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OXFORD STUDIES IN MUSIC THEORY

Form as Harmony in Rock Music

OXFORD STUDIES IN MUSIC THEORY

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DREW NOBILE



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About the Companion Website

URL: www.oup.com/us/formasharmonyinrockmusic

Oxford University Press has created an open website to accompany *Form as Harmony in Rock Music*. The website contains playlists with most of the book's musical examples for both the Spotify and Apple Music streaming platforms. The website also contains a sortable index of songs discussed in the book.

Note on the Musical Examples

Most of the rock songs discussed in this book are presented visually as lead-sheet transcriptions with analytical overlay (roman numerals, formal identifications, etc.). The transcriptions attempt to represent as accurately as possible the recorded vocal line in standard notation as well as the chords played by the accompanying instruments with chord symbols above the staff. Rendering recorded material in standard musical notation, though, necessarily involves quite a bit of simplification and guesswork—singers scoop, shout, fall off, whisper, and grunt and rarely conform neatly to quantized pitch and rhythm. Furthermore, the act of transcription is mediated by a human ear and brain, and is thus filtered through the training and experience particular to the individual doing the transcription clashes with their hearing (in fact, I often question my own transcriptions when I listen through on a different day!). It is my hope that such quibbles will remain minor and that readers will forgive any perceived errors when assessing the book's broader analytical claims.

Some longer examples in chapters 6 through 8 are presented with simplified melodic transcriptions. (In all such simplifications, I have included the annotation "melody simplified" on the example.) These simplifications reduce the surface melody to its basic form, usually resulting in mostly half notes and whole notes; rhythmic details and embellishing notes are thus absent from the notated example. I only perform such a simplification when I find it particularly "hearable"—that is, when I can easily connect the recorded vocal line to the simplified transcription in real time. Hearability is of course a subjective assessment, and some readers might balk at the removal of seemingly vital melodic elements. I hope that readers will not interpret these reductions as claiming that the unnotated elements are at all unimportant; as I will stress throughout the book, structural significance and musical importance are entirely unrelated. (Even a faithful notated transcription removes nuances of timbre and diction, both of which are exceedingly important elements of rock songs.)

Many transcriptions include measure numbers to make it easier to refer to specific moments in the accompanying text. These numbers are not calculated based on the beginning of the track, and should be considered relevant only to the specific example presented in this book; most transcriptions will begin with a measure numbered 1, even if the passage is taken from the middle of a song. Timestamps connect the transcribed portion to its position within the original recorded track. I give timestamps (e.g., "starts at 1:07") whenever the passage begins

more than 30 seconds into the song or when I think it may be helpful. Many songs have multiple recorded versions with no single "original" (the album version, the single version, the US/UK versions, etc.), so the timestamps might not always refer to the recording available to you. The streaming playlists available on the companion website should match with the timestamps on the examples.

Introduction

There's a moment in Big Brother and the Holding Company's rendition of "Piece of My Heart" that anyone who has heard the song even once will recall vividly. I'm referring of course to Janis Joplin's explosive cry of "Take it!" about a minute in, right at the beginning of the chorus. This moment seems to embody all of rock's essential elements: freedom, power, personal expression, heartache, rebellion, and so on. But that moment, iconic as it is, is more than a moment. Its strength is completely lost if we remove it from its musical context. Imagine playing someone just that second or two of music and expecting an emotional reaction—you will more likely be met with bewilderment than excitement. The powerful effect of Joplin's cry derives as much from the material surrounding it as from what happens at that particular point in time. To understand that moment, we must therefore consider it in relation to the song's organization as a whole. That central question-how a song is organized in time-underlies the concept of musical form. Musical form is often presented in opposition to musical *content*, the latter referring to more tangible musical elements such as notes and rhythms. The two are not so easily separated, though; as the "Piece of My Heart" example attests, we perceive content through the lens of form, each moment's meaning dependent on its role within the song's temporal organization. Music builds its communicative capacity upon its formal foundation; studying form is thus not a matter of zooming in on one particular musical aspect, but rather it sets the stage for understanding all of a song's various expressive elements. Form, in other words, is the gateway to interpretation.

This book offers a comprehensive theory of form in rock music. My basic premise is that rock songs are cohesive entities, gradually unfolding through time a unified musical structure. Their formal components are not merely discrete elements arranged in succession but interdependent, dialogic utterances, each fulfilling a particular role in relation to the whole. Seen this way, rock form is inherently a *process*, an active, temporal journey, not a series of musical containers; "a self-realizing *verb*, unspooling itself through time, not a static noun," as James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy put it (2006, 616). In other words, form is something a song *does*, not something it *is*. A conception of form as process underlies much contemporary discussion of classical form (Schmalfeldt 2011, Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, Caplin 1998); discussions of form in rock, though, tend toward an object-oriented approach, focusing on dividing a song into labeled sections rather than describing its temporal development.¹ Rock-oriented studies

¹ For example, David Temperley describes formal analysis of rock songs as "dividing a song into sections and labeling each section with regard to its formal category" (2018, 150).

that reflect a more processual approach, such as Robin Attas's 2015 article on buildup introductions and Allan Moore's 2012 monograph *Song Means*, generally eschew large-scale thinking in favor of moment-to-moment interpretations; Moore specifically states that he "see[s] little to be gained from [discussing more global formal terms]. ... It implies a 'god's-eye perspective,' which does not seem to be part of the popular song experience, where what matters is exactly where one is at a particular point in time" (84). I do not believe a focus on process is incompatible with large-scale thinking, though. My aim in this book is to bring a process-based approach to the study of rock's large-scale structures.

As the title promises, my approach considers rock's formal processes to be rooted in harmony. I argue that rock's harmonic structures are organized as goal-oriented trajectories, and the way those trajectories interact with thematic groups defines a song's basic formal process. Throughout the book, I demonstrate that many aspects of a rock song—lyrical structure, instrumental texture, melodic design, and the like—ultimately trace back to the relationship between harmonic trajectory and formal layout. Furthermore, I show that form and harmony do not act independently but synchronize into a small number of conventional patterns used consistently across genres and decades. It is these formal-harmonic patterns—not generic successions of sections—that define rock's individual *forms*. These forms provide a backdrop framing interpretations of specific songs, a lens through which we may comprehend their particular lyrical narratives, timbral signifiers, and broad expressive content.

Music analysis is often framed as a dialogue between an individual piece on the one hand and stylistically determined norms on the other. Variations of this approach appear under the headings of "dialogic form," "ecological perception," and "markedness," among others. These all have in common a general assumption that there exists a set of conventions with which enculturated listeners are familiar; these conventions turn into expectations about a particular piece of music through the use of associated elements; and the thwarting of these expectations invites us to interpret a meaning to the unexpected moment.² Such a dialogic approach considers departures from normative models not as blemishes but as distinctive and meaningful features of a particular song. My contention here is that the formal-harmonic patterns I identify are stylistic norms powerful enough to engender such an interpretive dialogue. While not every rock song engages in dialogue with these forms, I argue that they nevertheless make up rock's primary formal palette, a common starting point from which songwriters paint songs' unique formal designs. The broad applicability of the normative models suggests that form might be the single factor uniting rock's myriad subgenres within the same musical style.

² Foundational studies with such an approach include Meyer 1956, Hatten 1994, Clarke 2005, and Hepokoski and Darcy 2006; see also Osborn 2016 for a rock-oriented adaptation.

Though broadly theoretical in scope, this book is deeply analytical, just as concerned with engaging the smallest details of individual songs as with its general stylistic claims. My analyses are intended not only to offer close readings of particular tracks but also to demonstrate the value and utility of deep analysis applied to the rock repertoire. Though I frequently consider matters of text, texture, timbre, and so on, my analyses are fundamentally *structural*, concerned primarily with the organization of "traditional" music-theoretical elements such as notes, chords, rhythms, and phrases. While music scholarship has finally accepted analytical studies of popular music as valid endeavors, there remains discomfort with a structural approach to rock, some considering it an inappropriate importation of classical tools into the vernacular realm. In general, I hope to let my analyses speak for themselves in refuting such views, and I will largely refrain from polemicizing in the chapters that follow. I will, however, offer a few words about structural analysis here, especially as it relates to the act of *listening* to rock.

Structural Listening

"Serious music," explains Theodor Adorno in a now-infamous 1941 polemic on popular music, "may be thus characterized: every detail derives its musical sense from the concrete totality of the piece which, in turn, consists of the life relationship of the details and never of a mere enforcement of a musical scheme" (paragraph 6). Adorno's description sounds a lot like the concept of form as process; musical elements act not independently but all in service of a unified whole. In the next sentence, though, Adorno makes it clear that popular music does not qualify:

Nothing corresponding to this can happen in popular music. It would not affect the musical sense if any detail were taken out of the context; the listener can supply the "framework" automatically, since it is a mere musical automatism itself. The beginning of the chorus is replaceable by the beginning of innumerable other choruses. The interrelationship among the elements or the relationship of the elements to the whole would be unaffected. In Beethoven, position is important only in a living relation between a concrete totality and its concrete parts. In popular music, position is absolute. Every detail is substitutable; it serves its function only as a cog in a machine. (Paragraph 7)

Such is the modernist position on popular music: it has low artistic value due to a lack of individuality and structural complexity. (As Alison Stone [2016, chapter 3] points out, Adorno's critique remains applicable to rock and pop repertoires that postdate his essay's publication.) Thankfully, this position is no longer acceptable in reasoned discourse, having been rebutted many times over in postmodern and other progressive academic circles. In particular, scholars have pointed out that value judgments based on perceived structural complexity seem ultimately intended to reinforce existing power dynamics wherein music composed

within certain social arenas (usually by white men educated in a particular way) maintained its cultural supremacy over all other music (as Rose Subotnik put it in 1996, "Why, if all music is equal in the ears of the structural listener, do some styles turn out to be more equal than others?" [158]). As an antidote to such cultural oppression, scholars brought popular repertoires into the academic conversation to demonstrate that value and structural complexity do not necessarily go hand in hand—that music with "quite a different raison-d'être" was just as worthy of serious study as that from the modernists' canon (McClary 1989, 77).

It is no surprise that I fully support rejecting the modernist view that popular music is artistically and culturally worthless. However, critics' focus on this politically charged value judgment risks leaving the modernists' other claim-that popular music has low structural complexity-unexamined. Indeed, as John Covach notes, many writers seem to concede that claim with no contest: responding to McClary 1989 in particular, Covach points out that "she seems to have accepted uncritically the notion that popular music is uncomplicated in the traditional sense, or if it is complicated structurally, or engages our attention along structural lines, then this is not how the song was meant to be heard anyway" (Covach 1997, 127). At the time Covach wrote those words, the field of music theory was just beginning to take popular music seriously as an object of analytical inquiry; in the decades since then, music-analytical work has demonstrated popular music's remarkable complexity, specifically in regard to "the music itself" (a phrase often used to distinguish analyses focusing on a work's internal elements from those geared toward social and cultural context). Yet the notion that popular music is simplistic in the particular domains in which canonical classical music is perceived to be complex-namely, form and harmony-has proved stubbornly persistent. Further, the notion that, regardless of complexity, those structural elements are unimportant in popular music is widespread. In this book, I aim not only to contribute to the literature attesting to popular music's structural sophistication but also to argue for the value of attuning to structural elements in our engagement with that repertoire. That is, I advocate not only structural analysis of popular music, but also structural *listening*.

To begin, I question the validity of a dialectical opposition between "structural" and "non-structural" listening. The postmodern case against structural listening, originating with Rose Subotnik (1996) and explored further in a collection of essays titled *Beyond Structural Listening* (Dell'Antonio 2004), is that its focus on internal logic and objectivity neglects the more visceral elements of sound and style, treating listening as passive rather than active engagement and ignoring elements of meaning drawn from a work's cultural context. Martin Scherzinger has challenged the postmodern position, arguing that it "essentially accepts formalism's hermetic claims, instead of configuring the business of analysis and close reading *as* social" (Scherzinger 2004, 257). In other words, Scherzinger reminds us that attuning to "purely musical" elements can be an active, culturally dependent (even dialogic)

mode of listening that palpably informs, and is informed by, engagement with elements of sound and style. To give a topical example: the argument that a rock song's musical interest is found in its timbre and texture rather than its notes and chords (see, e.g., Tagg 1982) overlooks these domains' interconnectedness. As Alison Stone points out in reference to R.E.M.'s "Losing My Religion," "The song's timbres and textures *interact* with its harmonic and melodic aspects and its form, and give them unique meanings not found in other songs, even ones that share some identical harmonic components" (Stone 2016, 128). Instead of rejecting structural listening in favor of its perceived opposite, perhaps we should expand our understanding of structural listening beyond the anti-interpretive limits imposed by modernism in order to recognize its potentially central role in the creation of meaning.

This brings us to the issue of relevance. Some popular music scholars contend that regardless of whether we can find interesting structural elements to analyze, those elements are nevertheless irrelevant to the way musicians and fans interact with the repertoire and thus should not be given much analytical credence.³ First of all, I do not agree with the premise that analysis is allowed to describe only what is intuitive to listeners and practitioners of the repertoire in question. Following a distinction proposed by David Temperley (1999), my approach to structural listening can be construed as essentially suggestive rather than descriptive: I invite readers to listen this way, inquire as to what it means to listen this way, and ultimately submit that doing so attunes us to important aspects of the rock style that might otherwise go unnoticed. But there's a little more to it than mere suggestion: once we turn on our structural ears, we begin to hear consistent patterns of harmonic and formal synchronization that recur across genres and decades. The presence of such patterns suggests that structural elements of rock are not accidental byproducts of a songwriting process focused elsewhere but rather basic building blocks fundamental to a song's construction. Further, the formal-harmonic pattern underlying a given song interacts with the lyrics and other "non-structural" elements to influence our perception of meaning, resulting in the type of "blended" listening already discussed. My ultimate position, then, is not only that structural listening is a valuable and important mode of engagement for rock but also that structural aspects already affect the way we perceive and interact with the repertoire, whether they act above or below the conscious level.

Methodology

There are, of course, many different kinds of structure, and many different ways of listening structurally. This book's methodology focuses on what theorists often call *formal structure* and *harmonic structure*: the organization of thematic groups

³ Some form of this argument appears in Tagg 1982, Middleton 1990, Walser 1993, and Moore 2012.

and chord progressions across an entire song. My approach can be summarized as follows: thematic groups and chord progressions are both organized hierarchically, and the resulting hierarchical elements relate to one another by fulfilling specific *functions*. Thematic groups include *phrases* and *sections*, which can act as the *formal functions* of verse, chorus, refrain, and so on. Harmonic groups include *prolongational areas* governed by a single harmony, which can act as the *harmonic functions* of tonic, pre-dominant, and dominant. The interplay between formal and harmonic functions defines a song's formal process.

Formal structure: measures, phrases, sections, and cycles

Musical time depends on two basic levels of pulse: the beat and the measure. Beats and measures are perceptual phenomena, loosely described as the foot-tapping level and groups of two, three, or four foot taps (usually four). Most rock songs communicate beats and measures via a backbeat pattern involving stress accents (typically snare-drum hits) on the second and fourth pulses at some level; generally, the pulse level involving those hits is perceived as the beat, and groups of four beats form a measure (see, e.g., Biamonte 2014, §6; Moore 2012, 51-52; and Stephenson 2002, 2). The first few seconds of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" present a typical rock drum pattern involving snare hits on beats two and four; strumming accents provide the backbeat in Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," while finger snaps play that role in Billy Joel's "The Longest Time." Trevor de Clercq, citing cognitive studies, argues for the additional consideration of absolute time in determining metrical levels in rock, in particular that what we perceive as a measure is usually around two seconds in length (de Clercq 2016). The two-second ideal helps guide metrical interpretations in songs with non-quadruple meters or drumbeats exhibiting "double-time" or "half-time" feels (i.e., with backbeat-like hits either twice or half as often as typically expected). Identifying specific metrical levels corresponding to beats and measures should not be considered an arbitrary exercise; these metrical levels are experientially distinct, and our perception of form depends upon our understanding of what constitutes a measure. There will always be ambiguous cases, of course, and factors such as harmonic rhythm or phrase lengths can also affect our perception of metrical levels. That said, beats and measures remain our primary markers of musical time, providing the foundation for perceiving larger formal units such as phrases, sections, and cycles.

Phrases, sections, and cycles arise when we cognitively "chunk" several measures together to form self-contained groups, which we arrange hierarchically in a non-overlapping fashion (see Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983, 13–17). Grouping structure tends to reflect a binary organization, with two-measure groups combining into 4-, 8-, and 16-measure groups, though less symmetrical organizations are also possible. I use the term *phrase* to refer to a discrete

group at around the four-measure level, though it will sometimes make sense to identify phrases as short as two measures. Phrases usually correspond to *hypermeasures*, that is, metrical units above the level of the measure, though phrase and hypermeter are not synonymous; see Biamonte 2014, [1.2], and Rothstein 1989. Importantly, "phrase" carries no harmonic connotations, such as the common textbook requirement that a phrase end with a cadence (my use follows Caplin 1998). Two or more phrases combine to form a *section*, a larger group of usually 8 or 16 measures that fulfills a distinct *formal function* such as verse, chorus, or bridge. Rock's formal functions will be discussed in detail in chapters 2, 3, and 4. Finally, a series of sections that repeats as a whole—generally beginning with a verse and ending with a chorus—forms a *cycle*. (Some cycles contain only one section; see Example 4.22 in chapter 4.) Rock songs are generally built around repetitions of a core cycle punctuated by excursions to other sections.

