiment. It is great music!" Cowell also notes, however, Seeger's inclination for self-criticism and perfectionism, a crippling combination that made it "virtually impossible for him to complete a work." His few finished compositions, according to Cowell, were "not focused" and "scattered," works that Seeger would "never show, and pretends he does not have." Seventeen pieces survive and have been archived at the University of California, Berkeley Music Library, including fifteen songs and two pieces for violin and piano. See Henry Cowell, "Charles Seeger" in *American Composers on American Music: A Symposium* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962): 120–121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Charles Louis Seeger, "On Style and Manner in Modern Composition," *The Music Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1923): 423–31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Charles Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," Modern Music 7, no. 4 (1930): 25-31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Charles Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979*, edited by Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994): 1–273.

TENM itself is divided into two parts plus nine appendices. Part I, entitled "Treatise on Musical Composition," introduces Seeger's critiques of compositional approaches to modern music in Europe and America in the early twentieth century. In this part, he develops a theory of music criticism based on a contrasting, yet complementary, distinction between logic, or the scientific, and intuition, or the artistic; he critiques the use of language to accurately describe musical phenomena; and he puts forth a theory of form based on the "resurrection" of the historical term "neume." Part II, entitled "Manual of Dissonant Counterpoint," takes the more philosophical speculations presented in Part I and applies them to a strict contrapuntal regimen of composition. This part reads more like a composition textbook, outlining lists of rules to be followed and musical examples to demonstrate these "procedures." While on the surface, the two parts of the treatise appear as though they can be read independently, they really are inseparable: only by understanding Seeger's approach to consonance and dissonance, as well as his formulation of the neume, both of which are presented in his philosophical musings of Part I, can one apply these foundational concepts to the composition of dissonant melodies, two-part counterpoint, and three-part counterpoint in Part II. As Taylor Greer states: "For [Seeger], the diagnosis of the ills affecting modern music was just as important as the dissonant 'remedy' he would prescribe."<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, I will give an overview of the ideas and methods presented by Seeger in TENM in order to clarify the musical foundation upon which many of the ultramodernist composers, including Beyer, were working. Seeger's writing is often muddled and difficult to digest, leaving many contemporary music theorists to disregard his theories, despite the significance they had for the New York composers in the first half of the twentieth century. By clarifying his ideas and the philosophical underpinnings of dissonant counterpoint, I hope to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Taylor Greer, "Critical Remarks," in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979*, edited by Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994): 28.

draw attention to and make clear in later chapters the parts of this theory that Beyer incorporated into her compositional style, and the ways in which she departed from this theory to create her own unique approach.

In many ways, TENM was a group effort on behalf of Seeger, Henry Cowell (to whom Seeger taught lessons guided by the principles found in this treatise), and Ruth Crawford whose work typesetting and composing music in this style had a profound influence on the formulation and presentation of his ideas. In fact, Seeger intended to list Crawford as a co-author of the treatise, but, after she refused, instead dedicated it "To Ruth Crawford, of whose studies these pages are a record and without whose inspiration and collaboration they would not have been written."<sup>6</sup> Throughout this chapter and this dissertation more broadly, I will refer to the treatise and the ideas therein as Seeger's, but I acknowledge, as Seeger did himself, that the ideas truly are not his alone.

#### Part I: Treatise on Musical Composition

One of the guiding philosophies of TENM is Seeger's distinction between the "raw" and the "manipulated" materials of music. According to Seeger, "raw" musical sounds are rooted in science and are measurable through principles of physics and acoustics, whereas "manipulated" musical sounds are rooted in cultural understanding.<sup>7</sup> He writes:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> For more on the partnership between Seeger and Crawford during the writing of TENM, see Nancy Rao, "Partnership in Modern Music: Charles Seeger and Ruth Crawford, 1929–31," *American Music* 15 no. 3 (1997): 352– 380.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Although Seeger makes no mention of his influences in this section, his philosophy of "raw" sounds being "manipulated" into musical forms is Aristotelian in nature, specifically relating to Aristotle's concept of the four causes. Aristotle outlines four meanings to the word "cause": the material cause ("that from which a thing is made"), the formal cause (the pattern or form an object takes), the efficient cause (the source from which an object is changed), and the final cause (the goal or purpose of the object). We can see clear parallels between these causes and Seeger's basic underlying philosophy of music in this section: the "raw" materials of pitch and rhythm are "that from which [music] is made"; music is the "form" these materials take; the composer is the source that changes the raw materials into music; and, while he does not go into detail regarding the final goal or purpose of music, he does mention that "men have manipulated the raw materials of music in a manner *socially useful and valuable*" [emphasis

For a longer period than we have any record, men have manipulated the raw materials of music in a manner socially useful and valuable, but with a result quite different from the sound-rhythm sequences mentioned above. Each culture has gradually built and become habituated to a particular kind of manipulation of the raw materials of music, resulting in a profound modification of the attitude toward the raw materials and of the forms inherent in them, and imposing upon them a new class of forms which we may call the *forms of the manipulated material* or the *musical forms*. These resemble the *physical forms* and psycho-biological patterns of reaction about as much as the forms of baskets and vases resemble the forms of willow trees and clay in pits. The technique of music is, then, the forming of music out of tone and rhythm.<sup>8</sup>

Seeger begins his investigation by proposing that all musical sounds comprise two essential elements, which he calls the "raw" materials of music: tone and rhythm. These two categories can be further divided into three subcategories: tone encompasses pitch, timbre, and dynamics; rhythm encompasses proportion, accent, and tempo. Seeger is careful to distinguish between the scientific and artistic approaches to these six elements. While he uses the word "functions" to describe a scientific approach to these musical materials, acknowledging that they can exist in isolation and be measured using the principles of physics and acoustics, he uses the term "resources" to refer to a composer's artistic approach to the same six materials, one in which they are necessarily intertwined, inseparable, and need to be "conceived as a single gestalt."<sup>9</sup> Seeger writes:

Musically, then, these six variables are known in conjunction with each other—a series of tone-beats with at least dynamics, tone, pitch, accent, and proportion... To the musical character of these variables we may give the name *function* or *resource*, according to whether we are speaking (scientifically) of an objective process in music or speaking (critically) of the subjective act of willing to do such-and-such a thing on the part of the composer.<sup>10</sup>

added]. See Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 86, and Aristotle, *Physics*, edited by David Bostock, translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2020): 40-41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 86. In this quote, and all other Seeger quotes in this chapter, the italics are in the original unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Taylor Greer, "Critical Remarks," 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 87.

Changes (or what Seeger calls "inflections") in any of these elements can be characterized as "tension" (an increase), "relaxation" (a decrease), or "poise" (no change). Seeger provides the following table to compare the eighteen possibilities:

	Tension (+)	(Tonicity) (Rest) Poise (=)	Relaxation (-)	
The tone becomes	Higher	Remains the same	Lower	(pitch)
	Louder	Remains the same	Softer	(dynamics)
	"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)

Table 1.1. The inflection of the six functions of a melody (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, 88).

Seeger acknowledges that the organization of some of these functions, such as pitch and

tempo, are more "highly developed" than others:

Even in their most elementary aspect these functions are not equally highly developed by us. There seems to be at work both in their musical and in their linguistic systematizations some sort of balance of a complementary nature. That is, where one is highly organized or organized in one way, another is left to the freest phantasy or organized in an opposite way.<sup>11</sup>

While pitch has been given a clear priority in the past, Seeger attempts to right this imbalance by

applying the methods of pitch organization to all other musical functions. He writes:

There must, of course, be a balance between organization and unorganization in our music—if it is not to undergo a complete revolution. But if we accept the conclusion that the present chaos in the overorganized pitch resource may be compensated for by an increased organization of some of the other resources, we have one possible and not entirely undesirable alternative.<sup>12</sup>

To prove his point, Seeger takes the word "gamut" as it is related to pitch, noting that we can clearly define an entire range of pitches that can be either articulated or unarticulated. He then

applies this word to the other five functions, speculating on what their gamut might be. After

pitch, the function that gamut most easily applies to is proportion: once again, we can clearly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 90.

articulate an entire range of proportion options from a 64<sup>th</sup> note (or even smaller) to a whole note. Gamut can also be applied to tempo fairly easily, although Seeger notes that "the gamut of tempo can be fairly accurately measured by the metronome, we customarily do not insist upon very accurate articulation discrimination"<sup>13</sup> The remaining three functions, Seeger willingly admits, are less easily organized in terms of their gamut:

The gamuts of dynamics and timbre are almost entirely without articulation and remain unorganized at the present time. The *degrees* of the former are more clearly written (*pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, etc.) but there are far fewer of them than we have in the latter. In skilled performance, very refined gradations are practiced, but they partake of the nature of improvisation rather than of deliberate organization. The gamut of accent is almost as highly developed as that of proportion—perhaps more so—but the breakdown of the romantic tradition is resulting in a confusion between the various kinds of accent (for instance, between the accentuation of the first of the measure and the first of the section or the slur); so this function is also left too often to the phantasy of the performer, to the detriment of its position in organic writing.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to gamut, Seeger proposes six additional principles for pitch organization that can be applied to the other musical functions: inflection (increases or decreases as described above), consonance and dissonance, modality, scale, chord(ality), and tonality. While each of these domains play an important role in Seeger's understanding of music, consonance and dissonance receives the greatest amount of attention from Seeger and is most significant for understanding his formulation of dissonant counterpoint (and, subsequently, Beyer's compositions) so I will limit my remarks to this category.

#### Consonance and dissonance

As with other aspects of his understanding of music, Seeger walks a fine line between understanding consonance and dissonance as a scientific phenomenon, and one that is shaped by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 90. The idea of applying concepts from pitch organization to other musical parameters (dynamics, proportion, register, etc.) was taken up later in the century by post-war serialist composers such as Milton Babbitt, George Perle, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Pierre Boulez.

cultural understanding.<sup>15</sup> He begins his discussion by describing three aspects of consonance and dissonance where language has compounded confusion. He writes:

Though musical practice has shown remarkable unanimity in the understanding of the situation, utter confusion has reigned down to the present day in the language distinction:

- (1) Between the physical and the musical definitions of the terms *consonant* and *dissonant*;
- (2) Between the taste-reactions to the *raw* materials as "pleasant" and "unpleasant" and the perception, in the *manipulated* materials, of consonance and dissonance;
- (3) Between the melodic and chordal characteristics of consonance and dissonance.<sup>16</sup>

In order to clarify the first two points, Seeger explains consonance and dissonance first as a scientific phenomenon using the harmonic series, and then as a cultural phenomenon rooted in musical context. Like Rameau, Seeger accepts that the harmonic series, and the ratios between notes therein, provides a scientific explanation for consonance and dissonance: simple ratios between notes are heard as more "pleasant" and more "consonant" than more complex ratios between notes.<sup>17</sup> He balances this explanation, however, with a more artistic approach that acknowledges cultural understanding of intervals as consonant or dissonant changing through time (such as the perfect fourth being heard as dissonant in the Renaissance era but consonant to modern ears) and depending on musical context. For example, Seeger uses the melodic intervals of the tritone and the perfect fifth for comparison. While in isolation, the tritone would be classified as dissonant and the perfect fifth as consonant, two tritones heard in succession become

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Other ultramodern composers understood dissonance in different ways, such as Dane Rudhyar who associated dissonance with spirituality. Carol Oja explores the influence Rudhyar had on American ultramodernism and compares his theorization of dissonance with Seeger's in "Dane Rudhyar's Vision of American Dissonance," *American Music* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 129–145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> For more on Rameau's conception of music as generated from the harmonic series, see Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l'harmonie*. Paris, 1722. Trans. By Philip Gossett as *Treatise on Harmony*. New York: Dover, 1971.

consonant as they outline the span of an octave, and two perfect fifths heard in succession become dissonant as they outline the span of a major ninth.

Similarly, Seeger is careful to distinguish between melodic and chordal consonances and dissonances. He notes that while melodic consonances and dissonances cannot be classified as precisely and scientifically as chordal ones, as hearing something as consonant or dissonant largely depends on musical context, some conclusions can be drawn. First, he notes that melodically, seconds are the most consonant, while sevenths and ninths are most dissonant, especially when sounded in succession; thirds, fourths, fifths, and sixths are consonant provided they are not repeated in succession in the same direction; melodic intervals are more dissonant if they are compounded by one or more octaves; and any consonant interval can be heard as dissonant if it is prepared and resolved nondiatonically. For example, the perfect fifth between C and G becomes dissonant when in the melodic sequence F#-C#-C-G-G#. Seeger writes: "any diatonic interval except the octave may be dissonant if nondiatonically prepared and resolved. In example 41 [referring to the sequence of notes stated above] the fifth, C-G is hard to sing."<sup>18</sup>

In terms of chordal consonances and dissonances, Seeger groups perfect unisons, perfect octaves, perfect fifths, and perfect fourths as "perfect consonances"; major thirds, major sixths, minor thirds, and minor sixths as "imperfect consonances"; major seconds, minor sevenths, and major ninths as "imperfect dissonances"; and minor seconds, major sevenths, and minor ninths as "perfect dissonances." The tritone stands alone, with Seeger noting that it is heard as more consonant in chordal settings than in melodic ones.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Seeger suggests that while

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 129–130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ernst Krenek proposes a similar division of interval qualities. He proposes that dissonant intervals are "distinguished by their degree of tension"—those with lower tension (major seconds, minor sevenths, major ninths) he calls "mild dissonances"; those with higher tension (minor seconds, major sevenths, minor ninths) he calls "sharp dissonances." Like Seeger, he proposes the tritone cannot be categorized as either consonant or dissonant, instead calling it a "neutral interval." See Ernst Krenek, *Studies in Counterpoint: Based on the Twelve-Tone Technique* (New York: G. Shirmer, Inc., 1940): 7–8.
augmented and diminished intervals are considered dissonant, if they are heard within a weak (or non-existent) tonal setting such as that in most modern music of the time, our ears hear them as the enharmonic (and, thus, consonant) equivalents. He writes:

All augmented and diminished intervals are dissonant in theory. This dissonance, however, depends on the existence of a fairly strong diatonic tonality at the place where they occur. When this tonality is weak or altogether absent (as in so much modern music) the enharmonic equivalents, which often are consonances, are the ones actually heard. Consequently, most of the augmented and diminished intervals written or played in the duodecuple system are practically consonant, and it is best to write them in the simplest way.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, while we can understand intervals in isolation as consonant or dissonant, the musical reality is often less clear-cut, with the context (i.e. what is heard directly before and after) playing a large role in our hearing of a particular interval as consonant or dissonant. Thus, preparation and resolution of intervals need to be handled quite carefully—a point that Seeger emphasizes many times in the second part of this treatise.

Following this discussion of consonance and dissonance in the pitch domain, Seeger then explains how the other musical materials (dynamics, timbre, proportion, accent, and tempo) can be consonant or dissonant. After noting again that "the gamuts and inflection of dynamics and timbre are so primitive that detailed working out of their possibilities is not yet practicable," he provides some preliminary thoughts on what consonance and dissonance might look like when applied to these parameters.<sup>21</sup> He writes: "Dynamic consonance is the rule with us, but

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 130-131.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 100. Schoenberg also commented on timbre being in a more primitive state of organization when compared to pitch, and set out to create *Klangfarbenmelodie* in response. He writes: "The evaluation of tone color (*Klangfarbe*), the second dimension of tone, is thus in a still much less cultivated, much less organized state [...] Now, if it is possible to create patterns out of tone colors that are differentiated according to pitch, patterns we call 'melodies,' progressions, whose coherence (*Zusammenhang*) evokes an effect analogous to thought processes, then it must also be possible to make such progressions out of the tone colors of the other dimension, out of that which we call simply 'tone color,' progressions whose relations with one another work with a kind of logic entirely equivalent to that logic which satisfies us in the melody of pitches." See Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. by Roy E. Carter (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978): 503.

occasionally a rapid sequence or alternation of fortissimo and pianissimo may give a dissonant effect."<sup>22</sup> In music with multiple parts, dissonance can be created when one part *crescendos* while the other *decrescendos*. Consonance and dissonance are even more difficult to explain when applied to timbre. Seeger writes "Consonance of tone-quality seems to be the rule in the single line, but in the art of orchestration dissonance of tone-quality has been much sought after for the last hundred years. An example of dissonant timbre interval might be a stopped horn and a clarinet on the C above middle C."<sup>23</sup> Beyond these preliminary thoughts, Seeger suggests that more work needs to be completed establishing a clear scaling of dynamics and timbre before consonance and dissonance can be applied more effectively. Until then, he notes that this area must be left to "experimental and speculative musicology."<sup>24</sup>

When considering the three musical resources that constitute tone (pitch, dynamics, timbre), Seeger suggests that the concepts of consonance and dissonance are most usefully applied *between* resources rather than *within* a single one. For example, a rising pitch (i.e. tension) paired with an increase in dynamics (i.e. tension) creates a consonant effect, while a rising pitch paired with a decrease in dynamics (i.e. relaxation) creates a dissonant effect. Likewise, Seeger uses an example from Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung* to show that a *decrescendo* (relaxation) followed by the entrance of the tam-tam (tension) creates dissonance. In general, then, one can extrapolate that an increase in tension in one parameter paired with an increase in tension in another creates consonance, while an increase in tension paired with relaxation creates dissonance.

Next, Seeger applies the concept of consonance and dissonance to the three musical functions constituting rhythm: proportion, accent, and tempo. To help define consonance and

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 22}$  Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 101.

dissonance as it relates to rhythmic proportion, Seeger borrows from the ratios found in the harmonic series—just as pitch consonance can be defined by simple ratios between pitches, proportional consonance can be defined by simple ratios between rhythmic values. For example, 1:1, 2:1, 3:1 and 4:1 all create rhythmic consonance, while 3:2, 3:4, and 3:5 all create rhythmic dissonance. Just as pitch intervals can be heard as consonant or dissonant in two orientations (melodically/sequentially or harmonically/simultaneously) consonance and dissonance can also be heard sequentially or simultaneously within rhythmic proportions. Seeger provides an example to help illustrate the difference between melodic and chordal consonance and dissonance for rhythmic proportion:



Example 1.1. Proportion: rhythmic consonances (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 4, p. 102)



Example 1.2. Proportion: rhythmic dissonances (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 5, p. 102).

According to these examples, melodic consonance for rhythmic proportion occurs when two measures heard sequentially can be viewed as a simple ratio between rhythmic values (such as a measure containing one sustained note followed by a measure of two, three, or four equal rhythmic values, see Example 1.1). Melodic dissonance, by contrast, occurs when two sequential measures can be viewed as complex ratios, such as a measure of two eighths followed by a measure of triplet eighths, followed by a measure of quintuplet sixteenths (see Example 1.2). Likewise, chordal consonance for rhythmic proportion occurs when rhythmic values, now heard simultaneously in two different voices, can be viewed as a simple ratio, and chordal dissonance for rhythmic proportion occurs when rhythmic values in two simultaneous voices can be viewed as a complex ratio (commonly known as polyrhythms or cross-rhythms).

When using the terms consonance and dissonance in relation to accent, Seeger suggests that in general, regular occurring accents are consonant in the melodic domain, and coinciding accents are consonant in the chordal domain. Cross-accents (i.e. accents on different beats in two voices of a polyphonic texture) and accents that imply a metre other than the notated metre are considered dissonant. He continues by proposing two essential elements that are tied up with the concept of accent: "(a) the *interval of stress* or number of beats between those beats receiving the greatest amount of stress; and (2) the relative *amount of stress* borne by a beat in respect to the beat immediately preceding and succeeding it."<sup>25</sup> The following two examples are provided by Seeger to differentiate between the two categories, and to show their relation to intense, normal, and relaxed inflections.



Example 1.3. Inflection of stress (reproduced from Seeger TENM, Example 8, p. 105).



Example 1.4. Amount of stress (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 9, p. 105).

Example 1.3 shows the differentiation between intense, normal, and relaxed interval of

stress.<sup>26</sup> Seeger writes:

The *intense* inflection of accent is theoretically impossible. From a scientific point of view, no two beats can be exactly equal; but from a musical point of view it is sometimes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 104.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> In the caption for this example, Seeger erroneously writes "Inflections of proportion," however the image is depicting inflections of stress.

desirable to make them *seem* as if they are... The *normal* accent interval (strong-weak strong-weak) is difficult to perform because of a similar tendency toward relaxation. That is, the second "strong" tends to be less heavy than the first "strong," and so to fall into a quadruple rather than a duple meter. The *relaxed* accent interval is, like the intense, theoretically impossible; but from a musical point of view it is often desirable to make it *seem* as if the two weak beats were equally weak.<sup>27</sup>

Not only can the frequency of accent create an intense, normal, or relaxed inflection, but so too can differentiated *amounts* of stress. In Example 1.4, we can see how stronger accents evenly spaced can create a more "intense" inflection, while medium-strength accents and weak accents evenly spaced can create "normal" and "relaxed" inflections respectively. Taken together, then, Seeger seems to believe that an increase in the amount and/or frequency of stress results in an increase in the level of intensity. Seeger argues that while a scientific theory of accent might be content with a twofold classification ("strong" and "weak"), this is "useless" in musical practice, where the inclusion of "medium" strength beats (such as beat 3 in a quadruple metre, or beat 3 in a triple metre) occurs regularly.<sup>28</sup> As with rhythmic proportion, the combination of two opposing inflections (intense and relaxed) in two different voices creates dissonance, as does irregular use of intense, normal, and relaxed inflections, or the use of intense/normal/relaxed inflections that are misaligned with our metrical expectations, within a single line.

Finally, Seeger explores what consonance and dissonance might look like as they relate to tempo. Seeger proposes that there are two ways a tempo can change: gradually (which he likens to a stepwise progression within a tonal scale) or suddenly (which he likens to a skip-wise progression in a tonal scale). There are several ways that tempo changes can be experienced as consonant or dissonant: in general, very gradual changes of tempo are consonant; extreme *accelerandos* or *decelerandos* are more dissonant; changes of tempo that reflect a simple ratio are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 104.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 104.

consonant (here, Seeger gives the example of the relationship between the slow introduction and the exposition of many of Haydn's symphonies which have a 1:2 or 1:4 consonant ratio<sup>29</sup>); and changes of tempo that reflect a more complex ratio (2:3 or 3:4) or an indeterminate ratio will feel more dissonant.<sup>30</sup>

To conclude this section on consonance and dissonance, Seeger reminds the reader that consonance and dissonance can be heard not only within one resource as discussed above, but also among two or three of each trio (the three elements that constitute tone and the three elements that constitute rhythm) or across tonal and rhythmic elements. An even more complicated relationship can be established by "contrary leading of any three, four, five, or all six resources."<sup>31</sup> He continues "the great bulk of our music, then, is made up of both consonant and dissonant material in all resources. And it is the interplay of their relations that music consists."32

## Neumatic theory

For the final three chapters in Part I of the treatise, Seeger leaves behind the application of principles of pitch organization to focus on musical form. He begins his discussion of musical form by examining the definition of the term "phrase," which, he argues "demands the definition of (1) what constitutes the smallest amount of material of which it can be composed, (2) the means by which the smallest amount of units of material are connected in the phrase of more than one such unit, and (3) the means by which phrases are combined to form the composition as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Of course, with no specific tempo markings on the scores for Haydn's symphonies, one cannot definitively say that there is such a consonant relationship between the tempo of the slow introduction and the exposition. Many of the symphonies with slow introductions (including Symphony no. 6, 86, 88, 90, 92, 93, 96, 98, 100, 103, and 104), however, move from adagio to allegro, making a 1:2 relationship possible. As a conductor trained with the Cologne Opera, Seeger could be imparting his own personal interpretation of these tempos in this remark.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 106–107.
 <sup>31</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 109.

a whole."<sup>33</sup> To answer the first of these questions, Seeger proposes the concept of the "neume." He argues that while a single tone or beat (or, as he later calls it, a tone-beat as "all tone manifests rhythm and all rhythm manifests tone"<sup>34</sup>) can constitute a data point for scientific purposes, it cannot be considered *musical* material. Similarly, two tone-beats cannot "be regarded as forming an independent unit" as "they cannot give tonal or rhythmic centricity or perform essential musical functions such as preparation and resolution, modulation, rubato, etc."<sup>35</sup> Three tone-beats, by contrast, *can* perform such "essential musical functions," and thus can be considered as the "smallest melodic unit," which Seeger classifies as a "neume." He writes:

There is no accepted term at hand to designate this *smallest melodic unit*, as a unit, so we may perhaps be justified in resurrecting the term *neume*, which was commonly used in ancient times to denote this very thing. The neume was written then as a single stenographic symbol...which signified to the performer both tonal and rhythmic progress, but in such a way that the *progress*, rather than the *points departed from and arrived at*, was emphasized.<sup>36</sup>

Seeger categorizes neumes into two fundamental forms: binary neumes which consist of two progressions or three pitches, and ternary neumes which consist of three progressions or four pitches. Each of these categories can be further divided to describe the contour of the progression between notes in the neume: line neumes are binary neumes that progress in the same direction; twist neumes are binary neumes that progress in opposite directions; line-line are ternary neumes that progress in one direction, twist-twist are ternary neumes that progress in opposite directions, and twist-line and line-twist are ternary neumes that combine a progression in one direction with a change in direction. The chart below, Table 2, is provided by Seeger (his Figure 7) to detail each of these neumes in each of the six musical functions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 138-139.

		TONAL			RHYTHMIC			
		Pitch	Dynamics	Timbre	Tempo	Accent	Proportion	
Binary ++	la	ىر	<_		accel-accel	11	$\underline{\lor}$	"Line"
	b	J	>>		rall-rall	$\cup \cup$	しし	Line
+ -	2a	$\checkmark$	<>		accel-rall	<ul><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li><li></li></ul>	$\subseteq$ $\Box$	"Twiet"
- +	b	$\checkmark$	$>\!\!\!<$		rall-accel	$\cup$ /	$\overline{\smile}$	I WISt
Ternary	3a	ىر	<<``		acc-acc-acc	111		"Uine line"
	b	<i>у</i>	]_>		rall-rall-rall	$\cup \cup \cup$		Line-inic
++-	4a	J	<<>		acc-acc-rall	170		"Line-twist"
- ++	b	$\sim$	>><		rall-rall-acc	$\cup \cup \prime$		
+	5a	$\mathcal{\mathcal{M}}$	<>>		acc-rall-rall	/00		"Twist-line"
- ++	b	$\mathcal{N}$	><<		rall-acc-acc	01/		1 (120 1110
+ - +	6a	$\sim$	<><		acc-rall-acc	/ . /		"Twist-twist"
- + -	b	$\sim$	><>		rall-acc-rall	$\cup$ $\prime$ $\cup$		2
						NB: <b>/</b> = strong	NB: $-$ = long	
						$\bigcup$ = weak	$\bigcup$ = short	

Table 1.2. Neume forms as progressions (unarticulated inflection) (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Figure 7, p. 139).

It is important to note that Seeger is more concerned with the *progression* between notes than with the notes themselves. He writes: "there is a tendency at the present time to think in terms of the raw materials of music (beats, notes, chords, etc.) rather than in terms of progression of phrases and melodic continuity. The latter is more musical and should be encouraged by the use of a term that by its very nature emphasizes it."<sup>37</sup> By concerning himself with the progression between notes rather than the pitch content of the motive, Seeger creates a contour theory that describes music as a process—one that is constantly evolving and changing—rather than a static entity. The focus on process also allows Seeger to extrapolate his neumatic theory to musical parameters beyond pitch, including dynamics, timbre, tempo, accent, and proportion.<sup>38</sup> These neumatic contours are more easily applied to some of these domains than others-in fact, Seeger leaves the timbre column on his chart blank, revealing his own difficulties conceiving contours within this musical parameter; however, he argues that the chart he presents is "stuff from which any logic of music must be derived."<sup>39</sup> He further explains that the chart is set up in such a way so that when read from left to right, the inflections of each column within one row are consonant with each other. The combination of different rows across columns (such as combining pitch 1a with dynamics 1b and accent 2a) creates dissonance.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Theories of musical contour, as it relates to pitch as well as other musical parameters, were further explored by later 20<sup>th</sup>-century music theorists. See, for example, Michael Friedmann, "A Methodology for the Discussion of Contour: It's Application to Schoenberg's Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 29 (1985): 223–48; Robert Morris, *Composition with Pitch-Classes: A Theory of Compositional Design* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Larry Polansky, "Morphological Metrics: An Introduction to a Theory of Formal Distances," in *Proceedings of the International Computer Music Conference* (San Francisco: Computer Music Association, 1987); Elizabeth Marvin and Paul Laprade, "Relating Musical Contours: Extensions of a Theory of Contour," *Journal of Music Theory* 31 (1987): 225–67; Elizabeth West Marvin, "A Generalized Theory of Musical Contour: Its Application to Melodic and Rhythmic Analysis of Non-Tonal Music and its Perceptual and Pedagogical Implications" (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1988); Elizabeth West Marvin, "The Perception of Rhythm in Non-Tonal Music: Rhythmic Contours in the Music of Edgar Varese," *Music Theory Spectrum* 13 (1991): 61–78; and Robert D. Morris, "New Directions in the Theory and Analysis of Musical Contour," *Music Theory Spectrum* 15, no. 2 (1993): 205–228.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 139.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 141.

Seeger's concept of music-as-process also allows for transformations of neumes. He writes: "any neume can be transformed into any other neume. Provided it is done gradually, this process may be made use of in composition."<sup>41</sup> According to Seeger, there are several ways to transform one neume into another: the contour may be preserved while the interval sizes change; the canonic twelve-tone operations, or, as Seeger calls them, "conversions" (prime, inversion, retrograde, and retrograde-inversion) can be applied; notes can be added at the beginning, middle, or end of neumes ("extension"), or notes can be subtracted from the beginning, middle, or end of the neume ("intension").<sup>42</sup> At its core, Seeger's theory of neumatic transformations describes the process of turning a neume, a small structural unit, into the longer, larger shape of a melody:

Any neume can be changed into any other provided the change is gradual. This fact has been made use of in composition and may be termed a kind of modulation—a moving from neume to neume in a manner similar to movement from key to key. Neume transformation of this sort is one of the commonest and most important means of building the organic phrase.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to these transformations, Seeger proposes that neumes can also be "modified" by way of tonal and rhythmic modifications.<sup>44</sup> These categories of variation techniques are not well defined and encompass many different possibilities, leaving the reader to wonder if Seeger only accepted the modifications he demonstrates, or if others were equally valid. Under "tonal modification," Seeger suggests that a neume can be modified through "progression by complement." He writes: "the simplest and, at present, most useful is the *Octave Complement*, whose

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 149.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 150–153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 149.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Throughout these chapters, Seeger uses the words "transformation," "modification," and "conversion." While initially these three terms are presented as different categories of variation techniques, there are times when Seeger seemingly uses the terms interchangeably. For example, the "conversions" are initially presented as the four canonic twelve-tone operations: prime ("any neume"), inversion ("its contrary"), retrograde ("crab"), or retrograde inversion ("contrary crab"), however the first sentence under the "rhythmic modification" heading reads "Exact rhythmic conversion is rare in our art" seemingly conflating the "conversion" and "modification" categories.

operation consists in a substitution of the octave complement of each progression as it occurs... Modification of the neume can also be made by progression in other complements than that of the octave,"<sup>45</sup> including octave complement, major seventh complement, perfect fifth complement, and tritone complement (see Example 1.6 and 1.7). This definition leaves a lot up to interpretation by the reader, but a closer look at his examples helps to provide some clarity. In Example 1.5, we can see that the initial melodic fragment, when modified by major seventh complement, takes the initial intervals between pitches and augments them so that the initial interval plus the new interval creates a major seventh. For example, D to E in the initial melodic



*Example 1.5. Modification of the neume by progression in complements other than at the octave (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 60, p. 144; annotations added).* 

fragment is a major second; the major seventh complement of this is a major sixth (D to B) as a major second plus a major sixth creates a major seventh. The same strategy holds when modifying by perfect fifth and tritone complements; however, the diagram provided to demonstrate octave complements (Example 1.6) is unclear and perhaps operates using a different strategy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 144–145.



Example 1.6. Modification of the neume by octave complement (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, example 59, p. 144).

In addition to progression by complement, Seeger includes two more "tonal modification" possibilities: "the versions of a neume may also be modified by the taking of tones available in a scale or mode instead of the exact progressions" and "modifications can also be made by added intervals" (see Example 1.7 and 1.8).<sup>46</sup> Example 1.7 (Seeger's Example 61) raises more questions than it answers. Seeger is not clear what exactly it means to "take tones in a scale or mode," based on the limited information and examples he provides; however, one strong possibility is that he means to work within a given diatonic system and count in diatonic intervals so that a major second in one mode might map onto a minor second or a major second in another mode. This theory holds true when comparing the melodic fragment in Example 1.7 (F-G-A), which he calls a "contrary retrograde," to the initial one presented in Example 1.6 (D-E-F).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 144-145.

Here, we can see F-G-A as a *diatonic* retrograde-inversion of D-E-F, as the initial fragment is inverted and retrograded while remaining diatonic to the key of D minor. Example 1.8 is more clear, but still leaves some questions unanswered.<sup>47</sup> While presumably, one could modify through complements and could augment or diminish by intervals other than those for which Seeger provides examples, it is left unclear as to whether Seeger believed these were the only possibilities or if he was demonstrating just a few from a larger menu of options.

Other inconsistencies abound in Example 1.8, further compounding the confusion. First, it is unclear to what extent contour should be preserved when applying the augmentation and diminution modifications. In the examples of modification by augmentation, Seeger seems to always preserve the contour-in the second line of these examples, the second and third pitches are augmented by intervals in opposite directions (i.e. the A becomes a B when augmented by major 2<sup>nd</sup> (a transposition upwards by major second), but F# becomes E (a transposition downwards by major second)). In the examples of modification by diminution, however, Seeger is less strict about retaining the contour of the initial melodic fragment: while the first modification by diminution preserves the contour, the remaining two examples are inversions of the original. Seeger is also inconsistent with which notes he modifies in each melodic fragment. In the second line of examples of modification by augmentation, Seeger applies the modification to the second and third pitches only, leaving the first and last pitches untransformed. In the second line of examples of modification by diminution, by contrast, he applies the modification to the final three pitches of each fragment, preserving only the first pitch from the initial statement. These inconsistencies raise suspicions regarding the rigour of the system that Seeger presents in a quasi-scientific way.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> There's an error on the fourth line of Seeger's Example 62, where he writes an F# as the second quarter note in the second measure. To modify the initial neume by Major 3<sup>rd</sup>, this note should be an F natural.



Example 1.7. The contrary retrograde (or the diatonic retrograde-inversion) of the initial D-E-F motive presented in Seeger's Example 60 (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 61, p. 144).



Example 1.8. Modification of the neume by added intervals (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 62, p. 145).

Seeger's description of rhythmic modifications is even less developed and clear, ceding that "exact rhythmic conversion is rare in our art. Augmentation and diminution are still in a primitive stage of development in spite of their moderate employment over five hundred years."<sup>48</sup> He does provide some potential strategies for rhythmic modification, though, including the use of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 145.

ties and dots to prolong tones, contracting tones, adding or subtracting beats, and displacing accents.<sup>49</sup> Seeger turns to an example from Orazio Vecchi's *Fantasia a 4* to show how rhythmic modifications were utilized in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, presumably (although not explicitly) suggesting that similar modifications are still useful in the twentieth century (see Example 1.9).<sup>50</sup>



Example 1.9. Fifteenth/sixteenth-century practice in rhythmic modification of the neume: Orazio Vecchi, Fantasia a 4 (1600) (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 64, p. 146).

While "modifications," "transformations," and "conversions" all fall under the larger heading of "neume transformations," Seeger is less precise about whether each of these categories transform the *neume* (i.e. the melodic intervals between pitches) or the pitches themselves. In his discussion of conversions, it seems that Seeger is applying these variations to the neumes, i.e. the interval successions, rather than pitches, as he speaks about them more generally and relates the transformations back to his initial table of neumes rather than any pitch-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 145-146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> It is unclear where this transcription of Vecchi's *Fantasia a 4* comes from or what exactly Seeger is accomplishing with this example. Although Seeger refers to his example as "quotations from Vecchi's *Fantasia*" which "show fifteenth- and sixteenth-century practice," the transcription provided here does not reflect the original rhythmic values or time signatures of Vecchi's piece, ultimately undermining Seeger's argument.

specific examples. By contrast, the tonal and rhythmic modifications are less clearly *neume* transformations. While the complements (such as progression by major seventh complement) and the modification by augmentation or diminution effect the intervals between notes, the "modification of the neume by taking tones in a scale or mode" seems to be transformations applied to specific pitches working within a particular system. Likewise, the rhythmic modifications can only be applied to notes rather than progressions (or intervals) between notes. After emphasizing that the progression between pitches should not be conflated with the pitches themselves, Seeger seems to go back on his word and do just that when discussing the ways in which neumes can be modified.

As an example of neume transformations in action, Seeger shows how he can take the opening phrase of Schubert's C Major Symphony No. 9 (1825) and gradually morph it to become the clarinet motif from m. 46 of Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (1895).<sup>51</sup> While he does not specify the exact transformations, conversions, or modifications used in each step, one can see a general use of the techniques mentioned so far in this chapter, including the adding and subtracting of pitches, alteration of interval sizes through augmentation or diminution, inversion, and rhythmic augmentation or diminution (see Example 1.10). Seeger's layout of this example is not so intuitive, with the original melodic idea and the goal of the transformations both appearing in the top system, followed by the transformations divided into eight steps on the three subsequent lines; however, one could go through the process step-by-step and describe the transformational process. Marguerite Boland, while not providing a step-by-step analysis, does provide a list of Seeger's transformations that are employed throughout:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> While Seeger himself does not identify the origins of these two melodic fragments, Marguerite Boland identifies them as such in her chapter "Imagination and Method: J. M. Beyer's String Quartet No. 2," in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music 1900-1960*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022): 201.

The tonal phrase (top staff at "Change:") is transformed into a "dissonated" melody (top staff at "into") following steps (2) to (8) on the staves below. These steps indicate the gradual process used to reach the final results, including rhythmic augmentation and diminution; alteration of the interval size (Seeger refers to increases as "tonal augmentation" and decreases as "tonal diminution"); reversal of interval direction ("tonal retrograde"); and addition or subtraction of pitches ("extension" or "intension" respectively).<sup>52</sup>



Example 1.10. Neume transformation (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 67, p. 147).

To add to the confusion regarding Seeger's neume transformations, Seeger once again falls back to balancing between a scientific approach and an intuitive one. Following what seems to be a fairly rigorous and systematic outlining of the ways in which a neume can be transformed, appealing to the scientific approach, Seeger adds a short section entitled "The sense or feeling for neume conversion." He writes:

While the academic devices and the intellectual discipline their cultivation induces are of inestimable value to the composer, they constitute only one of the ways of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Boland, "Imagination and Method," 201.

cultivating the essential quality of musicianship that we may call the *sense* for oppositeness, reversal, etc. Tradition, in our art, has approved for a thousand years the reliance upon sense rather than upon calculation in this direction... The sense or feeling for neume conversion is evident in the composition of good music of all sorts—in folk songs as well as in symphonies. Often, one is surprised that the feeling of contrariness or reversal is so well given with such meager technical means.<sup>53</sup>

To further his point, Seeger proposes that even Schönberg's twelve-tone method, a compositional method that is often viewed as highly intellectual, calculated, and systematic, still "shows a deep and subtle feeling for the relationship of the exact versions of his themes," specifically in Op. 25.<sup>54</sup> To help develop this "sense of neume conversion," Seeger suggests that composers should write folk tunes, starting out simple and progressively becoming more complex with the inclusion of "irregular measure, cross-accent, fanciful repetitions, and conversions."<sup>55</sup> It seems, then, that the rules presented by Seeger throughout this section on neumes and neume transformations are more "soft" rules that do not necessarily need to be followed if you follow "intuition."

