

Transition

At the heart of the tonal drama in the exposition of a full-movement form (sonata, concerto, rondo, etc.) lies the conflict between the home key and its rival subordinate key. The formal functions of main theme and subordinate theme are responsible for establishing and confirming these tonalities. Standing between these functions is the *transition*, which serves to destabilize the home key so that the subordinate key can emerge as a competing tonality in the exposition.¹ In addition, the transition loosens the form established by the tight-knit main theme, imparts greater rhythmic continuity and momentum to the movement, and, especially toward its end, liquidates the characteristic melodic-motivic material in order to "clear the stage" for the entrance of the subordinate theme.

Most often, the transition destabilizes the home key through the process of modulation, so that the home key is eventually given up and replaced by the subordinate key. But the transition need not modulate: if the main theme has tonic as its harmonic goal (by closing with an authentic cadence), the transition may undermine this tonal stability simply by leading to the home-key dominant, a decidedly weaker harmonic goal. These two tonal procedures characterize the main categories of transition, termed *modulating* and *nonmodulating*, respectively. A third category combines these two types into a single *two-part transition*.

The harmonic goal of a transition is normally dominant—of the subordinate key, in the case of a modulating transition, or of the home key, in the case of a nonmodulating one. This dominant may be articulated by a half cadence but may also appear in ways that are noncadential. The transition thus closes somewhat like the B section of a small ternary.² Unlike main and subordinate themes, a transition need not end with a cadence. For this reason, it is not considered a genuine theme but, rather, a *themelike unit* within the exposition.

As an integral unit of form, a transition is constructed out of the same intrathematic functions associated with main and subordinate themes. The sentential functions of presentation, continuation, and cadential are most commonly employed. The periodic function of antecedent occurs now and then,³ but a true consequent (which by its

very nature must lead to a tonic goal, an authentic cadence) is seldom found. Although introductions are rare, a postcadential standing on the dominant appears at the end of most transitions. As in the case of subordinate themes, the ternary functions of exposition, contrasting middle, and recapitulation are not used in transitions (see chap. 8, n. 9).

A transition is more loosely organized than its preceding main theme.⁴ Many of the devices of formal loosening described in the previous chapter are applicable to transitions—extended continuation, omission of initiating function, modal shift, tonicization of remote regions, and expanded cadential progressions. Some of the loosening techniques associated with subordinate themes, however, are not appropriate to transitions. For example, a transition seldom begins with a standing on the dominant, since most main themes close with tonic harmony, which is usually continued into the beginning of the transition.⁵ (Even when the main theme ends with dominant harmony, the transition most always begins with tonic.) A string of evaded cadences, so common with subordinate themes, rarely is found in transitions, since this technique is connected with an impending authentic cadence, not with a half cadence ending a transition. Finally, transitions are often quite short, sometimes lasting as little as four measures.⁶ The massive expansions of form typical of subordinate themes are seldom encountered with transitions.

In comparison with main themes, transitions less often contain melodic material that would be characterized as tuneful (except, of course, when beginning with the preceding main-theme material).⁷ Rather, they frequently feature "passage-work"—arpeggiations and scale patterns projecting a "brilliant style."⁸ Transitions are often the first place in the movement where a continuous rhythmic accompaniment (such as an "Alberti" bass) is employed. Furthermore, a transition is typically characterized by a significant increase in dynamic intensity and forward drive. Indeed, the beginning of the transition is often the moment when the movement seems to be "getting under way." The frequent use of structural elision with the end of the main theme and a sudden change from piano to forte also helps create the impression of high energy at the beginning of the transition.

EXAMPLE 9.1 Mozart, Violin Sonata in C, K. 403/385c, i, 1-9

Main Theme
"Consequent" presentation
b.i.

Transition (nonmodulating)
"Antecedent" presentation
b.i.

Allegro moderato
staccato

continuation

C: I II $\frac{4}{2}$ V $\frac{3}{2}$ } I VI II $\frac{6}{4}$ V $\frac{7}{4}$ I

PAC

[Subordinate Theme]

continuation

I — IV V($\frac{4}{2}$ $\frac{3}{2}$) G: I...
(V)

HC

EXAMPLE 9.2 (a) Haydn, Piano Sonata in C, Hob. XVI:21, ii, 7-12; (b) mm. 1-4

Transition
b.i. cadential

Adagio

a)

F: I VII $\frac{3}{4}$ { VI $\frac{6}{4}$ (V) II $\frac{6}{4}$ } V($\frac{4}{2}$ [7]) $\frac{4}{2}$ — [7] $\frac{4}{2}$ — $\frac{3}{2}$

dominant arrival (premature)

Main Theme
compound basic idea
b.i.

b)

F: I — V VI

MODULATING VERSUS NONMODULATING TRANSITION

Most transitions can be divided into two main categories based on their underlying tonal structure. The majority of transitions modulate from the home key to the subordinate key, although a significant minority remain in the home key. Both types end with dominant harmony and feature similar loosening techniques. (Two-part transitions, which combine a nonmodulating and modulating transition, make up a third category, described at the end of this chapter.)

