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## AN ALTERNATIVE FORMAL FUNCTION? JAMES WEBSTER'S ANTIPERIOD AND CLASSICAL THEMATIC DESIGN

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### Introduction

In his monograph on Haydn's *Farewell* Symphony, James Webster notes that 'a period whose consequent cadences off the tonic and hence is more "open" than the antecedent,' a formal unit that he terms an 'antiperiod' (Webster 1991: 44), has been little studied in the literature. This study seeks to remedy this relative neglect, proposing that this form-functional type, common in the mid-eighteenth century in a variety of designs at many different formal levels, influenced thematic-tonal procedures through to at least 1800. The study identifies two basic models: the parallel antiperiod, wherein the two phrases begin alike, and the contrasting antiperiod, where the second phrase develops from opening material or begins with new motivic content. Unlike the standard periodic model, the antiperiod is dynamic and open-ended, much like the sentence and sentence-like hybrids identified in William Caplin's theory of formal functions.

This study will then explore how the basic harmonic plan of the antiperiod can expand to encompass larger formal regions. The antiperiod can form a complete main theme as an expanded presentation phrase (the first half of a sentence) for which the subsequent transition provides continuation function. At an even larger level, the double statement of parallel material that typifies the antiperiod can comprise both main theme and transition for which the subordinate theme metaphorically acts as continuation.

This study, to be clear, does not seek to supplant Caplin's form-functional models. It seeks instead to display the underlying similarity of various open-ended theme-types (for instance, a modulating period, and a sentence that ends on the dominant) that receive different analytical labels in Caplin's theory. By subsuming all theme types in which the second phrase is more tonally open than the first phrase under Webster's broad category of antiperiod, the analyst can identify the diverse ways this potential theme-type plays out in the works of different composers, while at the same time acknowledging the underlying similarity of harmonic and cadential organisation.



## Caplin's Theory of Formal Functions: A Brief Summary

In the twenty-first century, many musicians have been introduced to Classical thematic models through Caplin's theory of formal functions, both in his 1998 study, *Classical Form*, and his subsequent writings that clarify and expand upon it (in particular, 'The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions' in 2004 and *Analyzing Classical Form* in 2013). Central to Caplin's theory is the categorisation of tight-knit theme-types, which are 'characterized by harmonic-tonal stability, cadential confirmation, unity of melodic-motivic material, efficiency of functional expression, and symmetrical phrase groupings' (Caplin 1998: 17), namely, the sentence, period and (rarely) small ternary. The first two types are virtual opposites regarding their motivic and cadential design: the sentence features immediate repetition of the initial basic idea followed by development (presentation-continuation), while parallel phrase beginnings, with contrasting motivic and cadential design (typically a half cadence for the opening phrase and a perfect authentic cadence for the closing phrase<sup>1</sup>) comprise the period (antecedent-consequent). Theme-types that blend the sentence and the period's cadential or motivic features (thus occupying the broad midpoint between the two formal models) Caplin labels as hybrids. For instance, a theme that begins as a period but continues as if it were a sentence is an antecedent-continuation hybrid, labelled according to the formal functions of its component phrases.

Caplin's models, especially his various hybrids, provide sufficient flexibility for analysing the vast majority of thematic designs, not only for the Classical period for which the theory was intended but also for the early Romantic period, where echoes and extensions of Beethoven's practice held sway. Adopting his terminology for the music of the mid-eighteenth century has been rather more problematic, however. The rapidly changing stylistic currents of this era, including J.C. Bach's Galant style, C.P.E. Bach's *Empfindsamer Stil*, the Baroque overtones of the still-active J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel, plus the *Stile Antico* of J.J. Fux, whose musical path (as Alfred Mann notes) briefly overlapped with the young F.J. Haydn in late 1730s Vienna (Mann 1970: 721), make the application of Caplin's theory challenging. In particular, the notion of opening material articulating a tight-knit form-functional unit can be markedly at odds with mid-eighteenth-century thematic practice: C.P.E. Bach and Joseph Haydn often favoured a rhapsodic, improvisatory approach to initial thematic design that resists categorisation according to Caplin's tight-knit models. If a musical work can begin with a greater variety of form-functional possibilities, it follows that subsequent material, the role of which in the musical discourse is typically to effect formal loosening, may display a far greater wealth of formal-thematic designs as well.

The wealth of musical possibilities, categorised by their harmonic closure (including, but not limited to, cadential closure) can be reduced to four different models in a two-phrase theme: Open-Closed, Closed-Closed, Open-Open and Closed-Open<sup>2</sup>. The first three models figure large in Caplin's theory, comprising non-modulating periods, certain sentence designs, and modulating periods, respectively<sup>3</sup>. The last model, Closed-Open, gets less attention, as it was a rare expedient in the Classical period (a sentence that begins with tonic prolongation and ends with a half cadence is the only common manifestation<sup>4</sup>). The Closed-Open design (Webster's antiperiod), however, was a frequently used thematic strategy in the mid-eighteenth century. This study will focus on different manifestations of the Closed-Open thematic-cadential type in mid-to-late-eighteenth-century style and explore the ramifications of how this type plays out at a variety of formal levels in the hands of various composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, J.C. Bach, and C.P.E. Bach. It will also demonstrate how the rhapsodic, developmental character of this design has echoes in many of the tight-knit themes from the late Classical period for which Caplin created his theory of formal functions.

