

The Classification of Theme Types: Period, Sentence, Hybrid

At issue is the classification of those “classical” themes that divide into two distinct parts, with the sense that the second part responds to, continues, or completes the first. The first part may or may not end with a cadence; the second part will (PAC, IAC, or HC). Moreover, the second part may or may not be similar in musical content to the first part.

For identification and descriptive purposes, the question for the analyst is: how may we most usefully, most professionally, describe the differing varieties of this two-part musical span? This is not a simple matter: it involves decisions about foundational definitions (most notably about cadences and their potential roles in these forms), debates that to this day are not settled. Over the years scholars have dealt with this issue in differing ways and from the standpoints of differing descriptive traditions: simply put, on close inspection, this thematic “microworld” turns out to be complex territory. Be that as it may, one of the most influential recent methods for doing so is that outlined in 1998 as *form-functional theory* by William E. Caplin (*Classical Form*). That is the procedure that this document seeks to address and summarize.

Form-functional theory’s two fundamental categories for such themes are the *period* (antecedent + consequent) and the *sentence* (presentation + continuation). From there one extrapolates into four distinguishable *hybrids*, most of which combine aspects of the two fundamental ones. (“Hybrid 1,” for instance, is antecedent + continuation.) As a whole, any of the theme types may either prolong the initial tonic (ending, e.g., I:PAC) or modulate to a different key (as in a “modulatory period” or a “modulatory sentence”).

The prototypical length for such a two-part, short theme, period or sentence, is 4+4 measures, ending with a cadence. While commonly enough encountered in the high-galant and classical repertory, this 4+4 norm serves best as a background, “idealized” scheme or ideal type with which any individual exemplar sets itself into dialogue. In practice, the prototypical length is often altered by *compression*, *expansion*, or *extension* (4+6, 4+8, 5+6, etc.)—or by the effect of the notation or literal barring of the passage. Thus the 4+4 norm will be always embraced. Nonetheless, the 4+4 norm is useful heuristically in classification schemes, suggesting as it does the two parts of the theme in question. This may be referred to as *a musical span of the 4+4 type* (giving a sense of general length and proportion). In what follows, however, understand the 4+4 norm (when you read words like “the first/second four bars”) as flexible, applying

¹ This is a summary of William E. Caplin’s theme types: a “how-to” guide outlining a four-step method for determining the structures of individual themes in the high-galant or “classical style.” I supplied this guide, albeit one in the process of continual revision, as a handout in the first or second session of every Sonata Theory seminar that I led over the past fifteen years. Remember that this document was first produced in 2006 (if not before), when Caplin’s theme types, revolutionary in their impact at that time, were the primary *New Formenlehre* game in town. Since then, they have been much discussed in the literature and have often been expanded upon to make some of the concepts more flexible. The ensuing footnotes will refer to some of this discussion. What appears here applies some 2020 rewording to the 2006 version, a revision somewhat more attuned to the publication of my *A Sonata Theory Handbook* (2021).

also to instances with differing numbers of bars, so long as the first part and the second part are clearly distinguishable.

Under normal circumstances, classifying a theme as either a *period* or a *sentence* presents little to no problem: the two are so dissimilar that their differences leap out to the ear and eye at once, and most decisions about them are easily made. That said, each “quick” decision along these lines benefits by a second look, a double-check, noting especially crucial cadence points and other aspects of the theme. It may be, for instance, that upon closer inspection the theme is better classified as a hybrid or that what you are hearing is actually part of a broader, *compound* theme.

For the close, form-functional analysis of themes of this period according to the form-functional guidelines, I suggest a **four-step method**—a screening process that clarifies our decisions about simple and expanded periods, sentences, and hybrid. (A briefer summary of this process is also provided on pp. 10-12.) Along the way I also offer interpolated or footnoted commentary on some of the issues that one might encounter through the application of this method.

Step 1 (check for the presence of an obvious period, antecedent-consequent)

While it is usually an easy matter to identify a period, it bears noting that there are four criteria for a period, all of which should be present. Assuming a simple, brief thematic unit (4+4 or equivalent, and not a larger, compound theme):

