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BENEDICT TAYLOR

FORMAL JESTS: THE SONATA-FORM SCHERZO IN MENDELSSOHN'S
MATURE CHAMBER MUSIC

The formal fecundity of Mendelssohn's scherzos has never seriously been in doubt. This is a movement type that has always been associated with the composer, above all that fleet-footed, half-lit music that whirls past the listener in a trice, the seemingly inimitable *Elfenschерzo* that finds its popular embodiment in the music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the 'Walpurgisnachtstraum' third movement of the Octet. Although too reductive, this epitomisation of the 'Mendelssohnian scherzo' has worked in some ways in the composer's favour. More readily than with any other movement from the sonata cycle, commentators have acknowledged that Mendelssohn's scherzo movements depart from earlier examples in ways that make comparisons with a classical prototype of limited use. To consider a sonata-form first movement from the nineteenth century without reference to its supposed indebtedness to a Beethovenian norm has seemed impossible for many critics, even when the hypothetical model tells us little about the qualities of the later movement and its distinct syntactical properties. But fortunately, in the present case, the perceived distance from classical precedent has allowed Mendelssohn's scherzos to be judged with a degree of critical freedom otherwise unforthcoming in accounts of music from this period.

This lassitude is curious, however. What is formally most distinctive about Mendelssohn's practice in this regard is his adoption of some form of overriding sonata design for the majority of his mature scherzi. As Friedhelm Krummacher points out, sonata form was not traditionally linked to the minuet or scherzo movement in the chamber music of Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven, and its use by Mendelssohn here is thus something of an innovation (1978, 246).¹ (To underplay this novelty by speaking of a 'classicising' tendency revealed by this distinctly un-

classical trait would be fairly senseless; rather, it demonstrates how central the sonata idea is to Mendelssohn's compositional practice.)²

Nevertheless, this relation with sonata form is often far from straightforward. In referencing sonata design in his scherzi, Mendelssohn frequently appears to be playing against expectations raised by the form, taking delight in confounding or confusing the attentive listener in the movement's formal twists and turns, as if this ambiguous and ever-shifting relation is itself a crucial part of the aesthetic quality of the music. 'In that sonata form is taken over into the scherzo,' observes Krummacker, 'it becomes itself an element of the scherzo character: the play with form is henceforth characteristic of Mendelssohn's mature scherzi' (1978, p. 246).

Such formal conceits work apparently effortlessly alongside the characteristic qualities of the Mendelssohnian scherzo: the sheer rapidity of the music, the evanescent sonorities and fluid thematic continuity, the veiled dynamics and enigmatic emotional tone. Nothing is quite what it seems. Everything passes by the listener in a blur, where the ingenious manipulations of design can barely be caught, but nevertheless impart a delicious confusion to the course of the music. 'The music flits past so rapidly that one can scarcely grasp it properly. And hence it is all the easier to miss how unconventional is its structure, how unschematically it is formed, and how multifariously its phrase types are differentiated' (Krummacker 1978, p. 423). To an even greater extent than for other movements of the sonata cycle, form as intentional schema would appear to be posited as an object for playful misuse in Mendelssohn's scherzi, where departures from a perceived norm become constitutive of the music's formal significance, and where aesthetic and formal properties can hardly be separated.

The essentialised view of the typical 'Mendelssohnian scherzo' is nevertheless deficient in several important respects. Despite the enduring appeal of the mercurial scherzo archetype witnessed in the Octet and *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, Mendelssohn's scherzo styles are quite varied, even within a given genre, and these are further subject to change and development across the two or so decades of his creative life. Just as with the lazy habit of labelling each and every Mendelssohn slow movement a 'song without words' (as if, beyond a certain lyrical quality, what is meant by that label is clear), the popular view of the composer's scherzi as being delicate variations of essentially the same elfin soundworld has hardly helped convey the full expressive range and variety of this body of music. Here we may observe that the association with fairies has not always worked to Mendelssohn's advantage.³

One may in fact distinguish four basic types of scherzo movement in Mendelssohn's instrumental music after 1825,⁴ the first two of which are sonata orientated, the latter two of which refer to simpler tripartite models:

- 1) the rapid, quicksilver scherzo, normally a sonata (Sonata Theory's type 3) or sonata rondo (type 4) variant. Early examples appear in the Octet, Op. 20/iii (1825), and A major Quintet, Op. 18/iii (1826), finding a fruitful development in the quartets in E minor Op. 44 No. 2/ii (1837) and E flat, No. 3/ii (1837–8), the D minor Piano Trio Op. 49/iii (1839), and the somewhat freer design of the C minor Piano Trio Op. 66/iii (1845). The scherzos from the 'Scottish' Symphony (1841–2) and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1844) incidental music provide further examples from the 1840s in the orchestral medium.
- 2) the more moderately paced *scherzando*, cast in abridged (type 1) sonata form and without the *perpetuum mobile* effect of the previous type, which is introduced in the 1840s with the D major Cello Sonata Op. 58/ii (1843) and B flat Quintet Op. 87/ii (1845). The quartet movement published as Op. 81 No. 2 (1847) provides a quicker variant of this type.
- 3) the intermezzo or canzonetta type of movement, typifying the early quartets in A minor Op. 13/iii (1827) and E flat, Op. 12/ii (1829), both of which, marked *Allegretto*, are in ternary form with a faster central trio-like section. (The second movement of the *Lobgesang* (1840) is not dissimilar in style, albeit without a faster central section.)
- 4) occasional references back to the older tripartite classical model of the rounded binary dance form – the minuet nostalgically recreated in the D major Quartet, Op. 44 No. 1/ii (1838), and the bitter vehemence of the scherzo and trio in the F minor Quartet, Op. 80/ii (1847). The former quality is also glimpsed in the minuet of the 'Italian' Symphony (1833).

What is conspicuous from the above, however, is how prevalent sonata form is as a point of formal departure. While not every Mendelssohn scherzo references sonata form, sonata is still overwhelmingly predominant as the underlying formal principle.⁵ After 1829, following the intermezzo-style movements of the first two quartets, only two further examples from the chamber music eschew sonata design, and these – in their very different ways – both call upon the older minuet- or scherzo-and-trio model for expressive purposes, treating it with a certain knowing detachment, effectively as a topical 'type'. In the stylised minuet of Op. 44 No. 1, the pronounced harmonic stasis – long pedal points in the outer sections and drones proceeding by

fifths in the musette-like trio – exaggerated legato writing, pellucid textures, and held-back tempo call up a lost world whose archaism is put in inverted commas as it were, while in the scherzo of the F minor Quartet the older dance form is imbued with a savage irony that makes way only for the emptiness of the trio with its bare two-part writing and archaic ostinato bass.⁶ To a certain extent, however, the same self-conscious detachment is taken over into the sonata-orientated movements, where the formal scheme itself – the expectations that the presence of certain sonata features raise – becomes part of the material manipulated by the composer, an element of the broader aesthetic conception.

This article examines the manipulations of form present in the sonata-orientated scherzi of Mendelssohn's mature chamber works in the years after 1837.⁷ It considers both the formal play observable at the smaller-scale level of syntax and phrase construction, and in particular the playing with expectations at the larger level of the movement. Focussing on the trademark quick-tempo scherzi in sonata form, it investigates four significant case studies from the period 1837–45 – the scherzi of the String Quartets Op. 44 No. 2 and No. 3 and the Piano Trios Op. 49 and Op. 66 – before casting a briefer look at the scherzando style of movement and what is probably Mendelssohn's final example in the genre, the scherzo published posthumously as Op. 81 No. 2.

This investigation serves three important purposes within current debates about sonata form. First, while continuing the incursion of *Formenlehre* into the nineteenth century, it brings discussion of sonata form round to address a movement type – the scherzo – not normally considered in recent discussions, which instead has been concerned largely with first-movement designs (and to a lesser extent finales, as well as concerto first-movement form and overtures).⁸ Rather cutting across the typology offered by Sonata Theory, various different sonata types are suggested by the designs of the four scherzos treated here as case studies, in such a way as to undermine any strong correlation here between movement type and formal type (indeed only the Type 5 sonata is not applicable to Mendelssohn's scherzi). Secondly, stemming from this, the interaction between different formal types seemingly posited by these movements has numerous similarities with the dialogic approach foregrounded by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's Sonata Theory, in which form is understood as resulting from the interplay between the specific design of the individual piece and an intentional scheme drawn from generic expectations. The playful ambiguities in form suggested by Mendelssohn's scherzi would seem particularly well suited to a theory

in which formal meaning is understood to arise from the productive tension between expectation and realisation, abstract generic norm and particular instantiation. Still, much of Mendelssohn's subtle manipulation of form occurs at the smaller-scale level of syntax, and one of the final implications of this study concerns the interrelation between top-down, intentional models and bottom-up generative approaches to form.

Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49, third movement, Scherzo: *Leggiero e vivace*

A convenient starting point for considering the later Mendelssohnian scherzo might be provided by the D minor Piano Trio, Op. 49 (1839): convenient, in that many of the external qualities of this scherzo type are present in this example, yet the movement is somewhat unrepresentative in the overall clarity of design and hence sets into relief the greater formal complexity of the composer's other examples. As with several of the quick scherzi after 1837, it is cast as a sonata rondo. A concise exposition (bb. 1–38) leads back to the return of the primary theme in the tonic initiating a development (bb. 47–117), followed by recapitulation (b. 118–55) and coda (bb. 156–88). The one unusual feature here is that the development is longer than either the exposition or recapitulation, a feature which reflects the syntax of the movement's material, dominated by the primary theme, whose irregular internal construction is easily subject to loosening and sequential elaboration. More conventional – but actually rather untypical of Mendelssohn's customary practice – is the clarity of cadential definition at the close of sections. Structural cadences at the end of the exposition and recapitulation are articulated with clear PACs: at b. 28 for the end of S (EEC; followed by a further PAC at b. 38 rounding off the ensuing closing theme), and at the corresponding place in the recapitulation (b. 141, ESC). The clarity of definition here towards the tail of the two sections to some extent mitigates the continuity of the preceding music, where no Medial Caesura is discernible (a sonata theorist might indeed view this as a continuous exposition) and, while not strictly monothematic, the material is not as sharply differentiated in motivic content or texture throughout the section.

The point of recapitulation is also clearly identifiable, albeit reached slightly obliquely: the V–I motion to D major at bb. 117–18 is part of a larger sequence, the preceding music creeping up from V/Am via V/Bm to the leading note C sharp which elides with dominant seventh harmony at all but the last possible moment in the second half in b. 117 (see Ex. 2 below). The double return is unmistakable when it arrives, but has crept in by stealth, with barely a hint of the true dominant prior to this.