Harmonic structure: chords, functions, and prolongations

The study of harmony begins with chords. At nearly all moments in nearly all rock songs, one can identify a specific chord governing that moment's pitch content. The relationship between pitch content and underlying chord is not fixed, and there are often multiple plausible ways to interpret a passage's chord progression; see Doll 2013 for a discussion of chord labeling issues. In this book, I will label chords in two ways: with standard lead-sheet symbols indicating the chord's root, quality, and bass note (see Example 0.1) and with roman numerals indicating the chord's context within a key. Following what is becoming standard practice in rock-oriented scholarship, I will use the major scale as the referential set for chord roots regardless of the governing mode; for instance, if A is the tonal center, an F chord is always labeled bVI and an F[#]-minor chord is always labeled vi, even if all of the A chords are A-minor chords. This labeling system avoids having to specify whether a passage is in minor or major, a distinction that is not always clear or useful (see Temperley 2018, chapter 2). Other than that, numerals will follow the general practice of North American music theory, with upper- and lowercase numerals differentiating chords with a major or minor third and figured-bass symbols indicating non-triadic tones and/or inversion.

While hierarchical groupings are generally accepted as experientially valid in relation to thematic structure, the same cannot be said about harmonic hierarchy. The idea that we can chunk a series of several chords into a single, deeper-level



Example 0.1 Common chord types and their lead-sheet symbols

harmonic entity is controversial, especially in reference to rock music. Harmonic hierarchy can be described as a type of *prolongation*, a concept deriving primarily from the early-twentieth-century work of Heinrich Schenker. In a theory of harmonic prolongation, certain chords are seen as subordinate to other, more structural chords; these structural chords operate on a deeper structural level than the subordinate chords, creating their own large-scale chord progression that may or may not resemble any progression appearing on the surface. In chapter 1, I present a theory of rock harmony rooted in harmonic prolongation, offering an adaptation of Schenkerian theory tailored to rock's harmonic idiom. The chapter demonstrates that while rock's prolongational techniques are not the same as those found in classical music, rock nevertheless can be seen to exhibit a hierarchical harmonic organization wherein large-scale structural progressions of a few chords are embellished in specific ways to form the surface chord progressions. In particular, rock's structural progressions coalesce into goal-directed patterns of harmonic functions at work across entire sections and/or cycles.

I am not the first to combine Schenkerian analysis and rock music; Walter Everett has been doing so in print since 1985, and several others have offered Schenkerian studies of rock throughout the ensuing decades. For the most part, existing approaches tend to treat the Schenkerian system as a fixed methodology and use it to investigate rock's relationship to traditional tonal practice. To Everett, for example, there are many different "tonal systems" at play across the rock repertoire, some of which reflect norms described by Schenker, others of which "would hold Schenker hostage." Everett makes clear that though rock songs may yield different analytical results than their classical counterparts, his methodology "entails no 'adaptation' of Schenkerian principles; the analytical procedure with rock music must proceed according to unchanging principles of counterpoint." I take the opposite approach: I believe that adapting Schenkerian techniques to suit rock's characteristic style can result in a methodology relevant to all (or at least most) of rock's diverse harmonic practices. Such an adaptation cannot be done ad hoc, though; only a coherent and consistently applied theory can demonstrate the utility of prolongational thinking and hearing in rock.⁴

⁴ Everett summarizes his theory of rock tonality in Everett 2004 and 2008 (the quotes are from the latter essay, pp. 139–41); see also Everett 1999 and 2001 for extensive use of Schenkerian analysis applied to the music of Beatles. Notable Schenkerian studies of rock outside of Everett's output include Kaminsky 1992, Brown 1997, Wagner 2003, O'Donnell 2005, Burns 2008, Koozin 2008, Nobile 2011, and Osborn 2017. Of these, Burns's essay is the only one to make a significant effort toward adapting Schenkerian methodology to fit the rock style, demonstrating her modifications through careful analysis of Tori Amos's 1992 song "Crucify." Criticisms of Schenkerian nalysis in rock can be found in Middleton 1990, Moore 1995 and 2001, Stephenson 2002, and even in Burns's same essay. Finally, an example of ad hoc modification of Schenkerian practice appears in chapter 4 of Moore 1997.

Rock

This book employs a broadly inclusive definition of "rock"—what we might call "small-r rock"—encompassing what many would refer to as "pop" as well as "rock 'n' roll," "folk-rock," "R&B," and so on. Defined this way, rock is not a genre but rather an umbrella term encompassing many genres. We can get a sense of which genres fall into the category of small-r rock by perusing rock history textbooks (e.g., Covach and Flory 2018), various Billboard charts, and pop-critical databases such as Rolling Stone Magazine's "500 Greatest Songs of All Time." In borderline cases, I generally err on the side of inclusion, as I believe rock's stylistic norms extend outward to some degree. Some authors employ a more narrow definition, which we could call "big-R Rock," that does treat it as a genre; in this context, Rock is usually offered in dialectical opposition to Pop. The distinction between Rock and Pop is complex and fuzzy, often involving sticky issues such as authenticity and reception (not to mention problematic race and gender associations). I use the broader definition not only to avoid these issues but also to make the case that all of these various genres can be seen to exhibit a consistent musical style, engaging with the same compositional norms and employing similar expressive devices.⁵

My target repertoire in this book is concise, radio-ready rock songs from the 1960s, '70s, and '80s-what some call the "classic rock" decades. More specifically, I identify 1963 and 1991 as marking important stylistic boundaries. The year 1963 is of course when the Beatles released their first commercial recordings, and the rock style coalesced around their dominance of mainstream music throughout the '60s. As the Beatles ushered in the British Invasion, other genres were coming into their own, such as folk-rock, Motown, and soul, all of which intermingled throughout the next few decades. At the other end, the early '90s saw the rise of two new musical styles within rock and pop: grunge and hip-hop. Grunge bands like Nirvana and Pearl Jam set out to challenge all rock conventions, reacting specifically to the visually oriented MTV artists and the flashy, virtuosic heavy metal bands that ruled the '80s. Unlike prior rebellions, such as the late-'70s punk movement, this one proved more than a passing phase; the grunge aesthetic has been thoroughly absorbed into rock music extending to today, making 1991 a stylistic turning point. At the same time as grunge was reconfiguring the rock aesthetic, the hip-hop movement that had been growing in the black communities of the United States exploded into the mainstream in the 1990s; since then, as Christopher Doll summarizes, "mainstream pop has largely become hip-hop and contemporary R&B" (Doll 2016, 285). Both grunge and hip-hop shift focus away from the pitch-based structures of harmony and melody and toward texture, timbre, rhythm, and other elements. On top of these stylistic shifts, the late '90s saw

⁵ On the Rock/Pop binary, see Moore 2001, 3 and 199; Spicer 2011, xii-xiv; and Brackett 2016.

significant advances in digital audio technology and the emergence of Napster and other MP3-sharing hosts, both of which forever changed the music business.⁶

As mentioned, the book's first chapter outlines my harmonic theory, which sets the stage for the ensuing theory of form as harmony. The remaining chapters unfold in two parts, with an overall progression from small- to large-scale analyses. The first part investigates rock's component sections: chapter 2 focuses on verses, chapter 3 on choruses, and chapter 4 on prechoruses, bridges, and other auxiliary sections such as intros, outros, and solos. These chapters demonstrate that each section type can manifest in various ways depending on its harmonic profile. The second part of the book synthesizes the discussions of section types into analyses of complete songs. Each chapter covers a particular form type: Chapter 5 focuses on AABA and strophic forms, the two main forms that do not contain a chorus. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 focus on rock's verse-chorus forms: sectional verse-chorus, where verse and chorus are separate and autonomous entities; continuous verse-chorus, where the two sections cohere as a single musical statement; and verse-prechorus-chorus, where the presence of a third section entirely alters the formal trajectory. The theoretical apparatus is always accompanied by several deep structural analyses, often supplementing formal-harmonic discussion with considerations of text, texture, and expressive meaning. I hope that both the theory and analyses contained in this book will reveal that rock is no less receptive to close reading than any other repertoire, and more broadly that a structural perspective has the power to enhance our engagement with all aspects of rock music.

⁶ Several other theorists identify 1991 as an important stylistic turning point, noting especially the prevalence of hip-hop and dance music on the Billboard charts; see, for example, Summach 2012, 13–14; Burgoyne 2011, 130–31; and de Clercq 2017a, [1.7].

1 Harmonic Syntax

Centuries of music-theoretical work have shown that classical music organizes chords in a highly systematic way. In that repertoire, when we hear a chord, we can often make a pretty good guess as to what the next chord will be: certain root motions are much more common than others (descending fifth and third are particularly likely), and certain chord progressions are normative while others are considered "incorrect" (e.g., V chords usually precede I chords but rarely precede ii chords). In the few decades in which rock music has been a target of analytical inquiry, music theorists have looked for a similar chord-progression logic within that style. It does not take long to realize that rock's chord-to-chord successions do not adhere to classical norms, the former being full of V-IV, ii-I, ii-IV, and other progressions that are rare in the latter. As we look closer, it becomes difficult to extract any broadly applicable system governing chord progressions. David Temperley has recently undertaken a statistical analysis of chord successions in rock music and concluded that in rock "we do not see strong, specific constraints analogous to those found in common-practice harmony. Rock does not show strong directional preferences for specific chord pairs (e.g., V to IV is nearly as common as IV to V); or for particular intervallic motions (e.g., ascending versus descending fifths)" (2018, 48). Certain successions are more common than others, but that seems to be largely because certain *chords* are more common than others; IV may go to I twice as often as it goes to V, but that may be just because rock contains twice as many I chords as V chords.¹

So what do we do with this information? A little later on, we will see how theorists have grappled with rock's unconstrained chord successions when formulating theories of harmonic progression. My approach, however, builds from the premise that focusing on individual chord-to-chord successions tells us little about rock's overall harmonic organization. These small-scale progressions may be relatively unconstrained, but when we zoom out and look at progressions across entire formal areas, we start to see a more consistent organizational scheme present across rock's genres and decades. To begin with, many small-scale chord progressions can be understood as embellishments, or prolongations, of a single harmony, resulting in a hierarchical organization in which a succession of, say, 25 chords can arise out of just three or four main harmonies. The deep-level progressions participate in trajectories from stability to instability to a conclusive

¹ Statistical studies of common-practice chord progressions, while surprisingly small in number, generally support the aforementioned theoretical tendencies; see, for example, Tymoczko 2003 and Temperley 2009. return to stability, spanning either one complete formal section or a group of several sections. Seen this way, rock harmony follows a consistent *syntax*, each chord fulfilling a particular role within a cohesive, goal-directed structure. More specifically, we can understand rock's syntactical structure to arise from a particular sequence of harmonic *functions*. All of this—prolongation, function as syntax, and large-scale teleology—is familiar from classical harmonic theories, especially those within the Schenkerian lineage. Adapting this theoretical framework to rock's idiosyncrasies, however, is not trivial. This chapter attempts such an adaptation, with the goal of laying out a theory of harmonic syntax for the rock repertoire. I begin by unpacking the concept of harmonic function.²

Category, Prediction, Syntax: Three Views of Harmonic Function

Theories of harmonic function seek to answer some combination of the following three questions in relation to a given chord: (1) What kind of chord is this? (2) What other chord(s) does this chord want to proceed to? and (3) What role does this chord play in its musical context? The first question reveals a conception of function as category: all possible chords are divided into categories (e.g., tonics, subdominants, and dominants), and each chord either belongs entirely to one category (e.g., a IV chord is a subdominant) or mixes elements of multiple categories (e.g., a vi chord is strongly tonic and weakly subdominant). Importantly, categorical membership does not change based on context, but rather is an inherent property of each chord. The second question stems from a concept of function as prediction, where expectations of chord-to-chord successions are the primary focal elements.³ Theories of function as prediction usually focus on individual chords' general tendencies (e.g., ii chords tend to proceed to V) and often presuppose function-as-category (e.g., when tonic, subdominant, and dominant categories are said to arrange themselves in the paradigmatic progression T-S-D-T). Finally, the third question conceives of function as syntax. Function-as-syntax definitions consider a chord's role within a syntactic unit, usually a phrase or other formal group. With a syntactical definition, function is meaningless outside of a specific context; "dominant," say, is not something a chord is but rather something a chord functions as within a given passage. Harmonic functions considered in this way are analogous to grammatical functions such as subject, object, and the like, which consider words in relation to a (linguistic) sentence; grammatical functions contrast with grammatical categories-noun, adjective, and so on.-which are internal properties of words rather than relational notions (see Chomsky 1965, 67-69).

² For a more detailed look at the theoretical issues underlying my theory of harmonic function, as well as a closer look at existing conceptions within both rock and classical theory, see my article "Harmonic Function in Rock Music: A Syntactical Approach" in the *Journal of Music Theory* (Nobile 2016).

³ In my 2016 article, I called this concept "function as progression."

The standard modern function theory aimed at classical tonality combines function-as-category with function-as-prediction. The categorization system derives from Hugo Riemann's mature Funktionstheorie, which originated the practice of labeling every chord as a modification of one of three primary triads, namely, I, V, and IV. This labeling system divided the chordal palette into the three functional categories tonic, dominant, and subdominant. Building on Riemann's categorization, modern theorists posited that each category has a tendency to progress to a specific other category. In particular, dominants imply motion to tonics, and subdominants imply motion to dominants. (Riemann himself did identify the T-S-D-T ordering as paradigmatic, but as David Kopp argues, that idea was not inherent to his theory of function, falling instead under the separate concept of "musical logic"; see Kopp 1995, 10-13) Combining category and prediction in this way allows certain chords to exhibit different functions in different contexts (e.g., vi functions as tonic between I and IV but functions as subdominant between I and V) and also leads some progressions to be labeled as "nonfunctional" (e.g., I-V-IV-I). Such theories depend upon classical tonality's highly constrained progressions, where ii-I and V-IV successions are rare; at best, they describe an aspect of classical harmony, and at worst, they risk a prescriptivist element dictating which progressions are "correct" (indeed, many undergraduate harmony textbooks teach students to build progressions based on these functional tendencies). Either way, this type of function theory would seem ill-suited to rock music given rock's unconstrained chord-to-chord successions.⁴ Some more recent work aims to reconcile Schenkerian notions of goal-directedness and prolongation within a theory of harmonic function, thus incorporating function-as-syntax. Central to many syntactical function theories is the phrase model: a single functional progression T-PD-D-T underlying a musical phrase (PD stands for "pre-dominant"; see Laitz 2015, chapter 9, for a succinct, pedagogically oriented explanation). In the phrase model, each component function is carried by one main harmony, which is often prolonged by several chords, and the phrase contains exactly one succession of these functions-that is, the phrase has at most one pre-dominant function and one dominant. ("Embedded phrase models," which are miniature T-PD-D-T progressions occurring within the phrase, exist at a shallower structural level and serve to prolong the larger phrase model's initial tonic.) If a V chord occurs within a tonic prolongation, say via a $I-V_3^4-I^6$ progression, it does not have the same function as a V chord representing D of the overall phrase model. One cannot comprehend a chord's role within the phrase model without taking into account the progression across the entire phrase.⁵

⁴ Eyton Agmon has made the case for the separation of category- and progression-based theories of harmonic function, advocating for a root-motion conception of the latter (1995, 198–99). Daniel Harrison's scale-degree-based function theory does a good job of discussing both categories and progressions while acknowledging that they are separable aspects of harmony (1994, esp. chapter 2).

⁵ Other theories incorporating function-as-syntax include William Caplin's form-functional theory, where a chord progression acquires cadential function only by acting as the structural end of a larger group, and Fred Lerdahl's generative theory of harmony, which proclaims that "functions depend not on root identity

Even with this syntactical bent, virtually all classically based theories still depend on function-as-category considerations. The phrase model's dominant, for instance, must involve some kind of V chord, even if not all V chords act as phrase-level dominants. The reliance on function-as-category is not at all a fault in classical theories; indeed, the association between the dominant category and syntactical dominant function is an important marker of the classical style and should be incorporated into any theory of classical harmony. As we look beyond classical music, though, it is important to acknowledge that category and syntax are two independent aspects of harmony, which may or may not act in sync in a given musical style. That is, it might be possible for the syntactical elements of dominant function to exist even in the absence of a chord in the dominant category. The mutual independence of syntax and category is, as I will demonstrate, a prominent feature of rock's harmonic idiom. Disentangling the two is therefore an important first step toward a theory of rock harmony.