- The first four measures are normally subdivisible, 2+2, into a *basic idea* (b.i.) following by a (more or less) *contrasting idea* (c.i.). Thus an antecedent can be parsed as b.i.+c.i. If the first four bars—or shortened or lengthened equivalent—more properly and obviously scan as b.i.+b.i. (or b.i.+b.i.’), you are almost surely looking at the presentation of a sentence: move directly to Step 2.
- To be the *antecedent* of a potential period, the first four measures (or “first-part” equivalent), the *antecedent*, must end with a “weak” cadence, *strictly defined*, that is, either a half cadence (HC) or an imperfect authentic cadence (IAC)—something that, while cadential, does not provide full closure to the thematic idea. If you perceive a b.i.+c.i. first part that does not end with an HC or IAC, strictly considered (for example, if it ends with a V chord in inversion, or if it all takes place over a tonic pedal)—and if you are certain that the first part cannot be read as b.i.+b.i.’—it cannot be an antecedent but is rather a *compound basic idea*): move directly to Step 4.
- If the first part is clearly an antecedent, in order to be considered a consequent the second four measures (or equivalent) must begin in a manner parallel to the first, as if going back to the beginning (even if embellished) and at least starting off by retracing or alluding to the opening of the phrase. The second half’s opening, that is, should be understood as largely *reiterative* of the first part’s b.i., even though the remainder of the second half might veer off in a different direction. If that (even quasi-) reiterative aspect is not the case,² while the first part is nonetheless a clear antecedent, move directly to Step 3.

² Bear in mind, however, that though more infrequently, the restart of b.i. might be on a different pitch level, producing a *sequential period*. Note also that in the case of a *modulating period*, the period can cadence in a key other than that in which it had begun.

- The final four measures (or equivalent) must end with a PAC, or at least a stronger, more fully closed cadence than had the first four measures. (The alternative is a first part ending I:HC; the second part ending with the stronger I:IAC.)

If these four criteria are met, then we are dealing with a period. Once again, verify that each part ends with a cadence, strictly defined, and that the final cadence is a PAC or at least is stronger than the first cadence, thus completing and closing the thematic idea. If that is the case, no further steps are needed, though it is prudent to be aware of the potential problems addressed in Steps 3 and 4.

Caution: do not confuse a repeated four-bar phrase (for example, 4+4, each ending in a PAC) with a period. That would be, more simply, a repeated phrase.³

Step 2 (if the theme is not a period, check it for sentential structure)

If you are not dealing with an obvious period (Step 1), look at the first part alone (4 mm. as a norm). Does it subdivide 2+2—or equivalent—and also suggest the statement of a two-measure *basic idea* (b.i.) and its immediate repetition or modest recasting? (The repetition may be slightly varied—perhaps reversing the harmonic motion of the first or restating the first on a different chord, usually V.)⁴ If so, then the strong sense obtained in these four bars is: *b.i. + b.i.*'

(Note: One might add in passing that on occasion one might find a presentation with three statements, not just two: *b.i. + b.i.*' + b.i.'" Those cases, "2 + 2 + 2," are rarer, however: the double-statement of b.i. remains the prototype.)⁵

³ Another way of construing this is to observe that each phrase articulates the form of a consequent, that is, a b.i + c.i phrase that ends with a I:PAC—normally the second part of a period. From that perspective, what we have are two "consequent-style phrases" (as at the opening of Chopin's E-flat Nocturne, op. 9 no. 2). That said, because the two identical or near-identical phrases unfold in linear time and within the larger, more commonly encountered world of, say, thematic periods, we can get the sense of the second phrase—the repeat—*responding* to the first in the manner of the period's "answer" to a question. In such cases I have suggested that we might speak of the first PAC phrase as a "consequent in antecedent position," while the second phrase, more normatively is situated "in consequent position."

⁴ At what point does a variant of a basic idea (b.i. '), pushed along a continuum of increasing variation, become so distant from or contrasted with the original b.i. that it is better to regard it as a *contrasting idea* (c.i.)? Opinions will differ. From Caplin's discussion of his musical examples, it would appear that the resemblance between b.i. and b.i. ' should be rather emphatic and the tonic prolongation of the first four bars clear. Other analysts—including the present writer—might be more generous in this regard, allowing a greater degree of variability between b.i. and b.i. ', so long as a fundamental rhythmic shape, impulse, or contour-skeleton remains perceptible. Thus I would regard Mozart, Quartet in G, K. 387/i as beginning with b.i.+ b.i. ', mm. 1-4, even while a perhaps stricter interpretation might decide upon b.i.+ c.i. instead. As an example of a very highly decorated case (or test case for interpretation), it would even be possible to hear mm. 1-4 of the second movement of the Flute and Harp Concerto, K. 299, as an instance of b.i.+ b.i. ' (in which b.i. ', mm. 3-4, is a highly decorated and reshaped variant of b.i., mm. 1-2), although other analysts might be more inclined to construe it as b.i.+ c.i. In these cases, more important than simply "making a decision" and insisting upon it is, rather, to realize the ambiguity of the issue and to explicate it.

⁵ For an example, see the opening nine bars of Mozart's Symphony No. 29 in A, K. 201, mm. 1-9: a single span of sequences (sequences of a two-bar *basic idea*, b.i.), merging at its end into a cadential figure. Mark Richards, "Viennese Classicism and the Sentential Idea: Broadening the Sentence Paradigm," *Theory and Practice*, 36 (2011), 17-224, proposes the useful term *trifold sentence* for such structures. A broader, "compound" example would be the opening *sixteen* bars of Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony (No. 45).

