

Mendelssohn's Piano Trio Op. 66 and the Analysis of Romantic Form

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Introduction: Sonata Form and the 'Mendelssohn Problem'

The historical and analytical issues that Carl Dahlhaus famously housed under the rubric of a 'Mendelssohn problem' loom especially large for our understanding of Mendelssohn's sonata forms.¹ Although the question of how to move legitimately beyond Viennese high classicism pervades responses to early nineteenth-century sonata-type works in general, it acquires particularly urgency for Mendelssohn, in view of the sheer persistence of efforts to cast his music in a negative post-classical light, which range from adverse style criticism to racially motivated hostility. His commitment to classical forms in an aesthetic environment circumscribed by Franco-Italian opera and the decidedly Romantic genres of the character piece, Lied, and virtuoso fantasia bespeaks a kind of musical idealism, which later generations could easily dismiss as anachronism. At their ugliest, such charges conjoined with anti-Semitism: the spectre of Wagner and the political turn of Mendelssohn reception are never too far from the ostensibly neutral task of formal analysis.²

Sustained scholarly interest over the past several decades – what Benedict Taylor calls 'the long Mendelssohn renaissance' – has salvaged the composer's reputation for the musicological canon, if in a rather attenuated way.³ Theory and analysis have, however, contributed to this revival belatedly and in relatively small measure. Although formal matters have long inflected critical antagonism, the mechanics of Mendelssohn's sonata practice have only recently attracted persistent attention, thanks in large part to the renewed momentum acquired by *Formenlehre*. As Janet Schmalfeldt points out: 'As for Mendelssohn's chamber and symphonic works, there seems to be a dearth of effort on the part of theorists to ask

¹ Carl Dahlhaus, ed., *Das Problem Mendelssohn* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1974).

² The twin sources of Mendelssohn's fall from grace are usually taken to be the critical opposition of the New German School and its apologists after 1848 and, in the Anglophone world, the assault on Victorian values variously perpetrated by Bernard Shaw, Lytton Strachey, Samuel Butler and others in the early twentieth century. A lucid appraisal of this trajectory is given in R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xix–xxix and of its post-World War II aspects in Benedict Taylor, 'Introduction: The Long Mendelssohn Renaissance', in Taylor, ed., *The Early Romantic Composers: Mendelssohn* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. xiii–xxviii. On Wagner, Franz Brendel and the anti-Semitic turn after 1848, see Donald Mintz, '1848, Anti-Semitism, and the Mendelssohn Reception', in R. Larry Todd, ed., *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 126–48 and more recently Sinead Dempsey-Garratt, 'Mendelssohn's 'Untergang': Reconsidering the Impact of Wagner's 'Judaism in Music', in Nicole Grimes and Angela R. Mace, *Mendelssohn Perspectives* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 31–48.

³ Taylor, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

questions such as, how does Mendelssohn construct his themes, and on what grounds might they be compared with Mozartean classical models?’⁴

Larry’s Todd’s perception that even post-War proponents revisiting Mendelssohn’s reputation have tended to damn him with faint praise consequently has particular relevance for analysis.⁵ This reticence is manifest in Friedhelm Krummacher’s 1974 essay on Mendelssohn’s sonata forms, which set out ‘to outline a few of the main problems in Mendelssohn’s composing’, and primarily to test the complaint that he ‘merely adopted traditional forms and filled them up in a new way but at the same time also misunderstood and undermined them’.⁶ Countering the grievance that Mendelssohn retained ‘the formal scheme that was prescriptively formulated in [his] lifetime’ whilst omitting ‘the characteristics that one tends to expect from a proper sonata movement’, Krummacher argues that Mendelssohn’s lyrical material holds the key to an understanding of his forms.⁷ In the end, however, this perception spawns no developed concept of Romantic form, and Krummacher’s conclusions are tepid to say the least: ‘One may find Mendelssohn’s music too transparent, too weakly profiled, or too lacking in contrast – its technical standard, its personal individuality, and its historical influence, despite all differences in judgement of it, are nevertheless not to be ignored’.⁸

The conversion of Mendelssohn into a progressive composer is pursued more robustly by Greg Vitercik, who proposed in 1989 that ‘one of the most significant achievements in the finest of Mendelssohn’s early works is, in fact, the establishment of a highly individuated romantic sonata style’ founded on ‘a functionally coherent relation between the proportions and structural gestures of the sonata style on the one hand and a Romantic musical language on the other’.⁹ Vitercik agrees with Krummacher’s insistence that the Romantic cuckoo in the classical-formal nest is a lyrical melodic style, which is alien to the late-eighteenth-century sonata. For Vitercik, arguments about the success or failure of Mendelssohn’s sonatas turn on the extent to which these elements are synthesised. He admits this for the early music (specifically the Octet Op. 20 and the String Quintet Op. 18), but withholds it for the later style. Glossing Krummacher’s commentary on the first movement of

⁴ Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 164.

⁵ Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, pp. xxi–xxii.

⁶ Friedhelm Krummacher, ‘Zur Kompositionsart Mendelssohn’ in Carl Dahlhaus, ed., *Das Problem Mendelssohn* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1974), pp. 169–84, trans. Douglass Seaton as ‘On Mendelssohn’s Compositional Style’, in Seaton, ed., *The Mendelssohn Companion* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 551–68, at 552. More substantially, see also Krummacher, *Mendelssohn – der Komponist: Studien zur Kammermusik für Streicher* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1978).

⁷ Krummacher, ‘On Mendelssohn’s Compositional Style’, p. 552.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 565–6.

⁹ Greg Vitercik, ‘Mendelssohn the Progressive’, *Journal of Musicological Research* (1989), 333–74, at 334, and see also Greg Vitercik, *The Early Works of Felix Mendelssohn: A Study in the Romantic Sonata Style* (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 1992).