Indeed, the strongest dominant preparation had been for the mediant, F sharp minor, some bars preceding (bb. 100–6), followed by the settling onto V/V at b. 112.⁹

Though the external outlines may seem fairly clear, where the movement proves more irregular is in the smaller-scale phrase construction, and to this extent the scherzo of Op. 49 foreshadows the scherzando style of the 1840s. The initial phrase of the primary theme is seven bars in length, and itself made up of irregular units quixotically rearranged yet following established functional logic (see Ex. 1) [**insert Example 1 here**]. Motivically, one can distinguish a one-bar basic idea (*a*, b. 1) followed by a contrasting turning figure spun out initially into two bars (*b*, bb. 2–3). In formal function, these opening seven bars could be split into a three-bar presentation on the tonic followed by an expanded four-bar response prolonging dominant harmony (the parallel between the two phrases is underscored by the reuse of the basic idea in b. 4 to initiate the response), but this response already shows rearrangement of the motivic constituents and clear signs of development. Rather than one bar of *a* and two bars of *b*, *a* is now repeated to span two bars, followed by the fragmentation of its central rising third across the next two bars (bb. 6–7), forming a type of lead-back to a projected restatement at b. 8. The contrasting idea (*b*) is missing completely in the response, and the basic idea (*a*) is already subject to motivic fragmentation typifying continuation function (there is a touch of hemiola in these two bars resulting from the shifting grouping patterns created by this fragmentation, which creates yet further metric friction). What would by rights appear balancing subphrases – statement and response – actually evince contrasting constructive principles: the first a compound basic idea contrasting *a* and *b* in an irregular three-bar unit (formed as 1+2), the other simply repeating and fragmenting a single basic idea *a* in a more regular four-bar unit (formed as 2+2). This opposition between three- and four-bar units will be carried over to inform the hypermetre of extended parts of the development.

The restatement of this theme in the string instruments at b. 8 seems as if it might be referencing the double statement with textural variation common in chamber music with piano; an initial antecedent-like phrase in the piano is answered either by its repetition or by a balancing consequent phrase in the strings. This structure has already been witnessed in the Trio's preceding slow movement, and at a considerably faster tempo such formal padding would not be out of place here in the scherzo. Instead of which, however, the balancing phrase at b. 8 goes its own way after its first three bars by continuing the contrasting *b* motive in sequence to *vi* as part of a

modulatory trajectory aimed at V/V. An erstwhile consequent phrase has elided with transition function, and the already loose phrase organisation has broken down into loose-knit transitional syntax. With utmost economy the expected double textural statement functions as a P⇒Tr module. The miniature proportions of this evanescent sonata movement (over in around three and a half minutes) result not only from the sheer pace at which it moves, but from the concision with which the expected functions are carried out.

Such compression is perpetuated in the following bars, in which the secondary theme in the dominant emerges from the preceding transition without any appreciable break (b. 17). Owing to its opening V⁶₅ harmony the theme smoothly elides with the V/V prepared from b. 13, and, consisting of a continuation-like phrase, evinces a strong end orientation. Moreover, its characteristic head-motive is introduced before the listener probably realises its significance as forming the secondary theme, such as it is; first proposed at b. 17, it is in all likelihood on its reappearance four bars later (answered now in strings) that we first realise this idea forms a salient thematic idea. One can hardly pinpoint the moment when the transition becomes secondary theme: the two are so fluidly conjoined. In this light, the clear PAC at b. 28 and simple, easily identifiable closing theme provide necessary punctuation rounding off the exposition. A codetta consisting of post-cadential liquidation of the opening theme's basic idea (bb. 38ff) leads back to the return of this theme in the tonic to open the development at b. 47.

Based entirely on primary theme material, this development continues the syntactic loosening witnessed earlier, elaborating on the mosaic like juxtaposition of motivic ideas and their sequential treatment (see Ex. 2) [**insert Example 2 here**]. Starting out in the manner of a possible exposition repeat, it is only with the answering consequent phrase (b. 54) that one realises something is different. Transposed up a tone now to the supertonic, the whole phrase may well suggest more clearly an embryonic alternative phrase type, the sequential response in a large-scale sentence structure in which the entire opening seven bars forms a compound presentation phrase.¹⁰ Such expectations are left unfulfilled here as the music continues into loose-knit elaboration of the turning figure (*b*). But at the third iteration of this primary theme in the recapitulation (bb. 125–7), it is this new supertonic version which is heard, replacing the phrase format originally given in the exposition. And even more notably, through one of Mendelssohn's habitual excisions of transition material, this response phrase, reduced to a mere three bars, leads directly

into the secondary material (b. 128). The latter theme had all along seemed intrinsically suited to function as a continuation-cum-cadential unit (owing in no small part to the strong initial harmonic tendency towards 6_3 harmony), and by cutting the ‘trial’ run of its initial motive (bb. 17–20) in the recapitulation this continuation quality is further emphasised. Now in the recapitulation, the compression of primary, transitional and secondary material into one continuous phrase suggests a latent compound sentential structure straddling the exposition. The relatively extended coda in turn unveils a new legato thematic idea over motivic fragments of the primary theme that had been adumbrated towards the end of the development (bb. 100–112) but only here at the close of the movement truly blossoms.¹¹ Thus alongside and to some extent against the recursive nature of the larger sonata rondo design, the movement is marked by a continuous reinterpretation of phrase structure and evolution of thematic material across its course.

As the account above suggests, there is great intricacy and ingenuity in the manipulations of motivic material and phrase structure in this scherzo. What is less apparent, however, is any sense that form, understood as generic schema, is subjected to deliberate ‘deformation’, that the movement plays one formal type off against another, raising expectations on the part of the listener that are subsequently problematised or overturned. A reading of the movement along such lines has nevertheless been offered by Donald Mintz, which chimes well with the broader interpretation offered here of Mendelssohn’s scherzi. For Mintz, this scherzo is indeed in sonata form, but continually evokes elements of rounded binary form customary from earlier minuet and scherzo movements, which he assumes the listener is most likely to be expecting. Mintz understands this tension in a manner not unlike the dialogic play of form underpinning modern sonata theory:

During the course of the movement, Mendelssohn makes a number of references to different aspects of different conventional forms. Since knowledge of the forms is presumably part of the listener’s intellectual equipment, these references awaken expectations. The expectations, however, are shown to be erroneous, not because none of the conventional forms is employed, but because, so to speak, the ‘wrong’ one (that is, the sonata) is employed (Mintz 1960, p. 261).

Sadly, however, Mintz's claims for the movement's formal ambiguities would probably strike most listeners as overstated.¹² While the general principle he outlines is relevant for many of Mendelssohn's other scherzi, his reading of Op. 49 significantly exaggerates the movement's affinities to rounded binary form. It is hard to conceive, for instance, why a listener would assume the opening seven-bar phrase should serve as the opening of a binary scherzo any more than that of a sonata design: this passage is just a pair of subphrases outlining tonic and dominant harmonies – not even a complete theme, but a presentation phrase of a larger melodic design, most likely the antecedent of a period. The return to the primary theme in the tonic at b. 47, meanwhile, is surely no more liable to be heard as an unorthodox rounded binary return (coming in the absence of any contrasting central section) than as a sonata rondo, or even repeated sonata exposition. Such issues recur throughout Mintz's analysis, undermining the plausibility of his interpretation of the movement. But this does not detract from his wider insight: while the particular instance he chose may not be convincing, the general principle Mintz outlines is nevertheless applicable to many of Mendelssohn's other scherzi.

What Mintz's account also highlights is the question over to what extent sonata form might reasonably be taken as a generic expectation for a scherzo movement dating from 1839. For us, with full knowledge of Mendelssohn's compositional practice up to his death in 1847, the sonata (in some cases in abridged or sonata-rondo variants) is surely the default option for this movement. Of the thirteen scherzo-type movements in chamber works written after 1825, nine are some version of sonata form – a proportion that rises to nine out of ten when we discount those movements expressly entitled 'minuet', 'intermezzo' or 'canzonetta'. Of course this comes from a wider knowledge of Mendelssohn's music, including a few works as yet unwritten at the time of Op. 49. Still, ample enough instances predate the Trio – in the chamber realm opp. 20, 18, 44 No. 2 and 44 No. 3: the informed listener would thus hardly be surprised if a subsequent scherzo from this composer were in sonata form.

It is probably not possible to give a single, definitive answer to what 'the listener' would expect in terms of formal norms, since even in Mendelssohn's own day different listeners would have different levels of expertise and bring different levels of exposure to their listening experience. Is it meaningful to judge a norm against the wider practice of the time, against that of the preceding age, or against the composer's own practice?¹³ Are we not in many cases actually more interested in how the composer – or our construct of this figure, perhaps the fabled 'ideal listener'

– might have envisaged the design? What can be asserted here, however, is that rounded binary form within a larger ternary scherzo-and-trio structure remains a background set of generic norms that may always be referenced by the composer at this time, while in practice sonata organisation more often provides the interpretative framework used by Mendelssohn in his mature instrumental scherzi.

String Quartet Op. 44 No. 2, second movement, *Allegro di molto*

More representative of the formal inventiveness of Mendelssohn's scherzi is the slightly earlier example from the E minor Quartet, Op. 44 No. 2 (1837). This was the first of the quartets written by Mendelssohn following the effective eight-year break in the composition of chamber music, and the second movement is characteristic of Mendelssohn's scherzo style in several important respects.¹⁴ The writing throughout, with interjecting tremolo onsets, fleet staccato textures and *perpetuum mobile* feel is recognisably Mendelssohnian, yet nonetheless distinct from the stereotypical 'fairy music' for which the composer is so often typecast. As with Op. 49, at a smaller, syntactic level, the primary material is marked by irregular internal phrase lengths and an ambiguity of metrical stress that imparts a pregnant instability and buoyant impetus to the music. In overall form, the movement likewise traces the outlines of a sonata rondo design, with successive sections clearly articulated by the return of the opening theme in the tonic at b. 53 (initiating the development) and b. 151 (the recapitulation), the music subsequently moving into a coda after b. 201. The larger formal peculiarity of this movement, however, stems from the melodic idea introduced in the viola at b. 141, later reheard near the end of the movement.