When *b.i. + b.i.'* is the case—and especially in instances in which mm. 5-8 do not also rebegin with yet another full statement of measure 1-2's *b.i.*—the entire 4+4 musical span will normally be in dialogue with the format of a *sentence*. Within Sonata Theory usage the *b.i.+ b.i.'* portion is called the *presentation* or the *presentation modules*.⁶ The second part is the *continuation* (sometimes described as *continuation==>cadential* in circumstances described below).⁷

While the above may suggest an easy decision about the presentation, analytical complications can arise with regard to certain aspects of it. These complications demand a closer consideration.

Aspects of the first part: the presentation (b.i. + b.i')

The presentation as tonic prolongational progression: Caplin's form-functional theory—quite strict in this respect—regards the *b.i.+ b.i.'* succession as fundamentally a “tonic prolongational progression” that provides a “requisite harmonic stability” (37) for the launching of the larger, sentence-based theme.⁸ The second *b.i.* may be an exact *repetition* of the first *b.i.* “statement,” it may be a slightly differing *response* to it, or it may be a *sequential repetition* of it (that is, a transposition to a different scale degree). Certain presentational harmonic patterns are typical: {I-I / V-V}, which can also be indicated {T-T / D-D}; {T-D / D-T}; {T-D / T-D}; and so on. These may be regarded as simple *tonic-dominant oscillations* and should not be misinterpreted as cadential.⁹ The dominant(s) are often in inversion; they may in some cases be replaced by diminished chords (or diminished sevenths) with the leading tone as the root. The tonic may also be decorated via a simple $\frac{5}{3} - \frac{6}{4}$ motion or something similar. Occasionally a predominant chord can precede the dominant: {T-P-D-T}, seeming to inscribe a more complete harmonic motion.¹⁰ See the second aspect below.

In cases where the second *b.i.* ends on a dominant or other non-tonic chord, form-functional theory's view (40) is that the literal sense of tonic prolongation is obscured within the 2+2 unit itself. The *b.i.+ b.i.'* modules then function as the introductory gesture to what follows, which will complete the progression. The presentation initiates a harmonic motion that is pursued into the

⁶ Here Sonata Theory slightly alters Caplin's preferred terminology. For Caplin, *Classical Form*, pp. 35, 40, et seq., the terms of choice are presentation *phrase* and continuation *phrase*. But Sonata Theory normally regards the term “phrase” to refer to musical spans that end with a cadence. This happens only rarely, if ever, at the end of a presentation.

⁷ Sonata Theory uses Greek letters to describe a sentence's portions: $\alpha\alpha'$ (alpha-alpha [prime]) for the presentation; β (beta) for the continuation (including a cadential close; and possibly γ [gamma], if one chooses to label the cadential portion separately—which can happen in some extended continuations). Thus a typical sentence (4 + 4) follows the pattern $\alpha\alpha'\beta$, that is $(\alpha\alpha')\beta$; one with an extended (post-presentation) continuation, more than four bars long, might also be described as $\alpha\alpha'\beta\gamma$ or $(\alpha\alpha')\beta\gamma$.

⁸ In more recent years there has been some pushback on Caplin's claim of the necessity of a “tonic prolongation” within a presentation. One writer who demonstrates that this is not always the situation is Mark Richards, in “Viennese Classicism and the Sentential Idea”: see n. 5 above.

⁹ The presentation may thus be understood as most often ending in a *dominant arrival* or a *tonic arrival* (or a simple return to an initial tonic after inscribing a modest harmonic arc or trajectory around it).

¹⁰ The example that Caplin provides (p. 38, ex. 3.8) is the primary theme of the first movement of Mozart's Quartet in C, K. 465, mm. 23-30, in which m. 24 (=m. 2 of the sentence) is an “embellishing

predominant,” IV_4^6 . Cf. the opening of Mozart, Sonata in B-flat, K. 333, which begins with the pattern {I-ii-V⁷-I}, mm. 1-4, which tilts much further in the “cadential” direction with its {T-P-D-T} succession.

continuation. In such cases in general, Caplin understands an early tonic chord in the continuation—in mm. 5 or 6, for instance—as a completion of the tonic prolongation characteristic of the presentation.¹¹ Caplin’s usual meanings of “tonic prolongation” involve simple oscillating chords or motion over a tonic pedal point. In short, one may regard the presentation as a whole (b.i.+ b.i.) as either closed or open, depending on whether or not it ends on the tonic.

No presentation’s end should ever be considered a “cadence.” Form-functional theory insists that *the b.i.+ b.i.’ presentation does not—virtually by definition—end with a cadence.*¹² All of this is dependent on strict definitions of what does and does not qualify as a cadence, a difficult and important matter that was perhaps left somewhat unclear in *Classical Form*, for all of the discussion on pp. 42-45. (Caplin dealt with cadential definitions more thoroughly in an important later article from 2004.)¹³ On this view there cannot be a cadence, strictly considered, at the end of a presentation for two reasons.

