Beyond the Beethoven Model: Sentence Types and Limits

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It is quite likely that no other form in the history of Western music theory has been so strongly associated with a single musical example as the sentence. Most forms are not defined by a single *locus classicus*—no one piece serves as the ultimate paradigm of sonata form, no single phrase represents the virtual embodiment of the period. When it comes to the sentence, however, one example is consistently privileged above all others: Beethoven's Piano Sonata in F Minor, op. 2, no. 1, first movement, bars 1–8 (ex. 1).

The most obvious reason that this example is so favored is that Arnold Schoenberg himself used it as the primary exemplar of the form.[1] (Schoenberg, of course, "discovered" the sentence.) Since then, nearly every theorist who has written about the sentence has mentioned the Beethoven theme as a model example.[2] It would be inaccurate, however, to assume that theorists continue to emphasize this example simply because Schoenberg used it first. After all, the theme does provide an excellent example of many standard sentence features. Bars 1–4 contain a common tonic-dominant alternation—what William Caplin refers to as "statement-response repetition" (1998:37–39). The continuation includes typical features such as motivic fragmentation and acceleration of harmonic rhythm, and the sentence concludes with a conventional half-cadence. The overall metric grouping, moreover, is the usual 2+2+4, and the continuation contains a typical embedded grouping of 1+1+2.

Yet when we consider how theorists have written about this theme, it becomes clear that the example is not privileged because of these generic qualities alone. Indeed, quite paradoxically, the Beethoven theme has come to represent an "ideal type" not because of the qualities that make it generic, but because of the qualities that make it unique. In all of the major sources of sentence theory—Schoenberg's *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (1967), Erwin Ratz's *Einführung in die musikalische Formenlehre* ([1951] 1968), and Caplin's *Classical Form* (1998)—the sentence is ultimately defined in contrast to the period; thus, the "forward-striving" aspects of the form are often accentuated in opposition to the more balanced form of the period. This is especially clear in Ratz's description of the form:

> In the case of the period we have a symmetrical structure that has a certain "repose in itself" due to the balance of its halves, which are more or

Example 1. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 2, no. 1, first mvmt., mm. 1–8.

less equal . . . The eight-measure sentence, however, contains a certain forward-striving character due to the increased activity and compression in its continuation phrase [mm. 5–8] making it fundamentally different in construction from the symmetrical organization of the period. (quoted in Caplin 1994:152)

Beethoven's theme from op. 2, no. 1 is structured in a way that conveys this "forward-striving character" perhaps more clearly—or at least more economically—than any other example. Edward Cone's discussion of the theme from 1968 is representative. He writes that:

The entire phrase of eight measures naturally divides into 2+2+4. An examination of the motivic structure of the second half finds a reduced pattern of 1+1+2 . . . A linear analysis of the ascending melody supports this motivic division, for it can be heard thus: two measures of F, two measures of G, one of A♭, one of B♭, and two of an extended C. But now a look at the bass discovers, beginning in the fifth measure, an exact diminution of this accent! The result is that the harmony shows a steady increase in speed until the cadential measure. Thus these eight measures, which superficially fall into the conventional sentence-pattern, are actually bound together in a tightly unified progression. (1968:75–76)

Notably, Cone regards the sentence structure as essentially trivial; for him, the phrase's unique and unified sense of acceleration is far more sig-

nificant. Ratz emphasizes this sense of directed motion even more strongly by analyzing the final measure as two separate harmonies. He thus hears the theme as a consistent acceleration of harmonic rhythm, which regularly doubles in speed from the beginning of the theme to the end: 2+2+1+1+ ½ + ½ + ¼ + ¼ (1968:23).

Both of these analyses overlook the halting collapse of the theme after the melodic climax on the downbeat of m. 7, a gesture that reigns in the theme's initial forward motion, despite the continued acceleration of harmonic rhythm. What is significant, however, is that in both cases the sentence is associated with rhetoric of acceleration, goal-directedness, and forward drive. In that sense, the theme from op. 2, no. 1 has come to represent an ideal example not simply because it corresponds to a generic formal plan, but also because it conveys a strong sense of forward propulsion that sharply contrasts with the more balanced form of the period. Small wonder, then, that theorists such as Caplin continue to present this theme as "perhaps the most archetypal manifestation of the *sentence* form in the entire classical repertory" (1998:9).

I suspect, however, there is another reason why the Beethoven theme has been so strongly privileged, a reason that has less to do with the actual theme itself than it does with the concept of the sentence in general. Unlike the period, the sentence is an extraordinarily malleable form; its very nature defies strict definition.[3] Few themes are designed with the tightness of the Beethoven model, but there are countless passages that fall under the general umbrella term "sentential."[4] This, perhaps, accounts for the *belatedness* of the concept. Whereas the period was recognized as a conventional form at least as early as A. B. Marx, the sentence was not defined as a distinct "theme type" until the early twentieth century, and did not enjoy widespread recognition in North American theory until quite recently.[5] One possible reason for this is that the sentence has only two *essential* elements: the short/short/long proportion and an ordered sequence of formal functions—presentation, continuation, and cadential.[6] Yet these two elements appear in so many different guises that it is often difficult to recognize them as related to a single formal type. Indeed, the sentence is so "loose" by its very nature that it practically demands a single, clear *locus classicus* to ground what is, in practice, an extraordinarily elusive concept. The Beethoven model provides such an anchor and offers a distinct pedagogical value: it reduces a highly variable form to a single ideal type. It thereby simplifies our understanding of the form by providing a template for compositional modeling and analytical observation.