There is nothing particularly remarkable about the theme in itself. Consisting of a simple four-bar phrase that is repeated before trailing off, as if unfinished, on C sharp minor harmony, it is barely a fully fledged theme; fragment of a theme might be an equally apt characterisation (Ex. 3) [**insert Example 3 here**]. Yet the effect is gently haunting; the phrase lodges itself in the memory with a wistful quality that is all the more telling for being so evidently understated. Someone listening to the movement without really concentrating on the unfolding form might well take it for a second subject or, perhaps better, closing theme, a brief lyrical relaxation following cadential attainment, especially as the theme recurs once again, now resolved into the tonic major, near the end of the work. Yet if this is a secondary or closing theme, more careful examination of the movement's structure tells us it is entirely in the wrong place. It is first encountered at the end of the development section, indeed well

after the development section should have ended. And it is this belatedness – even if only dimly sensed by the casual listener – that imparts much of the effect.

As with the scherzo of Op. 49, the development is significantly longer than the exposition – already almost double the length, even before the new theme emerges. The section starts off in standard sonata-rondo fashion as if forming a restatement of the exposition, but had soon moved to new tonal areas, the consequent phrase of the primary theme at b. 61 directed to the supertonic, F sharp minor, which alternates with B minor in the ensuing bars. With the arrival on a G sharp dominant chord in b. 77, however, it becomes apparent that C sharp minor is probably the real goal of this passage, underscored by a brief fugato in double counterpoint at this point, which fuses elements of the primary theme and closing phrase of the secondary theme. Yet the dominant of C sharp, reached again following an escalating stretto at b. 93, still proves unstable, liable to slip towards the minor subdominant F sharp, and it is only after an extended cadential approach initiated with the 6_4 at b. 109 that C sharp minor is finally reached in b. 125. The tonal goal that had been held out almost fifty bars earlier is attained through a PAC into C sharp at this point – the first such decisive cadence in any key in the entire movement. One reason for the expanded length of this development section is the sheer amount of time taken to confirm this key, which virtually equals the length of the entire exposition.

C sharp minor – vi of the overall tonic E major – is a common enough key in which to end the main part of the development, and the ensuing passage, contrasting figuration drawn from the secondary theme area with a new descending legato idea, seems to invoke the expected retransition in rhetoric as well as function. Yet there is something strange about these bars. C sharp minor alternates once more with its subdominant F sharp, but this leads back to C sharp again, and the music repeats, going round on itself in four-bar units. Moreover, each of these phrases is articulated with a strong authentic cadence.¹⁵ Having not heard a single PAC in the movement up to this point, now we can't get enough of them, and the repetitions simply stall any momentum that might be expected for a retransition. Rather than leading back dynamically to the recapitulation after the crisis of the development's 'point of furthest remove', the music seems to be coming to a halt, and doing so repeatedly. It is following the third PAC to C sharp minor in b. 141 that the new theme softly enters.

This theme is the first really lyrical idea in the movement, its legato, cantabile quality contrasting with the almost constant quaver movement preceding it. Given

both times *pianissimo* in the viola, it has a shy, veiled quality, emerging from within the quartet texture, as if speaking from a distance. Still, the significance of this unassuming little theme seems out of proportion to its inherent qualities; its effect is almost entirely context-dependent. It possesses the quality of an afterthought: not only does it appear to be an erstwhile closing theme that enters at the end of the wrong section – the development – but it emerges long ‘after the end’ of this section, in a (post) post-cadential passage, in a place where the music has already signalled closure with something approaching over-insistence. Moreover, it is incomplete as a phrase, trailing off in the melodic voice without reaching any cadence.

In sonata terms the presence of this thematic idea at this stage in the piece is distinctly enigmatic. One way of explaining it would be to understand this peculiarity as the result of importing aspects of one formal archetype into another, just as Mintz attempts in his account of Op. 49, and indeed a reading along just such lines has been made by Krummacher in his analysis of this movement. In Krummacher’s opinion, this new theme references a trio from a larger three-part scherzo-and-trio design, one misplaced within an otherwise sonata-derived form.¹⁶ Like Mintz’s understanding of the scherzo of Op. 49 but at a larger formal level, the second movement of Op. 44 No. 2 plays one formal scheme off against another.

For several reasons, however, this interpretation is not altogether convincing. The biggest point in its favour is the character of the theme: presented over pizzicato accompaniment in the cello, it possesses a naïve, serenata-like quality, forming a temporary relaxation in the otherwise continuous drive of the movement, and in other circumstances might have proved amenable to providing material for a trio section. On the other hand, the slightness of the theme – the miniscule proportions occupied within the movement by this idea, and its lack of significant internal organisation – rather argue against it meaningfully constituting a trio section. To hold that these ten bars have the function of a trio within a larger 244-bar sonata movement would seem highly quixotic (even when counting the additional fourteen bars taken up by its reprise near the end).¹⁷ Moreover, the theme is not even a complete thematic entity, but merely consists of a four-bar presentation phrase that is immediately repeated and then trails off; it is at best a fragment of trio-like material fleetingly inserted into a sonata movement.

In terms of generic expectations, it would also be extraordinary for anyone to expect a trio to be found here at the end of a sonata’s development section. A tripartite scherzo-and-trio form might be a reasonable expectation for many scherzos

in the late 1830s, but as we have seen, this is far from the norm for Mendelssohn's own practice, which tends just as frequently towards sonata organisation in the preceding dozen years (and almost invariably towards the sonata in the following decade), and following two sections of a clear sonata-orientated design a trio here would be plain bizarre, especially at the end of a long development when the recapitulation is already overdue.¹⁸

It would seem rather more persuasive, as suggested earlier, to see the theme at b. 141 as akin to a misplaced secondary or closing theme in a sonata design; this is very much the effect within the movement as a whole, where the idea is reprised in the tonic near the end, and is consistent with the sonata expectations that, unlike the scherzo-and-trio model, have been consistently raised by the movement up to this point. The loose phrase structure (without continuation or cadential components) and post-cadential context would point more to a lyrical closing idea, especially as there has been no such theme in the actual exposition.¹⁹ A clear precedent for such an apparently unorthodox structure in Mendelssohn's own work could also be given by the third movement of Op. 18, in which the only real contrasting thematic material in a virtually monothematic exposition is given likewise in a location near the end of an extensive development section strongly marked as retransitional in function.²⁰ The point is that what should be the second subject comes in completely the wrong place.

This interpretation seems preferable. Still, there are some difficulties with this closing-theme reading. It would be unusual (though not unprecedented in Mendelssohn) for a secondary tonal area to be given by the relative minor.²¹ Moreover, unlike the scherzo of Op. 18, where the reprise of the new theme occurs immediately after the primary theme's recapitulation, thus retrospectively suggesting that it does indeed take the place of a missing secondary theme, in the quartet it returns only after a full recapitulation of the exposition material and following a passage that, owing to its parallels with the retransition heard at the end of the exposition (bb. 51–2), would suggest any following events belong to a coda. The design thus suggests the parallel two-strophe designs common to several other Mendelssohn sonata forms, where a new event in the development section is recapitulated in the movement's coda, the recapitulation/coda sequence paralleling that of the exposition/development.²²

More generally, this reading raises the thorny issue of whether one can speak of formal components simply being taken over from one part of a form to another, and consequently of what constitutes a theme's identity, a debate which relates in turn to

an underlying methodological tension between form as schema and form as generated by syntax. Can one really take out an interthematic function (such as a closing theme) and insert it in another larger section as if nothing has changed? In this present case, it may in fact be possible to resolve a ‘bottom-up’ formal-functional understanding with a ‘dialogic’ view of form as intentional schema, as on intrinsic factors, the fact that the idea seems like a theme, a distinct lyrical entity, but is loose-knit, consisting of merely a reiterated presentation function, and thus unable to serve as a proper complete thematic unit (as would a primary or secondary theme), would suggest its being suited to just such a closing function. And contextually, this is the first truly post-cadential theme in the entire movement, since it arises following the first PAC in the piece at b. 125. It thus makes sense in the present instance to speak of the theme as possessing a closing function, but in the wrong place – ninety bars too late, in a location where a re-initiating function should by rights be expected.²³ Therein lies the irony. And therein too lies the peculiarly wistful quality of this theme, doubly belated, existing in an impossible area of the form.

All the same, there is common ground between the two readings; Krummacher is onto the same formal irregularity as analysed here in a different manner. Whether the new idea at b. 141 is described as a fragment of a trio interpolated into the retransition of a sonata rondo, or as an erstwhile closing theme belatedly joining the music an entire section too late, the overriding point is that encountering this idea at this formal juncture is a little bizarre. However we describe it, the theme is ‘out of place’ according to customary formal schemes. Yet at this moment, it also sounds strangely satisfying. Instead of appealing to the deformation of schematic models to explain this theme, one might equally approach this problem in terms of more general constructive principles, as the result of syntactic properties of the material used by Mendelssohn in this movement. And here we might understand the unexpected emergence of a new lyrical theme as a response to the excessive concentration on the primary-theme material and otherwise unremitting *moto perpetuo* effect of the music up to this point.

The exposition is marked by a homogeneity of material that tends towards monothematicism; while the theme articulating the secondary tonal area at b. 25 is distinguishable from the opening theme, it is clearly derived from it, above all in rhythm. (Given the extreme simplicity of its motivic and harmonic profile, it is furthermore by rhythmic quality that the theme is most strongly characterised.) The dotted-crotchet three-quaver rhythm in the upper three parts obviously continues the

same figure heard in the fragmentation of the primary theme in the preceding transitional bars (bb. 20–2; cf. the original model in bb. 4–6 & 12–14), and the four-semiquaver four-quaver pattern in the cello references the most characteristic rhythmic motive of the primary theme, heard in the opening bar (see Ex. 4) [**insert Example 4 here**]. More melodically distinctive is this theme’s continuation phrase (bb. 41–51), but even this passage derives from the accented suspensions of the primary theme’s bb. 4–6, now metrically shifted onto the second beat; and anyway, as Krummacher points out, this idea is so formulaic as to undermine any sense of it being a significant thematic entity.²⁴ The transition that precedes this secondary theme is formed as a continuation of the material set out in the primary theme, which is formed as a pair of parallel eight-bar phrases that suggest some elements of periodic organisation. Indeed, the transition’s successive fragmentation of the primary theme’s material, coupled with the fact that both halves of the opening 16-bar ‘period’ merely alternate tonic and dominant harmonies in an essentially prolongational structure (the return to the tonic in bb. 15–16 is weakly articulated by an IAC), suggests a larger sentential structure formed by bars 1–25, in which the presentation component (bb. 1–16) serves as primary theme and the continuation (bb. 16ff) turns into a transition, the cadence to the dominant B major at b. 25 dovetailing with the start of the secondary theme.²⁵ The economy of means, and fusion of intrathematic functions with interthematic ones, is again striking.