- The first: “The absence of a supporting cadential progression in most presentation phrases automatically prohibits us from identifying cadential closure in those cases” (45). Here the suggestion is that the b.i.+ b.i.’ pattern will not normally be grounded in a “complete cadential progression” (tonic—>predominant—>dominant—>tonic, or T-P-D-T) [p. 27]—even though the occasional exception can be found.¹⁴ Thus the presentation’s end is normally disqualified from the strict definition of a cadence on these grounds, i.e., that the definition of a complete cadence should be expansive, including also preceding T and P functions, not mere tonic-dominant oscillation. One would also expect the V-I progression, of course, to occur *with two root-position chords*. Thus V⁶ to I motion, by definition, does not produce an authentic cadence at the end of an otherwise “complete cadential progression.” Caplin grants that in certain presentations “the possibility of a cadence is at least suggested.” (His example, p. 45, ex. 3.13, is Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C, op. 2 no. 3/i, mm. 1-4—{I-V / V⁷-I}). But he does note that “Beethoven leaves the melodic line open at the end of the phrase, thus helping to counteract the cadential implications given by the harmony” (p. 45). The more general implication is that a composer will normally weaken cadential effects or potential implications at the end of the presentation in order to forestall a sense of real closure.
- From the point of view of Sonata Theory, the second reason is the stronger one: “But there is no cadence at the end of this phrase, or any other presentation, for a more

¹¹ P. 40: “Frequently, though, a response version of the basic idea [= b.i.] ends with dominant harmony, and thus the progression is not actually completed until the arrival of the tonic at the beginning of the continuation phrase. . . . In exceptional cases, the tonic prolongation concludes after the continuation phrase has begun [perhaps, e.g., in m. 6, as in Beethoven, Sonata in G, op. 14 no. 2, mm. 1-8].”

¹² “We may be tempted to identify cadential closure at the end of some presentation phrases. This analytical mistake can be circumvented when we understand more clearly why a presentation, in principle, never closes with a cadence” [Caplin, 45]. “At the end of the [presentation] phrase, we do not have the impression that thematic closure (or ‘cadence’) has been achieved” [10.]

¹³ Caplin, “The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57 (2004), 51-117. Cf. the alternative discussions of “cadence” in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, e.g., pp. 66-67 n. 5.

¹⁴ With regard to K. 333/i, mm. 1-4 (n. 9 above), which seem to end with a mild “IAC-effect,” Caplin suggests, p. 153, that initial b.i.+ b.i. presentation—his preferred interpretation—could also “for reasons of melodic contour . . . be considered a compound basic idea.” This latter claim suggests that he does not consider m. 4 to be constitute a cadence, strictly considered—the lack of which is a central feature of the c.b.i.

fundamental reason. Inasmuch as the basic idea itself functions to *begin* a theme, a repetition of that idea must also express a similar function of beginning. Indeed, repeating an opening idea actually reinforces the sense of formal initiation. Conversely, to effect thematic closure, a basic idea must be followed by different material, a ‘contrasting idea,’ that has the appropriate harmonic content to express cadential function” (p. 45). This suggests that the overriding rhetorical feature of b.i.+ b.i.’ itself—especially in its definitional role of pursuing an *initiating function*, a function that is automatically signaled by the very pattern of b.i.+ b.i.’—will automatically shift to secondary status any seeming IAC- or PAC-effect that the composer might have put into that b.i.+ b.i.’.¹⁵ What might superficially seem to be a local “cadence” is reduced to a cadential feint (or, perhaps claiming slightly less, an articulation involving a return to the tonic via the dominant, something of a tonic arrival) in the service of an initial tonic prolongation).¹⁶ In Caplin’s terminology, it might have *cadential content*, but it will not have a *cadential function*.

According to the norms suggested above, then, b.i.+ b.i.’ will be regarded as *noncadential* and normally tonic prolongational. (Compound presentations—longer ones—can present more difficult “cadential” issues. See the discussion of this below, p. 12.)

Note: If one does *not* find a fairly clear b.i.+ b.i. (or b.i.+ b.i.’) pattern in the first part, this structure is not sentential. (In this case, assuming that a period has already been ruled out—i.e., especially if the first part cannot be considered an antecedent—proceed directly to Step 4, which deals with non-antecedent b.i. + c.i successions.)

Assuming, though, that one *does* find that b.i.+ b.i.’ pattern, the structure is a sentence. Continue within Step 2, which is all that one will need: Steps 3 and 4 are now superfluous.