What I argue, however, is that such a strategy ultimately masks significant complications in defining the form. It also limits the range with which

the form can be effectively utilized as an analytical tool. By defining the sentence in terms of a single, tightly-knit model, and associating it with an explicit forward-striving "Beethoven rhetoric," especially in contrast to the period, theorists have oversimplified some crucial aspects of sentence structure. In particular, there are a number of distinct subtypes that need to be brought out from under the shadow of the Beethoven model; this is the first step in recognizing the extraordinary potential of the sentence as a tool for musical analysis. I argue that sentences are best defined not against a single abstract ideal, but as manifestations of a common *compositional impulse,* one shared—perhaps unconsciously—by countless composers from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Though some manifestations of this impulse are quite idiosyncratic, others recur with enough frequency to be labeled as distinct types within the larger, fuzzy category of the sentence. The following section introduces some of these types. The final section of the paper then addresses questions concerning sentence limits and "failed" forms.

Sentence Types and the Problem of Normative Continuation

Most debates about musical form boil down to a single question: what is normative and what is not? Indeed, the greatest challenge in the identification of a new formal type is to define the terms of normativity. What usually happens? What do we expect to happen? When it comes to the sentence, the challenge of defining normativity is most acute when dealing with the concept of continuation.

From a hyper-rhythmic point of view, the sentence is best represented as a three-part gesture: short/short/long.[7] Yet when considered from the perspective of Caplin's formal functions, it makes more sense to define it in two distinct parts: a "presentation phrase" and "continuation phrase."[8] The first part, the presentation phrase, is defined by repetition; without the repetition of a basic idea, there can be no sentence. The second part, the continuation phrase, is less clearly defined. It is perhaps best understood in terms of a "drive toward cadence," but such directed motion may be achieved by a variety of means.

For the purposes of this paper, I will take the presentation phrase for granted. I will assume that all sentences begin with the statement of a short, basic idea (usually one to four measures) followed by one of three possible repetitions: exact (sometimes with slight variation), sequential (with the entire basic idea transposed to a new scale degree), or statement-response (according to some type of tonic-dominant alternation). These terms correspond, in general, to Caplin's definition in *Classical Form.* My only dis-

agreement with Caplin's terminology is that he restricts the possibilities of a presentation phrase by arguing that it must prolong a given tonic. This approach works to a certain extent within the context of Classical themes—Caplin's approach accounts specifically for the instrumental music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven—but it does not reflect the widespread use of the sentence in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music. To put it simply, the sentence, as it developed in the Baroque and Classical periods, was strongly tied to specific tonal dynamics, often with distinct Schenkerian implications. But tonality is not a *necessary* aspect of the form. Indeed, it is not hard to imagine a short/short/long proportion in which an idea is presented, repeated, and dissolved into continuation without any trace of common practice tonality (the opening eight-bar theme of the "Cradle Song" from Berg's *Wozzeck* is a good example).[9] Nevertheless, though the presentation phrase can be somewhat problematic, it is the continuation that deserves the most attention.

In a recent review of Caplin's book, Joel Galand assesses some problems associated with continuation. In particular, he cites the important distinction between the development and "mere continuation" of a basic idea (1999:154–56). Neither Schoenberg nor Ratz spoke of the presentation and continuation phrases of the sentence (these terms were first adopted by Caplin); rather, they spoke of the beginning of the sentence—the statement and repetition of an idea—and its subsequent development or liquidation. Not all sentences, however, feature a thematic development, and many introduce new material in their second half (usually mm. 5–8). As Galand points out, this reflects the opposition between *Entwicklung* and *Fortspinnung* found in Hans Mersmann's formal theory, a distinction that Galand relates to the difference between motivic development and simple continuation. In Galand's opinion, Caplin solves this problem by defining the continuation phrase of a sentence according to four different features that may or may not appear in any given continuation: motivic fragmentation, acceleration of harmonic change, increased rhythmic activity, and sequence. Thus, a continuation can introduce new material, without motivic development of the basic idea, but still convey continuation function through other processes, such as acceleration of harmonic change or sequence. For that reason, Caplin identifies the Mozart passage in example 2 as a sentence. Although it lacks a traditional "liquidation" of the basic idea, Caplin writes, "a sense of continuation function is nonetheless projected by the slight increase in harmonic and surface rhythmic activity" (1998:45–47).[10]

Another problem that Caplin addresses is the potential size of a continuation. How long can a continuation be extended before it is no longer a continuation? To what degree can it be cut short? Is there a normative length

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Example 2. Mozart, String Quartet in A Major, K. 464, second mvmt., mm. 1–8.

at all? Here, Caplin follows Schoenberg and Ratz in defining the sentence as an eight-bar model, adding the idea that "notated" measures often differ from what we actually hear—what Caplin calls "real" measures. Thus a 1+1+2 grouping in a slow tempo will frequently sound like a 2+2+4 grouping. In that sense, continuation phrases are normally four "real" measures long. The only exception to this is the legitimate sixteen-measure sentence, which has a four-measure, compound basic idea (itself involving a two-bar basic idea and a two-bar contrasting idea). In those cases, the continuation is eight measures long in order to balance the larger presentation. Caplin supports this premise by invoking the spectrum of tightness and looseness first developed by Schoenberg and Ratz. According to Caplin's model, tightly-knit sentences, such as the Beethoven theme, are characterized by "harmonic-tonal stability, a symmetrical grouping structure, form-functional efficiency, and a unity of melodic-motivic material" (1998:257). Loosely-knit sentences convey the opposite: "harmonic-tonal instability (modulation, chromaticism), an asymmetrical grouping structure, phrase-structural expansion, form-functional redundancy, and a diversity of melodic-motivic material" (1998:255). Thus any given sentence can be situated easily along the spectrum, either close to the ideal (the Beethoven model) or far away, in a looser sentential condition. In that case, passages that either extend or compress the normative length of a continuation are heard as relatively "loose." This then feeds into a larger formal perspective in which primary themes tend to be the most tightly-knit, secondary themes tend to be looser, and transition and development sections tend to be the most loosely-knit.