The virtual monothematicism of the exposition is heightened in the development, which up to the cadence at b. 125 derives all its material from that of the preceding section. Such comparative lack of contrast is particularly salient given the sonata-rondo structure, a design marked even more strongly than usual by the formal principle of thematic return (and hence, by implication, the need for some intervening contrast).²⁶ It is this extreme concentration on the opening material that eventually gives rise to a counter-reaction in the shape of the new lyrical theme at b. 141, however quixotic its emergence may seem at this point. And by confining it to this late stage, after the repeated cadences to C sharp in the preceding bars, Mendelssohn is bringing out the belated effect, investing the phrase with a pathos that it would hardly possess otherwise.²⁷

The new theme in the viola is heard at a point in the music where the recapitulation was not only expected but already overdue. It occupies a place that should be taken up by retransition, but in its static, post-cadential quality it seems diametrically opposed to what a retransition should do. However, having led the

music down a formal blind alley, Mendelssohn extricates himself with nonchalant ease: the C sharp minor harmony on which the new theme trails off simply links up through a common-tone shift with the E major opening harmony of the primary theme, which returns at b. 151 to initiate the recapitulation. Something similar had occurred at the comparable juncture in the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the parallel being underscored by the common key of E major, but in the quartet the tonic harmony is altered by the addition of a seventh, which turns the initial tonic into the dominant of the subdominant. Thus reharmonised, the opening two bars are reinterpreted as I^7-IV , part of a progression aimed at the dominant in bb. 153–4. What is striking is that at no stage is dominant harmony heard to prepare the return. In fact, the customary harmonic order is reversed, the opening tonic now leading to the dominant at the end of the phrase as if this latter harmony is the music's goal.²⁸

This point of recapitulation – arriving as it does from the most unrepossessing of departure points – is in fact one of Mendelssohn's most elegant reconfigurations of a stage of sonata form at which he so often excels. Typical is the avoidance of any PAC into the tonic at this point (indeed of the slightest suggestion of a preceding dominant) as well as the harmonic elision over the structural boundary, the two stages being connected as part of a single progression. But the effect also derives much from the idiosyncratic construction of the primary theme already manifest at the start of the movement. Notable in the opening phrase is how irregularly the thematic material is organised: although adding up to an even eight-bar phrase, the theme is formed from the accretion of smaller, uneven units, which might be approximated as a 3+3+2 grouping, although even these divisions manifest some overlap.²⁹ The ostensible 3/4 metre is not even clear at the start, being obscured by the melodic grouping that correlates the first beat of b. 2 with the second beat of b. 3 (as if reflecting an underlying 4/4 metre), and there is a mild suggestion in these opening bars that the real metric downbeat might come on the second notated beat. Such is the speed of the music that one might more readily perceive hypermetre, but in this case it is unclear as to whether the opening bar is anacrusic in function: the *forte* emphasis on the opening four-semiquaver pattern imparts a spring to the first beat of the first bar, but the tonic degree is reached by the melodic voice on the downbeat of b. 2 (being further accentuated by the preceding grace-note), which by melodic and harmonic implication is hence more weighty. What seems undeniable is that emphasis in the phrase is directed to the arrival on dominant harmony in b. 4, heard as the goal of the melodic descent in the preceding three bars and coinciding with the point at which the

metric structure is first fully clarified. At an even higher level, then, not only does b. 1 seem upbeat to bb. 2–3, but the entire first three bars seem to display an upbeat quality with respect to b. 4.³⁰ There is hence a sense of end-weightedness to the phrase, with the larger implied I–V harmonic structure of these eight bars heard as essentially suspended tonic harmony falling back to an underlying dominant prolongation.

In the reprise of these bars, this interpretation, already latent, is brought to the fore. Owing to the fact that the reharmonised opening starts in the midst of a cadential approach, the hypermetric stress is placed on the dominant reached in b. 154: the hypermetrically weak E⁷ of the theme's opening bar (now *pianissimo*) clearly resolves to the hypermetrically stronger A harmony of the second, and with the ⁶₄ that follows these three bars lead together to the larger hypermetric downbeat of b. 154, whose dominant is heard as the delayed harmonic goal at the point of recapitulation. Not only is resolution of the harmonic progression delayed over the structural join until the fourth bar of the reprised theme, then, but the objective is dominant, not tonic harmony.³¹

The recapitulation is extremely regular, with no compression of material whatsoever. (The contrast with Mendelssohn's practice for other sonata-form movements is striking: such regularity, it might be supposed, compensates for the otherwise bewildering formal liberties taken in these scherzi.) Here, though, the two-bar idea that served initially as brief retransition back (bb. 51–2) is extended out into a sixteen-bar codetta-like passage (bb. 201–16). Preceded by an IAC (effectively a PAC covered by the second violin's [^]5) that already marks an advance on the absence of cadential articulation at the comparable close of the exposition, this section functions as an extended cadential preparation for the restatement of the viola theme at b. 217. Mendelssohn's writing is typically inventive in these bars, passing the codetta's descending scale figure throughout the texture and in contrary motion before combining it in *stretto* with the primary theme's initial motive (b. 209), which is thus shown to be virtually identical.

On its return following this passage and a second IAC, the new theme manifests even more clearly its closing-theme quality (even though here, unlike on its previous appearance, it is not in fact preceded by a PAC; see Ex. 5) [**insert Example 5 here**]. Resolved now into the tonic E major (and to this extent upholding the 'sonata principle'), this theme will serve to lead to the first PAC in the tonic in the entire movement. The phrase is now slightly extended by a continuation in sequence down

a third, thus regaining the original C sharp pitch level of its development appearance; no less than before, this submediant harmony, on which the music dwells in these bars, links up to the return of the primary theme (b. 231), again presented over E⁷ harmony as at the point of recapitulation. But now, the primary theme's first four bars are altered so as to effect a perfect cadence. And in doing so something of this new theme's construction is clarified. As first presented at b. 141, the new theme had been loose-knit and open-ended, consisting of a pair of presentation phrases without continuation or cadential units, unable to serve (from a stricter Caplinian perspective) as a complete thematic entity in its own right. But in the coda, not only does the sequential elaboration of bb. 225–30, with its thematic fragmentation and foreshortening, provide a continuation phrase, but also the modified opening of the primary theme to which it is joined completes the entire phrase through its cadential progression.

This is the first PAC in the tonic in the entire movement, and astonishingly it has arisen from the new theme, combining with the primary theme's opening to create a single thematic complex aimed at securing the movement's structural closure. There is therefore a mild paradox present in this procedure: not only has the scherzo's initiating phrase become the direct means for the movement's structural closure by the end, but the theme that had been heard as post-cadential in the development – as appearing belatedly, after its time – becomes, in the coda, the crucial pre-cadential theme.³² What at a larger interthematic level is a closing theme becomes an intrathematic beginning, and the thematic beginning becomes an intrathematic closing unit. The symmetry of resolution according to schematic formal models – the tonal resolution of the new theme, the mirroring between development and coda – masks the more intricate formal-functional reinterpretation contained within. And such reinterpretations of intrathematic formal-functions on the local level unfold across large-scale joins on higher interthematic or sectional levels – the divide between development and recapitulation, and between the coda and its own codetta.

String Quartet Op. 44 No. 3, second movement, *Assai leggiero vivace*

It is with the work following the E minor Quartet – the Quartet in E flat, Op. 44 No. 3 – that we find what is probably the most developed example of the Mendelssohn scherzo that plays one formal type off against another. In this brilliantly inventive movement, not only do we re-encounter the structural conceit of the 'theme out of place' seen earlier in the scherzi of Op. 18 and Op. 44 No. 2, but rounded binary and

sonata forms are both clearly operational as respective modes of organisation. At the largest level, too, the now-familiar monothematic tendency of the movement is the cause for a drastic reinterpretation of the exposition material in the recapitulation, Mendelssohn articulating a symmetrical, arch-shaped expressive trajectory which hints at a 'reverse recapitulation' effect. Such structural ingenuity works alongside the restless quaver motion and dark, somewhat sinister atmosphere to create a haunted, driven quality to the movement.

The opening section of Op. 44 No. 3's scherzo is formed as a rounded binary structure (Ex. 6) [**insert Example 6 here**]. A model sixteen-bar period serves as an opening *a* section, being immediately repeated as customary. The *b* section following the double bar reworks the opening material, treating it in sequence and fragmentation and manifesting a tonal instability that contrasts with the opening. A modified reprise of the opening (*a'*) is then given over a dominant pedal at b. 48, the consequent phrase replaced by a new cadential segment, itself extended through a 'one-more-time' technique, and a miniature four-bar codetta follows the PAC at b. 72. The schematic design is clearly indicated by the double bar with repeat sign at b. 16. In fact, Mendelssohn's original conception was even more transparently constructed as a rounded binary form: the autograph manuscript shows a repeat of the second half was first indicated, the composer subsequently crossing out the double-bar and repeat sign at b. 76.³³

Only one passage slightly complicates this clarity of design, namely the eight-bar interpolation at b. 40 which directly precedes the reprise of the *a* section at b. 48. These bars could, to be sure, simply be taken to prolong the central *b* section, but their thematic material is distinct from the surrounding music, marked by a change in texture to homophony and a momentary let up in the previously constant quaver motion, and harmonically they briefly usurp G's potential function as V/Cm by treating G minor as a key in its own right. This latter aspect is in fact prepared by the previous nine bars, and perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the entire passage from b. 31 to b. 48 forms a slight digression within the larger course of the section; the dominant at b. 31 could have led directly to the reprise, but the following bars adumbrate an uncertain oscillation between V/Cm and V/Gm, ending on the latter harmony, albeit without any great conviction.

It is conceivable that a listener encountering this passage might sense an unexpected switch in formal paradigms at this point: the new idea at b. 40 might in fact constitute a sonata-form secondary theme in the dominant minor (a not unusual

choice for Mendelssohn), with the cadence to V/Gm preceding it retrospectively interpreted as an MC.³⁴ This is possible, though I suspect unlikely – at least for anything more than a moment (and the music passes by so quickly that all is over before one knows it). The preceding vacillation between V/Cm and V/Gm is too unstable for secondary theme preparation, and within four bars the new thematic idea is tending back towards C minor, before coming to rest on a predominant ii⁶ chord in this key. This is, in other words, simply an unexpected interpolation, delaying the return back to the tonic at the close of the b section by elaborating on the potential ambiguity between G as V of C minor and a key in its own right. The passage is curious, slightly anomalous, but as yet not much more than that.