### Summary

The "Treatise on Musical Composition," published as the first portion of TENM, presents Seeger's philosophy on how music works and his diagnosis of the problems with modern music. Three features of his discussion are integral to the theory of dissonant counterpoint, presented in the second part of the treatise. First, Seeger continually stresses an opposition between logic and intuition, science and art. While many of his musings are scientific in design, such as evoking a Rameauian understanding of consonance and dissonance rooted in the harmonic series, he simultaneously makes space for a more artistic approach by suggesting that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 147.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 147.

"it is a matter of artistic sense" to decide when the rules should be followed and what sounds good.<sup>56</sup> It seems that, to Seeger, a composer of good modern music would know and understand the "rules" and the way music works, but also know when to break the rules to create a desired effect. The reliance on intuition becomes even more clear in the composition manual to follow, where "rules" for writing in a particular style are presented, followed immediately in most cases by a caveat that they can be broken if a composer so chooses.

The second thread that runs throughout the first part of TENM that plays an important role in the composition manual to follow is Seeger's concept of consonance and dissonance based on tension and relaxation. Seeger describes the way these qualities can operate within all six musical materials (pitch, dynamics, timbre, proportion, accent, tempo). In general, Seeger argues that sudden and drastic changes within a single parameter (i.e. *forte* to *piano* in dynamics, abrupt changes in tempo, etc.) create tension, and therefore dissonance, while gradual changes across a single parameter (i.e. crescendos or decrescendos, accelerandos, etc.) create consonance. He also suggests that dissonance and consonance can be created between parameters if there is an increase in tension in one occurring simultaneously with an increase in relaxation in another. In the second part of the treatise, Seeger outlines the rules for writing in a style that is founded on dissonance, so establishing early on what exactly he means by consonance and dissonance is imperative. The composition manual to follow, as we will see, begins with dissonant writing for single melodies before progressing to two-part and three-part contrapuntal composition. That dissonance can occur within a single parameter as well as between two or more parameters becomes a central feature of the subsequent chapters.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 213.

Finally, toward the end of the first section of the treatise, Seeger proposes an organic theory of form based on the "neume," a three- or four-note unit of music that can be transformed in a variety of ways. While in the first section of the treatise, Seeger theorizes the ways in which the concept of line and twist neumes can be extrapolated to all six musical functions, the composition manual focuses on neumes as the essential building block of melody and demonstrates the ways in which neumes can be expanded into phrases and how those phrases can be combined into polyphonic textures. Only once the groundwork is laid in the first section does Seeger move on to applying these ideas and concepts as the "new way forward" for American composition in the second section.

#### Part II: Manual of Dissonant Counterpoint

Part II of TENM, "Manual of Dissonant Counterpoint," is a more practical approach to applying the concepts presented in Part I in a new, dissonant style of composition. Unlike Part I, which is speculative in nature, the Manual reads more like a composition textbook, as the name suggests: three topics are covered (dissonant melody, two-part counterpoint, and three-part counterpoint) and within each, a series of compositional "procedures" are outlined with good and bad examples given to demonstrate each. Over the course of this part of the treatise, Seeger draws heavily on the concept of the neume, presenting greater detail and more specific techniques for how to expand an initial neume into an entire composition. The emphasis on equal importance of pitch and rhythm, as observed in Part I of the treatise, continues throughout.

The section begins with an introduction, in which Seeger compares the "mood" of modern composition with that of the Romantic era:

Most modern composition seems to restrict itself to a comparatively low variety of moods. In avoiding the romantic sentiments there has been little left except excitement, which is not an emotion or sentiment but rather a concomitant of emotion or sentiment... In its abhorrence of the pretty, the sentimental, the self-pitying revery, the exuberant optimism and subjectivism of romantic ardor, modern music has run almost entirely to the grotesque, the unsentimental, the merely exciting, and the almost inevitable pessimism of pure objectivity.<sup>57</sup>

Seeger argues that, rather than focusing on "the noble, the virtuous, and the sublime," twentiethcentury composers have turned their attention to expanding the use of dissonance.<sup>58</sup> He suggests, however, that this focus on dissonance might be developing it "to a point beyond where it may be sustained," comparing it to the dissonance practices of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, in which he argues "adventurous experiments resulted in dissonant practice that was left high and dry by the succeeding generations."<sup>59</sup>

In response, Seeger sets out to theorize and codify a style with dissonance as the musical

foundation into which consonance can be introduced:

The question whether dissonant composition can be sublime and 'inculcate virtue' has yet to be answered. On theoretical grounds alone there is no reason for believing that it cannot. Between a consonant foundation into which dissonance is introduced and a dissonant foundation into which consonance is introduced there is theoretically no choice. Indeed, it is possible to envisage the coming of a grand style comparable to that of Palestrina, Bach, or Beethoven, which could be adequately accounted for in terms of either theory. The employment of the first choice (a consonant foundation into which dissonance is introduced) has been made for so long a time and has come to such an unwieldly state of development that the employment of the second may prove to advantage. It is the aim of the present undertaking to take a deliberate step in the direction of such a style.<sup>60</sup>

Before ending the introduction, Seeger gives a word of warning that the theory is "necessarily

unbalanced" (i.e. focused solely on dissonant musical foundation) in order to counteract a long

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 168–169.

history unbalanced in the opposite direction (i.e. focused entirely on a consonant musical foundation).<sup>61</sup>

#### Dissonant Melodies

The first three chapters of the Manual focus on dissonant melody, perhaps a surprising place to start for a theory of dissonant counterpoint, as the words "dissonance" and "counterpoint" both often allude to the presence of two or more parts. However, as Seeger made clear in Part I of TENM, dissonance can occur within a single musical function in a solo line of music (i.e. pitch, rhythm, etc.), and, later, he stresses that only by learning to write a good melody that can stand on its own, can one write effective polyphonic textures: "[We] may accept as axiom that *the more each part can stand by itself, the better* other things being equal, *will be the polyphonic combination of them*" (emphasis in original).<sup>62</sup> After the complex, multi-part compositions of earlier centuries, such as the symphonic forces common in the Romantic era, the simplicity of a single-line composition should be viewed as most welcome:

There are, then, two reasons for the cultivation of organic technique in the single melodic line. First, it is itself a type of composition that has been little exploited. Now especially, after sheer multiplication of parts has almost defeated itself, it should prove a welcome simplicity as against the often mere display of complexity. Second, a firmer technique in the single melodic line will make for a polyphony more clear, more absolute, and with more really independent parts.<sup>63</sup>

According to Seeger, the single-line compositions need not be overly long or complicated. He suggests picking out one instrument for the composition and writing characteristically for it: "Small suites for the single woodwind instruments make a nice vehicle for early efforts in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 169.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 191.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 192.

dissonant writing."<sup>64</sup> This suggestion was taken up by Seeger's most prominent student, Ruth Crawford, in her *Diaphonic Suite No. 1* (1930) for flute or oboe, and, as will see in Chapter 3, Crawford and Seeger's student, Johanna Beyer, in her Suite for Clarinet I and Suite for Clarinet IB (both composed in 1932).

Seeger's section on dissonant melodies is divided into three chapters, each dealing with progressively larger chunks of music: Dissonation of the Neume, Dissonation of the Phrase, and Dissonation of the Whole. Notably, Seeger does not define the word "dissonation," but rather uses it as if it is common parlance. According to Joseph Straus, "dissonation" refers to melodies that resist "a traditional, tonal interpretation. Regular or traditional combinations are to be systematically avoided. The composition guidelines Seeger provides are designed precisely to deny traditional implications."65 This definition implies a prior set of consonant possible choices and an intentional disruption of this consonance.<sup>66</sup> This certainly seems to be the case for Seeger, as his examples throughout the following pages compare a consonant melodic segment with several options for how to make it more dissonant and "better." Through the following chapters, Seeger sets out to prescribe a regimen through which consonance can be introduced into a dissonant musical framework without disrupting and ultimately swaying the music back into a more traditional, tonal landscape. This process begins with the smallest unit of music, according to Seeger: the neume. Seeger presents all of the permutations of the ways line and twist neumes can be dissonant in comparison with a consonant initial neume (see Example 1.11). As can be seen in the example, dissonant line neumes tend to make use of large leaps, or what Seeger calls

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 195. The advice to write for woodwind instruments seems to have been taken by Ruth Crawford, whose earliest dissonant counterpoint compositions, written under Seeger's tutelage, are the *Diaphonic Suites*, one of which is written for solo oboe (or flute), one for bassoon and cello, one for two clarinets, and one for oboe and cello.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Joseph N. Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 18–19.
 <sup>66</sup> One might also think of "dissonation" more broadly as the process of increasing intensification within or between musical dimensions and parameters.

"octave extensions," especially leaps of a seventh, ninth, fourteenth, or sixteenth. Seeger proposes these large intervals are more dissonant than seconds.<sup>67</sup>



*Example 1.11. All dissonant permutations of a line neume (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 91, p. 171).* 

Following the discussion of permutations, Seeger explicates in detail fourteen "general procedures" to tonally dissonate the neume, and three "general procedures" for rhythmic dissonation. Many of the rules are demonstrated through multiple examples which Seeger annotates on a scale from "very bad" to "best," leaving it up to the reader to puzzle together what exactly separates the "good" from the "not very bad" and the "better" from the "best." As

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 170.

in traditional counterpoint treatises, Seeger's rules add limitations to the number of intervals in a row that should be used and other ways in which variety can be achieved. For example, Seeger proposes that "not more than two consonant intervals of the same degree should be used in line succession" (see Example 1.12) and "not more than three dissonances of the same degree should be used in line succession" (see Example 1.13). Once again, Seeger's lack of clarity causes some confusion, as it is not apparent what exactly he means by "of the same degree." In Example 1.12, with consonant intervals in line succession, the first "very bad" example has a perfect fifth followed by a perfect fourth, suggesting that "the same degree" refers to the "perfect" quality of both of these intervals. However, in the following example, a major sixth follows a minor third, suggesting perhaps instead, "of the same degree" is referring to the "perfect" and "imperfect" categories of consonance and dissonance. In both cases, Seeger's solution (one he categorizes as "better" and the other as "not very bad") is to turn a line neume with two consonant intervals into a twist neume. In the case of Example 1.13, a major second follows a minor seventh (adding further support that "same degree" refers to perfect and imperfect categories of intervals). Overall, it seems that the egregious error in these examples that should be avoided is the outline of the octave between the first and third notes. In each case, Seeger solves what he considers to be the problematic examples by using the same intervals but changing direction.



Example 1.12. Use of consonant intervals in line successions (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 98, p. 173).



Example 1.13. Use of dissonance in line succession (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 99, p. 173).

While the previous rules have applied to line neumes, Seeger also warns against using too many skips in twist neumes, "especially skips of the same degree" (see Example 1.14). Here, Seeger seems to be using "the same degree" in a different way. In his first two examples, both of which he has marked "bad," the exact same quality and size of interval is used twice in a row: two major thirds in the first example, and two minor thirds in the second. To fix this in the "better" example, Seeger alternates between major and minor thirds. Here, then, it seems that "the same degree" is referring to the major or minor quality of the interval, not the perfect or imperfect category (since both major and minor thirds are imperfect consonances).



Example 1.14. Use of skips in twist neumes (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 100, p. 173; annotations added).

Another important "procedure" Seeger introduces in this section is the concept of dissonating a consonance. He writes: "after a progression of two consonant intervals it is advisable to make dissonation. Roots of triads if present, usually must be dissonated... Generally speaking, many of the prohibitions made on the basis of interval can be disregarded when a clear

and strong accentual, modal, or 'tonalitous' clash can be effected."<sup>68</sup> While Seeger does not explicitly describe how to "dissonate" the root of a triad, his examples show that he is suggesting the insertion of a note a semitone away from the root, or in some cases, from one of the other members of the triad (see Example 1.15).<sup>69</sup> Straus generalizes the concept of dissonation as a "requirement that the notes of any triad or triadic interval be followed immediately by a note a semitone (or tritone) away,"<sup>70</sup> however none of Seeger's examples in this section show dissonation by an interval other than a semitone. Seeger further elaborates that the dissonating note is more effective if it is leapt to, rather than reached by stepwise motion (see Example 1.16).



Example 1.15. Examples of dissonation: roots of triads (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 101, p. 174).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Seeger's description of his examples in this section do not always line up with the visual he says he is discussing. He writes "At (e), both accented tones and the root are dissonated," but there are no accents on any of the notes in example e. He also writes "At (f), an exceptional case may be noted in that the accented tones and the root are not dissonated, but the major third of the triad is," when, in fact, the visual example f shows the root being dissonated. This last description seems to be applying to example g instead.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 18–19.



Example 1.16. Dissonation by skip (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 102, p. 174).

Next, Seeger suggests limitations on repeated tones, similar to the limitations on how many successive consonant and dissonant intervals can be used in a row, demonstrating a general preference for variety in his theory of dissonant melodic writing. For optimal variety, tones should never be reiterated immediately, but rather should be separated by "at least six progressions... A greater separation is better, but much depends on the character and leading of the intervening tones."<sup>71</sup> He also suggests that it is better to repeat a tone in a different octave than to repeat it at the same octave, again showing a propensity for variety over direct repetition. In Example 1.17, the repeated D in the first measure, separated by only four intervening pitches, is made "better" by adding three more intervening notes. In the second example, a repeated E in the first measure is made "better" by removing the reiterated tone entirely in the second. In the third example, a repeated E in the first measure after only three pitches is made "better" by adding two additional intervening tones. In Example 1.18, a repeated B3 after three intervening pitches is deemed "bad" while a B4 after the same three intervening pitches is deemed "better." In general, Seeger proposes that the repetition of a note, either at the unison or in a different octave, is more noticeable when it is somehow aurally accented—if it is the highest or lowest, first or last, the longest, or the most accented pitch, or holds some other "position of prominence" within a neume, extra care should be taken to not repeat that pitch.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 174.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 174.



Example 1.17. Repetition of tone (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 103, p. 175; annotations added).



Example 1.18. Octave repetition of tone (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 104, p. 175).

In sum, Seeger's goal of this section is to demonstrate how consonance can be introduced into a dissonant framework effectively. He writes: "As in consonant writing the aim was the effective introduction of dissonance, so in dissonant writing the aim is the effective introduction of consonance. It is better discipline to maintain a rigorously dissonant fabric and to introduce consonance only when it can be well done. Theoretically there is no limit to the amount of consonance that can be used in dissonant writing."<sup>73</sup> The procedures Seeger lays out based on dissonation and variety suggest a total reversal of all tonal conventions—a dissonant interval following consonance negates any triadic implications, consonant intervals should be "resolved" by leap instead of step, and variety of pitch and intervallic content undermines any centring effect or sense of tonic. This idea is supported by Seeger himself in an article he published separately from the treatise. He writes: "By definition the procedure was on the whole one of negation and contrariness... the conventional thus became a thing to be avoided, not because it was in itself bad, but because one was, for some unknown reason, unable to use it rightly."74 This goal of "negation and contrariness" underpins much of what Seeger lays out in the Manual of Dissonant Counterpoint as a whole.

Following this section on tonal dissonation of the neume, Seeger outlines—in a much less detailed manner-the ways in which a composer can rhythmically dissonate a neume. In general, Seeger proposes that rhythmic dissonance can be obtained through three different means: syncopation, unusual metre (by which he seems to mean unequal metres-those including 5, 7, 10, 11, etc.), and/or uneven division of the measure and beat, for which he provides Example 1.19 as a demonstration.<sup>75</sup> While Seeger does follow up with three ways rhythmic dissonation can occur, similar to his "general procedures" for tonal dissonation, they are a lot less clear and he provides no examples. The only concrete procedure of the three once again shows Seeger's preference for variety: "not more than three groups of accented couplets or two groups of accented triplets should occur in line succession when tones are all of the same duration."<sup>76</sup> The second procedure expands on the first, suggesting that if "tones are of different

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 174.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," 26.
<sup>75</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 175–176.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 176.

values, as in polymetrical values, this number [i.e. the number of groups of accented couplets and triplets in line succession] can be extended, possibly doubled." Finally, Seeger ends the section on rhythmic dissonance with a third "general procedure" that is less of a rule or guideline to follow and more of a general comment: "It must be remembered that in dissonant writing, the set rhythmic design is not in place unless it is rhythmically dissonant within itself."<sup>77</sup> Based on the above discussion, then, it seems that rhythmic dissonance is primarily achieved through syncopation, unequal metres, and unequal division of the beat, more than negating any sort of rhythmic consonance through a strict series of rules, as was laid out in the previous section on tonal dissonation. While Seeger tries to pay equal attention to all musical resources throughout the treatise, it is quite clear that pitch dissonance is the most developed aspect of his theory of dissonant counterpoint.



Example 1.19. Rhythmic dissonance of the neume by uneven division of measure and beat (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 105, p. 176).

Seeger's next chapter moves away from dissonation of the neume to a slightly longer unit of music: dissonation of the phrase. Here, unlike in the previous chapter, Seeger starts with rhythmic dissonance by laying out three "melodic orders":

"M.O. 1: Beats constant, measures vary (Note equals note, h = h)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 176.

# M.O. 2: Beats vary, measures constant (Measure equals measure, M = M)

M.O. 3: Alternation of orders 1 and 2 In this order, care must be taken to keep the rhythmic structure within the limits of practical performance."<sup>78</sup>

He further proposes that to achieve rhythmic dissonance in a phrase, "not more than two measures of the same meter should be used in direct succession if rhythmically consonant (that is, in simple 2, 3, 4, 6, or 8 division). If rhythmically dissonant (that is 5, 7, 9, etc., or unusual division of 2, 3, 4, 6, or 8), three measures may be effective."<sup>79</sup> Yet again, Seeger shows his preference for variety here: not only should the intervals and pitch content be varied, but on a deeper level of the musical structure, one should vary the rhythmic and metrical framework of the music, either through varying the number of beats in a measure, or the length of the beat that is perceived as the pulse. These "melodic orders" will come back in Beyer's music, analyzed in Chapter 3.

Seeger also outlines the ways neumes can be the building blocks in the construction of phrases. He outlines six techniques to be used, all of which were also mentioned in the first part of the treatise when he introduces neumes and neume transformations for the first time: repetition, sequence, opposition, continuity, extension, and intension. The last two of this list, Seeger notes, "should be much used, since by the very nature of dissonant writing a simple extension or intension profoundly changes the neume characteristics yet leaves a feeling of unity."<sup>80</sup> He then follows this list with another list of "general procedures" or rules to follow when creating phrases. This list of procedures is more general than the techniques proposed for tonal

 $<sup>^{78}</sup>$  Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 179.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 179.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 179-184.

dissonation of the neume, reading more like a list of guidelines or aesthetic details to watch out for: limit the number of skips used, use contrary and retrograde motions and inversions to give symmetry yet preserve the dissonant effect, use phrasing (which he clarifies as "slurs and dots") to "make more dissonant a fairly consonant sequence," avoid complex and composite metres, and watch the "general trend" of the melodic line to make sure it does not double back on itself too often or "push always upward."<sup>81</sup>

In the final chapter focusing on dissonant melodies, Seeger expands the musical unit under discussion even further, now considering "dissonation of the line as a whole." This chapter focuses on more general aspects of a composition as a whole-elements such as form (or what Seeger refers to as "gross-form"), and tonal and rhythmic centricity. Seeger proposes that, while aspects of consonance and dissonance in smaller melodic units are "fairly easy to establish and organize,"82 consonance and dissonance related to the form of an entire composition are more complicated. He proposes that many older compositions that contain consonant melodic units (or what Seeger refers to as "consonant detail") on the foreground, such as those by Palestrina, Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, are placed within a dissonant formal structure: "A sonata movement with major divisions such as: first-theme section—31 measures, transition section—43 measures, second-theme section-22 measures, closing-theme section-26 measures is, from a point of view of technical analysis, extremely dissonant. Historically, however, Romantic music either regarded this as consonant or else ignored the deviation of the pattern from an order such as: 36-48-24-24."83 While Seeger is not explicit about what makes a consonant or dissonant form, the above discussion suggests that, similar to dissonant rhythmic proportions, a dissonant form is based on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 184.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 192.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 192–193.

whether there is a simple or complex ratio between the number of measures in consecutive formal sections.

Seeger proposes four possible ways "the detail" and "the whole" can be combined:

- (1) "consonant detail, consonant gross-form (much folk music, popular music, and the simpler art music falls into this class);
- (2) consonant detail, dissonant gross-form (much of the older art music);
- (3) dissonant detail, consonant gross-form;
- (4) dissonant detail, dissonant gross-form."84

While the final two options are available for composers of dissonant music, "neither can be

recommended in their purely theoretical aspect" for two reasons:

In the first place, we are in the historical position of having had too much dissonant form—and at that, dissonant form of a highly diffuse nature. Second, organic composition as here understood is constituted by a balance between dissonance and consonance. Since the method adopted relies on a basic dissonance into which is introduced as much consonance as the fabric will stand, and since the detail in a composition is grasped first and the form afterward, the casting of this dissonant detail should be made into a mold structurally as consonant as can be made to appear historically dissonant.<sup>85</sup>

It seems that while Seeger is adamant that a dissonant musical fabric be maintained on the surface, through tonal and rhythmic dissonation of neumes and phrases, there is more freedom when it comes to the form of the piece, where a balance between consonance and dissonance is ideal.

In terms of tonal centricity of a composition, Seeger proposes that a pitch centre, rather than a key, be used to create centricity "since the old tonality and modality have weakened to such an extent that they have no use in dissonant writing except to be negated."<sup>86</sup> He further

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 194.

refines his thoughts by suggesting that pitch centres should not be reduplicated in multiple octaves, but rather that one specific pitch in a particular register should serve as the tonal centre. If other, subordinate centres are present throughout a piece, they should have a sense of balance and symmetry around the primary pitch centre. Seeger provides Scriabin's Op. 73, No. 1, *Guirlandes*, as an example, where the tonal centres are:

 $A - \underline{F} - C \text{-sharp} - A - \overline{B} - \underline{G} - A^{87}$ 

In this key scheme, the main pitch centre, A, is balanced by subordinate centres a major third below and a major third above before returning to the initial centre, and then balanced yet again by pitch centres now a major second above and then below, before a final return to A. Later, in the "general procedures," Seeger proposes that:

It is wise to choose for a tonal center a pitch reasonably near middle D, or, for a change, reasonably near the center of the range the melody is to cover. It seems possible that the subordinate or dominant tone-centers are situated a major third above and below instead of a fifth above and below the tonic [as they are in tonal music]. There is also a possibility that the leading tone from above may be stressed. Leading tones from below should be a whole tone or a skip, leading tones from above either a half, a whole, or a skip.<sup>88</sup>

As with much of Seeger's writing, this "rule" to have a tonal centre around middle D seems arbitrary, and he provides no further comments or rationale. There is also a change in his tone of conviction from earlier chapters: while there were particular ways neumes *must* be dissonated (i.e. a consonant leap or triad *must* be immediately followed by a tone a semitone away from the root; repeated notes *must* be separated by at least six other notes, etc.), these guidelines on tonal centres seem a lot more flexible and are only presented as "possibilities."

As with conventional tonal centres, Seeger disparages the use of rhythmic centricity through the use of conventional time signatures. He writes:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Seeger, Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 195.
The last thirty years have seen the breaking down of this system, partly on account of a phraseological confusion regarding the respective roles of metrical and phrase accent. The old metrical signature served a double purpose and is often ambiguous. On the one hand, it served as a means of keeping the musicians together; and on the other hand, to designate the recurrence of pulse. Modern music has, generally speaking, lost its feeling of pulse, and attempts have been made to change the metrical signature every time the phrase-accent changed. The complexity of ensemble performance resulting from this practice is most objectionable and often results in a profound lack of subtlety.<sup>89</sup>

While Seeger does not immediately propose an alternative way of achieving rhythmic centricity, or even clarify whether omitting a time signature altogether is preferable to using changing time signatures, he does later propose that "rhythmic centricity can also be gained in dissonant melody by the recurrence of a characteristic rhythm, by an economy of rhythmic detail, and by a judicious emphasis upon rhythmic continuity."<sup>90</sup>

Following these general comments about form, tonal centricity, and rhythmic centricity, Seeger follows up with another extended list of general procedures that relate to these topics. As with the general procedures outlined earlier, he does not provide a rationale for his rules but rather expects the reader to take his word at face value. In relation to the form of a composition, Seeger proposes that some forms, including sectional and three-part forms, should be avoided: "Avoid the sectional form. Avoid three-part form unless it is of some unusual kind such as a very short first or third part. Four-, five-, six-, and seven-part sections are possible, but the problem of getting inner organization into these really belongs to a plan so different from the orthodox view of musical form that it should be taken up separately."<sup>91</sup> As an alternative to these formal plans, Seeger proposes "verse-form":

Music may have a form that can be likened to prose, as can much of the vocal polyphony of the sixteenth century; or it can be sectionalized as dance music; or it can be given what may be called 'verse-form.' The prose form is well suited to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 195.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 195.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 196.

soaring and sostenuto *cantilena*—which should be very sought after in dissonant melody. The verse-form, however, is perhaps the easiest to work in. Some possibilities are listed below. (The figures refer to either the number of beats, the number of measures in a phrase, or the number of phrases in a section, etc.)

- $b) \quad 5{-}7{-}5{-}7{-}3{-}3{-}5{-}7{-}5{-}7{-}3{-}3{-}4{-}4$
- $c) \quad 4-3-2-1-2-3-4 \quad 4-3-2-3-4 \quad 4-3-4 \quad 1-2-1 \\$
- d) 1-2-1-2-3-2-1-2-3-4-3-2-1 5-5-5
- e)  $2-2-2-3-3-4-2-5-1-2-4-1-5-1-1-1-1-1-1^{92}$

He continues: "With the above, many devices of musical assonance and rhythm can be combined. For instance, a repeated tone, a characteristic interval, some particular neume or rhythmical figure, a distinctive slurring or dotting, can recur at symmetrical intervals at the beginning, middle, or ending of each phrase."<sup>93</sup> It seems, then, that a primary concern for Seeger when it comes to form is a sense of balance and symmetry, whether it be with the number of measures per phrase, or the placement of a particular figure in symmetrical locations throughout a movement. Verse-form was taken up as a musical structure in Crawford's music, particularly in her *Diaphonic Suites*, and was also used by Beyer in her Clarinet Suites and the first two movements of *Dissonant Counterpoint*, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

Symmetry and balance are also considerations in other general procedures outlined in this section. First, Seeger proposes that retrograde motion, either exact or modified, should be used as a form of repeat, and that exact repeats should be avoided. He writes: "the more rigorously the dissonant fabric is sustained, the better it will be in retrograde motion. Whole

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 196.

sections and whole compositions can be performed backward with either exact or modified relation."<sup>94</sup> He also comments on the use of ostinatos, proposing that "while the theme and variation plan is not recommended at present, various forms of ostinato (passacaglia, chaconne) are possible. The ostinato can be modulated by changing one tone in it at symmetrical intervals until a new ostinato is formed."<sup>95</sup>

Finally, Seeger provides comments on four other aspects of musical design that are unrelated to form, pitch, or rhythm. First, he warns against "the monotony of unintended diffuseness (too much variety)."<sup>96</sup> In order to avoid this, Seeger proposes that a composer should give "a fairly equal amount of attention to all the technical resources and see that their interrelationships are all properly cared for."<sup>97</sup> Next, he proposes that dynamic level "should be carefully chosen, and the departures from this level made with just as much forethought as the tonal modulation."98 Similarly, he proposes that "the basic speed should be held clearly in mind, and the accelerando, rallentando, and rubato calculated in such a way that their relations among themselves and to the dynamics, the rhythms, and the pitches are nicely balanced."99 And finally, "the accentual layout is perhaps one of the most important. Too many accents, too few accents, or a helter-skelter arrangement of them is the quickest way to spoil a composition."<sup>100</sup> While in the first part of the treatise, Seeger attempted to treat all six musical resources (pitch, dynamics, timbre, rhythmic proportion, tempo, accent) equally, it becomes clear in the Manual of Dissonant Counterpoint that pitch still takes priority with the greatest detail given in terms of its organization in modern music. Rhythm, while also discussed in some detail, has significantly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 196–197.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 197.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 197.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 198.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 198.

fewer concrete rules compared to pitch. Dynamics, tempo, and accent are only mentioned quickly at the end of the final chapter dealing with dissonant melodies—thrown in as an afterthought. Timbre does not appear at all.

#### Two-part Dissonant Counterpoint

Following this thorough discussion of dissonant melodies, Seeger moves on to two-line dissonant counterpoint. He writes: "In two-line dissonant counterpoint equal attention must be paid to the melodic (horizontal) dissonance, both tonal and rhythmic, of each line, and to the chordal (vertical) dissonance, both tonal and rhythmic."<sup>101</sup> Similar to the melodic orders presented earlier, Seeger establishes three "chordal orders" (C.O.) that combine two melodies:

C.O. 1. Beats coincide, accents vary (see Example 1.20).

C.O. 2. Accents coincide, unaccented beats vary (see Example 1.21).

C.O. 3. Neither coincide (see Example 1.22).<sup>102</sup>



Example 1.20. Chordal Order 1: beats coincide, accents vary (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 134, p. 200).



Example 1.21. Chordal Order 2: accents coincide, unaccented beats vary (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 135, p. 200).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 199.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 199.



*Example 1.22. Chordal Order 3: neither beats nor accents coincide (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 136, p. 200).* 

Seeger also clearly establishes which intervals and rhythms are chordally dissonant, differentiating them from intervals and rhythms that are melodically dissonant: "The simultaneous (chordal) sounding of the two tones composing an interval must be clearly differentiated from the sequential (melodic) sounding of them... In dissonant counterpoint so much depends on melodic dissonance that chordal dissonance is far less important than in the old diatonic counterpoint."<sup>103</sup> Intervallic dissonances are separated into two different categories: perfect dissonances (minor 2<sup>nd</sup>, major 7<sup>th</sup>, minor 9<sup>th</sup>, major 14<sup>th</sup>, and minor 16<sup>th</sup>) and imperfect dissonances (major 2<sup>nd</sup>, minor 7<sup>th</sup>, major 9<sup>th</sup>, minor 14<sup>th</sup>, and major 16<sup>th</sup>). The tritone, Seeger proposes, is "practically consonant" when heard chordally. Rhythmic dissonances are likewise divided into more and less dissonant categories: 2/3, 3/2, 2/5, 2/7, and 2/9 are "mild" dissonances; 3/4, 4/3, and 3/5 are "medium" dissonances; and 4/5, 3/7, 4/7, 3/8, and 4/9 are "strong" dissonances.<sup>104</sup>

This overview is followed by another set of "general procedures," this time focusing on species of counterpoint and how dissonance can be the general framework for two-part compositions. Seeger goes through his version of each of the four species of dissonant counterpoint, explained in more detail below, providing descriptions and examples for where consonance and dissonance should fall: "In the First Species the composer should alternate

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 201.

consonance and dissonance: if *b* is consonant, *a* and *c* must be dissonant; if *c* is consonant, *b* and *d* must be dissonant, etc." (see Example 1.23); "In the Second Species, any two of three relationships *a*, *b*, and *c* may be consonant provided they are well dissonated" (see Example 1.24); "In the Third Species, four-way relationships may contain three consonances and five-way may contain four. Only for special effect should there be more than four consecutive consonances, and then they must be very well dissonated" (see Example 1.25).<sup>105</sup>



*Example 1.23. First species: consonance and dissonance alternated (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 142, p. 203).* 



*Example 1.24. Second species: two consonances well dissonated (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 143, p. 203).* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 203.



Example 1.25. Third species: four-way relationships with three consonances (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 144, p. 203).

Throughout this section, Seeger is not talking about species counterpoint as it was in earlier eras. Unlike traditional species counterpoint, which features simultaneous attacks between lines (in first, second, and third species), Seeger's examples of species counterpoint all feature cross-rhythms which greatly reduce the number of coinciding moments between lines. His example of first species counterpoint, then, does not feature a traditional "note-against-note" setting, but rather a 2-against-3 cross-rhythm. In a different publication, Seeger's ideas on species counterpoint seem to differ. There, he writes: "the species were as in the old counterpoint. The essential departure was the establishment of dissonance, rather than consonance, as the rule. Thus, in the first species, in two parts, no consonance was allowed; and from the second onwards it was consonance that had to be prepared and resolved."<sup>106</sup> The rules for consonance in first species differ between these two publications—in the article, Seeger maintains that no consonance can be used in first species, but in the Manual, he writes that consonance and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," 26.

dissonance should be alternated in first species. This contradiction is perhaps rectified later in the article, where Seeger stresses the importance of dissonant rhythmic structures in twentiethcentury dissonant counterpoint:

The first of these [new principles] involves a recognition of rhythmic harmony as a category on par with tonal harmony. We must distinguish the rhythmic interval and chord and classify the rhythmic consonances and dissonances. This brings about the abandonment of the five species of the old counterpoint. The rhythmic structures of the old counterpoint were suited to a predominantly consonant tonal system. Rhythmically speaking, modern composition is still in the state in which it existed tonally during the days of Hucbald, that is, it makes use only of combinations (ratios) involving the series 1:2:4:8:16, etc., and on the other hand, of the series 1:3:6:9:12, etc. (1:5, 1:7, 1:10 etc. being very rare). As tonally in 900, so rhythmically in 1900, the relations 2:3 and 3:4 represented the ultimate in harmonic comprehensibility.<sup>107</sup>

It seems, then, that the earlier comment about the species being "as in the old" with only a reversal of consonant and dissonant intervals was more of a general statement about the contrary nature of dissonant counterpoint than a technique to be utilized in composition. Chordally dissonant rhythmic proportions, such as the cross-rhythms observed above, and the rhythmic non-coincidence of the melodic lines is an important facet of creating a dissonant foundation in two-part dissonant counterpoint. This generalization is explicitly stated by Seeger later in his list of general procedures: "The most typical sort of dissonant counterpoint is that in which no coincidence of beats occurs."<sup>108</sup>

Seeger provides a few other general comments to be taken into consideration when composing two-part dissonant counterpoint. First, he mentions that while cross-relations of octaves should be used sparingly (see Example 1.26), crossing of parts "is good" if balanced with non-crossing. Similarly, he proposes that "wide spacing must be well balanced with close

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," 26-27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 204.

spacing."<sup>109</sup> And finally, when considering consonance and dissonance in two dimensions (vertically and horizontally), he writes "a rigorously dissonant melodic line will dissonate a fairly consonant set of chordal relations. A severity of chordal dissonance will dissonate two fairly consonant melodic lines. The former is to be preferred to the latter, and a balanced alternation of the two to either alone" (see Example 1.27 and Example 1.28).<sup>110</sup> In general, it can be ascertained that many of the same principles that are considered when writing tonal counterpoint (spacing, relationship between parts, etc.) are to be considered when writing dissonant counterpoint. While some of the same aesthetic principles apply, such as avoiding pitch crossrelations and balancing open and closed spacing, others, especially those dealing with the relationship between consonance and dissonance, are reversed.



Example 1.26. Tone alternation, or cross-relations (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 146, p. 204).



Example 1.27. A dissonant melody dissonates a fairly consonant set of chordal relations (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 147, p. 204).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 204.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 204.



Example 1.28. Fairly consonant line is dissonated by chordal dissonances (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 148, p. 204).

As with the earlier chapters on dissonant melodies, Seeger considers the ways in which a two-line phrase can be dissonated. In particular, Seeger focuses on the alignment of phrases between the parts: "the phrase lengths of the two lines may coincide, in which the phraseology will be homophonic though dissonant; or they may not begin and end at the same time, in which case the phraseology will be heterophonic. This polyphony may be so organized that occasional coincidence of phrase construction between the two lines will give a feeling of alternating consonance and dissonance of phrase-form."111 Some additional comments on the organization of dissonance within the musical functions beyond pitch and metre are also provided at this point, some of which are more helpful than others. In general, the guidelines laid out in this section are far less rigid than those introduced previously, with Seeger sometimes providing multiple options rather than narrowing down a most efficient or effective way of achieving dissonance. For example, when discussing timbre for two-line compositions, he writes: "Lines can be conceived as being played by similar instruments of equal range, similar instruments of different range, different instruments of similar range, or different instruments of different range," covering all possible permutations of these two factors and not providing any sort of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 206.

preference or recommendation for the most effective method.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, when considering rhythmic proportion, he writes: "Both lines may move in even proportion, or one in even and one in uneven, or both in uneven. One line may be legato, the other staccato, alternating or coinciding in various manners. An even flow in one line may gradually change into a broken rhythm, while in the other line the reverse takes place. Legato may increase in one line while it decreases in the other. The same sort of thing can be done with all the infinite variety of nuance available."<sup>113</sup> Again, we see a prevalent use of the word "may" and several different options, giving the impression that methods of dissonating two-line melodies are mere suggestions or guidelines and less rigorously organized than the dissonation of single-line melodies discussed earlier.

Other aspects of this section, however, are a bit more precise. According to Seeger, contrasting dynamics between lines, such as one increasing in volume while the other decreases in volume, is an efficient way to create a sense of dynamic dissonance between the two parts. Similarly, "cross-accenting" (i.e. having misaligned accents between the two parts) also adds to the dissonant effect. In terms of tempo, Seeger proposes that "the two lines may be treated as progressing in the same tempos or as if they were progressing in different tempos (!). By increasing or decreasing the number of tones per measure in one line, that line may be given an effect of stringendo or diminuendo while the other line remains as before, or goes the opposite way, or goes the same way at the same speed or at a proportionate speed."<sup>114</sup> In general, we can conclude that dissonance in two-line phrases is largely based on contrariness between the lines: if one line is loud, the other is soft; if one is increasing in tempo or is establishing a metre through a

 $<sup>^{112}</sup>$  Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 206.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 206–207.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 206.

particular accent pattern, the other is slowing down or establishing an alternate metre. This establishment of contrariness, of independent lines sounding simultaneously, is what Seeger refers to as "heterophony."<sup>115</sup>

Although somewhat downplayed in the Manual, with only three pages dedicated to the topic and no clear definition of the word provided, heterophony is one of the key principles to Seeger's concept of dissonant counterpoint. In a chapter about Ruth Crawford's music in a book published by Cowell, Seeger explains:

By *complete* heterophony we understand a polyphony in which there is no relation between the parts except mere proximity in time-space, beginning and ending, within hearing of each other, at more or less the same time: each should have its own tonal and rhythmic system and these should be mutually exclusive, while the forms should be utterly diverse. Heterophony may be accidental, as, for instance, a radio-reception of Beethoven's "Eroica" intruded upon by a phonograph record of a Javanese gamelan. But from an artistic point of view, a high degree of organization is necessary (1) to assure perfect non-coincidence and (2) to make the undertaking as a whole worthwhile.<sup>116</sup>

Dissonance is the catalyst for heterophony, as it ensures the independence of parts, or their

"mutual repulsion."117 Seeger differentiates the combination of dissonant melodies into

heterophony from the combination of consonant melodies into traditional polyphony:

We have a great deal of homophony. The impulse and the logic point toward a new polyphony, "heterophony." And since this means real independence of parts, it follows that the parts must be so different in themselves and the relation between them (which makes their simultaneous sounding agreeable) must perforce be such that their difference rather than their likeness is emphasized. This is possible under a basis of dissonance; but with the slightest error in the handling of consonance, our homophonically over-educated ears will infer chordal structures not intended

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Seeger's use of the word "heterophony" is not the same as how it has been used historically. According to the entry on heterophony on *Grove Music Online*, the term was originally coined by Plato and is most often used to describe the "simultaneous variation of a single melody." I cannot find any information on why Seeger used this word or how the usage of the word changed over time. For more information on the original meaning of "heterophony," see Peter Cooke, "Heterophony," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root. Accessed March 1, 2023, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630.</u> <u>e-0000012945?rskey=rJ7Ud1&result=1</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> Charles Seeger, "Ruth Crawford," in *American Composers on American Music: A Symposium* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962): 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 80.

and the polyphony will be lost. So it becomes necessary to cultivate "sounding apart" rather than "sounding together"—diaphony rather than symphony.<sup>118</sup>

In order to achieve heterophony, then, Seeger proposes that two independent melodies can be combined:

While a single melodic line may be characterized as heterophonic in that the mood in which it started has given place to an opposite or different mood, it is obvious that the scope of heterophony is vastly enlarged by the undertaking of two-line counterpoint... it is in the two-line composition as a whole that true dissonance of mood—actual "other-soundingness" and "sounding apart"—can be appreciated. As has already been indicated, either line of a well-constructed composition in dissonant counterpoint should be capable of solo performance as an entirely adequate and self-contained whole. The composition should be such, however, that when the two are combined as indicated the effect will justify the combination and give the listener something he did not find in the lines separately.