Op. 44 No. 2, Vitercik insists that the productive collaboration between lyricism and sonata form in opp. 18 and 20 polarises in this work: ‘Form and content, rather than generating one another as they do in the early works, seem stiffly irrelevant to each other’.¹⁰ Radicalism is in these terms a feature of Mendelssohn’s youth, and the old image of teenage creativity yielding, after 1830, to bourgeois *Gemütlichkeit* is thereby reinforced.

To insist that Mendelssohn is a radical composer is therefore to fight a war on several fronts at once. It is simultaneously to challenge the claim that he is a regressive classicist, to reject negative value judgements benchmarked against the imperative of originality, to deny the charge of formal conformism, and to counter the accusation that his capacity for innovation petered out in maturity.¹¹ To this end, I want to argue that the old critical habits die hard because revisionists have as yet paid insufficient attention to the music’s truly innovative features and have failed to track their development across his oeuvre. Mendelssohn’s novelty in the domain of sonata form is not in the first instance a function of melodic style, rhetoric, expression, topical discourse, generic experimentation or even large-scale form as such; and *pace* Krummacher and Vitercik, it has nothing to do with lyricism as a mode of rhetoric. Rather, it resides chiefly in the details of thematic syntax; that is, in those aspects of phrase organisation, which William Caplin’s work on Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven locates within the purview of formal function.

This observation implies that a substantial understanding of Mendelssohn’s forms will never be achieved through architectural comparison with classical precedents. The explanation for the differences between, for example, a Mendelssohnian and a Mozartian recapitulation does not reside in the juxtaposition itself, but has to be sought in the formal implications of Mendelssohn’s attitude towards syntax as a thematic property. We have failed fully to disclose the startling originality of Mendelssohn’s syntax not only because of the barriers to analysis that style-historical or cultural-political criticism have erected, but also for want of a substantial theoretical framework by means of which it can be described. This lacuna shares a point of origin with the historical issues addressed above. It is the music-theoretical correlative of a musicological attitude committed to constructing early nineteenth-century instrumental forms in negative terms, as the aftermath of a perfected classicism, or a shallow prolongation of Beethovenian forms for their prestige rather than relevance, or as an expression of Biedermeier self-satisfaction rather than Napoleonic aspiration.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 371.

¹¹ On the biographical contexts for Mendelssohn’s classicism, see Leon Botstein, ‘Neoclassicism, Romanticism and Emancipation: The Origins of Felix Mendelssohn’s Compositional Outlook’, in Seaton, ed., *The Mendelssohn Companion*, pp. 1–27. I will return to Botstein’s argument below.

¹² On the distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ approaches to Romantic form, see Steven Vande Moortele, *The Romantic Overture and Musical Form from Rossini to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 9–13.

Theory: Romantic Form and Romantic Syntax

To analyse Mendelssohn's forms is therefore to advance the cause of a Romantic *Formenlehre* in general, a field, which is in many ways the wild frontier of contemporary music theory. Major recent developments in the discipline, centred on the work of Caplin on the one hand and Hepokoski and Darcy on the other, have greatly refined our theoretical apparatus, whilst also reinforcing its Viennese-classical dependency.¹³ At the other end of the long nineteenth century, repertoire including Mahler, Sibelius, Strauss, and Elgar has been annexed to sonata deformation theory; but the possibility or even desirability of a formal theory for Romantic or post-Romantic practice akin to Caplin's taxonomy remains a matter of debate, and the criteria for such a theory are at best emergent rather than established.¹⁴

The overarching question of what form means is central to this project. This question has elicited contrasting responses from Caplin and Hepokoski and Darcy. For Caplin, classical form is not an independent category, but an expression of the generative hierarchy that arises through the concatenation of functions – that is, the temporal units, which are discrete by virtue of the formal task they perform. Caplin therefore distances himself from the theory of form as such: 'I see classical form arising out of a common set of formal functions, which are deployed in different ways to create multiple formal types. The common element is not sonata form per se, but rather the functions that make up the various forms'.¹⁵ For Hepokoski and Darcy, classical form rather arises in the dialogue between generic norms and the specificity of a composer's responses to them; as they explain: 'the composer generates a sonata – which we regard as a *process*, a linear series of compositional choices – to enter into

¹³ William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and *Analyzing Classical Form: An Approach for the Classroom* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ See for example James Hepokoski, 'Fiery-pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss's *Don Juan* Revisited', in Bryan Gilliam, ed., *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 135–175, Sibelius: *Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 'Elgar' in D. Kern Holoman, ed., *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (New York: Schirmer, 1997), pp. 327–44, 'Framing *Till Eulenspiegel*', *19th-Century Music* 30 (2006), 4–43 and more recently 'Monumentality and Formal Processes in the First Movement of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15', in Peter H. Smith and Heather Platt, eds., *Expressive Intersections in Brahms* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 217–51. See also Warren Darcy, 'Bruckner's Sonata Deformations', in Paul Hawkshaw and Timothy L. Jackson, eds., *Bruckner Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 256–77, Seth Monahan, 'Success and Failure in Mahler's Sonata Recapitulations', *Music Theory Spectrum* 33/i (2011), 37–58, Steven Vande Moortele, *Two-Dimensional Sonata Form: Form and Cycle in Single-Movement Instrumental Works by Liszt, Strauss, Schoenberg, and Zemlinsky* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009) and 'In Search of Romantic Form', *Music Analysis* 32/iii (2013), 404–30.