Up to b. 76, then, the listener has been presented with a self-enclosed section that, given its rounded-binary construction, would clearly suggest the opening scherzo part of a larger ternary scherzo-and-trio design. The new idea that is introduced now following the close of this opening section might not initially contradict its expected identification as trio, but as the music proceeds it soon casts doubt on this reading. Formed as a kind of loose fugato with paired canonic entries on the same pitch (g–g, d–d), the passage would be ill-suited to function as trio. The syntax is just too loose knit, and with the tonal mobility, directed ever more clearly to V/Gm (V/v), at some point it becomes clear that what we are listening to is the transition section of a sonata form.³⁵ A V:HC MC at b. 106 followed by eight bars of MC-fill prolonging this dominant confirms this reading (see Ex. 7) [**insert Example 7 here**].

In other words, a rounded binary design, strongly implying scherzo-and-trio organisation, becomes merely the primary theme group of a sonata exposition; a possible binary scherzo has turned into a sonata. Such functional reinterpretation no doubt presents a mild surprise for any listener following the unfolding of the movement with generic formal schemes in mind. But this is not, it should be emphasised, a case of simultaneous conflicting interpretations: the opposing formal readings are on different hierarchical levels of the structure, one nesting inside the other. There is no reason why a primary theme group in a sonata form could not be structured as a rounded binary form: it is just that in a scherzo movement such initial indications of rounded binary design will inevitably signal to the listener that we are in one formal type – the traditional binary scherzo – whereas in fact we are in another – Mendelssohn's more habitual sonata scherzo. There is consequently not a continued dialectical tension between two antithetical readings, so much as a superseding of one by the other, which effects structural expansion.³⁶

The sonata interpretation is seemingly confirmed now with the appearance of a secondary theme in the dominant minor (b. 114) – the key that was briefly suggested by the interpolated passage within the primary-theme group. Formed as a large-scale period with sentential antecedent and consequent phrases (bb. 114–30, 131–55, the latter expanded by an extended cadential approach), the theme begins (as so often with Mendelssohn) over 6_4 harmony, continuing the dominant reached at the preceding MC and avoiding cadential resolution to the secondary key until the PAC at b. 155, which provides the EEC. Representative of Mendelssohn's fast scherzi more specifically is the monothematic quality of the design: this secondary theme reuses the characteristic running quaver figure of the primary theme's basic idea, given in the viola over a new countermelody in the first violin. Though the harmonic structure of the theme is quite altered and the phrase structure expanded, the effect is one of continuation; what with the presentation over a dominant pedal and the resumption of the driving quaver figure, the result is as much a climactic continuation of the primary theme material as a clearly distinct new theme. This lack of evident differentiation between the two main thematic groups will become a crucial feature in the recapitulatory stages of the movement.

It is at this point, following the EEC in b. 155, that we hear once more the phrase from bb. 40–8; and now we realise what it was all along: the exposition's closing theme. Prematurely appearing within the primary thematic group, this G minor interpolation in fact serves, untransposed, as a post-cadential suffix to the entire exposition. Although the parallels with the scherzo of Op. 44 No. 2 are far from exact, it is conspicuous not only that a closing theme is once again involved but how the seemingly anomalous theme is found at a location where a reprise is expected (whether with rounded binary in Op. 44 No. 3, or at a higher level with sonata form in Op. 44 No. 2). That stage in a form where something is expected to return – and doesn't – is a perfect place to surprise the listener with a new idea, highlighting the departure from generic expectations that are here, more than ever, in evidence.

But while the opening bars of this idea, contrasting in their salterello-like rhythm and simplified homophonic texture, are perfectly suited to serve as codetta to the exposition, the phrase had originally meandered away from G minor before trailing off, and just as before, the same happens now. And once again, this leads into a restatement of primary material over a dominant pedal, conforming precisely to the a' reprise of the primary group's binary form. It is as if we have rejoined the music of the exposition over a hundred bars earlier – though this time, significantly, the key has

been changed: the predominant ii^6 in C minor is altered by one note, the $a\langle\text{flat}\rangle$ replaced with a $b\langle\text{natural}\rangle$, and the new diminished triad resolves to a dominant 6_4 of A flat major. Repeated now, the opening four-bar unit is harmonically altered, moving in sequence to V/B flat, and in turn to V/C minor (b. 178). And at this point – though the listener is probably not aware for a while – we have embarked upon the sonata recapitulation.

Interpreting these bars is no easy matter, as no sooner is a function for a theme or passage suggested than it is taken back. To summarise the course of events just experienced: the apparently anomalous passage from b. 40 had seemed to fall into place when reinterpreted to serve as a closing theme at b. 156, but its original problematic function is restored when the passage leads to the resumption of the primary theme material just as it had before, and the sequential treatment of the latter in turn dovetails with a sonata recapitulation.³⁷ The erstwhile rounded binary reprise leads analogously to an actual sonata recapitulation. Whether in retrospect b. 156 actually is a closing theme is unclear and perhaps not important; it starts out like one, but becomes part of the brief retransition. The entire section from b. 156 to b. 177 is effectively a retransition in an abridged (type 1) sonata form, though this is not clear until the section is already over.

The recapitulation, too, is ingenious (see the continuation of Ex. 7). Not only is the return given over a dominant pedal, but it is joined in the midst of a harmonic sequence, and thus completely elided with the foregoing music. Moreover, at this point the primary and secondary themes are effectively fused. The first eight bars (bb. 178–85) take up the primary theme's antecedent phrase, largely in the form given at the binary reprise at b. 48 (though with some details taken from the opening section), but for the consequent phase (bb. 186–213) the music switches into a reworked version of the secondary theme, with its characteristic countermelody presented *fortissimo* in the first violin. The substitution of one for the other probably passes the listener by without notice: not only do both themes share the same running figure that permeates much of the movement, but both were previously given over dominant pedals.³⁸ Already barely distinguishable from each other, the two themes are elided into one composite thematic entity here at the recapitulation. The secondary theme had already seemed to mark an intensified version of the opening material, and the reprise of this material here, reaching the first *fortissimo*, forms the climax of the movement. It is probably only here that the listener senses that we are really back in

the recapitulation: though the music has been in the tonic for a little while, for reasons of the earlier harmonic elision this is not brought home until this point.

This secondary theme is also changed at this point (Ex. 8) [**insert Example 8 here**]. Originally formed as a large-scale period consisting of two sentential phrases, now only one phrase is given in response to the primary theme's antecedent, but with a 'one-more-time' cadential extension to the modified continuation (bb. 203–13).³⁹ In fact, every time that either primary or secondary material is given in this movement, substantial changes are made in their phrase construction, a feature which is especially pointed given how the two ideas are already so closely related as to form variants of each other. This is epitomised by the subsequent return of the secondary theme at b. 249. Heard following the reprise of the fugato transition (bb. 213–48, itself modified by a new chromatically descending 'lamento' counterpoint),⁴⁰ the thematic idea presented here would likely be taken as corresponding to the secondary theme, reflecting the order of events of the exposition. As we have seen, however, clear elements of the secondary theme have already returned in the consequent phrase of the erstwhile primary theme reprise, and this latest version of the theme is unsurprisingly highly modified in light of this. The rhythmic figure in the violins clearly draws from the secondary theme's continuation phrase, but the dynamics are drastically reduced, and the harmonic context completely reinterpreted. The harmonic design now traced – dominant alternating with tonic at one-bar intervals – is found nowhere else in previous versions of either primary or secondary themes (it effectively transposes to the tonic the V/<flat>VI–<flat>VI progression from the corresponding place in the secondary theme's continuation), and the overall progression (V–i, V–i, <flat>ii⁶–⁶₄–V⁷–I) forms a simple cadential progression, the phrase being repeated at b. 257 to arrive at the effective ESC at b. 265. But the subdued quality and reduction of texture and dynamics at this point actually calls to mind much more the primary theme, as originally presented at the start of the movement (compare bb. 249–53 with bb. 1–4), which in thematic substance is scarcely distinguishable from the secondary theme by now.

There is hence a peculiar sense that the primary and secondary themes have in certain respects been reversed in the recapitulation. While the two were never completely distinct, the first theme in the recapitulation is most strongly characterised by the use of secondary-theme material for the climactic phrase of bb. 186–213, and the secondary theme that is heard following the transition has taken on the predominant qualities of the primary theme. The result is an arch-shaped dynamic of

intensity over the course of the movement, reflected in the symmetrical dynamic layout that rises from *piano* to *fortissimo* stridency at the recapitulation before dropping back to *piano* by the end.

This movement might indeed provide a pertinent contribution to the debate concerning the contentious notion of the ‘reversed recapitulation’, in that the ambiguities arising from its interfusion of P and S material both complicate the idea of reverse recapitulation and nevertheless problematise certain theoretical strictures of Hepokoski and Darcy’s Sonata Theory. First of all, there is no real possibility of a Type 2 sonata reading to this piece, as primary-theme material is clearly given at the start of the recapitulation at b. 178. On the other hand, there is a remarkably strong PAC given at b. 213 within the erstwhile P-theme group, which, coming at the end of the reprise of what is in fact the S theme’s consequent phrase, forms the closest parallelism with the material that secured the EEC in the exposition. From a hardline Sonata-Theory perspective that takes as its overriding criterion the parallelism of structural cadence occurring alongside the recapitulation of the secondary theme – in other words, the type of argument commonly used to assert that an ostensible reverse recapitulation is actually a type 2 sonata, with any subsequent reference to primary theme material relegated to paragenetic coda space – this cadence must form the ESC and the recapitulation thus ends here; everything after this point is coda. But the clear rotational parallel of the music from b. 213 with the latter half of the exposition (bb. 76ff) would make such a reading appear absurd. Nevertheless, despite the arch-shaped dynamic to the movement as a whole, the idea of reverse recapitulation is not really adequate to the subtlety of the procedure witnessed here either. The permeation of material across subject groups, already prominent in the exposition, is taken to a degree in the recapitulation that breaks down formal distinctions based on thematic identity. Mendelssohn’s remarkable movement offers a fusion of seemingly antithetical normal and reverse recapitulatory elements.

The final section – the extensive coda of bb. 265–301 – reprises this dynamic arc *in nuce*. It effectively recalls and greatly expands on the four-bar codetta given to the primary theme at bb. 72–6 – a formal parallel that underscores the virtual reversal of primary and secondary themes in the recapitulation, since the passage now serves as the codetta to a second theme which has taken on much of the quality of the exposition’s primary theme. For much of its course running in unison across all four instruments, these atmospheric bars build successive waves of the restless quaver motive that has been running throughout both primary and secondary themes – the

common denominator between them as it were, finally liquidating this material into silence.

Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 66, third movement, *Molto Allegro quasi Presto*

A fourth and final case study is provided by the scherzo of the Second Piano Trio, Op. 66, a work written a few years after the Op. 44 quartets and Op. 49 trio. Mercurial in tone and enigmatic in structure, this movement might on first sight seem another instance of the scherzo type outlined in the preceding three examples; yet there are notable differences in the treatment of form. In the other scherzi analysed here, tensions between two alternative modes of organisation ultimately resolve to one of these forms, though the irregularities resulting from the presence of elements from the rejected scheme become part of the formal meaning of the music. In the present example, however, what initially appears clear in design becomes strained to the point where no single formal scheme proves satisfactory as an explanation, Mendelssohn treating generic forms with a notable freedom.

Sonata would seem the most likely mode of organisation given Mendelssohn's usual practice in rapid-tempo scherzi, and the early stages of the movement do nothing to dispel such expectations. An opening four-bar idea in G minor is immediately repeated, its subsequent continuation (b. 9) extended and loosened in becoming a transition to the secondary tonal area. This is not the dominant minor initially suggested in b. 13 but instead the relative major, B flat, whose arrival in b. 24 (articulated with a PAC) is elided with the start of the secondary idea. Again, however, after a pair of four-bar presentation phrases this theme's continuation turns out to be modulatory: B flat proves to be unstable, falling as an upper neighbour to V of D minor (the key initially suggested near the start of the transitional passage), which is confirmed by another PAC at b. 40. The third idea heard now has something of the character and construction of a closing theme, offering a new legato line in the violin over the semiquaver accompanimental figuration that has persisted across the entire section. A subsequent PAC in b. 52 confirms this tonality, with a brief retransition leading back to the tonic. Thus we are presented with a concise three-key sonata exposition, each stage of which is articulated with its own material, even if the first two stages are tonally mobile and run on continuously into each other. Such continuity is characteristic of Mendelssohn's scherzi: what is new here is the use of a three-key scheme (to this extent mirroring the opening movement of the piano trio, a tonal scheme also visible at the larger level of the work's movements).

As with earlier scherzi, there is a strong monothematic tendency to the themes of the exposition, with little distinct contrast offered. Even more than earlier examples, though, it should be noted how simple, even basic, the thematic material used is. The first theme, consisting of fleet semiquavers presented in canonic imitation, is little more than figuration, while the second idea is simpler still: highly repetitive and tonally elementary, this is to all intents and purposes figuration. In fact it is more or less identical to the type of generic passage inserted into numerous early nineteenth-century piano concertos after a secondary theme, commonly termed a display episode. Moreover, there is little of the internal complexity in phrasing and small-scale syntax that marks the thematic material of the scherzi of the Op. 49 Piano Trio or Quartet Op. 44 No. 2, and throughout this section – as indeed the entire movement – the music divides readily into regular four-bar phrases. What relieves the music from possible banality is the sheer speed at which proceedings go – the music is by in a flash – and the fact that all the material heard seems to be cut from the same cloth.

The return of the opening theme in the tonic (b. 58) following a brief retransition would therefore suggest the second rotation of a sonata design – most likely the development section of a sonata rondo (type 4), since at the speed adopted the scale of the movement is surely too slight to lead directly into an abridged type-1 sonata recapitulation. Such expectations are again not refuted by the design of the section, which after recycling the first theme in the tonic presents in turn a new contrapuntal idea (b. 78) and the second theme (b. 92) in the submediant E flat, before returning to V of G minor (from b. 100) and settling onto an extended dominant pedal (bb. 114ff) as if in preparation for a reprise. It is with the subsequent course of events that sonata expectations are thrown out of the window. For instead of any sonata recapitulation, what arises now is a fifty-bar section of G major that offers the most contrasting thematic material heard so far in the movement. Coming in the tonic major and so late in proceedings, it is hardly plausible that this forms a secondary theme in a sonata form structure; a large-scale B section is really the only appropriate term for this. Given that the ensuing section from b. 182 reprises the music of the scherzo, the organisation suggests that this new section constitutes the trio of a larger compound ternary design; and given that this subsequent reprise corresponds in some, though not all, respects to the sonata recapitulation expected earlier, it appears that this trio has simply been inserted into a sonata-form movement between the end of the development and the start of the recapitulation. Earlier in accounting for Op. 44 No.

2's scherzo, the possibility of hearing a trio at the end of a sonata development section was strongly rejected; but here in Op. 66 it is hard to avoid just such a reading.⁴¹ The result will be less an integration of sonata with ternary scherzo-and-trio form as a loosening of the former to the point where its principles become all-but dissolved.

It is not that the presence of a trio is a likely expectation for a listener at this point in the movement: it is simply the case that no other formal design seems apt as a description of what actually happens. Unlike in Op. 44 No. 2, this ostensible trio section is of a reasonable length – fifty bars – and evinces some melodic organisation that would justify calling it a theme in its own right. The music is still highly repetitive, featuring no fewer than seven appearances of the opening four-bar motive at its original pitch level (and four more transposed variants foreshortened to two bars, which results in 36 of the section's 50 bars being made up of its initial phrase), but the four-bar units divide into a normative structure for a trio – a written-out rounded-binary design (a a | b a' b a' → c), the final return turning into a cadential phrase that elides with the dominant pedal underpinning the return of the scherzo. There is also the sense that such contrast provided by a trio is even more appropriate in Op. 66: while the scherzo of Op. 44 No. 2 was no less monothematic, there was a concentration and intricacy to the thematic working there which impressed a certain tautness onto the movement, whereas the rather more paratactic, episodic nature of Op. 66's writing permits greater freedom. Another way of saying this is that the new trio material is likely felt as welcome by the listener, despite the fact that its arrival confounds generic formal schemes.

In basic outlines, the movement from this point on would suggest a fairly clear and, at least from a schematic perspective, unproblematic interleaving of sonata rondo with scherzo and trio forms (Table 1) [**insert Table 1 here**]. A third rotation or recapitulation of the sonata form occupies bb. 182–215, followed by a reprise of the trio in the coda (bb. 216ff), which is eventually liquidated alongside elements of the scherzo's opening theme (bb. 246–66). The formal stratagem is thus the inverse of what happens in Op. 44 No. 3: there, an erstwhile rounded-binary form scherzo becomes merely the primary group of a larger sonata exposition; here in Op. 66, the first two sections of an erstwhile sonata rondo becomes the outer scherzo section of an essentially tripartite larger scherzo-and-trio design. Despite this apparent formal clarity, though, the tonal scheme of the music after the trio interpolation is unusual, and on closer inspection neither does the arrangement of events within the following sonata section conform to what a sonata recapitulation should achieve.

The biggest drawback with the recapitulation reading is that only the primary theme is really brought back in this section. The second theme has disappeared with barely a trace (its figuration may be loosely recalled in bb. 192–5, but in harmonic layout and all other respects there is no point in common), and of the third theme there is not a hint. Admittedly the respective materials were hardly that strongly characterised as thematic entities or distinguished from the primary theme in the first place, but one would still expect some reference to them in a sonata reprise.⁴² Thus the normative function of a sonata recapitulation – the resolution in the tonic of significant material appearing in a non-tonic key in the exposition – is not accomplished. Indeed, consisting of little more than the restatement of the primary theme, which begins over a climactic dominant pedal, this abridged third rotation suggests a framing coda as much as a recapitulation.

This in turn might give us cause to revisit the preceding second, ‘developmental’ rotation. For although the third, closing theme is absent from this section, the second theme is restated, and here in E flat, the flat submediant. The precedent for recapitulating a secondary theme originally heard in the mediant a fifth lower in the submediant, combined with the fact that no subsequent reprise of this theme is ever given, might suggest that these bars in the development do service for a balancing recapitulation of the second theme. Since the development section starts out with the primary theme in the tonic, and is scarcely more loose-knit in syntax than the exposition, there is no intrinsic reason why this part could not already constitute a reprise.⁴³ This is not to say that the second rotation *is* in fact a recapitulation and the third, partial rotation a coda: merely that recapitulatory functions are diffused across the two, while the neither section is categorically identifiable with the function nominally allotted to it. The upshot is an increasing formal laxity as the movement progresses: after the interpolation of a trio section at b. 132, not only do the latter stages of the erstwhile sonata rondo movement become broken down, but its previous sections prove subject to retrospective reinterpretation.

What adds weight to this apparently unlikely reading is the fact that the reprise of the trio in the movement’s coda is likewise in the flat submediant, E flat. Admittedly the material was originally given in the tonic major, so there is no need for tonal resolution: nevertheless, the fact that this same key is chosen for the return of the trio here underscores how the flat submediant has become associated with this reprise function. It also puts into relief how free the movement’s organisation has become: not only is the music highly repetitive and paratactic at a small-scale level,

but apparently normative large-scale harmonic relations are relaxed over its course. We are left with a rather quixotic and freely formed movement, which, despite the apparently clear schematic outline in which scherzo and trio form is amalgamated with sonata rondo, gradually unravels to result in a notable looseness of structure.

Ultimately, rather than coming to a definitive formal interpretation, the ambiguities and conflicting formal suggestions do not perhaps allow us to settle on a single reading. Sonata organisation remains a relevant background, but one that is strained to the point of unorthodoxy given the lack of tonal resolution in the recapitulation. If anything, the resulting freedom of design – the heterogeneous, episodic nature of the music, in which new material is constantly introduced, though not necessarily reprised, between recurring statements of the primary theme in the tonic which acts as a kind of unifying refrain – suggests more of a pure rondo principle than the ostensible sonata rondo. Such formal laxness is unusual for Mendelssohn, even if the toying between different formal schemata encountered en route is by now familiar from earlier scherzi.

The scherzo of the C minor Piano Trio, dating from 1845, is a later instance of this movement type than the preceding three examples all composed in the late 1830s, and demonstrates a somewhat modified approach to form. Although different formal types are called up – as in the other cases, sonata-rondo and scherzo-and-trio – generic formal demands are treated with a considerably greater degree of freedom than before: the result is a loosening of the power of schematic designs to explain what happens, and a consequent reduction of the explanatory value of a typological formal analysis. In the two quartet movements, a crucial part of the music's meaning comes from understanding the formal twists and turns; ultimately in Op. 66, the listener does not really need to know the increasingly tenuous relationship to generic form, because the movement breaks down all such formal expectations by its end. Already in the scherzo of Op. 49, though, the outward play with generic formal schemes had become less significant than the small-scale intricacy of the thematic construction and manipulation of formal functions across the movement. Such tendencies in the two piano trios point to the approach adopted in a number of chamber works from the 1840s – the scherzando movements of Op. 58 and Op. 87,

and the scherzo of Op. 81. All three are formed as abridged (type 1) sonata movements with little or nothing of the ambiguity between possible formal types seen in Op. 44 Nos 2 and 3 or Op. 66. In these movements, joking at the larger level of schematic form is largely replaced by lower-level irregularities in thematic construction or the reinterpretation of functions.