Function-as-syntax has not played a central role in discussions of rock harmony. Most writings seek to adapt the traditional category-plusprediction T-S-D-T model, whether by largely jettisoning the prediction aspect (Biamonte 2010) or defining new rock-based categories with their own predictive tendencies (White and Quinn 2018). Syntactical considerations do appear in Christopher Doll's sweeping theory of harmonic function in rock, which treats function as an aural effect of individual chords in specific contexts (Doll 2017). Doll incorporates several elements into his conception of function, but at its core it is based on a chord's distance from the next tonic chord, measured by the number of intervening chords. For instance, the three chords in a V-IV-I progression acquire "pre-pretonic," "pre-tonic," and "tonic" functions. The prefix "pre" refers to prediction, not progression, but unlike typical function-as-prediction theories, Doll's prediction is based not only on general stylistic tendencies but also on our prior knowledge of the song in question; in other words, we might predict the chord that comes next mainly because we know it comes next (see pp. 81-82). Doll's theory essentially divides a song's chord progression into strings ending on tonic; we could consider these strings as a type of syntactic unit, albeit a non-formal one, within which every chord has a functional role based on where it occurs.

The Functional Circuit

The syntactical theory that follows, by contrast, is based on the notion that rock's harmonic structure is organized primarily in reference to complete formal units. The formal units in question are at a minimum one complete song section, such as a verse or a chorus, but they often comprise multiple sections, such as a verse–chorus

but on prolongational role" within a syntactic unit that he calls a *cadenced group* comprising, at the deepest level, a structural beginning and a structural ending. See Caplin 1998, chapter 1, and 2004; Lerdahl 2001, chapter 5; and Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983, chapter 7.

cycle or an AABA layout. Considered at this level, rock songs can be seen to exhibit a teleological harmonic process consisting of a fixed number of stages (i.e., functions), each of which may exhibit one or more standard prolongational techniques generating its surface chord progression. My theory is thus top-down: local successions arise out of the large-scale harmonic structure, rather than the other way around. The idea that large-scale structure can generate small-scale progressions resonates with the Schenkerian idea of the background generating the foreground. To Schenker, each structural level arises from specific prolongations of a prior, deeper level. I believe that the general principle of Schenkerian prolongation can be seen to underlie rock's harmonic structure as well as that of classical music. However, my theory departs from Schenker's in two significant ways. First, the generative progression is not a contrapuntal model but rather a progression of syntactical functions at the level of the formal units already described. Second, rock's prolongational progressions not only take on different forms from those seen in classical practice but also do not generally follow the same design as the deeper structural progressions. One of Schenker's most consequential observations was that harmonic and contrapuntal procedures seen at the surface level are, broadly speaking, the same as those seen at all deeper levels; this observation, which only applies to the music of so-called genius composers, is the fundamental principle underlying Schenker's concept of organic unity. Rock's structural levels, however, are relatively distinct such that small- and large-scale progressions follow different strategies. The remainder of this chapter begins by discussing rock's large-scale syntactical processes, followed by detailed looks at the common prolongational techniques seen within each functional area.

Central to my theory of rock's harmonic syntax is what I call the functional circuit. A functional circuit is a harmonic trajectory spanning a complete formal unit, comprising the syntactical harmonic functions of tonic, pre-dominant, dominant, and back to tonic (T-PD-D-T). These are, of course, the same functions that underlie the classical phrase model, and indeed the functional circuit and the phrase model are analogous structures; I use the different term to avoid any confusion over the word "phrase," which I employ in the Caplinian sense of a discrete thematic group of around four measures with no requirement of harmonic closure. (Functional circuits usually span several phrases.) There is another important difference, though, between the phrase model and the functional circuit: within the functional circuit, the component functions-pre-dominant and dominant in particular—are purely syntactical with no function-as-category associations. The syntax proceeds like this: We begin on harmonic stability with a prolongation of I. At some point, the harmony departs from tonic to an unstable area; most often, this departure entails a shift to a prolongation of IV, vi, or ii, but any non-I harmony can fulfill the role of departure (in certain circumstances the pre-dominant can even be carried by a I chord; see the discussion surrounding Example 4.10 in chapter 4). The departure chord, representing

pre-dominant function, eventually gives way to another unstable harmonic area, effecting a syntactical shift from *departure* to *return*. This new area, the syntactical dominant, points toward a resolution to stable tonic, which, when achieved, effects cadential closure. Many songs employ the V chord to carry syntactical dominant function because of its strong voice-leading motion into I; however, as with the pre-dominant, syntactical dominant function can arise from any non-I chord—and, as we will see, sometimes even arises from I.

The functional circuit's progression of stability \rightarrow instability as departure \rightarrow instability as return \rightarrow stability represents "directed motion in time from one tonal entity to another," which is how William Rothstein defines a musical phrase (1989, 5). In particular, it conceives of harmonic syntax as a *temporal* process, involving motion through a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning-middle-end paradigm underlies several theories of musical motion, most notably Kofi Agawu's semiotic theory (1991) and William Caplin's form-functional theory (1998; 2009), both of which are directed toward instrumental music from the Classical period. Though the term may sound simplistic, the beginning-middle-end paradigm is notable in its treatment of musical time not as a series of discrete events but rather as the gradual unfolding of a cohesive whole. That is, rather than representing static locations, beginnings, middles, and ends outline a web of interdependence such that each of the three acquires its meaning in relation to the others; one cannot conceive of any of these three elements independently. The functional circuit's opening tonic represents the beginning, "the first step toward the intentional production of meaning," as described by literary theorist Edward Said. The pre-dominant represents the middle, which in Agawu's words "both undermines and prolongs the beginning. It undermines the beginning by departing from it, generating tension in the process. It prolongs it in the sense that the beginning finds its ultimate definition only through the middle and ending." And finally, the dominant-tonic cadence at the end of the circuit represents the end, "securing closure for the entire structure" (Agawu 1991, 56–67).⁶

Some preliminary examples are in order. Example 1.1 gives four passages exhibiting complete functional circuits. These passages do not represent the full range of possible instantiations of the functional circuit but rather offer exemplars of some typical ways in which rock displays its circuits. More idiosyncratic situations will arise within the detailed discussions of individual functions.

⁶ I should note that Agawu's application of the beginning–middle–end paradigm to the Schenkerian Ursatz associates the middle with the V chord. Schenkerian theory, of course, does not acknowledge the existence of a pre-dominant function on the same level as tonic and dominant, so the background harmonic structure is always I–V–I. My recognition of the pre-dominant as equal in status to tonic and dominant represents a significant departure from Schenkerian theory. There are parallels between this temporal syntax and Riemann's early theory of "function as abstract category," in which the Hegelian thesis–antithesis–synthesis dialectic is applied to harmonic function. See Harrison 1994, 266–73.



Example 1.1 Four passages exhibiting functional circuits.





Example 1.1 Continued

F7

А⊧В⊧ F7 Gŀ7

(c) John Mellencamp (John Cougar), "Hurts So Good" (1982), chorus

'cause it won't be too long. keep on turnin' PD D Т

D69

E₽7

Gb Ab

A67

fulfilling all of the formal and rhetorical roles of dominant function even though it has no tones in common with a V chord. The functional circuit's main harmonies are thus I-ii-iv-I.

Madonna, "Like a Virgin," verse through chorus (Example 1.1b): A I-ii-I neighboring progression prolongs tonic across the first eight measures. The progression seems like it will repeat, but the ii chord in measure 13 acquires pre-dominant function with a stark rhetorical shift. The pre-dominant ii chord is prolonged by motion to its upper fifth vi before the progression moves on to the dominant V chord. The title lyric "like a virgin" accompanies the cadential arrival on I; the final tonic is then prolonged with the same I-ii-I neighboring progression that prolonged the initial tonic. Note that the functional circuit concludes at the beginning of the chorus, such that the chorus's chord progression represents a *post-cadential* tonic prolongation; this formal-harmonic layout is typical of verse-prechorus-chorus form, as discussed in chapter 8 (see also Example 8.17).

John Mellencamp, "Hurts So Good," chorus (Example 1.1c): A *chord shuttle* (to be defined later) between I and V prolongs the initial tonic for four measures, followed by a move to IV functioning as pre-dominant. Though the literal progression in measures 4–5 is V–IV, the V chord is subsidiary to I, so the structural progression is from I to IV. The ensuing IV–vi–IV progression prolongs the pre-dominant with motion to its upper third and back, after which we get a V–I cadence representing the syntactical dominant and final tonic.

Stevie Wonder, "Higher Ground," verse (Example 1.1d): This funky track's signature riff introduces the tonic-prolonging *chord loop* (defined later) $I-\flat III-IV$, the first chord giving the occasional scent of a major third under the melody's $\flat 3$ within an otherwise Dorian setting. After eight measures, the loop is transposed up a step, moving us to the pre-dominant area prolonging II. The IV chord in measure 11 functions as II's upper third within the pre-dominant prolongation, followed by a $\flat VII-I$ cadence (D–T). As in "Like a Virgin," the final tonic is prolonged in the same manner as the initial one.

Example 1.2 offers Schenkerian graphical analyses of the four excerpts from Example 1.1. These graphs encapsulate the written analysis above in visual form; indeed, Schenker often claimed that his graphical notation could convey all necessary analytical information with no need for accompanying text. It is not my intention in this book to use graphs to substitute for written discussion (especially since many readers are not expert Schenkerians), but rather to use them as succinct summaries of the harmonic analyses presented in the text. (The graphs will often contain more information than that presented in the accompanying text, but it should not be necessary to "read the graph" to understand any analysis in this book.) The main thing to look for in the graphs is the large-scale harmonic progression of the functional circuit: these chords' bass notes are written in the lower staff with open noteheads, and their stems are beamed together; the pre-dominant harmony receives a flag on its stem. Other chords are presented as bass notes with closed noteheads, with analytical symbols such as slurs and beams showing how these subordinate chords prolong the deeper structural harmonies. For instance, the I-ii-I progression in the first eight measures of "Like a Virgin" is shown as a Gb with open notehead followed by an Ab with closed notehead and flagged stem (the flag identifies the Ab as a neighboring tone) and another Gb with closed notehead and unflagged stem; the three bass notes are slurred together to indicate that they together form a neighboring pattern prolonging Gb. Though melodic structure is not a primary focus of this book, my graphs will usually show the melody's prolongational structure as well, in turn demonstrating the passage's large-scale contrapuntal framework. In other words, removing all notes except those with open noteheads will reveal the passage's basic two-voice counterpoint. Rock's melodies do not necessarily coalesce into a Schenkerian Urlinie-a deep-level



Example 1.2 Graphs of the four passages in Example 1.1.

(b) Madonna, "Like a Virgin"



(c) John Mellencamp (John Cougar), "Hurts So Good"



Example 1.2 Continued

(d) Stevie Wonder, "Higher Ground"



stepwise descent from a note of the tonic triad to $\hat{1}$ —nor do they avoid traditionally forbidden contrapuntal motions such as parallel fifths and octaves. That said, I do believe that rock's melodic voice leading retains the inherently stepwise structure of classical melodies (though some will be shown to outline an arpeggiation or other non-conjunct motion), and descending stepwise motion to $\hat{1}$ remains the strongest means of creating melodic closure.⁷

Before moving on to discussions of individual functions, there are some points I would like to address. First, I should make clear that not all songs contain functional circuits. Many songs simply prolong tonic throughout, sometimes with a single, short chord progression repeated throughout the song, other times with more varied progressions that simply never depart for unstable harmonic areas. We will see several examples of such songs throughout the book, especially in chapters 5 and 6. Other songs seem to move to an unstable pre-dominant area but eventually return to tonic without achieving a real cadence, in effect abandoning the circuit midway. For instance, in the Temptations' "I Can't Get Next to You" (Example 1.3), the tonic prolongation seemingly breaks in measure 9 with a move to IV. The IV chord is prolonged first by changing to minor-iv and then moving to its upper fifth I in measure 10. We expect measure 11 to repeat measure 9 and then move to the syntactical dominant in measure 12 (outlining the typical layout of PD-[T-PD-]D discussed in chapter 4). Instead, measure 12 returns to tonic as the beginning of the refrain, resulting in a hypermetrically shortened three-bar unit across measures 9-11. The syntactical dominant has been elided, and there is no cadence; the prolonged IV chord is thus retrospectively reinterpreted as a

⁷ See Nobile 2015 and Osborn 2017 for more on rock's contrapuntal structure.

large-scale neighbor to tonic, its potential pre-dominant function thwarted by the premature return to I.

It is sometimes possible for a functional circuit to arise in the absence of pre-dominant function—that is, with just T–D–T. A common example of a T–D–T circuit is seen in the 12-bar blues, where the first eight bars' I–IV–I progression prolongs tonic and the following V–IV–I progression provides D–T (where IV "softens" the V–I cadence; see Example 1.24). Non-blues songs occasionally omit the pre-dominant as well, such as Otis Redding's "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" (Example 1.15d). It nevertheless remains the overwhelming norm for all functions to be present within a functional circuit, the dialectic of departure and return providing the strongest means of harmonic closure.

Finally, some readers might wonder why I retain the standard functional terms for pre-dominant and dominant, rather than defining new terms such as, say, "departure" and "cadential." Pre-dominant is not so problematic; while many theorists note the (classical) association between pre-dominant function and the subdominant category, the pre-dominant is generally considered a purely syntactical concept. The term itself is perhaps not ideal, as it implies connection only to the ensuing dominant and not to the preceding tonic, an issue that arises in common-practice theory as well. (Marion Guck proposes simply using "P," representing "post-tonic/plagal/pre-dominant"; see Guck 1978. A similar issue arises with the formal term "prechorus," which functions just as much as a "post-verse.") A deeper terminological issue arises with "dominant," though, as it is so intertwined with the V chord. I certainly recognize the potential for confusion between the syntactical and categorical meanings of "dominant," and I do not want to imply that a non-V chord functioning as syntactical dominant is somehow weaker than or, worse, a deformed version of V. That said, the

Example 1.3 The Temptations, "I Can't Get Next to You" (1969): a potential pre-dominant area is retrospectively reinterpreted as a tonic prolongation because there is no ensuing syntactical dominant.



No dominant; IV retrospectively reinterpreted as tonic neighbor

reason I retain the standard terms is that I do not believe I am redefining anything—I am simply extracting one of the two existent meanings of these terms. Theorists use "dominant" to signify both a chord category and a syntactical role. Extracting the syntactical meaning highlights the relationship between rock's harmonic syntax and that of common-practice tonal music—that is, we can see how rock's syntactical dominants fulfill the same syntactical role as classical music's phrase-level dominants, even when rock uses chords other than V. A firm link between syntactical dominant function and the V chord is a feature of the classical style, not a universal truth. If we no longer insist on such a link, we might find that the structures of rock and common-practice music are more alike than we think.

Tonic Function

Tonic function is intertwined with the notion of harmonic *stability*. As Christopher Doll describes it, tonic is "a type of functional effect that involves a harmony stable enough to preclude any sense of requiring resolution" (2017, 20). For the most part, tonic stability arises from a chord built on 1, the tonal center; such chords, receiving the Roman numeral "I," project maximum *pitch* stability, especially when found in triadic form, as none of their component notes seeks resolution elsewhere. Not all I chords project tonic stability, however; some, such as those participating in a pre-dominant or dominant prolongation, are subordinate to some other chord and do not act as a stable point of rest. Tonic function is projected through a prolongation of I that is not subordinate to any other prolongation at any deeper level. William Caplin's description of harmonic prolongation is useful here:

A harmonic prolongation is created when a single harmonic entity is perceived in the listener's imagination to be sustained through time, despite the presence of an intervening chord (or chords) of different harmonic meaning. The *prolonged harmony* thus "remains in effect without being literally represented at every moment" throughout the progression. The intervening chord can be considered a *subordinate* harmony because it remains under the influence and control of the prolonged harmony. Prolongation thus entails two levels of harmonic activity: a local level that contains the succession of prolonged and subordinate harmonies and a deeper level that contains the prolonged harmony alone. (Caplin 1998, 25; embedded quote from Forte and Gilbert 1982, 142)

In other words, a tonic prolongation may contain many chords that are not I chords, but tonic function is present throughout the prolongation, even when a I chord is not literally sounding. Tonic function does not disappear and reappear with the I chords.
Syntactically speaking, tonic function plays two related roles. Appearing at the beginning of a syntactic unit, it acts as a "sturdy jumping-off point for future harmonic exploration" (Doll 2017, 20). This type of syntactical tonic can be distinguished as the *initial tonic*, setting the harmonic context for the progression as a whole. Songs without functional circuits reside entirely within their initial tonic area, eschewing any trajectory of departure and return. When an initial tonic does begin a functional circuit, we eventually see another syntactical role for tonic function, that of *final tonic*. The final tonic completes the harmonic trajectory by returning to stability after the unstable pre-dominant and dominant areas, in so doing effecting closure for the overarching syntactic unit. The arrival on final tonic forms a cadence, specifically an authentic cadence. Placed at both endpoints of a harmonic trajectory, syntactical tonic function projects both pitch-based and formal stability.