Modulating Transition

The most thorough way of destabilizing the home key is to abandon it entirely by modulating to the subordinate key. Each movement finds its own specific way of modulating, but some general procedures are regularly encountered.⁹

In major-mode movements, the subordinate key (almost always the dominant region of the home key) is usually reached by means of a *pivot-chord* modulation. A simple pivot sees the home-key tonic becoming the subdominant of the subordinate key, which then can move easily to the dominant.¹⁰ Often, there is a prominent move to VI, which pivots to become a pre-dominant II in the subordinate key.¹¹ Sequential progressions also are effective in creating a smooth modulation to the new key.¹²

In minor-mode movements, the modulation to the relative major (the conventional subordinate key) frequently involves reinterpreting VI as IV, which then progresses to V. Another common pivot sees IV in the home key becoming II in the new key.¹³ If the subordinate key is the minor dominant, then the modulation usually takes place along lines similar to major-mode movements.

Nonmodulating Transition

The primary function of a transition—to destabilize the home key—can be achieved without necessarily abandoning that key. If the main theme ends with tonic harmony of an authentic cadence, the home key can still be significantly weakened by allowing the transition to conclude on dominant harmony. The subordinate theme then begins directly in the subordinate key.¹⁴ Nonmodulating transitions are found most often in major-mode movements, since the final dominant can simply be sustained as the tonic of the new key.¹⁵

EXAMPLE 9.1: The main theme, built as an eight-measure sentence ($R = \frac{1}{2}N$), ends with a perfect authentic cadence in measure 4. The theme begins to be repeated in the following measures, but when the sentence closes instead with a half cadence, we perceive a distinct weakening of the home key in a manner that suggests transition function. The G-major harmony from the end of measure 8

is continued at the start of the next thematic unit, but this harmony now is fully interpreted as tonic of the subordinate key. We can thus hear this new unit as a subordinate theme and confirm our suspicions that the preceding unit is a nonmodulating transition. (The possibility of hearing measures 1–8 as a “reversed period”—a consequent followed by an antecedent—is considered shortly in connection with transitions that begin with main theme material.)¹⁶

If the main theme closes with a half cadence, a nonmodulating transition is not normally used: a second ending on the dominant of the home key would not, in itself, represent a destabilization of that key.¹⁷

Because a nonmodulating transition does not bring the dominant of the new key before the beginning of the subordinate theme, an internal half cadence and standing on the dominant often appear in the subordinate theme proper (see chap. 8).

BEGINNING THE TRANSITION

Most transitions open in one of four main ways: with new material supported by the home-key tonic, with the opening material of the main theme, with a false closing section made up of codettas to the main theme, or with a sudden shift to a nontonic region of the home key. The first two procedures account for the majority of transitions; the third and fourth procedures are less common. The choice of beginning depends to some extent on the structure of the preceding main theme (group), especially how it ends.

New material. Many transitions in the classical literature begin with new material supported by the home-key tonic. This opening is commonly used after the main theme has closed with a perfect authentic cadence, less often after a half cadence. At first, the listener cannot be sure whether the new material represents a transition or possibly a second main theme, for only the subsequent modulation to the new key or a goal dominant in the home key can confirm that a transition has indeed been under way. (A second main theme would close with another perfect authentic cadence in the home key.)¹⁸

EXAMPLE 9.2: The transition opens in measures 7–8 with a new two-measure basic idea. To be sure, this “new” idea clearly derives from the opening basic idea (ex. 9.2b, mm. 1–2), in that it consists of a scalar descent and closes with the same rhythmic gesture. Yet the melodic scale-degrees, the harmonic support, and the accompanimental setting of measures 7–8 (ex. 9.2a) are sufficiently different to project the sense of a new beginning (of the transition) rather than a repetition (of the main theme).¹⁹

Main-theme material. This opening is typically employed when the main theme ends with a half cadence. In

EXAMPLE 9.3 Beethoven, Piano Sonata in G Minor, Op. 49/1, i, 1-17

Main Theme
Antecedent presentation

b.i.

continuation

Transition
Consequent (failed) presentation

b.i. (fr. M.T.)