¹⁵ See William E. Caplin, 'What are Formal Functions?', in Pieter Bergé, ed., *Musical Form, Forms and Formenlehre: Three Methodological Reflections* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), pp. 21–39, at 32.

a dialogue with an intricate web of interrelated norms as an ongoing action in time'.¹⁶ The distinction between conformational and generative conceptions raised by Mark Evan Bonds frames this debate.¹⁷ Hepokoski and Darcy's 'web of interrelated norms' retains the notion of a heuristic scheme as a regulative presence; Caplin's formal functions privilege harmonic and thematic syntax over whole-movement forms as theoretical categories.¹⁸

Analysts of Romantic form have reached similarly diverse conclusions, with Charles Rosen and Carl Dahlhaus staking out the debate's polar extremes. For Rosen, sonata form was essential to the classical style, but peripheral to Romanticism. Its theorisation at the hands of Czerny and Marx converted it from a living stylistic principle into a fixed architecture; simultaneously, post-classical composers developed a style, which Rosen considered irrelevant to sonata composition.¹⁹ For Dahlhaus, the form's history travels in the opposite direction: the classical sonata is defined by formal convention; compelled by Beethoven's example, the Romantic sonata privileges motivic development over architecture.²⁰ Hepokoski and Darcy's notion of deformation arranges the argument's elements in a rather different way. Deformations are departures from classical orthodoxy, achieved through misprision of an inherited norm. The distance from high classicism is apparent in the extent to which composers steer away from the classical paradigm on the largest scale, thereby bolstering the perception that sonata form is inherited as a reified scheme. This also supplies the historical mechanism of the form's development, since deformations themselves become reified over time, creating a fresh orthodoxy against which later practice defines itself.²¹

Janet Schmalfeldt's approach is continuous with both Caplin and Dahlhaus. For Schmalfeldt, as for Dahlhaus, the key factor differentiating Romantic form from classical

¹⁶ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 13–52; the distinction between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' ways of thinking about form, and sonata theory's place in relation to them, is also glossed in James Hepokoski, 'Sonata Theory, Secondary Themes and Continuous Expositions: Dialogues with Form-Functional Theory', *Music Analysis* 35/i (2016), 44–74 at 46–7.

¹⁸ As Hepokoski and Darcy explain: 'to call a work a sonata is to conclude that ... it does indeed invite us ... to use our generic conception of a sonata as the regulative principle of interpretation by which to understand its events'. See *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 610.

¹⁹ Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York: Norton, 1980), pp. 292–3. The last chapter of *Sonata Forms* displays a uniquely dismissive attitude towards the nineteenth-century sonata-type repertoire, as for example in the following statement: 'For the eighteenth century, one can find examples of the still-developing forms of the sonata ... that may represent the stereotyped, normal, stylistic practice at a given moment, or they may represent the extremes to which the style can be taken. No such exemplary choices can be found for the period after Beethoven. The stereotypes of sonata construction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are representative not so much of a developing musical language as of the individual composer's laziness or despair.' See *ibid.*, p. 293.

²⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 42 and 53.

²¹ See for example Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, pp. 5–9, and also Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, pp. 614–21.

form is its processual rather than architectural nature, and specifically the tendency to replace classical ‘being’ (the direct identification of material and function) with Romantic ‘becoming’ (the condition whereby the material’s function is subject to retrospective transformation). Contrasting the eighteenth-century habit of composing in relation to regulative conventions and genre markers, Romantic composers devised sonata forms that narrate the coming into being of form as part of the music’s diachronic experience. Taking Beethoven’s ‘Tempest’ Sonata as her point of origin, Schmalfeldt investigates exemplary works by Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Schumann; her ideas have since been developed by Steven Vande Moortele, Nathan Martin, and others.²²

Mendelssohn’s sonata forms are critical to these debates. When James Garratt identified him as ‘the first composer of modernity: the first musician to wrestle with the dilemma of being dispossessed of a *lingua franca*’, he isolated a problem for music theory no less than for music history, to which Schmalfeldt’s analyses of the Octet, *Midsummer Night’s Dream* Overture and Trio Op. 49 in a sense respond.²³ Her claim that Mendelssohn’s ‘expansive, processual approaches to the treatment of form, motive and harmony’ belie the music’s apparent stylistic atavism makes the case for its centrality to any theory of Romantic form; and the chronological spread of the works she considers undermines decisively any differentiation of the youthful and mature music on analytical grounds.²⁴ Yet the features Schmalfeldt highlights need to be situated in a larger theoretical context, because the music reveals syntactic procedures, which remain elusive in sonata-theoretical or orthodox Caplinian terms, whilst also straining the rubric of ‘becoming’. An analysis alert to this theoretical dark matter may progress some way towards a general framework for a theory of Romantic form as well as a model of Mendelssohnian sonata form in particular.

Formalising this perception, I locate ‘becoming’ as one of six central syntactic categories, extracted from a corpus study of 72 sonata-type movements by Mendelssohn undertaken with Paul Wingfield:

1. *function transformation*, or ‘becoming’, signified by the symbol ‘ $\Rightarrow$ ’;
2. *proliferation*, or techniques of phrase expansion and extension;

²² Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming*, and Nathan Martin and Steven Vande Moortele, ‘Formal Functions and Retrospective Reinterpretation in the First Movement of Schubert’s String Quintet’, *Music Analysis* 33/ii (2014), pp. 130–55.

²³ James Garratt, ‘Mendelssohn and the Rise of Musical Historicism’, in Peter Mercer-Taylor, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 55 and Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming*, pp. 159–94. Contemporaneous with Schmalfeldt is Benedict Taylor’s important study of the string quartets opp. 12 and 13, the Piano Sonata Op. 6, Octet, Op. 20, and Symphony No. 3, Op. 56, which focuses on temporality and cyclical relationships as markers of Romantic innovation; see, *Mendelssohn, Time and Memory: The Romantic Conception of Cyclical Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

²⁴ Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming*, p. 194.