Tonic prolongation techniques

Riffs and pedals

The simplest statement of tonic function is a single, sustained I chord. In Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary," for instance, the verse's eight-measure tonic prolongation involves a strummed D-major chord over an unmoving D in the bass (at 0:11-0:28). Most long I chords, though, involve a vamping riff in the accompaniment, providing some melodic motion over a static harmony. In Bon Jovi's "You Give Love a Bad Name," for example, the eight-measure verse prolongs tonic with a pentatonic riff played in unison under the vocal line (Example 1.4). The sense of a single sustained chord is also present any time the bass pedals 1, even if other instruments engage in some level of harmonic motion. In the Jackson 5's "ABC," the piano alternates I and IV triads while the bass pedals 1, resulting in the repeated voice-leading motion I_{3-4-3}^{5-6-5} (Example 1.5a). Similarly, Foreigner's "Feels like the First Time" pairs a thumping bass pedal with soft synthesizer dyads projecting $I_{3-2-2-3}^{5-b7-6-5}$ (Example 1.5b). Though the non-bass instruments are in a sense playing multiple "chords," the bass pedal ensures that the riffs are heard as surface embellishments of a single harmony. Riffs and pedals outlining a I chord are a favorite device underlying initiating verses of '80s heavy metal songs; in addition to "You Give Love a Bad Name," examples include Van Halen's "Panama," Judas Priest's "Livin' after Midnight," Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train," Guns 'n' Roses' "Paradise City," and Def Leppard's "Pour Some Sugar on Me."

Chord shuttles

Most tonic prolongations involve more than one chord. A common technique is to alternate between I and some other chord, a device known as a *chord shuttle*.⁸ The

⁸ The term "chord shuttle" comes from Philip Tagg's 2014 book *Everyday Tonality II*.

Example 1.4 Bon Jovi, "You Give Love a Bad Name" (1986): a pentatonic riff outlining a sustained i chord provides the basis for this verse's tonic prolongation.



Example 1.5 Tonic pedals in the bass.



(b) Foreigner, "Feels Like the First Time" (1977), verse accompaniment



two chords usually span the same length, either one measure or a half measure each, and the back-and-forth occurs at least twice in immediate succession. In "Hurts So Good" (Example 1.1c), the four-measure tonic prolongation arises from a shuttle between I and V. Chord shuttles usually "break" when the progression moves to the pre-dominant. Given the structure of chord shuttles, it is usually the case that the pre-dominant harmony will directly follow the non-tonic member of the chord shuttle, as with the V–IV progression in measures 4–5 of "Hurts So Good." However, this literal chord progression does not represent the structural harmonic motion; the shuttle's second chord is subsidiary to the I chord, and so the ensuing pre-dominant should be understood to proceed directly from I (see Example 1.6). It is even sometimes the case that the shuttle's subsidiary chord and

the main pre-dominant harmony are the same chord; in the Beatles' "Misery," for example, a I–IV shuttle leads to IV as pre-dominant (see Example 2.7). Though there is no literal chord change on the surface, the breakage of the chord shuttle plus the hypermetrical emphasis on the second IV chord prompt a change in syntactical function. The overall progression remains I as tonic to IV as pre-dominant; the shuttle's IV chords exist at a shallower structural level than either of those two structural harmonies.

Chord shuttles (and their longer brethren, chord loops, discussed later) present an interesting synthesis of the seemingly antithetical notions of harmonic motion and harmonic stasis. In one sense, these oscillating progressions project constant motion by repeatedly moving from a state of repose to a state of tension (see Malawey 2010). Chord shuttles do not have the same static quality as single-chord tonic prolongations, which sit solidly in a state of repose. Yet at the same time, the ebb and flow of chord shuttles creates its own kind of stasis, one of motion without going anywhere. William Echard describes chord oscillations as "the simplest way to create a changing harmonic profile without producing any net movement" (Echard 2000, 121). The static quality of tonic-prolonging chord shuttles remains regardless of the relationship between I and the subsidiary chord. In this way, the I–V shuttle in "Hurts So Good" and the I–IV shuttle in "Misery" have the same overall effect as the I–ii shuttle in Wham's "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go" (0:12–0:24), the I–bVII shuttle in the Kinks' "Tired of Waiting for You" (0:07–0:27), the I–vi shuttle in Little Eva's "The Loco-Motion" (Example 1.11), and the i–bIII

Example 1.6 The I–V shuttle in "Hurts So Good" breaks into the pre-dominant IV chord; the structural progression is I–IV even though the surface progression is V–IV.



Example 1.7 The Rolling Stones, "As Tears Go By" (1964): an open chord loop prolongs tonic.



shuttle in Ratt's "Round and Round" (0:15–0:46). In all of these songs, the end of the chord shuttle coincides with the move to the pre-dominant area; sometimes the pre-dominant chord is the same chord as the non-tonic member of the shuttle, as in both "Misery" and "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go," but as we saw, that does not take away from the feeling of functional progression.

Chord loops

Repeated progressions encompassing three or more chords often act as chord loops. Like chord shuttles, chord loops do not project functional harmonic motion, but instead represent a sustained tonic prolonged by a circular progression. The loop becomes part of the groove, more like a drumbeat than a chord progression, adopting a metrical quality: loops have a beginning but no ending, instead constantly pointing back to their starting point, setting up the expectation that they will cycle around forever, like the four beats in a measure of ⁴/₄. As Philip Tagg puts it, "Loops, like shuttles, are much more 'places to be' than 'means to an end'" (2014, 427). The moment at which the loop breaks-which in some songs never occurs—is structurally significant and usually signals a formal boundary. Chord loops generally take on one of two formats: four equally spaced chords, each lasting one measure or a half measure, or three chords with one lasting twice as long as the others (see Moore 2012, 77). Chord loops are obviously related to chord shuttles, but, following Tagg 2014, I retain different terms to distinguish between a simple alternation of stable and unstable chords and a more complex web of stability relations surrounding the tonic.9

Loops can be divided into those that both begin and end on a I chord ("closed" loops) and those that end and/or begin off-tonic ("open" loops). Closed loops solidly establish the tonic through motion away from and back to I, often mimicking a T-PD-D-T functional circuit through the trajectory of departure and return. But the loop is not a functional circuit; it is on too small a scale and does not end with a cadence. For instance, the Band's "The Weight" prolongs tonic throughout its verses via a I-iii-IV-I closed chord loop (Example 1.25b). Open loops most often begin on I but end on a different chord, as in the four-chord I–II[#]–IV–V loop beginning the verses of the Rolling Stones' "As Tears Go By" (Example 1.7), or the three-chord I-bIII-IV loop we saw in Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" (Example 1.1d). Like chord shuttles, open loops that break into a pre-dominant harmony exhibit a literal progression from a non-I member of the loop to the non-I pre-dominant harmony, as in the V-IV progression in measures 8-9 of "As Tears Go By." Nevertheless, there is no direct connection between the loop's final chord and ensuing pre-dominant chord, despite their temporal juxtaposition; rather, the structural progression is from I to the pre-dominant, as represented visually in Example 1.8.

⁹ Christopher Doll (2017) uses "loop" to refer to any repeated chord progression of more than one chord; Moore includes single-chord "loops" as well (2012, 76–77). Richard Middleton refers to all of these as "open-ended repetitive gestures" (1990).

Example 1.8 The progression of "As Tears Go By" represented visually: the structural progression from tonic to pre-dominant is I–IV even though the surface progression is V–IV.



I am not primarily concerned with the differences among various looped progressions. Others have adequately categorized and tabulated the many common loops seen throughout the rock repertoire, and indeed the schematization of certain loops is an important issue in style and genre identification (see especially Moore 1992, Tagg 2014, and Doll 2017). For instance, the so-called "doo-wop" progression (I-vi-IV/ii-V), so named because of its ubiquity in late '50s and early '60s "milksap" recordings, is so stylistically marked that any post-1963 occurrence is necessarily heard as a reference to this earlier style. On the other hand, the loop most often identified as schematic in post-1990 music-the progression analyzed as either vi–IV–I–V or i–bVI–bIII–bVII depending on one's identification of the tonal center-is not so common in earlier styles; when it does appear in the '60s, '70s, and '80s, it is no more stylistically significant than any other loop.¹⁰ Regardless of the specific progression used, most loops ultimately serve the same purpose: to project harmonic stasis without harmonic monotony. Tonic-prolonging loops achieve this through motion away from and back to I (closed loops) or motion around I (open loops). The actual chords that participate in the loop are not the primary issue; $I-II^{\sharp}-IV-V$ and I-vi-V-IV have different sounds but the same effect.

Neighboring and passing chords

Neighboring chords are subordinate chords placed between two instances of the same prolonged chord. For instance, the progressions I–IV–I, I– \flat VII–I, I– \flat VII–I, I–V–I, and i– \flat VI–i frequently prolong tonic as neighboring progressions, the middle chord in each progression acting as a neighboring chord (Example 1.9a–c). Neighboring chords generally arise from melodic neighboring tones in at least one voice, often combined with a "cast-out root" such that all chords appear in root position (see

¹⁰ A rotated version of this loop, I–V–vi–IV, is more common in the classic rock decades (heard in the Rolling Stones' "Beast of Burden," e.g.), but is still not so ubiquitous to make it stand out from other open loops.

Example 1.9d). In the case of I–IV–I, for instance, the I chord's fifth and third move up a step and back down $\binom{5-6-5}{3-4-3}$, and the bass motion 1-4-1 arises from the middle chord being placed in root position. In classical harmony, passing chords most often separate two inversions of the same harmony, as for instance in the progression I–V 4_3 –I⁶. Such progressions are less common in rock, which relies more on root-position chords (but see the first five measures of Example 2.15 and the beginning of the chorus of Example 6.17 for two such examples). Rock's passing chords more often either connect prolonged chords of two different functions (Example 1.10a) or nest within a neighboring progression, providing a stepwise connection between I and the neighboring chord (Example 1.10b).

Example 1.9 Neighboring progressions prolonging tonic.



Example 1.10 Passing progressions connecting tonic and pre-dominant (a) and nested within a neighboring progression (b).



Other tonic prolongations

Prolongational techniques in the tonic area are certainly not restricted to the progressions already discussed; there are infinite possibilities for varying the chord progression while remaining grounded on tonic. Tonic areas usually govern the longest time span within the functional circuit and as a result are the most likely to be embellished with many subordinate chords. We see stepwise-descending bass lines (Example 2.1), sequences (Example 6.6), auxiliary progressions (Example 6.5), motion to a back-related chord (i.e., ending on an incomplete neighboring chord; see the verses in Examples 8.3 and 8.14), or simply a consonant harmonization of a melodic line (as we saw in "Nowhere Man," Example 1.1a). Many songs prolong tonic for their entirety, never departing for the unstable predominant and thus exhibiting no functional circuit. Such songs frequently exhibit a chord shuttle or loop repeated throughout the song; examples include the Staple Singers' "I'll Take You There" (I-IV shuttle), Parliament's "Flash Light" (riff giving rise to a i-IV shuttle), Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama" (V-IV-I or I-bVII-IV loop, depending on whom you ask), and the Kingsmen's "Louie, Louie" (I-IV-v-IV loop).

Pre-Dominant Function

Pre-dominant function begins when a new chord replaces I as the main prolonged harmony. Syntactically, this moment represents the shift from initial stability to

instability, specifically the type of instability associated with moving away from stability (as opposed to pointing back *toward* stability, as in dominant function). The pre-dominant, as mentioned, represents the *middle* of a harmonic trajectory. We have departed from our starting point to explore contrasting harmonic areas; we will eventually return via the syntactical dominant, but not until we reach the end of our progression. Rock's most common chords prolonged within the pre-dominant region are IV and vi, with ii common as well; vi's inclusion in this list represents a divergence from classical practice, where vi generally connects I to IV or ii and thus resides within the tonic area.¹¹ Since all of these chords frequently appear within tonic prolongations, how do we know when they represent a functional shift to the pre-dominant? Somehow we must perceive that the tonic is no longer active, no longer "sustained through time," and that the new chord is not "under the influence and control" of a prolonged I chord. Rhetorical emphasis on the new chord offers the strongest evidence that it has pushed tonic aside; think of the iv chord placed at the beginning of the chorus in Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" (Example 7.2) or, on a smaller scale, the ii chord arriving on the hypermetrically strong fifth measure of the verse to "Nowhere Man" (Example 1.1a). Also contributing to the sense of departure from tonic is an avoidance of the I chord; in "Hurts So Good" (Example 1.1c), for instance, the IV chord is given hypermetrical emphasis in measure 5, and then there are no more I chords until the final cadential arrival. As we will see, though, I chords do make frequent appearances within the pre-dominant area, most often as IV's upper fifth or vi's upper third.

Pre-dominant prolongation techniques

5-6 shifts (lower thirds)

A pre-dominant harmony can be prolonged by moving to a chord a third lower. This motion arises from a 5–6 shift on the prolonged chord; that is, its chordal fifth moves up a step to form a first-inversion triad, whose root is "cast out" into the bass, resulting in a root-position triad a third below the original chord. For example, in Little Eva's "The Loco-Motion," IV is prolonged via a IV–ii–IV–V/V progression, representing motion to its diatonic and chromatic lower thirds (Example 1.11). A 5–6 shift on a pre-dominant vi chord often arises within a I–vi–IV–V progression where vi, not IV, is the main pre-dominant. Conventional function-as-category thinking would dictate that in such progressions IV is the pre-dominant while vi represents a tonic extension. With a syntactical view of harmonic function, however, we can understand vi to be structurally superior to IV if it is placed in a position of prominence—at the beginning of a chorus section, say. In Fleetwood Mac's "Go Your Own Way," the verse prolongs the initial tonic (cf. Example 2.26)

¹¹ Laitz's textbook allows vi to act as pre-dominant, but Caplin's does not.

Example 1.11 Little Eva, "The Loco-Motion" (1962): a chord shuttle prolongs tonic, followed by two 5–6 shifts prolonging the pre-dominant and the cadential I prolonging the dominant.



and the chorus contains the progression vi–IV–V, which repeats twice before resolving to I (Example 1.12). The rhetorical emphasis on vi suggests that it functions as the primary pre-dominant, with IV a prolongational chord effecting a 5–6 shift on vi. (Note also the "melodic-harmonic divorce"—where the melody does not follow the chord tones—over this IV chord, suggesting a subordinate role for that chord; see Temperley 2007 and Nobile 2015.) That is, the shift from I to vi coupled with the shift from verse to chorus causes a syntactical shift from initial stability to instability, even though the vi chord has two tones in common with I. A similar progression occurs in the prechorus in Ramones' "Sheena is a Punk Rocker" (Example 8.8).

Upper thirds and fifths

In rock and pop styles, inverted chords are far more rare than in classical tonal music. When the bass moves to a different member of a prolonged chord, it usually gives rise to a root-position chord a third or fifth higher. Thus, while the bass line $\hat{4}-\hat{6}$ might underlie a IV–IV⁶ progression in classical music, in rock it is much more likely to underlie IV–vi. If IV represents the main pre-dominant harmony, the vi chord can be considered subordinate to IV, resulting from the bass's arpeggiation to the chordal third. We saw an example of IV–vi–IV prolonging IV in "Hurts So Good" (Example 1.1c); other examples can be found in the prechoruses from



Example 1.12 Fleetwood Mac, "Go Your Own Way" (1977): a I–vi–IV–V–I progression where IV prolongs vi via a 5–6 shift.

the Supremes' "Come See about Me" (Example 8.9) and Heart's "Crazy on You" (where the iv-bVI motion is embellished with passing harmonies; see Example 4.2). Another common upper-third prolongation is ii–IV prolonging ii, as we saw in "Higher Ground" (Example 1.1d, with major II); other examples appear in the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" and Wham!'s "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go" (Example 4.3a–b; both add a passing iii chord between ii and IV).

Upper-fifth prolongations work the same way: the bass arpeggiates to a prolonged chord's fifth, and that bass note gives rise to a root-position chord. The most common upper-fifth prolongation within the pre-dominant area is IV–I prolonging IV. In this interpretation, the I chord does *not* carry syntactical tonic function, instead functioning as an embellishing chord prolonging the pre-dominant. These embellishing I chords are what Schenker would call "apparent tonics," surface I chords that are subordinate to another, non-I sonority at a deeper level (see Schachter 1990). Consider Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Lookin' Out My Back Door," where the chord progression I–vi–IV–I–V–I underlies a functional

circuit (Example 1.13). (The verse exhibits a period structure where the first half ends on V, effecting a half circuit with a half cadence, followed by a full circuit in the second half; half cadences are discussed later in this chapter and periods are discussed in chapter 2.) The IV chord, placed on the hypermetrically strong fifth bar supporting the melodic peak, carries pre-dominant function; the following I chord acts as its upper fifth; and V-I provides the dominant-tonic cadence. In graphs, I often use the "zig-zag" beam (one of Schenker's "unfolding" symbols) to indicate upper-fifth prolongations, as shown in the bass-line graph under the transcription. Upper-fifth prolongations of IV arise frequently in classic bridges (see chapter 4) and also underlie the schematic "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression common in continuation choruses (see Example 3.8 and accompanying discussion). Embellishing I chords can also be used as vi's upper third, as in the prechorus to Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" (Example 4.7a). Finally, upper-fifth prolongations can arise above chords other than IV; we saw a ii-vi-ii progression where vi acted as ii's upper fifth in "Like a Virgin" (Example 1.1b). The prechorus to Mott the Hoople's "All the Young Dudes" combines several of the pre-dominant prolongations discussed: the main pre-dominant ii is prolonged first via its upper fifth vi, then via its upper third IV, which in turn is prolonged at a shallower level via *its* upper fifth I (Example 1.14).

Example 1.13 Creedence Clearwater Revival, "Lookin' Out My Back Door" (1970), verse: a IV–I upper-fifth motion prolongs the pre-dominant.



Example 1.14 Mott the Hoople, "All the Young Dudes" (1972), prechorus: a pre-dominant prolongation with upper thirds and fifths.