Caplin's model is thus quite comprehensive. Any sentential passage can be measured against his normative eight or sixteen-bar models and defined accordingly (either as more or less tightly-knit). Yet even within Caplin's highly effective system, certain issues are overlooked. One of the most sig-

nificant is what we might refer to as the "spectrum of differentiation." In the introduction to *Classical Form,* Caplin points out that his theory distinguishes grouping structure —"discrete time spans organized hierarchically in a work"—from formal function—the "harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic processes that are not necessarily the same as those that create the work's grouping structure." As he states, "function and group are often congruent, but this is not always the case" (1998:4). Internal grouping is especially significant in the context of the continuation phrase. Even within the Classical and early Romantic periods we can identify a variety of distinct sentence designs based largely, though not entirely, on the grouping structures of the continuation. Four such types are discussed below.[11]

The Sentence with a Dissolving Third Statement

The first type, the sentence with a dissolving third statement of the basic idea, is ubiquitous (see exx. 3a–3b). As we know from Schoenberg, the continuation of a sentence often involves a certain degree of motivic "liquidation," which he defined as a technique that "consists in gradually eliminating characteristic features, until only uncharacteristic ones remain" (1967:58). This is often achieved—as in the Beethoven theme from op. 2, no. 1—with motivic fragmentation, but it is also frequently expressed as an undifferentiated process of dissolution. Both examples 3a and 3b create cycles of repetition that ultimately break off toward cadence after the third statement. In the case of the Widmann example, there is an overall arch-like contour in the melody, a characteristic feature of many sentence designs. The Chopin example, on the other hand, features a descending $\hat{5}$–line in the melody, with static, exact repetition at the outset of the phrase. Nevertheless, in both cases, the continuation offers a sense of "release" from the preceding repetitive cycle. It is as if the opening statements attempt to set the music in motion, and the continuation fulfills this intention by breaking through toward cadence.

 This gesture is particularly effective as an opening gambit. Examples 4a–4c, for instance, all express the same basic gestural impulse despite vast differences in compositional style. In the case of the Beethoven and the Ligeti examples, the gesture is more or less independent from the rest of the piece; it introduces certain characteristic qualities of the subsequent music but remains separate as a pure, introductory gesture.[12] The Franck example, on the other hand, becomes the basis for a set of variations; one of the more fascinating aspects of the piece is the transformation of this simple introductory gesture into a number of more distinctly "thematic" statements. (Note that the Ligeti example demonstrates the degree to which sentence

Example 3a. Erasmus Widmann, "Magdalena," from *Der musikalischer Tugendspiel.*

Example 3b. Chopin, Nocture in F minor, op. 55, no. 1, mm. 1–8.

expression does not depend upon common practice tonality.[13])

Each of these examples highlights an important association between sentence types and syntactical function. As Caplin argues, just as the intrathematic functions of a given theme—presentation, continuation, and cadential—occur in a specific syntactical order, so too are themes within a movement organized according to specific interthematic functions, such as main theme, transition, subordinate theme, and closing section (1998:17). Caplin points out the fact that tightly-knit sentences occur most often as main themes, while "looser sentential functions" appear more often in transitional or subordinate contexts. Examples 4a–4c suggest, moreover, that certain types of sentences lend themselves more easily to specific syntactical functions.

Sentences with a Sentential Continuation

A second sentence type, slightly more differentiated, involves continuations

Example 4a. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in A Major, op. 2, no. 2, first mvmt., mm. 1–8.

Example 4b. Franck, *Variations symphoniques*, mm. 5–9.

Example 4c. Ligeti, String Quartet no. 1, *Vivace, capriccioso*, mm. 69–80.

Example 5a. Haydn, Piano Sonata in G Major, Hob. XVI/27, Finale, mm. 1–8.

Example 5b. Gilbert and Sullivan, *Iolanthe*, "Spurn Not the Nobly Born."

that are themselves structured as a mini-sentence, presenting an embedded short/short/long proportion (see exx. 5a and 5b). Though this second type often conveys the sense of "development" and thematic liquidation emphasized by Schoenberg and Ratz, this is not always the case. Nor does the first type always convey a sense of "mere continuation." On the contrary, these two possibilities are independent of the specific motivic processes that might take place within a given continuation.[14] A sentential continuation might introduce new material without motivic fragmentation, whereas the dissolving third statement might feature an extended motivic liquidation; again, the difference is in the grouping structures, not the specific formal processes.[15]

The presence of the familiar Beethoven theme in this category (ex. 1)

Example 6. Wagner, *Die Fliegende Holländer*, Overture, mm. 203–10.