3. *truncation*, or the abbreviation of functions;²⁵
4. *elision*, or the overlapping of functional boundaries;
5. *non-congruence*, or the non-alignment of formal parameters;
6. *deferral*, or the relocation of structural cadences.²⁶

My guiding theoretical attitude is that differences between classical and Romantic sonata form are best understood as *responses to syntactic change*: as attempts to develop formal strategies accommodating a new thematic syntax. I construe large-scale formal choices not as misprisions of a formal heuristic, but as modifications compelled by Romantic syntax: Mendelssohn's sonatas differ from Mozart's because Mendelssohn's syntax differs from Mozart's. The syntactic categories are therefore critical to an understanding both of the way Mendelssohn constructs his material, and of the sonata process that results. His expansion techniques often distend both main and subordinate-theme functions beyond classical proportions; in response, he also applies radical truncation methods in the recapitulation, producing a strikingly post-classical concept of formal proportion, which upsets the delicate balance between tight-knit and loose formations that Caplin posits as a basic formal principle.²⁷ Similarly, the non-congruence of function and bass progression sometimes spans major inter-thematic boundaries, generating a kind of continuity that is foreign to the classical sonata. And the deployment of structural cadences challenges key aspects of the 'essential sonata trajectory' as Hepokoski and Darcy define it, apparent especially in the destabilisation of the 'essential expositional closure' (EEC) and the 'essential structural closure' (ESC), and the concomitant redrawing of sonata space's cadential boundaries.²⁸

It is this chapter's central task to exemplify these categories and their formal implications through analysis of a paradigmatic instance, the first movement of the Piano Trio Op. 66. One terminological feature of the analysis requires preliminary comment. I apply capitalised A, TR, B and C to connote inter-thematic functions (main theme, transition, subordinate theme, closing section), integer suffixes (A1, A2) to connote new material under those functions, and superscript integers (A1¹, A2¹) to indicate reprise. The labeling seeks

²⁵ Truncations of the classical recapitulation are considered by Hepokoski and Darcy in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, pp. 247–9.

²⁶ See Paul Wingfield and Julian Horton, 'Norm and Deformation in Mendelssohn's Sonata Forms', in Grimes and Mace, eds., *Mendelssohn Perspectives*, pp. 83–112. I have explored these categories in other generic contexts in various publications; see for example Julian Horton, 'John Field and the Alternative History of Concerto First-Movement Form', *Music and Letters* 92/i (2011), 43–83, 'Formal Type and Formal Function in the Post-Classical Piano Concerto', in Nathan Martin, Steven Vande Moortele and Julie Pednault-Deslaurier, eds., *Formal Functions in Perspective* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2016), pp. 77–122, and most substantially *Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83: Analytical and Contextual Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017).

²⁷ On the concepts of tight-knit and loose formation, see Caplin, *Analyzing Classical Form*, pp. 264 and 203–5.

²⁸ On which subjects, see Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, pp. 18 and 120–4 (on the EEC) and 20 and 232–3 (on the ESC).

consistency, so I do not reapply those labels at lower functional levels: a contrasting middle within A will for example be designated ‘A2’, not ‘B’, and its specific function subsequently explained (as ‘CM’). Hence a small ternary form within A is described as ‘A1–A2 (CM)–A1¹’ or within B as ‘B1–B2 (CM)–B1¹’. Where necessary, alphabetic consistency is retained for motives, which within A are therefore classified under ‘a’, within B under ‘b’, and within C under ‘c’. Motives that are specific to an inter-thematic subdivision retain the relevant integer suffix: multiple motives within A1 are accordingly designated ‘a1.1’, ‘a1.2’, and so forth, in order of appearance.²⁹

Analysis: Syntax and Form in Mendelssohn’s Piano Trio Op. 66

The Piano Trio Op. 66 richly exemplifies Mendelssohn’s post-classical realignment of syntax and form.³⁰ Both functional transformation and proliferation are evident in the first movement’s A theme, shown (with analytical overlay) in Example 1 **[insert Example 1 here]**. The movement begins with a tight-knit theme concluding with the tonic PAC in bar 22, which as Example 1 explains is periodic, comprising an antecedent rounded by a medial half cadence in bar 8, and an expanded 14-bar consequent. The period is in Caplin’s terms a compound, because the antecedent and consequent are sentential: the antecedent devolves into statement, response, continuation and cadence, which the consequent revisits and modifies.³¹ The material from bar 22 has transitional rhetoric, implying the ‘energy gain’ that Hepokoski and Darcy associate with TR, an impression reinforced by the modulation towards *v* initiated in bars 28 and 29 and sustained as far as the D flat⁶⁻³ chord in bar 38.

Here, however, the movement’s first functional ambiguity arises. Bar 40 reinterprets D flat⁶⁻³ as a Neapolitan sixth, deflecting the music into a tonic PAC resolving in bar 42, after which the A antecedent is reprised. Schmalfeldt’s concept of becoming now comes into play. Bars 22–41 articulate a dual functional transformation. As soon as we experience the tonic A reprise at bar 42, what seems like a transition retrospectively becomes a contrasting middle (TR⇒A2(CM)); and this, I would argue, despite the absence of a preparatory HC or standing on V, the back-projected reprise function at bar 42 being strong enough to engender a retrospective sense of interiority in bars 22–41.³² This also changes the functional identity of bars 1–22, which from the perspective of bar 42 are no longer an A-theme group, but a

²⁹ I have developed this terminology in ‘John Field and the Alternative History of Concerto First-Movement Form’, and ‘Formal Type and Formal Function in the Post-Classical Piano Concerto’.