Dominant Function

Once a harmonic progression has departed for the pre-dominant area, its path back to stability culminates with a cadence. The cadential area begins with a move to syntactical dominant function, a harmonic stage signaling an imminent return to tonic effecting formal closure. As in classical practice, rock's most common representative of syntactical dominant function is V. The V chord both clearly distinguishes itself from the most common pre-dominant harmonies IV, vi, and ii—it is not the lower third, upper third, or upper fifth of any of those—and offers a strong voice-leading connection to I, with its $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{2}$ framing $\hat{1}$ over the strong $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ descending bass motion. Saying that V is the most common dominant harmony is quite different from saying that V is the most common chord preceding I (which Temperley's statistics show is not the case). Most chords that lead to I do not carry syntactical dominant function; in "The Locomotion," for instance (Example 1.11), I is preceded thrice by vi and once each by V/V and V, but only the V chord functions as syntactical dominant. Most (but not all) syntactical dominant harmonies do lead directly to I, but there is little reason to expect this small subset of progressions to reflect general tendencies; in fact, common cadential progressions are likely specifically avoided in non-cadential situations, diminishing their overall frequency but not their overall importance. Temperley's data shows that if we look only at chord progressions coinciding with the end of a section's vocal line (his definition of a cadence), V becomes the most common pre-tonic chord, occurring in 54% of such progressions (up from 31% overall), while IV precedes tonic 31% of the time (down from 40% overall) (Temperley 2018, 62). These numbers do not necessarily reflect

syntactical dominant–tonic progressions, but they do suggest that the frequency of certain chord successions can differ at different formal locations.¹²

That said, rock songs do frequently use chords other than V to carry syntactical dominant function. We saw examples of minor-iv and \flat VII functioning as dominant in "Nowhere Man" and "Higher Ground" (Examples 1.1a and 1.1d). The IV chord (minor or major) is by far the most common syntactical dominant representative other than V, also seen in Examples 2.4, 2.5, 5.11, 8.9, and 8.15. \flat VII, though widely touted as rock's modal replacement for V, more often acts as a prolongational chord—for example, as I's lower neighbor or as IV/IV in the progression IV– \flat VII–IV—than as a syntactical dominant representative; examples of it functioning as dominant in addition to "Higher Ground" include Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do with It?" and Bob Seger's "Turn the Page" (Examples 1.15a–b), both of which lead to their minor tonic via \flat VII– \flat VII–i progressions (see also Examples 7.2 and 8.13). Other chords are rarer in the syntactical dominant position but do occasionally fulfill that role; Example 1.15c–e shows examples of II[#], ii, and vi acting as dominant.¹³

Could a I chord ever function as dominant? For a true cadential arrival, there needs to be some harmonic motion from syntactical dominant to tonic, so a literal I-I cadence is impossible. However, in rare cases cadential motion can occur between two chords with root 1. In their 1978 cover of Al Green's "Take Me to the River," the Talking Heads modify Green's chord progression such that a i⁷ chord functions as syntactical dominant. In Green's version, the verse-prechorus-chorus cycle outlines a functional circuit i-bVI-IV-I, the PD-D area exhibiting the "triple plagal" motion bVI-bIII-bVII-IV (Example 1.16a). A functional layout of T in the verse, PD-D in the prechorus, and a cadential arrival on T at the onset of the chorus is the standard layout for verse-prechorus-chorus form, as described in chapter 8. The Talking Heads, though, do something different in the second half of the prechorus. They skip the \flat VII chord, resulting in the progression \flat VI– \flat III–IV– i^7 –i(Example 1.16b). At first glance, it might seem as though the Talking Heads arrive at tonic prematurely, before the formal and melodic arrival at the beginning of the chorus. However, the i⁷ chord at the end of the prechorus has so much tension that it is entirely unstable. We can taste the impending chorus arrival, but the song teases us by extending the expected four-bar hypermeasure to five bars before resolving; singer David Byrne increases the tension by asking a question, "Am I in love to stay?," stretching the melody upward to its peak, under which the guitar and organ sustain the fourth between $b\hat{7}$ and $b\hat{3}$. This fourth fulfills the same voice-leading function as a V chord's $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{2}$, framing $\hat{1}$ with notes above and below; here, though,

¹² An analogy can be made with classical bass lines: while the bass note 1 often follows 7, 2, or 4 within phrases, at a cadence it nearly always follows 5. A statistic measuring the most common bass notes preceding 1 would not be able to demonstrate the syntactical importance of 5–1 in that style.

preceding 1 would not be able to demonstrate the syntactical importance of 5–1 in that style.
¹³ Again with the caveat that Temperley's definition of cadence is different from mine, his data nevertheless supports the rarity of bVII–I cadences; they represent only 6% of section-ending progressions to tonic, while V–I and IV–I together represent 85% of such progressions (Temperley 2018, 62).



Example 1.15 Cadences with syntactical dominants other than V or IV.

the notes are adjacent to $\hat{1}$ within the minor-pentatonic scale rather than the major scale (cf. Doll 2017, 41–43). As Byrne answers his question and comes back down in the melody, this fourth resolves $b\hat{7}-\hat{1}$ and $b\hat{3}-\hat{1}$, as shown in Example 1.17. In other words, formal and rhetorical tension coupled with pentatonic voice leading

Example 1.16 "Take Me to the River": the Talking Heads modify Al Green's chord progression such that a i⁷ chord functions as syntactical dominant across the prechorus-chorus boundary.



Example 1.17 The i^7 -i cadence in the Talking Heads' version of "Take Me to the River" exhibits directed voice leading towards $\hat{1}$ in the upper voices similar to that of a traditional V–I cadence but derived from the minor-pentatonic rather than diatonic scale.



towards 1 creates a dominant-tonic cadence over this i^7 -i progression, even with no change in root or bass note. Example 1.18 graphs the Talking Heads' functional circuit, showing the main harmonic progression as $i-bVI-i^7-i$. If you are not



Example 1.18 Graph of verse–prechorus–chorus cycle in the Talking Heads' version of "Take Me to the River" showing the main harmonic progression as $I-\flat VI-i^7-i$.

convinced of i⁷'s dominant function in the verse-prechorus-chorus cycle, the Talking Heads solidify its role as such in the bridge; where Al Green places the standard retransitional V chord, the Talking Heads again use i⁷, here with even more rhetorical tension as the drums hammer eighth notes, Byrne gets frantic ("till I can't ... till I can't ... I can't take no more!"), and the $b\hat{7}-b\hat{3}$ fourth is even more prominent than in the prechorus (Example 1.19). While Green's chords are more typical of '70s pop and rock music, the Talking Heads' substitutions do not change the overall syntactical progression.

Dominant prolongation techniques

The cadential I and expanded dominant progressions

Because of the urgency projected by the syntactical dominant, it is less likely than tonic or pre-dominant to be prolonged by multiple chords. When the dominant area does contain more than one chord, the most common prolongation technique involves what I have termed the "cadential I." The cadential I is the rock version of the classical cadential six-four, a sonority that looks like I_4^6 but participates in a dominant prolongation and does not carry any tonic stability. The cadential six-four arises from a sixth and fourth above the bass note $\hat{5}$ resolving to the fifth and third of the V chord, a progression commonly notated as "V₄₋₃⁶⁻⁵" (Example 1.20a). Rock occasionally contains actual cadential six-four chords, as in Three Dog Night's "Joy to the World" (Example 2.11), or Culture Club's "Karma Chameleon" (Example 8.25) (see also Everett 2009, 208–9). Far more common in rock, though, is for the initial sonority to manifest as a *root-position* I chord (Example 1.20b). This cadential I most often behaves exactly like a cadential six-four, appearing on a (hyper)metrically strong beat and leading to a root-position V chord on

Example 1.19 "Take Me to the River": the Talking Heads also modify the bridge's syntactical dominant, replacing Al Green's V⁷ with i⁷.



(b) Bridge in the Talking Heads' version



a weaker beat. When this metrical situation occurs following a pre-dominant prolongation, the cadential I is best seen as part of the dominant prolongation, resolving to the following V chord. We saw an example in "The Loco-Motion" above (Example 1.11): after the pre-dominant progression IV–ii–IV–V/V, the I–V progression in measures 13–14 prolongs the syntactical dominant, with I subordinate to V as the cadential I. Only after the V chord does the progression cadence to a tonic-functioning I. Other examples of the cadential I can be found in Examples 2.9, 2.16, 6.2, 6.4, 8.8, and 8.23; see also Nobile 2011. Note that in a IV–I–V progression where IV is PD and V is D, the intervening I chord can act either as IV's upper fifth or as the cadential I. The difference is metrical: if IV and V are on stronger (hyper)beats than I, then I is best interpreted as the cadential I (compare "The Loco-Motion" and "Lookin' Out My Back Door").¹⁴

¹⁴ The cadential I is related to the concept of the "inverted cadential six-four" discussed by William Rothstein (2006) and Timothy Cutler (2009). Rothstein and Cutler, who analyze exclusively common-practice repertoire, note that certain first-inversion and root-position I chords are best interpreted as cadential six-fours with the "wrong" voice in the bass. See Nobile 2016, 167–72 for a fuller discussion.



Example 1.20 The cadential I is akin to a root-position cadential six-four.

Occasionally, more chords than just the cadential I precede the arrival of the main syntactical dominant harmony. In the Beatles' "Please Please Me," for instance, a prolonged pre-dominant IV chord leads to the cadential progression I–IV–V–I (Example 1.21). Walter Everett interprets the I chord in measure 13 as "a cadential $_{4}^{6}$ that is disguised as a I chord"—in other words, a cadential I—and then interprets the following IV chord as a neighboring chord to V such that the I–IV–V progression prolongs V (Everett 2001, 132–33). This progression is what I call an "expanded dominant progression," where the cadential I is embellished with several chords before resolving to the main dominant harmony. Generally, the chords between the cadential I and V provide some standard connection between I and V, as in the schematic I–IV–V in "Please Please Me." Some expanded dominant progressions give us I–vi–ii–V, as in James Taylor's "Carolina in My Mind" (at 0:25–0:30) or the

Example 1.21 The Beatles, "Please Please Me" (1963): the expanded dominant progression $I-IV-V^7$ prolongs V.



related $I-VI^7-II^7-V^7$, as in Mary Wells's "My Guy" (at 0:30–0:37); Example 6.12 shows an expanded dominant progression built from an ascending scale in the bass from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$.

Combination of V and *b*VII

I noted that \flat VII is not a particularly common representative of syntactical dominant function in a functional circuit. It does, however, occasionally appear within the syntactical dominant area as V's chromatic upper third. In Big Brother and the Holding Company's "Piece of My Heart," the prechorus ends with a V- \flat VII-V progression prolonging V with motion to and back from its chromatic upper third (Example 1.22a; see Example 4.4 for a transcription). In the Doobie Brothers' "Rockin' Down the Highway," there is no return to V, so the cadential progression is V- \flat VII-I (Example 1.22b). Tommy James and the Shondelles' "I Think We're Alone Now" reverses the dominant progression to give us \flat VII-V-I (Example 1.22c). Why in all three cases do I consider \flat VII to be subordinate to V, rather than considering V to prolong \flat VII as its lower third? First of all, a lower-third prolongation with the embellishing chord arriving first is not a typical prolongational technique (5–6 shifts are not generally reversible), so the

Example 1.22 Dominant prolongations combining V and bVII.



first two examples' V–bVII progressions are unlikely to be heard with the first chord resolving into the second. In "I Think We're Alone Now," it would make prolongational sense to consider the bVII–V progression as a 5–6 shift on bVII; however, given the strong voice-leading motion V–I effecting the cadential arrival, I find it hard to hear V as anything other than the most structurally significant chord within the dominant area.

IV as "softener" and the 12-bar blues

A V-I cadence can sometimes be softened by inserting a IV chord, resulting in the progression V-IV-I. "Softening" is Walter Everett's term, referring to an interpretation of the IV chord as consonant support for the passing tone 4 separating the V chord's 5 and the I chord's 3, as shown in Example 1.23 (see Everett 2004, [1], and 2009, 228-30; see also Doll 2017, 73-74). Rock's cadential V-IV-I progressions derive from the standard formula at the end of the 12-bar blues (see Example 1.24). Interpreting IV to be subordinate to V at the end of the 12-bar blues has proved controversial in the music-theoretical community; some argue that that interpretation inappropriately privileges classical norms in a theory of rock harmony (see, e.g., Stephenson 2002, 102-4). Of course, there are many twelve-bar blues songs in which nobody can argue that IV is more important than V: those that skip the IV chord so that V lasts for two measures and leads directly to I. Classic examples include Chuck Berry's "Rock and Roll Music" (1957), "Johnny B. Goode" (1958), and "No Particular Place to Go" (1964)-the last of which omits IV in the verses but includes it underneath the guitar solos-and Stevie Ray Vaughan's "The House Is Rockin" (1989). These examples suggest that the IV chord in measure 10 is an insertion—albeit a remarkably common one—that does

Example 1.23 Harmonic interpretation of a V–IV–I progression where IV "softens" the cadence by providing consonant support for the passing tone 4.



Example 1.24 A standard 12-bar blues progression.

$$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|} & & & 5 & & 9 \\ \hline I & I & I & IV & IV & IV & I \\ \hline IV & IV & IV & IV & I \\ \hline \end{array}$$

not alter the fundamental syntax of the progression. In general, therefore, I agree with Walter Everett that the IV chord serves to soften the V–I cadence.¹⁵

Cadence and Closure

A functional circuit culminates in a *cadence*. Defined in reference to the functional circuit, a cadence forms the end of a broader harmonic process that began with the circuit's initial tonic; cadences are not simply punctuation marks seen at certain formal moments. As William Caplin puts it, "Cadence is best understood as a *syntactical* component of music, as distinguished from the wide variety of features that are, broadly speaking, *rhetorical* in function" (2004, 52). In particular, cadences are agents of syntactic *closure*. Again, Caplin:

Cadence creates musical closure, but not all closure in music is cadential. Closure in general involves bringing to completion some process implicating one or more modes of musical organization at a given structural level of a work. ... [In cadences,] a definite *harmonic* process is closed, since the harmonies associated with the cadence always bring to some degree of completion a broader harmonic progression beginning prior to the onset of the cadence. ... More importantly, however, the various types of closure associated with individual musical parameters are, in themselves, insufficient to create cadence unless a sense of *formal* closure is present as well. (Caplin 2004, 56–57)

Cadence, in other words, requires both formal and harmonic closure. There are many ways to effect formal closure without harmonic closure-that is, non-cadentially. We can speak of rhythmic closure, which can arise simply upon completion of four melodic groups of two or four measures each; thematic closure, which can arise from the completion of a motivic process such as srdc (see chapter 2); lyrical closure, which can arise from the completion of an idea in the text, or, at a more basic level, simply from the grammatical completion of a sentence; or melodic closure, which can arise from directed motion toward 1 in the vocal line. The chorus to the Steve Miller Band's "Take the Money and Run," for instance, exhibits rhythmic closure only, as it contains four identical two-bar ideas (Example 1.25a); the verses to the Band's "The Weight" exhibit rhythmic, thematic, lyrical, and melodic closure, exhibiting an eight-bar aaba thematic design presenting a cohesive story in the text and ending with melodic motion to 1 (Example 1.25b). Neither example contains a cadence, though, since there is no harmonic closure; both exhibit tonic-prolonging chord loops throughout, and though "The Weight" does end on a I chord, the final IV-I motion does not provide the end of any section-long harmonic process.

¹⁵ As I describe in Nobile 2016, 172–74, in rare cases (such as Michael Jackson's "Black or White") it might be possible to understand V to function as syntactical *pre*-dominant in a 12-bar blues progression, with IV functioning as syntactical dominant.



Example 1.25 Formal closure arising from non-harmonic means.



A conception of cadence as closure contrasts with many existing discussions of rock cadences. David Temperley's definition, which loosely follows Ken Stephenson's concept of a "closed cadence," reads as follows: "A cadence is a harmonic move to I coinciding with the end of the vocal line of a chorus (or refrain)" (Temperley 2018, 61; Stephenson 2002, chapter 3). Christopher Doll defines a cadence as "a chordal gesture that marks the end of one phrase and the beginning of another" (2017, 90). Both definitions can be seen to reflect a concept of cadence-as-punctuation, considering a cadence as a rhetorical device marking a formal end. The IV–I progression at the end of Example 1.25b would qualify as a cadence following both Temperley's and Doll's definitions; in Doll's, the other three IV–I progressions in the second, fourth, and sixth measures would also qualify. A

Example 1.26 The Beatles, "A Hard Day's Night" (1964), end of verse: the cadence arrives at the end of the functional circuit in measure 11, not in the section's final measure.



concept of cadence-as-closure does not only disqualify certain rhetorical gestures from being cadences but also allows for non-cadential harmonic and melodic material to occur *after* the moment of cadential arrival. In the Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night," for instance, the verse's functional circuit ends with a V–I cadence in the eleventh measure, followed by a *post-cadential* I–IV–I progression prolonging the final tonic (Example 1.26). Both Temperley and Doll would identify a cadence in measure 12; Temperley in fact explicitly labels that IV–I progression as the section's cadence (2011, [2.4–5]). (Doll could allow measure 11 and measure 12 both to be cadences at different harmonic levels, depending on one's hearing.) As we will see in later chapters, a cadential arrival often occurs on the first downbeat of a chorus section, specifically a telos chorus following a verse and prechorus; the entire chorus section, thus, functions as a post-cadential tonic prolongation.