Andante

p *mf* *mf*

g: I V⁷ I IV I⁶ V^{6/5} I II⁶ V (I^{6/4} I^{6/4}) I ...

[HC]

continuation

[Subordinate Theme]

b.i.

fp *cresc.* *p* *dolce*

Bb: { IV II VII⁶ I⁶ II⁶ V^{6/5} V V^{6/5} I

[HC]

EXAMPLE 9.4 Haydn, Piano Trio in E-flat, Hob. XV:30, i, 15-44

[Main Theme]

cad.

Transition (part 1)
false closing section ⇒ presentation (extended)
cod. ⇒ b.i.

Allegro moderato

f *pm* *p*

E♭: IV V I pcd. ...

[PAC] elided

continuation

standing on the dominant

VI ... V⁷ V

[HC] elided

Transition (part 2)

new idea

standing on the dominant

p *cresc.*

Bb: { VI^{6/5} II^{6/5} (V) V⁷ VII⁷ V

[HC] elided

[Subordinate Theme]

fp I ...

such cases, we have the initial impression that the main theme is not yet over. Since the half cadence can be heard to close an antecedent unit, the return of the opening basic idea implies the start of a consequent. When the music no longer corresponds to the antecedent and modulates to the new key, we understand in retrospect that the return of the basic idea marked the beginning of the transition and that the half cadence truly closed the main theme.²⁰

EXAMPLE 9.3: The half cadence in measure 8 closes a simple sentence. The sentence begins to be repeated, thus suggesting the formation of a sixteen-measure period. But the modulation at measure 12 and the ending with another half cadence at measure 15 prompt the listener to reinterpret the first sentence as a main theme and the second sentence as a transition.

Analysts might be tempted to locate the beginning of the transition at measure 12, the moment when the “consequent” of the main theme departs from its course and the modulation takes place. To be sure, this moment marks the end of main-theme material, but from a more strictly formal point of view, this moment represents neither an end (of the main theme) nor a beginning (of the transition). Rather, measure 12 stands very much in the middle of a formal process, one that clearly begins at measure 9.²¹

The strategy of beginning the transition like a repetition of the main theme can also be used when the latter has closed with an authentic cadence. Frequently in such cases, the beginning of the transition elides with the end of the main theme.²² If the transition is nonmodulatory, the combined main theme and transition can sometimes give the impression of being a kind of “reversed period” (i.e., a consequent followed by an antecedent).²³

EXAMPLE 9.1: As discussed, the opening four measures are constructed as a sentence ($R = \frac{1}{2}N$) ending with a perfect authentic cadence. The sentence is repeated in the following four measures but ends this time with a half cadence in measure 8. The overall structure suggests a sixteen-measure period whose constituent functions have been reversed. This use of *phrase* functional labels is fine as far as it goes, but it leaves open the question of how logical it can be for the composer simply to reverse syntactical units. When we recognize that the two units have specific *thematic* functions, namely that of a main theme followed by a nonmodulating transition, then the formal syntax becomes more convincing. Some details of pitch structure in this example suggest that “re-reversing” the units into a normative antecedent–consequent succession would not be entirely satisfactory. Note that the second unit introduces a number of chromatic embellishments (the A♯ at the end of m. 6; the F♯ and B♯ in m. 7). This chromatically inflected antecedent would unlikely be followed by a purely diatonic consequent of a regular period. Thematically, however, the chromaticism contributes to destabilizing the home key, thus helping to fulfill one of the central functions of a transition.²⁴

False closing section. A main theme that ends with a perfect authentic cadence can be followed by a closing

section consisting of codettas. When this occurs, the end of the closing section and the subsequent beginning of the transition usually are separated by a distinct break in rhythmic motion.²⁵ On occasion, however, such codettas merge directly into material that no longer seems part of a closing section but, rather, is more typical of a transition. In these cases, the codettas appear at first to have a post-cadential function in relation to the main theme, but they are then understood retrospectively to initiate (usually as a presentation) the transition proper. We can thus speak of the codettas forming a false closing section, as defined in the previous chapter in connection with subordinate themes.