The emphasis on independent melodic lines and the "sounding apart" within a two-line composition further clarifies why Seeger begins the Manual of Dissonant Counterpoint with several chapters meticulously outlining the ways in which a single-line melody can be made dissonant within itself.

## Three-part Dissonant Counterpoint

Finally, Seeger includes a short section on writing three-part dissonant counterpoint. He proposes that, in three parts, one should be the "leader" and the other two should be considered "added" parts: the relationship between the leader and each added part should follow the same rules as two-part dissonant counterpoint, outlined above, and the relationship between the two added parts should also be dissonant.

In three-line counterpoint, one line (called the leading line) must be used as a structural basis for the conduct of the other two. The leading line need not stand out more prominently than the other two. It may be more, less, or equally important. Most advantageously situated in the middle, it should play an important role in reducing the technical difficulties of performance to a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," 28.

minimum... The procedure for two-line counterpoint applies between each added line and the leading line. Between the added lines the principles of dissonant writing should obtain [sic].<sup>119</sup>

Seeger also advises that the leading voice should "flow" continuously while the added lines should be introduced "discontinuously" so that the texture is mostly two-part counterpoint with moments of three-part texture used sparingly. Further, he warns against making the rhythmic dissonance too complex between the three parts to be performed accurately.<sup>120</sup>

Seeger provides some commentary on Example 2.29, which he considers to be a good example of simple three-line counterpoint. While the leading line, on the centre staff of the three parts, features a series of running eighth notes (the continuous flow ideal for a leading line he mentioned earlier), the other two parts are introduced "discontinuously": both lines feature short melodic units separated by rests, and the two counterpoint lines overlap with each other only slightly so that most of the excerpt is in a two-part texture. The two added lines, Seeger points out, are neumatic opposites (both are twist neumes but in opposite directions—the Cpt. 2 line has a [- + -] contour while the Cpt. 1 line has a [+ - +] contour) but are "of the same mood": while the leading line features "smooth and undulating movement," it is contrasted by the "somewhat sluggish and irregular mood of the counterpoints."<sup>121</sup> About the dissonant relationship between the lines, Seeger writes:

The leading line chosen for the examples in this chapter has such a strong dissonant tonal contour that any counterpoints set to it will have a tendency to be comparatively consonant, dissonation being quite difficult. Rhythmically, however, the leading line is not very dissonant, and the rhythmic dissonance in the counterpoint is comparatively easy. This should balance up the situation without rendering the composition unduly difficult to perform.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 214.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 214.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 224.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 224.

It seems that complete tonal and rhythmic dissonation is not always necessary, or even preferred, when working in three parts, especially if it drastically increases the performance difficulty of the composition.



Example 1.29. Simple three-line counterpoint (reproduced from Seeger, TENM, Example 171, p. 225).

Seeger also mentions that the example should be performed "by any group of three instruments of the same kind, such as three clarinets or three oboes."<sup>123</sup> He does not elaborate any further on this to explain why three instruments of the same kind are preferred, or why both of his examples (clarinets and oboes) are woodwinds. In fact, the preference for three instruments of the same kind seems in opposition to the principles of heterophony, as there surely would be a blend between parts that would impede on the true independence of each line. Nevertheless, the preference for three instruments of the same kind falls into the "similar instruments of similar range" category discussed in two-part counterpoint composition, and the tendency toward clarinets or oboes aligns with Seeger's earlier observation that suites for woodwinds are a good choice for early efforts in dissonant writing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 224.

### Conclusion

TENM and the theorization of dissonant counterpoint therein is an integral document to our understanding of the ultramodernist movement. While Seeger's theoretical writings are often overlooked and not well understood by modern theorists, most likely due to the inconsistencies throughout and oblique writing style, Seeger undoubtedly made his mark on an era of composers searching for a new direction in American music. As Cowell writes:

While Seeger has worked out some of his findings himself, his greatest importance lies in his subtle influence in suggesting to others both a new musical point of view and specific usages in composition. Few modern composers, either in America or abroad, are entirely uninfluenced by him; yet most of those who use his ideas do not know his name and believe themselves to have originated the ideas, so delicately does he work! He has a new idea—he imparts the idea to a few important acquaintances, usually in such a way as to cause instant repulsion on their part and to irritate them greatly; but Seeger does not mind irritating: he knows that if he irritates his subject enough, the idea will be remembered and passed on. And this is what actually happens. He springs an idea which is so unpopular and unprecedented as to cause absolute outrage, in California. One of the insulted listeners, who travels a great deal, goes to Germany, and in an aggrieved manner relates the idea, perhaps as an example of idiocy. Next season a new and unprecedented type of music will be shown to the world by a young German composer. So it has gone. He not only has no credit but often has to fight against personal irritations which he has sometimes aroused through his methods of presentation, in people who do not understand his witty by cynical way of getting results.124

While each ultramodern composer, including Henry Cowell, Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, Edgar Varèse, Dane Rudhyar, and Ruth Crawford, had their own unique style, many of the principles discussed in TENM are features common to the ultramodern idiom: a systematic avoidance and explicit negation of traditional tonal elements including melodies, harmonies, and rhythms; a strong preference for variety (of pitch material and intervallic combinations) over repetition; a rejection of full, rich orchestral textures and homophony in favour of more sparse polyphony

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Henry Cowell, "Charles Seeger," in *American Composers on American Music: A Symposium* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962): 119–120.

focusing on individual, independent lines; and a more careful, deliberate attention to and integration of musical parameters beyond pitch and rhythm, including dynamics, timbre, tempo, and accent. While it is certainly not the case that Seeger can take full credit for all of these innovations and stylistic features, his tutelage and active participation as a composer and thinker was one thread stringing this group of composers together—Seeger taught Crawford and Cowell, who taught Ruggles; he was an active member of the Pan American Association of Composers, and eventually the Composers' Collective, which was organized by Cowell and Varèse and funded by Ives; and he participated in the salons of patrons Djane Lavoie Herz and Blanche Walton.<sup>125</sup> Although TENM was published posthumously, Seeger's ideas were shared through direct mentorship and through various publications, including in Cowell's publication series, *New Music Quarterly*, and *Modern Music*, among many others.

In the chapters that follow, I will show how the theory of dissonant counterpoint and organic development of musical ideas were incorporated and modified in the work of one particular composer, Johanna Beyer. Beyer was yet another member of Seeger's lineage, studying with Seeger himself, Crawford, and Cowell, and an active member of the same new music Composers' Collective. While Seeger and Crawford turned away from ultramodernism and dissonant counterpoint in the mid-1930s, their influence and legacy lived on in the work of students like Beyer through the 1940s and beyond.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> For more information on common features of the ultramodern idiom among these American composers, see Straus, 213–220.

# CHAPTER 2 Literature Review and Methodology

Seeger's influence and the wide-spread use of dissonant counterpoint among the ultramodernist composers has been well documented in the literature on early twentieth-century music in America.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Ruth Crawford's use of dissonant counterpoint in her compositions provided a fruitful topic of research throughout the 1990s. Joseph N. Straus's book, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, is the leading source on unpacking Seeger's theoretical contributions and the implementation of these ideas in Crawford's compositional practice.<sup>2</sup> Articles by Mark D. Nelson and Judith Tick, both of which predate Straus's manuscript and Pestacallo's published edition of Seeger's treatise, as well as an article by Taylor Greer a few years later, share similar aims: to demonstrate the ways in which Crawford made use of various aspects of Seeger's theory in her compositions.<sup>3</sup> In the wake of Judith Tick's ground-breaking biography on Crawford, Nancy Yunhwa Rao takes a different approach, suggesting that the partnership between Crawford and Seeger from 1929 to 1931 "generated the core of inquiry through which Crawford crystallized her musical expression in composition and Seeger synthesized his thoughts on modern musical composition—ideas that would eventually find expression in his treatise."<sup>4</sup> Rather than a unidirectional pathway of influence from Seeger's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See, for example, David Nicholls, "On Dissonant Counterpoint': The development of a new polyphony, primarily by Charles Seeger (1886–1979), Carl Ruggles (1876–1971), and Ruth Crawford (1901–53)," in *American Experimental Music, 1890–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 89–133.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Joseph N. Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Mark D. Nelson, "In Pursuit of Charles Seeger's Heterophonic Ideal: Three Palindromic Works by Ruth Crawford," *The Music Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (1986): 458–475; Judith Tick, "Dissonant Counterpoint Revisited: The First Movement of Ruth Crawford's *String Quartet* 1931," in *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock*, ed. Richard Crawford, R. Allen Lott, and Carol Oja (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990): 405–22; and Taylor A. Greer, "The Dynamics of Dissonance in Seeger's Treatise and Crawford's Quartet," in *Understanding Charles Seeger, Pioneer in American Musicology*, ed. Bell Yung and Helen Rees (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1999): 13–28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Nancy Yunhwa Rao, "Partnership in Modern Music: Charles Seeger and Ruth Crawford, 1929–31," *American Music* 15, no. 3 (1997): 352.

treatise to Crawford's compositional practice, Rao proposes a more dialectical relationship between the two, suggesting that Crawford's working out of Seeger's theoretical principles in her compositions had just as great an impact on the revisions to his treatise as his ideas had on her in the first place.

Due to this detailed documentation of Crawford's involvement in the creation and codification of dissonant counterpoint as well as its use in her compositions, she is often considered the most significant female composer of the twentieth century, despite her relatively limited compositional output. While Melissa de Graaf's work on the Composers' Forum concert series has uncovered many other women who were also composing during this time, surprisingly little has been said about the use of dissonant counterpoint or other features of ultramodernism in the music of other female composers besides Crawford.<sup>5</sup> Johanna Beyer, a student of Crawford and Seeger and a close associate of Cowell's, is one of such female composers who, until relatively recently, has gone largely overlooked in the scholarship on ultramodernism. Scholarly interest in Beyer's compositions was initiated by John Kennedy and Larry Polansky's 1996 article published in *The Musical Quarterly*, which provides "a brief introduction to Beyer's life and music, along with an annotated checklist of known extant manuscripts" in order to "stimulate and provide a foundation for future musicological research and to facilitate performance of her work."<sup>6</sup> In addition to giving an overview of Beyer's background and life as well as list all of her

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Melissa de Graaf lists all the participants in the Composers' Forum between 1935 and 1940, dividing the list into four sections: female professional composers, female student composers, male professional composers, and male student composers. Her list accounts for 16 professional women composers and 42 student composers who were women. While there were certainly more men composers in both categories (121 professional men composers and 64 student composers who were men) the insinuation that Crawford was the only, or even one of very few, women composing at this time is inaccurate. See Melissa de Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers': Gendered Reception in the New York Composers' Forum, 1935–1940," *American Music* (Fall 2008): 303.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> John Kennedy and Larry Polansky, "'Total Eclipse': The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer: An Introduction and Preliminary Annotated Checklist," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 719.

known works, Kennedy and Polansky also provide some general comments about her writing style and some commentary on each piece.

Following Kennedy and Polansky, much of the existing scholarship acknowledges Beyer's ultramodernist roots and the influence of dissonant counterpoint on her compositions; however, many sources focus on the gendered reception of her works from a sociological standpoint rather than providing any in-depth analytical commentary or developing theories to describe her compositional style. De Graaf, for instance, examines Beyer's experience as a female composer taking part in the Composers' Forum concert series in New York through the lens of the gendered comments she would receive from the audience.<sup>7</sup> Rachel Lumsden also approaches Beyer's music through a feminist lens, although her work provides a gendered reading of detailed analytical observations of Beyer's second String Quartet. In particular, her work focuses on extramusical connections made through musical borrowing: she proposes that Beyer's unconventional views of marriage and her experience as a female modernist composer are represented through her "subversive setting" of a Mozart aria.<sup>8</sup>

Other sources still make more general observations, often about one or two particular pieces of music, rather than codifying any specific melodic or harmonic processes that are foundational to her compositional style or that can be found in many pieces in her oeuvre. Kelly Hiser, for example, identifies an "economy of means" present in much of Beyer's work, arguing that several of her pieces can be seen as evolving from a small cell of motivic material.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See Melissa de Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism in the Music of Johanna Beyer," *Institute for Studies in American Music (ISAM News Letter* XXXIII, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 8–9, 15; and de Graaf, "Never Call Us Lady Composers," 277–308.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See Rachel Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge: Johanna Beyer's String Quartet No. 2 (1936) and Vivian Fine's *The Race of Life* (1937)" (Ph.D. diss, The City University of New York, 2012).; and Rachel Lumsden, "'The Pulse of Life Today': Borrowing in Johanna Beyer's String Quartet No. 2," *American Music* 35, 3 (2017): 303–342.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Kelly Hiser, "An Enduring Cycle': Revaluing the Life and Music of Johanna Beyer" (M.A. thesis, University of Miami, 2009): 66.

Marguerite Boland makes similar claims, and observes a process of "cumulation and reduction" by which melodies tend to get longer or increase in textural density before declining, creating an arch shape.<sup>10</sup> While these are apt observations, neither author offers any specific theories on why and how melodies evolve from motivic cells, or why and how melodies tend to get longer and then shorter.

In this dissertation, I propose a theory of melodic transformation that provides further clarity and systemization to the sense of melodic evolution observed by Hiser and Boland. In particular, I propose five melodic transformations that create a sense of an ever-evolving melodic metamorphosis that exists in many of the pieces in Beyer's oeuvre, including Suite for Clarinet I (1932), Suite for Clarinet IB (1932), the piano suite entitled *Dissonant Counterpoint* (193?), and her first String Quartet (1933–34), movements of which will be analyzed throughout the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. I also interweave aspects of queer theory to connect the melodic processes and structures in Beyer's music, uncovered through the transformational theory, to aspects of her biography. This chapter begins with an explanation of the transformational methodology, followed by an introduction to queer theory, an overview of its use in music-theoretical scholarship, and the ways in which it is applicable to Beyer's music to be explored further in the chapters that follow.

### Methodology

### Dissonant Counterpoint and Melodic Transformations

Beyer was undoubtedly influenced by the compositional style of her mentors, especially Cowell, Crawford, and Seeger. In spite of these similarities, she, like every other ultramodernist composer, adopted her own unique method for composing dissonant counterpoint that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Marguerite Boland, "Experimentation and Process in the Music of Johanna Beyer," Viva Voce 76 (2007): 2-4.

distinguishes her works from her contemporaries. As Boland and Polansky state, "Although they bear a superficial resemblance to works like Ruth Crawford Seeger's Diaphonic Suites, Piano Study in Mixed Accents, or even the fourth movement of her String Quartet, Beyer's dissonant counterpoint pieces (most of her work until about 1936) have their own style-abstract, yet redolent of a sophisticated melodist's instinct. Rigorously composed, they are gems of what might be called the 1930s New York City dissonant counterpoint 'school.""11 Crawford and Seeger's influence on Beyer's compositional style is readily apparent, especially throughout the earliest compositions in her oeuvre. Her earliest pieces, the two Clarinet Suites from 1932, bear a striking resemblance to Crawford's *Diaphonic Suites*<sup>12</sup>: they are all written in verse form (a musical structure devised by Seeger in which each line of music comprises a different number of measures and ends with a double bar line and, often, a "musical rhyme"—see p.63-64 of this dissertation for Seeger's description of verse form and its connection to dissonant melodies) and are written for woodwind instruments. Her use of palindromic forms within each of these suites also suggests Crawford's influence.<sup>13</sup> Around the same time, Beyer also wrote a suite for piano entitled *Dissonant Counterpoint*, the first two movements of which are also written in verse form, demonstrating her explicit knowledge of Seeger's treatise and the compositional style of the ultramodernists. Kennedy and Polansky have also suggested a link between Beyer's second String Quartet (1933-

<sup>12</sup> Crawford wrote her *Four Diaphonic Suites* in 1930, just two years before Beyer's Clarinet Suites. Crawford's composition consists of four suites, the first for flute or oboe, the second for bassoon and cello or two cellos, the third for two Bb clarinets, and the fourth for oboe and cello. A thorough analysis of these movements can be found in Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger*, especially 54–56.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Marguerite Boland and Larry Polansky, "Tempo Melodies in the Johanna Beyer Clarinet Suites (Fourth Movements)" (2007–8): 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Crawford was inclined to use precompositional plans in her writing. In particular, three movements from Crawford's works, including *Piano Study in Mixed Accents* (1930), the first movement of *Diaphonic Suite no. 4* (1930), and the final movement of her *String Quartet* (1931) are written in palindromic forms. See Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger*, especially 67–76.

34) and Crawford's quartet (1931) as both make use of a "counterpoint of dynamics"<sup>14</sup>: sustained notes are set in a continual *crescendo / decrescendo* texture, which "emphasizes timbre over melody, harmony, and rhythm," eventually reaching a similar climactic outburst.<sup>15</sup>

Another clear connection between Beyer's compositions and the work of Seeger and Crawford can be deduced from notes included on the manuscripts of several movements of the Clarinet Suites. On the manuscript of the third movement of Suite for Clarinet I, for instance, Beyer writes: "modulation from skippy + twist neume (large interval) to steppy + line neume (small interval)." This note indicates her knowledge and practice of a particular feature of Seeger's dissonant counterpoint theory: neumes and neume transformations. As discussed in Chapter 1, Seeger proposed that dissonant melodies were comprised of "neumes," three- or fournote melodic units, that could be categorized in terms of their contour: line neumes are threenote neumes that progress in the same direction; twist neumes are three-note neumes that progress in opposite directions; line-line are four-note neumes that progress in one direction, twist-twist are four-note neumes that progress in opposite directions, and twist-line and line-twist are four-note neumes that combine a progression in one direction with a change in direction.

Seeger's focus on progression between notes in a neume resulted in an organic theory of melody that allowed for small motivic units to be morphed gradually into longer melodies, phrases, and entire pieces of music through a process of neume transformation. Seeger writes:

Any neume can be changed into any other provided the change is gradual. This fact has been made use of in composition and may be termed a kind of modulation—a moving from neume to neume in a manner similar to movement from key to key. Neume transformation of this sort is one of the commonest and most important means of building the organic phrase.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> This term comes from Ellie Hisama's analysis of the third movement of Crawford's *String Quartet*. See Ellie Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See Kennedy and Polansky, "Total Eclipse," 752. A similar conclusion is drawn by de Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music,"149.

This process, one which Seeger often referred to as "modulation," as seen in the quote above, seems to be what Beyer is alluding to in her note on the Clarinet Suite manuscript.

Straus applies the concept of neumes and neume transformations to the music of Ruth Crawford Seeger. In particular, he classifies six neume transformations that are consistent in her works, some of which are drawn directly from Seeger's treatise and others that are devised by "observing the spirit, if not the letter, of Seeger's enterprise" <sup>17</sup>: INT ("an interval is replaced by its complement or its compound"); P, I, R, and RI ("the neume is treated as a brief series of pitches or pitch classes and subjected to the traditional serial operations: prime, inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion"); MULT ("all intervals are expanded or contracted by some multiple"); EXP ("all intervals are expanded or contracted in size by the same amount"); PE ("one interval expands or contracts by a semitone, the other(s) stay the same"); and CONT ("the contour of the neume is preserved, or inversion, retrograde, or retrograde inversion is applied without respect to the intervals").<sup>18</sup> Throughout his discussion of Crawford's music, Straus stresses two key points. First, he suggests that there may be several equally plausible, equally musical interpretations of the transformations occurring within Crawford's melodies. Second, and more importantly, these transformations create the sense of an ever-evolving melodic metamorphosis. He argues that, while the melodies are constantly changing and developing, the consistent use of transformations is what holds them together.

I have observed a similar, yet different, process of gradual transformation in much of the music in Beyer's oeuvre. In many of her pieces, Beyer writes a single melody per instrument, or per part of the texture, and repeats that melody over and over again for the entire piece with some alterations in each new iteration. The pieces written in verse form, such as the Clarinet

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Joseph N. Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 34–40.

Suites and the first two movements of *Dissonant Counterpoint*, make this process visually obvious, as each new line on the score begins a new varied repetition of the melody. In the first movement of Suite for Clarinet I, for instance, the melody on the second line of the score is repeated with some alterations on the third line, which is then repeated on the fourth line with some additional alterations, and so on (see Example 2.1). In my analyses, I use translucent grey lines to show connections between notes that remain untransformed between repetitions, and coloured lines and symbols to show notes that have been transformed in particular ways.



Example 2.1. Suite for Clarinet I, movement 1 is written in verse form and features an end rhyme at the end of each system of music—a Bb and B in different octaves. Starting in measure 3, the melodic idea presented on the second line is repeated with some variation on the third line, which is then repeated with some variation on the fourth line, and so on. Translucent grey lines indicate notes that remain untransformed between repetitions of the melody.

In this dissertation, I propose five specific transformation categories that Beyer consistently applies in many pieces of music in her oeuvre, which creates a sense of constant metamorphosis and evolution over the course of each piece: add (notes get added, usually one or two semitones away from the notes they precede or follow, see Example 2.2a), delete (notes get deleted, see Example 2.2b), reorder (a group of adjacent notes get reordered, see Example 2.2c), transpose (notes get transposed up or down, typically by a whole tone or semitone, see Example 2.2d), and register (notes change register through transposition by one or more octaves, see Example 2.2e). Multiple transformations can also be applied at once, such as two notes being reordered and displaced by an octave. In the following chapters, I will apply these transformations to single-line melodies (movements from Suite for Clarinet I and Suite for Clarinet IB, see Chapter 3), two-part textures (movements from the *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite, see Chapter 4), and four-part textures (movements from String Quartet no. 1, see Chapter 5). For the sake of ease and clarity, I will use the symbols and colours related to each transformation type in Examples 2.2a–d through the rest of the dissertation.











Example 2.2. Five transformations that can be applied to Beyer's melodies: a) add: notes get added, one or two semitones away from the notes they precede or follow (Suite for Clarinet I, movement 1, mm. 3-12); b) delete: notes get deleted (Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 1, mm. 5-13); c) reorder: a group of notes gets reordered (Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 1, mm. 10-18); d) transpose: notes get transposed up or down, typically a whole tone or semitone (Suite for Clarinet I, movement 3, mm. 1-16); and e) register: notes change register through transposition by one or more octaves Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4: mm. 1-14).

While I have outlined the typical conditions under which these transformation types occur (i.e. added notes most commonly are a whole tone or semitone away from the notes they precede and/or follow, note transpositions are usually by whole tone or semitone, reorderings usually involve two adjacent notes), there are instances throughout the dissertation where I make exceptions in response to other features on the surface of the music. For instance, in Example 3.3, I show a note transposition by a fourth rather than by a whole tone or semitone. In this example, there are several features of the music that suggest these notes should be heard as varied repetitions of one another: they are both the longest duration in each of their respective phrases of music, lasting for an entire measure; they are both tied over to the downbeat of the following line; and they are both the only accented note in their lines of music, marked with a wedge accent in the first instance and a *sforzando* in the second. Likewise, in Example 3.4, a more complex reordering of notes occurs where pitches are swapped not with an adjacent one but one three or four notes away. Here, I make an exception based on the rhythmic grouping: the pitches within the sextuplet are shuffled but otherwise remain a self-enclosed unit. By making exceptions such as these, I hope to show the flexibility with which this methodology can be applied when one is sensitive to the musical details of each movement.

The five transformation types I propose arose from a bottom-up approach, categorizing the common relationships I noticed between repetitions of melodies in many of Beyer's pieces. They explain the patterns I observed in her scores rather than the initial aural experience of listening to her music. Listeners might learn to hear these transformational processes to varying degrees—after several years engaging with Beyer's music and thinking about melodic transformations in this way, I can now hear her musical structures consisting of repeated, altered melodies. While I can hear, generally, whether one repetition of a melody is longer or shorter than the previous, or in a different register, other transformations (such as the reordering or

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transposition of notes) are much less perceptible, as is the degree of specificity outlined in this methodology (i.e. which particular notes are transformed in any given repetition). Whether or not these processes can be perceived in real time, the consistency with which they appear in Beyer's oeuvre suggest to me that they are a significant part of her musical structures and worthy of analytical inquiry.

The process of transformation in Beyer's music that I propose, while clearly influenced by Seeger's theory of neumatic transformation and Crawford's compositional practice as theorized by Straus, is different from that of her mentors. Whereas Crawford follows Seeger's theory of *neume* transformations, altering the intervallic content of short motivic cells, Beyer seems to make use of a large-scale evolutionary process, repeating and altering melodies that are several measures long. The transformations I propose alter the pitch content of the melodies, rather than the intervallic content of smaller motives, classifying these more as *melodic* transformations than any sort of strict neume transformations.

While some authors, such as Boland and Hiser, have acknowledged the use of repeating melodies in Beyer's music, little has been said about specific transformations that are found consistently within many pieces in her oeuvre. In regards to the Clarinet Suites, Boland notes: "the clarinet melody [in the first movement of Suite for Clarinet I] is constructed from an additive procedure: each successive phrase is a repetition of the previous phrase with additional notes inserted into the melodic line (as well as the occasional note substitution)."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Hiser observes Beyer's note on the score for the third movement of Suite for Clarinet I, proposing that "Beyer carefully controls the rate of this 'neumatic transformation,' which essentially transforms the melodic contour, from one line to the next."<sup>20</sup> By applying this specific

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Boland, "Experimentation and Process in the Music of Johanna Beyer," 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Hiser, "An Enduring Cycle," 63.

set of transformations as outlined above, I provide additional clarity and specificity to the observations made by both Boland and Hiser, indicating which notes are inserted or omitted in each melodic line, and which are transformed in particular ways.

In her chapter on Beyer's second String Quartet, Boland argues that all of the melodies in the four-part contrapuntal texture of the first movement can be viewed as variations of one single melody. She calls this movement "an exercise in neume transformation, par excellence"<sup>21</sup> and argues that "by applying Seeger's method of dissonation to a single tonal melody in three different ways we arrive at the four-part dissonant contrapuntal texture that Bever composed."22 Using the somewhat vague terms from Seeger's treatise including "tonal displacement," "tonal retrograde," "tonal intension," "tonal extension," "rhythmic augmentation/diminution," and "octave displacement," Boland demonstrates how the theme played by the cello, a quote of Mozart's "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" aria from The Magic Flute, can be transformed to create the melodies played by the first violin, second violin, and viola. She then takes her argument one step further to suggest that the melodic material of the other movements in this String Quartet can also be viewed as transformed versions of the Mozart quote. While this is certainly in line with the sorts of observations I have made in Beyer's other music, my work stands apart from Boland's in two distinct ways. First, Boland's chapter provides some deep insights to the processes present in the second String Quartet, however she does not go further to suggest that these processes are generalizable across Beyer's entire oeuvre. By contrast, the transformations I propose will be applied to Beyer's Clarinet Suites, movements from her piano suite, Dissonant Counterpoint, and the first String Quartet in later chapters of this dissertation, in order to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Marguerite Boland, "Imagination and Method: J.M. Beyer's String Quartet No. 2," in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music, 1900–1960*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022): 201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Boland, "Imagination and Method," 203.

demonstrate how they function in different musical textures. Second, Boland is content to apply Seeger's terms for neume transformations to Beyer's music without any modifications or points of clarification. The transformations I propose, while based on the spirit of Seeger's neume transformations, are more specific and clear. For example, rather than simply stating that notes can be added (Seeger's "tonal extension"), I have observed that Beyer's added notes most often appear a tone or semitone away from the note they directly precede or follow.

The transformations I propose, then, closely align with the neumatic transformations, modifications, and conversions that Seeger proposes in TENM while adding a level of clarity and systemization that Seeger's theory lacks. Seeger proposes a broad, wide-ranging list of possibilities for neume transformations and organic growth of phrases, including the four canonic twelve-tone operations, tonal modifications (modification by any intervallic complement, modification by "taking tones in a scale," modification by augmenting or diminishing the interval sizes), rhythmic modifications (augmenting or diminishing rhythmic proportions), repetition, sequence, opposition, continuity, extension, intension, ellipsis, and cancrizans. This list is exhaustive and allows for any unit of music to be seen as a transformation of any other unit of music, if enough intervening steps are taken.<sup>23</sup> In response, I have narrowed down the list of possibilities to five that appear consistently in Beyer's music. This narrower scope is more manageable and meaningful: it no longer allows for any note to be heard as a transformation of any other note, but rather allows for only a few possible transformational pathways to be traced through any given piece. Several of Seeger's categories are also too broad and lack specific guidelines on the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Seeger himself notes: "Any neume can be transformed into any other neume. Provided it is done gradually, this process may be made use of in composition." As an example, he demonstrates how two melodic motives from different pieces written by different composers, seventy years apart, (the opening motive of Schubert's C Major Symphony No. 9 (1825), and the clarinet motif from Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (1895)) can be seen as neumatically transformed versions of each other. See Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 147–149.

conditions under which a given transformation can occur. For example, his category of "extension" allows for added notes or beats at the beginning, middle, or end of a neume, with or without altering the original duration of the melodic unit. This category, then, seems to allow for an infinite number of possibilities: any note or notes can be added anywhere to a melodic unit and can be classified as an "extension." The language Seeger uses to classify his transformations is also unclear, creating what seems like overlapping categories. For example, he proposes that "intension" and "ellipsis" are two separate categories of transformations. While both clearly allude to material being removed, he does not elaborate further (nor do his examples provide any additional clarity) to demonstrate which types of removals qualify as "intension" and which as "ellipsis." The transformations I propose, by contrast, add more detail to the conditions under which transformations can occur. Like Seeger, I propose that notes can be added (Seeger's "extension" category); however, I stipulate that the added notes appear one or two semitones away from the notes they proceed or follow, once again to limit the possibilities. Likewise, note transpositions can occur, but typically only allow for notes transposed by one or two semitones, and I have collapsed all forms of deleted notes into a single category.

Over the course of the following analyses, there will be some places where two, or perhaps even more, different analytical interpretations can be made in terms of which transformations are occurring. In any situation where multiple interpretations are possible, efficiency is preferred. For instance, we could read the following example in two different ways: one interpretation sees the F#5 in Line 3 becoming E5 in Line 4 through the transposition transformation, and E4 in Line 3 becoming F#4 in Line 4, similarly through the transposition transformation (see Example 2.3a). A second interpretation reads this as a reordering of F# and E, and a change of register for both notes (Example 2.3b). Since the first option in the example presents two transformations (each note transposed by a whole tone), compared with the second option which presents three transformations (a reordering and two register changes) to get from one line to the next, the first option here is preferred as it requires less steps.



Example 2.3. Two different interpretations of the transformation path from Line 3 to Line 4 in the first movement of Suite for Clarinet I: a) E and F are both transposed by a whole tone, or b) E and F are reordered and change register.

It should also be noted, however, that the goal here is not to achieve "the correct" transformational path from one line to the next. If there are multiple, equally plausible and equally efficient interpretations, it matters little which path is chosen by a given analyst. What matters more is the recognition that one line can indeed be seen as a variation of the preceding one. Each listener and analyst might hear connections between notes differently depending on what they are attending to and what is emphasized in the performance. If a listener hears more obvious connections between notes in the same register, for instance, they might be more inclined to hear the transposition transformation in the example above, since F#5 and E5 are in the same register, as are E4 and F#4. On the contrary, if a listener is attending to pitch classes instead, they would likely hear the reordering transformation where E and F# are simply in a different order on the two lines. Another entirely plausible situation is that a listener might not even be aware of specific transformations occurring at any given time without a score in front of them. The spirit of these transformations draws attention to and sheds light on the constant

melodic metamorphosis that is present in these movements, regardless of how vague or clearly each listener feels that process.<sup>24</sup>

## Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, and Gender

My second strand of methodology is rooted in critical theory and cultural analysis, specifically feminist and queer theories. Feminist scholarship has shown that modernism across several art forms, including visual art, literature, and music, was shaped by anti-feminist reactions and misogynistic philosophies.<sup>25</sup> Marianne DeKoven explains that the first wave of feminism and the suffrage movement, in particular, created a new kind of woman, one who was educated and independent, against whom many writers of modernist literature retaliated:

The radical implications of the social-cultural changes feminism advocated produced in modernist writing an unprecedent preoccupation with gender, both thematically and formally. Much of this preoccupation expressed a male modernist fear of women's new power, and resulted in the combination of misogyny and triumphal masculinism that many critics see as central, defining features of modernist work by men. This masculinist misogyny, however, was almost universally accompanied by its dialectical twin: a fascination and strong identification with the empowered feminine. The result was an irresolvable ambivalence toward powerful femininity that itself forged many of Modernism's most characteristic formal innovations.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> A few examples of feminist approaches to modernist art forms, including literature and visual art, include: Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1991); Elizabeth Jane Harrison and Shirley Peterson, eds., Unmanning Modernism: Gendered Re-Readings (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997); Janet Lyon, "Gender and Sexuality" in The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism, Walter Kalaidjian, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Rita Felski, The Gender of Modernity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Jani Scandura and Michael Thurston, eds., Modernism, Inc.: Body, Memory, Capital (New York: NYU Press, 2001); Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed by Straus when discussing neumatic transformations in Crawford's music. He writes: "Of course, there may well be still other ways of hearing this melody, and, in many cases, there will be no obvious, theoretically principled or musically intuitive way of choosing among these alternatives. Indeed, the alternatives may seem equally attractive, although in different, and occasionally contradictory, ways. In general, Crawford's melodies are multivalent, slippery, and elusive, resisting any single interpretation." See Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger*, 38).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Marianne DeKoven, "Gender and Modernism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Michael Levinson ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 174.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar make similar claims, arguing that the social changes brought about by women's new-found independence and the entry of women into the workforce resulted in "maimed, unmanned, victimized characters" that were "obsessively created by early twentieth-century literary men."<sup>27</sup> As just one example, Gilbert and Gubar discuss T. S. Elliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," originally titled "Prufrock Among the Women," which "emphasizes the ways in which the absurdly self-conscious modern male intellectual is rendered impotent by, and in, the company of women."<sup>28</sup> They suggest that, as the century progressed, men found new ways to defend themselves against women in their writing, including "mythologizing women to align them with dread prototypes; fictionalizing them to dramatize their destructive influence; slandering them in essays, memoirs, and poems; prescribing alternative ambitions for them; appropriating their words in order to usurp or trivialize their language; and ignoring or evading their achievements in critical texts."<sup>29</sup> The most significant mechanism, according to Gilbert and Gubar, was to "define their artistic integrity in opposition to either their literary incompetence or the aesthetic hysteria they associated with women."<sup>30</sup>

Similar attitudes and trends have been observed in modernist music. Male composers, like their literary counterparts, felt threatened by female musicians, and in response claimed that earlier nineteenth-century tonal compositional practices were too feminine and emotional. In order to reassure themselves of the masculinity of their artistic pursuits, male modernist composers turned to dissonance as the basis of their ideological construction, a quality in music which they characterized as "variously hard, powerful, abstract, learned, and above all, virile."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. I: *The War of the Words* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, No Man's Land, 31–32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, No Man's Land, 149.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, No Man's Land, 157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 222.

Dissonant counterpoint, in particular, was viewed as a compositional technique only practiced (at least successfully) by male composers. This masculine ideology was endorsed by many associated with the ultramodernist movement, most notably by Ives, Cowell, and Seeger, as well as by audiences attending new music concerts, such as the Composers' Forum concert series, to be discussed forthcoming.<sup>32</sup> Ives, in particular, was known for using misogynistic rhetoric as a way of purposefully trying to exclude women composers from the ultramodernist agenda, wondering, for example, whether Ruth Crawford's String Quartet was "mansized" enough to be included on a recording series initiated by Cowell that he was funding.<sup>33</sup> Even Seeger initially resisted taking Crawford on as a student. In an interview conducted by Ray Wilding-White in 1976, Seeger claimed:

Cowell was much impressed with [Crawford's] writing and spoke to me about her several times, and of course I saw some of her first compositions published in *New Music*. I was very snooty in those days about women composers and had come more or less to the conclusion that the great tradition of European music, say from 1200 to 1930, had been created mostly by men and that it was a bit absurd to expect women to fit themselves into a groove which was so definitely flavored with machismo (and, of course, the early music of the twentieth century and the late music of the nineteenth century was machismo with a capital M).<sup>34</sup>

While there certainly were women composing in a dissonant style during this era, the belief that

musical modernism was only for men resulted in these women's legacies being almost entirely

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Melissa de Graaf discusses the sorts of comments female composers, including Beyer, would receive during the Composers' Forum concert series in two articles. See Melissa de Graaf, "Never Call Us Lady Composers': Gendered Reception in the New York Composers' Forum, 1935–1940," *American Music* (2008): 277–308., and Melissa de Graaf, "Intersection of Gender and Modernism in the Music of Johanna Beyer." Institute for Studies in American Music (ISAM) Newsletter, vol. XXXIII, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 8–9, 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Quoted in Rita Mead, "Henry Cowell's New Music 1925–1936," (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1978): 495. Ives' misogynistic rhetoric is discussed in detail by Judith Tick, see Tick, "Charles Ives and Gender Ideology," in *Musicology and Difference*, Ruth Solie ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020): 83–106.
<sup>34</sup> Ray Wilding-White, "Remembering Ruth Crawford Seeger: An Interview with Charles and Peggy Seeger," *American Music* 6, no. 4 (1988): 445.
obscured until nearly a century later. Even today, Crawford continues to be upheld as the token woman modernist composer, with many others continuing to be overlooked.