reveals the basic problem with its status as an ideal type; in truth, it only represents one of several default options for continuation.[16] What makes this type particularly notable is its potential for an aggressive, accelerated drive to cadence, an option that Beethoven fully exploits. Though it is perhaps the most common continuation type, it is by no means the only one.[17]

This type also highlights the importance of the rhythmic proportion short/short/long. As many writers have suggested, there is something archetypal about this rhythm. Indeed, Alfred Lorenz, with his theory of *Barform* ([1924–33] 1966), argues that this proportion often pervades all levels of structure in German classical form. In a sentence with a sentential continuation, the proportion appears at two different levels. This elicits a rather complicated expression of formal functions. If mm. 5–8 of the Beethoven theme can be heard as a "mini-sentence," then mm. 5–6 would simultaneously convey presentation and continuation function, the former on a smaller level than the latter. Yet the existence of a "mini-sentence" in these measures cannot go unchallenged. No matter how "loose" sentences may appear, there are, of course, perceptual (and conceptual) boundaries in terms of size. Even if we disregard Schoenberg's implicit prioritization of eight-bar themes, it is impossible to define the sentence in meaningful terms if it includes drastically different sizes, whether larger or smaller than the eight-bar scheme. As Leonard Meyer writes, "just as one cannot simply increase the size of, say, a mosquito tenfold and still keep its functions and activities constant, so one cannot merely augment a musical pattern fourfold and yet maintain its functional relationships" (1980:195). Still, the internal recur-

Example 7. J. S. Bach, Fifth English Suite, Sarabande, mm. 1–8.

rence of the short/short/long proportion within examples 5a and 5b—even if not defined as a sentence in its own right—does underline the significance of this rhythm as a primary impulse in the articulation of the form.

Sentences with an "AABA" Design

A third type of sentence design, perhaps the most differentiated, involves continuations that are internally balanced and usually grouped as 2+2 (ex. 6). In such cases, the opening of the continuation often contrasts motivically with the basic idea, while the cadential portion restates the motivic characteristics of the basic idea. The overall result is an "AABA" structure, despite the larger, directed motion toward cadence.[18] The tune "Happy Birthday" is one of the most familiar examples in the vernacular, but examples abound in the art music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (such as the "Sailors' Song" from Wagner's *Die Fliegende Holländer*).[19]

In an eight-bar theme, such sentences convey an overall 2+2+2+2 metric grouping, despite the continuous harmonic motion toward cadence in the latter half of the theme. What makes such sentences particularly worthy of their own designation is that unlike the other two options for metric organization, these sentences tend to be reserved strictly for thematic material. The design has an almost periodic balance to it and thus cannot be easily incorporated into looser sentential regions like the other two types. It

is also particularly notable for its folk-like simplicity and is often reserved for vocal contexts. This type, however, has been largely ignored in theoretical texts, most likely because its balanced structure seems to resists the forward drive of the Beethoven model. When compared with the Beethoven theme, such themes appear more "periodic" than sentential.

The Sentence as *Fortspinnungtypus*

A fourth type, typically larger than the others and also quite differentiated, involves a sentence design that is best thought of as a particular kind of *Fortspinnungtypus*, a form defined by Wilhelm Fischer in the early twentieth century before Schoenberg conceived the sentence. According to Fischer, a typical Baroque *Fortspinnungtypus* involves three main parts: *Vordersatz*, *Fortspinnung,* and *Epilog.* To a degree, these three parts correspond to the three main formal functions of the sentence as defined by Caplin: presentation, continuation, and cadential. Indeed, Fischer's first example of a *Fortspinnungtypus*, from the Sarabande of Bach's Fifth English Suite, is a relatively standard eight-bar sentence (with a sentential continuation—see ex. 7).[20] The sentence and the *Fortspinnungtypus* are not equivalent, however.[21] Most importantly, Fischer does not specify that the *Vordersatz*—which would correspond to the presentation phrase—include both the statement and repetition of a basic idea. Thus many of his examples simply begin with an undifferentiated four-bar idea, followed by an extended sequence leading to a cadence.[22] Nevertheless, some sentences are organized in ways that invoke Fischer's concept as a result of the differentiation between an extended sequential continuation (or *Fortspinnung*), and a subsequent cadential section (or *Epilog*). Two famous examples are given below: the opening of Mozart's K. 545 (ex. 8a), and the *idée fixe* of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* (ex. 8b).

Despite the obvious differences in length and thematic character, these passages are designed in similar ways. They both present a relatively "closed" basic idea and repetition (in each case, the presentation phrase ends with a melodic repose on $\hat{3}$). Moreover, they each involve extended, sequential continuations that conclude, again, with weak melodic closure on $\hat{3}$ (m. 8 of the Mozart example; m. 31 of the Berlioz). Furthermore, each theme is closed off with a subsequent cadential section, though in the Berlioz theme, it is far more extended, and is itself organized as a sentence.[23]

The most obvious, distinguishing characteristic of this fourth sentence type is its length, which extends beyond the normative eight-bar model. For that reason, it is more easily incorporated into loosely-knit contexts than other sentence types. Many developmental passages and secondary themes,

Example 8a. Mozart, Piano Sonata in C Major, K. 545, first mvmt., mm. 1–2.