EXAMPLE 9.4: The main theme closes with a perfect authentic cadence on the downbeat of measure 16. At this same moment, the violin sounds a new two-measure idea of obvious codetta character and repeats it in measures 18–19. The piano then takes over the same music in a somewhat embellished manner at measure 20. Just before reaching completion, however, the music moves off to VI (m. 24), which signals that the preceding passage, which seemed like a closing section to the main theme, functions instead as the beginning of the transition.²⁶

It sometimes is difficult to determine whether codetta material forms a genuine closing section to the main theme or a false closing section to begin the transition. In such cases, an analysis of the grouping structure can be helpful. As a general rule, the structural beginning of a thematic unit brings a moderate-size unit (two to four measures in length). However, the presence of small, fragmented units normally represents a thematic continuation, rarely a new beginning. Therefore, if the codettas in question are followed by a larger unit, they probably belong to a separate closing section independent of the transition, whose beginning is articulated by the new, larger group. But if the codettas are followed by a smaller unit, they probably form a false closing section to begin the transition.

EXAMPLE 9.5: The end of the main theme on the downbeat of measure 8 leads directly into material that has the standard characteristics of a codetta, including a typical pedal-point prolongation of the tonic that emphasizes the subdominant (cf. the paradigm in ex. 2.1b). The resulting four-measure closing section can, however, be reinterpreted as a presentation phrase to begin the transition when, at measure 12, the fragmentation into one-measure units and the sudden acceleration of surface rhythm clearly express continuation function.

Nontonic region. Most transitions begin with tonic of the home key to provide a firm footing for the later destabilization of tonality. In some compositional contexts, however, harmonic stability at the opening of the transition might be unnecessary or even redundant. If the main-theme area strongly emphasizes tonic harmony—through the use of a

Beethoven
C minor
Sonata
op. 10/1
iii
non-
modulatory
trans. ✓

EXAMPLE 9.5 Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 10/1, iii, 8-18

[M.T.] Transition (non-modulating)
false closing section ⇒ presentation
cod. ⇒ b.i.

continuation frag.

Prestissimo
p
c: I ped.
PAC

frag.

standing on the dominant

[Subordinate Theme]
b.i.

I (V) I V (1) V (1) V (1) V Eb: (V) I (V₂ 1⁶) V₃
dominant arrival (III)

EXAMPLE 9.6 Mozart, Piano Sonata in F, K. 332/300k, i, 19-27

[Main Theme 2]
cad. closing section cod. cod.

Transition
compound basic idea b.i.

c.i. c.b.i. (repeated)

Allegro

F: I⁶ V⁷ I V I V I V⁶ VI VII⁴ C: { VI⁶ II⁶ (V)

PAC

↑ interesting R.N.

EXAMPLE 9.7 Haydn, String Quartet in B-flat, Op. 50/1, iv, 13-34

[Main Theme] consequent b.i.

Transition
cad. idea new idea (fr. cad.)

standing on the dominant

[Sub. Th.]

Vivace

Bb: I VI V⁷ I V₂ F: { I⁶ IV⁶ V₃ I V₃ I VII⁶ V HC

(IV⁶) V...

I cresc.

closing section or multiple main themes (or both)—the transition may begin directly in a nontonic region of the home key in order to advance the process of tonal destabilization.

The nontonic region used in the majority of cases is the submediant. This harmony is particularly effective because it creates an immediate modal contrast and can easily function as a pivot to the new key. Yet at the same time, VI continues to function as a tonic substitute, thus making it an appropriate harmony to project a sense of formal initiation for the transition.

EXAMPLE 9.6: The main-theme group consists of two themes, each ending with a perfect authentic cadence. Moreover, the cadence of the second main theme (mm. 19–20) is followed by two codettas of one measure each. As a result of this emphasis on the home-key tonic, it is not surprising that the transition starts with VI at measure 23. That this moment represents a new beginning is made clear by the change from one-measure codettas (mm. 21–22) to a four-measure compound basic idea (mm. 23–26) and by the abrupt shift to forte dynamic and *Sturm und Drang* style.²⁷

Unusual Beginnings. Whereas the majority of transitions begin in the ways just described, some different procedures are employed now and then. Three, in particular, occur frequently enough to warrant illustration.

1. Beginning with the cadential idea of the main theme.

EXAMPLE 9.7: The main theme closes with a perfect authentic cadence in measure 16; the true melodic line lies in the second violin (the alto voice in mm. 15–16). (The first violin plays a newly added subsidiary idea.) The transition begins by repeating the cadential gesture in measures 17–18 and develops this idea all the way until the half cadence at measure 24. The accompanying voices sound the head motive “a” from the basic idea of the main theme.²⁸

2. Beginning like a previous B section.

EXAMPLE 9.8: The main theme is constructed as a small ternary (see ex. 6.10). The upbeat to measure 29 brings back music from the beginning of the contrasting middle (one octave higher) and thus suggests that the B and A' sections might be repeated, as sometimes happens in the rounded binary version of the small ternary form. But the supporting V⁷/VI harmony, which gave the impression of being the “wrong” dominant back at measures 10–15, now serves as the “real” (and only!) harmony of the transition.