Catherine Parsons Smith supports the notion that modernist composition was a masculine pursuit, noting that "it appears that modernism in music, as in literature, may indeed be understood as a reaction to the first wave of feminism. One must painfully conclude that while this reaction was productive for many males, it was profoundly destructive for female composers."<sup>35</sup> Smith argues that, by turning to dissonant composition, female modernist composers were ultimately alienating themselves: they renounced their feminized heritage rooted in a domestic musical tradition, while simultaneously being rejected by their male contemporaries.<sup>36</sup> Smith also suggests that, due to the misogynistic rhetoric common at the time, modernism itself was markedly masculine, ultimately driving women away from pursuing a career as modernist composers. Smith uses Crawford as an example, arguing that she "abandoned the development of her own modernist compositional language in the early 1930s, just as she seemed to have gained creative maturity."<sup>37</sup>

In his monograph examining Crawford's music, Joseph N. Straus further elaborates on the masculine ideology embedded in the ultramodernist tradition and endeavors to determine if Crawford's music "speaks in a different voice" than her male contemporaries due to her female subjectivity.<sup>38</sup> He investigates the duality between consonance and dissonance—the issue that could be said to be at the centre of ultramodernist composition—in Crawford's oeuvre, mapping

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Catherine Parsons Smith, "A Distinguishing Virility': On Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender*, Susan C. Cook and Judy Tsou, ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994): 99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Catherine Parsons Smith, "A Distinguishing Virility': On feminism and Modernism in American Art Music," in *Cecila Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy Tsou (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994): 92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Smith, "A Distinguishing Virility," 93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 223.

these musical characteristics to feminine- and masculine-gendered traits in what he claims are two equally plausible ways: "either consonance is the stable, privileged term with dissonance its dark, chaotic Other, or dissonance is the active, striving term and consonance merely the passive place upon which dissonance discharges its energies."<sup>39</sup> He argues that while the male modernist composers, such as Ives and Cowell, would support the second of these two interpretations— "certainly Ives imagined the dissonance of his music as a barrier against softness and effeminacy"—Crawford also seemed to identify with dissonance, marking it as "natural and feminine" in her compositions.<sup>40</sup> Straus provides the last movement of Crawford's String Quartet as an example of the difficulties of mapping binaries such as gender onto a composition:

In the fourth movement of the String Quartet, for example, a free melody in the first violin is poised against a strictly serialized melody played in octaves by the other three instruments. One might argue that the serial voice, with its rational, orderly patterning, lines up with the first term in each of the familiar male/female, reason/emotion, stable/unstable oppositions. One might argue equally plausibly, I think, that the free melody in the first violin asserts a striving, autonomous individuality against the cyclical melody shared communally by the other instruments, and thus that the free melody should be lined up with the first terms in the dualities.<sup>41</sup>

Ultimately, Straus suggests that "Crawford's music can be understood to create and invoke a system of dualities, including possibly the binarism of gender, only to question and undermine it."<sup>42</sup> While Straus is careful to not make any sweeping claims about female ultramodernist composers in general, or the ways in which Crawford's biography might play a role in the narrative we hear regarding the conflict between consonance and dissonance in her music, his work set the stage for feminist music theorists to follow, including Ellie Hisama and Rachel Lumsden.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 223.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 223.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 224.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 224.

In response to Smith, Hisama has argued that ultramodernism can be viewed not as an oppressive tool but rather a source of inspiration and creativity for women composers, including Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon. Hisama points out that Crawford abandoned modernist composition in the early 1930s not due to the misogyny of her colleagues, but rather to pursue folk music, raise her family, and focus on teaching.<sup>43</sup> Hisama also argues that while the male composers of the time viewed modernist composition as a masculine endeavour, that did not necessarily make it one. She writes:

That male composers like Ives wished to ascribe to modernism stereotypically masculine characteristics is not sufficient reason to claim that modernist music actually *is* a male preserve. Unlike Gilbert and Gubar, or Marianne DeKoven, who have convincingly claimed that misogyny is part and parcel of specific modernist literary texts, Smith does not demonstrate the inherent misogyny of musical matter itself—that is, pitch, rhythm, and other elements of structure... These analyses of compositions by Crawford, Bauer, and Gideon illustrate my belief that the aesthetic and techniques of musical modernism are not inherently misogynist, but that modernism indeed provides a space for forms of expression by women. Because it released these composers from the strictures of a common musical style by giving them the means to forge new musical procedures and narratives, modernism did not prove harmful to them, but rather stimulated their work in inventive and liberating ways.<sup>44</sup>

Hisama also disagrees with Straus's interpretation of the final movement of Crawford's String Quartet. While Straus presents the two gendered readings—one in which the first violin line is gendered male, and one in which it is gendered female—as equally plausible, Hisama argues that facts from Crawford's biography point to one interpretation as more convincing than the other. She writes:

The reading which designates Voice I as the male party does not take into account the psychological contexts of the quartet—that is, Crawford's dissatisfaction with her diffident manner and her anger about women's lack of freedom. Composing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Crawford's turn from ultramodernism to folk songs and her desire to raise a family are discussed in Judith Tick's biography of Crawford. See Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), especially pp. 223–246.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Ellie M. Hisama, Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 11.

the quartet movement may well have allowed her to confront a weakness she perceived in her manner and to reverse traditional gender roles. The texture of a solo, unmuted voice confronting a group of three muted voices strengthens the reading that characterizes Voice I as embodying Crawford herself challenging a body of authority which was assuredly gendered male... Indeed my feminist account of the voices' relationship *contradicts* the stereotype in which female identity is equated with passive, weak, and timid, while male identity is equated with aggressive, strong, and confident.<sup>45</sup>

Despite Hisama's persuasive argument that women modernist composers were creating music in the early half of the twentieth century, and that "feminists of the twenty-first century have the responsibility to include them and their music in our accounts of modernism, rather than leaving its legacy to men," surprisingly little has been said about the use of dissonant counterpoint in the music of other women composers besides Crawford.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the following chapters, I propose that the narratives and musical structures I interpret in my analyses of Beyer's music are informed by her lived experiences as a woman, immigrant composer writing in an American-nationalist musical style dominated by men. Unlike Smith, Straus, and Hisama, who all propose that the consonance/dissonance binary lines up with a feminine/masculine binary in modernist music one way or another, I suggest that consonance, dissonance, masculinity, and femininity are more complex than the "ideological binary" systems made use of in previous analyses, aligning my methodology with the philosophies of queer theories. Beyer's music can be considered non-normative in many ways, including her equal prominence of consonance and dissonance, sometimes occurring simultaneously in different musical parameters; distorting the practices of heterophony by creating multiple melodies from the same source material; and blurring formal boundaries through phrases that constantly expand and contract. Acting within the confines of dissonant counterpoint and the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Hisama, Gendering Musical Modernism, 47 (emphasis in original).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Hisama, Gendering Musical Modernism, 11.

ultramodernist idiom while deviating from the rules to create her own unique style can be seen, then, as Beyer's way of asserting her independence and her feminist agency within her misogynistic environment.

# Queer Theory and Music Theory

The dissolution of the gender binary finds its home in the post-structuralist field of queer theory, which sets out to "challenge the pervasive and often invisible heteronormativity of modern societies."<sup>47</sup> One of the earliest proponents of the field, Judith Butler, sought to disentangle the concepts of sex and gender, ultimately proposing that gender is performative, based on a series of repeated actions, and extends beyond the physical realm of sex:

If sex and gender are radically distinct, then it does not follow that to be a given sex is to become a given gender; in other words, "woman" need not be the cultural construction of the female body, and "man" need not interpret male bodies. This radical formulation of the sex/gender distinction suggests that sexed bodies can be the occasion for a number of different genders, and further, that gender itself need not be restricted to the usual two. If sex does not limit gender, then perhaps there are genders, ways of culturally interpreting the sexed body, that are in no way restricted by the apparent duality of sex.<sup>48</sup>

Butler draws on the transformative work of the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, who radically claimed that "one is not born, but becomes a woman."<sup>49</sup> Beauvoir, in her attempt to uncover the history behind gender inequality, believed that while there are biological differences between men and women, women "become women" due to the circumstances of their society and the pressures of societal norms: "No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine."<sup>50</sup> Butler

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Michael Warner, "Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet," *Social Text* 29 (1991): 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990): 152.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans., Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011): 606.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 606.

expands this idea by postulating that if gender is a social construct rather than a biological given, there can be multiple interpretations of gender beyond "the usual two," breaking away from the typical binary system. Further, if gender is a performative act, it is fluid, flexible, and subject to change. Queer theory combines these threads, advocating for an understanding of gender that is inclusive to multiple, flexible bodily interpretations between "masculine" and "feminine."

Sara Ahmed theorizes queerness phenomenologically, as a particular way of being in the world. Her theory of queer phenomenology is rooted in the concept of orientation: as humans, we are all oriented toward particular objects, people, and spaces which in turn influences the way we perceive the world. Our intention or our actions to use these objects in specific ways recursively affects the way we orient ourselves toward them. Ahmed uses the example of a writing table: by sitting at the table with a pen in hand, we are engaged in a certain type of work that makes "certain things, not others, available" to us.<sup>51</sup> A writing table, for instance, is shaped in a particular way that is conducive to writing, but would not make for a good coffee table as the height prohibits setting a cup of coffee on it while seated on a sofa. In this way, "the table is both an effect of work and also what allows us to work: whether the table 'works' depends upon whether we can do, when we make use of the table, the work we intend to do."<sup>52</sup> Queer orientations, by contrast, "are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by the lines of conventional genealogy. Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world 'slantwise' allow other objects to come into view. A queer orientation might be one that does not overcome what is 'off line,' and hence acts out of line with others."53 These moments of "disorientation" result in a "queer effect," one that is relative to a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, 50

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, 107 (emphasis in original).

minoritized group or context, defined by "bodies out of place."<sup>54</sup> Ahmed takes women writers as an example:

As Virginia Woolf shows us in *A Room of One's Own*, for women to claim a space to write is a political act. Of course, there are women who write. We know this. Women have taken up spaces oriented toward writing. And yet, the woman writer remains just that: the woman writer, deviating from the somatic norm of "the writer," as such. We know too that there are women philosophers, and how they still cause trouble as "bodies out of place" in the "home" of philosophy, which itself is shaped by taking some bodies and not others as its somatic norm. So what happens when the woman philosopher takes up her pen? What happens when the study is not reproduced as a masculine domain by the collective repetition of such moments of deviation?<sup>55</sup>

Beyer's experience as an immigrant woman composer, especially one in such a misogynistic environment as the ultramodernist circles, is yet another example of a "body out of place" and the queer disorientation that this experience encompasses.

Throughout her monograph, Ahmed uses the word "queer" in two different ways: one is a way of describing what is "oblique," "off line," non-normative, subversive, or deviant; and the other describes specific non-hetero sexual practices. The two definitions, she argues, are intertwined, and cannot be reduced. Queer lives are queer due to their deviation, sexual and otherwise, and their disruption of "the order of things."<sup>56</sup> Later, Ahmed suggests that "queer lives are about the potentiality of not following certain conventional scripts of family, inheritance, and child rearing, whereby 'not follow' involves disorientation: it makes things oblique."<sup>57</sup> "Queer," then, can encompass not only a sexual orientation, but also someone who lives their life in an otherwise unconventional way.<sup>58</sup> It is this meaning of queer—deviant, subversive, non-normative

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, 161.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, 177-178.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> A similar understanding of queer as deviational is provided by David Halperin, who argues that "queer is... *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.* It is an identity without an essence" (emphasis in original). See David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 62.

in general, but also an avoidance of traditional gender roles and, potentially, a non-heterosexual orientation—that I will continue to use throughout the remainder of this dissertation.

Music scholars have been combining feminist theoretical practices with music theory since the early 1990s. According to Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "a (feminist) music-theoretical poiesis inquires how subject positions shape and are (re)enacted in musical discourse, even in that discourse which concerns the 'structural' organization of music."<sup>59</sup> Applications of queer theory, by contrast, are far more recent. Queer theory and queer phenomenology have been applied in the field of musicology, especially in popular music studies, with success for the past two decades; however, the incorporation into music theory has trailed behind.<sup>60</sup> One significant contribution is by Gavin Lee, who applies queer phenomenology to music theory as a discipline, with specific reference to David Lewin's theory of musical phenomenology, to demonstrate how this approach to music perception can be viewed as queer. He also proposes a queer formalist framework as a way the field can move forward with "queer music theory." Unlike Lee, who is more concerned with queering specific music theories and the discipline as a whole, my application of queer theory has a different goal: I will show how my interpretations of Beyer's music support gendered readings that rely on a queer understanding of gender, one that is fluid, flexible, and not limited to the usual masculine/feminine binary. At the same time, I will also demonstrate how these

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "Of Poetics and Poiesis, Pleasure and Politics—Music Theory and Modes of the Feminine," *Perspectives of New Music* 32, 1 (1994): 47. For other early examples of feminist music theory, see also Fred Everett Maus, "Masculine Discourse in Music Theory," *Perspectives of New Music* 31, 2 (1991): 264–93; Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991 [2002]); Suzanne G. Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994): 67–83; and Marion A. Guck, "Music Loving, Or the Relationship with the Piece," *Music Theory Online* 2 (1996).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Several collections, dating as far back as the early 1990s, have been published that focus on queer musicology. For a few examples of this type of work, see Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds., *Queering the Pitch*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007); Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga, eds., *Queering the Popular Pitch* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg, eds., *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Ruth Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

movements are non-normative, and therefore could be understood themselves as queer within the ultramodernist movement.

A second, more recent contribution by Lee distinguishes between "queer music theory" and the "queer ethos." While the "queer ethos," that of non-normative musical practices, can be learned and applied by any composer or analyst, "queer music theory" is contingent on the LGBTQ+ identity of the music-maker, composer, listener, or theorist. Lee provides the caveat that despites its generalizable nature, the "queer ethos" should still "focus on music-makers or listeners who are marginalized in some way by race, gender, sexuality, or ability."<sup>61</sup> My application of queer theory to Beyer's music, with her marginalized identities and non-normative musical practices, falls into the category of the "queer ethos" as outlined by Lee.

The gender studies and queer theory literature have made use of "queer" as a verb (as in, "to queer" something). "Queering" describes an action or choice to subvert societal norms or the dominant culture, especially in instances where gender binaries can be challenged. In the words of Suzanne Clisby, "here we understand 'queering' as praxis, both a practice and a method that enables us to challenge and subvert normative understandings and representations of gender, sexualities, and identities."<sup>62</sup> In the following chapters, I make use of the verb form of "queer" to describe specific instances where Beyer deviates from expectations of the idiom within which she was working or otherwise undermines conventional gender norms. For instance, while dissonance was traditionally considered a "masculine" musical trait and consonance a more "feminine" one, the simultaneous combination of dissonance and consonance "queers" a conventional gendered reading of Beyer's music.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Gavin Lee, "Introduction," in *Queer Ear: Remaking Music Theory*, ed. Gavin Lee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023): 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Suzanne Clisby, "Framing the Margins: Gender, Sexuality, and Identities of the Borderlands," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Identities of the Borderlands: Queering the Margins,* Suzanne Clisby, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020): 3.

## Queer Theories and Beyer

In many ways, Beyer subverted the masculine/feminine binary throughout her life, supporting an interpretation of her musical narratives through a queer lens. As a woman composing in the ultramodernist idiom, Beyer lived a lifestyle that deviated from what was expected from her during this time, existing as a "body out of place" similar to Virginia Woolf's woman writer, or the woman philosopher as discussed by Ahmed. By bending the rules of dissonant counterpoint within her works, thereby not conforming wholesale to the masculine ideology touted by her contemporaries, Beyer furthered this sense of "body out of place," acting as a deviant within a heteronormative, misogynistic system. She therefore neither conformed to the expectations of her as a woman (by being a composer and writing in a dissonant style) *nor* conformed to the masculine expectations of her ultramodernist contemporaries (for example, by including a heavy dose of consonance into her works), instead occupying a liminal space between the two conventional gender roles in a heterosexual framework.<sup>63</sup> In her dissertation studying the music of Beyer and Vivian Fine, Lumsden refers to this liminal space as being "on the edge":

Describing the composers and works discussed in this dissertation in terms of an "edge" is an attempt to reflect some of these philosophical tensions. Simplistically speaking, edges have a demarcative function, serving as borders, boundaries, limits: edges delineate an "inside" and "outside." To varying degrees, Beyer and Fine, as women, were "on the edge" of a decidedly male-dominated field, since both women struggled to build musical careers during an era in which men dramatically outnumbered women as composers, particularly in the realm of dissonant, atonal music... But edges can be more than just superficial lines or categorical boundaries—edges can also be places of power. One who is "on the edge" navigates multiple

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> In the introductory chapter to her edited collection, Suzanne Clisby associates an intersectional understanding of queerness with folks who occupy "marginal spaces" or "borderlands": "those who inhabit the margins and edges of our social worlds." A later chapter in this collection, written by Clisby and Tanzina Choudhury, proposes that Bangladeshi women who work on construction sites "queer the margins of male space through posing a potentially radical challenge to patriarchal gender norms." These women "constitute an invasion of female bodies into male space; they perform masculinised labor in the public arena… and they are frequently the main source of household income and as such subvert the stereotype of male as breadwinner." These descriptors all ring true for Beyer's circumstances as a woman composer supporting herself, suggesting that a similar understanding of Beyer, and other women ultramodernist composers of the time, as "queering" male space can be adopted. See Suzanne Clisby, "Framing the Margins," 1–11, and Tanzania Choudhury and Suzanne Clisby, "Women Queering the Margins of Male Space? Female Construction Workers as 'Border Bodies' in Bangladesh," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Identities of the Borderlands: Queering the Margins*, Suzanne Clisby, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020): 167–185.

fields, multiple areas—and is able to see both inside and outside, within and between their respective positions. Edges can serve as spaces of privileged insight, with the potential for fostering unique and powerful politics of location. A broad wealth of feminist scholarship... has examined the potentially transgressive perspectives of oppressed groups and outsiders, reevaluating the epistemologies of those who are "on the margins" as revelatory, subversive, and even revolutionary.<sup>64</sup>

Lumsden points to other aspects of Beyer's life beyond being a woman composer that further subvert the gender norms of the time and position her "on the edge" of what it meant to be "feminine" during the 1920s and 30s. For example, Lumsden argues that Beyer held unconventional views on marriage, proposing an open marriage with Cowell during his incarceration. In a letter to Cowell, Beyer writes: "I personally believe that freedom in marriage is the only tie."<sup>65</sup> Beyer also expressed on several occasions how she could financially support both of them, if they were to marry, queering the conventional view of men as the main source of household income.<sup>66</sup>

Melissa de Graaf observes similar deviations from gender norms in Beyer's life, with specific reference to her experience taking part in the Composers' Forum concert series. De Graaf argues "the Forum sessions not only allowed [Beyer] to test her music in front of live audiences, they also provided her with an opportunity to construct her artistic and gender identities."<sup>67</sup> These concerts were a rare occurrence for Beyer's work to be performed, and her appearance as well as her language and behaviour while interacting with the audience during the ensuing question-and-answer periods provide a glimpse into how she balanced "two intersecting, often contradictory identities."<sup>68</sup> De Graaf points out several aspects of Beyer's appearance and demeanor that could be classified as masculine. In her headshot for the Forum program, for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Rachel Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge: Johanna Beyer's String Quartet No. 2 (1936) and Vivian Fine's *The Race of Life* (1937) (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2012): 3–5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Quoted in Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge," 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge," 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 8.

<sup>68</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 8.

example, she appears "stark, severe, what some might call unfeminine": she has a strong gaze looking off into the distance, the "sharp lines of her neck and shoulders" are accentuated, and her hair is pulled back.<sup>69</sup> When she was asked questions by the audience after her performances, her answers were often quick and efficient, "lacking in emotion—characteristics often associated with the rational and masculine."<sup>70</sup> At the same time, she retained some characteristically passive, perhaps even feminine qualities when engaging with the audience, particularly when her music was under attack. De Graaf describes how, in response to a rude comment from an audience member, Beyer simply "bowed graciously" rather than displaying a temper or sense of impatience that was common amongst her male colleagues.<sup>71</sup>

As discussed briefly in the Introduction, Beyer was no stranger to offensive comments, both toward herself and her music, during these concerts. De Graaf classifies three categories of comments that Beyer most often received: anti-modernist comments, anti-female comments, or heart versus brain comments. While her male colleagues were also victim of the anti-modernist comments during the Composers' Forum concert series, none of them dealt with the same gendered critiques as Beyer. Some audience members, concerned with the intellectualism of the modernist movement and a woman's inability to compose from the brain rather than the heart, "questioned whether Beyer had ever been in love, implying that such emotion was impossible for a woman who wrote such unfeeling music."<sup>72</sup> Beyer's commitment to balancing her masculine and feminine identities in her musical pursuits is obvious in her response, where she insisted (on more than one occasion) that her works were "from both the heart and the brain."<sup>73</sup> Ultimately,

<sup>69</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Composers' Forum Concert Transcripts, May 19, 1937 (National Archives II, Maryland, MD), quoted in de Graaf, "Never Call us Lady Composers," 295.

de Graaf argues, "that [Beyer] sought to embrace dual aspects of her musical self is evident in her music, in which the independent feminine and masculine lines together achieve the balance that Beyer sought in her own complicated identity."<sup>74</sup> It is this complicated identity, with a balance of masculine and feminine qualities, that I suggest could be read as queer.

While I will propose in the subsequent chapters that aspects of Beyer's biography and lived experiences are reflected in the musical structures of her Clarinet Suites, *Dissonant Counterpoint*, and String Quartet no. 1, especially her experience as a "body out of place" within the ultramodernist movement, her subversion of gender norms, and her personal liminality between masculine and feminine characteristics, I do not want to suggest that these readings were necessarily what Beyer intended. To be clear, I am not interested in compositional intent— I am not suggesting that a queer narrative was purposefully and consciously composed by Beyer to express her particular situation or experiences as a woman in the ultramodernist movement. Rather, like Hisama, I see aspects of Beyer's biography as enabling a new way this music might be interpreted. Further, I am not suggesting that queer theory is a compelling analytical lens for Beyer's entire oeuvre, that the results of these analyses are representative of all the music Beyer wrote, or that Beyer herself was necessarily queer. I am merely suggesting that these movements, in particular, could be interpreted as an expression of Beyer's complex subjectivities and feminist agency.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 9, 15.

### CHAPTER 3

Consonance, Dissonance, and Gender in the Clarinet Suites

Traditionally, dissonance is most often thought of as a vertical phenomenon, a clash between two notes occurring simultaneously. In "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music" (TENM), however, Seeger emphasizes the importance of dissonance in single-line melodies.<sup>1</sup> In fact, over half of his treatise, including his "Manual for Dissonant Counterpoint," is dedicated to dissonance in the horizontal domain. Seeger proposes that dissonance can occur in all six of what he considers to be the main building blocks of music: pitch, dynamics, timbre, tempo, accent, and proportion. In general, melodic intervals greater than an octave are more dissonant than simple intervals; abrupt changes in dynamics or tempo are more dissonant than *crescendi / decrescendi* or *accelerandos / decelerandos*; and anything that creates a complex ratio (e.g. proportions between the number of notes in subsequent measures, proportions between tempi in subsequent sections, etc.) is more dissonant than simple ratios.<sup>2</sup> Seeger advises that composers should begin with writing pieces for solo instruments, especially solo woodwind instruments, in order to gain practice writing dissonant melodies.<sup>3</sup> He emphasizes that only by writing good, dissonant melodies can one hope to write effective dissonant polyphonic textures.

Like her mentor, Ruth Crawford, whose first *Diaphonic Suite* was for solo flute (or oboe), Johanna Beyer similarly heeded Seeger's advice to begin her compositional efforts in the dissonant style with compositions for a solo woodwind instrument. Suite for Clarinet I and Suite for Clarinet IB for solo Bb clarinet are Beyer's earliest known compositions, written during the time she was taking lessons with Crawford and Seeger in the early months of 1932. These two

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Charles Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979*, edited by Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994): 1–273.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 100-107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 195.

pieces exist in manuscript form in the Johanna Beyer Archives housed at the New York Public Library for Performing Arts and have since been published by the composers' collective Frog Peak Music as part of the Johanna Beyer Project, led by Larry Polansky.<sup>4</sup> Within the Johanna Beyer Archives, two versions of each Suite appear with some discrepancies between them: one is written a whole-step lower than the other, and several transpositional errors occur as well as the occasional odd enharmonic respelling. In the notes following the Frog Peak Music publication of these Suites, Polansky claims that the second, transposed version, seems to be the "final (or later) 'fair copy' version," for which he lists several reasons: it is neater and removes several "notational collisions" that occur in the first version (such as hairpins colliding with notes on the staff); it does not contain the same editorial corrections, such as crossed out notes; and it does not contain notes written in the margins, which Polansky deem to be "memoranda intended for the composer herself... not intended to be part of the finished score."5 Polansky also notes that the second version includes "for Clarinet Bb" in the title. He suggests that the designation of which clarinet to use furthers the likelihood that this edition is the final version, meant to be used for performances. Like Polansky, I will assume the second version of these scores is the "final" copy and use this edition in my analyses.

All four movements of both Clarinet Suites are written in verse form. As described by Seeger, discussed in Chapter 1, verse form is a musical structure which takes poetry as its model. This formal type is distinguished, primarily, by its visual layout on the manuscript page—each phrase of musical "poetry" is restricted to a single line on the score, each line is typically a different number of measures long, and each typically ends with a double barline. Other aspects

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Beyer's unpublished manuscripts may be found in the Johanna Magdalena Beyer scores, JPB 82–77, Music Division, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Larry Polansky, "General." Editorial notes for Suite for Clarinet I (Lebanon, NH: Frog Peak Music, 2006).

of this form are also borrowed from poetry, including the common use of musical "assonance" or "rhyme" at the beginning or end of each line—repeated notes, rhythmic patterns, articulations, etc., that create a sense of symmetry and balance from phrase to phrase, line to line. It is likely that Beyer learned this formal type during her lessons with Seeger and Crawford, whose four *Diaphonic Suites* and "Sacco, Vanzetti," composed in 1930 and 1932 respectively, are all likewise set in verse form.

In this chapter, I will track the five melodic transformations proposed in Chapter 2 in three movements from Beyer's Clarinet Suites (Suite for Clarinet I, movement 3, and Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 3 and 4) to highlight the sense of melodic metamorphosis and constant evolution occurring in these single-line pieces. I propose that through this process of melodic transformation, Beyer upholds the ultramodernist preference for variety over repetition, similar to Crawford's practice in the *Diaphonic Suites* (1930). At the same time, Beyer's melodies create a narrative arch that goes against the dissonant counterpoint style: melodies start out dissonant and become more consonant. I hear these movements of the Clarinet Suites as a musical representation of Beyer's subjectivities, mirroring her isolated experience as a "body out of place" within the ultramodernist movement and the way in which she fluidly and flexibly negotiated her gender identity in her everyday life.

My hermeneutic interpretation of these movements draws on the critical field of queer theory in two ways. First, I propose a new understanding of consonance and dissonance that transcends a binary system, undermining the traditional gender binary often ascribed to these qualities. Unlike her ultramodernist contemporaries who privileged dissonance (and masculinity) as the foundation of their compositional practice, Beyer integrates consonance and dissonance equally into the Clarinet Suites, with two movements featuring an initial dissonant melody gradually morphing into a more consonant final line, and one movement alternating between

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consonance and dissonance in consecutive phrases of music. Unlike previous analyses of modernist music, which operate under the assumption that consonance and dissonance are discrete variables (i.e. something is either consonant or dissonant, with no gradation between them) that cannot occur simultaneously,<sup>6</sup> I propose that consonance and dissonance are continuous, allowing for some moments to be *more* dissonant than others. While this idea is not explicitly stated by Seeger, he does suggest a continuous understanding of consonance and dissonance and dissonance in TENM: intervals are divided into "perfect" and "imperfect" categories of consonances and dissonances, and he distinguishes between rhythmic proportions that are "mild," "medium," or "strong" dissonances, suggesting internal divisions of each category.<sup>7</sup> By rejecting the consonance/dissonance binary in favour of a continuum, I likewise reject any gendered readings based on a masculine/feminine duality. Through the analytical model that I apply to these movements, I hear the melodic material as in flux and constantly changing, lending itself to a queer understanding of gender that places masculinity and femininity on a spectrum and allows for multiple, flexible, and non-static bodily interpretations between the two.

Since Beyer incorporates consonance and dissonance within several musical domains (pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulations, and tempo), the ability to hear specific moments as either wholly consonant or dissonant is also complicated. At many moments throughout, dissonance in one parameter (pitch, for example) is simultaneously contrasted by consonance in another (rhythm). For those who wish to ascribe the rigid dichotomy between masculine and feminine

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> In Straus's analyses of Crawford's music, for example, he uncovers moments of consonance and dissonance in several musical parameters including melody, rhythm, and dynamics; however, he does not discuss moments that might be more rhythmically dissonant than others, or what happens when rhythmic dissonance is paired with melodic consonance, etc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> According to Seeger, minor 2<sup>nd</sup>, major 7<sup>th</sup>, minor 9<sup>th</sup>, major 14<sup>th</sup>, and minor 16<sup>th</sup> intervals all create perfect dissonances, while major 2<sup>nd</sup>, minor 7<sup>th</sup>, major 9<sup>th</sup>, minor 14<sup>th</sup>, and major 16<sup>th</sup> intervals create imperfect dissonances. For rhythm proportion, 2:3, 3:2, 2:5, 2:7, and 2:9 create mild dissonance; 3:4, 4:3, and 3:5 create medium dissonance, and 4:5, 3:7, 4:7, 3:8, and 4:9 create strong dissonance. See Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 201.

characteristics to dissonance and consonance, these moments containing both are problematic and disorientating, creating a "queer" effect. Rather than understanding either consonance or dissonance as Beyer's feminine subjectivity, adhering to the social pressures to compose in a particular style or speaking out against them, I interpret the transcendence of the binary and the fluid, ever-evolving progression from a state of relative dissonance to one of relative consonance, as Beyer's act of feminist agency.

### Suite for Clarinet I, movement 3

On the manuscript for the third movement of Suite for Clarinet I, Beyer writes a note that captures the overarching narrative of the movement (see Example 3.1): "modulation from skippy + twist neume (large interval) to steppy + line neume (small interval). Contrast between staccato and legato, climax falling down." Within this description, Beyer reveals not only her knowledge of and adherence to the ultramodernist agenda and the compositional practice of dissonant counterpoint laid out in Seeger's treatise, but also her quirkier, more playful, perhaps even more feminine personality. The "twist neume" and "line neume" terminology comes directly from Seeger's treatise on dissonant counterpoint-according to Seeger, "neumes" are the smallest musical unit, comprising three or four notes, similar in some ways to a melodic motive. Beyer's use of these terms projects the more quasi-scientific, manly persona associated with the compositional practice of dissonant counterpoint. The inclusion of more whimsical, "feminine" descriptors, such as "skippy" and "steppy" stands out as a unique, more effeminate way to describe what otherwise might be considered a "masculine" process. This note, then, sets the tone for the combination of masculine and feminine qualities in this movement, and demonstrates one small but significant way Beyer queers conventional gender norms in her musical practice.

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Example 3.1. A note at the top of the manuscript for the third movement of Suite for Clarinet I reads "modulation from skippy + twist neume (large interval) to steppy + line neume (small interval). Contrast between staccato + legato, climax falling down." The original Beyer manuscripts can be found in the Johanna Beyer Archives in the Music Division of the New York Public Library for Performing Arts.



Example 3.2. The initial melody of Suite for Clarinet I, movement 3 features variety in pitch classes, with an almost complete aggregate and repeated notes (indicated by parentheses) most often separated by six intervening tones. Intervals between tones feature many "perfect" and "imperfect dissonances," shown in blue and orange, with consonant intervals (purple and red) dissonated by a semitone preparation or resolution. Rhythmic dissonance is created through complex ratios of notes in adjacent measures, and rapidly changing articulated dynamics create dynamic dissonance.

The movement opens with a melodic line that is typical of the dissonant counterpoint style, conforming to many of Seeger's rules for a dissonant melody (see Example 3.2). The first half of the line comprises a nearly complete twelve-tone aggregate demonstrating a propensity for chromatic completion, with C#<sup>8</sup> repeated once and an F missing.<sup>9</sup> The repeated note, C#, is separated by six notes from its first iteration, reflecting Seeger's insistence on variety. In the second half of the line, note repetitions occur more often, with Eb and E heard in m. 5 repeated as D# and E in m. 7, and the G in m. 6 repeated as the last note of m. 7; however, in each of these cases, Beyer separates the repetitions by at least six intervening pitches. The one exception is the repetition of C, heard in the lower register on the last note of the quintuplet in m. 5, and again only four notes later two octaves higher.

The intervallic content of this line is also varied, with no direct repetition of any interval, and includes many instances of Seegers "perfect dissonances" (minor seconds, major sevenths, minor ninths, shown in blue on Example 3.2) and "imperfect dissonance" (major seconds, minor sevenths, major ninths, shown in orange on Example 3.2), together totaling eleven of the twenty-five intervals. The consonant intervals (shown in red) and the augmented and diminished intervals that, while on paper look dissonant, are most often heard as their consonant enharmonic equivalents<sup>10</sup> (shown in purple) are all dissonated by a semitone preparation or resolution (or both) in pitch-class space of the consonant interval (see Chapter 1 for Seeger's guidelines on "dissonation").

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The Clarinet Suites are written for Clarinet in B<sup>b</sup> with a transposing score. All references to pitch throughout this chapter refer to the notated pitch on the score rather than the sounding concert pitch unless otherwise stated. <sup>9</sup> While chromatic or aggregate completion is not discussed by Seeger in TENM, Straus notes this feature is a significant aspect of Crawford's compositional style. He writes: "The tendency of Crawford's melodies to fill whatever musical space is made available to them acts as a dynamic force—they move toward a state of 'chromatic plenitude'... The integrity, the self enclosure, of individual melodic phrases stems, in part, from their achievement of chromatic completion. Each phrase or unit tends to occupy a single chromatic zone, either in pitch or pitch-class space. Crawford's melodies seek to saturate completely whatever space they have opened up for themselves." See Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger*, 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Seeger writes: "All augmented and diminished intervals are dissonant in theory. This dissonance, however, depends on the existence of a fairly strong diatonic tonality at the place where they occur. When this tonality is weak or altogether absent (as in so much modern music) the enharmonic equivalents, which often are consonances, are the ones actually heard. Consequently, most of the augmented and diminished intervals written or played in the duodecuple system are practically consonant, and it is best to write them in the simplest way." See Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 130–131.

Several other features of this melody are also dissonant, according to Seeger's theory of dissonant counterpoint. While the movement is notated in 2/8, the rhythmic pulse is obscured (and therefore "dissonated") by the use of tuplets (triplets, quintuplets, sextuplets, etc.) in half of the measures. The number of notes in successive measures often create complex ratios, producing "mild" and "medium" rhythmic dissonances: m. 1 to m. 2 creates a 2:3 ratio; m. 2 to m. 3 creates a 3:4 ratio; m. 4 to m. 5 creates a 2:5 ratio; and m. 5 to m. 6 creates a 5:3 ratio (see green boxes beneath the score in Example 3.2). In terms of dynamics, the markings are articulated (i.e. specific indications rather than hairpins) and feature stark, sudden contrasts between *piano*, *forte*, *pianissimo*, and *mezzoforte*. This rapid alternation, Seeger claims, creates dynamic dissonance in single-line melodies.<sup>11</sup>

The opening melody also features entirely detached articulations, combining the use of *staccato, staccatissimo*, and *portato* notations. While Seeger does not explicitly discuss articulations and how they can be more or less dissonant, the alternation of detached articulation types creates a sense of "tension" in this opening melody, a quality that Seeger equates with dissonance. Further, in all of the movements of these Suites, Beyer seems to purposefully link detached articulations with dissonance and *legato* articulations with consonance. Her note on the manuscript of this movement implicitly makes this connection: not only is there a modulation from skippy, large-interval twist neumes to steppy, small-interval line neumes, but there is also a contrast between the *staccato* articulations at the beginning and the *legato* articulations at the end. Associating detached articulations with a disjunct line might partially be a convention of the instrument, as it is far more challenging to play a slurred disjunct line than it is to play a detached one. Or it could be a more subtle connection between the more aggressive, perhaps even

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 100.

"masculine" nature of the opening melody, enhanced by detached articulations, and the more calm, smooth, "feminine" nature of the final line, enhanced by *legato* articulations. Either way, articulation seems to be deeply linked to the different characters at play in this musical narrative and as such, are included in my analysis despite the lack of any explicit theorization from Seeger on how this parameter might be consonant or dissonant.

On the surface of this opening line, then, each individual parameter exudes dissonance, and likely would be gendered "masculine" in traditional analyses of modernist music and by the composers of the time. The interaction of parameters on a deeper level of musical structure, however, problematizes this reading. In particular, three instances of rhythmic consonance in this line—a 4:2 ratio from mm. 3–4, a 3:6 ratio from mm. 6–7, and a 6:1 ratio from the penultimate to the final measure of this line—undermine its entirely dissonant framework. These moments of rhythmic consonance are contrasted by dissonant pitch, articulations, and dynamics, creating a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics within this single line of musical To me, these moments of simultaneous dissonant and consonant, masculine and feminine, musical features create what Ahmed refers to as a "queer effect": a straying or deviation from the straight, clear-cut lines of *either* masculine *or* feminine; a "disruption of the order of things."<sup>12</sup>

While the opening melodic line is fairly typical of the dissonant counterpoint style, the overarching narrative of the movement that leads from this dissonant, disjunct melody at the beginning to the smoother, more consonant melody at the end is far less conventional. While most other ultramodernist composers, including Cowell and Crawford, desired to maintain an entirely dissonant musical fabric with the odd interjection of carefully controlled consonance, Beyer strayed from this ideal and gave consonance and dissonance equal prominence throughout

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, and Others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 161.

this movement of the Clarinet Suites. This movement, then, might be considered to be a nonnormative, and therefore queer, example of the dissonant counterpoint style, as Beyer enacted her feminist agency to create a musical narrative that transforms the melody from what, at the time, might have been considered a dissonant, "masculine" persona at the beginning, to a more consonant, traditionally "feminine" persona at the end.



Example 3.3. Transformations from Line 1 to Line 2 in Suite 1, movement 3.

The melodic transformations I proposed in Chapter 2 reveal how the initial presentation of the melody in this movement gradually mutates into the final, smoother statement at the end. Line 1 and Line 2 (see Example 3.3) remain fairly similar with only some small alterations: the D# and C# in m. 2 change registers; a C in the third measure is transposed down a whole tone to become Bb; an F grace note is added in m. 12 and a C# is transposed down a semitone to C; the first two notes in the quintuplet are reordered and change registers while the last two notes are transposed by a whole step; in the following triplet, the A and G are reordered and the A is transposed to become C#; the C on the downbeat of m. 7 changes register and is transposed down by a semitone; and the final note of the line is also transposed. Although the last note is transposed by a perfect fourth instead of a semitone or whole tone as is usual with the transposition transformation, there are many features that indicate this note should be heard as a varied repetition of the one that ends the initial statement of the melody: in both lines, this final note has the longest duration (written as a quarter note), it is tied over to the downbeat of the following line, and it is the only accented note in the line (marked with a horizontal wedge accent in Line 1 and a *sforzando* in Line 2). While not the same pitch, these qualities allude to the use of a varied "end rhyme," a common facet of verse form as discussed by Seeger.

The new, altered melody presented in Line 2 then becomes the starting place for the next set of transformations which create Line 3 (see Example 3.4): the F# and E in the first measure of the line change order and registers; a G is added; Eb in the next measure is transposed by a whole tone and changes register while the following C# also changes octaves; the G at the beginning of the quintuplet is deleted; this is followed by two reorderings and a Bb that is transposed by a whole tone and changes register; the F grace note and D in m. 12 change order and the F is transposed by a whole tone plus an octave; the following C is transposed down a semitone to C#; the quintuplet in the next measure has three notes transposed (Eb becomes F, Bb becomes C, and D becomes Db) and multiple notes reordered; the following triplet has a G transposed up to become Ab, a G# transposed down to become G, and a reordering of C# and G#; the sextuplet in the second last measure of the line features multiple reorderings, two register changes, and an E transposed up to become F; and the last measure has a C added and the Eb transposed down a whole tone to become C#.



Example 3.4. Transformations from Line 2 to Line 3 in Suite 1, movement 3.