³⁰ The Finale of Op. 66 is considered as a paradigm of common Mendelssohnian sonata strategies in Wingfield and Horton, ‘Norm and Deformation in Mendelssohn’s Sonata Forms’, pp. 105–7.

³¹ On which subject, see *Analyzing Classical Form*, pp. 166–7, where Caplin categorises sixteen-bar compound periods depending on whether the antecedent comprises a sentence, a compound basic idea+continuation, or an antecedent+continuation.

³² This view contrasts Caplin’s insistence that a small-ternary contrasting middle is defined by a standing on V or half cadence preceding the A reprise; see *Analyzing Classical Form*, p. 197.

periodic A section ($A \Rightarrow A1$) within a larger ternary main theme. In effect, the cadence in bars 40–42 changes the hierarchical status of bars 1–22, demoting them from an inter-thematic function (the A-theme group), to an intra-thematic function ($A1$ of the A-theme group).

The accumulation of ambiguity gathers pace after bar 42. $A1^1$ loses its structural integrity almost immediately, dissolving into transition from bar 46; $A1^1$, in short, has now become TR. This in turn forces a reinterpretation of the PAC in bars 40–42. Contrasting the functional demotion of bars 1–22, bars 40–42 retroactively gain formal significance: from the vantage point of bars 42–43, the PAC is intra-thematic, articulating a sub-division of the A group; but after bar 46, it acquires inter-thematic importance, as the tonic PAC delineating the end of the A-theme group.

The A group's interaction of proliferation and functional transformation is appraised in Figure 1 [**insert Figure 1 here**]. Mendelssohn's practice here goes beyond the model Schmalfeldt explores in Op. 49, because although the basic design is the same, the transitional character of the contrasting middle is more pronounced.³³ The group's thematic opulence evidences proliferation because the continual reappraisal of functional identity ultimately produces an A-theme syntax that considerably distends classical thematic proportions. This is apparent in the cadential structure alone: where Beethoven or Mozart might be content with one intra-thematic cadence, Mendelssohn deploys three (in bars 8, 22 and 42), all of which support multiple and dichotomous functions. The result is an A-theme group, the syntactic character of which references and radically develops high-classical practice.

The strikingly Romantic formal priorities that this proliferative A theme bequeaths are graphically demonstrated by comparison with its recapitulation, given in Example 2 [**insert Example 2 here**]. Eschewing Mozartian principles of balance, Mendelssohn contrasts proliferation with extreme truncation, jettisoning $A2$ and $A1^1$, and with them all of the inter- and intra-thematic ambiguities characterising the expositional A-theme group. The antecedent reappears intact, but the consequent dissolves into transition after the response phrase (from bar 224). As Figure 2 displays, this design is the effective antithesis of its expositional counterpart: if the expositional A theme converts inter-thematic functions into intra-thematic functions (that is, music that seems to have moved beyond main-theme functionality is retrospectively annexed to it), then the recapitulated A theme converts intra-thematic functions into inter-thematic functions (that is, what seems to be the A-theme consequent becomes the transition, such that the A-theme antecedent becomes the A theme *in toto*) [**insert Figure 2 here**]. This produces a bifurcation of formal responsibilities: the tonal function of the recapitulation remains tonic stabilisation (C minor is retrieved and sustained),

³³ Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming*, pp. 164–73.

but at the expense of syntactic stability, generating a formal dialectic between the expository and recapitulatory A-theme variants.

The A theme's loss of structural integrity is exacerbated by its relationship with the development. The retransition is elided at both ends, creating a degree of continuity that compromises large-scale functional articulation. Example 2 shows that the retransitional standing on V begins in the bass at bar 197, prefaced by a secondary V⁷. This structural dominant, however, arrives mid-phrase, asserting itself in the second bar of the violin's descending melodic sequence initiated on the last beat of bar 195 and creating a parametric non-congruence between melody and bass. In contrast, the end of the retransition aligns with the start of the recapitulation in the bass progression (that is, A1 returns over a root-position tonic at bar 213), but the thematic return overlaps with a motivic process stretching back into the development. As Example 2 also reveals, this involves the gradual liquidation of features of the B theme (specifically its second motivic element, labelled b1.2 in Example 2, introduced in the violin from bar 195, and transferred to the piano in bar 208) and the compensatory reconstruction of A1 in the cello, aided by the violin from bar 208. A1's reconstitution culminates in its reprise, but the motivic residues of B persist in the piano as a kind of liquidatory overlap (to appropriate Peter Smith's phrase) until the antecedent's half cadence in bar 220.³⁴ There is, in short, a processual non-congruence here: an adumbrative process culminating at the recapitulation's start overlaps with a liquidatory process that overshoots the development's end. This is also conveyed by textural means, because the piano's retransitional triplet figuration is maintained into the A-theme antecedent.

The partnership of elision and non-congruence at the recapitulation's start references their extensive collaboration in the exposition's B group and C section. As Example 3 shows, the B theme arrives with considerable rhetorical force at bar 63 (anacrusis 62) in the violin and cello, but, *pace* Hepokoski and Darcy, this event is not clearly articulated by a medial caesura (MC) [**insert Example 3 here**].³⁵ A transitional standing on V/III is established at bar 57, and a clear MC opportunity is reached on the downbeat of bar 62. The piano's transitional texture however ignores this boundary and continues until the end of the B-theme presentation phrase in bars 69–70, and this serves to articulate the maintenance of the transition's standing on V, which only resolves with the putative imperfect authentic cadence in 69–70, generating an eight-bar parametric misalignment: rhetorically and form-

³⁴ See Peter H. Smith, 'Liquidation, Augmentation and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps', *19th-Century Music* 17/iii (1994), 237–611.