The use of a single harmony in a transition is most unusual. Beethoven compensates for the lack of harmonic progression by writing a subordinate theme that, as discussed in the previous chapter, creates a more definite sense of modulation (see ex. 8.18). In this respect, the modulating subordinate theme also possesses a degree of transition function.²⁹

3. Beginning like an A' section.

EXAMPLE 9.9: Measures 1–8 and 9–18 make up the exposition and contrasting middle of a small ternary. (The internal organization of the exposition is most unconventional, especially since it is not even clear that it closes with a perfect authentic cadence; in light of what follows, however, the opening eight measures must be interpreted as an A section.) The return to the basic idea at measure 19 signals an obvious recapitulation, one that would normally bring an authentic cadence to close the main theme. But the melodic D[♯] in measure 22 steers the music toward the subordinate key, and the section closes instead with a half cadence in measure 29. The recapitulation of the ternary is thus left incomplete, and we understand retrospectively that the functional beginning of a modulating transition occurs at measure 19.³⁰

ENDING THE TRANSITION

The close of the transition is often marked by a liquidation of melodic–motivic material, a reduction in texture, and sometimes (but not always) a break in rhythmic activity to set off the entrance of the subordinate theme. The final harmony is a dominant—of either the subordinate key or the home key. Most often this dominant arises in a half-cadential progression, and the appearance of that harmony creates a genuine half cadence. Sometimes the dominant cannot be considered cadential because it is inverted, contains a dissonant seventh, or does not correspond to the “end” of the prevailing phrase-structural processes. At other times, the final dominant does not even belong to a recognizable cadential progression but comes instead as the last link of a sequential chain. In very few cases, the dominant, by resolving quickly and without interruption to the tonic at the beginning of the subordinate theme, is not perceived as an “arrival” of any kind.

The final dominant of the transition is usually given temporal emphasis in order to arouse the listener's expectation for a tonic resolution. A number of techniques can be used to stretch out the dominant in time. Most often a standing on the dominant bringing new melodic–motivic material either follows, or elides with, the half cadence. A somewhat different way of creating a standing on the dominant consists of repeating the half-cadence idea several times in succession. In those instances when the final dominant is not created out of a half-cadential progression, the dominant is often elongated (sometimes with a fermata) relative to the prior harmonies in order to give an impression of being an “ending” harmony nonetheless.

The following discussion of transition endings is organized along a continuum of possibilities from the clearest half-cadential articulation at one extreme to the complete absence of a concluding function at the other extreme.

EXAMPLE 9.8 Beethoven, Piano Sonata in E-flat, Op. 31/3, ii, 28-35

[M.T.] Transition standing on the dominant new idea [Sub. Th.] a tempo

Allegretto vivace *pp* *poco ritard.* *a tempo*

Ab: I⁶ V I V⁷/V¹ F: I (VI)

EXAMPLE 9.9 Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C, Op. 2/3, iv, 1-29

see p. 61 for compound basic idea: a b.i. and c.i. that does not close w/ a cadence

Main Theme
 [A] compound basic idea b.i. consequent (?) b.i. c.i. [B] standing on the dominant

Allegro assai *p* *ff*

C: I V V (PAC ?)

[A'] ⇒ Transition compound basic idea b.i. c.i. continuation

V V *ff* V G: { III⁶ VI⁶... (V)

V⁶ VII⁶ V HC

ABA' - like a small ternary, except the A' becomes the transition

Half Cadence

A transition can be concluded most definitively by means of a half cadence. According to the rule, the dominant of a half cadence must initially appear as a triad in root position. A subsequent prolongation, however, may introduce a dissonant seventh and invert the harmony. The half cadence closing a transition is usually followed by a postcadential standing on the dominant, one that may become highly extended. Sometimes, and especially in slow movements, a standing on the dominant is omitted, and the subordinate theme immediately follows the half cadence (see ex. 9.1, m. 8, and ex. 9.3, m. 15).

EXAMPLE 9.7: The transition closes with a half cadence in measure 24. The subsequent standing on the dominant features accented neighboring chords built over the lowered sixth degree of the new key. Although the melodic line at the end of the transition leads decisively to a tonic harmony at measure 34, this moment must not be interpreted as an imperfect authentic cadence. The harmony prolonged from measure 24 on is the *ultimate* dominant of a half-cadential progression, not a *penultimate* dominant of an authentic cadential progression.