## The Closed-Open Theme Type and the Parallel Antiperiod

One reason for the relative neglect of the antiperiod in the scholarly literature (as Webster ruefully noted) stems from its idiosyncratic form-functional design, since it combines the parallel phrase-member structure of the period (basic idea-contrasting idea) with the dynamic tonal-directional character of the sentence<sup>5</sup>. Though Caplin refers to such a theme-type as a 'reversed period'<sup>6</sup>, its trajectory more closely resembles an open-ended sentence that terminates on (or modulates to) the dominant. In Heinrich Christoph Koch's terminology from his *Versuch Einer Anleitung Zur Composition*, such a theme would consist of a *Grundabsatz* (a phrase ending on the tonic) followed by a *Quintabsatz* (a phrase ending on the dominant)<sup>7</sup>, effecting a gradual opening of the tonal space within the theme itself.

The underlying similarity of the antiperiod and the sentence (or sentence-like hybrid) from Caplin's theory of formal functions becomes evident if one compares a pair of analytically comparable main themes from early Haydn. The first excerpt, from Haydn's String Quartet in C major, Opus 1 No. 6 (Ex. 1a), is a particularly elegant example of an antiperiod, the phrases of which begin exactly alike (*Grundabsatz*



followed by *Quintabsatz*). This quartet, dating from the late 1750s, follows what Poundie Burstein terms a ‘standard Galant opening gambit’ (Burstein 2020: 107), as it presents a basic idea and contrasting idea within a phrase that ends with a perfect authentic cadence (PAC) followed by a reprise of this material that leads to a half cadence (HC).

Remarkably, one could reverse the two phrases of this theme to create a convincing and conventional periodic design (*Quintabsatz* followed by *Grundabsatz*). Contrary to Caplin’s ‘reversed period’ terminology, however, such a reversal is seldom musically possible: particular details of the constituent parts usually preclude a simple swapping of the two phrases (Caplin 2013: 508). The second phrase typically features harmonic intensification, or a speeding of surface or harmonic rhythm: reversing the phrase order in a theme of this type would result in a sense of musical anticlimax.

Let us consider, for comparison, the main theme from Haydn’s Sonata in D major, Hob. XVI: 14, finale (Ex. 1b). Like the opening measures of Opus 1 No. 6, this theme has the melodic-motivic content and harmonic goals of the antiperiod: Burstein, accordingly, following Koch, labels the opening phrases as *Grundabsatz* followed by *Quintabsatz*<sup>8</sup>. The only difference is the absence of a cadence at the first phrase’s conclusion. This theme’s status as an antiperiod is beyond question, however: Webster’s deliberately broad definition of this theme-type does not mandate cadential articulation at its midpoint. This thematic design is additionally consonant with Caplin’s theory of formal functions (if a bit problematic) as a sentence-like hybrid: the opening phrase is a compound basic idea, fundamentally a presentation phrase made up of two contrasting phrase members rather than a twice-stated basic idea (Caplin 1998: 45). The motivically similar second phrase, by all appearances a misplaced antecedent phrase like the second phrase of Opus 1 No. 6, would follow, however uncomfortably, as a continuation phrase<sup>9</sup>.

This type of open-ended thematic organisation rivalled the standard periodic theme-type with the normative HC and PAC cadential goals as an opening model for multiple mid-eighteenth-century composers. Nor does its use derive from a single composer or geographical location: composers as stylistically diverse and geographically separate as Domenico Scarlatti<sup>10</sup>, working in isolation in Spain, and Johann Christian Bach, whose reputation was secured in England, occasionally used the antiperiod as an initiating theme type. (This opening gambit may stem from the desire to fuse the open-ended effect of the Baroque head-and-*Fortspinnung* design with the periodic melodic design and relative phrase-structural clarity of mid-eighteenth-century Galant style<sup>11</sup>).

A pair of examples from J.C. Bach’s keyboard sonatas will serve as illustration. We will begin with the minuet from his Sonata in B-flat major, Opus 5 No. 1 (Ex. 2), published in 1765, three years after his move to London, England. This movement, like the Haydn string quartet movement discussed above, begins with a concise eight-measure theme, the cadential plan of which reverses the HC-PAC norm.

Unlike Haydn’s Opus 1 No. 6, in which the second phrase begins with an exact reprise of the first, J.C. Bach varies the basic idea’s return, melodically, harmonically and texturally, in measures 5–6. Alterations notwithstanding, the rhythmic profile of the melody is virtually identical to its original presentation, marking this phrase member as a varied repeat of measures 1–2 rather than a continuation-like fragmentation and development of it. The comparable motivic-cadential strategies in Haydn’s and J.C. Bach’s themes suggests a similarity of musical aims in a more general sense: by beginning with an antiperiod, both composers sought to create motivic integration between opening and closing phrases, while still creating an open-ended conclusion that would readily permit further continuation.