³⁵ I have in mind Hepokoski and Darcy's well-known assertion that '*If there is no medial caesura, then there is no secondary theme*', in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 52 and the subsequent debate contained in William Caplin and Nathan Martin, 'The Continuous Exposition and the Concept of Subordinate Theme', *Music Analysis* 35/i (2016), 4–43, on the one hand and James Hepokoski, 'Sonata Theory, Secondary Themes and Continuous Expositions', 47–8, where the statement in *Elements of Sonata Theory* is revisited.

functionally, the B group begins at bar 63; structurally, the secondary key area is confirmed by the bass motion at bar 70.

The latter stages of the exposition, appraised in Example 4, trade non-congruence for cadential deferral [**insert Example 4 here**]. The B group unfolds as a small ternary design, with the reprise beginning on the last beat of bar 78, but there is no structural PAC or EEC in E flat. Instead, a new continuation takes hold, which eventually produces a V–i arrival on G minor (although not definitively a cadence) at bar 105, from which point III is never recovered, and we enter the territory of a three-key exposition. The replacement of III with v generates a problem for the exposition as a whole, to which cadences are central. Example 4 reveals that there are four attempts to confirm G minor, none of which are cadentially definitive. V/v is first posited in bars 93–94, but the expected resolution is undercut in bar 95 by the cellist, who resolves the dominant onto i⁶⁻³. Bar 105 is more secure, in that it conveys a root-position G minor triad, supporting a reversion to A2 material. The preparatory harmony however approaches this chord via an ascending stepwise bass beginning on [^]3 in bar 99, rather than through authentic cadential progression.³⁶ A clear PAC is then articulated in bars 108–109, but this has the function of a medial phrase ending, not a structural cadence (Caplin might see it as a cadence of limited scope, albeit one operating in the absence of a preceding structural cadence).³⁷ The exposition's final attempt to assert G minor culminates in the arrival 6-4 at bar 128, but the resolution onto i at bar 132 is at best an IAC (the violin G on the downbeat is hardly assertive enough to relegate the piano's B flat to the status of a cover tone), and the v: PAC in bars 139–140 is unhelpfully slender, impelling a six-bar post-cadential phrase, which elides with the development, in an instance of what Hepokoski calls a Brahmsian deformation.³⁸

The combined formal effect of elision, non-congruence and deferral is *teleology*: the point of cadential arrival conveyed in a classical sonata by the EEC differentiating B theme and C section is here pushed to the exposition's outer limit.³⁹ In the recapitulation, the B and

³⁶ Here I broadly adopt the theoretical language for describing cadences established in William Caplin, 'The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57/i (2004), 51–118.

³⁷ On the cadence of limited scope, see Caplin, *Analyzing Classical Form*, pp. 155: 'If an individual codetta occupies the length of a full phrase of four measures, it may itself be concluded with a brief cadential idea. In such cases, it is important to understand that the structural scope of that cadence is limited to the boundaries of the codetta and does not otherwise affect the processes of cadence that were responsible for closing the theme proper', and also 'The Classical Cadence', pp. 86–9.

³⁸ On which subject, see James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, p. 7, fn. 17.

³⁹ This could be understood as an instance of what Hepokoski and Darcy call the 'C^{pre-EEC}', that is, material of closing-section rhetoric emerging prior to the structural cadence; see *Elements of Sonata Theory*, pp. 190–1: 'Particularly in sonatas after 1800 S may break down without producing a PAC. This inability is sometimes followed by a decisive, contrasting, potentially C-like theme'. Their remarks that 'such themes ... bestride both the S- and C- concepts. They are emphatically pre-cadential ... and yet ... one suspects that they are simultaneously implying the onset of what "should" be a C idea' capture aspects of Mendelssohn's tactic in Op. 66, although the structural cadence's articulation

C material are reprised without significant truncation, and their tonal disjunction is replaced by modal parallelism (the B theme's tonic major shades to the C section's tonic minor). Yet the attainment of a common tonic root is insufficient to counteract the exposition's structural insecurity, because its cadential provisionality is simply reproduced. This deficit generates large-scale teleology, by displacing the clinching structural i:PAC into the coda, as shown in Example 5 [**insert Example 5 here**], achieved in bars 361–372 with sufficient force to cleave the post-C section music into pre- and post-cadential parts.

This tactic problematises the definition of a coda as a 'parageneric space', that is, as a region standing outside the essential sonata trajectory, the start of which is defined by the recapitulation's structural PAC.⁴⁰ Mendelssohn transfers this cadence out of rhetorical sonata space altogether (which, allowing for the C material's liquidatory extension, properly ends at bar 326) and in so-doing compels wholesale redefinition of the coda's function, since it now lies structurally in part within the sonata action, but rhetorically wholly beyond it. To define the C section as persisting until bar 371 would be to court analytical perversity: the rotation of exposition material is unambiguously concluded at bar 326, its completion being signaled by motivic process (the liquidation of C's overhanging fragment of A's *Hauptmotiv* or a1.1) and gesture (the recapitulation's dramatic impetus is spent by this point). In effect, Mendelssohn dislocates two concepts – rotation and the essential sonata trajectory – which for Hepokoski and Darcy act cooperatively in the high-classical sonata.⁴¹ This dislocation can be explained as a non-congruence of rhetoric and bass progression. Defined by the rotation of thematic order, the coda begins at bar 327; but no post-cadential material occurs until bar 372, articulating the point of cadential-structural resolution. Again, we can understand this as

is sufficiently slender and late in the day as to problematise the very idea that cadential closure defines the C section's starting point. Another possibility, but one that cannot be explored in detail here, is that closure can be articulated prolongationally rather than cadentially. On the possibility of non-cadential phrase ending in eighteenth-century music, see Caplin, 'The Classical Cadence', pp. 72–4.