EXAMPLE 9.10: The modulation to F major occurs immediately at the start of the transition, and the new key is confirmed by the half-cadential progression beginning with I^6 in measure 20. The half cadence at measure 22 is then followed by a multiphrase standing on the dominant. The first phrase (mm. 22–25) consists of two repetitions of the cadential idea itself. The second phrase (mm. 26–29) features a change to triplet rhythm in the upper part and the use of neighboring secondary dominants. The final phrase (mm. 30–32) further accelerates the rhythm by means of sixteenth notes and introduces the dissonant seventh.

Because the cadential arrival at measure 22 is immediately followed by repetitions of the half-cadential idea, the sense of an ending at that measure is somewhat weakened. Indeed, the listener who focuses primarily on melodic and textural content might well believe that the change of material at measure 26 marks the structural close of the transition. But the harmonic content clearly points to measure 22 as the true cadence establishing closure. This discrepancy between the cadential arrival and a melodic-motivic change is a loosening trait typical of transition sections. Even more obvious discrepancies of this kind are considered shortly in connection with premature dominant arrivals.

One might object to the reading of a cadence in measure 22 by comparing these repeated half-cadence ideas with the “one more time technique,” a situation in which a true authentic cadence does not occur until the final repetition. But the latter technique involves cadential evasion, in which the final harmony of the cadential progression is not understood to arrive (and thus to define cadential closure) until the last repetition. In the case of the repeated half-cadence ideas of this transition, the dominant harmony on the downbeat of measure 22 is perceived as the final harmony of the progression (and not at all as an initial harmony), thus marking a cadential arrival at that point. (See also ex. 1.7, mm. 16–20.)³¹

Dominant Arrival

Unlike a main theme or a subordinate theme, a transition need not necessarily end with a cadence. In some cases, a half-cadential progression is present, but for a variety of reasons, the appearance of the final dominant fails to create a true cadence. In other cases, a cadential progression is absent, yet the final dominant still gives the impression of being an ending harmony. As explained earlier in chapter 6, the term *dominant arrival* distinguishes such situations from actual half cadences.

Presence of a cadential progression. Various factors can obscure, or even destroy, true cadential closure even when a half-cadential progression is present at the end of the transition.

EXAMPLE 9.2: A pre-dominant II^6 in measure 9 leads in the following measure to a cadential six-four. In a typical half cadence, the six-four would resolve quickly to a five-three, and the moment of cadential arrival is easily associated with the entrance of the root of the dominant in the bass voice (i.e., with the appearance of the six-four chord) (see ex. 9.1, m. 8). In this example, the six-four chord is itself prolonged (by neighboring dominant sevenths) for more than two measures before resolving to the five-three position on the second beat of measure 12. The resulting noncongruence of the harmonic arrival (m. 10) and the melodic-motivic arrival (m. 12) obscures the sense of half cadence, and since the dominant harmony appears before the end of the phrase unit, we can speak of a *premature* dominant arrival in measure 10. (See also ex. 8.14, m. 36.)

EXAMPLE 9.5: A half-cadential progression may sometimes consist simply of I moving directly to V (as in ex. 4.3, m. 4). The very end of the transition (m. 16) brings such a progression, and so we might be tempted to recognize a half cadence at that point. But the preceding music, from as early as measure 12, also contains a series of $I-V$ progressions, and accordingly, we might ask whether they create half cadences as well. Since the chords in the second half of measures 12 and 13 clearly function as subordinate harmonies that help prolong tonic from the beginning of the transition, these dominants cannot represent moments of half cadence. The same could initially be said for the dominant on the third quarter-note beat of measure 14. But the following tonic, coming as it does “too early” in comparison with the pattern of alternating harmonies set up thus far, seems to be subordinate in a dominant prolongation continuing into measures 15 and 16. The dominants in these measures have the potential of being final chords of a half cadence, but none can claim any special cadential status over the others. On the contrary, the music in these measures sounds like a standing on the dominant. According to this interpretation, a half cadence would appear with the dominant on the second half of measure 14. But as we observed, this dominant sounds like a primary harmony only in retrospect, for on its first appearance, it seems subordinate to a tonic prolongation. The change in melodic-motivic material at this moment, however, at least supports the notion of a dominant arrival, if not a clear-cut half cadence.³²

Allegretto

PAC
 IV
 V⁷
 I⁶
 II⁶
 (V⁷)
 V
 I⁶
 HC
 II⁶
 (V⁷)
 V...