A later example, J.C. Bach’s Sonata in A major, Opus 17 No. 5, first movement (published ca. 1780), illustrates an intriguing variant of the antiperiod design in its main theme (Ex. 3). If one considers solely the melodic content of this passage, measures 1–4 form a basic idea-contrasting idea module. Since measures 5–6 almost exactly duplicate measures 1–2, the opening gesture’s status as a basic idea is confirmed. Measures 7–8 stand, moreover, as a slightly simplified version of measures 3–4 (most especially regarding the near-identical left-hand parts in the bass), suggesting that this material functions as a contrasting idea.

The anomalous close in measure 4 muddies the analytical waters, however. J.C. Bach surely could have supported the upper-voice return to the tonic with a V–I bass support to articulate a PAC, much as he had in Opus 5 No. 1. He chose, however, to evade the cadence in the bass by supporting the leading tone with an inverted dominant seventh harmony and delaying the arrival of scale degree 1 in the bass until the third beat. The absence of a cadence at the theme’s midpoint thereby creates a close affinity with a sentence-like hybrid design. According to Caplin, in the absence of a concluding cadence in measure 4, the opening phrase would comprise a compound basic



**Example 1a.** Haydn, String Quartet in C major, Opus 1 No. 6, first movement, measures 1–8: parallel antiperiod (consequent-antecedent)

**Example 1b.** Haydn, Sonata in D major, Hob. XVI: 14, finale, measures 1-10: parallel antiperiod as sentence-like hybrid



**Example 2.** J.C. Bach, Piano Sonata in B-flat major, Opus 5 No. 1, Finale (minuet), measures 1–8: parallel antiperiod (consequent-antecedent) as main theme

Consequent

Basic idea (Motive x twice)      Contrasting idea

PAC

Antecedent

Basic idea (Motive x' twice)      Contrasting idea 2

HC

**Example 3.** J.C. Bach, Sonata in A major, Opus 17 No. 5, first movement, measures 1–10: parallel antiperiod with evaded cadence

Consequent (Compound basic idea)

Antecedent (Continuation)

(evaded cadence)      HC



idea (Caplin 1998: 61). The next phrase, due to its increased chromaticism and open-ended conclusion on an HC, would suffice as a continuation phrase (granted, one that eschews fragmentation of the basic idea from measures 1–2 in favour of a near-exact restatement of it). Retaining the parallel phrase beginnings of the antiperiod, J.C. Bach nonetheless effects a more dynamic thematic profile through cadence avoidance in measure 4, as the musical content opens up gradually into the transition that follows.

Though the use of an initial antiperiod by J.C. Bach in ca. 1780 would count as a historical nod to the Galant style of his formative years, this theme-type persisted into the nineteenth century, serving as a viable alternative to the vastly more common sentence and period. The finale of Beethoven’s Violin Sonata in A major, Opus 30 No. 1 (written in 1802), a theme and variations movement, begins with an antiperiod that features nearly parallel phrase beginnings (Ex. 4).

This unit, the opening half of a simple binary theme, evokes a straightforward periodic design, the formal simplicity of which allows plenty of room for further development when the variations ensue. Though this antiperiod seems simply to reverse the cadential roles of the standard periodic model (as we have seen above in Haydn’s Opus 1 No. 6), it would be misleading to refer to its phrases as a consequent followed by an antecedent. Beethoven gently syncopates the basic idea in measures 5–6, supporting it with a more elaborate harmonic progression. These subtle but significant changes create a musical segment that develops the opening material in the manner of a continuation phrase rather than a misplaced antecedent<sup>12</sup>. With his rethinking of prior material, Beethoven places this theme squarely in the realm of the sentence-like hybrid (Caplin’s compound basic idea plus continuation), despite its clear affinity with the mid-eighteenth-century antiperiod model.

**Example 4.** Beethoven, Violin Sonata in A major, Opus 30 No. 1, third movement, measures 1–8: parallel antiperiod initiates Theme and Variations

The image displays a musical score for measures 1-8 of Beethoven's Violin Sonata in A major, Opus 30 No. 1, third movement. The score is presented in two systems, each with a violin (Vln.) and piano (piano) part. The first system, labeled 'Compound basic idea (Consequent)', covers measures 1-4. It features a 'Basic idea' in measures 1-2 and a 'Contrasting idea' in measures 3-4. The piano part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The second system, labeled 'Continuation (Antecedent)', covers measures 5-8. It features a 'Basic idea (varied)' in measures 5-6 and a 'Contrasting idea (new)' in measures 7-8. The piano part continues with a similar accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p dolce*, *cresc.*, and *sf*, and structural annotations like '(PAC)' and 'HC'.





Another telling feature in this excerpt is the putative authentic cadence in measure 4. In reading this theme as a sentence-like hybrid, Caplin specifically labels this point as ‘no cadence’, since the first phrase of a sentence or sentential hybrid, by definition, cannot cadence (Caplin 1998: 128, Ex. 7.2). Though the  $V^7-I$  harmonic progression that characterises the PAC is surely present, the syncopated delaying of the cadential goal in the bass attenuates the sense of closure<sup>13</sup>. Beethoven, like Haydn and J.C. Bach before him, combines the parallel melodic openings that typify the period with the developmental character of the sentence, creating a theme-type that effectively occupies the middle ground between the two models.