⁴⁰ On which subject, see *Elements of Sonata Theory*, pp. 281–92. Hepokoski and Darcy would surely regard this as a 'discursive' coda in the Beethovenian manner (*ibid.*, pp. 284–8), but this concept cannot account for the transferred structural cadence. On the other hand, there are strong rhetorical reasons for not regarding bars 327–72 as a 'coda-rhetoric interpolation', or new material implanted before the C material has been fully recapitulated (*ibid.*, pp. 288–92): the recapitulatory rotation is decisively completed by bar 327. Caplin considers the classical coda in *Analyzing Classical Form*, pp. 519–50, defining its start in rhetorical terms as '*that point where the music of the recapitulation stops corresponding to the exposition*' (p. 520, italics in original), and distinguishing between its 'conclusion' function, which pertains to material processes, and its 'after-the-end' or framing function, which pertains to the essential tonal and phrase-functional processes closed by the subordinate-theme cadence. Caplin identifies five common procedures under the former category: 'recollection of main-theme ideas'; 'restoration of deleted material from the recapitulation'; 'reference to the development section'; 'shaping a new dynamic curve'; and 'realization of unrealized implications'. See *ibid.*, pp. 538–45. In these terms, the problem posed by the closing stages of Op. 66/i is that the first part of the coda has a conclusion function (it articulates a post-recapitulation material process) but not a framing function (because we still await the structural cadence).

⁴¹ A similar strategy has been noted by Benedict Taylor in the finale of the 'Scottish' Symphony; see *Mendelssohn, Time and Memory*, pp. 267–71.

responding to techniques established in the exposition. As Figure 3 clarifies, Mendelssohn transfers non-congruence upwards in the formal hierarchy [**insert Figure 3 here**]: in addition to its role in blurring expositional inter-thematic boundaries, it now carries a large-scale function, applying to the relationship between recapitulation and coda.

The expansion of the exposition's non-congruent features in the recapitulation and coda provides perhaps the most compelling evidence for the syntactic perspective on Romantic form advocated here. The misalignment of rhetoric and structure is a direct consequence of Mendelssohn's expositional deferral strategy, which in turn arises from his thematic syntax. This dislocation cannot be remedied by the classical sonata's recapitulatory mechanisms, because the tonic transposition of expositional material is in this case simply a transposition of the EEC's absence. A feature of the exposition's thematic syntax thus necessarily becomes a formal problem on the largest scale, which obliges Mendelssohn to rethink the nature and function of the coda, if the tonic is to be cadentially secured at all. No straight comparison of the recapitulation and coda in Op. 66 with a classical paradigm will explain these procedures. Their purpose is not dialogical – they do not misread the work's formal genealogy – but resides in the need to work out the formal consequences of syntactic novelty.

The coda has two additional functions. The first is intertextual, and is revealed in bar 385 (see Example 5 again), where B1 puts in a final, post-cadential appearance, arresting the coda's momentum in a turn of events that strongly resembles the B-theme reminiscence with which the first movement of Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata ends, quoted in Example 6 [**insert Example 6 here**]. Both Mendelssohn and Beethoven associate the subordinate-theme recollection with the composing out of a chromatic neighbour note (flat $\wedge 6$ for Beethoven; flat $\wedge 2$ for Mendelssohn). But whereas Beethoven uses the reference to eliminate a minor-mode intrusion, Mendelssohn's B-theme recall is an emphatic act of negation, which converts the theme's modal mixture into a local dominant inflection of iv over a tonic pedal, distorted from the outset by the initial VI/iv clashing with the bass C.

The second issue played out here is the residual canonic treatment of A1 by augmentation and diminution (before the structural cadence) and its post-cadential stretto *rectus* and *inversus* and eventual liquidation, explained in Example 7 [**insert Example 7 here**]. This process is in manifest dialogue with the B-theme recall, which emerges once the liquidation of A1 has been driven to a textural standstill in bars 380–384. Tellingly, the treatment of A1 is suspended during the structural PAC itself, and resumed afterwards. Here, as in the exposition B theme, retransition and A1 recapitulation, the motivic process and formal strategy are not coterminous. In the coda, they are effectively stratified: formal closure interrupts motivic counterpoint.

By way of summary, Figure 4 compares Mendelssohn's Op. 66 with Hepokoski and Darcy's classical heuristic or 'generic layout' [insert Figure 4 here].⁴² The structural cadences' shifting locations clearly differentiate sonata theory's orthodoxy from Mendelssohn's practice. What Figure 4 fails to capture is the generative relationship between material and formal innovations: in other words, it explains how Mendelssohn and Mozart are different, but not why. The foregoing analysis proposes that this latter explanation resides in the syntactic domain, and will never be grasped by showing how Mendelssohn misreads Mozart: the exposition is teleological because non-congruence destabilises III and deferral destabilises v, not because Mendelssohn doesn't compose a classical III:EEC; the A recapitulation is truncated because the A exposition is expanded, not because Mendelssohn rejects a full classical reprise; and the coda is cadential because the exposition's syntax disrupts the recapitulation's classical function under transposition, not because the recapitulation is itself unlike normative classical comparators.