(phrase 2)

(phrase 3)

V (V⁷) V (V⁷) V... V⁷

EXAMPLE 9.11 (a) Beethoven, Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 36, i, 57–63; (b) mm. 34–41

Transition

model sequence standing on the dominant

Allegro con brio

a) 57 59 60 61 62 63

D: I A: { bVI (V) bII } V⁷ } dominant arrival

Main Theme

Allegro con brio

b) 34 36 37 40 41

fp *cresc.* *p*

Absence of a cadential progression. The final dominant of a transition is not always achieved by a genuine half-cadential progression. Sometimes the progression is in the making but fails to be fully realized because the final dominant includes a dissonant seventh.³³ At other times, a cadential progression is not even implied when the final dominant appears. In both cases, the dominant can appear to be an ending harmony nonetheless, because (among other possibilities) it may mark what sounds like the beginning of a standing on the dominant, it may feature liquidation and a reduction in texture, or it may be especially elongated relative to its preceding harmonies.

EXAMPLE 9.11: The goal dominant of the transition arrives at measure 61 in a noncadential manner by appearing in first inversion. Immediately thereafter, the bass takes up the root of the harmony, which is prolonged for eleven measures (only three of which are shown in the example). The complete change of musical material following the dominant arrival gives the impression of being a typical standing on the dominant, despite the lack of cadential articulation.

Note that the dominant initially appears in first inversion, for specific motivic reasons. The main theme (ex. 9.11b) features a prominent descending third motive in measures 36–37 (see circled notes), which is repeated in measures 40–41. The latter version is then chromatically altered in measures 60–61 of the transition (ex. 9.11a). Moreover, this same motivic pattern is also played out at a higher level, shown by the circled downbeats of measures 57, 59, and 61.

EXAMPLE 9.12: The downbeat of measure 89 is initially heard as I, which completes the tonic prolongation of the presentation begun at measure 81. (The transition of this movement starts earlier at m. 65 and consists largely of new material supported by extensive tonic prolongations.) The rest of measure 89 is interpreted as II¹/III (in the new key of F major), and this harmony initiates a descending fifth progression, which supports model–sequence technique (somewhat modified) in measures 89–92. The last harmonic link in the sequential progression is the dominant of the subordinate key at measure 92, which then emerges as the final, noncadential harmony of the transition. The ongoing melodic activity, however, is not concluded until measure 95, after which new material appears for the standing on the dominant. Since the harmonic goal precedes the melodic goal, we can speak of a premature dominant arrival at measure 92.³⁴

Omission of Concluding Function

Now and then, the final dominant of a transition gives no sense of being an ending harmony whatsoever. The dominant does not appear to be the goal of the progression; it receives no emphasis; and it resolves directly to tonic at the beginning of the subordinate theme with little or no rhythmic break. With a minimal sense of functional end for the transition, it can be difficult sometimes to determine just where the subordinate theme begins. Usually, however, the

composer provides some means of expressing a beginning, such as the appearance of a new basic idea in the context of a presentation phrase.³⁵

EXAMPLE 9.13: Most of the transition consists of brilliant passage-work prolonging the tonic of the home key. (Note the unusual use of three different presentation phrases to project this lengthy prolongation.) At measure 28, the move to VI provides a pivot for modulating to the subordinate key, whose dominant appears one measure later. This dominant does not seem to mark any kind of “ending” whatsoever as it moves directly to the tonic in the following measure. At that point, the basic idea from the main theme returns in the lower voice, supported by a solid tonic prolongation in the new key. Listeners familiar with Haydn’s practice of beginning subordinate-theme groups with a transposed version of the main theme’s basic idea could likely believe this to be the case here, even though the transition lacks a specific concluding function. And indeed this interpretation would be correct, since at no later point in the exposition can a stronger sense of structural beginning for the subordinate theme be found.³⁶

The lack of a concluding function for a transition may produce a subordinate theme containing an internal half cadence and a subsequent standing on the dominant. The dominant emphasis missing from the end of the transition is thus regained in the subordinate theme itself.