Once again, this new melody becomes the starting place for transformations that lead to Line 4 of the piece (see Example 3.5): E changes register; a Bb is added; F# and G are reordered and the G also changes register; Db is transposed up a whole tone to Eb; another Bb is added, Ab and A are reordered and A changes register; a G grace note is added; C# and D change order and register in the fourth measure of the line; the quintuplet notes are reordered and have three octave changes as well as C transposed down a whole tone to Bb; G in the triplet is deleted while C# is transposed down a semitone to C; and the last two measures contain multiple reorderings, an F transposed down to E, a C# transposed up to D, and two register changes.



Example 3.5. Transformations from Line 3 to Line 4 in Suite 1, movement 3.

Already by this point, the fourth line of the movement, the melody has become more smooth and consonant (see Example 3.6). While the opening line featured many leaps of a seventh or more, Line 4 features many more smaller skips and leaps, as well as more stepwise motion. A general "smoothing out" can also be found in the other musical parameters. In the realm of articulations, the piece begins with a line that is primarily *staccatos* and by the third and fourth line there are several notes that are slurred together. The dynamics are also more "smoothed out" by the fourth line: instead of abrupt changes between *piano*, *forte*, *pianissimo* and *mezzoforte* like those found in the first system, Line 4 has more gradual dynamic changes through the inclusion of a *decrescendo* and a *crescendo*.



Example 3.6. The first four lines of Suite 1, movement 3 "smooth" out gradually: the lines contain more stepwise motion and smaller skips, the dynamics change from distinct dynamic markings to having gradual changes between them, and articulations shift from entirely detached (staccatos, staccatissimos, and portatos) to having some groups of notes slurred together

Line 5 and Line 6 mark the halfway point of the piece (see Example 3.7). Line 5 features an abrupt recap of the opening three measures, slightly transformed: the initial F# changes register followed by an E that also changes register and is transposed up a semitone to F; D# on the downbeat of m. 2 changes register, and the C# and G change order; followed by an exact restatement of m. 3 in m. 35. Line 6 features a restatement of the previous measure, where all notes are transposed up a whole tone except B which is transposed up a semitone to C. These transpositions create more melodic consonance, with the augmented fifth in m. 35 (G# to C) rewritten as a minor sixth in m. 36 (Bb to D), and the major seventh from C to B (a "perfect dissonance" according to Seeger) softened slightly to a minor seventh from D to C (an "imperfect dissonance"). G is also added to this measure to create a quintuplet, breaking up the dissonant leap of a ninth (a major ninth in Line 5 which becomes a minor ninth in Line 6) into to smaller, more consonant intervals: a perfect fourth from C to G, and a minor sixth from G to B<sup>4</sup>. The added slur marking across all of m. 36 also increases its consonant effect. This point of arrival at the halfway mark and the recap of the opening measures is emphasized by the *fermata* markings over the barlines at the end of Line 5 and Line 6 paired with a *rallentando* and a *fermata* over the final B in m. 36, creating a break for the first time in an otherwise constantly moving melody.



Example 3.7. Line 5 and Line 6 mark the halfway point of the movement. Line 5 features a slightly altered recap of the opening three measures, and Line 6 features a repetition of the previous measure, also slightly transformed.

After the midway point, the *a tempo* marking indicates a resumption of the original tempo from before the interruption of Line 5 and Line 6, and the large-scale melodic transformations continue with Line 4 being transformed to become Line 7, Line 7 transformed to become Line 8, and Line 8 transformed to become Line 9 (see Example 3.8). The line-by-line transformations continue to smooth out the melody, with more and more stepwise motion introduced on each subsequent line, and more notes grouped together under slurs, until the final line. In m. 65 (see Example 3.9), the climax of the piece is reached: an A6, in the highest register of the clarinet, written as a quarter note and sustained by a fermata. Following the fermata, the melodic line rushes toward the end, "falling down," as Beyer indicates in her note on the manuscript, in a much more consonant, *legato*, mostly stepwise line, interrupted only briefly by a grace note leaping down an augmented octave into the final pitch of the movement.



Example 3.8. (continued on the next page). Line-by-line transformations continue after the mid-way point, with Line 4 transformed to create Line 7, Line 7 transformed to create Line 8, and Line 8 transformed to create Line 9. On each succeeding line, the melodic material becomes smoother with more stepwise motion, the articulations smooth out with more legato slurs, and the dynamics smooth out with more unarticulated dynamic markings (crescendo and decrescendo).



Example 3.8 (continued). Line-by-line transformations continue after the mid-way point, with Line 4 transformed to create Line 7, Line 7 transformed to create Line 8, and Line 8 transformed to create Line 9. On each succeeding line, the melodic material becomes smoother with more stepwise motion, the articulations smoot out with more legato slurs, and the dynamics smooth out with more unarticulated dynamic markings (crescendo and decrescendo).



Example 3.9. The final line of the movement, Line 10, features a climax on A6, the highest note available on the Bb clarinet, followed by a legato, mostly stepwise descent to a low Gb3, interrupted only by a short G4 grace note immediately preceding the final pitch.

If one interprets this movement as a musical portrayal of Beyer's subjectivity, and equates dissonance and consonance with masculinity and femininity respectively, then it follows that the narrative of this piece could be heard as Beyer's smooth, seamless fluctuation between masculine and feminine qualities in her life. Over the course of this movement, the pitch material, rhythmic structure, dynamics, and articulations all move fluidly between various states of consonance and dissonance through the use of the melodic transformations proposed in Chapter 2. Each line of music can be interpreted as more or less dissonant than others by comparing, for instance, the number of dissonant intervals greater than an octave (melodic dissonance), or the number of dissonant, complex ratios between the number of notes in successive measures (rhythmic dissonance). Line 4, for example, is the most melodically consonant line of the first half of the

movement, featuring only one leap larger than an octave. The inclusion of slurs in mm. 25 and 29 also creates the smoothest, most consonant articulations heard up to this point in the piece. Yet compared with a line in the second half of the movement—Line 8, for example—Line 4 is more dissonant: Line 8 features no leaps larger than a major 7<sup>th</sup>, and only four *staccato* articulations. Line 4, then, is both more consonant than the previous lines of music, and more dissonant than the music that follows. The placement of consonance and dissonance on an unarticulated spectrum, allowing for gradations of "more dissonant" and "less dissonant" between the two poles, breaks away from the previously accepted conception of these qualities as discrete categories, onto which femininity and masculinity (also as discrete categories) have been mapped in prior analyses of ultramodernist music. This reading aligns with a queer understanding of gender, which is also fluid, flexible, and ever-changing, and, I propose, could be seen as a reflection of Beyer's view of herself, asserted in one of many letters to Cowell during his incarceration: "I detested wanting, groping females... I am not a set piece of so many molecule's [sic] I am an ever changing something; hope to stay so."<sup>13</sup> The dissolution of the gender binary in Beyer's life, then, is mirrored by the dissolution of the consonance/dissonance binary in this movement of the Clarinet Suites.

Throughout the evolution between a dissonant melody and a more consonant one, there are also several particularly rich and complex moments where one parameter increases in consonance while another parameter simultaneously increases in dissonance, further complicating the ability to assign uniform categories of consonance and dissonance and subsequently "masculine" or "feminine" gendering to any particular line of music and creating a "queer effect." While on the surface, the initial melody might be heard as dissonant and therefore

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Quoted in Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge," 83.

traditionally gendered "masculine," and the final line as consonant and therefore traditionally gendered "feminine," a closer scrutiny reveals a much more complicated whole. For example, from Line 1 to Line 2, the pitch material becomes more consonant: the reordering and register change of the first two notes in m. 13 alters the melodic line from having two large leaps (a perfect 11th followed by a diminished octave) to two smaller ones (a perfect fifth followed by a diminished fifth), and the transposition of the last two notes in the same measure (B<sup>t</sup> becomes A and C<sup>\(\)</sup> becomes D) reduces the intervals between the last three notes from a perfect 12<sup>th</sup> followed by a major 14<sup>th</sup>, to a perfect 11<sup>th</sup> and a perfect 12<sup>th</sup>. Similarly, the transformations applied to the triplet in the following measure reduce the intervals from a minor 7<sup>th</sup> and augmented octave to an augmented 4<sup>th</sup> and perfect 5<sup>th</sup>. Finally, a transposition and register change from C6 to B4 on the downbeat of the penultimate measure, and the transposition from Bb3 as the final note of the line to Eb4 reduces intervals from large dissonant leaps, to smaller, more consonant ones. As the intervallic content of the line becomes smaller, and therefore more consonant, the rhythmic structure simultaneously becomes more dissonant. In Line 2, there are only two instances of rhythmic consonance instead of three (the consonant 4:3 in mm. 3–4 becomes a dissonant 5:2 in mm. 11-12). Even on the final line of the movement, where pitch, dynamics, and articulations are all comparatively quite consonant, with a mostly stepwise melodic line, a large crescendo, and all notes under slurs, the rhythmic structure of the music remains dissonant, with complex ratios featured between mm. 64–68 (3:5, 5:4, 4:5, and 5:6). This constant integration of consonance and dissonance on various levels of musical structure and across different parameters lends itself to a more complex conception of gender that accepts many more designations than "the usual two."

I read this integration of consonance and dissonance, and a fluid movement between these states, as a portrayal of Beyer's complex subjectivity and expression of her gender identity. As de Graaf points out, Beyer was constantly balancing masculine and feminine traits in her daily life—she was a woman ultramodernist composer (a stereotypically male career path, and an overtly "masculine" style of composition) who was unmarried and supported herself (atypical of women at the time). She often presented herself in a more "masculine" way than her female colleagues, both physically (pulling her hair back for her photo in the concert series program) and in the ways she interacted with the audience. This movement from the first Clarinet Suite, with the simultaneous contrast of consonance and dissonance in different parameters, can be understood as a musical expression of Beyer's "complicated identity," one which "sought to embrace dual aspects" of femininity and masculinity.<sup>14</sup>

### Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4

The fourth movement of Suite for Clarinet IB begins in a rather unconventional way—a steady stream of fortissimo eighth notes played at a slow, eighth note = 56 tempo, with the melodic line often leaping two octaves or more. At the end of the first system, and every subsequent line of this verse-form structure, a small "m=m" indication appears, and the performer increases the speed of the eighth notes. Over the course of the movement, the tempo ebbs and flows, slowing down between Line 3 and Line 4, and again between Line 8 and Line 9, and otherwise continually speeding up until the final line is played at an astonishing, perhaps physically impossible, speed of eighth note = 1276. Embedded within this unique and exciting tempo trajectory, a similar narrative as the third movement of the first Clarinet Suite can be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> De Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism," 9, 15.

heard: a highly disjunct, detached, dissonant musical line is gradually transformed into a more conjunct, *legato*, consonant one. Boland and Polansky identify this movement as historically important, citing it as one of the earliest and most salient examples of "tempo melody," a metric modulation technique coined by Cowell in *New Musical Resources*.<sup>15</sup> As they point out, though, Beyer's knowledge of this technique likely comes from Crawford and Seeger, as her notation directly reflects that used in Seeger's treatise.<sup>16</sup>

In TENM, Seeger proposes three "melodic orders": Melodic Order 1, in which "beats [remain] constant, measures vary" or "note equals note, h = h"; Melodic Order 2, in which

"beats vary, measures [remain] constant" or "measure equals measure, M=M"; and Melodic Order 3, which is an "alternation of orders 1 and 2" in which Seeger advices "care must be taken to keep the rhythmic structure within the limits of practical performance." <sup>17</sup> The example Seeger provides for Melodic Order 3 looks remarkably similar to the fourth movement of Beyer's second Clarinet Suite (see Example 3.10). This technique uses the  $\mathfrak{I} = \mathfrak{I}$  and m=m notations between

measures, indicating tempo changes based on equivalencies between eighth note durations or between the duration of entire measures. For example, with an m=m indication between a measure of two eighth notes and a measure of three eighth notes (as seen between the fourth and fifth measure of the example below), the tempo of the second measure is proportionally

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Henry Cowell, *New Musical Resources*, edited by David Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 98–108. These tempo modulations are also reminiscent of those explored more thoroughly by later 20<sup>th</sup>-century composers such as Conlon Nancarrow, Ben Johnston, and Elliott Carter.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Marguerite Boland and Larry Polansky, "Tempo Melodies in the Johanna Beyer Clarinet Suites (Fourth Movements)," (2007): 1–4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 179. Note that when Seeger writes, "measures vary," he is referring to measure lengths, or the number of notes per measure.

equivalent to the previous measure (three eighth notes are now played in the same time it took to play two before), so the tempo increases by a ratio of 3:2. In the second system of the example, although the second measure containing triplet eighth notes looks faster than the previous measure—visually, the second measure is shorter than the first—the notes in the second measure are actually played slower than those in the previous measure due to the m=m indication: three eighth notes now take up the same amount of time as five did previously, slowing the tempo at a proportion of 3:5.



Example 3.10. Melodic Order 3 uses e = e and measure = measure notations to indicate changes in tempo (reproduced from Seeger's Example 110, TENM p. 180).

At the bottom of the manuscript for the fourth movement of Suite for Clarinet IB (see Example 3.11), Beyer explains her usage of this technique. She writes: "m=m is an abbreviation for measure=measure. This indicates that the measure so marked is equal to the previous measure. h = h indicates that not the entire measure but the 8<sup>th</sup> note is the unit of measurement."

This creates a continual ebb and flow of tempo across a piece composed entirely of running eighth notes. Tempo, then, becomes an additional parameter that can create consonance or dissonance in this movement.

m=m is an abbres	intion for measure	= measure. This in dicates that the measure So may	ked is equel to the
P=P indicates	that not the extine	e measure but the 8th note is the unit of measure	mensure.

Example 3.11. At the bottom of one of the manuscripts for Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4, Beyer includes the note "m=m is an abbreviation for measure = measure. This indicates that the measure so marked is equal to the previous measure.  $\mathcal{N} = \mathcal{N}$ indicates that not the entire measure but the 8<sup>th</sup> note is the unit of measurement."

According to Seeger, the more frequently the tempo changes, the more dissonant a melody becomes.<sup>18</sup> In this movement of Suite for Clarinet IB (see Example 3.12), the m=m metric modulations only occur at the ends of lines, resulting in an increase in dissonance as the melodic lines get shorter (as fewer measures per system means more frequent changes in tempo), and then an increase in consonance as the melodic lines get longer at the end (as there are more measures per system, and therefore fewer frequent changes in tempo). Seeger also proposes that, as with dynamics, a sudden change in tempo (as opposed to gradual changes through the use of accelerando and ritardando markings) also creates dissonance, as do changes of tempo creating complex ratios.<sup>19</sup> In the fourth movement of the second Clarinet Suite, most of the metric modulations are dissonant according to this definition, with Line 1 to Line 2, Line 2 to Line 3, Line 4 to Line 5, Line 5 to Line 6, Line 6 to Line 7, and Line 10 to Line 11 all increasing by 3:2 and Line 8 to Line 9 decreasing by 3:4. Over the trajectory of the piece, then, the tempo modulations create dissonance and consonance in two ways: over the first three quarters of the movement (from Line 1 to Line 9), there is a twofold increase in dissonance, as tempo modulations occur more frequently with lines getting shorter and all but two modulations resulting in an increase or decrease of speed at a dissonant ratio. In the last quarter of the piece (Line 9 to Line 12), there is an increase in consonance, as the tempo modulations occur less

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 106.
frequently, as the lines of music get longer, and three of the four modulations result in an increase of speed at a consonant ratio.

Table 3.1 shows all of the tempo modulations in terms of the ratio relationship between successive lines of music as well as the calculated tempo for each line based on these ratios. Over the course of the movement as a whole, the tempo increases by a very dissonant ratio of 14:319, from an initial tempo of eighth note = 56 to final tempo of eighth note = 1276. This final tempo is extreme and, arguably, physically impossible for a human performer to accomplish requiring around 21 notes per second. The detached large leaps in the last three measures further compound the unlikeliness of this line to be performed at the implied tempo. Boland and Polansky suggest that "Beyer was not interested... in this kind of mathematical precision, nor in making a conceptual statement regarding extreme tempi. The notation, which stresses relative, not absolute tempi, allows the performers to make slight adjustments along the way."<sup>20</sup> I am inclined to agree—to me, this movement seems to be more about a general accelerando effect, from very slow to as fast as possible, than any sort of rigid mathematical calculations. Surely if Beyer wanted precise tempo modulations, these tempi would be indicated more clearly, with a less relative modulatory system. The one recorded performance of this movement, performed by clarinettist Craig Hill on the Sticky Melodies album, seems to align with the idea of relative tempi and emphasizing a general speeding up rather than precise tempo calculations—his starting speed is around eighth note = 46, rather than 56, and the last line, although performed quite quickly, is not anywhere near eighth =  $1276.^{21}$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Boland and Polansky, "Tempo Melodies," 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Johanna Beyer, "Suite for Clarinet Ib: Accelerando," *Sticky Melodies*, performed by Craig Hill. New World Records 80678-2, 2008, CD.

In terms of its melodic content, the movement begins with a highly disjunct line (see Example 3.13) which, like the previous movement, aligns with many of Seeger's rules for writing dissonant melodies. The melody features a ten-note succession, omitting only C# and G# from the full twelve-tone aggregate, followed immediately by a complete twelve-tone aggregate with Bb (written once as Bb and once as A#) and Bt doubled once each. The repeated Bt in the second half of the line adheres to Seeger's rule requiring six or more intervening notes between repeated pitches, but the repeated Bb falls shy of this requirement, with only four pitches between the initial iteration and its repetition. The effect of repetition of these notes is softened in that they occur in different octaves. Overall, Beyer's tendency toward chromatic saturation and variety of pitch material, features common to many ultramodernist compositions using dissonant counterpoint, is evident within this melody.



Example 3.12. The trajectory of consonance and dissonance based on tempo modulations over the course of Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4. As the lines progress toward Line 9, they get shorter which results in more frequent tempo modulations and an increase in dissonance. From Line 9 to Line 12, each system gets longer, resulting in less frequent tempo modulations and an increase in consonance. Score reproduced with permission from Frog Peak Music, a composers' collective.

Line #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ratio of												
tempo	1:1	3:2	3:2	2:6	3:2	3:2	3:2	4:2	3:4	4:2	3:2	$4:2^{22}$
modulation												
Calculated												
tempo of	56	84	196	49	63	95	149	284	913	425	638	1976
eighth	50	01	120	74	05	33	174	201	215	745	050	1270
notes <sup>23</sup>												

Table 3.1. Calculated tempo for each line of music in Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4 based on the tempo modulation ratio from one line to the next. Tempos are rounded to the nearest integer.



Example 3.13. The opening melody of Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4 is dissonant in a variety of ways: it features mostly "perfect" and "imperfect dissonances" between successive notes and all consonant intervals are dissonated by being larger than an octave and through preparation or resolution by semitone; the pitch content is varied with a ten-note row and a twelve-tone aggregate with two repeated pitches; and successive measures contain different number of eighth notes, often creating complex ratios.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Two manuscript versions of this score exist, one which groups Suite for Clarinet IB with Suite for Clarinet IA and identifies the four movements for each suite on the title page; the second might be the performance part for the Bb clarinet, as it is transposed up a major second and includes a title that indicates the piece is for Bb clarinet: "Suite II for Clarinet in Bb." There are several discrepancies between the two versions, one of which is the number of notes in m. 66: in the first version, the manuscript includes three notes in m. 66, while in the second version, a fourth note is added. Here, I am using the second version, which includes four notes in m. 66, following the Frog Peak Music published edition of this work, edited by Marguerite Boland and Larry Polansky. In the editor's notes, they write: "Where discrepancies exist between the two versions, this edition generally follows [the second one], which appears to be the later version." Johanna Beyer, *Suite for Clarinet IB*, edited by Marguerite Boland (Lebanon, NH: Frog Peak Music, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> All tempo markings are rounded to the nearest integer.

As with the pitch material, the intervals are also varied and make prevalent use of Seeger's "perfect dissonances" and "imperfect dissonances" categories (coloured blue and orange in Example 3.13). All consonant intervals (in red) are made more dissonant by their pitches being separated by more than an octave (with the exception of the perfect fifth between D# and A# in m. 4, one of only two intervals smaller than an octave in the entire line) and are dissonated by preceding or following one or both notes by semitone.

The melody is also dissonant in terms of its rhythm and metre. The line is unmetered, and Beyer alternates the number of notes per measure in all subsequent measures until the final three, adhering to Seeger's suggestion that "not more than two measures of the same meter should be used in direct succession."<sup>24</sup> Several of the successive measures also create rhythmic dissonance through complex ratios: the first measure of five eighth notes followed by a measure of four eighth notes creates a 5:4 ratio; the fourth measure contains four eighth notes followed by a measure of three eighth notes (4:3), which is then followed by a measure of two eighth notes (3:2). Although this might not be entirely audible, considering the eighth note remains a constant speed, in this line Beyer changes the articulation types help to delineate the measures and draw attention to the varying number of notes in each group. These varying articulation types in each measure, almost all of which are detached, also contribute to the dissonant effect of the line.

The same five melodic transformations applied to the previous movement can be used in Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4, to trace how the initial dissonant melody is gradually altered to become the more consonant, stepwise melody at the end of the movement. The first two lines remain very similar (see Example 3.14), with the pitch-class succession of the first thirteen notes of the first line retained in the second, six of which change register and the other seven remain

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 179.

untransformed entirely. The changes in register in the first half of the line initiate a smoothing out of the line: where Line 1 comprised almost entirely twist neumes (only once, in the first measure, does the contour continue in the same direction for two intervals), Line 2 features three instances of line neumes, in mm. 9, 10, and 11.

Halfway through the line, several notes from Line 1 are deleted in Line 2, before the line resumes with a varied repetition of the end rhyme: B and G change order, B changes register, and the final G# is transposed up two octaves. The deletion of pitch material in the second line occurs at a moment when there was an interval smaller than an octave (a perfect fifth in Line 1 between D# and A#). By omitting this section of music and jumping right to a varied repetition of the end rhyme, the line becomes melodically more dissonant by reducing the number of intervals smaller than an octave from two to one (the major 6<sup>th</sup> from G to E in m. 11). The deletion also creates a more rhythmically dissonant line: where Line 1 had consonant 4:2 and 2:4 ratios between number of notes in mm. 2-4, the deletion and subsequent restructuring of this line creates dissonant ratios until the final three measures of the line.



Example 3.14. Line transformations between Line 1 and Line 2 of Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4.

Transpose Reorder I hear the first two lines of Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4 being paired together as one extended opening phrase. Although the second line can be seen as derived from the first, as shown in Example 3.14, Lines 3 and 4 can also be heard as transformed variations of Lines 1 and 2 respectively, creating a two-line pairing in a small ABA'B' form at the outset of the movement. A comparison between Line 1 and Line 3 shows their similarities (see Example 3.15). The first half of Line 3 features mostly register displacements of notes, with one deleted note (A in m. 1), a reordering between D and Eb in m. 2, and two note transpositions (Eb is transposed down a semitone to D in the second measure, and F is transposed down a whole step to D# in the third measure). Halfway through, the A# of Line 1 is omitted as it was in Line 2, once again negating the perfect fifth interval presented in the initial melody. The rest of Line 3 after this point, however, mirrors Line 1 note for note until the very end where G# is displaced by two octaves,



Example 3.15. Line transformations between Line 1 and Line 3 of Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4 reveals a high degree of similarity between the two, suggesting a two-line pairing between Line 1 and Line 2, and Line 3 and Line 4 (where Line 3 and 4 are transformations of Line 1 and 2 respectively).

Line 3 features an even greater increase in consonance than the previous two lines. This line contains four intervals smaller than an octave (an increase from two in Line 1 and one in Line 2), and four instances of line neumes, compared to one in the first line, and three in the second. This increase in consonant melodic material is paired with an increase in dissonance in the rhythmic and metric structure: Line 2 to Line 3 features a dissonant 3:2 increase in tempo, as indicated by the metric modulation at the end of Line 2, and the ratios between subsequent measures in Line 3 are all dissonant until the final two measures.

A comparison between Lines 2 and 4 also shows their similarities (see Example 3.16). In the first measure of Line 4, the F# of Line 2 is moved up three octaves and transposed down a semitone to F $\natural$  and the C is deleted. This is followed by five register changes and a Bb that is untransformed between the two lines. The E and F in mm. 11–12 are deleted in Line 4, followed by an F# that is untransformed and an Eb that is moved down an octave and transposed up a semitone to E $\natural$ . Two more notes, F and B, are deleted, and the final note of the line is transposed up a semitone from G# to A.



Example 3.16. Line transformations between Line 2 and Line 4 in Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4 also reveals their similarities.

As a whole, these first four lines of the movement remain fairly dissonant: Line 4 is a nine-pitch succession with a repeated A; it follows Seeger's guidelines to have five intervening pitches between the initial A in m. 21 and the repetition in m. 24; all of the intervals are larger than an octave; almost all of the intervals fall into Seeger's categories of "perfect" or "imperfect" dissonances; and the three consonant intervals (a perfect fifth from A to D in mm. 21–22, a sounding minor sixth from D# to G in mm. 22–23, and a perfect fourth from E to A in the final measure) are dissonated by a stepwise preparation or resolution. The dissonant melodic material is further supported by fairly dissonant metric structure, with half of the ratios between subsequent measures being dissonant in the fourth line (2:3 and 3:2 from mm. 20–22), and, as discussed earlier, dissonant tempo modulations.

Line 5 begins as another transformed version of Line 1, suggesting the start of another two-line paring as established at the outset of the movement (see Example 3.17). Once again, the lines appear very similar, with five notes removed in Line 5 and all other notes remaining untransformed or transformed through registral displacement. Line 5, however, is significantly more consonant than Line 1: exactly half of the intervals are smaller than an octave, and half of the ratios between sequential measures create rhythmic consonance. This increase in melodic and rhythmic consonance is contrasted by the dissonant tempo modulations: a dissonant 3:2 tempo increase leads from Line 4 into Line 5, and the same dissonant increase occurs once again from Line 5 into Line 6. This creates a clash of consonance and dissonance on different levels of the musical structure—while some musical parameters are increasing in consonance, others are maintaining the dissonant aesthetic introduced four lines earlier.

After Line 5, the two-line pairing is abandoned, and all subsequent lines are transformed versions of the line immediately preceding (see Example 3.18). As the melody progresses toward Line 9, each line of music gets progressively more consonant—the number of intervals greater

than an octave decreases from nine in Line 5 to only one in Line 8 and two in Line 9, and the articulation markings become less varied so that in Line 8 and Line 9, all notes are grouped together under two slurs. This, however, is contrasted with a rhythmic structure and tempo modulations that remain fairly dissonant: in Line 8, the most consonant line heard thus far, two of the three ratios between sequential measures remain dissonant, and all tempo modulations except two (Line 6–7 and Line 8–9) feature dissonant ratios. The tempo modulations also increase in frequency as the music progresses toward Line 9, with fewer and fewer eighth notes present in each line of music (21 eighth notes in Line 6, 19 eighth notes in Line 7, 15 eighth notes in Line 8, and nine eighth notes in Line 9).



Example 3.17. Line transformations reveal that Line 5 is another transformed version of Line 1, suggesting the start of another twoline pairing. Line 5 is much more consonant than Line 1, with half of the melodic intervals smaller than an octave and half of the rhythmic ratios being consonant.

– Transpose < Reorder







Example 3.18. (continued on next page). Line transformations from Line 5 to Line 9.



Example 3.18 (continued). Line transformations from Line 5 to Line 9.

Line 9 acts as a midway point of symmetry in a loose palindrome (see Example 3.19)<sup>25</sup>, where Line 10 can be heard as a transformed version of Line 8 (see Example 3.20), Line 11 as a transformed version of Line 7 (see Example 3.21), and Line 12 as a transformed version of Line 6 (see Example 3.22). The palindromic form helps to highlight a conception of consonance and dissonance on a continuum: while Line 10, for instance, is more consonant than its palindromic counterpart (Line 8), it is simultaneously more dissonant than the final two lines of music that follow. In the case of Line 11 and Line 12, the transformations result in a drastic increase in melodic consonance, where the deletion, transposition, and registral displacement of notes smooths out large leaps from the initial statement of the melody into smaller skips or stepwise motion. For example, when Line 7 is transformed to become Line 11, the removal of A in m. 40, which originally created a leap of a major seventh (Bb to A) followed by a leap of a perfect fifth (A down to D), results in a much smaller skip of a major third from Bb to D. Likewise, the registral

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> In their article on tempo melody, Boland and Polansky note that "each of the four-movement suites uses palindromic forms" without specifying which movements can be seen as palindromes. The line transformations I propose in this dissertation help to elucidate these palindromic forms by revealing relationships between varied repetitions of lines. See Boland and Polansky, "Tempo Melodies in the Johanna Beyer Clarinet Suites," 1.

displacement of m. 41 from the fourth octave to the fifth changes the minor ninth leap from E to F and the diminished octave leap from F back down to F# to a chromatic, stepwise progression in mm. 61–62. This move from dissonant to more consonant motion in the melody is also paired with more consonant articulations in Line 11: unlike its more dissonant counterpart in Line 7, which featured a measure of *tenuto* articulations and two measures of *staccato* articulations at the end of the line, Line 11 has all of its notes grouped together under two long slurs.



Example 3.19. Line 9 is the point of symmetry in a loose palindrome, where Line 10 is a transformed version of Line 8, Line 11 is a transformed version of Line 9, and Line 12 is a transformed version of Line 6.



Example 3.20. Line transformations from Line 8 to Line 10.



Example 3.21. Line transformations from Line 7 to Line 11.



Example 3.22. Line transformations from Line 6 to Line 12

The transformations from Line 6 to Line 12 also create more consonance for the final line of the movement. Line 6, much like the opening line of the movement, features many leaps of an octave or more. The registral displacements, occasional note transpositions, and reorderings that occur between Line 6 and Line 12, however, result in a mostly stepwise line. The final line also has several instances of added notes, which enhance the smoothness of the line even further and, much like Crawford's music as discussed earlier, reveal a tendency toward chromatic completion and filling in the gaps between notes.<sup>26</sup> This descending, *legato*, mostly stepwise line is reminiscent of the ending of the third movement of Suite for Clarinet I, echoing a similar arc from a disjunct, detached, dissonant initial melody at the beginning to a conjunct, smooth, consonant melody at the end. While the previous movement followed a linear path from one line to the next, with each subsequent line heard as a transformed version of the previous, Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 4 features a more complicated trajectory with varied line pairings around a point of symmetry. Nevertheless, an overarching narrative from Line 1 to Line 12 exists, one that morphs fluidly and gradually between dissonance and consonance by smoothing out intervals between notes, paired with a move from alternating, mostly detached articulations to several notes grouped together under slurs. The increase in consonant melodic material and articulations in the final lines of the movement is supported by mostly consonant tempo modulations: as the lines get longer from Line 9 to Line 12 (nine eighth notes in Line 9, thirteen eighth notes in Line 10, nineteen eighth notes in Line 11, and thirty eighth notes in Line 12), the tempo modulations occur less frequently, creating an increase in consonance, and when the modulations do occur, only one of the three (Line 10 to Line 11) creates a complex, dissonant ratio.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> See Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 8 for more information on Crawford's use of chromatic fill.

Despite the increase in melodic consonance, consonant articulations, and consonant tempo modulations over the course of the movement, the rhythmic structure remains dissonant through to the end. In Line 11, the only instance of rhythmic consonance is at the very end of the line where the end rhyme returns with three sequential measures of two eighth notes. The same follows for the final line of the movement: all rhythmic proportions in consecutive measures are dissonant until the final end rhyme. The end rhyme in the final line, however, is particularly interesting. Although it is the only moment of rhythmic consonance in the final line, everything else about the final three measures creates an abrupt return to dissonance: the melodic material returns to the dissonant, disjunct state from the opening of the movement with only one consonant interval less than an octave, and the *legato* articulations are broken with two measures of *staccato* notes. This swift and unexpected reprisal of the initial dissonant musical fabric reminds the listener that the state of consonance and dissonance in this movement is non-static, and that just as easily as the initial melodic line was transformed into a more consonant version, dissonance can be restored.

Over the course of the movement, relative levels of dissonance can be compared across single parameters in order to identify "more" or "less" dissonant moments. In terms of the tempo modulations, for example, if one applies the categories of ratios that Seeger uses to describe different levels of rhythmic dissonance (mild, medium, and strong) to ratios of tempo modulations, then the tempo modulations that increase at a rate of 3:2 (which accounts for all of the dissonant modulations in the first two-thirds of the movement) are less dissonant ("mild dissonances") than the modulation that decreases at a rate of 3:4 (which occurs from Line 8 to Line 9—a ratio that Seeger would categorize as a "medium dissonance"). The 3:2 modulations are more dissonant, however, than the consonant 2:6 and 4:2 modulations heard at other points in the movement.

At the same time, there are many moments where consonance and dissonance are experienced simultaneously in different parameters. This conflict between consonance and dissonance comes to a head in the final line of the movement. The first six measures of this line feature the most consonant melody heard so far: a fairly conjunct, legato line descending two and a half octaves from C6 to F3. The consonant pitch material, articulations, and tempo modulation (a 4:2 increase from Line 11 to Line 12), however, are starkly contrasted by an almost entirely dissonant rhythmic structure. These rhythmic dissonances are even more dissonant, according to Seeger's categories, than previously heard: the line comprises two instances of strong rhythmic dissonant ratios (4:5 and 5:4 from mm. 68–70), three instances of medium dissonances (4:3 and 3:4 from mm. 66–68 and mm.70–71), and one instance of mild dissonance (3:2 from mm. 71– 72). This clash between consonant melody and articulations and dissonant rhythm is then suddenly reversed for the final three measures of the movement-the dissonant, disjunct, detached character from the opening line is reprised with pitch material that leaps more than an octave between almost every note, all of which are played *staccato*, while two consecutive measures of two eighth notes (mm. 72–73) create moments of rhythmic consonance. I suggest this integration of consonance and dissonance on different levels of musical structure creates a "queer effect" as it disorients the normative musical experience, one in which consonance and dissonance are reliant on one another but never overlap. It also lends itself to a queer understanding of gender that allows for a combination of masculine and feminine traits, broadening our definition to allow for multiple interpretations of gender beyond the "usual two."

As a whole, then, I read the narrative of the fourth movement of Suite for Clarinet IB as a musical representation of Beyer's complex subjectivity and expression of her gender identity. Just as the movement fluidly shifts between states of consonance and dissonance, and overlaps these characteristics on multiple levels of musical structure, Beyer sought to embrace aspects of both

masculinity and femininity in her everyday life. The prominent role of consonance, especially as an end goal for the final line, positions this movement as a "body out of place" within the ultramodernist idiom—one in which dissonance was the end goal and consonance was antithetical—similarly mirroring Beyer's "body out of place" (and therefore queer) experience as an immigrant female composer working within a misogynistic environment.

#### Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 3

The third movement of Suite for Clarinet IB also integrates consonance and dissonance equally throughout, but does so in a different way than the previous movements discussed in this chapter: instead of beginning with a dissonant melodic line that gradually evolves into a more consonant one, consonance and dissonance in this movement are contrasted on alternating lines of music. On the manuscript for this movement, Beyer makes the interplay of these two characters explicit, writing "Contrast of phrases: skippy — steppy." Once again, Beyer reveals her quirkier, more whimsical, perhaps even more "feminine" personality in this description with her use of the words "skippy" and "steppy" in place of Seeger's more quasi-scientific, "masculine" sounding terminology, such as "line neume" and "twist neume." By avoiding Seeger's descriptors, Beyer projects a more feminine approach to what was seen as a "manly" process, queering the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. The direct juxtaposition between consonant and dissonant lines of music is also unusual for the dissonant counterpoint style, making this movement non-normative within the ultramodernist idiom and enhancing its queer effect.

I interpret this movement as being organized into three two-system and two three-system groups (see Example 3.23). As a whole, the movement is clearly set within a dissonant framework: although there is a metre, 2/8, the extensive use of tuplets and the variety of notes per measure

obscures any strong sense of regularly occurring pulse. Overlaid on top of this framework is a contrast between melodic lines that can be heard as more or less consonant or dissonant. Although Beyer only identifies a contrast between conjunct ("steppy") and disjunct ("skippy") motion, other aspects of the musical fabric, including pitch content, articulations, and dynamics, also distinguish between these opposing characters. The dissonant lines (Lines 1, 3, 5, 7, and 10) are characterized by their use of disjunct motion, detached articulations (*staccato* and *marcato*), and sudden and extreme dynamic contrasts (*pianissimo* to *mezzoforte* on Line 1; *piano* to *forte* on Line 3; *fortissimo* to *pianissimo* to *forte* to *piano* on Line 10). Consonant lines (Lines 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12) are characterized by mostly conjunct motion or smaller skips, *legato* articulations, and more gradual changes in dynamics through the use of *crescendo* and *decrescendo* markings. Two different end rhymes also help to connect the dissonant lines and distinguish them from the consonant ones. Dissonant lines make use of a D# to E<sup>‡</sup> motive, set as a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth, while consonant lines use an elongated low F# to signify their ending.

A closer look at Line 1 and Line 2 helps to distinguish between these qualities. Line 1 (see Example 3.24) reflects many of Seeger's guidelines for dissonant melodies. The melody comprises a ten-note succession, only missing F# and G from the twelve-tone aggregate. The final three notes of the line, F, D#, and E, are a retrograde of the initial three, giving the line an internal sense of balance. The D# and E at the end make up the end rhyme, as mentioned above, in a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth figuration. While a semitone apart in pitch class space, the D# to E in the end rhyme of the dissonant lines are expressed as a more dissonant minor ninth (or, occasionally, a major seventh) apart. The intervallic content is also varied, with five perfect dissonances, three imperfect dissonances, a tritone, and two consonances. Each of the consonant intervals is dissonated according to Seeger's rules, by being prepared or resolved by

semitone in pitch-class space. The rhythm is dissonant, with a measure of two eighths followed by a triplet (creating a dissonant 2:3 ratio) followed by another measure of two eighths (creating a dissonant 3:2 ratio). The inconsistent use of detached articulations (*staccato* and *marcato*) as well as the sudden and sharp contrast between *pianissimo* and *mezzoforte* dynamics also enhances the dissonant effect created in this line.

Line 2 contrasts with Line 1 in nearly every way (see Example 3.25). While the pitch material remains decidedly dissonant (the melody comprises an almost-complete twelve-tone aggregate, missing only a C#, followed by a complete twelve-tone aggregate), the melodic line features significantly more conjunct motion, with any gaps from large leaps filled in chromatically (blue brackets above the pitch line in Example 3.25 indicate all moments of stepwise chromatic saturation). A different end rhyme is used to indicate the conclusion of the consonant lines: a low F# held for the longest duration heard yet in the movement. The approach to this end rhyme is a consonant perfect fourth descent from B<sup>\u03e4</sup> down to F#, providing yet another point of contrast with the dissonant end rhyme ending Line 1. The metre continues to be obscured with the frequent use of tuplets (specifically quintuplets, sextuplets, and a triplet), and some consecutive measures create dissonant ratios (such as 2:5 in mm. 7-8, 5:6 in mm. 9-10, and 3:2 in mm. 11-12); however, the rhythmic divisions of each measure change less frequently (two measures of two, followed by two measures of five, followed by two measures that can be heard as a triple division, followed again by two measures of two) which smooths out the dissonance by making the changes less jarring. The only articulated dynamic marking provided for this line is the *forte* at the beginning, and a *decrescendo* marking makes the dynamic change less abrupt and, therefore, more consonant. The articulations are also more consonant in this line, where almost every note is connected by slur markings.

CONTRAST (Sonnet form \$-96)



Example 3.23. Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 3 features consonance and dissonance on alternating lines of music. Score used with permission from Frog Peak Music, a composers' collective.