Half cadences

Some song sections end on their syntactical dominant, with no final tonic completing a functional circuit. We can call these T–PD–D outlines functional *half* circuits, ending with *half cadences*. Half cadences are not simply authentic cadences with their final tonic lopped off—they are not just the first half of an authentic cadence—but rather arise from a syntactic structure in which the dominant is itself the harmonic goal. The aforementioned association between cadence and closure presents a paradox in the concept of the half cadence: How can we speak of harmonic closure when a passage ends on an unstable harmony? Poundie Burstein has examined this paradox in reference to classical half cadences, writing:

Despite the inherent contradictions, however, most musicians do agree that various elements used in conjunction with one another can convey an impression of closure on a dominant harmony. ... Elements of the rhythm, texture, and melodic design

combine to demarcate the dominant harmony in such a way that it could be perceived as an endpoint. ... Consequently, rhetoric and structural syntax cannot always be readily disentangled from one another in this regard. (Burstein 2014, 205–7)

More specifically, the effect of a half cadence depends on the presence of three elements: (1) a harmonic outline involving clear pre-dominant and dominant areas (to ensure that we are not dealing with a simple tonic prolongation ending on a back-related chord); (2) a strong sense of formal closure upon arrival on the syntactical dominant in question; and (3) a harmonic disjunction between the syntactical dominant and the first chord of the following section such that there is no sense of resolution across the section boundary. In Don McLean's "American Pie," for instance, the chorus begins with a six-measure tonic-prolonging I-IV-I-V chord loop, moves on to a three-measure prolongation of vi as pre-dominant, and ultimately settles on V for the last two measures (see Example 3.2). The arrival on V closes the chorus, and the I chord that starts the following verse begins a new harmonic trajectory with no direct connection to the chorus's final V. Other instances of half cadences are found in both the verse and chorus of the Eagles' "Hotel California" (Example 6.6) and at the end of most classic bridge sections (as we will see in chapter 4). Half cadences seem particularly likely to employ V as the syntactical dominant, though other chords can effect half-cadential closure as well, such as the half-cadential II[#] chord ending the verses to the Left Banke's "Walk Away Renée" (Example 1.27).

There is another situation in which we could appropriately employ the term "half cadence," namely, at the midpoint of a section where the second half begins just like the first half; in other words, a *period* structure (see chapter 2). Here, the word "half" takes on additional significance, as the half cadence marks the halfway

Example 1.27 The Left Banke, "Walk Away Renée" (1966): the verse contains a functional half-circuit ending with a half cadence on II^{\sharp} .



point of the section. We saw an example of this type of half cadence in "Lookin' Out My Back Door" (Example 1.13): that verse's first eight bars outline a T–PD–D half circuit, and measure 9 begins just like measure 1, this time completing the circuit T–PD–D–T. We will encounter several more periods with medial half cadences in chapter 2. An ensuing return to the section's opening material is necessary for a half-cadential effect to be present midway through a section, this re-beginning ensuring a harmonic separation between the two portions. What is not necessary, though, is for the second portion to answer with an authentic cadence. Several of rock's period structures involve two parallel halves that *both* end with half cadences, including the Beatles "All You Need Is Love" (Example 2.6) and Bob Dylan's "Positively 4th Street" (Example 5.6).

Summary

The harmonic theory presented in this chapter focuses on deep-level organization, as opposed to local chord-to-chord successions, and considers harmony as a teleological process, as opposed to a series of discrete elements. The central concept, the functional circuit, adapts the classical phrase model to describe rock's harmonic trajectories across one or more complete formal sections. Rock's trajectories, like those of classical music, can be seen to exhibit four stages, or syntactical harmonic functions: initial stability (tonic), instability as departure (pre-dominant), instability as return (dominant), and final stability (tonic). Each stage contains one main harmony that is prolonged throughout that particular stage. A functional circuit is a complete trajectory across these four stages (T-PD-D-T), and a functional half circuit ends with its syntactical dominant (T-PD-D). Generally, initial and final tonics are carried by I chords, while pre-dominant and dominant are carried by other chords. The primary difference between rock's progressions and classical progressions is that the pre-dominant and dominant areas are not tied to specific chords. The most common pre-dominant chords are IV, vi, and ii, and the most common dominant chords are V and IV, though others are also possible, including I; functions are defined based on their syntactical roles, not the pitch content of their component chords. Prolongational techniques within each functional area combine familiar Schenkerian techniques seen in classical progressions (linear expansions, bass arpeggiations, etc.) with some rock-specific prolongations (chord shuttles and loops, the cadential I, etc.).

The formal theory presented in the remainder of this book is built upon this chapter's harmonic theory. My theory of *form as harmony* argues that a song's formal process depends upon the way the harmonic process synchronizes with the formal sections. For instance, a verse-chorus song where both verse and chorus give us T-PD-D-T is quite different from one where verse gives T and chorus gives PD-D-T. Harmony does not tell us what is the verse and what is the chorus, but it does define the structure of the verse-chorus cycle, as well as the content and expressive function of the component sections.

Verses

Verses are starting points. No matter how many different sections a song has, when we come to a verse, we feel that the formal clock has been reset-the verse does not continue a thought; it starts a new thought. Some verses carry that new thought through to its conclusion, while others merely plant a seed to be explored further in later sections such as choruses, prechoruses, and the like. That basic distinction divides rock's verses into two main types. Harmonically speaking, the first type contains a complete functional circuit (T-PD-D-T), ending with a cadence, while the latter prolongs only the initial tonic of a functional circuit, setting up the expectation that PD-D-T will ensue in other sections. I will use the terms "sectional verse" in reference to the first type and "initiating verse" in reference to the second. While both types contain the basic characteristics of verses-narrative lyrics that change on successive iterations and the like-their effects are quite different. Sectional verses are self-contained utterances, providing a sense of arrival and completeness at their end; when they do lead to other sections like choruses or bridges, the other sections begin with a new idea that complements or contrasts with the verse. Initiating verses, on the other hand, are incomplete thoughts with no satisfying conclusion, dependent upon other sections to finish what they started; the combination of sections therefore creates a single continuous structure, lending more cohesion to the complete cycle.

This chapter looks at the internal constructions of sectional and initiating verses in the rock repertoire. Sectional verses, with their complete, closed trajectories, often follow one of several standard thematic layouts, where the harmony's functional circuit interacts with specific melodic-motivic processes. The most common such layouts are *periods*, comprising two parallel halves with respectively weak and strong cadences, and *srdc*, comprising four melodic groups functioning, respectively, as statement, restatement, departure, and conclusion. As I will discuss, periods, *srdc*, and other sectional-verse layouts, such as small **aaba** and the 12-bar blues, all synchronize their thematic and harmonic trajectories in specific ways. Initiating verses, with no large-scale harmonic motion, do not exhibit the level of thematic variation seen in sectional verses; most often, initiating verses present two or four repetitions of the same melodic idea over a repeated chord progression. By presenting only the beginning of harmonic and thematic processes, initiating verses look to later sections for thematic development and harmonic instability.

Sectional Verses as Periods

A typical period proceeds like this: a passage begins on tonic and eventually leads to pre-dominant and dominant functions but stops there on a half cadence; a second passage then begins the same as the first, but this time goes through pre-dominant and dominant to a final tonic arrival, effecting an authentic cadence. In other words, periods involve two passes through the same material, the first ending inconclusively, the second strongly. Because of the first-pass/second-pass relationship, we call a period's two halves the *antecedent* and the *consequent*. Billy Joel's "Piano Man" sets both its verses and choruses to a period, the antecedent's half cadence and the consequent's authentic cadence punctuated with rhyming syllables in the lyrics (Example 2.1). The graph in Example 2.1b shows the typical two-branch period layout, with a T-PD-D half circuit and melodic descent to $\hat{2}$ in the antecedent answered by a T-PD-D-T full circuit and complete descent to $\hat{1}$ in the consequent. Similarly, the Monkees' "Daydream Believer" sets its lilting verses



Example 2.1 Billy Joel, "Piano Man" (1973), verse: period.

to 16-bar periods, as shown in Example 2.2; in both songs, the first four bars of the antecedent and consequent are identical (besides the different lyrics), while the next four bars contrast.

As anyone who has gone through a traditional undergraduate theory curriculum knows, periods are common in classical repertoires, especially in instrumental music of the late eighteenth century. While classical and rock periods work within their respective stylistic idioms, their basic layouts are essentially the same, with a half-cadential antecedent followed by a similar consequent ending conclusively. In bringing up this connection, I do not mean to suggest that rock songs with periods somehow derive from classical music—that would be a historically dubious claim—but instead I wish to demonstrate that despite the cultural and temporal divide between the two repertoires, they nevertheless exhibit many of the same musical processes. Billy Joel's classical background notwithstanding, it is not generally the case that songwriters who write periods are consciously or subconsciously referring to eighteenth-century idioms, nor do rock





listeners perceive elements of classicism in such songs. (It would be equally likely, and perhaps more so, for songwriters or listeners to associate period structures with Tin Pan Alley music, as Walter Everett suggests [2009, 136].) Rather, the idea of a period-combining two phrases, the second of which answers the first-might just be a pretty good way to build a cohesive section. Furthermore, while their basic harmonic designs resemble those of Classical periods, both "Piano Man" and "Daydream Believer" adorn their period layouts with rock-specific voice leading. "Piano Man"'s final cadence includes the common avoidance of 2 in the melody over the V chord, opting instead to anticipate the arrival on 1 in measure 7 before the harmony cadences to tonic in measure 8. The graph in Example 2.1b shows the $\hat{2}$ in parentheses, indicating the conspicuousness of its absence, in the sense that what Billy Joel actually sings is heard as a variation of the hypothetical version in which 2 does appear. (It is in fact not so hypothetical in this case, since the harmonica melody in the song's introduction plays $\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ over the V chord.)¹ "Daydream Believer" counterpoints its stepwise-ascending bass with parallel octaves in the melody—and parallel root-position chords I-ii⁽⁷⁾-iii-IV—which would never fly in classical styles (see Example 2.2b).

Techniques in rock periods

The two halves of rock's periods are often nearly identical, with only the smallest difference required to change the antecedent's weak cadence into a strong one in the consequent. Sometimes, the consequent repeats the antecedent exactly but tacks on a I chord to turn a half cadence into an authentic one, as in Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Lookin' Out My Back Door" (Example 1.13 in chapter 1). The verse's final passage ("doo, doo, doo, lookin' out my back door") serves as the refrain, and the presence of the title lyric enhances the feeling of closure at the end of this phrase, even though the melody is nearly identical to that of the antecedent until the last note. Sometimes both phrases end on authentic cadences, in which case changing the melody's last note from 3 to 1 can be the difference between looking ahead for more (with questioning upward motion) and coming to a satisfying close (with declarative downward motion); in Don McLean's "Vincent" and the Eagles' "Tequila Sunrise," the two phrases are identical except for that one final note (Example 2.3).

The use of chords other than V as syntactical dominant further expands the options for periods. In the Eagles' "Lyin' Eyes," the antecedent's half cadence on V is answered by a IV–I authentic cadence (Example 2.4). In this period, the functional half circuit in the first phrase is the standard I–IV–V (where IV is prolonged by a 5–6 motion turning it into ii), whereas in the second phrase the circuit is I–IV–IV–I, with IV representing both the syntactical pre-dominant and dominant. (The Eagles

¹ There is a common-practice analog to this situation, namely, when 3-7-1 substitutes for 3-2-1, but the situation in which 2 is avoided in favor of 1-a dissonant note against the V chord—is decidedly non-classical.

Example 2.3 Periods in which the only difference between antecedent and consequent is the melody's final note.

(a) Don McLean, "Vincent" (1972), verse



Example 2.4 Eagles, "Lyin' Eyes" (1975), verse: period with V as dominant in the antecedent and IV as dominant in the consequent.



save the V–I cadence for the end of the chorus accompanying the title lyric.) An interesting technique afforded by the possibility of different dominant chords is to replace a IV–V progression in the antecedent, functioning as PD–D, with a IV–I progression in the consequent, here functioning as D–T, as in both Elton John's "Your Song" and Van Morrison's "Tupelo Honey" (Example 2.5). The appearance of the I chord at the end of the consequent retrospectively turns the previous IV chord, originally the pre-dominant, into the syntactical dominant, thus effecting a IV–I authentic cadence. As in "Tequila Sunrise" and "Vincent," this is a way for the two phrases to proceed nearly identically until the cadential moment.

Example 2.5 Verses in which a IV–V progression in the antecedent is replaced with IV–I in the consequent, with IV functioning as pre-dominant in the former and dominant in the latter.



Example 2.6 The Beatles, "All You Need is Love" (1967), verse: period with two antecedent phrases.



One final observation about period structures in sectional verses: on occasion, especially in songs that contain a chorus, a verse's antecedent phrase will lead to another antecedent, with the same inconclusive cadence as the first half. For example, the verses of the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" contain two eight-bar phrases, both leading to half cadences on V over the line "It's easy" (Example 2.6). The ensuing chorus ultimately achieves an authentic cadence at the end ("Love is all you need"). Is this verse a period? In a sense, yes, with its clear two-part parallel construction. Given that many of rock's consequents are exactly the same as their antecedents until the last minute, a listener hearing this song for the first time would likely assume that they were hearing a period until the chorus came in before the V chord could resolve. But in another sense, this verse is not a period, in that the fundamental idea of period structure-a weak cadence answered by a strong one-fails to materialize. The question comes down to the nature of the half cadence in rock songs. Can a section that ends with a half cadence function as a self-contained formal unit—in this case, a sectional verse—or does the inconclusiveness of its end make it sound incomplete? I believe that the situation in rock music is more complex than it would be in classical music, in which authentic cadential closure is required for completeness. Rock songs are less reliant on authentic cadences (many songs never cadence to tonic at all), and so I am inclined to consider these double antecedents to be a type of period; these verses remain harmonically *closed*, in that they exhibit an autonomous harmonic trajectory, but are to some degree *inconclusive*, in that their trajectories do not complete a full circuit ending on tonic. (Recall the discussion of half cadences in chapter 1.) In other words, these verses are still sectional verses, but they nevertheless look ahead to future sections to provide the song's ultimate harmonic closure.

Sectional Verses as Srdc

In many of rock's periods, both the antecedent and consequent divide into two contrasting melodic groups. In "Piano Man," for instance, the antecedent's first four bars are set off from the next four with a pause in the vocal line ("It's nine o'clock on a Saturday; [pause] the regular crowd shuffles in"); the consequent begins just like the antecedent ("There's an old man sitting next to me"), but the second half is new ("making love to his tonic and gin"). The whole period thus looks like **ab**|**ac**, where each boldface letter refers to a two- or four-bar melodic group. Similar layouts underlie "Daydream Believer," "Lookin' Out My Back Door," and "Lyin' Eyes." The two-part structure of antecedents and consequents recalls William Caplin's description of classical-era antecedents and consequents as containing a "basic idea" and a "contrasting idea" (1998, chapter 4).

An alternative arrangement of four melodic groups places the two similar units next to each other up front, with the contrasting elements following afterward (aabc). Walter Everett calls this arrangement srdc, referring to the form-functional succession of statement, restatement, departure, and conclusion.² Unlike periods, srdc structures do not contain half cadences at their midpoints, instead exhibiting a single functional circuit across their entirety. Srdc is similar to the classical "sentence," comprising two basic ideas followed by a "continuation phrase" ending with a cadence; however, there are some structural differences that warrant the use of a different term. For example, the idea of a "departure" in the third subphrase (in which the material contrasts with that of s and r) is somewhat antithetical to the classical idea of "continuation," where the motivic material derives from the first half; furthermore, the second half of a classical sentence less often divides into two delineated subphrases as in rock's d and c gestures.

The Beatles' early song "Misery" provides a short and straightforward example of an **srdc** sectional verse (Example 2.7). Here, **s** and **r** are essentially identical in both melody and harmony and are clearly delineated by rests in measures 2 and 4. **D** introduces contrasting melodic material and a more continuous vocal line, leading to a cadence in **c** over the title lyric. The text also follows the melodic **srdc** pattern both syntactically—**s** and **r** provide rhyming halves of a complete sentence, and **d** forms a complete clause setting up **c**'s single-word appendage—and semantically—**s** and **r** provide background information, **d** moves on to explain the current situation, and **c** summarizes the overall sentiment.

Harmonic models for srdc

Though **srdc** is usually defined based purely on melodic-motivic relationships, there is a significant harmonic element as well. "Misery"'s verse begins by prolong tonic in **s** and **r** through a I–IV chord shuttle. **D** begins off-tonic, taking us through pre-dominant and dominant (IV–V) and concluding with a cadence to tonic at the

² Everett first introduces the term **srdc** in the second volume of *The Beatles as Musicians* (1999, 16) and treats it in detail in *The Foundations of Rock* (2009, 140–41). Several theorists have delved further into the particularities of rock's **srdc** phrase structures; see especially Summach 2011, Nobile 2011, and de Clercq 2012.