Aspects of the second part: the continuation

The final four bars as a whole are regarded as the *continuation*, and they will drive to a cadence at the end (an HC, an IAC, or a PAC—in the tonic or in another key). There is a potential confusion of terminology here. On the one hand, the final four bars of a simple continuation are themselves referred to as the sentence’s continuation. But that four-bar continuation is typically subdivided into a *continuation function* followed by a *cadential function*. Thus “continuation”

¹⁵ Another restatement of why the presentation does not conclude with a cadence: “The strongly ongoing quality created by a presentation generates demand for a *continuation phrase*, one that will directly follow, and draw consequences from, the presentation” (p. 10).

¹⁶ My own view has been that Caplin’s definitions of a cadence within a mm. 1-4 unit are sometimes unclear and at times circular. A lurking dilemma seems present here. On the one hand, by definition a presentation (b.i.+ b.i.’) cannot end with a cadence. Hence if one starts by focusing on any perceived b.i.+ b.i.’ rhetoric, any light “cadence-effect” at its end becomes merely secondary, not decisively structural. On the other hand, if one starts by insisting upon recognizing a cadence (HC, IAC, PAC) at the end of m. 4—perhaps because of the presence of a recognizable cadential formula at that point—then the seemingly presentational status of mm. 1-4 (should it be present) is disallowed. In such cases, Caplin modifies his analysis to regard mm. 1-4 as *ipso facto* an *antecedent*, sometimes collapsing an otherwise seeming b.i.+ b.i.’ into a b.i.+ c.i. to help alleviate the contradiction. See, e.g., his discussion of Mozart, Concerto No. 19 in F, K. 459/i, mm. 1-8, Example 4.4, pp. 49-51.

means two things: 1) that 4-bar unit (or equivalent) that follows the presentation, and 2) that (initial) portion of the continuation that exhibits *continuation function*.

According to Caplin [40ff], *continuation function* is characterized by some commonly encountered features: *fragmentation* (“the immediate breaking down of the two-measure size (established in the presentation) into smaller segments,” p. 41); *acceleration of harmonic rhythm* (more intense harmonic motion); *increase in surface rhythmic activity*; or *harmonic sequence*. All of these, one might note, are also characteristic of any drive-to-cadence, more broadly construed. The continuation (second part as a whole) will end with the cadence proper (PAC, IAC or HC), effected by a module that clearly has a *cadential function*, which may in turn be the result of a (complete or incomplete) *cadential progression*.

Comment: In the prototypical sentence the continuation will fragment material from the presentation, as if working with that material. (This is different from the “b.i. restart” effect characteristic of many consequents.) In actual practice, however, one might find extended continuations that move away from this fragmentation strategy—ones in which the music of the continuation refers less obviously to the presentation, in varying degrees, or even move on to by-and-large differing ideas altogether. One *locus classicus* of the extended, fully *contrasting continuation*—an important subtype not much discussed by Caplin—is that of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in F, op. 10 no. 1/i.¹⁷

Sometimes the cadential-function, latter portion of the continuation is clearly perceptible as such. At times, though, the four-bar continuation seems to be occupied entirely by the cadential function, as though there were “two different functions in a single group [continuation function and cadential function],” which Caplin calls “form functional *fusion*” (p. 45). This is especially the case when the continuation (mm. 5-8 or equivalent) is based entirely on an *expanded cadential progression* (ECP)—that is (normally), when the continuation begins on a I⁶ chord and initiates a I⁶-P-V-I (T-P-D-T) progression (a “complete cadential progression”), now expanded in length over the entire four bars. In such cases Caplin prefers the label “continuation==>cadential,” in which “the symbol ==> stands for ‘becomes’ and denotes a retrospective reinterpretation of formal function. In other words, what we expect to be a continuation phrase (following, as it does, a presentation) is understood retrospectively to be a cadential phrase based on an expanded cadential progression” (p. 47).

The nested sentence or sentence chain: While not much covered by form-functional theory proper, it is not uncommon in classical and (especially) later repertoires to find that a presentation leads not to a tidy, complete continuation and close but rather that the “continuation” itself begins as a new sentence (2+2), with a new basic idea, leading to its own continuation. This is what is called a *nested sentence* or *sentence chain*: presentation 1 leads to presentation 2 (as its continuation) and potentially onward like this, down the road. This happens in cases where a longer theme is built from two or more, but differing b.i.+b.i. successions before the whole theme arrives at a cadence: (2+2) + (2+2) [+ (2+2)], etc., finally to cadence. For a clear example of such an extended theme that begins with (at least) double presentations, see the opening of Mozart’s *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*.

¹⁷ *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 84 n. 14, expands upon this point and begins to lay out a somewhat differing conception of sentence structure.

Step 3 (for cases in which a b.i.+c.i. antecedent, ending in a clear HC or IAC, is not followed by a consequent, and when a period proper has thus been ruled out)

As noted above, an initial b.i.+c.i pairing is an *antecedent* when it ends with either an HC or an IAC.