Example 8b. Berlioz, the *idée fixe* from *Symphonie fantastique*.

for instance, are structured with this type of sentential design.[24] It thus lends itself to specific interthematic functions within the context of the sonata. James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, for instance, discuss "sentences with dissolving continuations," in which the presentation phrase corresponds to the primary theme, and the "continuation-to-cadence" corresponds to the "transition-to-medial caesura" (Hepokoski and Darcy:forthcoming). In such cases, the transition is heard as "fully merged" with the primary theme. They cite mm. 1–12 of the Mozart K. 545 Piano Sonata as a classic example.

Naturally, in Caplin and Ratz's system, this last type would fall under the general category of "loosely-knit sentences," a fact with which I would agree. But the dichotomy between tightly- and loosely-knit forms, however useful, should not obscure the existence of alternative sentence types, especially when they are as common as those given above.

Each of the above examples represents a different manifestation of the same sentence impulse. If the Beethoven model serves as the representative of a single, ideal, tightly-knit form, and all other sentences are measured as either more or less "loose" in relation to that particular theme, we run the risk of misinterpreting how any given sentence relates to a larger backdrop of similar subtypes. The Mozart theme from K. 545 is not a distorted sentence, but one of many conventional manifestations of the same generic impulse. All of this suggests that the sentence is best recognized not as a rigid formal scheme, but as an extraordinarily protean formal gesture.

It is worth mentioning again that these four types are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. I have no intention of displacing the Beethoven model with an equally rigid—but more complex—group of ideal types. After all, the spectrum of differentiation is only one way of grouping sentences into different subtypes. We could also identify sentences in terms of conventional contour patterns or voice-leading structures (such as the $\hat{1}$–$\hat{7}$–$\hat{4}$–$\hat{3}$ pattern found in the presentation of many classical sentences).[25] Certain composers, moreover, tend to favor specific, idiosyncratic manifestations of the form. Mozart, for instance, often sets up conventional presentation phrases followed by a repetitive tonic affirmation in the continuation. The opening of the first movement of the *Jupiter* symphony (mm. 1–23) is an excellent example. The continuation of this passage (mm. 9–23) contradicts the sense of fragmentation, liquidation, and drive to cadence that we find in the Beethoven model, but such a theme is by no means unconventional in Mozart's compositional output; it simply represents another variant of the "sentential impulse."[26] Moreover, in two previous essays, I identified three different categories of sentence expression in the music

of Wagner, categories that were defined not in terms of a spectrum of differentiation, but according to their dramatic and rhetorical functions within the operas (2002/2003; 2003). What is important, then, is that any given sentence should not be understood solely in comparison with the Beethoven model, but also against a wide backdrop of conventional possibilities.

Sentence Limits, "Failures," and Listener Expectations

The above examples suggest that the sentence, in all its various manifestations, is best defined as the product of a generic compositional impulse, rooted in the loose combination of two "archetypal" gestures: the rhythm short/ short/ long and the formal functions presentation, continuation, and cadential. Moreover, since each of the above examples expresses the primary elements of the sentence—the proportional relationship and the form-functional relationship—they can all be included within the general definition of "sentence" without stretching the meaning of the term beyond analytical utility. Nevertheless, the question of sentence limits must be addressed. With such an explicitly loose definition, a great deal of music begins to fall under the general category of "sentential" without necessarily corresponding to any conventional manifestations of the form. This issue is intimately tied to the topic of listener expectations. At what point do listeners begin to hear a passage as "sentential," and what do they expect to happen in such a passage?

  This topic comes up indirectly in Schoenberg's discussion of the sentence in *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. After defining the "practice form"—with the theme from Beethoven's op. 2, no. 1 as the prime exemplar—he proceeds to consider a number of deviations from the norm. One of the examples he discusses is a theme from Schubert's Piano Sonata, op. 122 (ex. 9). Schoenberg devotes a paragraph of text to this example, first emphasizing the unusual cadence on VI and then raising the question of whether or not this truly is a sentence form.[27] Regarding mm. 9–12, he writes:

> These last four measures make the impression of codettas; if they are, the preceding eight measures might be considered a period. But analysis as a sentence is supported by the similarity of the two segments, m. 1–4 and m. 5–8, to tonic form and dominant form. This hypothesis would lead one to expect a continuation of eight measures. (1967:61)

Since this eight-measure continuation does not occur, Schubert's theme might best be heard as a failed sentence, one where the continuation is displaced with abrupt cadential tags.[28]

  According to Schoenberg's model, sentences begin with one of three

Example 9. Schubert, Piano Sonata in E♭ Major, op. 122, third mvmt., mm. 1–12.

possibilities for repetition: exact, sequential, or complementary (statement-response). Thus if we hear one of these repetitions at the beginning of a theme, as we do with the Schubert example, then a subsequent continuation must be expected.[29] Herein lies the challenge of sentence analysis: because these types of repetition are ubiquitous in Western music, an extraordinarily large number of passages would elicit sentence expectations without producing normative continuations. In order to hear a specific passage as a "failed sentence" or "failed continuation," then, we need to separate those types of repetition that initiate sentential expectations from those that do not. Creating a theory that would account for such a distinction, however, is nearly impossible: the degree to which a given repetition elicits sentence expectations is dependent not only on the unique context in which the repetition occurs, but on the specific features of a basic idea itself. If themes were analyzed entirely through the lens of a period/sentence dichotomy, then any passage that begins with the statement of a brief musical idea and some form of repetition would immediately fall under the category of "sentential," regardless of what happens next. Yet the statement and repetition of a musical idea is far too common in Western music to be associated entirely with a single formal concept such as the sentence. Obviously, many themes begin with a statement-repetition pattern without eliciting any connection to the sentence whatsoever.[30] The criteria for sentence "failure," then, are difficult to pin down.