Example 2.7 The Beatles, "Misery" (1963), verse: srdc.

beginning of c. (Note that while there is no change of chord across measures 4–5, measure 4's IV chord is part of the tonic-prolonging chord shuttle, while measure 5's IV chord breaks the shuttle and represents the beginning of the pre-dominant area; recall the discussion of chord shuttles in chapter 1.) While there is plenty of variation among **srdc** verses, the basic harmonic outline seen in "Misery"—a tonic prolongation in **s** and **r**, an off-tonic **d**, and a cadence in **c**—holds as a general model for most **srdc** verses. In this way, the harmonic and formal trajectories are in sync, with stability in the initial presentation of melodic material (**sr**), instability over the contrasting material (**d**), and a return to stability as the verse concludes (**c**).

An initial presentation of two tonic-prolonging phrases is generally required for an srdc verse to unfold. However, s and r do not always contain the exact same melody and harmony (in such cases, we could understand r to stand for "response" instead of "restatement"). For instance, in the Police's "Every Breath You Take" and the Jackson 5's "I'll Be There," s prolongs I and r prolongs vi (Example 2.8). In both, the vi chord extends the tonic prolongation as a descending arpeggiation connecting I to IV, with IV arriving at the beginning of d and carrying pre-dominant function. In "Every Breath You Take," the melody remains the same in both s and r, while in "I'll Be There," the melody in r is transposed down a third along with the harmony. Another common way that s and r may contrast occurs when s ends on I but r ends on V, as in the Beatles' "From Me to You" (Example 2.9).³ Ending r on V contributes to the energy gain characteristic of d, which generally begins off-tonic on a chord *other* than V, often IV or vi. However, the V chord at the end of r should not be understood to progress to d's first chord; in these cases, r's V

³ Other examples: Freddie and the Dreamers, "I'm Telling You Now"; Gerry and the Pacemakers, "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Cryin"; the Allman Brothers Band, "Ramblin' Man" (verses and choruses; see Example 6.2).

Example 2.8 Srdc verses with s on I and r on vi.



Example 2.9 The Beatles, "From Me to You" (1963), verse: **r** ends on a back-related V, and **d**'s IV chord connects back to the opening tonic.



chord is *back-related* to s's opening tonic, and the pre-dominant chord that begins d connects not to this V but to the tonic at the beginning of s. In other words, the V chord at the end of r acts as an incomplete neighbor prolonging tonic and so resides at a shallower level than both s's opening tonic and d's opening pre-dominant.

The harmonic layout of d and c is variable. As noted, most srdc verses begin d with a non-tonic chord and come to a cadence in c. In particular, rock's srdc verses tend to follow one of three general models: (1) d contains PD-D and resolves to T on the downbeat of c; (2) d contains PD and c contains D–T; and (3) d begins unstably but continues the tonic prolongation from s and r before moving on to PD. Example 2.10 summarizes these three harmonic models. "Misery" (Example 2.7) and "From Me to You" (Example 2.9) outline models 1 and 2, respectively. In the former, the arrival on tonic at the beginning of c does not permit the refrain to do anything more than simply state the title lyric as a tacked-on sentence fragment; in the latter, however, c is more of a complete gesture, taking us from dominant to tonic-elaborated with a cadential I chord-with a longer clause in the lyrics ("with love, from me to you"). Model 3, where the tonic prolongation continues into d, is less common than models 1 and 2. A continuation of tonic makes it difficult for d to fulfill its two main roles: to contrast with s and r and to gain energy in preparation for c. To ensure contrast and energy gain, d usually destabilizes its tonic in some way. In Three Dog Night's "Joy to the World" (Example 2.11), d begins on I, but that chord quickly turns into an unstable V_2^4 /IV, leading to the pre-dominant area in measure 6 followed by a V_{4-3}^{6-5} -I cadence in c. Further energy gain comes through increased harmonic rhythm, a more continuous vocal line, and thickened instrumental texture (the whole band plays in d and c, whereas only the drums played after the downbeats in s and r). Some model 3 verses begin d off-tonic but return to I before cadencing, such that d's first chord acts as an accented neighboring chord within the tonic area. Van Morrison's crooning A-minor ballad "Moondance" begins d with a iv^{add6} chord (Dm6) that slinks quickly back to i (Am7; see Example 2.12). While we could interpret the i chords as upper-fifth prolongations of iv (thus placing the pre-dominant at the beginning of d), each two-measure unit really seems to settle on i, aided by the intervening VII chord. It is not until measure 23 that the pre-dominant function arrives unequivocally,

Example 2.10 The three harmonic models for srdc. All have tonic prolongations in sr and a cadence in c.

Model 1 (cadence at beginning of c):						Model 2 (cadence at end of \mathbf{c}):					
S	r	d	С			5	5	r	d	С	
Т		PD E) Т			٦	Γ		PD	D	Т
Model 3	3 (toni	c extends	into c	l):							
S	r	d		С							
Τ			PD	D	Г						
or T		P	DD	Т							
		1									
		tonic									
	dest	abilized at	d								


Example 2.11 Three Dog Night, "Joy to the World" (1971), verse: srdc model 3.

Example 2.12 Van Morrison, "Moondance" (1970): **d** phrase beginning with an accented neighboring chord prolonging tonic.



carried by the same $iv^{add 6}$ chord (possibly better labeled here as $ii_{5}^{\phi 6}$), which this time pushes through to the dominant V⁷ and on to i on the downbeat of *c*.

Metrical expansions in srdc

"Joy to the World"'s verse lasts ten measures, extended from the expected eight by a modified repetition of **c**. (This extension is omitted from the second verse but reappears in the third.) While most **srdc** verses follow a symmetrical construction where all four phrases are the same length, metrical expansions and compressions are not uncommon, especially within the dc portion. For example, Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs' "Sugar Shack" expands d from the expected four bars to six bars by repeating the two-bar ii–V shuttle an extra time (Example 2.13).⁴ As is common in d, "Sugar Shack"'s melodic groupings undergo "fragmentation" by being broken into smaller units; here, the four-bar groupings of s and r lead to two-bar groupings in d, of which there are three instead of the expected two. In the other direction, the Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night" follows four-bar s and r phrases with compressed two-bar d and c phrases for a twelve-measure verse (Example 2.14). Here, melodic fragmentation takes us from four-bar groupings in s and r to one-bar groupings in d; the four-fold acceleration of melodic material makes it almost unnoticeable that d is half as long as s or r. Both examples project model 1 in their harmonic structures, with tonic prolongations in s and r, pre-dominant to dominant in d, and a cadence to I at the beginning of c. Harmony is primarily responsible for our perception of the expansions and contractions; in "Sugar Shack," the return of the ii chord in measure 13 confirms that we have not yet left d, and in "A Hard Day's Night," the arrival on tonic in measure 11 confirms the premature arrival of c, despite the melody's inability to complete its $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}$ ascent to its goal of $\hat{8}$.⁵

The Allman Brothers Band's "Melissa" divides its 16-measure **srdc** verses asymmetrically via a compressed **r** and expanded **d** (Example 2.15). **S** gives us a referential four-bar phrase, but **r** is interrupted after two bars by a premature **d**. Hallmark signifiers of departure function solidify measure 7's role as **d**, including melodic fragmentation to two-bar groupings, accelerated harmonic rhythm (to two chords per measure from one), and a series of short rhyming lines in the text ("knowing many, loving none / bearing sorrow, having fun / but back home

Example 2.13 Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs, "Sugar Shack" (1963), verse: **d** is expanded to six measures by repeating the ii–V progression an extra time.



⁴ Jay Summach (2011, [15–16]) discusses this song's expanded **d** as a proto-prechorus.

⁵ See Nobile 2011, [2.3], for a discussion of this song's melodic structure.



Example 2.14 The Beatles, "A Hard Day's Night" (1964), verse 1: d and c are half as long as s and r.

he'll always run"). The harmony seals the deal, with a pre-dominant IV chord prolonged through measures 7–10 via a bass ascent through the A-major scale. The graph in Example 2.15b shows this ascending scale in the bass, counterpointed in contrary motion with a descending sixth in the melody. The end of the scale is not yet the end of **d**, though, as the third rhyming line arrives over a \flat VI–V progression in measures 11–12. As the graph shows, measure 11's \flat VI chord can be interpreted as the chromatic upper third of the pre-dominant IV chord, with V representing the dominant leading to a cadential arrival on I over the title lyric. Thus, "Melissa" ultimately outlines srdc's model 1, with a four-measure s, a truncated two-measure **r**, an expanded six-measure **d** giving us PD–D, and a four-measure **c** that recapitulates the tonic-prolonging progression from **s**.

Sectional Verses as Small aaba

Often, an srdc verse's c phrase recapitulates material from s and r, making an overall aaba pattern.⁶ An aaba design can arise in one of two ways. First, an srdc verse following model 1 (where c contains only the final tonic) may have

⁶ Walter Everett cites aaba as a subtype of srdc, though the one example he cites (the Turtles' "You Baby") has significant differences between s/r and c (2009, 140). Matthew BaileyShea discusses similar aaba designs in reference to the Classical sentence (2004, 16–17). See also Callahan 2013.



Example 2.15 The Allman Brothers Band, "Melissa" (1972), verse: the **d** phrase begins early because of the arrival of the IV chord in measure 7.

the same chord progression in s, r, and c, usually altering the vocal line in c. For example, "Sugar Shack" contains the same tonic-prolonging I–IV shuttle in s, r, and c, but c's melody is different. This type of aaba layout is essentially a special case of srdc, and so does not really need a separate label. The other type of aaba verse, though, is only partially related to srdc. Here, the first two a phrases

end off-tonic, usually on V in the manner of a half cadence, while the third a modifies the ending to contain an authentic cadence to tonic. In the middle, the **b** phrase resembles a typical model 2 **d** phrase, beginning off-tonic and leading to the dominant. However, **b**'s final dominant does not resolve into the ensuing **a** phrase, instead effecting another half cadence. We can think of this type of small **aaba** as a mixture of period and **srdc** structures, outlining the succession antecedent–antecedent–departure–consequent.

Three well-known examples of small-**aaba** sectional verses occur in Badfinger's "Come and Get It" (written by Paul McCartney), Don McLean's "American Pie," and Styx's "Come Sail Away" (Examples 2.16, 2.17, and 2.18). In "Come and Get It," the first two as are basically identical in melody and harmony, both ending on V. **B** begins on \flat VI and progresses through \flat II to a half cadence in measure 12. The final **a** begins as a recapitulation of the first two but ends with a conclusive V–I (D–T) cadence supporting a melodic descent to 1. In "American Pie," the first two as are not exactly the same, but their melodies and lyrics are similar, and they both begin on tonic and end on V. (The verse given in Example 2.17 is the second verse of the song, which shares the same chord progression and overall structure with all subsequent verses; the first verse is more of an introduction, played in an improvisatory manner with just vocals and piano, and its melody and chords differ a bit from the other verses.) **B** outlines the overall progression vi–IV–V, as shown,



Example 2.16 Badfinger/Paul McCartney, "Come and Get It" (1969), verse: small aaba.



Example 2.17 Don McLean, "American Pie" (1971), second verse: small aaba.

and the final **a** recapitulates the second **a** but achieves an authentic cadence over the refrain line. Finally, "Come Sail Away," with voice leading reminiscent of Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling In Love," follows the same plan as the others, with motion to V at the end of the first three phrases and IV–V–I supporting a melodic arrival on 1 in the final **a**.

"American Pie" and "Come Sail Away" have 33- and 32-bar verses, respectively, so what exactly makes their **aaba** layouts "small"? After all, *large* AABA often takes up a total of 32 bars, and that form has four discrete sections, not just one (see chapter 5). There are several elements that give small **aaba** the structure of a single section rather than multiple sections. First, with half cadences in the first two **a**s, the only authentic cadence occurs at the end, giving the form a harmonic cohesion lacking in large AABA, where all three As generally contain full functional circuits. Second, even when small **aaba**'s component phrases are eight measures long, they tend to divide into two melodic groups, whereas large AABA's sections generally comprise four groups. Compare the first **a** phrase of "Come Sail Away" with the eight-bar verse in "Misery," the latter of which acts as A within a large AABA form (Example 2.7); though they both span the same number of measures, the former



Example 2.18 Styx, "Come Sail Away" (1977), verse: small aaba.

exhibits a two-part melodic structure (just like a typical antecedent within a period), whereas the latter contains a four-part **srdc** structure. Finally, larger formal contexts show that small **aaba** generally fulfills the role of a single verse. This is most obvious in "American Pie," where it alternates with choruses (which never occurs in large AABA form); in "Come and Get It," the eight-bar **aaba** verse is the only section in the song, but it occurs twice in its entirety, rather than coming back only partially as is common in large AABA. "Come Sail Away" follows an idiosyncratic formal layout (showing the band's prog-rock aspirations), the first half of which resembles the overall form of "Come and Get It," with two iterations of the small-**aaba** verse.

That said, small **aaba** and large AABA do have similar harmonic structures. As we will see in chapter 5, large AABA generally projects a deep-level interrupted structure, with T–PD–D across AAB answered by T–PD–D–T in the final A (see Example 5.8). Small **aaba** can also be seen to project an interrupted structure dividing it into a half circuit in **aab** and a full circuit in the final **a**, as shown in Example 2.19, which graphs "Come Sail Away." However, because the first two **as** end with half cadences, the functional progression is slightly different from that of large AABA: in small **aaba**, the **b** phrase continues the dominant prolongation from the end of the second **a**, so we have T–PD–D in **aa** with an extension of D in **b**; in large AABA, the first two As' functional circuits fold into a deeper tonic prolongation, resulting in T across AA followed by PD–D in B. In sum, small **aaba** combines features of periods, **srdc**, and large AABA: it contains period-like





antecedent- and consequent-like phrases, follows an **srdc**-like four-part thematic layout, and exhibits a large-AABA-like interrupted harmonic structure.

Sectional Verses with Blues Progressions

Periods, srdc, and small aaba are all based on binary groupings, where an 8- or 16-measure section divides into four groups of two or four measures. Expansions and other metrical irregularities may create some asymmetry, but the binary underpinning generally remains. Sectional verses based on the 12-bar blues progression, on the other hand, exhibit a three-part thematic structure of 4+4+4 measures (recall Example 1.24 for a standard 12-bar blues progression). Classic blues verses frequently exhibit an aab arrangement, sometimes referred to as "bar form," with two similar four-bar phrases followed by a third, contrasting phrase (Everett 2009, 138). The third phrase generally presents a concluding role, so we can think of these aab blues verses as akin to srdc without d. We can see such an src layout in James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)" (Example 2.20). The first two phrases are nearly identical in melody and lyrics while the third phrase contrasts, the latter explaining why the singer feels good (or nice, in some verses). The sense of srdc with omitted d is also borne out in the harmonic layout: s and **r** prolong tonic, and **c** contains a D–T cadence, resulting in a T–D–T functional circuit whose layout is identical to model 2 with d omitted. Alternatively, some blues verses contain three contrasting phrases, usually resembling sdc where r rather than d is omitted from an srdc layout. (Trevor de Clercq calls this phrase structure "hybrid 12-bar blues" [2012, 135-42].) The Beatles' "You Can't Do That" exhibits this layout (Example 2.21); here, the second and third phrases maintain the same lyrics from verse to verse, and only the first phrase changes. We can relate sdc blues

Example 2.20 James Brown, "I Got You (I Feel Good)" (1964), verse: **src** thematic layout over a 12-bar blues progression.



Example 2.21 The Beatles, "You Can't Do That" (1964), verse: **sdc** thematic layout over a 12-bar blues progression.



verses to **srdc**'s harmonic model 3, where **d** begins with an off-tonic neighboring chord before returning to tonic.

In relating 12-bar blues verses to **srdc**, I certainly do not mean to imply that blues verses are incomplete or "deformed" versions of **srdc**. Rather, the relationship demonstrates that what some think of as a purely harmonic schema participates in similar thematic processes to verses based on unrelated harmonic progressions. In so doing, we can see how the 12-bar blues gives rise to its own type of sectional verse, related to but distinct from **srdc**, periods, **aaba**, and others. Furthermore, four-phrase 16-bar layouts can arise from certain modifications of the 12-bar blues; the layout known as the "16-bar blues" is a true hybrid of **srdc** and the 12-bar blues, where the first phrase of an **sdc** blues layout is repeated, thus producing **srdc** Example 2.22 Standard 16-bar blues layout with srdc overlay.