Reminder: For half cadences (usually ending a progression T-P-D), the concluding V must be in root position and must not—within the classical style—have a seventh above it (V⁷) to count as a cadence in the strict sense, at least as Caplin defines it. Cf. p. 79: “If the final dominant is inverted or else contains a dissonant seventh . . . the dominant would then be too unstable to function as a cadential goal. In such cases, the formal articulation created by this final harmony can be labeled a *dominant arrival*, in contrast to a genuine half cadence.”

If the pairing does not end with a cadence, strictly considered, it is to be regarded not as an antecedent but as a *compound basic idea* (c.b.i.). Skip Step 3 and proceed to Step 4.

If you are looking at a clear, opening antecedent but what follows cannot be regarded as a parallel consequent, then what we have is a *hybrid theme*—either *Hybrid 1* or *Hybrid 2*.

These two, very similar, hybrid cases, 1 and 2, occur when part two begins with an idea different from—contrasting with—the antecedent’s b.i. Prior to form-functional theory such a case of statement-and-reply was identified as a *contrasting period* or some similar designation. Form-functional theory does away with that designation in favor of its Hybrids 1 and 2. Thus if the two four-bar phrases (or equivalents) are *contrasting*, we no longer call this a period (which for form-functional theory always implies “parallel period”). Instead we have something that seems to “begin like a period but end like a sentence” (p. 59). Thus we encounter *hybrid themes*.¹⁸

Caplin distinguishes between two types:

- **Hybrid 1: antecedent + continuation.** This is an antecedent (ending with a cadence, strictly considered) followed by something else, a differing idea, that keeps us from classifying the whole as a (parallel) period (in which, by definition, the consequent must begin with b.i.). Caplin notes that the continuation will often feature signs of a typical sentence-continuation, namely, fragmentation, increase in the rate of harmonic change, and so on, and will soon move into a cadential function.

¹⁸ **Comment:** As noted above, Hybrids 1 and 2 describe a situation that would have been called a *contrasting period* in the more traditional *Formenlehre* terminology—a terminology that Caplin sought to replace as inadequate or imprecise. (The concept of “hybrids” as a useful tool of phrase description remains a matter of debate.) Since the concept of these structures as literal “hybrids” is sometimes less than clear (it depends entirely on Caplin’s definitions and decisions to prioritize only the normative sentence and period), one might be tempted to seek for other ways to understand these familiar structures. Although I have not yet elaborated the thought in any publication (it appears neither in the *Elements of Sonata Theory* nor in *A Sonata Theory Handbook*, both of which, for convenience’s sake, default to form-functional theory’s method of classifying themes), Hybrids 1 and 2, for instance, might also be grasped, and perhaps more clearly grasped, as *through-composed periods*: those with an antecedent and a clearly complementary, balancing second half, though not one that literally recaptures the sense of the initial b.i. as in a more normative, symmetrical consequent. In general, what I suggest here is the larger category of *through-composed two-part themes* (as opposed to *reiterative two-part themes*), a category that would also include the sentence (along with what Caplin calls a Hybrid 3 theme). Such classifications at least permit one to see overlaps and interrelationships among the various formal possibilities. See n. 20 below.

- Hybrid 2: Option C: antecedent + cadential. This is essentially the same thing as Hybrid 1 with one main difference: the second phrase will be “built exclusively on an expanded cadential progression” [ECP], one that “often displays few, if any, continuational characteristics . . . [and is thus] exclusively cadential in function” (p. 61). This is most commonly a I⁶-P-V-I progression. Thus if the “continuation” begins on a I⁶ and proceeds to cadence, it is regarded as an ECP, and form-functional theory would have us distinguish it as Hybrid 2. (In some respects this parallels, yet differs from, his distinction between “continuation” and “continuation=>cadential” in his classification of sentences. See Caplin, p. 61.)

Step 4 (for cases in which a b.i.+c.i. first part does not end with a cadence, strictly considered)

Since the assumption here is that the first part is neither b.i.+ b.i.' (a *presentation*) nor a b.i. + c.i. *antecedent* ending with a cadence, strictly considered, the theme cannot be classified as a sentence, a period, or either Hybrid 1 or 2. Thus one undertakes Step 4 only if, within Step 3, one has come to the conclusion that the first four bars, b.i.+c.i., are not cadential: they do not end with an unequivocal, complete HC or IAC. Instead, they are to be classified (“downgraded,” so to speak) as a *compound basic idea*. Thus Step 4 is concerned only with situations in which the initial four bars is neither a presentation nor an antecedent—but rather a compound basic idea.