## The Contrasting Antiperiod and Sentence-like Themes

The antiperiod may suggest a misplaced consequent followed by a similarly misplaced antecedent, as the previous examples attest. It is more typical, however, for this theme-type to resemble motivically a sentence, wherein the second phrase begins with a mere motivic recollection of the first phrase’s basic idea or with new material altogether. Recalling earlier terminology, one could call this model a *contrasting antiperiod*, analogous to Douglass Green’s ‘contrasting period’ (Green 1979: 66), which we can define as an antiperiod, the second phrase of which begins differently from the first<sup>14</sup>. This design, as we have seen, is common around the middle of the eighteenth century, an era in which many opening themes prolong the tonic in their initial phrase, then move outward to the dominant in the second phrase.

A common opening phrase design, found in many works of C.P.E. Bach, Haydn and other composers active around the mid-eighteenth century, involves terminating with a Prinner close<sup>15</sup>. As a riposte to an initiating gesture, this concluding device comprises a scale degree 6–5–4–3 descent in the melody, accompanying a scale degree 4–3–2–1 motion in the bass. Composers often made the Prinner schema more harmonically conclusive by adding the dominant in the bass between scale degree 2 and the goal tonic<sup>16</sup>, creating the outer voice pattern of the imperfect authentic cadence (IAC)<sup>17</sup>. The opening theme of the slow movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 42 in D major (1771), known well enough to be cited in Koch’s *Versuch*<sup>18</sup>, will serve as illustration (Ex. 5).

This theme, following Caplin’s theory, can be classified as a sentence-like hybrid (specifically, compound basic idea plus continuation), as the second phrase develops from the opening phrase rather than simply restating it. Harmonically, the apparent IAC in measure 4 (anomalous for the sentence’s opening phrase, which, by definition, does not end with a cadence) can be easily discounted: the cadential effect of the Prinner close in measure 4 serves as an IAC of limited cadential scope, i.e. a seeming cadence that lacks meaningful form-functional weight<sup>19</sup>. (Haydn’s placement of the phrase’s harmonic goal on the least accented beat further attenuates its cadential effect.) The resemblance of this closing gesture to the beginning of Hob. XVI: 14 is noteworthy: but, for the offbeat skip to scale degree 5 in the bass, the passage from Symphony No. 42 (cited above) would be incontrovertibly non-cadential.

A similar Closed-Open thematic design, found throughout the Classical period, begins with a statement-response opening gesture, a typical design for a sentence’s presentation phrase (Caplin 1998: 39), followed by a modulating continuation (or consequent) phrase. One common harmonic plan for a statement-response, though prolongational ( $I-V$ , then  $V-I$ ), can syntactically resemble an IAC at its conclusion<sup>20</sup>, whereas the second phrase can cadence in the dominant rather than merely on it. The rondo finale of Haydn’s Sonata in D major, Hob. XVI: 37 (ca. 1780) illustrates such a design with an initial modulating sentence that initiates a rounded binary A section (Ex. 6). The opening phrase is an archetypal statement-response (harmonically featuring a  $I-vii^{\circ 6}$  progression answered by  $V^7-I$ ).

The harmonic content suggests an IAC in measure 4, but the placement within the form-functional context confirms that this harmonic close is of limited cadential scope. The second phrase, though resembling the first in its melodic rhythm, is different enough melodically and harmonically to complement the opening measures as a continuation phrase rather than a misplaced antecedent. Haydn, here, modulates fleetingly to the dominant, creating the requisite off-tonic ending characteristic of Webster’s antiperiod model.



**Example 5.** Haydn, Symphony No. 42 in D major, second movement, measures 1–8: contrasting antiperiod (compound basic idea plus continuation)

Compound basic idea                      Continuation

Con sord.                      *tr*

(Strings) *p*

IAC? (Prinner)                      HC

**Example 6.** Haydn, Sonata in D major, Hob. XVI: 37, finale, measures 1–8: contrasting antiperiod as sentence-like hybrid theme

Compound basic idea                      Continuation=>Cadential

Basic idea (statement)    Contrasting idea (response)

*p*

IAC (limited scope)                      HC (as PAC/V)

COMPOUND BASIC IDEA                      CONTINUATION=>CADENTIAL

Basic idea (statement)    Contrasting idea (response)

*p*

IAC (limited scope)                      HC (as PAC/V)

This thematic-cadential strategy was not exclusive to Haydn in these years. The slow movement of Muzio Clementi's Sonata in B-flat major, Opus 10 No. 3, published in 1783, proceeds similarly (Ex. 7). The opening phrase is a statement-response module: Clementi balances the I–V harmonic underpinning of the statement with a V<sup>7</sup>–I harmonic riposte in the response. (As with Ex. 6, we can discount the apparent IAC in measure 4 as having limited cadential scope, thus conforming to Caplin's assertion that the first phrase of a sentence does not end with a cadence.) The continuation phrase effects a standing on the dominant, though measure 7 (in which Clementi withholds the bass part) provides enough of an implication of tonic harmony for measure 8 to serve as an HC arrival in measure 8, rather than a continuation of dominant harmony throughout.