Consider examples 10a and 10b, two themes from Schumann's *Kinderszenen*. Both of these examples begin with the exact repetition of a

Example 10a. Schumann, "Vom fremden Ländern und Menschen," mm. 1–8.

Example 10b. Schumann, "Bittendes Kind," mm. 1–8.

short, two-measure basic idea. The first, the famous opening theme from "Vom fremden Ländern und Menschen," proceeds with a relatively "normative" continuation—a dissolving third statement. The second example, the opening of "Bittendes Kind," simply moves on to yet another statement and repetition of material. Is this second example, then, a failed sentence? Do the opening measures engender a definite expectation for continuation?

One could argue that the lack of tonic prolongation in the "presentation" of the second example diminishes our expectation for normative continuation. This would be consistent with Caplin's definition of the sentence, which asserts that tonic prolongation is a necessary feature of "presentation function." In "Vom fremden Ländern und Menschen," the prolongation of the tonic in the opening measures (mm. 1–4) suggests that a more extended drive to cadence will follow in the subsequent measures (mm. 5–8). The extended dominant harmony of "Bittendes Kind," on the other hand, is, to a degree, "unanchored" to any specific phrase-structural expectations.

But is tonic prolongation truly necessary to create a sense of "presentation function?" Certainly the conventions of the sentence, as it developed throughout the Baroque and classical periods, were associated with specific tonal dynamics, and, in general, the "loosening" of tonal expression in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries involved a corresponding "loosening" of phrase-structure conventions. As discussed above, however, the sentence as a compositional impulse does not *depend* upon tonality. Indeed, the two primary elements of the form—the proportional relationship and the form functional relationship—can be suggested quite clearly without traditional tonal patterns (see ex. 4c above). From that logic, the opening of "Bittendes Kind" could certainly be heard from a sentential perspective. With such a hearing, the lack of a genuine continuation over the course of the piece reveals an "unresolved" formal process, a feeling that is enhanced by the lack of harmonic resolution (the opening dominant harmony is prolonged throughout the piece). Nevertheless, to speak of this example as a "failed sentence" would overemphasize the association between sentence structure and the generic "statement/repetition" relationship. Put simply, all sentences begin with a "presentation" (the statement and repetition of a short, basic idea) but presentation alone cannot be *equated* with sentence form.[31]

Nevertheless, the concept of "failed sentences" can be quite suggestive with regard to music analysis. A simple example from Beethoven's *Fidelio* is given below (ex. 11). This passage occurs toward the beginning of Act Two, as Rocco impatiently digs a grave for the doomed Florestan. Anticipating Pizzaro's arrival, Rocco presses Fidelio/Leonora to help him, saying, "Nur hurtig fort, nur frisch gegraben, es währt nicht lang, er kommt herein." Though the sentence that accompanies this statement is unusually distorted, it begins in a relatively conventional way: it opens with a 2+2 metric grouping and a typical statement-response repetition. The continuation, however, immediately cuts to a short cadential gesture, abruptly modulating to E minor. The effect underscores Rocco's impatience by eliminating any gradual process of liquidation.

A more modern and particularly suggestive example of sentence failure

Example 11. Beethoven, *Fidelo*, Act Two, Nr. 12, Duet.

Example 12. Viktor Ullman, Piano Sonata No. 7, Adagio, mm. 1–16.

can be found in the adagio of Viktor Ullmann's seventh piano sonata from 1944 (see ex. 12).[32] Ullmann studied briefly with Schoenberg from 1918 to 1919 and, as a result, may have been aware of the sentence as a theoretical construct. The theme in example 12 is constructed as a sixteen-bar palindrome. What makes the example unique, however, is that the first half of the theme is a relatively straightforward, eight-bar sentence; a two measure basic idea is repeated with slight variation, followed by what sounds at first like a conventional continuation, complete with motivic fragmentation, acceleration of harmonic rhythm, and the use of sequence. After a brief point of repose in m. 9, however, the theme begins to turn back on itself. As a result, the sense of continuation is reopened in m. 10, and, thus, the subsequent measures sound like yet another liquidation, not just of the basic idea, but of the entire sentence itself. All sentences have a certain self-destructive tendency, but in this case, liquidation is achieved in a very unusual manner.

This concept of "failed sentences" is also relevant to large-scale structures. Elsewhere, I analyzed passages in Wagner in terms of *Satzketten*, or "sentence chains," where sentential fragments—repetitions of two-bar units and short continuation modules—continually overlap without ever completing their tendencies toward liquidation (2003:189–209). In other words, each continuation module tends to give way to yet another repetition of

Figure 1. Sentence Elements, Options, and Common Types.

Essential Elements

Proportion:	**Short**	**Short**	**Long**	
Formal Functions (Caplin):	*Presentation*		*Continuation* ⟶	*Cadential*

Some Common Types

Dissolving 3rd Statement:	Short	Short	Long (undifferentiated) ⟶	Cadence
Sentential continuation:	Short	Short	(Short: Short:	Long)
AABA sentence:	Short (A)	Short (A)	**B**	**A'**
Fortspinnungtypus:	Short	Short	Sequential *Fortspinnung*	*Epilog*
		Vordersatz		

Internal Features

Common Features
- Based on "characteristic" material
- Short, usually two measures

Common Features
- Acceleration of harmonic change
- Fragmentation
- Sequence
- Increased rhythmic activity

Options
- Statement response
- Exact (slightly varied)
- Sequential

Options
- Half-cadence
- PAC
- IAC
- Deceptive
- Evaded

Interthematic
Rhetorical Functions: Introductory, Transitional, Thematic, Closing/Cadential

Matthew BaileyShea

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material. This technique has the potential to create an extraordinary buildup of tension over large spans of music, usually leading to an eventual release: an extended continuation that dissolves the prior tension of each preceding sentential fragment.[33] Such processes are common in the music of Wagner and Liszt, but can also be identified in Classical development sections as well.