In the *Allegretto scherzando* of the second Cello Sonata, Op. 58 (1843), for instance, sonata organisation is merely the tonal ground plan informing a rather sectional ABABA structure in which transitional mediation between thematic groups is minimal to the point of being all but non-existent (a feature which points to slow-movement forms, and recalls more specifically the merging of scherzo with slow movement witnessed in the middle movement of the earlier B flat Cello Sonata, Op. 45). It is not that the movement is without potential ambiguities, but these are less marked than before and scarcely seem a crucial part of the scherzo element. The first theme, for instance, is presented as a rounded-binary structure, without the subsequent conceptual shift from potential A section to expositional primary theme registering as a significant functional reinterpretation (this owing to the movement's unmistakably sectional nature). What is of most interest in the movement is how the sonata reprise (b. 93) is desynchronised from the movement's effective climax, which occurs some bars later at the lower-level binary reprise within the primary-theme group (b. 120). The central *b* section of this theme (bb. 105ff) is recapitulated over a dissonant tonic pedal, building up a tension that is released in the walking-bass of the binary-form reprise (*a'*), heard as the culmination of the preceding music. The retransitional rhetoric of sonata form has been redeployed at a smaller interthematic level within the first theme's binary design, effectively reversing the expected hierarchy of formal levels and deemphasising the actual moment of recapitulation.⁴⁴

The sonata-form basis is even more transparent in the later *Andante scherzando* from the Op. 87 Quintet (written in 1845, but left unpublished by Mendelssohn), and with this the absence of any real formal ambiguity. A rounded-binary primary theme is followed by an imitative fugato that serves as transition to the secondary theme in the relative major, with a post-cadential passage serving as retransition back to the reprise of the primary theme for the recapitulation. As in Op. 44 No. 3, the succession of a rounded-binary theme and fugato might initially suggest a scherzo followed by contrapuntal trio, but by this stage the expositional format is a familiar one in Mendelssohn's music, with any formal ambiguity not long-lasting.⁴⁵ The 'scherzando' interest here stems from the quirky and emotionally ambivalent

character of the movement, above all the uncertain metrical construction and harmonic design of the first theme, which is intensified in the coda.

Such qualities are taken further in the Op. 81 movement. Unlike the two preceding examples, this is a fast scherzo, marked *Allegro leggiero*, but otherwise has more in common with the scherzando style of Op. 58 and Op. 87 than with most of the earlier quick scherzi (including the 1842 scherzo from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which seems echoed in the latter part of Op. 81's secondary theme). Again, the formal design is uncomplicated – an abridged (type 1) sonata with the further return of the primary theme in the coda; the main interest resides in the irregular construction of the thematic material. This is especially marked in the primary theme, again fashioned in rounded-binary form, whose opening section belies the regular 4-bar phrasing with its counterintuitive melodic groupings and skewed harmonic-metric structure. The dominant harmony of the opening bar and a half serves as an extended anacrusis to the tonic that arrives on the second half of b. 2 – a hypermetric upbeat which seems to last at least half a bar too long – and the final half bar of the four-bar phrase also seems superfluous. There is something wryly off-kilter about the phrasing in this scherzo, where less regularity on the page would sound more regular to the ear.⁴⁶ Such tensions between notated and audible metre are reflected in the secondary theme (b. 35), where the melodic structure initially works across the notated metre, only gradually resolving to conform to the written barline.

Op. 81 is probably the last of Mendelssohn's scherzi, dating from the last months of his life, some ten years after the composition of the E minor Quartet.⁴⁷ What is evident from looking at the works of the intervening decade is how Mendelssohn's practice within his scherzo movements does not remain static: there is not a single formula which is repeated unchanged throughout. Even in the four case studies examined, while numerous features recur – sonata-rondo designs, monothematic, often continuous expositions, the rounded-binary primary theme and the tension between scherzo-and-trio and sonata organisation, the new theme introduced apparently in the wrong place, often at an expected point of reprise – it is conspicuous how the tension between alternative formal schemes or between expectation and compositional reality plays out in quite distinct ways in each.

To take an example, consider the idea of the new theme introduced unexpectedly and 'out of place' in the development section. An early example occurs in the scherzo of the Quintet Op. 18, which like the scherzo of Op. 44 No. 2 occurs at the end of the development section and is heard as if constituting a contrasting second

theme missing from the monothematic exposition and displaced to the wrong part of the form. The formal conceit is almost exactly the same in both; yet the new theme in the quintet will go on to function in the radically reworked recapitulation as if it were indeed the true secondary theme, whereas the new theme in Op. 44 No. 2 returns only in the coda after a full recapitulation of the exposition, in a curious ‘closing-theme’ context that merges into the start of the primary theme to attain structural closure. The formal consequences of the two similar ‘deformations’ are quite different. Likewise, Op. 18, Op. 44 No. 2, and Op. 66 all introduce their new material at the same structural point, in a position where the recapitulation is strongly expected, but no one has heard this new theme in Op. 18 as forming a trio section, whereas Krummacher reads the theme that arises in the comparable formal position in Op. 44 No. 2 as being just this – a reading rejected by me as implausible – and yet the new section starting at the same location in Op. 66 – which to my mind is transparently just such a trio – is in turn not considered by Krummacher as such. Irrespective of which analyst one chooses to believe, the discrepancy in interpretation is patent. And changing hierarchical levels, what else is occurring within the rounded-binary primary-theme group of Op. 44 No. 3 than the introduction of a new theme when a reprise is expected, the same that appears at the larger, sonata level in Op. 44 No. 2, and in each case will become the effective closing theme? One could speak in all these instances of a new theme introduced in a retransitional context at the end of a central development section. Yet, approached from the perspective of the music’s internal organisation and function, the meaning of these superficially similar layouts are quite different in each case. Neither is this even considering other uses of the new development theme in Mendelssohn’s music – from the overture to *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* to the first movement of Op. 12, the slow movement of Op. 44 No. 3, and the finales of the two piano trios – which likewise result in markedly different formal implications for each work.⁴⁸

This points in turn to a larger conclusion concerning the differing syntactic and contextual interpretations that can be given to otherwise similar schematic designs or formal ‘deformations’. To this extent, building up sonata typologies or deformational families of common structural conceits deployed is only telling half the story. What is also crucial to consider is the context in which such departures from generic formal expectations operate at the level of function and syntax: superficial similarity at the level of generic formal scheme can mask quite distinct reinterpretation of internal functions within such outlines. Ideally, of course, bottom-up and top-down

approaches should be married in accounting for form: both form as syntax and form as schema are necessary for interpreting the structural play of these mercurial musical jests.

Notes

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¹ The internal rounded-binary forms of classical minuet or scherzo sections can occasionally be expanded into sonata-like designs, but almost invariably the movement as a whole follows a compound ternary (minuet–trio–minuet) outline (the *allegretto vivace* of Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 59 No. 1 is a rare exception).

² On the problematic nature of critical constructions of Mendelssohn’s music as ‘classicistic’ see the discussion by Dahlhaus 2015, 5–6.

³ These are points that Krummacher is rightly at pains to emphasise, who highlights the limited applicability of the ‘fairy scherzo’ type to Mendelssohn’s music and insists on the development of the scherzo format in the composer’s post-1837 practice: see Krummacher 1978, pp. 252 and 423–6. Krummacher’s study is the most important and so far only extended study of Mendelssohn’s chamber music; the accounts of the scherzi are among the most insightful parts of his book and provide the only substantial precedent for the present article. On the uses and potential liabilities of Krummacher’s work for understanding Mendelssohn see Taylor 2020.

⁴ This survey starts from the Octet, written in the autumn of 1825, and does not include the B minor Piano Quartet, Op. 3, finished earlier that year. In orchestral and piano music, the sonata orientation is rather less pronounced, though tends towards the sonata by the 1840s: of the symphonies, only the ‘Scottish’ (the last to be completed) has a sonata-based scherzo – to which one should add the comparable sonata-rondo design of the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* ‘Scherzo’ (also 1842). The dance movements of the two early piano sonatas (1826 & 1827) are structured as minuet and trio (Op. 6) and as rounded binary without trio but with extended coda (Op. 106; this latter design, perhaps a proto-sonata, is also used earlier in the ‘Intermezzo’ of the F minor Piano Quartet, Op. 2).

⁵ This contrasts pointedly not only with earlier classical practice but also with that of Mendelssohn’s contemporaries. The scherzo of Fanny Hensel’s only String Quartet (1834) is ternary in construction, though complicates the design by developing the outer material in the latter stages of the contrapuntal central episode. Likewise, none

of the numerous string quartets by Louis Spohr (34, 1805–55) or George Onslow (36, c. 1807–46) has a sonata-form scherzo. Robert Schumann also favours the more traditional scherzo-and-trio or other enlarged paratactic structures (scherzo with two trios, variations) in his chamber music and symphonies. Even in the Op. 41 quartets (1842), dedicated to Mendelssohn, none of the scherzi is formed as a sonata movement – not even that of Op. 41 No. 1, which unmistakably references the sonata-form scherzo of Mendelssohn’s Op. 44 No. 3 in thematic construction and tone.

⁶ Elements of both movements – the old-world minuet and archaic contrapuntal trio – can be found earlier in the original minuet from Op. 18 (1826 version), though possibly without the same degree of irony. On these qualities of Op. 44 No. 1/ii, see Mintz 1960, pp. 12–14, and especially Krummacher 1978, pp. 261–3, and on Op. 80/ii, *ibid.*, pp. 263–6.

⁷ The two early examples of sonata-form scherzi from the chamber music – the Octet and first Quintet – are thus not treated at length here, though aspects of their designs will be raised in passing. While both are remarkable pieces they fall outside the ostensible bounds of this study, and have already received perceptive readings by Greg Vitercik, who has devoted two of his best analyses to these pieces (1992, pp. 104–20, 169–80, excerpted in 1989, pp. 333–74).

⁸ An exception is McClelland 2010.

⁹ This undercutting of the dominant conceivably relates to the strong dominant emphasis in the primary theme’s anacrusis: approaching V/D via V/V (effectively prolonged from b. 112 throughout the linear sequence) avoids overplaying this harmony, as well as adding to the insouciant ease with which this reprise is eventually effected.

¹⁰ A repeated sonata exposition is admittedly unlikely in a scherzo, but such is the brevity of the section and comparative understatement of strong thematic contrast through which the complementary key areas are articulated that one might almost mistake it for the first part of a rounded binary form (which *would* normally be repeated). Probably only the extent of post-cadential music after b. 28 makes the binary reading unlikely.