**Example 7.** Clementi, Sonata in B-flat major, Opus 10 No. 3, second movement, measures 1–8: contrasting antiperiod as presentation (statement-response) plus continuation

Presentation Continuation

Statement Response

*p* *sf* *p* *sf* *p* *pp*

IAC (limited scope) HC

PRESENTATION CONTINUATION

Statement Response

*p* *sf* *p* *sf* *p* *pp*

IAC (limited scope) (I) HC

## Antiperiod as Opening Segment of Large-Scale Forms

Probably the most analytically provocative feature of the Closed-Open theme type is its ability to be a component part of larger formal spans. Even when an antiperiod forms a complete theme, its off-tonic ending suggests that it is merely the initial stage in a process that continues with subsequent sections. Using Janet Schmalfeldt's 'form as process' terminology (i.e. the 'concept of becoming'<sup>21</sup>), we can say that an antiperiod, in retrospect, can become an expanded antecedent phrase or the first half of a sonata exposition once the listener has heard it in its larger context.

One such design involves using an antiperiod as the initial gesture of an expanded thematic design such as a 16-measure (or longer) sentence or period. The slow introduction of Haydn's Symphony no. 92 in G major (*Oxford*) provides a good illustration. Haydn begins with two melodically parallel phrases, the second of which finishes more emphatically off tonic than the first: Webster accordingly describes this opening unit as an antiperiod ([Webster 1991: 167](#)). This eight-measure unit seems formally incomplete, however, suggesting a twice-stated opening gesture rather than a complete theme. Caplin therefore labels these measures as an expanded presentation phrase, to which the following contrasting four-measure unit adds a continuation phrase, completing this initial idea as a 12-measure sentence<sup>22</sup>.

The antiperiod as initiating unit of a longer theme is a formal expedient often found in minuets or other dance movements. Beethoven's Sonata in E-flat major, Opus 7, third movement, is an example in which an antiperiod initiates the first half of a binary-form scherzo ([Ex. 8](#)). The 24-measure span encompasses an eight-measure opening idea that ends on the dominant, followed by a second parallel segment spanning 16 measures that goes one step further, actually modulating to the dominant. The initial eight measures, in and of themselves, display a contrasting antiperiod design: Beethoven pairs an opening phrase that has a PAC as its harmonic goal with a second phrase that fragments preceding material and terminates with an HC, creating the Closed-Open harmonic design that exemplifies Webster's antiperiod model. When the next formal unit (measure 9ff.) follows with a varied repeat of measures 1–4, this opening eight-measure segment now serves, in retrospect, as an expanded antecedent phrase for which measures 9–24 complete the unit as an even more greatly expanded modulating consequent.

**Example 8.** Beethoven, Sonata in E-flat major, Opus 7, third movement (minuet), measures 1–24: contrasting antiperiod as expanded antecedent phrase

Antecedent (as contrasting antiperiod)

Presentation Continuation

*p dolce*

PAC (limited scope) HC

Consequent

Presentation Continuation

*pp*

*sf*

*sf*

*sf*

PAC, B-flat major

From a form-functional standpoint, this theme is non-problematic: it is a compound theme (a variant of the 16-measure period) in which two smaller, motivically related thematic units have the character of an expanded antecedent followed by an expanded consequent (Caplin 1998: 65). These units, taken separately, each suggest a sentence design (presentation plus continuation): the opening contrasting antiperiod conforms to Caplin’s sentence model if the PAC that concludes the opening phrase is designated as having limited scope.

An antiperiod can initiate still longer formal spans, such as the main theme and transition of a sonata exposition. Since many mid-eighteenth-century compositions begin with a brief tonic affirmation followed by an extensive spinning-out (thus recalling a head-and-*Fortspinnung* vestigial Baroque design), the contrasting antiperiod, writ large, is a common feature in sonata-form movements from this era. The finale of C.P.E. Bach’s Sonata in E minor, Wq. 49 No. 3, from the Württemberg Sonatas (written 1742–1744) illustrates how this theme type plays out over multiple formal spans (Ex. 9).

Measures 1–13 display the same Closed-Open design that we have seen in previous excerpts. The onset of new material in measures 6–13 marks the theme-type as a contrasting antiperiod: reminiscent of the example from Haydn’s Symphony No. 42, but somewhat irregular in phrase length and discursive in motivic design. The first 13 measures fit Caplin’s theory of formal functions as an anomalous sentence: the opening phrase features a four-measure tonic prolongation (ending with a weakly defined IAC), the second half of which returns in measures 5–6. C.P.E. Bach elides this presentation-like phrase with a continuation in measures 6–13 that begins with model-sequence based on a parallel tenth linear interval pattern and ends with an HC. Had he continued with transition material, the main theme of measures 1–13 would have comprised a sentence. The subordinate key’s onset in measure 14, however, marks this initial passage as



**Example 9.** C.P.E. Bach, Sonata in E minor, Wq. 49 No. 3, third movement, measures 1–17: contrasting antiperiod as main theme→transition

main theme plus transition: the presentation phrase (measures 1–6) serves as the main theme, while the continuation phrase (measures 6–13) follows as a non-modulating transition, completing a main theme→transition blended formal unit<sup>23</sup>.

Mozart proceeded similarly in a number of his early works, using a contrasting antiperiod to initiate a main theme→transition formal span. The opening measures of his String Quartet in G major, K. 156, written in late 1772, is representative of his use of this strategy (Ex. 10). Mozart begins with a statement-response phrase (measures 1–8), ending with an IAC of limited scope. He follows this segment with new material in measures 9–18, completing an 18-measure sentence-like design that ends on an HC. As the subordinate theme follows immediately in measure 19, the opening segment must comprise both main theme (the initial statement-response module) and transition (the continuation phrase that ensues).