Conclusions

Nothing in this movement's syntactic organization or formal strategy supports the separation of Mendelssohn's sonata-type music into phases of youthful innovation and mature classicist retrenchment. Many of Op. 66's procedures can be found across Mendelssohn's oeuvre: as the corpus study undertaken with Paul Wingfield establishes, truncation, the elision of A and B, and of development and recapitulation are widespread, and are deployed throughout the composer's life.⁴³ The latter is particularly widely distributed, appearing as early as the first movement of the Piano Quartet No. 1 of 1823 and as late as the first movement of the String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80 of 1847. The problem of balancing proliferation and truncation is also ubiquitous, being equally prominent in the first movements of the Octet, the piano concertos opp. 25 and 40, symphonies nos. 2, 3 and 4, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture, both piano trios, the string quartets opp. 13 and 44, nos. 1 and 2, and the String Quintet Op. 87. In none of the cases after Op. 25 is it possible to discern a disconnect between material and form. On the contrary, the challenge of how to modify form to accommodate an expansive A-theme syntax is the same in each case, and the solutions are only differentiated to the extent that they reflect each work's material specificity.⁴⁴

The dichotomy of lyricism and form broached by Krummacker and Vitercik is similarly problematic. This is, in one respect, a historical cliché, which has attached to a wide

⁴² See Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 17.

⁴³ 'Norm and Deformation in Mendelssohn's Sonata Forms', p. 105.

⁴⁴ As Dahlhaus corroborates: 'the contradiction occurring in Chopin between sonata form ... and the themes that fill this schema, is a discrepancy detectable almost nowhere in Mendelssohn: the musical development of ideas and the formal outline harmonise seamlessly'. See 'Two Essays from *Das Problem Mendelssohn*', trans. Benedict Taylor in *Mendelssohn*, pp. 3–10, at 6.

array of post-Beethovenian composers, including Schubert and Schumann, and which in many cases really reduces to the hollow assertion that song is important to Romanticism. The point has been pursued most extensively, and has greatest analytical traction, for Schubert's sonata forms, in which case lyricism is a matter of rhetoric, apparent in the paratactic designs of his mature theme groups, which have manifest large-scale implications.⁴⁵ Mendelssohn's themes however betray no comparable evidence of lyric parataxis, which could distance them from Beethoven or Mozart; the detection of Mendelssohnian lyricism is usually based on melodic character alone, rather than its syntactic context. The distinction between a lyric Romantic style and a sonata-appropriate Classical style is highly questionable: the singing style is after all endemic to the topical discourse of sonatas by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; and no lyric melody, taken out of its rhetorical context, is immune to the motivic deconstruction, which for Krummacher motivates a 'proper sonata movement'.

In one sense, Mendelssohn's classicism is obvious and trivial to point out: his determination to carry classical forms and genres forwards clearly sets him apart from composers engaged in more overt generic experimentation (as two polar counter-examples, we could cite Berlioz and Chopin). More sophisticated is Leon Botstein's argument that Mendelssohn's music is 'classical', or perhaps 'neo-classical', by virtue of his sympathies with classicist elements in contemporary German thought, especially Goethe's writings and North-German attitudes towards antiquity and civic art, which view leads Botstein to conclude that 'Mendelssohn explicitly sought to use a classical heritage to fashion a contemporary equivalent; and therefore his elaborations of sonata style can properly be termed "Romantic" only in the narrow sense of chronology'.⁴⁶ Yet stressing an allegiance to classical models is an act of misdirection, to the extent that it compels us to focus on melodic-stylistic features on the one hand, or on architectonic features on the other, whilst overlooking the syntactic new world that lies in between. From this perspective, Botstein has Mendelssohn's sonata style back-to-front: it is not that he marshalled 'a classical heritage to fashion a contemporary equivalent', but that he applied a typically Romantic attitude to thematic construction in order to revivify classical formal precedents.

An even less well-travelled road – but one yielding provocative insights – situates Mendelssohn within the broader development of Romantic and post-Romantic sonata syntax. The techniques evident in Op. 66 pervade sonata forms from Schumann to Schoenberg. They are especially significant for Brahms, whose sonata style trades extensively in proliferation, deferral, elision and non-congruence, in ways that sometimes suggest direct Mendelssohnian

⁴⁵ On this subject see especially Su-Yin Mak, *Schubert's Lyricism Reconsidered: Structure, Design and Rhetoric* (Saarbrücken: Lambert, 2010), and 'Schubert's Sonata Forms and the Poetics of the Lyric', *Journal of Musicology* 23/ii (2006), 263–306.

⁴⁶ Botstein, 'Neoclassicism, Romanticism and Emancipation', p. 3.

modelling, but whose debt to Schubert and Beethoven has been stressed to Mendelssohn's almost total exclusion.⁴⁷ I think, for instance, of the first movement of Brahms's String Quartet Op. 51, No. 1, which, like Mendelssohn's Op. 66, is in C minor, also begins by transforming a tight-knit A theme into a small-ternary design and a small-ternary A1¹ into TR, also elides its MC and B presentation over a sustained dominant, and also blurs the line between retransition and A recapitulation by means of parametric non-congruence (in this case, the A-theme retransitional liquidation over A flat⁶⁻³ is also the recapitulation's initiating phrase).⁴⁸ A detailed account of Mendelssohn's new formal-functional *lingua franca* is thus not only the key to an understanding of his sonata forms, but also to the rich intertextuality of their compositional reception.

⁴⁷ The paradigmatic study of Brahms's debt to Schubert is of course James Webster, 'Schubert's Sonata Forms and Brahms's First Maturity (II)', *19th-Century Music* 3/i (1979), pp. 52–71.

⁴⁸ For an analysis of this process, see Peter H. Smith 'Liquidation, Augmentation and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps', 243–7. As Paul Wingfield and I showed in 'Norm and Deformation in Mendelssohn's Sonata Forms', recapitulation over an unstable chord inversion, particularly a V⁶⁻⁴, is a common practice for Mendelssohn, apparent in 36 movements in the corpus. Clear examples appear in the first movements of the 'Italian' Symphony and E minor Quartet (considered elsewhere in this volume), and the Finale of the Fantasy, Op. 28. On this tactic in Mendelssohn's music, see also Taylor, *Mendelssohn, Time and Memory*, pp. 246–7.