Each of these cases, however, depends on an established context in which listeners would be aware—on some basic level—of what sentences are *supposed* to do. And as I have established above, this is quite complicated, given the many diverse possibilities for sentence expression even within the relatively restricted realm of tonal, tight-knit themes. All of this suggests that we need to adopt a more complex—and, hence, more analytically effective—understanding of the form. A tentative model is presented as figure 1. Here, the sentence is represented according to a variety of features, some of which are presented as essential elements (the first level), others of which exist as common default options. Naturally, the "internal features" and "essential elements" are derived from Schoenberg's initial discussion of the form and Caplin's more recent clarification. Added are the distinct possibilities for overall organization—the different types discussed above—and interthematic function (given at the bottom of the figure). As previously acknowledged, other common types could be added to this model, but the four presented here, based on a spectrum of differentiation, are perhaps the most salient.

It is worth remembering that Schoenberg first established the sentence as a "practice form" for beginner composers. And defining the sentence for compositional pedagogy is quite different from developing the concept as a tool for analysis. Whereas a single, primary example might suffice as a compositional model, a variety of possible options are necessary to understand the range—and limits—of the sentence as an analytical tool. Though it would be futile (and foolish) to attempt a comprehensive taxonomy of sentence types, it is important to recognize the sharp differences among the common manifestations of the sentence impulse. Every theorist who has written about the sentence in depth has presented and discussed multiple themes, but the primacy of the Beethoven model has implicitly defined it as the ultimate yardstick with which we measure "normativity." The sentence is a rich, complex, and elusive gesture in Western music and no single example—no matter how elegant in design—can account for its manifold realizations.

Notes

An early version of this paper was presented at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the Society of Music Theory in Columbus, OH. I am grateful to Patrick McCreless, David Clampitt, and my three anonymous readers for their comments and suggestions.

1. It is unclear exactly when Schoenberg first conceived the sentence as a formal paradigm. Webern discusses Schoenberg's concept of the form in lectures from 1932 and 1933, published as *The Path to the New Music* (1963:27,30–31) and Schoenberg himself began sketching ideas about the form in 1934, now published in *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique and Art of its Presentation* (1995:173–75). His clearest presentation of the sentence, however, appeared posthumously in *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (1967:20–23,58–63).

2. A number of Schoenberg's students used the first eight bars of Beethoven's op. 2, no. 1 to define the form, including Webern (1963), Ratz ([1951] 1968), Josef Rufer (1954), and Erwin Stein ([1962] 1989). This trend was then preserved in the more recent scholarship of writers such as Edward Cone (1968), Carl Dahlhaus (1978), Walter Frisch (1982), Janet Schmalfeldt (1991), and William Caplin (1998). In addition, recent theory textbooks have begun to introduce the sentence, using the Beethoven theme as a model. See Roig-Francoli (2003) and Laitz (2003).

3. Stein puts it simply: "the overall shape of the sentence is loose" ([1962] 1989:93). Stein's definition is limited, however, by his reliance on the Beethoven theme as a prototype.

4. The adjective "sentential" has seen widespread use in recent years, especially since Caplin's *Classical Form*. The term, however, can be traced at least as far back as Ratz ([1951] 1968:40), who refers to certain passages in Bach as *satzartig*.

5. The term "periode," of course, appears in many theoretical texts of the eighteenth century, most notably in Koch (1782–93). In most cases, however, it does not denote a specific theme type as much as a general syntactic unit (a complete passage that ends with a cadence). Thus two given periods could differ quite a bit in size and structure. The "belatedness" of the sentence is obvious from its absence in most theory texts on musical form in the last fifty years. Indeed, Schoenberg's concept did not spread to a wide audience until Carl Dahlhaus clarified the term in "Satz und Periode" (1978:16–26). And until Caplin's *Classical Form*, the term was never entirely secure in the collective musical vocabulary of English-speaking authors. A recent book on musical form, for instance, by Glenn Spring and Jere Hutcheson makes no mention of the sentence. Instead, examples that correspond to the form are defined as "asymmetrical periods" (1995:54).

6. Caplin uses the terms "presentation, continuation, and cadential" in his excellent work on formal functions (1998). In general, I agree with his descriptions and definitions of each term. My only point of disagreement involves the necessary limits of his definitions. In short, Caplin defines these terms specifically with regard to the instrumental music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and thus his terms do not necessarily apply to sentences in other contexts, especially the late nineteenth or twentieth century. The discrepancies between my model and his are discussed in more detail later in the paper.