As we have seen from the preceding two excerpts, the contrasting antiperiod in its expanded form lends itself readily to reinterpretation as a main theme→transition blended formal unit (with the main theme becoming transition). A parallel antiperiod, with a similar expansion, can serve the same formal role: Caplin briefly discusses such a design in the first movement of Mozart’s Violin Sonata in C major, K. 403, first movement (Caplin 2013: 319–20). The adagio third movement of Haydn’s String Quartet in E-flat major, Opus 17 No. 3 (1771) is a particularly clear manifestation of this strategy (Ex. 11). This work’s opening segment (measures 1–6) concludes fully on a PAC, thereby serving as a misplaced consequent phrase, whereas the following segment (measures 7–12) concludes cadentially on the dominant, complementing it as an equally misplaced antecedent phrase. Measures 1–6, given the slow tempo, are of sufficient scope to serve as a complete, albeit truncated, main theme (forming a concise sentence design), making the parallel segment of measures 7–12 a non-modulating dependent transition<sup>24</sup>. Here, the antiperiod serves a different function globally as a blended formal unit, encompassing the entire first half of a sonata exposition.

The motivic shape of the main theme-transition from Opus 17 No. 3 suggests that the formal process is as yet unfinished, waiting for the subordinate theme to complete it. With this work in particular, the sonata exposition spans over two minutes in performance, so hearing it as a single formal unit is prohibitive. If its components are of sufficient brevity, however, an antiperiod could indeed function as an



**Example 10.** Mozart, String Quartet in G major, K. 156, first movement, measures 1–22: contrasting antiperiod as main theme→transition

expanded presentation phrase, forming the main theme plus transition region of a sonata exposition, with the subsequent thematic region effecting completion by adding a complementary form-functional unit. The dual statement of parallel material that can characterise the antiperiod would serve as basic idea (Koch's *Grundabsatz*) followed by basic idea repeated (Koch's *Quintabsatz*), forming an expanded presentation function. Following James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, we can refer to such an expanded formal unit as a Grand Presentation. The remainder of the exposition (subordinate theme plus codetta) would then follow logically as a Grand Continuation<sup>25</sup>. The finale of Haydn's Symphony No. 1 in D major, written ca. 1757, will serve as an example, demonstrating how an antiperiod, and the formal processes it sets in motion, can dominate an entire (if brief) sonata exposition (Ex. 12).

This finale, which concludes Haydn's first essay in the symphonic genre, is a quicksilver movement in presto tempo, the formal structure of which can be profitably read as R=2N wherein two notated measures are equivalent to one real measure for analysis purposes<sup>26</sup>. The cadential and motivic processes in the opening 15 measures exactly mirror the main theme→transition module from Opus 17 No. 3. The movement's opening phrase (measures 1–6) is a single tonic prolongation, introduced by an extended arpeggio upbeat. Despite the PAC that concludes the unit, it seems altogether too brief to comprise a complete main theme (especially considering that six notated measures are analogous to a three-measure span from a form-functional standpoint). One would thus see this tonic arrival as having limited cadential scope and look to the subsequent material for form-functional completion.

**Example 11.** Haydn, String Quartet in E-flat major, Opus 17 No. 3, third movement (adagio), measures 1–12: parallel antiperiod as main theme plus transition

Main theme (Consequent)

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Cello

PAC

Transition (Antecedent)

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

HC  
(sub. theme follows in m.13)

Measures 7–10 form a matched pair with measures 1–4, suggesting a two-phase periodic structure. After the addition of new, more rhythmically active material, this second phrase comes to rest on the dominant, executing an HC in measure 15. Haydn’s procedures recall Webster’s antiperiod design thus far, with measures 7–15 forming an expanded (misplaced) antecedent (with a three-measure extension to provide space for development and an increase in energy) to the putative consequent of measures 1–6. When this antecedent then modulates to the dominant, the opening 15 measures can be understood in retrospect as a main theme→transition blended formal unit.

The transition continues in the following segment: measures 15–21 complete the modulation, concluding with a PAC in the dominant. (This rare, but not unprecedented, cadence type is Hepokoski and Darcy’s ‘third level default’ for a transition’s tonal goal<sup>27</sup>.) The new rhythmically active material marks this segment, located in the middle of the transition, as the beginning of a Grand Continuation that complements the Grand Presentation of measures 1–15. (In retrospect, measures 1-6 function as an expanded basic idea, and measures 7–15 as its varied and expanded repeat.) Measures 15–26 feature the developmental character of a continuation phrase, blending seamlessly with an expanded cadential progression in measures 27–32.