Example 3.24. Line 1 features many qualities that make it a dissonant line: the pitch material is varied, comprising a ten-note row; the end rhyme is a D# and E expressed as a dissonant minor ninth apart; the intervallic content is varied, and consonant intervals are dissonated; the rhythms of consecutive measures create dissonant ratios; and irregular use of detached articulations and sharp contrasts in dynamics add to the dissonant effect.



Example 3.25. Line 2 has many qualities in contrast with the first line, making it sound more consonant: the melodic line is mostly stepwise and features chromatic saturation; the end rhyme is a held low F# and is approached by a consonant descending perfect fourth, the dynamics are smoothed out through the use of a decrescendo, and the articulations are also smoothed out with the use of extended slur markings.

Even within these contrasting phrases that are, on the surface, either consonant or dissonant, feminine or masculine, particular moments within each line complicate and queer such a clear-cut reading. In the first dissonant line, for example, the rhythmic structure contains just as many consonant ratios between consecutive measures as it does dissonant ones (2:4 and 4:2 in mm. 3–5), undermining the underlying dissonant framework slightly. Similarly, a 3:3 consonant ratio appears between mm. 14–15 and mm. 25–26 on Line 3 and Line 5 respectively. Each of these three lines also feature one instance of a *crescendo* marking which adds some smoothness (and consonance) between otherwise dissonant dynamic changes. The consonant lines are also undermined slightly, especially in terms of the rhythmic structure. As the lines progress, more tuplets are added in each consonant line, creating strong rhythmic dissonances throughout. For example, in Line 6, which is very consonant in terms of its pitch material, articulations, and dynamics, only one instance of a rhythmic consonance occurs (4:4 in mm. 30–31) and several rhythmic ratios that Seeger would classify as "medium" or "strong" dissonances occur: 4:3 and 3:4 in mm. 31–33 are "medium" dissonances while 4:5, 5:6, and 6:7 in mm. 33–36 are all "strong" dissonances. These conflicting moments containing simultaneous consonance and dissonance in different musical parameters problematize the ability to fully assign "masculine" or "feminine" characteristics to what appear at first glance to be dissonant and consonant lines of music, queering the musical experience of this movement.

Hidden within the underlying structure of alternating consonant and dissonant lines are the same transformations observed in the other movements of these Clarinet Suites. While the other movements discussed in this chapter make consistent use of the melodic transformations in order to move from a state of relative melodic disjunction and dissonance to a state of relative melodic consonance and smoothness, either from one line to the next or from one line to its symmetrical partner in a palindromic shape, the third movement of Suite for Clarinet IB uses the transformations more sparingly. With the contrast between consonance and dissonance on alternating lines, rather than at the beginning and ending of the movement, the transformations in this movement are used to link together varied repetitions of dissonant melodic material (see Example 3.26). While the pitch content from line to line is varied through note transpositions,

added notes, register changes, and reordering notes, many features remain constant from one dissonant line to the next helping to group them together as varied expressions of the same melodic idea. The one exception to this transformational trajectory between dissonant lines is from Line 7 to Line 10. Although Line 10 is also a dissonant line and retains many of these same characteristics, such as disjunct motion, drastic changes in dynamics, and detached articulations (see Example 3.27), the transformational trajectory from Line 7 to Line 10 is less clear due to the robust expansion of the line from five measures long to ten. Many of the measures in Line 10 are clear variations on ones that occur in Line 7 (mm. 57–58, for example, can be heard as variations of mm. 37–38), but in others, the connection is much less clear. Nevertheless, Line 10 continues the narrative of the dissonant lines, relating to the previous statements through common dynamics, articulations, and disjunct motion between adjacent pitches.

The consonant lines, while also loose variations on one another, do not follow any sort of strict transformational trajectory. Instead, these lines feature more intense chromatic saturation. As with the dissonant lines, several characteristics help link the consonant lines together as varied expressions of one melodic idea. Although specific transformations between lines cannot be observed, these qualities link together the consonant lines as something different from the interceding dissonant ones and as loose repetitions of the same, or similar, musical ideas.



Example 3.26. The same five transformations are used in Suite for Clarinet IB, movement 3, this time from dissonant line to dissonant line rather than between two consecutive lines.



Example 3.27. Line 10, while also a dissonant line, is not connected to the other iterations in clear transformational ways.

Although I have used "consonant" and "dissonant" as well as "feminine" and "masculine" to describe these alternating lines, I want to be clear that I still do not see this as a binary system. While on the surface, these lines appear to be either categorically consonant or dissonant, feminine or masculine, I hope to have shown this is not the case when one examines the full musical fabric of the movement. When considering all of the different musical parameters that create the experience of this movement, including pitch, rhythm, articulations, and dynamics, each of the phrases throughout are a combination of consonant and dissonant features occurring simultaneously. Relative levels of consonance and dissonance can also be compared between phrases to determine which lines are more dissonant than others. For example, Line 4 has a more dissonant rhythmic structure than Line 2, as well as moments with larger leaps and a sforzando marking, rendering this line more dissonant as a whole. By allowing for consonance and dissonance to occur simultaneously across different musical parameters, assigning clear "dissonant" or "consonant," "masculine" or "feminine" descriptors becomes more complicated and, I suggest, more queer. This queer reading is reinforced by a more nuanced, continuous understanding of consonance and dissonance, wherein each line of music is not definitively either consonant or dissonant, but rather somewhere along a continuum between these two qualities. As with the other movements discussed in this chapter, I see the fluid, non-static combination of consonance and dissonance, masculine and feminine qualities, throughout this movement as a musical representation of Beyer's subjectivity.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the five melodic transformations I propose in this dissertation play a fundamental role in the underlying narrative of the fourth movement of Suite for Clarinet I, and the third and fourth movements of Suite for Clarinet IB. Like her ultramodernist contemporaries composing in the dissonant counterpoint style, Beyer demonstrates an affinity for using a small amount of material as the source for an entire composition and a strong preference for variety over repetition. At the same time, her compositional style subverts the ultramodernist requirement for an entirely dissonant musical framework by creating a narrative trajectory that integrates dissonance and consonance through a gradual process of melodic transformation. By combining consonance and dissonance on various levels of musical structure and among several different musical parameters, including pitch, rhythm, articulations, dynamics, and tempo, these movements lend themselves to a queer reading, in which consonance and dissonance are no longer a binary system, but rather exist on a spectrum that allows for fluid and flexible motion between the two poles and can be intermixed to various degrees. I interpret these movements, then, as a musical portrayal of Beyer's complicated and complex subjectivity as a female immigrant composer writing in a masculine, American-nationalistic musical style. Unlike Crawford, who aligned herself with dissonance as her act of feminist agency, I see transcending the consonance/dissonance binary as Beyer's subversive and queer assertion of independence. While this chapter has focused on dissonant melodies in the single-voice movements of the Clarinet Suites, the transformations that instigate the fluid motion between consonance and dissonance are integral to the sense of metamorphosis present across Beyer's entire oeuvre, including pieces with two-voice counterpoint and those with more complex four-voice counterpoint, as will be examined in the following chapters.

# CHAPTER 4 Queering Heterophony: Shared Musical Features in Dissonant Counterpoint

One of the most significant contributions of Seeger's conceptualization of dissonant counterpoint in "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music" is what he refers to as "heterophony." As discussed in Chapter 1, heterophony refers to a complete independence, or even a "mutual repulsion," to borrow Straus's phrase, of lines that sound simultaneously in two-, three-, or four-part counterpoint.<sup>27</sup> Dissonance, according to Seeger, is the foundation of heterophony—only by combining two (or more) melodies in such a way that they create primarily dissonant intervals, dissonant rhythms, or dissonant dynamics, can one ensure that the lines are mutually exclusive and "sound apart" from one another. The only relation between the parts, according to Seeger, should be the "mere proximity in time-space, beginning and ending, within hearing of each other, at more or less the same time."<sup>28</sup>

Despite the "mutual repulsion" of parts in dissonant counterpoint, Seeger also seems to believe that, beneath the surface, something must connect the independent lines of music in order to "make the undertaking as a whole worthwhile."<sup>29</sup> He writes: "As has already been indicated, either line of a well-constructed composition in dissonant counterpoint should be capable of solo performance as an entirely adequate and self-contained whole. The composition should be such, however, that when the two are combined as indicated the effect will justify the combination and give the listener something he did not find in the lines separately."<sup>30</sup> In his analyses of Crawford's music, Straus expands on this idea. He writes:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Joseph N. Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 80.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Charles Seeger, "Ruth Crawford," in *American Composers on American Music: A Symposium* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962): 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Seeger, "Ruth Crawford," 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Charles Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979*, edited by Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994): 211.

It is easy, of course, for a composer to write polyphonic parts of radically contrasting character. What is more difficult, and potentially more rewarding for listeners, is to create subtle links between the disparate parts that might justify their appearance together... I will focus not so much on what distinguishes the individual lines (this will be readily apparent) as on what binds them.<sup>31</sup>

A similar "binding" together of otherwise disparate parts can be found in Beyer's heterophonic music. In this chapter, I will analyze three movements from Beyer's first piano suite, aptly titled *Dissonant Counterpoint*, written in the early 1930s. I will show that while, on the surface, the two parts of these movements (i.e. the melodic content played by the right hand and that played by the left) "mutually repulse" each other through unique and contrasting characters, dissonant vertical intervals, dissonant rhythms and metrical structures, and contrasting ranges, one element consistently binds the parts together to "justify their combination": the use of the melodic transformations I proposed in Chapter 2. Not only do the same five melodic transformations occur within each hand, creating a common thread between the two lines, but these transformations also reveal that the melodic content of one hand can be understood as derived from that of the other through the use of the melodic transformations.

In her analysis of Beyer's String Quartet No. 2, Marguerite Boland makes a similar claim about the generation of an entire movement (and, in fact, all four movements in the piece as a whole) from a single melodic line through the use of neume conversions and transformations. She writes:

Beyer's 'feeling for neume conversion' is clearly shown in the melodic construction of Movement I, an exercise in neume transformation par excellence. The Mozart theme—itself a folk song with its origins in Beyer's own German cultural heritage is first heard low in the cello, accompanied by a dissonant contrapuntal texture of three melodic lines in the upper strings. The relationship between the cello theme and the upper melodies is remarkable. Following Seeger's model, I have put the first

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 81–82.

two measures of the Mozart theme through a neume transformation to produce the melody in the first violin.  $^{32}$ 

Boland then similarly demonstrates how the Mozart theme in the cello line also generates the melody in the second violin and the viola, and later, the melodic material in the other three movements. Boland acknowledges that this process is more of an analytical model than a suggestion for how this piece was composed, and that there may be more than one way to interpret the relationships between the parts or the specific steps one might take to "accomplish the dissonant transformation": "Although I have not seen documentary evidence that Beyer applied these transformational steps to the Mozart theme, I am using this process as an analytical method, suggested to me by the relationships I hear between the lines."<sup>33</sup>

The analytical interpretation I offer in this chapter, one which suggests the generation of the melodic material for both hands in three movements from the *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite from a single source, takes Boland's analysis of the String Quartet as its model. Instead of using Seeger's vague, somewhat confusing transformation types (such as "tonal displacement") as Boland does, however, I instead apply the five transformations proposed in Chapter 2. Like Boland, I do not wish to suggest that Beyer viewed these melodic lines as transformations of one another or that she intentionally used these specific set of transformations to generate related melodic material. Rather, my analyses reveal the relationships I find between the two parts in each movement, hidden deep beneath the musical surface.

According to Seeger, three-part contrapuntal textures were best created using a "leading line [that] need not stand out more prominently than the other two." Although he does not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Marguerite Boland, "Imagination and Method: J.M. Beyer's String Quartet No. 2," in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music, 1900–1960*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022): 201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Boland, "Imagination and Method," 201–202.

explicitly say it, presumably the same follows for two-part counterpoint and four-part counterpoint. As Straus points out in Crawford's music, oftentimes two lines in a dissonant contrapuntal texture will share motivic material or have other "common musical concerns beneath their obvious differences."<sup>34</sup> In each analysis of the following movements, I propose that one of the melodies can be viewed as the "leading line" from which the melodic content of the other part is generated in order to create a deep sense of cohesion binding together what, on the surface, seems like two disparate melodies.

In the program notes for the first movement of *Dissonant Counterpoint*, performed by Beyer in a Composers' Forum concert series in 1936, Beyer dedicates the work to Crawford and characterizes the movement in gendered terms: "Two-part dissonant counterpoint; the first voice feminine, arabesque-like; the second voice strong, masculine."<sup>35</sup> It is possible that Crawford's *Diaphonic Suite for Oboe and Cello*, with which Beyer would have been familiar as her student, inspired this gendered characterization of the lines. In a radiogram Crawford sent to Seeger from Berlin, she noted that in her piece, the oboe represented the female voice (her own) while the cello represented the male voice (that of Charles).<sup>36</sup> Beyer's dedication to Crawford and her use of verse-form, a formal structure Crawford commonly used in her compositions, allows for a connection to be drawn between these pieces. This gendered characterization given by Beyer prompts a closer examination of this movement in particular, and the work as a whole, through the lens of queer theory.

In the previous chapter, I argued that the overarching narratives of three movements from the Clarinet Suites metaphorically fall into a queer paradigm as each movement juxtaposes

<sup>35</sup> Quoted Melissa de Graaf, "Intersections of Gender and Modernism in the Music of Johanna Beyer," *Institute for Studies in American Music (ISAM News Letter* XXXIII, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Straus, The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger, 82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 167.

and combines moments of melodic dissonance with ones of melodic consonance, traditionally gendered masculine and feminine respectively, both on the large scale across the entire movement (i.e., a dissonant melodic line gradually and fluidly transforms into a more consonant one) and on a smaller scale within particular moments (i.e., dissonant rhythms are simultaneously contrasted with consonant melodic intervals). In this chapter, I likewise argue that movements from *Dissonant Counterpoint* fall into queer narrative paradigms, albeit in a different way: although Beyer explicitly characterizes some of her melodies as "feminine" and "masculine," I argue that a clear-cut gendered description is queered through the use of common musical features in both parts (such as deriving the content of both melodies from the same source, the common use of melodic transformations in each independent line, and overlapping ranges) as well as combining masculine- and feminine-gendered traits within both lines. These shared musical traits between the parts queers the notion of heterophony, which relies on two or more unique and independent parts, as well as any interpretations of either line as "masculine" or "feminine." Instead, I propose that both parts might be viewed as existing somewhere on a spectrum between "the usual two" genders.<sup>37</sup>

### Dissonant Counterpoint (193?)

Beyer's *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite comprises eight short movements, all of which, as the title suggests, are written in the dissonant counterpoint style. As Kennedy and Polansky write, "the piano pieces *Dissonant Counterpoint* (193?), *Gebrauchs-Musik* (1934), and *Clusters* (1931, 1936) are important early examples of Charles Seeger's theoretical ideas, yet they are characteristically Beyer's in their tendency toward a minimalist, single-minded adherence to a salient formal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990): 152.

procedure."<sup>38</sup> Although the exact date of composition is unknown as the manuscripts are undated, this piece is presumed to be from the early- to mid-1930s as the style and notation closely resemble her other pieces written during this time. Kennedy and Polansky propose that *Gebrauchs-Musik* and *Dissonant Counterpoint* were likely written in tandem and not completely distinct works to Beyer as "there are several documented performances by her [Beyer] (1934, 1935, 1936, and 1937) of a piece called "Excerpts from Piano Suites," which might have included parts of these two pieces, or possibly *Clusters*."<sup>39</sup> It is likely that the piece was finished at least by early 1938, as Beyer wrote a letter to Percy Grainger in May of that year referencing her plans for what is presumed to be this work:

I have decided to have a very difficult dissonant counterpoint Suite for Piano recorded with *Musicraft* this week. I used to play it in concerts. I inquired at Silvermans and also Wurlitzer but I finally decided to do it at Musicraft. The 12-inch record costs \$4—and one may have duplicates done for \$3—and if not duplicates, an even cheaper price can be made. The material they use for these records is quite lasting, and with good care one might use these records almost indefinitely.<sup>40</sup>

If this recording was ever made, it has since been lost.

As a whole, *Dissonant Counterpoint* stands out as a remarkable demonstration of Seeger's theory of heterophony. Each movement consists of two dissonant, independent melodic lines, one played by the right hand, the other by the left. As seen in the Clarinet Suites, each melodic line comprises an initial melodic idea that is then repeated and varied several times throughout the duration of the movement. These lines conform to Seeger's description of each part in a polyphonic work as "an entirely adequate and self-contained whole," yet the two melodies combined "give[s] the listener something he did not find in the lines separately."<sup>41</sup> I propose that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> John Kennedy and Larry Polansky, "Total Eclipse': The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer: An Introduction and Preliminary Annotated Checklist," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 726.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Kennedy and Polansky, "Total Eclipse," 740.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Quoted in Kennedy and Polansky, "Total Eclipse," 740.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 211.

the five melodic transformations are the element which links the two otherwise independent parts of these movements together into a cohesive, justified whole.

### Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 1

The first movement of the Dissonant Counterpoint piano suite, like the Clarinet Suites that came before it, is written in verse form (see Example 4.1). While the fermatas at the end of line 2 and line 4 seem to break the movement up into three sections-mm. 1-12, mm. 13-25, and mm. 26-41-the strong sense of return to the opening melodic statement in m. 33 suggests an alternate possible division, still into three parts, but now with a longer middle section-mm. 1-12, mm. 13-32, and mm. 33-31. In many ways, this movement conforms to Seeger's guidelines for heterophony and line independence. Within the melody of each individual hand, melodic and rhythmic dissonance are pervasive. No time signature is provided and the number of eighth notes per measure is constantly changing, with no more than three measures in a row containing the same metric grouping (within the first phrase, for example, there are three eighths in m. 1, two eighths in mm. 2 and 3, four eighths in mm. 4 and 5, two eighths in mm. 5-7, five eighths in mm. 9–12). Melodically consonant intervals are most often dissonated by being preceded or followed by a whole tone or semitone. For example, the major sixth down from C to Eb from mm. 3–4 in the right hand is preceded by a B, a semitone away from the C, and followed by an  $E^{\natural}$ , a semitone away from the  $E^{\flat}$ , while the consonant and triadic F-D-A progression from mm. 5–6 in the same hand is immediately followed by an A#, a semitone away from the A.













Accidentals only affect the neuronal example 4.1. The first movement of Dissonant Counterpoint is in verse-form. Fermatas at the end of line 2 and line 4 suggest a tripartite division (mm. 1-12, mm. 13-25, mm. 26-41), but the strong sense of return in mm. 33 suggests an alternate possibility with a longer middle section (mm. 1-12, mm. 13-32, mm. 33-41).

When considering the two parts in combination, the movement is grounded in an unwaveringly dissonant, heterophonic framework. Only six simultaneous attacks occur between the two hands within the first phrase, all of which create a dissonant vertical interval (see Example 4.2).<sup>42</sup> The frequent cross-rhythms between the two hands (created by triplets, septuplets, and nonuplets in six of the initial twelve measures) further obscure a sense of a regularly occurring metric grid and establish a "mutual repulsion" between the two melodic lines. This rhythmic independence is further underscored by the melodic contrary motion: the right phrase an up-down-up-down-up-down contour while the left plays the reversed, down-up-down-up (see arrows in Example 4.2). This combination of dissonance in the horizontal domain (within each melody, as described above) as well as in the vertical domain (between the two melodies being played simultaneously) was the ultimate goal for Seeger's conception of dissonant counterpoint.



Example 4.2. The first phrase of the movement features two line that are very independent: within the first twelve measures, there are only six simultaneous attacks between the two parts (boxed in red), all of which create a dissonant interval.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Note that Seeger does classify augmented and diminished intervals as dissonant; however, he mentions that in a weak or non-existent tonal framework, they are more likely to be heard as their consonant enharmonic equivalent and should be written as such. Since Beyer notated the downbeat of m. 7 and the downbeat of m. 12 as dissonant intervals (an augmented 2<sup>nd</sup> from Eb to F# in m. 7 and a diminished 7<sup>th</sup> from F# to Eb in m. 12) rather than their enharmonic equivalents (minor 3<sup>rd</sup> from Eb to Gb and a major 6<sup>th</sup> from F# to D#), I have classified them as dissonances in my analysis.
The right-hand melody, which Beyer classifies as the "feminine" voice, is, in many ways, more consonant by Seeger's standards (and therefore "feminine" by ultramodernist standards) than the melody in the left-hand voice: the melodic line features mostly smaller skips and stepwise motion (within the first twelve-measure phrase, there are only three leaps of an octave or more); and the dynamics are more subdued with only small fluctuations between *piano* and *pianissimo* dynamic levels. However, this line also features some more dissonant, "masculine" characteristics, which calls into question the "femininity" of this voice. The articulations, for instance, change frequently between detached *staccatos, tenutos*, and slurs, and the "arabesque" rhythms including triplets (mm. 1, 3, and 7), a septuplet (m. 6), 4:5 (m. 10), and 9:10 (m. 12) create dissonance by obscuring the metric grid. This combination of consonant and dissonant musical characteristics queers the boundary between what might be considered masculine or feminine by combining musical features associated with both genders.

The left-hand melody, which Beyer positions as the "strong, masculine" voice, likewise queers the boundary between masculine and feminine characteristics. The larger, more dissonant melodic leaps in the lower register portray a stronger, more virile voice often associated with bass lines; however, the rhythms, more even and regulated than those found in the right hand, are more consonant and adhere to the metric grid, while the slurred articulations seem less "aggressive" (i.e., less "masculine") than the right-hand melodic partner, creating a more "feminine" characteristic in these domains. Despite Beyer's binary characterization of the two voices in this movement, a closer reading reveals a more complicated and more mixed whole.

An analysis of the pitch material in the right-hand melodic line further uncovers its dissonant structure, and its unique identity when compared to that of the left hand. Here, I use set theory to highlight the internal cohesion and highly organized nature of the right hand, allowing me to interpret the right-hand melody as the "leading line" (to be discussed more

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forthcoming). Motivic analysis using set theory also reveals an additional way the right-hand and left-hand melodies are contrasting and independent, increasing the heterophony between them: while the right-hand makes use of (015) motives, the left-hand melody comprises primarily motives based on subsets of the whole-tone collection, (026) and (024).

The opening melodic gesture in the right hand comprises an almost-complete twelve-tone aggregate, with an E appearing twice and a missing C#, adhering to Seeger's preference for pitch variety. The initial row can be broken into three (015) trichords (see Example 4.3), all separated by one note. These (015) trichords embody Seeger's theory of dissonation: in each case, a perfect fourth leap is dissonated by a semitone, negating the melodic consonance. Each trichord is related to the following by T9. The intervening pitches also create a (015) trichord, inversionally related to the other three iterations of this set-class. The three (015) trichords divide the opening melodic line into three motives (see Example 4.4), labelled as motive x (m. 1), motive y (mm. 2– 3), and motive z (mm. 4–5).<sup>43</sup> These motives are then repeated and transformed, using the same melodic transformations as proposed in Chapter 2, to complete the initial melodic phrase. In m. 6, motive x is reordered (A-A#-D becomes D-A-A#), which is followed by a reordered and altered variant of motive y (y') in mm. 6–7 (E and G are deleted, F-B-C are reordered to C-B-F). In mm. 7–8, another variation of motive y occurs (y"), which contains two of the original pitches from the y motive—C and G—and two pitches that are transposed by semitone—F and Bb. In m. 9, a variant of motive z occurs (z'), in which the initial Eb is deleted, and Ab and F are transposed to B and A respectively. Another variation on motive x appears in m. 10 with an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Julianna Willson proposes a similar motivic division of this melodic line, however our analyses differ in a few small ways: Willson views all of m. 6 as a variation of motive x and m. 12 as x + z, disregarding the pitch similarities between the second half of m. 6 (C-B-F#) and motive y in m. 3 (F#-B-C). See Julianna Willson, "Layers of Dissonance within the First Piece of Johanna Beyer's Dissonant Counterpoint," paper presented at Music Theory Southeast, Tallahassee, FL, March 18–19, 2022.

added C# (x"), and m. 12 is a restatement of mm. 5-6 (z + x' + y' with F# deleted). By melodically transforming motives through reordering, transposing, deleting, and adding pitches, Beyer creates an entire melodic phrase, twelve measures long, out of a relatively limited amount of musical material.



Example 4.3. The initial row of the right-hand melody is made up of three (015) trichords related to each other by T9; the intervening notes between the trichords also make a (015) trichord.



Example 4.4. The first full phrase in the right hand of Dissonant Counterpoint movement 1 (mm. 1-12) comprises three motives—motive x (in yellow), motive y (in blue), and motive z (in green)—which are repeated and varied.

The entire initial right-hand phrase (mm. 1–12) is then transformed to create the following three phrases (mm. 13–25, mm. 26–32, and mm. 33–end). As with the movements of the Clarinet Suites discussed in the previous chapter, the melodic transformations can be applied

to reveal how each restatement of the melodic idea is varied and developed over the course of the entire movement. From the opening phrase to the second phrase in the right hand, D and A# are reordered and a C# is added; a D is added two notes later while G and E are reordered; C and B are reordered; Eb is displaced by an octave and rewritten as a D#; Ab and F are reordered to become F and G#; the following five notes remain untransformed between the two lines; F# is registrally displaced up an octave; G and C are deleted; the following F is untransformed while Bb is registrally displaced up an octave; E remains untransformed; B is transposed down a whole tone to A; and Ab is registrally displaced up an octave. In the second part of the phrase (mm. 22-25), the A is registrally displaced up an octave; C# and D are reordered; and the following three notes (C, B, and Bb) are added. In the final measure of the phrase, E and Eb change order while Eb also changes register; Ab is transposed to become F# and it changes order with F; D and A are transposed down a whole tone to C and G; A# is deleted; C is transposed up [] Add -x Delete a semitone to C#; and the final note, B, is deleted. Transpose



Example 4.5. The transformational pathways that lead from the first phrase of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 1 (mm. 1-12) to the second phrase (mm. 13-25).

This altered statement of the melody is then varied even further to create the next phrase in the right hand (mm. 26–32—see Example 4.6): the initial four notes are reordered with D and C# both transposed down a semitone to C# and C respectively; the next two notes are displaced up an octave and the D is transposed by a semitone to become D#; the next two notes are also

Reorder

displaced up an octave; B and C are reordered; D# and the following E are transposed down an octave, while F and G# are reordered and F changes register; the following six notes remain untransformed; and F is deleted. The final two pitches are a reordered and transposed version of Bb and A (transposed up a whole tone each to C and B) while the surrounding E and Ab are deleted



Example 4.6. Transformations that lead from the second phrase (mm. 13-21) to the third phrase (mm. 26–32) of the movement.

This third phrase of music is shorter than the previous two: rather than continuing for another three measures to conclude the phrase with a quick flurry of notes and a fermata (as seen in m. 12 ending the first phrase, and again in m. 25 ending the second phrase), the third phrase is abruptly cut off by a final varied restatement of the melodic idea. The final phrase, however, is a varied restatement of the opening melodic gesture (mm. 1–9) rather than another variation of the phrase that immediately preceded it, as has been the case thus far (see Example 4.7): the first four measures of the last phrase restate the melodic content of the first four measures of the movement verbatim (the only slight variation being a rhythmic one); the final note of m. 5, F, is deleted, and a C is added in its place in m. 37; the C four notes later is transposed up a semitone to become C#; B is untransformed; F# and G on the following two eighth notes are both transposed by a semitone—F# becomes F, and G becomes G#; this is followed by a C that is untransformed, an F that is transposed up a semitone to F# and displaced upward by an octave; and the final measure has the first two notes displaced downward by an octave, the final two notes reordered, and the B transposed down a whole tone to A.  $\begin{bmatrix} [] Add \\ O - x Delete \\ ---- Transpose \\ \hline Reorder \end{bmatrix}$ 



Example 4.7. Melodic transformations that lead from the initial statement of the melody (mm. 1-9) to the final statement (mm. 33-41) in the first movement of Dissonant Counterpoint. The first note of the second system is greyed out as it is tied over from the previous system, therefore already accounted for in the previous set of transformations.

Not only is the entire right-hand melody generated from the opening row, but so too is the left-hand melody found in the first phrase (mm. 1–12). Here, I interpret the initial row in the right-hand melody to be the "leading line" as its segmentation into three (013) motives with intervening pitches also creating an (013) motive suggest this line is more highly organized (and therefore more likely to have been composed first) when compared to the melody in the left hand. Although these two melodies seem unrelated on the surface, the melodic transformations proposed in Chapter 2 reveal their similarities (see Example 4.8): the first three notes of the righthand melody are reordered and transposed (A# becomes B, D becomes Eb); the next two notes are also reordered and G is transposed to Ab; a D is added; the following four notes are reordered and F# is transposed down a semitone to F while C is transposed up a semitone to C#; a G is added; and the final three notes are reordered while E is also transposed up a whole tone

Register change

to F#. All notes also change register by one or more octaves as they are shifted from the righthand melodic voice into the bass line.

Although Beyer signals the existence of two separate, distinguishable characters, or "voices," in this movement, the right-hand melody gendered "feminine" and the left-hand melody gendered "masculine," I propose that this interpretation is problematized not only by the integration of both consonant and dissonant musical features, but also by the close relationship between the two parts. Since both melodic lines are sourced from the same content, neither can be unequivocally "masculine" or "feminine." Rather, aligning with queer theory, the gendering of these melodic lines might be viewed as a performative act, a series of actions or features, that give the impression of "masculinity" or "femininity" of the same source material. Instead of two distinct characters in this movement, I interpret this movement to embody two separate, somewhat opposingly gendered strands of a single musical character sounding simultaneously. The combination of masculine and feminine features into each line that is neither exclusively aither endor of masculine and feminine features into each line that is neither exclusively



Example 4.8. Melodic transformations also reveal the similarities between the melodic content of both hands. The left-hand melody can be viewed as being generated from the melodic content of the right hand.

The left-hand melody (see Example 4.9) comprises ten pitch-classes, four of which appear twice (Eb, B, Ab, and G), with two pitch-classes missing to complete the twelve-note aggregate: C

and B<sub>b</sub>. This melodic line, like that found in the right hand, can be divided into four trichords segmented based on their unidirectional contour; however, the motivic content of these trichords is different from that found in the right hand, further underscoring a sense of line individuality. In the left-hand melody, the initial descending three notes create (026) as do the next three ascending notes. Not only are these two sets related by T5, but they also can be viewed as melodically transformed versions of each other using the transformations proposed in Chapter 2: B,  $E_{b}$ , and A are reordered and transposed so that A becomes  $A_{b}$ ,  $E_{b}$  becomes E, and B becomes D. The following three notes create an intervallically compressed (024) trichord, which can also be viewed as a transformed version of the previous: Ab, E, and D are again reorderd and transposed so that Ab becomes F,44 E becomes Eb, and D becomes C#. The final motive of the line is a tetrachord, (0236), that similarly outlines a (026) trichord but includes an internal chromatic step. Again, this (0236) is a transformed version of the preceding (024)—C# becomes B, F becomes G, G# is added, and Eb becomes F. Although the third trichord is different than the other three, (024) rather than (026), motivically it sounds quite similar due to the leap of a dissonant minor seventh between the second and third note: E to D in the second, F to Eb in the third, and G to F in the final iteration. While the first two instances of the (026) trichord are related by T5, the second and third are related by "T3," (albeit with an added note) creating an overall trajectory of T8 between the first and last iterations of this motive.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Note that most transposition transformations I have found in Beyer's music are transpositions by a whole tone or a semitone. The minor third transposition, found here as well as the minor third from B to D from the first trichord to the second, are found occasionally but are not typical.



Example 4.9. The melodic content of the left hand can be divided into four motives—two (026) trichords, a (024) trichord, and a (0236) tetrachord. Although the (024) is slightly smaller than the (026) motives, it sounds similar with the minor seventh leap at the end. The (0236) motive can be viewed as a (026) trichord with an added G#.

This melodic line, lasting for the entirety of the first phrase (mm. 1–12) is the source material for the left-hand melodies of the entire movement. The second phrase (mm. 13–25) is a varied restatement of the opening line (see Example 4.10): B changes register,  $E_b$  is transposed up a whole tone to F, A and Ab are reordered and change register; the following E is transposed down a whole tone to D; the next D is deleted and a Bb is added in its place in the second phrase; the following C# changes register while F is transposed up a semitone to F#; B changes register and is transposed down a semitone to Bb; three notes remain untransformed; F# changes register; and the final three notes of the phrase (C, C#, and D) are added.



Example 4.10. Melodic transformations leading from the first statement of the left-hand melody (mm. 1-12) to the second statement (mm. 13–25) in the first movement of Dissonant Counterpoint.

The following phrase (mm. 26–32) is a varied repetition of the phrase immediately preceding it (see Example 4.11): B changes register, D and B<sub>b</sub> are reordered; the following F# is transposed down a semitone to F and the E<sub>b</sub> changes register; B<sub>b</sub> changes register and is transposed to C# while the G is transposed up a whole tone to A. As with the right hand, the melodic line in the left hand is interrupted with another repetition of the initial melody before it reaches its conclusion. The final phrase (mm. 33–end) is very similar to the opening phrase (see Example 4.12): A in the third measure changes register; the following three notes are reordered, E<sub>b</sub> is transposed down a whole tone plus an octave to become D#, B is transposed down a semitone and up an octave to B<sub>b</sub>, and G changes register; this is followed by three deleted notes, and an added B to end the phrase.



Example 4.11. Melodic transformations leading from the second statement of the left-hand melody (mm. 13–25) to the third statement (mm. 26–32) in the first movement of Dissonant Counterpoint.



Example 4.12. Melodic transformations leading from the first statement of the left-hand melody (mm. 1-12) to the final statement (mm. 33-41) in the first movement of Dissonant Counterpoint.

The simultaneous yet independent evolution of the two melodies in this movement creates another element of variety that was not present in the single-line Clarinet Suite movements. In this piece, variety, one of the cornerstones of dissonant counterpoint, exists not only in the horizontal domain (prompted by the melodic transformations) but also in the vertical domain: as both lines are transformed in various ways, the resulting counterpoint obscures the melodic repetition due to the new relationships created between the two parts. Although the melodic content of the two hands is transformed independently from one another (i.e. different transformations occur and at different rates between the two hands), the phrasing is aligned: the two hands begin and end their repetitions of the melodic content simultaneously for the duration of the movement.

In sum, the first movement of *Dissonant Counterpoint* upholds many of Seeger's suggestions for creating a heterophonic musical texture. The two melodies have unique identities and a high degree of independence due to contrasting melodic and rhythmic content, rare simultaneous attacks, predominantly dissonant vertical intervals, and independent trajectories of melodic transformation. These opposing characters were not only identified by Beyer in her program notes, but also given a gendered interpretation—the right hand as feminine and the left as masculine. My interpretation of this movement through a queer paradigm, however, problematizes her gendered reading. By identifying the ways in which these melodies are similar

to one another, including the use of the same group of melodic transformations in each part and a single source material for both independent melodies, I propose that the distinct separation between these two characters is queered, undermining the duality between feminine and masculine characters that Beyer proposes.

## Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7

The seventh movement of the Dissonant Counterpoint piano suite is the longest movement of the set, spanning 77 measures. Unlike the first movement of this suite and all of the movements of the Clarinet Suites, the seventh movement is not set in verse form. Despite the lack of visually clear phrases, the same overarching compositional philosophy is at play here: a melodic line is composed in each hand, and that melodic line is repeated with variations over the course of the movement. Although Beyer does not explicitly comment on how she perceives the gender of each part in this movement, I interpret these lines as the inverse of those found in the first movement (see Example 4.13): here, the left hand plays what might be considered a more "arabesque, feminine" style, while the right hand provides more of a "strong, masculine" accompanimental line. The rhythmic characteristics of each part support this reading. While the right hand features longer note values that mostly adhere to the metric grid, portraying a sense of stability and "strength," the left hand features faster, more "arabesque"-like rhythms, including triplets and, later, septuplets. Unlike the first movement, where the "arabesque, feminine" voice was played by the higher register of the right hand where we could conventionally expect the melody to occur, and the "strong, masculine" line played in the lower register by the left hand, where we would expect a supportive bass line to occur, my interpretation of the seventh movement reverses

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these two characters by having the "arabesque, feminine" line played in the low register by the left hand, and the "strong, masculine" line played in the higher register by the right hand. When considering Ahmed's definition of "queer orientations" or "disorientation" as a misalignment, something that "acts out of line with others," then, movement 7 could be considered to create a "queer effect."<sup>45</sup>



Example 4.13. The opening seven measures of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7 shows the two distinct characters at play in this movement. The right-hand melody has slower-moving rhythms typical of a "strong, masculine" bassline, while the left hand features more faster moving, "arabesque, feminine" characteristics.

Throughout the movement, the register changes often and covers the entire range of the piano keyboard, blurring the individual characterization of each line and furthering the "queer effect" of the melodic parts. Beginning in m. 35, the right-hand melodic line descends into the third octave of the piano for eight measures, creating an overlap between the two hands where each line is no longer aurally distinct from the other. Likewise, the left-hand melody joins the right hand in the fourth and fifth octaves of the piano beginning in m. 50. In m. 62, the left hand once again descends into the bass register, followed two measures later by a descent into the third octave by the right hand, once again aurally obscuring the two distinct melodies. The final four measures of the movement feature a registral ascent back into the fourth, fifth, and sixth octaves of the piano, first by the right-hand melody in m. 74 followed by the left hand in m. 75. In the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 107.

final measure, the changing of registers reaches its culmination when the hands cross one another—the right hand plays a B0 in the lowest octave of the piano while the left hand crosses over to play F#6 followed by F7. This movement queers the distinction between the identities of the two lines by continually shifting registers and ending with a crossing of the hands, performed in the extreme registers of the piano. These musical lines, then, "act out of line" and create a disorienting, "queer effect" by deviating from the confines of their unique registers.

The two individual parts of this movement align closely with Seeger's rules for dissonant melodies and, when combined, create heterophony. The right-hand melody (see Example 4.14) comprises an almost-complete twelve-tone aggregate, missing the notes G# and A and repeating the notes C and D#. The atonality created by this melodic variety is enriched by dissonant leaps dispersed among the otherwise stepwise melody: a dissonant tritone leap (C# to G) starts the phrase, followed by an augmented fifth from Eb to B (mm. 5–6) and a large leap of a 12<sup>th</sup> from Bb to F to end the phrase. Although its "strong," bassline quality gives this line a more "masculine" feel, similar to that found in the left hand of the first movement discussed above, several musical features undermine that gendered reading, lending this melody to a queer paradigm. Rhythmically, the line is fairly consonant, residing within the metric grid with only two exceptions—the ties across the bar line from mm. 2–3 and mm. 6–7 diminishes the sense of pulse slightly. The consistent dynamic markings and *legato* articulations throughout also create consonance within these musical parameters.



Example 4.14. Analysis of the opening statement of the right-hand melody of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7 (mm. 1-7). The melodic variety—an almost-complete twelve-tone aggregate missing only G# and A—with dissonant leaps, including the tritone from C# to G, the augmented fifth from Eb to B, and the leap of a  $12^{th}$  from Bb to F, is contrasted by consonant articulations and dynamics.

The left-hand melody (see Example 4.15) contrasts with that of the right in many ways, giving a sense of uniqueness and individuality to the two parts of this movement. While the right hand plods along in measured, slower-moving rhythms, the left hand is more rhythmically active and elaborate, akin to what Beyer referred to as the "arabesque" right hand in the first movement of this piano suite. This "feminine" characterization is enhanced by smooth, consonant, more *legato* articulations and consistent dynamic markings. This line, however, is also queered through competing dissonant musical characteristics. Two triplet motives (one in m. 3 and the other in m. 5) break away from the metric grid, creating small moments of rhythmic dissonance, while several weak beat ties throughout the line momentarily weakens the sense of pulse (see the ties over the bar line from mm. 1–2, mm. 4–5, and mm. 5–6, as well as the weakbeat ties internal to m. 5). Dissonant leaps of a diminished seventh (F to G#), followed by a diminished octave (G# to G) and a minor 7<sup>th</sup> (G to A) in mm. 4–5 also add moments of dissonant, disjunct motion in an otherwise relatively consonant melodic line, complicating and queering the gendered reading.