Notice once again that we may have either a dominant arrival (inverted dominant or V⁷) or a tonic chord preceded by inversions of V—but no genuine cadence, as form-functional theory defines it. The impression is often that of a *near-antecedent*, but one kept from genuine antecedent status by the failure to produce a genuine, clear-cut cadence, strictly considered, at the end. (Cf. p. 61: “If a cadence does not appear at the end of the [first] phrase, then an essential component of antecedent function has been lost.”) In this sense what might otherwise have been an antecedent decays to a mere *compound basic idea* (c.b.i.), with interior structure b.i.+ c.i.

Here we have only two more options—two more *hybrids*—that depend on what follows the c.b.i.: will it begin differently from the c.b.i. or will it (re-)begin similarly, in parallel fashion?

- Hybrid 3: compound basic idea + continuation. This is the standard category when what follows the c.b.i. *contrasts* with it or substantially differs from it: it could not be considered a rebeginning of the same idea. Thus we have two contrasting parts, the second with a clear cadential closure, and the first not ending with a cadence, strictly considered. Note that Hybrid 3 is very similar to Hybrids 1 and 2, the difference being that the first four bars cannot be classified as an antecedent.¹⁹
- Hybrid 4: compound basic idea + consequent. This covers cases in which what follows the c.b.i. begins (rebegins) with the opening b.i. of the c.b.i.—in the manner of a consequent—then proceeds to cadence. In short, this will seem like a simple “period” in which we cannot classify

¹⁹ Put another way, Hybrid 3 can resemble the older or more traditional “contrasting period,” except that here the initial module does not (quite) qualify as a genuine “phrase” ending with a cadence, strictly considered. If it does, then Caplin would call it either Hybrid 1 or 2, depending on whether the contrasting second part is entirely occupied by an E.C.P. (Hybrid 2) or not (Hybrid 1). One might further note that in Hybrid 3 Caplin does not make the distinction between a “continuation=>cadential” and a merely “cadential” (E.C.P.) second module, the very distinction that separates Hybrid 1 from Hybrid 2.

the first part as an antecedent because it does not [quite] make the grade of genuine cadential status, strictly considered, at its end.²⁰

Summary of the screening process for simple, eight-bar themes

Given a thematic unit in two parts (norm: 4+4 measures), in which the second four bars do not merely repeat the first four:

1. Check first for any “obvious” antecedent-consequent relationship between mm. 1-4 and 5-8. If there is, the structure is most likely a *period* (if and only if mm. 1-4 end with an HC or IAC). Step 3 is a useful double-check here.

If such a relationship is not immediately apparent, look first at the initial four measures or equivalent:

2. b.i.+ b.i.' (2+2)? If so, then this is the *presentation* portion of a *sentence*. No need to consider steps 3 or 4. Mm. 5-8 or equivalent will be either a *continuation* or *continuation*==>*cadential* unit.

3. If not b.i.+ b.i.' (2+2), then it must be configured as b.i.+ c.i. (2+2, in which the “contrast” of c.i. can occur in varying degrees of strength and clarity). Check once again to determine whether the four measures end with a cadence (HC, IAC) strictly considered. If they do not, proceed to step 4. If they do, the four measures constitute an *antecedent*. We now have three options for classification, depending on the nature of mm. 5-8 or equivalent.

- Mm. 5-8 parallel to 1-4 (begin with same b.i.): *period*.
- Mm. 5-8 not parallel (we have a *contrasting* second part): *Hybrid 1 (antecedent + continuation)*. But before concluding this, make one more assessment:
- Final check: are mm. 5-8 occupied completely by an expanded cadential progression with few, if any, continuational characteristics? If so, alter the choice of Hybrid 1 to *Hybrid 2 (antecedent + cadential)*.

4. Mm. 1-4 = b.i.+ c.i., but without a cadence (HC, IAC), strictly considered. Here the concept of antecedent decays to that of *compound basic idea* (c.b.i.). We now have two final options for classification, depending on the nature of mm. 5-8 or equivalent.

- Mm. 5-8 not parallel (contrasting mm. 5-8): *Hybrid 3 (compound basic idea + continuation)*

²⁰ Pursuing the differing classification outlined in n. 18 above, one might suggest that Caplin’s Hybrid 3 is another subset of the through-composed theme (namely, something much like a *through-composed period*, though with a cadentially weakened, evaded, or imperfect antecedent); and Hybrid 4 is a subset of the symmetrically balanced, *reiterative two-part theme* (a variant of the period, though with a cadentially weakened, evaded, or imperfect antecedent.)

- Mm. 5-8 parallel to mm. 1-4 (begin with same b.i.): *Hybrid 4 (compound basic idea + consequent)*.

Obviously, these principles are still readily applicable to describe “short” themes that do not exemplify the heuristic model’s 4+4 bars.

Compound Themes

Compound themes are those which, in effect, double the proportions of simple themes. Instead of themes of the 4+4 type (which may be altered in length by compression, expansion, or extension), we have themes of the 8+8 type: larger sentences, period, hybrids.

For form-functional theory, the main task is that of classifying each 8-bar unit.