The modulation to A major having been accomplished, Haydn concludes the exposition with a brief subordinate theme (albeit distinctly closing in character) that articulates a compact sentence design. Haydn introduces a new basic idea in measures 21–4, followed by its partial restatement in measures 25–6. This abbreviated second statement dissolves into a continuation phrase, as a forte explosion in the full orchestra in measure 27 interrupts the basic idea at its midpoint. This phrase, an expanded cadential progression, increases in rhythmic activity as it leads to a confirming PAC in the subordinate key, A major. In essence, much like similar open-ended eighteenth-century thematic designs (for instance, the sentence that ends on an HC or the modulating first half of a binary-form composition), the antiperiod that opens the finale of Haydn’s Symphony No. 1, though a discrete unit in and of itself, serves as an initiating formal unit for a considerably larger and musically complex thematic-harmonic span.



**Example 12.** Haydn, Symphony No. 1 in D major, finale, measures 1–32: antiperiod (main theme→transition) as Grand Presentation

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with labels for thematic elements and structural functions:

- System 1 (Measures 1-10):** Labeled "Main theme" and "Presentation". The first measure is marked *f*. The system ends with "====>Transition" and "Continuation". The label "PAC (limited scope)" is placed below the system.
- System 2 (Measures 11-16):** Labeled "HC". The first measure is marked *f*. The system ends with "(simile)".
- System 3 (Measures 17-24):** Labeled "====>Cadential" and "Subordinate theme (Closing?)". The first measure is marked *p*. The system ends with *f*. The label "(to A major...)" is placed below the first measure, and "PAC, A major" is placed below the system.
- System 4 (Measures 25-32):** Labeled "PAC, A major". The first measure is marked *p*, and the second measure is marked *f*.



A decorative header image featuring musical notation on a staff, including notes, rests, and clefs, set against a light green background with a subtle pattern of musical symbols.

## Conclusion

Since Caplin designed the analytical models for his *Formenlehre* approach with the late Classical period in mind, it is not surprising that their application to thematic designs from around 1750, such as the antiperiod, can be challenging. This analytical challenge, to be certain, does not imply that these earlier thematic designs are somewhat lacking in comparison to how the mature Haydn and Mozart employed them in the final quarter of the eighteenth century. Such a view still pervaded analytical thought on occasion in the mid-to-late twentieth century: consider Charles Rosen's pejorative remarks concerning what he calls 'limping tonic cadences' in a number of Haydn's main themes from the early 1770s ([Rosen 1997: 149–50](#)).

These negative appraisals are unwarranted: the antiperiod, with its open-ended character, provided composers of the mid-eighteenth century with a rich and complex set of musical possibilities with which to begin a composition. There are many formal locations (e.g. the first half of a binary form or the main theme→transition region of a sonata exposition) where a confirmation of the home key followed by a tonal departure is not merely common but expected, a harmonic plan at which the antiperiod excels. Haydn and Mozart, whose mature works come from a slightly later period, simplified and streamlined the open-ended theme types they inherited from the prior generation, with increased thematic clarity compensating for the relative lack of variety of design.

Since various stylistic strands coexisted in the decades around 1750, composers explored multiple means of combining motivic and harmonic-cadential shape to articulate this harmonic plan. The quasi-improvisatory move from one tonal region to another that C.P.E. Bach favoured, often resulting in an expansive contrasting antiperiod encompassing both main theme and transition, is one such strand. A concise parallel antiperiod, a regular design often found in minuets, rondos and theme and variation forms, consisting of a pair of four-measure parallel phrases with the cadential plan reversed from the standard period, is another such strand, found on occasion in the music of J.C. Bach, Haydn, Clementi and the young Mozart, with Beethoven's Opus 30 No. 1 (discussed above) as a late manifestation.

As this study has sought to illustrate, many different form-functional units can create this Closed-Open harmonic plan, from Caplin's sentences and sentence-like hybrids to the two main categories of antiperiodic themes (which partially overlap with and derive from Caplin's models) proposed above. Webster's antiperiod, which encompasses a number of different yet harmonically related form-functional thematic units, stands as a viable additional formal model for mid-to-late-eighteenth-century themes, taking its place alongside Caplin's sentence, period and small ternary theme types in acknowledgement of its importance in mid-eighteenth-century European musical practice.

## ENDNOTES

1. Caplin ([1998: 49–51](#)), including his Ex. 4.2 (the main theme from Mozart's Sonata in B-flat major, K. 281, first movement) acknowledges the possibility of ending the opening (antecedent) phrase with an imperfect authentic cadence (IAC), calling it a 'less common' option.
2. Webster's definition of the antiperiod, which only requires that the second phrase end in a tonally more open fashion than the first phrase, could encompass open-more open thematic designs (e.g. Haydn's Sonata in E major, Hob. XVI: 31, finale, in which the opening phrase ends on V, while the second phrase ends further afield on V of the relative minor). It is a valid question whether one would consider such themes as open-open (in relation to the tonic chord) or closed-open, based on their closing gestures' relative distance from the tonic. This study narrows the focus solely to antiperiod designs, the opening phrase of which ends on a tonic chord.
3. If the antecedent phrase ends with an IAC, a non-modulating period would be harmonically Closed-Closed, and a modulating period Closed-Open (the open character arising from the non-tonic melodic goal). As is acknowledged in Caplin ([1998: 270](#)), such phrases are uncommon in the Classical literature.
4. This harmonic plan is often associated with a 'statement-response' opening phrase, as described in Caplin ([1998: 39](#)), which illustrates this formal design in the main theme of Mozart's K. 465 (Caplin's Ex. 3.8).
5. To acknowledge the open-ended nature of this formal unit, Alan Campbell has termed it a 'comma', see Campbell ([2000: 43](#)), especially n. 64.
6. Caplin ([1998: 89](#)) refers to the Closed-Open harmonic design with parallel phrase beginnings as a kind of reversed or inverted period, cf. also Caplin ([2013: 508](#)).
7. Defined in Koch ([1983: 36](#)). Nancy Kovaleff Baker translates these terms as 'I-Phrase' and 'V-Phrase' respectively.