Example 4.15. An analysis of the opening statement of the left-hand melody in Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7 (mm. 1-6). The mostly conjunct, ornamented, "arabesque" quality of this line is enhanced by the consonant articulations and dynamic markings. The triplets in m. 3 and m. 5 as well as ties obscuring the beat in mm. 2, 4, 5, and 6 create rhythmic dissonance, and large dissonant leaps in mm. 4-5 create moments of melodic dissonance.

Although on the surface, these two melodic parts appear to be quite disparate, I propose that the melodies share an underlying melodic framework that creates a sense of cohesion within this movement. I interpret the left-hand melody to be the "leading line," as suggested by Seeger, from which the right-hand melody is sourced. The left-hand melody flows the most continuously (i.e. there are fewer held notes and rests than in the right-hand melody) which Seeger claims is ideal of leading lines: "In early practice it has been found advisable to conduct a fairly steady flow in the leading line and to manage the added lines discontinuously."<sup>46</sup> Example 4.16 depicts the transformations that lead from the left-hand melody to the right: the D is transposed down a semitone to C#; A is reordered and transposed by a whole tone to become G; C changes register; the following D is added; the F is transposed down a whole tone to D# and F# is deleted; another reordering occurs along with a couple of transpositions so that Ab-B-F-Eb becomes E-F#-Eb-B; the following D and C both change register and are transposed down a whole tone to C and B<sub>b</sub> respectively; the following C# is deleted followed by an E that changes register and is transposed by a semitone to F. The final six notes of the left-hand melody are omitted from the right. This underlying shared melodic framework problematizes a distinct gendering of the two

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 214.

lines, instead prompting an interpretation of this movement as two separate, perhaps oppositely gendered, strands of a single musical character sounding simultaneously.



Example 4.16. Melodic transformations reveal the similarities between the opening statement of the left-hand melody (which I interpret as being the "leading line") and the opening statement of the right-hand melody.

The transformations that lead from the left-hand "lead" melody to that of the right hand are also present within the overarching trajectory of each individual part, creating yet another common thread between the two disparate melodies. The right-hand melody introduced in the opening seven measures is the basis for the melodic material in the right hand over the course of the entire movement. This melody is repeated ten times with slight variations upon each repetition that can be accounted for by the five melodic transformations I proposed in Chapter 2. Example 4.17 shows the transformational pathways that lead from the initial melody through the first three repetitions. The first repetition of the initial melody occurs from mm. 8–15 (see Example 4.17a) and it remains very similar to the initial statement: C# and G are transposed up an octave into the fourth register of the piano; D# also changes register; Eb changes register and is transposed down a semitone to D; the next three notes, C, Bb, and F, also change registers; and an E is added at the end of the phrase. The third statement of the melody begins in m. 16 (see Example 4.17b), once again varied but closely resembling the previous statement: the first three notes are registrally displaced downwards by two octaves; the D# is transposed down by one octave and an F is added; D is transposed down by an octave followed by an added F# and Eb; B and C are both registrally displaced—B by two octaves downwards and C by an octave upwards; Bb is transposed down an octave while E and F change order and E is transposed up an octave; and the final four notes of the line—A, Eb, F#, and G#—are all added. The A and G# added at the end of this line complete the twelve-tone aggregate in the right hand. Extra sonic emphasis is put on these notes by having them appear nearly three octaves lower than the rest of the melodic line occurring at the time: the leap of a thirteenth down from F5 to A3 followed by a leap of two octaves plus a tritone back up from A3 to Eb6 isolates the A in the lowest register and makes it salient within rest of the line. Likewise, the leap of two octaves plus a minor seventh downwards from F#6 to G#3 to end the phrase draws similar attention to the importance of the G# as the final note to complete the aggregate.

The fourth statement of the melody begins in m. 25 (see Example 4.17c) after two-and-ahalf beats of rest. While the first two notes of this repetition remain the same, the next two notes are both transposed by an octave (the C shifts up an octave and the D down an octave); F and F# are reordered and F# changes register; the next three notes—D, F#, and Eb—are deleted; the following B and C are registrally displaced, with B moving up an octave and C moving down an octave; the next three notes—Bb, E, and F—change registers while E is also transposed down a whole tone to D and F is transposed upwards to G#; and finally, the Eb is transposed down a semitone to E, F# is transposed up a semitone to G, and G# is transposed down a whole tone to F# to end the phrase.









Example 4.17. Transformational pathways of the right-hand melody in Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7 that lead (a) from the opening statement to the first varied repetition, (b) from the first varied statement to the second, and (c) from the second varied statement to the third.

The next statement begins in m. 35, with a jump to the lower register of the piano and two shorter phrase lengths, creating a sense of a new formal section.<sup>47</sup> The initial melody of this section is a transformed version of that which occurs immediately before it (see Example 4.18): the first two notes are registrally displaced downwards by two octaves; a G# and F are added while two notes from the previous iteration—C and D—are deleted; the next three notes are registrally displaced downwards; F is registrally displaced downward and is transposed by a whole tone to become Eb; B, C, and Bb are all transposed down one or two octaves; D and G# are both registrally displaced downwards and are transposed—D becomes an E and G# becomes F#; a C is added; the next three notes are reordered, registrally displaced, and transposed so that A, E, G becomes Eb, B, Bb, and a D is added; and the final note of the line is transposed down a whole tone from F# to E.



Example 4.18. The fourth statement of the melody begins in m. 35 with a transformed version of the melody that occurs immediately before it.

The seventh statement of the melodic idea begins in m. 44. Rather than viewing this melodic material as a transformed version of that which came before it, I interpret this melody as a varied restatement of the opening melodic line which creates a sense of "return" at the end of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> I determine phrase boundaries based on the beginnings and endings of the repeated melodic idea: a phrase lasts for the duration of a repeated statement of the melody.

the movement. This is the most elaborate restatement up to this point, with many intervening pitches added between the notes found in the original melodic line. As Example 4.19 demonstrates, all of the pitches of the initial melodic line can be found in the melody that begins at m. 45 some of which are varied slightly by occurring in a different register (for example, the initial C# and G are both registrally displaced downward by one octave in m. 44 when compared to the opening statement of the melody). Between these structural pitches, material is added, usually relating to the previous note by half step or whole step (for instance, the added material in m. 44 is a G# following a G, and a B and Bb following a C) or otherwise by a dissonant interval (the added material following Bb in m. 49 is added by an interval of a tritone, while the material following the F in m. 50 is added by the interval of an augmented 9<sup>th</sup>).



Example 4.19. The phrase beginning in m. 45 is an elaborated version of the opening melody, creating a sense of varied melodic return at the end of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7.

This transformational process continues throughout the rest of the movement, with each statement of the melody being a varied version of the previous. The final repetition of the right-hand melody, beginning in m. 70, is strikingly similar to the first statement (see Example 4.20). The melody begins three octaves lower than the initial statement for the first four measures (m. 70–73), followed by an exact repetition of the next four notes; the C in m. 6 is transposed down an octave, and a C# and D are added; the Bb is transposed up an octave; the final note of the

first phrase, F, is transposed down a semitone and registrally displaced up an octave, before the final note of this melodic line, a B in the lowest register of the piano, is added.



*Example 4.20. Melodic transformations reveal the high degree of similarity between the initial melodic statement (mm. 1–7) and the final phrase (mm. 70-77) in the right hand of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7.* 

A similar trajectory and melodic process occurs in the left hand, making use of the same five melodic transformations. The second statement of the left hand melody begins on the second beat of m. 6 and remains quite similar to the first statement of the melodic line, featuring only registral displacements of notes (see Example 4.21a): the second pitch, C, is registrally displaced up one octave while the F# two pitches later is transposed down an octave; the following A and Ab are also transposed down an octave. Following five untransformed notes, three more pitches, C#, E, and F are also transposed down an octave; three pitches later, G# is, by contrast, transposed up an octave, while the following G is transposed down an octave, and A, A#, and E are all transposed up an octave to end the phrase.

The next repetition begins in m. 11 (see Example 4.21b), with an alteration made to initial two notes of the melody: D is deleted, and C is now heard in the fourth octave (registrally displaced up two octaves from the previous iteration). The following F is registrally displaced up an octave, and the following F# from the first two statements of the melodic line is deleted; A is

transposed up an octave; Gb is added following an untransposed Ab; B and F are also deleted; Eb is transposed up a semitone to Et (which is also registrally displaced down an octave). Following a D and C that are retained, C# is registrally displaced up an octave, E is transposed down a semitone to D#, F is retained, and G# is registrally displaced down an octave. The following G is also registrally displaced, this time up an octave; A# is deleted; a D is added; and E is transposed down two octaves.



Example 4.21. Transformational path in the left hand of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 7 from (a) the opening melodic statement of the left hand to the first varied repetition, and (b) the first varied repetition to the second.

The melodic transformations continue throughout the opening section of the movement, with each phrase repeating the preceding one with variations. The tenth repetition, beginning part way through m. 49, is a varied repetition of the initial A melody rather than the melodic material that immediately preceded the section (see Example 4.22). As with the initial statement of the melody, this repetition begins with the D-C motive set as a dotted-eighth-sixteenth note rhythmic pattern, however rather than descending a step like the initial melody, this repetition has the C registrally displaced up an octave, opening with the leap of a minor seventh. The following F and F# are deleted; A is registrally displaced up an octave; Ab is deleted; B is registrally displaced up an octave; F is deleted; the following four notes (Eb, D, C, and C#) are all registrally displaced up two octaves; the following E is deleted; F is transposed up two octaves and G# is transposed up three octaves; G is deleted; A and A# are both registrally displaced upwards; C#, D, and D# are added; and E is transposed up two octaves, followed by another two measures of added notes.





The final repetition of the left-hand melody begins at the pickup to m. 71. This repetition also creates a sense of return, like that found in the right hand, closely resembling the initial statement of the melody from the beginning of the movement (see Example 4.23). The first pitch of the line, D, is transposed down two octaves, while the following C, F, and F# are transposed down one octave; in the following measure, A, Ab, B, and F are all transposed down one octave; in the triplet on the last beat of the second measure, the C is transposed down a whole tone to Bb; in the next measure, following a measure of retained notes, A, A#, and E are all transposed up an octave.



Example 4.23. Transformational pathway between the initial statement of the left-hand melody and that of the final repetition in the seventh movement of Dissonant Counterpoint.

In sum, the seventh movement of *Dissonant Counterpoint* adheres to many of Seeger's suggestions for creating a heterophonic musical texture while queering the boundary between two distinct musical identities through shared musical features. Although Beyer does not give a particular gendering to the two melodies present in this movement, I propose one surface-level interpretation might assume a reversal of the gendering compared to that of the previous movement—a strong, "masculine" right-hand melody and a more "feminine," arabesque left hand. Despite their contrasting characteristics, my interpretation of this movement through a queer paradigm identifies the ways in which these melodies are similar to one another, including the use of the same five melodic transformations in each part and a single source material for each of the independent melodies. I propose that these overlapping musical characters undermine the duality between femininity and masculinity, disorienting the underlying principles of heterophonic composition.

## Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 8

The eighth and final movement of the *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite is distinct in its construction. Unlike the other movements discussed so far, where the melodic lines appear to be an entire, self-enclosed unit, the eighth movement's melodic content is made up of smaller motivic cells. These motivic cells are the basis for the melodic variation underpinning this movement, whereby cells can be split apart, reordered, repeated, and/or internally varied. The melodic content of the right hand is made up of three two-measure cells plus an ending (marked as motive a, motive b, motive c, and motive d in Example 4.24), segmented based on the slur markings and the repeated short-short-long rhythmic durations. Each of these cells, except for motive d, is further divided into one-measure units: a<sub>1</sub>, a<sub>2</sub>, b<sub>1</sub>, b<sub>2</sub>, c<sub>1</sub>, and c<sub>2</sub>. The melodic content of the left hand (see Example 4.24) is likewise made up of three units, segmented based on differentiated rhythmic patterns: motive z is three measures, each of which is a half rest followed by a whole note; motive y is two measures, each of which is a quarter rest followed by a quarter note and a whole note, comprising an internal division between  $y_1$  and  $y_2$ ; and motive x is two measures of faster-moving quarter notes and half notes, also comprising an internal division between  $x_1$  and  $x_2$ . Rather than mapping pitch transformations from an initial melody to its varied restatement, then, I will show in the following analysis how motivic cells are varied, both internally and reordered on a larger scale, to create melodic variety within this movement.



Example 4.24. Motivic cells and their internal divisions in the opening phrase (mm. 1-8) of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 8.

Over the course of the movement, the motivic "puzzle pieces" get moved around, rearranged, and internally altered to create new versions of the melody upon each repetition. The right-hand melody appears in its initial form from mm. 1–7, and again with the internal segments of the motives reversed plus other small alterations from mm. 9–14. This is accompanied by the initial statement of the left-hand melodic content (mm. 1-7), and a repetition of the content with some reversal and other alterations (mm. 9–14, detailed below). The hands then switch melodies: the right hand plays the left-hand melodic content in its initial form (mm. 18–24) followed by its altered form (mm. 25–31) while the left hand plays the righthand melodic content in its initial form and then its altered form. Each of these statements are broken up by measures of rest that increase in length: the first and second iterations are broken up by a one measure rest (m. 8), and the second and third are separated by a two-measure rest (mm. 15-16). The fourth statement of the melody ends with a double bar line, followed by three measures of rest. The second half of the movement (mm. 35-68) is a retrograde of the first half but switches the material between the two hands (i.e. the left hand retrogrades what the right hand played in the first half of the movement, while the right hand retrogrades the left hand content of the first half).

In TENM, Seeger encourages the use of palindromes and retrograde motion to create a sense of balance and symmetry in a piece's formal structure. He writes: "the more rigorously the dissonant fabric is sustained, the better it will be in retrograde motion. Whole sections and whole compositions can be performed backward with either exact or modified relation."48 In the final movement of Dissonant Counterpoint, Beyer creates a deep sense of balance and symmetry in three ways (see Example 4.25). First, the movement as a whole is a palindrome, with the second half of the movement retrograding the first almost exactly (with a few small alterations as discussed below), creating balance and symmetry in the overarching form of the whole movement. Within the first half of the movement, a sense of balance is created through an inversion of the melodic content played by each hand: the melody of the right hand for the first seventeen measures is taken over by the left hand for the following fourteen measures. Although Seeger does not explicitly mention this sort of symmetry and balance created by invertible counterpoint, it adheres to his guidelines for modified repetitions in an innovative way. Finally, the internal segments of the motives in the first phrase of the right hand are retrograded in the second phrase, resulting in a sense of balance and symmetry on a smaller scale of formal structure.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 196.





Hands are inverted







Retrograde begins in opposite hands











Example 4.25. Annotated score of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 8 showing the large-scale palindromic form of the whole movement, the inversion of the two hands in the first half of the movement (see purple and green boxes), and the internal retrograding of motivic cells in the second phrase (see bracketed measures).

This movement, like the others of this piano suite discussed so far, is rooted in a dissonant foundation when considering the hands separately as independently melodies, as well as the contrapuntal combination of the two melodies together. The right-hand melody (see Example 4.26) comprises an almost-complete twelve-tone aggregate with a repeated C (separated by five pitches from its first iteration and occurring in a different octave to soften the effect of the repetition), demonstrating the ultramodernist propensity for chromatic completion and pitch variety. All consonant melodic intervals are dissonated by a semitone in pitch-class space: the initial motive a creates what at first might appear to be a consonant F major triad, with the first, second, and fourth pitches of this tetrachord A, F, and C; however, the sense of consonance and tonality here is disrupted by the B<sup>1</sup> on the third beat of the first measure, a dissonant tritone away from the preceding F and a semitone away from the following C. Likewise, the consonant minor third from Bb to G in the following measure is dissonated immediately by a semitone descent to G# on the third beat, and the major third descent from G# to E across the barline is similarly dissonated by the G on beat 2. Together, the variety of pitch material and the process of dissonating any consonant melodic intervals gives this melody the dissonant character expected in ultramodernist compositions.



Example 4.26. The right-hand melody from Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 8 (mm. 1–7) comprises an almostcomplete twelve-tone aggregate with C repeated once and a C# omitted. All consonant melodic intervals, including the F major triad in mm. 1–2, the minor third interval in m. 3 and the major third from mm. 3-4 (see blue connecting lines under the staff) are all dissonated by a semitone immediately preceding or following the consonance (see orange slurs).

The left-hand melody is also dissonant (see Example 4.27). Although pitch repetitions occur more frequently in this line, with motive x repeating nearly all of the pitches from motive y and motive z, there are no direct repetitions, and all repeated notes are separated by at least four intervening pitches. As with the right hand, all consonant or tonal implications created in the left-hand melody are negated through dissonation by a semitone or whole tone in pitch-class space. For example, the left-hand melody begins with what could be heard as a scalar segment in F# minor: F#-G#-A-B; however, immediately following this ascent of a fourth is a Bb, a semitone away from the preceding B<sup>a</sup>, which negates the tonal implications of the segment. Similarly, mm. 4–5 could be heard as an arpeggiation of an Eb major triad (Bb – G – Eb), but the preceding B<sup>a</sup> in m. 4 undermines this brief sense of tonality.

The metric setting of the left-hand melody also contributes significantly to its dissonant framework. Although the movement is set in a 3/2 metre, the left-hand melody contains no articulated downbeats. While the first six measures of the left hand contain rests on the downbeats, mm. 6–7 make use of ties to create a strongly syncopated feeling to end the initial melodic statement. The rests and syncopation together obscure the clear sense of metre in this melodic line and enhance its dissonant effect.



Example 4.27. The left-hand melody of Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 8 (mm. 1–7) features an initial seven-note segment over the first five measures. Several of these notes are repeated in the final two measures of the melody, diminishing the overall pitch variety. All consonant or tonal progressions, such as the F# minor scale segment in the first four measures and the Eb major triad from mm. 4-5 (see connecting blue lines), are dissonated by a semitone or whole tone in pitch-class space (see orange slur).

These two dissonant lines, when put together, create a dissonant contrapuntal framework that aligns with many of Seeger's guidelines outlined in TENM. A few prominent elements enhance the independence of these lines to create heterophony. Within the initial eight measures, only three simultaneous attacks occur between the two lines (beat 2 of m. 1, beat 2 of m. 3, and beat 2 of m. 5), with two of the three simultaneities creating dissonant harmonic intervals (a diminished octave on beat 2 of m. 1 and a minor 7<sup>th</sup> on beat 2 of m. 3). The overlapping motives also create a sense of formal dissonance: rather than the two parts containing motive lengths that coincide, the regular, two-measure motives that occur in the right hand are disrupted by motive z in the left hand, which lasts for three measures Although the right and left hands align when starting and ending repetitions of melodic statements, the overlap of small formal units on the foreground of the musical surface enhances line independence and the dissonant contrapuntal texture.

Despite these features, the voices in this movement are less characteristically distinct than in the other two examined so far in this chapter—there is not a clear "arabesque-like" melody with a "stronger," more accompanimental voice, but rather two voices that have a more equal status in the musical texture. This equality is further underscored by the ranges occupied by each voice. Although the voices never cross over one another at any given point, their overall tessituras do overlap with the top voice ranging from a B4 to Bb6, and the lower voice ranging from C4 to F#5 for the first seventeen measures of the movement. The inversion of the two hands a quarter of the way through the movement also contributes to a sense of equality and diminishes the uniqueness or individuality for each voice that is commonly found in heterophonic works. To me, this final movement of the piano suite provides almost a sense of resolution for the conflict occurring throughout the piece as a whole: unlike the other movements, which contain two unique voices occupying distinct ranges, sometimes crossing one another but never explicitly

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sharing melodic content, the eighth movement appears to be more harmonious with ranges and melodic content shared equally between the two hands.

Not only do the two melodies of this movement share a common range, but they also can be understood as stemming from the same source, as with the other movements discussed in this chapter. The five melodic transformations I proposed in Chapter 2 demonstrate how the right hand melodic material is altered in order to create the melodic content of the left hand (see Example 4.28): A and F# are reordered, change register, and are both transposed by a semitone—A is transposed down a semitone to G# and F is transposed up a semitone to F#; B and C are both transposed downward to A and B respectively; Bb and G change register; G# and E are reordered, change register, and are both transposed by a semitone in opposite directions—G# becomes A and E becomes Eb; the following three notes are reordered while F# is transposed up a whole tone to G#, C is transposed down a semitone to B, and both change register; Eb in the highest register is transposed to F# down one octave, and a final G in the left hand line is added.



*Example 4.28. Melodic transformations reveal the similarities between the two melodies that make up* Dissonant Counterpoint, *movement 8.* 

While the main source of melodic variety in this movement comes from reordering the motivic "puzzle pieces," inverting the hands, and retrograding the entire first half of the movement, small alterations are occasionally made within the motivic cells that can be accounted for with the melodic transformations (see Example 4.29). As mentioned above, the first repetition of the right-hand melody begins in m. 9, where the internal pieces of the first three motives are reversed: rather than motive a appearing as a<sub>1</sub> + a<sub>2</sub>, mm. 9–10 presents a<sub>2</sub> followed by a<sub>1</sub>. A similar reversal also occurs for motive b and motive c that follow. Within motive a, two other variations occur. First, the held note that comprises motive a<sub>2</sub> is transposed up a semitone from C (as it first appeared in m. 2) to C#, completing the twelve-tone aggregate of this melody. The second and fourth measures of the repetition, cell a<sub>1</sub> and b<sub>1</sub> in m. 10 and m. 12, are also altered through reordering, while in cell c<sub>2</sub> and c<sub>1</sub>, the Eb and C are altered through a register change (both are shifted down one octave). After two measures of rest, expanded from one measure in the previous statement, and now appearing before cell d rather than after it, the first note of cell d is also registrally displaced down an octave.



Example 4.29. Transformations between the initial statement of the right-hand melody and the second statement in Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 8 (mm. 1-17).

Following this repetition, the roles of the hands invert, and the right hand takes on the melodic material that was performed by the left hand in the opening melodic statement. This melodic material is also altered (see Example 4.30a). The initial z motive returns almost verbatim, however the pitches are registrally displaced upwards: F# up two octaves, and G# and A up one. The following y motive also returns almost exactly as it was the first time in the lefthand melody, with registral displacements moving the first three pitches up one octave, and the final Eb moved up two octaves to create an ascending minor sixth from G to Eb rather than a descending major third as was heard in m. 5. Finally, A, B, G# and G are all transposed up one octave in cell x. Following this statement, the one measure of rest is omitted, instead immediately beginning a varied restatement of mm. 9–14 (see Example 4.30b). The melodic statement begins with an A and F# both displaced up an octave, followed by a B in the next measure also registrally transposed up an octave. After notes that are retained exactly from the first iteration, Ab is transposed up a semitone to A<sup>\$\$</sup> in m. 28. The next measure, rather than being a varied statement of its counterpart in the left hand (m. 13), this cell can be understood as a varied restatement of cell  $y_2$  (see the inserted measure between the systems in Example 4.30b). The material originally heard in m. 14 is transposed up two octaves in m. 30. This repeated statement is then ended with a measure of added material that has not yet been heard in this movement, but could be viewed as an altered version of cell x: A is transposed up an octave, D is deleted, B is transposed up an octave; and Bb and A are added; G#, F# and G are transposed up two octaves; and the F# and G are reordered. Three measures of rest then occur, marking the end of the first half of the movement with silence.


Example 4.30. Melodic transformations leading from (a) the initial statement of the left-hand melody (mm. 1-8) to its varied restatement in the right hand (mm. 18-24), and (b) the first varied restatement of the left-hand melody (mm. 9-17) and its varied restatement in the right hand (mm. 25-31).

The left-hand melodic content follows a similar trajectory as the right hand over the first half of the movement. The first varied repetition of the left-hand melody, occurring from mm. 9–17 alters the ordering of motivic cells found in the right hand. Rather than simply reordering the parts of each cell, however, the left-hand melody splits cells apart, modifies them, and puts them back together in a different order (see Example 4.31). The opening of the varied repetition begins with a modified motive z, similar to the initial statement. Here, rather than stepwise motion from F# up to A, however, the internal G# is deleted and the F# and A are reordered, resulting in a descending minor third melodic interval. The next measure,  $y_1$ , appears exactly as it did in the first statement, but is followed instead by a modified  $x_1$  cell: the A is reordered to the end of the unit and transposed down a semitone to Ab, and a C is added between the B and Ab. This cell is

then followed by a varied repetition of  $y_1$ , where Bb is transposed down a semitone to A creating a descending major second instead of a descending minor second. A varied repetition of  $y_1 + y_2$ occurs in m. 14 where B and Bb are reordered and transposed by a whole tone plus an octave downwards to become C and C#, followed by G transposed down a whole tone to F and an E is added before the final Eb. Two measures of rest are inserted, as they were in the right hand, before the final measure of the line appears: a variation of  $x_2$  where G# is transposed down a tritone to D, F# is registrally displaced down an octave, and G is registrally



Example 4.31. Melodic variations from the initial statement of the left-hand melody (mm. 1-8) to its first varied restatement (mm. 9-17) in Dissonant Counterpoint, movement 8.

Starting in m. 18, the left hand takes over what was originally the right-hand melody from the first seventeen measures, once again with some slight alterations (see Example 4.32a). The initial motive appears verbatim in mm. 18–19, followed by a b<sub>1</sub> motive that is registrally displaced down an octave. In motive c<sub>1</sub>, the C on beat 2 is displaced downward by an octave, as are the Ebs in the following two measures. Following this repetition, the measure of rest that appeared in m. 8 is omitted, instead beginning the third varied repetition immediately in m. 25. As with the right-hand melody in the second statement (mm. 9–17), the internal segments of

Reorder Register change motive a are reversed, and now also include slight modifications (see Example 4.32b): the C# in motive  $a_2$  is transposed down an octave, while the B that initially appeared on the downbeat of motive  $a_1$  is transposed to become D, and the A on the third beat of the measure is registrally displaced down an octave. The internal segments in motive b are likewise reversed ( $b_2$  followed by  $b_1$ ) and the entire two-measure motive is transposed down an octave. Motive c appears in mm. 29–30, with internal segments also reversed ( $c_2 + c_1$ ) and the entire two measures transposed down an octave yet again. As with the right hand, this repeated statement in the left hand is ended with a measure that has not yet been heard in this movement, but can be understood as a varied form of motive a. In fact, this motive very closely resembles the altered motive a that appears at the start of the second repetition (mm. 9–10 in the right hand), where not only is the contour the same (down-up-up) but so too are the set classes, both being (0248) related by T4. As with the right hand, this measure of new melodic material is followed by three measures of rest, bringing the first half of the movement to a close with an extended silence.



Example 4.32. The melodic transformations that lead from (a) the initial statement of the right-hand melody (mm. 1-8) to the varied restatement in the left hand (mm. 18-24), and (b) the first varied restatement of the right-hand melody (mm. 9-17) to the varied restatement in the left hand (mm. 25-31).

The retrograde of the large-scale palindrome begins in m. 35 and once again the hands invert the melodic content, so that the right hand retrogrades what the left hand played in the first half of the movement, and the left hand retrogrades what the right hand played: motives a, b, and c appear in the right hand as they were in the beginning, now retrograded, and motives z, x, and y appear in the left. With this reversal of hands comes changes in register, the most significant alteration made between the first half of the movement and its retrograde in the second. Five other alterations occur in the retrograde: in the left hand of m. 38, the C on the last quarter note is transposed down a whole tone from D (compare m. 38 with its unretrograded counterpart in the right hand of m. 28); in m. 43 the E on the penultimate quarter note is transposed up a whole tone from D (compare the left hand of m. 43 with the right hand of m. 21); and in m. 60, the left-hand note is altered from an Eb to an F# while the second note of the right hand, a C, is added (compare m. 60 with m. 6). Finally, a measure of rest is inserted in m. 65, breaking apart motive a in the left hand and motive z in the right hand.

#### Conclusion

In summary, the first, seventh, and eighth movements of Beyer's *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite incorporate many of Seeger's suggestions for a heterophonic composition. The two lines of each movement have a unique identity and "sound apart" from one another due to lack of simultaneous attacks, dissonant vertical intervals between the two lines, frequent obscuring of the metric grid through triplets and cross-rhythms, and unique motives with overlapping formal divisions. Despite these markers of individuality, however, I propose that Beyer queers the conventional musical experience of heterophony by creating an underlying sense of cohesion between the two parts through shared musical features. In each of these movements, the five melodic transformations proposed in this dissertation are the basis of melodic variety in both parts, creating a melodic process that, although carried out independently in each hand, is unified by its consistent use of the same five transformation types. I have also shown how the two melodies, although seemingly disparate on the musical surface, can be understood as two variations of the same melody, also through the use of the melodic transformations. Finally, in the seventh and eighth movements of the suite, the identities of the two musical lines are blurred through overlapping tessituras, hands crossing over one another, and the inversion of melodic content played by each hand. Although Beyer asserted a gendered interpretation of the two melodic parts in *Dissonant Counterpoint*, movement 1, my reading of the shared musical features between the two parts in each of these movements problematizes this binarization, aligning instead with a queer paradigm of musical analysis.

# CHAPTER 5 Melodic Cohesion and Formal Dissonance in String Quartet no. 1

In "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," Seeger proposes that form, along with melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and tempo, is another aspect of a musical work that can be dissonant. Seeger is not entirely clear on what constitutes formal dissonance; however, he does note that many tonal compositions from earlier eras, such as those by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, are often set in dissonant formal structures. He gives the division of a hypothetical sonata form as an example, where the exposition is divided into a 31-measure main theme, a 43-measure transition, a 22-measure subordinate theme, and a 26-measure closing section. These proportions (31:43:22:26) are, according to Seeger, "extremely dissonant."<sup>1</sup> He compares this with what he considers a more consonant formal division: 36–48–24–24. It seems, then, that formal dissonance, like rhythmic dissonance and dissonant tempo modulations, could be due, at least in part, to complex ratios between the number of measures in subsequent sections.

Seeger also discusses formal dissonance on multiple levels of musical structure. On the lowest level, dissonance occurs when complex ratios are created between the number of measures in subsequent phrases. For example, a five-measure phrase followed by a two-measure phrase would be dissonant. On a middle level, dissonance can occur when the lengths of subsequent sections create complex ratios. Seeger's hypothetical sonata form, with complex ratios between the number of measures in the main theme, transition, subordinate theme, and closing section, all interior to the exposition, is an example of this mid-level structural dissonance. On the highest level, the proportions in the large-scale, overarching form (which Seeger refers to as the "gross-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Charles Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979*, edited by Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994): 192–193.

form"<sup>2</sup>) creates dissonance if the length of larger formal sections, such as the exposition, development, and recapitulation in a sonata form, create complex ratios.

Formal dissonance, like dissonance in other parameters discussed by Seeger (pitch, rhythm, tempo, etc.) can be generated melodically (within a single line of music) or harmonically (between two or more lines of music). The level of the phrase, the section, and the "gross-form" all offer ways for the formal structure of a single-line melody to be dissonant. Within multi-voice textures, formal dissonance can occur when the phrase lengths, section lengths, or the overarching form of the parts do not align. For example, if one melodic part has an A section that is twenty-three measures long while another part has an A section that is ten measures long, formal dissonance occurs. Seeger writes:

The phrase lengths of the two lines may coincide, in which the phraseology will be homophonic though dissonant; or they many not begin and end at the same time, in which case the phraseology will be heterophonic. This polyphony may be so organized that occasional coincidence of phrase construction between the two lines will give a feeling of alternating consonance and dissonance of phraseform.

Formal misalignment of multiple parts occurring simultaneously increases line independence, the primary goal in heterophonic, dissonant counterpoint compositions, and further enhances the dissonant structure of a musical work.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Seeger, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," 191. As with most of his terminology, Seeger does not provide an explanation for his use of the term "gross-form"; however, it is possible that this term originates from the German "großform" as was used by German theorists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continues to be used in modern German-speaking conservatory training today. Taylor Greer makes connections between Seeger's formal theory and those of Joseph Riepel, Heinrich Koch, Johann Kirnberger, and Hugo Riemann, strengthening the likelihood that this term originates in German scholarship. He writes: "In his desire to unite the analysis of musical form with the pedagogy of composition, Seeger was inspired by an even more recent theoretical tradition. His interest in the anatomy of melody falls within a long tradition in the history of music theory inaugurated by Joseph Riepel, Heinrich Koch, and Johann Kirnberger in the eighteenth century and continued in the late nineteenth century by Hugo Riemann. Like these theorists, Seeger begins with the smallest units of melody and then combines them to form larger units until the whole is reached. With a few adjustments, in fact, his summary of procedures for combining neumes into phrases could have been taken from the pages of an eighteenthcentury composition manual." See Taylor A. Greer, "Critical Remarks," in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979*, edited by Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994): 33.

In this chapter, I apply the set of melodic transformations to the first movement of Beyer's String Quartet no. 1 (1933–34). I show how each melodic line (in the first violin, second violin, viola, and cello) are transformed independently across the entire movement, creating a sense of melodic evolution and variety. Unlike in the movements of *Dissonant Counterpoint* examined in the previous chapter, however, the parts of String Quartet no. 1, movement 1 are transformed at different rates, resulting in melodies that are constantly shifting their temporal positions in relation to each other. This temporal shifting of each melody results in a varied contrapuntal texture and creates formal dissonance.

Despite the line independence underscored by formal dissonance, a deep sense of melodic cohesion occurs. This melodic cohesion can also be elucidated by examining the melodic transformations. In this chapter, I will show how all lines in the first movement are transformed variations of the cello line, which acts as the "leading line," like that discussed in the movements of *Dissonant Counterpoint* in Chapter 4. Unlike the piano suite, however, the first three movements of String Quartet no. 1 are also cohesive—the cello line of movement 1 acts not only as the source melody for all of the parts in the first movement, but also for the cello lines of movements 2 and 3, from which the other melodies (violin I, violin II, and viola) in each respective movement are then sourced.

As with the other pieces discussed in previous chapters, I will suggest that the movements of String Quartet no. 1 fall into a queer paradigm. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed uses the metaphor of lines to differentiate between conventional, heterosexual orientations, and queer orientations. These "lines" are not literal, but rather represent repeated actions a person takes, whether it is the objects they use and how they use them, or the spaces they occupy to use these objects. Heterosexual lines are ones that follow societal norms, actions that occur unimpeded or the spaces they move to unobstructed. Queer lines deviate from these expected, predictable paths: they are ones that "don't line up" or "act out of line with others."<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I suggest that the formal dissonance that occurs in the first movement of String Quartet no. 1 is a musical portrayal of queer orientations. Rather than regularly occurring formal divisions, ones in which all voices start and end phrases and sections at the same time, this movement is messy. The phrases overlap and formal boundaries are obscured: the parts, quite literally "act out of line" with one another and deviate from the expectations, the "societal norms," for how formal boundaries work in tonal Western art music.

## String Quartet no. 1

Written in 1933, String Quartet no. 1, the first of four string quartets by Beyer, represents an early stage in her shifting from writing music for soloists and duos to music for chamber groups and larger ensembles. Although much has been said about the second string quartet, including in in-depth analyses by Rachel Lumsden and Marguerite Boland, comparatively little has been written about the first.<sup>4</sup> The two quartets have several similarities, creating, as Polansky states, "an elegant matched pair"<sup>5</sup>: they both feature extensive use of glissandi and cluster chords; both are composed in the heterophonic, dissonant counterpoint style, with several scholars pointing to the similarities between these pieces and Crawford's String Quartet written two years prior<sup>6</sup>; and they both follow a conventional fast, slow, medium, very fast sequence of movements.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See Rachel Lumsden, "Beyond Modernism's Edge: Johanna Beyer's String Quartet No. 2 (1936) and Vivian Fine's *The Race of Life* (1937)," Ph.D. diss, The City University of New York, 2012.; Rachel Lumsden, "'The Pulse of Life Today': Borrowing in Johanna Beyer's String Quartet No. 2," *American Music* 35, 3 (2017): 303–342.; and Marguerite Boland, "Imagination and Method: J.M. Beyer's String Quartet No. 2," in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music, 1900–1960*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022): 192–228.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See Larry Polansky's liner notes to Johanna Beyer, *Sticky Melodies*, New World Records 80678-2, 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> For example, see Boland, "Imagination and Method," 195 as well as John Kennedy and Larry Polansky, "Total Eclipse': The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer: An Introduction and Preliminary Annotated Checklist," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 752.

In the first string quartet, the four movements are played *attacca* with an "aesthetic pause" before the beginning of the third movement. The piece opens with a lively, heterophonic "Allegro" in triple metre, in which the four parts of the texture are all independent and unique—the first violin line uses primarily longer durations with dramatic swells in dynamics; the second violin is more spacious, playing short, off-beat *sautillé* notes separated by rests; the viola line plays quick interjections while the second violin rests; and the cello plods along in quarter and half notes, alternating between *pizzicato* and *arco* articulations. The distinct character of each line is further enhanced by a lack of simultaneous attacks between all four parts.

The second movement is a slower-paced "Lento." Here, the upper three voices play primarily long, held durations while the cello is much more rhythmically active. As the movement progresses, more sextuplets and septuplets are introduced, as are extended trill passages and dramatic glissandi often spanning more than two octaves. The third movement, "Moderato," features a melody played by the first violin in the fifth and sixth octaves (E5 to Ab6). This melody alternates with the lower three voices who seem to comment on the primary melody with fast, tuplet passages. The final movement, "Presto," is unlike anything else heard in this piece. The movement is based almost entirely around glissandi in each instrument, first alternating between Es and Fs in all voices, before glissing in contrary motion in the first violin, viola, and cello, while the second violin plays a repeated Eb6 for 129 measures. The glissandi are played with dramatic, swelling dynamics creating an undulating soundscape both in terms of volume and pitch. The movement ends on an E/F dyad played by all four instruments. While there is surely much to say about each of these movements, this chapter will focus on a close reading of the first movement, as well as demonstrate how the melodic material of movements 1 through 3 are all generated from the same source. With a focus on glissandi, movement 4 of the

string quartet is based on an entirely different melodic procedure. The material within this movement is not generated from the same source as the others and, as such, will be omitted from this chapter's discussion.

#### String Quartet no. 1, movement 1

In the first movement of the first string quartet, the cello line acts as the "leading voice" from which the other voices are derived. It is the most highly organized in terms of its pitch-class content, suggesting this was possibly composed first with the others being sourced from it, rather than the other way around. The line features a twelve-tone series broken up into three chromatic tetrachords: [7645], [et89], and [3201]. The division of the tetrachords are articulated through a recurring short-short-long rhythmic pattern, as well as recurring pattern of three *pizzicato* notes followed by an *arco* articulation. An additional hexachord immediately follows the twelve-tone series, completing the first statement of the cello melody. The hexachord is a slightly varied repetition of the first six notes of the original pitch-class series using the five melodic transformation types—all six notes are registrally displaced upward by an octave and the final note, C, is a whole-tone transposition of the sixth note in the row, Bb (see Example 5.1).



Example 5.1. The cello line of String Quartet no. 1, movement 1 is a twelve-note series divided into three chromatic tetrachords: [7645], [et89], and [3201]. The final six pitches are a varied repetition of the opening six pitches.