Sixteen-Measure Period (or Compound Period)

This is an 8+8 period (a larger antecedent and consequent) in which each eight-bar unit is subdivided into 4+4.²¹ Thus we have: (4+4) + (4+4). The overall effect is typically: AB – AC. Obviously, to qualify as a period:

- the first 4+4 half—the initial “statement” or “AB”—will have to end with a weak cadence (HC or IAC) at the end of B, the second with a stronger one at the end of C (probably a PAC).
- and the second 4+4 half—the “response” or “AC”—will have to begin as did the first half (thus “parallel” to it) and it must end with a stronger cadence than did the first half (probably a PAC).

Compound periods are not difficult to recognize. The main issue for a more local classification of each half is: in each 4+4 section, do the first four bars end with a cadence or not?

Remember also that this first 4+4 will articulate two *differing* ideas (“AB”). (If they were similar, “AA’,” one would probably be looking at a compound sentence instead.) In each case, the differing idea, “B,” is regarded as a *continuation* (the only option when it is not a parallel idea). The classifications, then, are based on the nature of the *first* 4-bar unit in each of the two larger halves. In large part, this can be accomplished by examining the structure of the 4+4 antecedent and classifying its structure as one of the standard 4+4 types or hybrids.

To do this, look at the *first* 4-bar unit of the 4+4 antecedent.

²¹ In this respect it is similar to what has traditionally been called the “double period,” a term that form-functional theory rejects.

Is it the presentation of a sentence (b.i. + b.i.')? If so, we have (4+4) *presentation + continuation*. In this case, each half of the sixteen-measure period will be sentential (AB is parsed further as aa'B), structured as a sentence. We have the common case of the *sentential antecedent*, ending, usually, with an HC.

Or is the first four-bar unit a b.i.+c.i. succession that ends with a cadence, strictly considered? It might, for instance, even conclude with a I:PAC, a strong cadence that turns out to be “overruled,” by the second four bars’ weaker cadence, HC or IAC, in effect “reopening” the PAC at the end of the first four bars. In this case, we have a strong four-bar phrase (“A”) ending PAC followed by a more “open,” weaker phrase (B”) ending HC or (less often) IAC. (One might also describe such a two-phrase succession with James Webster’s colorful term from 1991, “antiperiod,” a succession that, in this case, reverses the normal order of phrase-ending cadences.)²²

Or do the first 4 bars not end with a cadence, strictly considered? In this case the four bars constitute a *compound basic idea* (c.b.i.) and produce a full theme that is either a compound Hybrid 3 or Hybrid 4, depending on whether the second four bars begin as a contrasting continuation (Hybrid 3), or a parallel module that also begins with the c.b.i. (Hybrid 4), though in this case the latter will end with either an HC or an IAC, thus completing itself as an eight-bar compound antecedent.

Sixteen-Measure Sentence (or Compound Sentence)

This is simply a sentence with larger proportions throughout.

(2 + 2) + 4
b.i. + b.i.' + continuation

becomes

(4 + 4) + 8
c.b.i. + c.b.i.' + continuation

In general, things occur on a broader scale, each of whose parts can be divided into subparts. Note that, as always, the continuation of a compound sentence can be either compressed into fewer than eight bars or expanded beyond eight bars.

Form-functional theory does maintain, though, that the presentation consists of c.b.i. + c.b.i., that is, that the presentation continues to be *noncadential* in function. (See the discussion of the “cadence, strictly considered” above.)

Comment: In practice, as the units of the presentation get longer and longer, their propensity to be heard as potentially cadential may well increase. This remains a matter of interpretation, even as one still retains the need for a root position V-I motion to produce a genuine perfect or imperfect authentic cadence. Nonetheless, even while a compound presentation might well to end with a strong cadence, that cadence is not yet “structural” (= “terminal”), since it does not “end” the theme but leads only into its continuation. Form-functional theory’s distinction between “cadential content” and “cadential function” is useful here.

²² Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 44.

Compound Hybrids

From the above it is easy to extrapolate into compound hybrids—those compound themes that cannot be identified as compound sentences or periods.

Compound Hybrid 1 will feature a compound antecedent (AB) followed by a contrasting 4+4 continuation (“CD”)

Compound Hybrid 2 is probably rare, since it involves the full 4+4 second half to be taken up with expanded cadential function

Compound Hybrid 3 is just like compound Hybrid 1, except that its first 4+4 unit does not end with an HC or IAC, strictly considered. (The relevant chord or chords might not be in root position, for instance.) It is probably an AB – CD structure.

Compound Hybrid 4 is just like a compound period, except (like Hybrid 3) that its first 4+4 unit does not end with an HC or IAC, strictly considered. (The relevant chord or chords might not be in root position, for instance.) It is nonetheless an AB – AC structure, prototypically over 16 bars.