¹¹ A brief account of this movement’s transformation of material in the coda is offered by Schmalfeldt 2011, pp. 189–93.

¹² Mintz’s analysis is given in *ibid.*, pp. 258–60. He grants that at the larger formal level this scherzo is one of the clearest and least ambiguous movements in Mendelssohn’s output: ‘These conflicts do not arise on the most general and broadest

level of the structure; at this level the movement is not only perfectly clear, it is even a bit schematic.’ Instead, ‘the conflicts arise only at a detailed level.’ Krummacher likewise offers criticism of Mintz’s reading of the movement (1978, pp. 426–8).

¹³ This is in effect rephrasing a question raised by Paul Wingfield and Julian Horton in their account of Mendelssohn’s supposed sonata ‘deformations’: at what stage is it still meaningful to speak of deforming a generic model if the majority the composer’s forms do precisely this? (In Mendelssohn’s case, for instance, the recapitulation over 6_3 or 6_4 harmony seems to be an individual stylistic principle and not on each instance it occurs a salient departure from a projected generic norm.) See Wingfield and Horton 2012.

¹⁴ Krummacher once again finds this movement ‘the most significant example of the mature scherzi’, serving as his ideal-type of Mendelssohn’s practice (1978, p. 429).

¹⁵ All are PACs, with the solitary exception of the second cadence to F sharp in b. 137, which is covered by a \wedge^5 in the first violin.

¹⁶ Krummacher 1978, pp. 430, 438–9. Krummacher also views the sonata-rondo reading as compromised by the lack of real thematic contrast between the primary theme ‘refrain’ and alternating ‘couplet’ episodes – probably placing excessive emphasis on thematic determinants of form for current tastes.

¹⁷ Krummacher in fact views bb. 141–50 as just the second part of a trio that begins with the PAC into C sharp minor at b. 125; this reading is even more questionable in terms of syntax and thematic construction, and the passage would still be too insubstantial in scale to balance the surrounding scherzo.

¹⁸ Aspects of sonata and scherzo-and-trio design could conceivably be combined by letting a trio substitute for the development section in an abridged (type 1) design with central episode, but this is evidently not the case here, where a lengthy development section has already been heard.

¹⁹ A continuation phrase of the secondary theme, bb. 41–51, has something of the quality of a closing theme in its prolongational function, offering a chromatic variant of the ‘Quiescenza’ schema, but is in fact pre-cadential, directly following on from the repetition of the secondary theme’s presentation phrase.

²⁰ Rather surprisingly, Krummacher does not consider the relation with Op. 18’s scherzo in his account of the movement. For a more extensive analysis of Op. 18 see especially Vitercik 1992, pp. 169–80, and 1989 (though conversely Vitercik does not engage with any of Mendelssohn’s music after the early 1830s).

²¹ A precedent being the first movement of the Op. 18 Quintet, whose exposition modulates from A major to the dominant E, only to slip unexpectedly to the submediant F sharp minor, in which key the exposition ends. The understanding of this scherzo's development section as offering in a manner a 'second exposition' parallels an earlier reading I have made of the opening movement of the Quartet Op. 12 (Taylor 2011, ch. 5).

²² See Taylor 2011, pp. 174–6 and 246–7.

²³ This is not to say that the theme at b. 141 *is* the exposition's closing theme, which has been simply displaced – the tonal disparity points to this not being the case – and neither would I propose too strongly that the development section could really serve as an alternative 'second exposition'. Rather, it points to the fact that the theme could easily function as a closing theme, and in a sense does. This is closing-theme-like material and is heard in a post-cadential context that – in another rotation – might have served as closing theme.

²⁴ Krummacher 1978, p. 435, who similarly observes that this movement can virtually be considered monothematic (p. 255). As noted above, this passage has the quality of a closing theme, but is actually pre-cadential and in form-functional terms constitutes a continuation of the preceding bars.

²⁵ Thus bb. 1–25 form a large-scale sentence with periodic presentation, an increasingly typical structure in Romantic organisation (see for instance Vande Moortele 2013, p. 415).

²⁶ This lack of internal contrast is especially brought out in Krummacher's reading of the movement (p. 424). Owing to his older view of sonata form as essentially motivated by thematic dualism, Krummacher finds the lack of a contrasting secondary theme or sonata-rondo episode abnormalities that even put the sonata form basis of the movement in doubt. While this reading seems exaggerated from a contemporary perspective, it nevertheless underscores the remarkably homogenous quality of Mendelssohn's movement up to b. 141.

²⁷ One might easily imagine a more continuous and thematically undifferentiated design that avoided the strong PAC at b. 125, for instance by reinterpreting the reiterated A major harmony in bb. 117 & 120 as IV in E major, thus leading back to the reprise much earlier and avoiding the stalemate of bb. 125–150. The fact that Mendelssohn does bring out the cadence to C sharp with such force marks out this event as salient, and sets up the rather more intriguing design of the movement with the contrast provided by the new lyrical idea at b. 141.

²⁸ From a Schenkerian perspective the I^7 at b. 151 would likely constitute an ‘apparent’ tonic return, subordinate to the main harmonic progression from the tonicized VI of the preceding section to the IV of b. 152. See for instance Rapoport 2012, pp. 94–5.

²⁹ See Krummacher 1978, pp. 253–4, for a complementary account of the primary theme’s irregular construction.

³⁰ Something of this quality is perhaps brought out from observing how the eighth bar of the theme seems one too many – an extension in the phrase length, despite thus adding up to an apparently normative eight-bar antecedent phrase. This in turn pinpoints how b. 4 seems to suggest the start of a four-bar subphrase containing the contrasting idea, implying a preceding four-bar basic idea. In Riemannian terms the whole antecedent could thus be considered to start on the second bar of a normative eight-bar phrase, with the eighth bar extended into an additional ninth (this extension helping regain the initial register for the start of the consequent).

³¹ The subdominant inflection at the onset of the recapitulation returns soon after in b. 162, the consequent phrase moving to IV in order to restate the transition down a fifth and thus facilitate the return of the secondary material in the tonic.

³² In this cadential sense, the new theme takes on something of a secondary theme function, rather than closing theme function (as in the development).

³³ See Krummacher 1978, p. 122.

³⁴ Krummacher 1978, p. 444 also considers this possibility, though similarly rejects it.

³⁵ The use of fugato or imitative contrapuntal texture for a transition passage in sonata form is not unusual for Mendelssohn: a similar plan is adopted in the *scherzando* of Op. 87 a few years later.

³⁶ In other words this is not a case of ‘Becoming’ in the strong (or purportedly ‘Hegelian’) meaning of the term, promulgated by Janet Schmalfeldt (2011) following the work of Carl Dahlhaus. Julian Horton’s notion of structural ‘proliferation’ is rather more appropriate here (see especially Horton 2020).

³⁷ The question remains as to why bb. 166–77 are necessary, since if Mendelssohn had not made the tiny harmonic alterations to the predominant chord in bb. 163–5, the music would have already lead directly back to V/C minor as before at bb. 46–8; the recapitulation at b. 178 could have occurred more easily at 166 without making any changes to the music. A desire to mislead the listener could again be in evidence: the new A flat harmony and altered phrase structure might suggest that a development section is underway – an interpretive move that is subsequently overturned by the

precipitous reprise at b. 178. Added to which, approaching the recapitulatory harmony by sequence adds a surprise element to the return: the thematic reprise is already underway for some time before the harmonic reprise, thus obscuring the moment of double return within an ongoing sequence.

³⁸ Significantly, though, the phrase from the secondary theme, originally given over a dominant pedal at b. 114, is texturally redistributed at the recapitulation to allow resolution to root-position tonic harmony in the bass, underscoring how the reprise of this theme forms the decisive point of return.

³⁹ The reemphasis on A flat major harmony here in the climactic part of the phrase reengages with this same harmony heard unexpectedly forty bars earlier as the closing theme gave way to retransition.

⁴⁰ The new contrapuntal line perhaps derives from the descending chromatic tetrachord in the bass of bb. 144–53 – the extension to the secondary theme’s consequent phrase, which is not heard in the form of this theme that directly precedes this transition in the recapitulation; it also, however, takes up a quality implicit in the original fugato theme, which traces a diatonic four-note descent (a<flat>–g–f–e<flat>). Thus this diatonic descent is heard now in parallel sixths against the chromatic descent in diminished note values.

⁴¹ Krummacher likewise picks up the trio aspect of this new section, but does not consider the relation of the preceding scherzo to sonata form, reading Op. 66 as a straightforward scherzo and trio; he thus makes no connection between this work and Op. 44 No. 2, even though Op. 66 provides a much stronger example of the design he described in the quartet. See Krummacher 1978, p. 459.

⁴² Even if the ‘second theme’ is treated as ultimately transitional in function, by virtue of articulating the second tonal area of a three-key exposition, and thus excisable, one would expect the closing theme to return.

⁴³ The one point against such a reading is the presence of the new contrapuntal idea in bb. 78–89: such a new theme is probably more likely in a development section, though such is the episodic nature of the movement that such distinctions are of less moment here.

⁴⁴ To this extent Op. 58/ii parallels the strategy seen earlier in Op. 44 No. 3/ii, where the climax is displaced to the latter part of the first recapitulated theme.

⁴⁵ The opening thematic group of Op. 87/ii is also significantly shorter than Op. 44 No. 3/ii, even at the rather slower tempo, and thus feels much less substantial as a potential entire scherzo section.

⁴⁶ For a longer account of this movement's irregular thematic construction and mosaic-like addition of motivic particles see Krummacher 1978, pp. 459–62 (though the author appears confused by the larger form adopted, tentatively suggesting a loose sonata-rondo structure in a movement which clearly falls into an abridged sonata design with P-based coda).

⁴⁷ The exact chronology of Op. 80 and 81 is unclear, though the manuscript sources reveal the scherzo of Op. 80 was started in July 1847, before the opening variation movement of the Op. 81 fragment was written (a sketch of the latter's opening theme is jotted down on the final page of the Op. 80 scherzo autograph [Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Krakow, Mus. ms. autogr. Mendelssohn 44/9, 13r]).

⁴⁸ For instance, when the new theme occurs earlier in the development section in the first movement of the Quartet Op. 12, the effect is quite different from that in Op. 44 No. 2, because a sonata rondo design is less expected there, and the listener assumes he or she is hearing the exposition repeat. The possibility that the developmental second rotation of Op. 44 No. 2 could be heard as an alternative, second exposition, is hence rather stronger in Op. 12 than in the later movement.

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