Over the course of the movement, this 18-pitch succession in the cello line is repeated eight additional times, each time introducing some slight alterations that can be accounted for by the melodic transformations we saw in Chapter 2 (see Example 5.2). In the second statement of the melody, beginning in m. 11, the first fourteen pitches are registrally displaced upward two octaves, while the final three are displaced downward one, two, and three octaves, respectively. D is also added between the fifth and sixth notes of the original line, and a B is added between the thirteenth and fourteenth pitches. The third statement of the cello melody begins in m. 21, where almost all pitches are once again registrally displaced, this time back downwards into the bass register. In this repetition, another note is added between the fifth and sixth notes, now a whole tone away from the D added in the previous repetition. The C and C# that ended the initial twelve-tone succession are also reordered in this statement. The fourth repetition of the melodic line begins in m. 31. Three transformations beyond changes of register occur: the ninth and tenth pitches, Ab and A, are reordered, the final two pitches of the initial twelve-tone series that were reordered in the previous repetition (C# and C) are reordered back to their original positions; and a note is added between the fourteenth and fifteenth notes (Bb added a semitone away from the preceding B). In the following statement of the melodic line, beginning in m. 40, a C and F# are added following the second pitch in the series, C and C# are once again reordered, and several notes undergo yet another change in register. In the sixth statement, beginning in m. 49, the C and F# that were just added previously are once again removed from the melodic line, as is the F two notes later, while a Db and D are added later in the line, and the C# and C are once again reordered. In the last segment of the line, the penultimate note, B, is transposed down a semitone to Bb. The seventh statement, beginning in m. 58, once again features octave leaps embellishing several of the notes in the melodic line. The F that was removed in the previous line

is added back in while the D that was added in the previous line is deleted, restoring the initial tetrachord of the opening line. The B<sup>‡</sup> in the second segment of the melody is also deleted, while the rest of the line remains the same with octave displacements. This statement of the melody is followed by a short restatement of the opening tetrachord, with the first two pitches transposed up an octave. One final, shortened, varied statement of the initial melody occurs, with an added B in the opening tetrachord. F and Ab are deleted, as are E, F, and B at the end of the line, while B, C, and D are added. By altering the melody using only a small set of transformation types, Beyer achieves a great deal of variety and generates an entire movement from a very small amount of musical material.

The twelve-tone series of the cello line provides the basis for all of the other melodic lines in this movement. The initial melodic idea in the first violin (see Example 5.3a) comprises the opening tetrachord of the cello series in retrograde: F, E, F#, and G. The second violin line (Example 5.3b) is also based on this same tetrachord, reordered once again to become E, G, Gb, and F. The second half of the second violin melody is an altered repetition of this tetrachord: an Eb is added between the first two notes, while the final two notes are reordered. Finally, the viola line (Example 5.3c) is once again based on the opening tetrachord of the cello line in a new order (now F#, G, F, E) while the second half of the line is an altered version of the second tetrachord. Here, the Bb of the original tetrachord is transposed up a whole tone to C and all four notes are reordered from B, Bb, Ab, A to G#, A, B, C. The spelling of this second tetrachord shares intervallic content with the first in this line (both tetrachords contain a major seventh followed by a major second and a minor second), however the contour of the final two intervals is inverted: rather than descending a major second and a minor second, the second tetrachord ascends by the same interval. In this way, the second tetrachord could be viewed not only as an altered



variant of the second tetrachord in the cello line, but also an altered restatement of the

Example 5.2. Transformational path from one statement of the cello's melodic line to the next.









Example 5.3. The tetrachords making up the twelve-note succession in the cello line of the first movement is the source material for the (a) first violin melody, (b) second violin melody, and (c) viola melody.

Within each of these lines, the initial melodic idea is taken and repeated in an altered form several times over the course of the movement. In the first violin line (see Example 5.4), the second statement of the melody begins in m. 6, where all pitches are registrally displaced by an octave (the first three pitches are transposed down an octave while the final pitch of the line is transposed up an octave). Two additional pitches, D and C#, are also added between the penultimate and the final note of the line. The next repetition begins in m. 11 and is expanded even more. The first three notes of the original tetrachord, F, E, and F#, are once again transposed back to their original register while C and Bb are added between the F and E. B is also added between D and C#, while the final three pitches of this repetition, A, Ab, and Db, are also added. The fourth statement, beginning in m. 16, retains the first eleven pitches of the previous statement, three of which (Bb, C#, and Ab) are registrally displaced by an octave. At the end of the line, Db from the previous statement is transposed up a semitone to become D while an E and F# are added. The fifth statement begins in m. 23 with an initial pitch displaced by an octave along with the F# four pitches later. Halfway through the line, B and C# are reordered while B is also displaced up an octave, and A and Ab two pitches later are also registrally displaced. The following D is transposed up a whole tone to E, followed by nine added notes, mostly residing in the sixth and seventh octave, connecting to the penultimate pitch of the line, E, by a whole tone. The final two pitches of the previous line, E and D#, are retained, both of which are registrally displaced. The sixth statement of the melodic idea is greatly expanded once again. The start of the line features only four registral displacements, as well as another registral displacement about halfway through, while all other notes remain constant. Toward the end of the line, an F is added between B and F# followed by nine more added notes. This group of added notes is remarkably similar to the nine notes added at the end of the first line: Bb A Eb F

F# C B F# E of the previous statement is altered to become D Bb A F Eb D C F# E in the second, creating a sense of repetition in the lower register.

Following this greatly expanded melodic statement, the first violin line plays a reprise of the opening measures, with three of the four notes transposed down an octave compared to the original, beginning in m. 40. This is followed by a reprise of the second statement (the melodic material beginning in m. 6) beginning in m. 45, and an exact reprise of the third statement beginning in m. 50. The next repetition, rather than following the established pattern as a reprise of the fourth statement, is a new altered variant of the previous phrase. Here, all notes are transposed up an octave, with the exception of Ab at the end of the melodic line, and the final Db that ended the previous statement is deleted. The next two statements feature altered restatements of the original tetrachord: the first, beginning in m. 57 features an octave displacement of the first, third, and final notes; the second, beginning in m. 60 then displaces the final note, G, up three octaves. The final statement of the violin line, beginning in m. 63, is a varied restatement of the fifth phrase (melodic material beginning in m. 23). The first eleven notes of the two phrases remain constant. Following this, the next two notes are reordered and transposed: E goes down a semitone to Eb while Bb goes up a semitone to B. D is then added, followed by a registrally displaced A. Bb and G are added, followed by an Eb that is transposed down by a whole tone to C#, and two more pitches, F and F#, that are registrally displaced downward by an octave and an added E. The next two notes are registrally transposed down an octave plus a semitone (C becomes B, B becomes Bb), followed by four added notes (Bb, C, D, and F). The final three notes are reordered and transposed—E becomes F, F# becomes G, and D# becomes C#.









Example 5.4. The transformational trajectory of the Violin I line. Each repeated statement appears on its own line of music in this example for added clarity, but system breaks do not occur in the original manuscript.

The second violin line also takes its initial melodic statement, as described above, and repeats it in varied forms over the course of the movement (see Example 5.5). The second statement, beginning in m. 6, is an almost-exact repetition of the initial melodic idea, with G and F at the end of the phrase displaced downward by an octave. The third statement begins in m.

11. Here, the first two notes of the tetrachord are registrally displaced downward by an octave followed by two notes that remain constant. After the initial tetrachord, E and Eb are deleted, while B and Bb are added. The following G is transposed back up an octave to its original register, and three notes are added at the end of the line: C, C#, and D. The next repetition, beginning in m. 16, is greatly expanded. The first twelve pitches remain the same as in the previous statement, with or without octave displacements, and eight notes are added to end the line, connecting to the previous melodic content by semitone in pitch-class space (D to Eb). The next statement, beginning in m. 21, repeats the pitch content of the previous with some register modifications (G and G<sup>b</sup> in the first tetrachord are transposed down a semitone while C# through Ab in the last half of the line are all transposed upwards by an octave). One other alteration occurs in this line: the seventh note is transposed up a whole tone from G to A. The sixth statement, beginning in m. 26, is greatly expanded once again. The G of the initial tetrachord is transposed back upwards by an octave, while several of the notes that were previously in the highest register are transposed back down (C, C#, D, Eb, Db, and B). Once again, an additional eight pitches are added to the end of the statement. One more long repetition of the melodic line appears, beginning in m. 33, where all pitches are the same as in the previous statement with some registral displacement. The final note of this repetition, E, is the only new pitch added in the whole line.





Example 5.5. The transformational trajectory of the Violin II line. Each repeated statement appears on its own line of music in this example.

In m. 39, a reprise of the opening melodic idea appears exactly as it was heard in m. 1. A repetition of the second statement of the melody follows, with some octave displacements and an extra seven notes added to the end of the line. A varied repetition of the fourth statement begins in m. 49. Here, in addition to octave displacements, an A is added as the eighth note a whole tone away from the preceding G, while the F that followed in the previous version of the line is deleted. Following an F that is untransformed and four more notes modified by register displacement, a Db is transposed down a semitone to C. Another six notes remain untransformed, followed by seven more added pitches to the end of the line. These added pitches

are the exact same as those added in the previous line, albeit in different registers: A, Eb, D, C#, G, B, Bb. Another reprise of the opening eight pitches occurs in m. 56, half of which are displaced by an octave. The second violin ends the movement playing eight measures of an E4 tremolo.

The viola line, like the other three lines, also undergoes pitch transformations throughout this movement (see Example 5.6); however, these transformations are more modest than the others discussed so far. The first repetition of the opening line features four octave displacements, reorders the last three pitches of the initial statement (A, B, C becomes C, B, A), and two extra pitches, C# and D, are added at the end of the statement. In the next repetition, beginning in m. 9, five pitches are registrally displaced and the C# and D at the end of the line are split apart by an added F and E. D# is also added to the end of the statement. The fourth statement begins in m. 13 where, once again, the initial tetrachord is only altered by register changes. Following the initial tetrachord, G and G# are added, followed by several more register displacements in the last half of the line. The next repetition, beginning in m. 19, has one altered pitch: Ab halfway through the line is transposed down a semitone to G. The second half of this statement shifts the final eight pitches of the line down one or more octaves compared to the previous statement. The next statement, beginning in m. 27, continues in the same register, resulting in register displacements for the first seven pitches of the melodic line. One other note is registrally displaced—C# four notes later. The next statement begins in m. 35 with an altered starting note: the initial pitch of the original tetrachord, F#, is transposed down a semitone to F. The rest of the first half of the statement remains unaltered until C#, at which point the next five notes are registrally transposed up an octave. At the end of this line, five pitches are added, repeating the last four notes of the previous statement (F, E, D, D#) with an extra D at the end, creating an

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echo effect. The melodic material beginning in m. 42, back in the register of the initial melodic statement, appears at first to be a reprise of the opening melody, however it too is altered. The F and E from the original tetrachord are removed, and a C# is added at the end of the line. A real reprise begins in m. 49, where all of the original melodic notes are played up an octave. An altered repetition of the melodic material from m. 27 begins in m. 53. Once again, the only transformations that occur are registral displacements. The next phrase begins in m. 59 as a variation on the phrase that immediately precedes it. In this variation, the first two notes are registrally transposed down an octave, an F is deleted, the next five notes are registrally transposed down an octave, B is deleted, and two more notes are registrally displaced down. This is followed by four notes that remain untransformed between the two phrases, and four added pitches, F, E, D, D#, that echo the previous four notes. The final phrase of the viola part begins in m. 65, once again as a variation on the previous line. Here, the first two notes of the line remain the same, followed by a deleted E, a G# that is registrally displaced up an octave, an A that remains untransformed, and a G that is deleted. B is added followed by a C that is registrally transposed up an octave, an Ab that is deleted, and a C# that is registrally transposed up an octave. The end of the line, with the repeated F, E, D, D# tetrachord is the same as the previous statement with one exception: the very last note, D#, is transposed up an octave. The viola line ends with a trill between D and D#, adding extra emphasis to the final two notes of the line.





Example 5.6. The transformational trajectory of the Viola line. Each repeated statement appears on its own line of music in this example.

While these transformational pathways between statements of the melody in each instrument are similar to those found in the Clarinet Suites and *Dissonant Counterpoint*, as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, another process is also at play in this movement creating an even deeper sense of variety over repetition. Rather than each part beginning and ending their varied repetitions of melodies at the same time, each instrument's melody is transformed at different rates, resulting in melodic lines that are time-shifted and continuously lining up different ways (see Example 5.7 for form chart of the whole movement, and Example 5.8 for score excerpt of mm. 11–39). All four melodic voices begin their first statement at the same time and the first and second violins both contain a melody that is five measures long. The viola's melody, by contrast,

is only four measures long, while the cello line is ten measures long. The shorter viola line creates a formal overlap, and consequently a sense of formal dissonance: while the first and second violin line are still finishing their first iteration of their melodies in m. 5, the viola is beginning its second iteration. Although the cello line is ten measures long, an internal division in the melodic line occurs halfway through in m. 5—as discussed above, the cello line is divided into two subsections, the first of which is a complete twelve-tone row and the second of which begins with a repetition of the first five notes of the first half. This internal division aligns with the first and second violin—the first half of the cello line comprises five measures as do the violin lines, and all three parts end again in m. 10. The viola line, then, is "acting out of line" with the other instruments, distorting the otherwise regular formal divisions.

The formal distortion increases throughout the movement as each instrument veers away from its established phrasing. The second statement of the viola line begins in m. 5 and ends halfway through m. 9. This contrasts with the other voices, which continue their second statements of their melodies until m. 10 and begin their next statement in the following measure. At the start of the viola line's next statement, a measure of rest is omitted, again shifting the position of the melodic line: unlike the previous iteration, where the viola began its statement a measure before the other three voices, the next repetition is shifted forward so that it begins a measure and a half before the other three (halfway through m. 9) and ends three measures later (halfway through m. 12). A fourth statement of the viola line begins in m. 13 while the two violins and the cello are still completing their third statements. This time, the viola line is doubled in length from three measures to six, ending its statement in m. 18. The violins begin their next statement in m. 16, following their regularly established phrase lengths, while the internal division of the cello part also aligns in m. 16. The second violin and cello continue on this path, ending their statements at the expected place in m. 20; however, the first violin veers off, with an expansion from five measures to seven, ending instead in m. 22.

The next viola statement, beginning in m. 19 is once again expanded, now to nine measures long. The second violin and cello begin their next statements in m. 21, each lasting for the expected duration: the second violin melody lasts for five measures while the cello melody lasts for ten. Another statement of the first violin melody begins in m. 23, and is expanded yet again to eight measures long. An expected statement of violin II begins in m. 26, and now finally this melody is also expanded from five to seven measures. The first violin and cello are realigned with the start of a new statement beginning in m. 31, while a second violin melody begins on the pickup into m. 33. The length of the cello melody on this restatement is altered now too-rather than ten measures long, the melody cuts the last three beats of rest, shortening the statement to only nine measures. A reprise of the first and second violin lines occurs in m. 40, where the second violin is misaligned by just one beat (compared to the original statement in m. 1). The cello line is also realigned with the first violin part, now playing a more rhythmically active variation than the original melody heard in m. 1. The cello line once again omits the final three beats of rest, creating a nine-measure phrase. The viola line is the only one that does not have what might be viewed as a reprise in tandem with the other parts, instead beginning a new statement in m. 42 and ending seven measures later. In m. 49, the second violin, viola, and cello parts all align for another restatement, but all last for a different number of measures: the second violin melody is seven measures long, the viola is shortened to four, and the cello continues with its nine-measure statements. At m. 56, all parts are once again misaligned, and statements spaced one measure apart begin, first in the second violin (m. 56), then the first violin (m. 57), then the cello (m. 58), the viola (m. 59), and a final restatement of the first violin (m. 60). A final statement of the viola melody begins in m. 65, along with the start of the E tremolos in the second violin,

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and a short, 2-measure statement of the cello beginning two measures later. In m. 69, a shortened, varied restatement of the cello line begins, lasting only four measures before all four parts come to a close together at the end of the movement.



Example 5.7. Form chart for the first movement of String Quartet no. 1. The top line indicates measure numbers while the following four lines represent phrase lengths in each instrument. The vertical bolded lines denote where repetitions begin and end, and the numbers directly following the vertical bolded line count the number of repeated melodic statements within a single instrument. As the movement progresses, the repetitions become more and more misaligned, creating increased formal dissonance.













Example 5.8. Overlapping phrases in mm. 11–39 of String Quartet no. 1, movement 1.

These continually overlapping phrases, most of which are an uneven number of measures long, create dissonance in the formal structure of the movement, as per Seeger's guidelines, as well as underscore the more general ultramodernist preference for variety over repetition. As each part is varied individually, the combined, vertical simultaneities are also varied due to the constantly shifting phrases and expanding/contracting phrase lengths. I propose the overlapping, shifting phrases create a queer experience in the formal domain of the movement: unlike normative expectations that all parts begin and end formal sections at the same time, this movement blurs the boundaries. The parts "act out of line" with one another, resulting in a formal structure that denies any united moments of reprieve and closure in all four voices until the very end of the movement.

## Melodic cohesion in movements 1 through 3

Not only is there melodic cohesion within each movement, such as all four melodic parts originating from the cello line in movement 1, but there is also melodic unity across the piece as a whole. I propose that the set of melodic transformations I defined in Chapter 2 reveals similarities between the cello parts in the first three movements that creates a subtle link between them. In each of the first three movements, the cello acts as the "leading line," from which the other parts within the movements all can be generated. In movements 1 and 3, the cello line is the most highly organized in terms of its pitch content. In movement 1, as discussed above, the cello line is a full twelve-tone series divided into three chromatic tetrachords. In the third movement, the cello line forms a palindrome (with one slight alteration—see Example 5.9). Although the cello line in the second movement is not as tightly organized, it shares many characteristics with the other three parts in the movement suggesting this is the source material for all four melodies.

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Example 5.9. The cello melody of String Quartet no. 1, mount 3 is a palindrome where the tenth pitch, G, acts as the axis of symmetry. One altered pitch strays from the otherwise exact palindrome—F#3 is mapped onto F3, a semitone lower (marked by an asterisk). The two halves of the melody are aurally demarcated by a change from arco to pizzicato articulations.

Example 5.10 shows the transformational pathways that lead from the first cello line, the main source material, to the cello line of the second movement, and then from the cello line of movement 2 to that of movement 3. From the first cello line to the second, several transformations occur. First, the cello line of movement 2 begins with the last two notes of the cello line in movement 1: C and C#. Following this, G is untransformed, followed by F# that is transposed up a whole tone to G#. The next four notes are reordered and transposed: E is registrally displaced down an octave, F is transposed down a whole tone to Eb and registrally displaced down an octave, B is transposed down a whole tone to A, and Bb is transposed up a whole tone to C. The four notes are also reordered from E, F, B, Bb to A, C, E, Eb. The next two notes are also reordered, registrally displaced, and transposed: Ab is shifted down a whole tone to B. Eb and D are reordered, and between them Bb and A are added. The last five notes of the cello melody in movement 2 are added.



Example 5.10. The initial cello melody from movement 1 is the source for cello melody in movement 2, which is then the source for the cello melody of movement 3. The transformational pathways elucidate the similarities between these three lines.

The cello melody of movement 3 can then be sourced from that of movement 2. D is added to begin the line (the last note of the cello line in movement 2, just as the last two notes of the cello line in movement 1 began that of movement 2), followed by three notes that are untransformed: C, C#, and G. G# is deleted, followed by an untransformed A. C is also deleted, the following E and Eb change order and register, and E is transposed down a whole tone to D. The following B is untransformed, while F# is registrally displaced up an octave, and D is deleted. The following A and Bb are reordered and both are transposed (Bb is transposed up a semitone to B while A is transposed down a whole tone to G and is registrally displaced up an octave). Between these notes, F is added. Following B, D# is transposed down a semitone to D, E is transposed down a semitone to Eb, and G is transposed up a whole tone to A. The following F is also transposed up a whole tone, now to G, as well as registrally displaced down an octave. G# is deleted while Db and C are added, and the final note of the line, D, is untransformed.

Within the second movement, the cello line is the clear "leading line" from which the other melodies are sourced. Example 5.11a shows the transformations that lead from the cello melody to the first violin line. The initial C and C# that begin the cello line are deleted, followed by a group of five notes that are reordered into a retrograde and altered: all undergo a registral change up one or more octaves, and most also have a transposition by a whole tone or semitone—E is transposed up a semitone to F and reordered from the last note to the first note of the group; C is transposed up a whole tone to D and reordered from the second last note to the second note of the group; A just undergoes a registral transformation and stays as the middle note of both groupings; G# is transposed up a whole tone to A and is reordered from the second to the second last position; and G is just registrally transposed and is reordered from the first position to the last. The following three notes are also reordered and transposed: F# is reordered from the last position to the first; B retains its middle position but is transposed up a semitone to C; and Eb moves from first position to last position and is transposed down a whole tone to C#. The following D is registrally transposed, followed by two notes that are deleted. The following D# and E are reordered and registrally displaced upwards. The next G is deleted, and the final three notes are reordered: G# moves from second position to first, D moves from last position to second and is transposed down a whole tone to C, and F moves from first position to last and is transposed up a semitone to F#.

The cello melody of the second movement can also generate the melody of the second violin line through the transformations (see Example 5.11b). The second violin line is much shorter than that of the cello, comprising only seven notes. These seven notes are a slightly

transformed retrograde of the first seven notes of the cello line. E, the seventh note of the cello line, is shifted into first position of the violin II melody, and is registrally displaced up two octaves. C, in second last position, becomes the second note of the violin II line, registrally displaced upwards and transposed down a whole tone to Bb. The fifth note of the cello line, A, is shifted into third position of the violin II line and is registrally displaced upwards. The fourth note of the cello line, G# is deleted, and the G that precedes it is shifted into fourth place in the violin II line and transposed down a whole tone to F, plus registrally displaced upward. The second note of the cello line, C#, becomes the penultimate note in the violin II melody, transposed up a semitone to D plus registrally shifted upwards, and the first note of the cello line, C, becomes the final note of the violin II line by being transposed up a semitone to Db and registrally displaced upwards into the fourth octave.

The cello line of the second movement also generates the viola melody (see Example 5.11c). The first two notes of the cello line are reordered, registrally displaced upwards by three octaves, and transposed up a whole tone—C becomes D and C# becomes Eb. The next three pitch-classes are the same in both lines, however the viola line shifts them all up three octaves. This is followed by C that is transposed up a whole tone to D and registrally displaced. The following E is also registrally displaced up three octaves, followed by a deleted Eb. The final three notes of the viola line are a transposed and registrally displaced version of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh pitches of the cello line: B is transposed down a semitone to Bb plus registrally displaced up three octaves; F# is transposed down a semitone to F and registrally displaced up three octaves; while D is transposed up a whole tone to E, and registrally displaced upwards three octaves.


Example 5.11. Transformational pathways that lead from the cello line of String Quartet no. 1, movement 2, to (a) the first violin melody, (b) the second violin melody, and (c) the viola melody.

In the third movement of String Quartet no. 1, the first half of the cello line, before the retrograde begins, similarly generates the melody of all three upper parts (see Example 5.12). In Example 5.12a, the first two notes of the first violin line, F and F#, are both added notes, followed by a G that is reordered from fourth position in the cello line to third in the violin melody and transposed up three octaves. C in second place in the cello line is transposed up a whole tone to D plus three octaves and reordered into fourth position in the line, followed by C# that is transposed up three octaves to Db. The D that started the cello line is transposed up a whole tone plus three octaves and reordered as the sixth note in the violin line. The following A is transposed down a semitone to Ab plus registrally displaced up four octaves, followed by five notes that are reordered and transposed: Eb is transposed up a semitone to E in the violin line; D is transposed down a whole tone and becomes the last pitch of the violin line; B is transposed up a semitone to G#.

Melodic transformations also lead from the cello line to the second violin melody in this movement. As with the other lines, all pitches in the cello line undergo a registral transformation into the second violin line. The first pitch in the cello line, D, is also transposed by a whole tone up to E. The next two notes, C and C#, change order, and both are transposed—C is transposed down a whole tone to Bb and C# is transposed down a whole tone to B. The following G in the cello line is deleted, and A is retained (albeit up two octaves) as are the following Eb and D, registrally transposed up one octave each. The next note, B, is transposed up by a semitone to C, and the penultimate pitch of the cello line, F#, is transposed down a semitone to F. The final pitch of the cello line, E, is deleted, and the final pitch of the second violin line, C#, is added.

Finally, the viola line of the third movement can also be viewed as a varied transformation of the cello line in this movement. The initial note of the cello line, D, is transposed up a semitone to Eb plus registrally displaced upwards by three octaves. The second pitch of the viola line, B, is added, followed by four pitches that are reordered and registrally transposed: C, C#, G and A in the cello line become F, G, C, C# in the viola line. The next two pitches in the cello, Eb and D, are deleted, followed by a B that is transposed down a semitone to Bb and registrally transposed up three octaves. The following F# is deleted, and the final pitch of the cello line, G, is transposed up a whole tone to A and registrally displaced upwards by two octaves.









Example 5.12. Transformational pathways that lead from the cello line of String Quartet no. 1, movement 3, to (a) the first violin melody, (b) the second violin melody, and (c) the viola melody.

## **Conclusion**

Although each movement within String Quartet no. 1 has its own unique character, and the individual lines within each movement are independent and unique, the melodic transformations reveal an underlying cohesion on three levels of the musical structure. First, as demonstrated by the close reading of melodic evolution in movement 1, each melodic line (first violin, second violin, viola, and cello) undergoes several varied repetitions over the course of the movement, each of which can be tied back to the original melody presented at the opening of the movement, creating cohesion within a single instrument. Second, the initial melodic statement in each of the upper three parts can be viewed as a transformed variation of the initial cello melody, creating cohesion between all four of the melodic parts. In the first movement, the cello line, a full twelve-tone row, acts as the "leading voice," from which all other parts can be generated using the five melodic transformations proposed in Chapter 2. Finally, melodic cohesion exists across the first three movements of this work. The cello line of the first movement is the source material for the cello lines in movement 2 and movement 3, from which the other parts of each movement are sourced. In a heterophonic, ultramodernist work, where line independence and individuality were preferred, Beyer makes the lines interdependent through the transformational

relationships I have shown, instead creating an underlying thread of unity within each line, each movement, and across the piece as a whole.

In addition to three levels of melodic unity within this piece, the String Quartet also introduces dissonance in its formal structure through shifting and overlapping phrase lengths. As each independent line is transformed over the course of the movement, the phrase lengths expand and contract, resulting in misaligned formal boundaries between the four instruments. Rather than adhering to the normative practice whereby all parts begin and end their phrases and formal sections at the same time, this movement, I propose, blurs these boundaries. I suggest this aligns with Ahmed's metaphor for queer orientations, in which "queer lines" deviate from the straight, heterosexual lines of societal norms. In this movement, then, the four instruments can be interpreted as "acting out of line" with one another, resulting in a queer formal paradigm.

## CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I set out to create an analytical system to understand the melodic processes present in Beyer's earliest ultramodern compositions. In the first chapter I began with an overview of Seeger's treatise, "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," and his "Manual on Dissonant Counterpoint," two theoretical writings that were foundational to the ultramodernist movement in New York in the 1920s and 30s. I explained the philosophical underpinnings of Seeger's theory and outlined the significant contributions of his work that are a necessary starting point for my analyses of Beyer's music, including Seeger's concept of consonance and dissonance in single-line melodies and within several different musical parameters (including pitch, dynamics, timbre, rhythmic proportion, tempo, and accent); the process of "dissonation" in which consonance can be inserted and carefully controlled in a dissonant framework; and Seeger's particular notion of heterophony in which multiple melodies sounding simultaneously maintain their unique identity and "sound apart" from one another. By unpacking Seeger's theory as a starting point, this chapter established the historical and cultural context of Beyer's ultramodern milieu.

The second chapter examined the current state of the research, first exploring the ways in which Seeger's theory of dissonant counterpoint has been discussed in the music of Ruth Crawford, one of Beyer's mentors and a significant influence on her musical style, followed by an overview of the existing research on Beyer's music itself. The current scholarship on Beyer primarily focuses on her gendered experiences as a woman ultramodernist composer, and makes general claims about her compositional style (such as its minimalist tendencies and the general process of "cumulation and reduction") or focuses on close readings of one or two particular pieces of music rather than theorizing processes common across her entire oeuvre. In response, I

proposed a new dual-strand methodology. The first strand is a transformational theory in which I codified five melodic transformations (add, delete, transpose, reorder, and register) that account for the melodic evolution present in Beyer's earliest compositions. The second strand of methodology is rooted in feminist theoretical practices, in which the composer's biography is a critical aspect of the analytical process, resulting in hermeneutic interpretations of their music rooted in lived experiences. I used queer theory to connect the musical structures I uncovered in Beyer's music to the ways in which she was disrupting gender norms and living an otherwise non-normative lifestyle as a woman ultramodernist composer.

In the subsequent three chapters, I applied the proposed methodology to Beyer's music, beginning first with single-line melodies in movements from her Clarinet Suites, followed by twopart counterpoint in movements from her *Dissonant Counterpoint* piano suite, and finally, more complex contrapuntal textures in movements from her String Quartet no. 1. In each chapter, I demonstrated how variety, one of the main aesthetic goals of the ultramodernist agenda, was created through repeated melodies that were altered and transformed in particular ways upon each repetition. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I also used the melodic transformations to demonstrate a deep level of melodic unity that is not apparent on the surface of the scores by suggesting that melodies in two- and four-part textures can be understood as variants of the same source melody, and that source melodies across movements can also be understood as melodic variants on one another.

I also suggested a gendered reading of the movements discussed in each chapter, interpretations which align with queer narrative paradigms. In Chapter 3, I proposed that the evolution from a dissonant, disjunct melody at the beginning of the Clarinet Suite movements to a more consonant, conjunct melody at the end, as well as the simultaneous presentation of consonance and dissonance in different musical parameters (i.e. consonant melody with dissonant

rhythm), breaks away from a binary understanding of consonance and dissonance as well as their binary association with "feminine" and "masculine" musical traits. Instead, I proposed that these movements place consonance and dissonance on a continuum, that the melodies flexibly and fluidly move between "more" and "less" dissonant moments, and that consonance and dissonance can occur simultaneously in different domains. I interpreted these musical narratives as a representation of Beyer's isolated experience as a "body out of place," constantly negotiating her gender identity in an attempt to be accepted by her misogynistic contemporaries and the audiences who attended performances of her music. In Chapter 4, I proposed that the movements of the Dissonant Counterpoint piano suite queered the notion of heterophony. In the program notes for this suite, Beyer genders some of her melodies as "feminine" and others as "masculine." My interpretation, in which the melodies stem from the same source, suggests an alternate queer reading, in which neither melody is entirely "masculine" or "feminine" but rather a "performative act" that exists somewhere between "the usual two" genders. Finally, in Chapter 5, I proposed that shifting and overlapping phrases in the two violins, viola, and cello lines of the first String Quartet were a queer representation of music that "acts out of line" with others, creating non-normative and dissonant formal structures.

Ultimately, I view this dissertation as contributing to the field of music theory in two ways. As the first detailed analytical study of Beyer's compositional style, this dissertation provides a starting point for more scholarly work on Beyer's music as a whole. The methodology proposed in this dissertation offers an explanation of a significant melodic process common in much of Beyer's ultramodern oeuvre. Second, by connecting Beyer's music to Seeger's theoretical ideas, this dissertation places Beyer and her music in a social and historical context of the ultramodernist school of composers that is dominated by men. My methodology rooted in critical analysis provides deeper insight to the ways in which being a woman composer in a

misogynistic environment could be understood to have impacted musical structures in Beyer's music, and provides a stepping stone to a more well-rounded understanding of modernist musical practices in America by including voices that previously have been marginalized.

## Areas for Future Research

Throughout the process of writing this dissertation and engaging with Beyer's music and the literature surrounding gender and modernism, several research questions arose that were beyond the scope of this project. What follows are some examples of what I view to be fruitful areas of future research. With relatively limited existing scholarship on Beyer's music and the work of other women ultramodernist composers, there are many possibilities for new directions; these are a few representative suggestions for how this work can continue to evolve moving forward.

## Beyer's ultramodernist compositional practices

Within the first four pieces of Beyer's oeuvre, discussed in detail in this dissertation, there is room for more analytical inquiry. My analyses focus primarily on pitch transformations, yet significant rhythmic transformations also occur within the repeated melodies. In some cases, for example, upbeats in one version of the melody are turned into downbeats in a transformed variation, or durational values are changed. These rhythmic modifications surely impact the perception of these repeated melodies and are worth further scrutiny to determine if the transformations are systematized in any particular way. A closer look at the rhythmic procedures and the ways in which they align with or depart from the melodic processes at play in these movements will provide a more complete picture of Beyer's ultramodern compositional style.

There are also many pieces that Beyer wrote in the ultramodernist idiom that are not discussed in this dissertation. Beyer wrote for many different instruments and ensembles,

including duos and chamber groups (Movement for Double Bass and Piano, Four Pieces for Oboe and Bassoon, Six Movements for Oboe and Piano, Movement for Woodwinds, Trio for Woodwinds, Quintet for Woodwinds, and three other string quartets), vocal ensembles (*The Federal Music Project* for choir, *Ballad of the Star-Eater* for clarinet and soprano, Three Songs for clarinet and soprano, *Have Faith!* for flute and soprano, *Sky Pieces* for soprano and piano, and the "Sandberg Songs" for piano, percussion, and soprano), and other works for solo piano (*Bees*, *Gebrauchs-Musik*, and *Clusters*). She was also a pioneer in percussion ensemble music, and music for electronic instruments. The methodology proposed in this dissertation may be applicable to these pieces to varying degrees, or they might require new analytical methodologies to capture their unique features. Either way, Beyer's entire oeuvre is ripe for analytical investigation and performance.

### Feminist reading of other compositions

One particular avenue for analyzing Beyer's music that has so far gone unstudied is a feminist reading of her choral music, specifically that which was written about the Composer's Forum concert series. Kennedy and Polansky identified a "sardonic sense of humor and a hint of embittered mockery" in Beyer's musical style without reference to any specific pieces.<sup>7</sup> I suspect these choral songs were what they had in mind when making this comment. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Beyer experienced a great deal of gendered commentary and attack toward herself and her music during her two appearances in the New York Forum in 1936 and 1937. In those same years, she wrote two pieces for choir, one entitled *The Federal Music Project* (the organization responsible for the Composer's Forum) and the other *The Composer's Forum Laboratory*. De Graaf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> John Kennedy and Larry Polansky, "'Total Eclipse': The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer: An Introduction and Preliminary Annotated Checklist," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 725.

proposes that these two pieces "reflect the atmosphere of criticism and attack" and that in these pieces, "one hears Beyer's response to the experience,"<sup>8</sup> yet no analytical work on the music itself has been completed. A feminist analysis that examines the text of these pieces, analyzes the music, and considers the ways in which Beyer's lived experiences and the criticisms she received are reflected in the text/music relationship would provide insight not only into Beyer's compositional style, but also her reaction to and thoughts on the only performance opportunities she was given.

### Dissonant counterpoint and the queer ethos

The application of queer theory to music theory is in a nascent stage with many opportunities for future work in this area. In particular, the connections between queer theory and dissonant counterpoint could be more fully explored than what is covered in this dissertation. Gavin Lee makes use of Ahmed's queer phenomenology to propose a framework for queer formalism in the discipline of music theory. One category he introduces in his framework encompasses theories of non-normativity and ambiguity.<sup>9</sup> Seeger's conception of dissonant counterpoint, which negates the rules of European counterpoint of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as tonal conventions of the later Classical and Romantic eras, is just one example of a music theory that could fall into this category of non-normativity. The process of dissonation, in which consonance introduced into a dissonant musical framework is defamiliarized and rendered unstable by preparing and/or resolving it by a semitone or tritone,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Melissa de Graaf, "'Never Call us Lady Composers': Gendered Reception in the New York Composers' Forum, 1935–1940," *American Music* (Fall 2008): 229.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Gavin Lee, "Queer Music Theory," Music Theory Spectrum 42, 1 (2019): 143-153.

reverses the conventional consonance/dissonance hierarchy and disorients the normative listening experience, aligning with the "queer ethos" as proposed by Lee.<sup>10</sup>

Beyer's music (especially that with explicit tonal references, such as the inclusion of Papageno's aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in her String Quartet no. 2) and that written by other women ultramodernist composers such as Crawford and Vivian Fine, would make an excellent case study in a project such as this. Although several scholars have studied dissonant counterpoint compositions by women composers through a feminist lens, none yet account for the embodied, disoriented experience of hearing an explicitly tonal reference, such as triads and quotations from classical repertoire, in an unfamiliar, atonal landscape. Scholarship exploring dissonant counterpoint through a queer lens could highlight our learned orientations of the consonance/dissonance hierarchy and the ways in which dissonation defamiliarizes the normative listening experience.

#### Late style/Disability style

The final pieces in Beyer's oeuvre also deserve analytical study, but through a different lens than her earlier pieces discussed in this dissertation. In 1938, Beyer was diagnosed with ALS which caused her great suffering until her death six years later. Around this same time, her compositional style underwent a drastic change from the atonal, modernist procedures of her early compositions to something much more tonal and reminiscent of eighteenth-century musical practices. While there has been a long history of music scholarship discussing "late style" as an aesthetic shift toward the end of a composer's life, Joseph Straus has proposed that a more reliable factor when considering "late style" is the mental and physical condition of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Gavin Lee, "Introduction," in *Queer Ear: Remaking Music Theory*, Gavin Lee ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023): 8.

composer—regardless of their age or premonitions of their imminent mortality, composers who write in a "late style" share some common experiences of disability, impairment, or other nonnormative bodily or mental functions that often accompany the aging or diseased body.<sup>11</sup>

To date, almost all accounts of artistic lateness in music, including Straus's "disability style" focus on the works of white, cisgender, heterosexual canonic composers who are men, with one recent and notable exception.<sup>12</sup> But women composers, too, can and have become disabled in their final years of life and their resulting music can undergo similar aesthetic transformations. It is also possible that disability and "late style" manifest differently in the work of women composers; thus, it is important to consider how women and composers with diverse identities experience disability and represent these narratives in their compositions. A project examining Beyer's final four compositions—Symphonic Movement I (1939), Symphonic Opus 5 (1941), Symphonic Movement II (1941) and Sonatina in C (1943)—all written during the years she was suffering tremendously from her symptoms, could determine how she "narrates [her] fractured mind and body"<sup>13</sup> (to borrow Straus's expression) as part of her "late style," as well as extend Straus's theory of "late style/disability style" to include more intersectional considerations of sex, gender, class, and immigrant status.

My interest in women ultramodernists began more than a decade ago, as it became clear that Ruth Crawford was considered to be the only significant woman composer in the first half of the twentieth century. As this work on Beyer took shape, I was increasingly astonished, not only by Beyer's major accomplishments and contributions as a composer, but of her perseverance in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Joseph N. Straus, "Disability and 'Late Style' in Music," The Journal of Musicology 25, no. 1 (2008): 3-45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Kate Schau, "'This is No Leave-Taking': Autobiography and Legacy in Ethel Smyth's *The Prison*" (M.A. thesis, University of Oregon, 2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Joseph N. Straus, Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 82.

the face of the hardships she experienced as an impoverished, immigrant woman searching for recognition in a school of composers who were anything but accepting. It is high time for Beyer to receive the acknowledgement she deserves for her contributions to modernist music in America, and for her music to be studied and heard. It has been my great pleasure to be able to share Beyer's fascinating compositions with my colleagues and students, often for the first time, and I can only hope that in the future her name will become commonplace for anyone studying and performing twentieth-century music.

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