EXAMPLE 9.14: The transition begins in measure 19 with a two-measure idea from the opening of the main theme. The idea is then repeated in the bass voice, now supported by the dominant of the subordinate key. By the end of measure 22, the listener does not expect this dominant to be the goal harmony of the transition: there is no cadential articulation, no standing on the dominant, and no temporal extension. Moreover, a repetition of a two-measure idea (mm. 21–22) tends to reinforce formal initiation, not create formal closure. Nevertheless, the following material clearly expresses the sense of a new beginning by bringing a presentation phrase supported by a root-position tonic in the subordinate key. There is no reason, therefore, not to consider measure 23 the start of the subordinate theme, even though the transition lacks a functional end. Since the transition accords no emphasis to the dominant of the subordinate key, we are not surprised to find the continuation of the subordinate theme leading to an internal half cadence at measure 30. The second part of the subordinate theme then begins at measure 36 with a new idea, now supported by the less stable I⁶.³⁷

TWO-PART TRANSITION

The process of tonal destabilization sometimes takes place in two distinct stages, thus yielding a *two-part transition*. Following a main theme ending with a perfect authentic cadence, the first part of the transition leads to a half cadence (or dominant arrival) in the home key, just as in a single nonmodulating transition; the second part then modulates to the subordinate key.

EXAMPLE 9.12 Beethoven, Symphony No. 4 in B-flat, Op. 60, i, 81-108

Transition presentation
c.b.i.

b.i. c.l. c.b.i. (rep.)

continuation
model sequence

Allegro vivace

Bb: I IV⁶ V³ I...

roots: Bb E III A D G

standing on the dominant

V⁷
dominant arrival (premature)
C

[Subordinate Theme]

104 106 107

p I...

EXAMPLE 9.13 Haydn, Symphony No. 90 in C, iv, 16-35

Transition presentation (1)
b.i.

varied

presentation (2)
new idea

presentation (3)
new idea

Allegro assai

C: I

Subordinate Theme presentation
b.i. (fr. M.T.)

continuation

G: VI⁶ II⁶ V³ I (V) I (V) I...

EXAMPLE 9.14 Mozart, Piano Sonata in C Minor, K. 457, i, 17–37

EXAMPLE 9.4: The first part of the transition begins with a false closing section to the main theme and leads to a half cadence in the home key at measure 26. A second part then begins at measure 33 with V^7/VI , whose resolution pivots to tonicize II of the subordinate key. The transition then ends at measure 37 with a half cadence, which elides with a standing on the dominant.³⁸

Frequently, the second part of a two-part transition begins with the basic idea of the main theme supported by the home-key tonic. The resulting structure then resembles the case in which what seems to be a small-ternary recapitulation is retrospectively understood as the beginning of the transition (see the discussion of ex. 9.9). The fundamental difference between these two situations depends on whether the passage leading to the dominant of the home key is understood as a contrasting middle or as the first part of a transition. In many cases, the former interpretation must be ruled out because of the fundamental principle prohibiting a B section from eliding with its preceding A section.

EXAMPLE 9.15: Measure 16 brings a perfect authentic cadence to close the main theme. The following unit begins with a false

closing section and leads to a half cadence in the home key (m. 24) and a long standing on the dominant. Measure 32 brings back the basic idea of the main theme (see ex. 9.15b), but rather than following it with a contrasting idea, the basic idea is repeated twice (ex. 9.15a, mm. 32–35). (Two additional statements of the idea appear through imitation, shown in the lower set of brackets.) New material at measure 37 effects the modulation, and the transition closes at measure 42 with a half cadence in the subordinate key, followed by a five-measure standing on the dominant.

The return of the basic idea at measure 32 might lead us to consider this moment as the beginning of an A' section (which would then be reinterpreted retrospectively as the start of the transition). But to view the main theme as an incomplete small ternary form would be incorrect, as the material following the perfect authentic cadence at measure 16 sounds like a closing section, not the beginning of a contrasting middle, which usually emphasizes dominant harmony. Moreover, measure 16 both closes the sixteen-measure period and begins the next unit leading to the home-key half cadence in measure 24. As a result of this structural elision, we may not speak of a contrasting middle here, and the notion of a recapitulatory function at measure 32 must also be abandoned. We therefore understand the main theme to end at measure 16, at which point begins a two-part transition.³⁹

EXAMPLE 9.15 (a) Mozart, Piano Trio in D Minor, K. 442, iii, 15-48; (b) mm. 1-4

[M.T.]

Transition (part 1)
false closing section → presentation
cod. ⇒ b.i.

continuation frag.

legato

Allegro

a)

D: II⁵ V⁷

I ped.

PAC elided

standing on the dominant

Transition (part 2)
presentation
b.i. (fr. M.T.)

continuation model sequence

p

8⁶ 1⁶ V² A: {VI⁶ II⁶ (V)} V² I⁶ II⁶ (VII)

standing on the dominant

[Sub. Theme]

Main Theme
b.i. c.i.

Allegro

b)