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8. Burstein (2020: 107) discusses Koch's terminology in depth, noting the increase in energy as the second (*Quintabsatz*) phrase approaches the dominant.
  9. Given the duple metre and rapid tempo, one could also analyse these 10 measures as the presentation phrase (five-measure basic idea, stated twice) of a longer thematic unit. This analytical possibility will be explored in a later segment of the essay.
  10. Campbell (2000: 42–4) remarks upon this theme type's use in Scarlatti's Sonata in C major, K. 527, remarking that other composers from this era (including C.P.E. Bach and Joseph Haydn) also employ it to begin a composition, cf. Campbell (2000: 91)
  11. For the affinity between the antiperiod and Baroque Head-and-*Fortspinnung* design, see Campbell (2000: 91).
  12. This analysis largely supports Caplin (1998: 89), who analyses the passage (in his Ex. 7.2) as a sentence-like hybrid (compound basic idea plus failed consequent). He notes that the antiperiodic design 'is offset ... by the melodic beginning of the phrases, in which the second phrase opens up the melodic space farther than the first phrase'.
  13. The cello line also recalls the opening motto of the violin with rhythmic diminution and free melodic inversion (or retrograde), a clever motivic link that unifies the theme.
  14. In Caplin's theory of formal functions, the 'contrasting period' qualifies as a hybrid theme type, blending features of the period and sentence, cf. Caplin (1998: 265 n. 2).
  15. The term appears in Gjerdingen (2007: 45). He then demonstrates the prevalence of the Prinner across a wide range of composers in the mid-eighteenth century.
  16. Illustrated in Gjerdingen (2007: 46–7). His first repertoire example of the Prinner illustrates this variant, implying that it is a common procedure in the mid-eighteenth century.
  17. Caplin (2015: 30ff.) refers to this variant as a Prinner Cadence, noting its resemblance to the IAC.
  18. A reduction of the movement appears in Koch (1983: 142–8).
  19. Discussed in Caplin (2004: 86) and Caplin (2013: 155–6). Hepokoski & Darcy (2006: 85) similarly describe a passage from Mozart's Sonata in C major, K. 279, in which 'the positionality of those cadences within the larger sentential-thematic structure ... weakens the usual sense of a PAC as a sign of emphatic structural closure', as cited in Diergarten (2015: 71).
  20. Granted, the early positioning of the V–I progression in the musical discourse usually precludes it from being mistaken for a cadence, as Caplin (1998: 45) asserts regarding the main theme of Beethoven's Opus 2 No. 3, first movement.
  21. This is Schmalfeldt's 'form as process', or the 'concept of *becoming*' (italics in the original), in which 'a formal function initially suggested by a musical idea, phrase, or section invites retrospective reinterpretation within the formal context'. This is the central metaphor of her analytical thought, with links to German Romanticist and idealist philosophy, per Schmalfeldt (2011: 8–12).
  22. See Caplin (2004: 89) and his Ex. 10, comprising a score reduction of the passage.
  23. As discussed in MacKay (2020, passim). Such formal blending, indicated by →, following Caplin (1998: 47) is indebted to Schmalfeldt's 'becoming'.
  24. Douglass Green uses this term for a transition that begins with a main theme incipit, cf. Green (1979: 190–5).
  25. This terminology models on Hepokoski & Darcy (2006: 45): they use the terms, 'Grand Antecedent' and 'Grand Continuation' to describe a sonata-form main theme followed by a dependent transition, as defined in Green (1979: 190–5).
  26. For real (i.e. experiential) versus notated measures, see Caplin (1998: 35).
  27. Hepokoski & Darcy (2006: 27) discuss this cadential option as a rare alternative to the HC in the subordinate key and the HC in the home key. These cadences are the first- and second-level defaults, respectively, for the transition's conclusion.

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## ABSTRACT

The antiperiod, which James Webster's 1991 book, *Haydn's Farewell Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music*, describes as 'a period whose consequent cadences off the tonic and hence is more "open" than the antecedent', has received short shrift in the literature. This study seeks to remedy the antiperiod's relative neglect, proposing that this form-functional type, common ca. 1750 in a variety of designs at many different formal levels, influenced thematic-tonal procedures through to at least 1800. The study identifies two basic models: the parallel antiperiod, wherein the two phrases begin alike, and the contrasting antiperiod, where the second phrase develops from opening material or begins with new motivic content. The antiperiod, unlike the standard periodic model, is dynamic and open-ended, much like the sentences and sentence-like hybrids identified in Caplin's 1998 book, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*. Its harmonic plan, moreover, can expand to encompass larger formal regions (main theme or transition as a presentation phrase, for which the subordinate theme acts as continuation).

**Keywords.** *Formenlehre*, antiperiod, theme, Caplin, Webster

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