7. To date there have been no significant studies on the historical origins of the sentence, but it is quite likely that the form developed out of various patterns in Renaissance and Baroque dance music (see ex. 3a, Erasmus Widmann's *Der musikalischer Tugendspiegel* [1613]). The proportional relationship, then, may have been the initial appeal of the form, separate to an extent from its later relationship with the developmental *Fortspinnung* techniques of Baroque instrumental music. This would correspond with Alfred Lorenz's association between

Barform and earlier dance types such as the Italian *Ballata,* represented by Lorenz in physical terms: "due piedi, una volta," or, "two steps and a leap." See Lorenz ([1924–33] 1966,3:185, 4:200). For a more extended account of the relationship between sentence and *Barform,* see Rothstein (1989:288–89) and BaileyShea (2003:83–91).

8. These terms are Caplin's, not Schoenberg's, but they represent the same division into two parts that Schoenberg favored; Schoenberg wrote simply of a "beginning" and a "completion." Erwin Ratz, on the other hand, suggests a three-part division, using the terms *Zweitakter, Wiederholung,* and *Durchführung* (2+2+4).

9. Obviously, our definitions of formal functions would need to be loosened in order to hear presentation, continuation, and cadential function in such cases; the different compositional syntax requires a more fluid conception of form-defining elements.

10. Caplin also presents this passage as an example of an "Expanded Cadential Progression" or "E. C. P." In this case, the bass initiates a cadential progression at the *outset* of the continuation instead of at the end of the continuation phrase. Caplin uses the label "continuation=>cadential" to identify such passages.

11. Naturally, this is not a comprehensive list of sentence possibilities; indeed, the sentence manifests itself in so many different ways that it would be nearly impossible to pin down all of the conventional subtypes within the general category of sentence design. Nevertheless, it is useful to recognize some of the more common options, especially those that challenge the archetypal status of the Beethoven model. In this case, examples are drawn from a wide range of historical contexts in order to best show the range with which these archetypes appear in Western music.

12. The Beethoven example recurs at the opening of the development and recapitulation but in each case it retains its introductory function; it is not developed as a theme in its own right.

13. Naturally, themes such as this are heard against the backdrop of earlier tonal models. Thus formal functions such as "presentation" and "cadential" are defined not by tonal procedures, as in the classical period, but by analogous musical gestures (statement, repetition, liquidation, etc.).

14. This assessment is consistent with Caplin's distinction between formal function and grouping structure.

15. Caplin presents examples of each of these first two types but does not explicitly set them apart as specific subtypes.

16. This formal perspective, including the concept of default options, is influenced by the Sonata Theory of James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy (1997; forthcoming).

17. Example 5b offers an interesting case in which the text has its own sentential rhythm and might thus be seen as an impetus for the sentence design in the music.

18. The bass in example 6 initiates a cadential progression, which Caplin would designate "continuation=>cadential," showing that the two formal functions overlap. For that reason, we can still designate such phrases as sentences; the bass motion toward cadence creates continuity on one level, while the motivic grouping creates a sense of differentiation (2+2). This contrasts with other AABA themes, such as Beethoven's famous "Ode to Joy," which do not project an overall continuation=>cadential function in the final two sections.

19. Caplin's example given above (ex. 2) is a rare case in which the continuation involves a 2+2 grouping without an overall AABA pattern.

20. Webern also identified this theme as a sentence (1963:27).

21. Caplin offers an extended account of the primary differences between the sentence and the *Fortspinnungtypus* (1986:255–57).

22. Many examples of such themes can be found in Baroque ritornellos, though Fischer restricts his prime examples to the Bach keyboard suites.

23. Meyer (1980) analyzes the Berlioz theme as an extension of a particular type of sentence design. Though he never actually uses the term "sentence," he identifies an archetype based on a 1+1+2 proportion with a generic voice-leading framework ($\hat{1}$–$\hat{7}$, $\hat{4}$–$\hat{3}$ etc.). Elements of this theory were later developed in Gjerdingen (1988) and explicitly associated with the sentence in Schmalfeldt (1991).

24. This form is similar, though not equivalent, to what Caplin, following Ratz, calls the "core" of the development. According to Caplin's model, development sections often involve two cores, both of which involve a model (usually 4 to 8 bars long), a sequence of that model, and fragmentation leading to cadence (1998:141–47).

25. The relationship between scale degree patterns and the sentence is discussed in Schmalfeldt (1991).

26. Consider the famous opening theme of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* for a similar, typically Mozartean sentence gesture.

27. With regard to the cadence on VI, Schoenberg writes, "were this not the work of a master one would be inclined to call it a weakness" (1967:61).

28. Schoenberg, however, never uses the term "failed sentence." In general, he praises any deviations from the practice form and considers them an artistic progress (ultimately relating to the strategy of developing variation found in Brahms). Caplin, too, does not specify "failed sentences," but he does identify failure in terms of formal function, such as the "failed consequent" (1998:88–89).

29. Paraphrasing the work of Leonard Meyer, Darcy writes that "in general, the literal or varied repetition of a musical motive or figure tends to create an anacrusis . . . two upbeats which lead to an expected downbeat unit or phrase" (1973:105).

30. A simple example among thousands is the opening theme from the Christmas carol "Silent Night."

31. Moreno (2000) presents an excellent overview of the perception of sequential repetition in the theories of Koch, Marx, and Reicha. None of these theorists associate the technique with any specific phrase structural convention (the sentence, of course, was not yet recognized as a distinct formal archetype) and their views are quite different with regard to the value of the technique as a compositional device.

32. Rachel Bergman, who brought this theme to my attention, discusses this piece in her dissertation (2001).

33. The idea of the *Satzkette* is strongly related to William Rothstein's concept of the "Stollen Process" (1989:296–97).

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