(Example 2.22). Alternative 16-bar blues-based layouts are found in KC and the Sunshine Band's "Boogie Shoes," where an **srcc** layout results from a repetition of the third blues phrase ("I want to put on my-my-my-my boogie shoes"), or songs like the Beatles' "Day Tripper" and the Doors' "Love Me Two Times," which begin with **s** and **r** over the first two blues phrases but then abandon the blues progression for the verse's second eight-measure half (the latter's verse is shortened to 15 total measures). Finally, as we will see later in this chapter, some *eight*-measure verses contain the first eight bars of a 12-bar blues progression, after which we get a new section (usually a chorus). Since these verses prolong tonic throughout, they are initiating rather than sectional verses.⁷

Refrains

Sectional verses very often contain a refrain: a short passage that serves as the melodic and lyrical "hook" of the verse. Refrains are typically placed at the end of a verse over the cadential chord progression ("tail refrains"), though they sometimes occur instead at the beginning ("head refrains").8 To be classified as a refrain, a passage must contain lyrics that do not change in the various iterations of the verse; these lyrics will generally contain the title of the song, or at least "sum up the song's main theme," as Walter Everett puts it (2009, 145). For example, "Misery"'s refrain is simply the line "misery," while "Melissa"'s is "sweet Melissa" (making many people mistakenly believe that the word "sweet" is part of the song's title). "American Pie"'s verse refrain is the line "the day the music died," which is not the title of the song (the title is reserved for the chorus) but refers to the catalyzing event for the stories told in the song's verses. The title lyric of a song does not always represent a refrain when it occurs; in "Every Breath You Take," one might at first expect the title lyric, which opens the song, to act as a head refrain, but that line never recurs in the remainder of the song. The refrain is in fact the line "I'll be watching you" at the end of each verse.⁹ A common lyrical technique is for the refrain line not to rhyme with other lines in the verse, thus emphasizing it by setting it apart from the rest of the verse.

⁷ For more on blues progressions, modifications, and thematic layouts, see de Clercq 2012, 123–52, and Everett 2009, 138–40.

⁸ Many verses analyzed in this chapter contain tail refrains; an example of a head refrain occurs in the verses to the Mamas and the Papas' "Monday, Monday."

⁹ "A Hard Day's Night" has a similar fakeout refrain at the beginning of the first verse.

Most theorists who discuss refrains define them purely in terms of their lyrical content—in particular, as a lyrically invariant line or two within a larger section. Trevor de Clercq, whose dissertation contains the most extensive discussion of refrains to date, makes the case that there are musical elements that define a passage as a refrain as well (de Clercq 2012, 57-70). Essentially, de Clercq argues that a refrain must convey a sense of arrival; in the case of tail refrains, arrival is usually accomplished with a cadence. Tail refrains are thus most common in sectional verses, since initiating verses do not end with cadences. Srdc verses are the most likely to contain tail refrains, which usually make up the c phrase, though tail refrains occasionally crop up in periods (e.g., "Lookin' Out My Back Door") and other sectional verse types as well. Many srdc verses analyzed in this chapter have refrains in c, including "Misery," "Every Breath You Take," "I'll Be There," "From Me to You," "Moondance," "Sugar Shack," and "Melissa." 12- and 16-bar blues progressions usually contain a refrain over their final four-bar phrase (i.e., the V-IV-I progression), as is the case in both "I Feel Good" and "You Can't Do That." Notice that none of these songs contains a chorus section. Song forms that do not include choruses, such as strophic and AABA forms, nearly always contain sectional verses as their main section, and more often than not contain tail refrains over their cadential gestures (see chapter 5). When sectional verses do precede choruses, usually in the context of a specific type of sectional verse-chorus form (see chapter 6), refrains are less common, since a chorus fulfills many of the same roles as a refrain. There do, of course, remain plenty of songs containing both refrains and choruses ("American Pie," e.g.).

Refrain versus chorus

The boundary between the categories of "tail refrain" and "chorus" is thick and fuzzy. Both tail refrains and choruses serve as the conclusion of a formal trajectory beginning with verse material. The basic distinction between the two is that a tail refrain is part of the verse, while a chorus is a separate section. In situations such as "From Me to You" (Example 2.9), that distinction is quite sufficient to define the final two bars ("with love from me to you") as a refrain and not a chorus; conversely, the Allman Brothers Band's "Ramblin' Man" (Example 6.2) clearly displays a 16-bar verse and a 16-bar chorus, each exhibiting a self-contained thematic and harmonic layout (**srdc** and a functional circuit). However, there are many situations in which a passage seems somewhat separate from the verse, but perhaps not enough to define it as a separate section. Indeed, Trevor de Clercq claims that refrain/chorus ambiguity is "perhaps the most commonly encountered type of ambiguity in pop/rock form" (2017a, [3.4]). As we will see in chapter 7, continuous verse–chorus form often arises from an **srdc** structure cleaving apart into separate (initiating) verse and (continuation) chorus sections, the former comprising **s** and **r** and the

latter comprising **d** and **c**. In many of these songs, the whole **srdc** passage often resides in a gray area between a single sectional verse and a separate verse and chorus, such ambiguity being a central aspect of continuous verse-chorus form. Similarly, many verse-prechorus-chorus songs result from metrical expansions of **srdc**, with **d** and **c** each as long or longer than **s** and **r** combined, thus cleaving apart as prechorus and chorus sections (see chapter 8); this creates the potential for ambiguity between an **srdc** verse and a verse-prechorus-chorus cycle (see also Summach 2011).

The fuzzy gray area between refrain and chorus is full of interpretive possibilities, so I will take care not to oversimplify things with a crisp heuristic for labeling a passage as one or the other. That said, when faced with a potentially ambiguous passage, a consideration of length can sometimes point one's interpretation in a particular direction. Here are a few generalizations regarding the relative lengths of refrains and choruses:

- 1. Refrains are shorter than choruses: choruses usually span at least eight measures, while refrains usually span at most eight measures.
- 2. Refrains usually contain either one or two melodic groups, while choruses more often contain four or more.
- 3. Tail refrains most often take up less than half of the verse's total length, e.g., comprising the last four bars of a 16- or 12-measure verse. Choruses are most often as long as or longer than the verse.
- 4. Shorter passages may still function as choruses if they follow a clear verse and prechorus (see the discussion surrounding Example 8.9).

Possibly debatable cases that I believe can be placed on one side of the refrain/chorus divide include the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand" (12-bar verse including a four-bar refrain; the refrain is too short to be a chorus [see Example 3.8]), Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge over Troubled Water" (16-bar verse followed by 8-plus-bar chorus; the chorus has four melodic groups), and the Bangles' "Walk Like an Egyptian" (28-bar verse including a 4-bar refrain, not verse-prechorus-chorus of 16 + 8 + 4 bars). The Beatles' "Ticket to Ride," on the other hand, falls in the gray area. Here, a 16-bar passage divides in half (see Example 7.1); the second half's off-tonic beginning and the song's overall resemblance to AABA form point toward a verse/refrain reading, while the second half's eight-bar length (equaling the first half) and division into four melodic groups point toward a verse-chorus reading. David Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" seems to have a 16-bar verse ("Ziggy played guitar...") and eight-bar chorus ("but where were the spiders?"), but on the second pass the former is shortened to eight bars and the latter presents a new set of lyrics, suggesting the possibility of hearing the whole passage as a single verse (or perhaps as a verse and bridge). Both "Ticket to Ride" and "Ziggy Stardust" begin their potential choruses off tonic, strengthening the sense

of cohesion between the two parts. War's "Why Can't We Be Friends," conversely, presents what seems like an eight-bar verse, but the last four bars ("Why can't we be friends?") begin on tonic, present four melodic groups, and are presented on their own at the beginning of the song, suggesting the possibility of a very short 4 + 4 verse-chorus structure.

Initiating Verses

Example 2.23 shows the first eight measures of Jefferson Airplane's "Somebody to Love." This passage consists of two four-bar phrases, each of which prolongs tonic through a i–IV– \flat VII–i progression and melodic emphasis on $\hat{1}$. These eight measures could be the first half of a 16-bar **srdc** verse, but instead of leading to a departure phrase, they lead to an eight-measure chorus containing four two-bar units repeating the title lyric ("Don't you want somebody to love? / Don't you need somebody to love? / Wouldn't you love somebody to love? / You better find somebody to love"). In other words, the eight measures in Example 2.23 constitute the entire verse. Unlike sectional verses, this verse contains no cadence, instead remaining solidly grounded on tonic throughout; the lyrics present not a complete sentence but merely an opening clause; and the melody essentially stays planted on $\hat{1}$.

"Somebody to Love"'s verse's incompleteness defines it as an archetypal initiating verse. The definition of an initiating verse is simple: an initiating verse is a verse that prolongs tonic throughout. But most initiating verses give a sense of incompleteness in many ways, not just through the lack of cadential closure, as we see in "Somebody to Love." As mentioned earlier, verses represent starting points, even when they are not the first section that appears in a given song; verses prolonging tonic, therefore, express the function of *initial* tonic (there is no such thing as a "continuation verse" or a "concluding verse"). Initiating verses most often appear in verse-chorus forms, where they combine with other sections to form a cohesive cycle. The next section, generally a chorus or prechorus, frequently begins with a move to the pre-dominant, eventually completing a functional circuit

Example 2.23 Jefferson Airplane, "Somebody to Love" (1967): initiating verse with two tonic-prolonging phrases.



spanning the entire cycle. However, this does not always occur; some initiating verses lead to choruses that continue the tonic prolongation, never progressing to unstable harmonic territory. Rarely, initiating verses do not lead to choruses at all, instead participating in AABA or strophic form. In both cases, the result is a feeling of stasis, comfortably resting in the present moment rather than pushing toward a future goal. This narrative often relates to some element in the text.

Layouts of initiating verses

The most common initiating verse layout involves two or four parallel melodic groups presented over a repeated tonic riff, chord shuttle, or chord loop. Initiating verses comprising two parallel phrases mimic the s and r phrases beginning an srdc structure (as we saw in "Somebody to Love"); as I will discuss in chapters 7 and 8, the srdc connection often extends to the ensuing sections as well, as many verse-chorus or verse-prechorus-chorus cycles can be seen as expanded srdc structures. Initiating verses with four phrases achieve a stronger measure of rhythmic closure than those with two, but generally retain a parallel phrase structure with no hint of cadential closure. Example 2.24 shows four archetypal initiating verses. In Example 2.24a, four two-bar melodic groups synchronize with a chromatic i-vi chord shuttle, each melodic group occurring over one shuttle iteration. Example 2.24b presents a similar layout but with four-bar groups over iterations of a I-bVII-IV-I closed chord loop. Examples 2.24c and d show initiating verses with two melodic groups, four-bar groups in the former and eight-bar groups in the latter. (In both, these groups further divide into smaller groups, but the larger groups represent the repeated units.) Both involve a repeated two-bar bass riff centered on tonic. In all four initiating verses, melodic and harmonic repetition combines with inconclusive lyrics to set up ensuing contrasting, explanatory sections; Examples 2.24a and b lead directly to choruses, while Examples 2.24c and d lead to prechoruses.

While riffs, loops, and shuttles are the most common harmonic techniques underlying initiating verses, any tonic-prolonging progression can give rise to an initiating verse. Some songs base their initiating verses on the first eight bars of a 12-bar blues progression (the tonic-prolonging I–IV–I portion), often abandoning the blues progression at the onset of the next section; like the initiating verses already discussed, blues-based initiating verses generally contain two parallel melodic groups, extracting the first two units of an **src** blues layout. Examples include Billy Ocean's "Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car" (Example 2.25) as well as Bonnie Raitt's "Something to Talk About" (0:19–0:38) and Michael Jackson's "The Way You Make Me Feel" (with doubled proportions; see Example 6.17). The initiating verse in Fleetwood Mac's "Go Your Own Way" gives us two similar four-bar groups at different pitch levels (Example 2.26), with the I–V ascending-fifth progression in measures 1–4 answered by IV–I in measures 5–8, Example 2.24 Four archetypal initiating verses.



(a) The Doors, "Light My Fire" (1967): eight-measure verse with four two-bar groups

(b) The Rolling Stones, "Sympathy for the Devil" (1968): 16-measure verse with four four-bar groups



Example 2.24 Continued





(d) Madonna, "Papa Don't Preach" (1986): 16-measure verse with two eight-bar groups



Example 2.25 Billy Ocean, "Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car" (1988): initiating verse based on the first eight bars of a 12-bar blues progression.



Example 2.26 Fleetwood Mac, "Go Your Own Way" (1976).



transposing the melody up a fourth. These eight bars are then repeated, making a 16-bar **abab** outline in the verse. Despite the repetition, this verse's progression is not really a chord loop, since the chords are not evenly spaced and the entire progression spans multiple melodic groups; instead, the progression prolongs tonic via a I–IV–I neighboring progression, with the V chord in measure 4 a passing harmony between I and IV. Jimmy Buffet's "Margaritaville" contains a similar pairing of groups with motion away from tonic in the first and back to tonic in the second (Example 2.27). Here, each eight-measure group divides into smaller melodic units as 2+2+4. With this varied thematic structure, clear I–V–I harmonic structure, and overall $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$ melodic descent, might we be able to identify a functional circuit across this verse, making it a sectional verse? If so, it is a flimsy circuit: the lack of pre-dominant function weakens the ultimate arrival on tonic,



Example 2.27 Jimmy Buffet, "Margaritaville" (1977).

as does the melodic arrival on $\hat{3}$ rather than $\hat{1}$. Furthermore, the symmetry of I–V|V–I in the two halves makes the harmonic structure seem more like a brief departure and return than a complete trajectory (the structure resembles two "basic ideas" forming the first half of a classical-style sentence). But it is the chorus that solidifies the verse's status as initiating rather than sectional; the chorus's initial IV chord represents a move to pre-dominant function, leading to a strong cadence at the end.

Off-tonic initiating verses

Occasionally, an initiating verse is built upon a shuttle or loop that does not contain a I chord. For example, the verses in Prince's "Little Red Corvette" loop the progression IV-V-vi-IV under four parallel four-bar melodic groups (Example 2.28a). The layout follows the standard model for initiating verses as already described, but instead of prolonging tonic, the progression seems anchored on IV. The chorus opens with a climactic move to I over the title lyric; according to Mark Spicer, the delayed tonic arrival "serves as a metaphor for the release of the sexual tension built up in the preceding verse" (Spicer 2017, [11]). As the graph in Example 2.28b shows, we can understand the verse through the chorus to exhibit an auxiliary cadence (a functional circuit that omits its initial tonic), with the verse's IV functioning as pre-dominant leading into the chorus's PD-D-T cadence. In this way, the verse fulfills the basic function of an initiating verse-providing the first part of a harmonic trajectory-but with a pre-dominant rather than tonic prolongation. Off-tonic initiating verses do not always lead to an eventual tonic arrival; for instance, the shuttle between F-major and G-major chords in the verses of Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams" persists for nearly the entire song, dreaming for

Example 2.28 Prince, "Little Red Corvette" (1982).



(a) Beginnings of verse and chorus

an A-minor arrival but never getting one, except for a brief hint during the solo section at 1:52.¹⁰ In the Human League's "Don't You Want Me," a similar F–G shuttle underlies the initiating verses, resolving to Am at the prechorus but falling back into the F–G shuttle at the chorus. In sum, initiating verses may avoid tonic without giving up their initiating function, but the result is often an unconventional harmonic layout that may carry an expressive effect.

However they are laid out, initiating verses are fundamentally different from sectional verses, which contain complete, closed trajectories on their own. The differences relate not only to the sections' internal structures but also to the song's overall construction, lyrical content, and expression. On overall song construction: we have already seen that strophic and AABA forms nearly always contain sectional verses, and conversely initiating verses are most at home in continuous

¹⁰ It is not unequivocal that the song's tonal center is A; to me, the melody, which outlines the A–E fifth, strongly suggests an A center, but since there are no solid i chords, that could be up for debate.

verse-chorus or verse-prechorus-chorus forms (see chapters 7 and 8). In both of these forms, the chorus alone or prechorus and chorus together provide PD–D–T of the functional circuit, beginning unstably and leading to a satisfying conclusion fulfilling the initiating verse's promise. On lyrical content: the inconclusiveness of an initiating verse's harmonic structure is usually reflected in an inconclusive text content, such as an incomplete sentence as we saw in "Somebody to Love," or more generally an unclear meaning that is ultimately revealed in a later section (compare the lyrics to, say, "Margaritaville," which are only fully understood after hearing the chorus, with those of "From Me to You," which provide all relevant information in the verse). And on expression: the use of an initiating or sectional verse in an unconventional context becomes expressively marked and can participate in a song's expressive meaning. The Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows," a revolutionary track in many ways, consists of an initiating verse repeated strophically (juxtaposed with psychedelic instrumental sections based on tape loops), never progressing to a prechorus or chorus or even breaking its tonic pedal in the bass. The song's unwillingness to move beyond an initial tonic prolongation parallels its lyrical depiction of an acid trip, where the listener is asked to revel in the present moment. The final lyric of the song asks us to "play the game 'existence' to the end of the beginning," repeating the line "of the beginning" eight times in total. What better way to comply than with a series of initiating verses?

Choruses

Most rock songs are built around a repeating formal group called a *cycle*. A cycle contains its song's primary thematic and lyrical content and typically occurs two to five times over the course of the song. When a cycle contains only one section, that section functions as a verse. Strophic and AABA forms, the subjects of chapter 5, are built around verse-only cycles. Cycles comprising two or more sections begin with a verse but eventually culminate in a chorus. When you think of a chorus, you might imagine an anthemic section you can sing along with, complete with the song's most memorable "hooks" and a statement of its main message in the lyrics. This description certainly applies to many choruses; indeed, the term itself originates in the practice of bringing in multiple singers at the chorus's arrival (Stephenson 2002, 135). However, a large number of choruses resist such a characterization. Some choruses catch you off guard; others seem over as soon as they begin. Choruses are defined by their role in the song's formal process, not their internal features.¹

This chapter looks at the various ways in which a section can express chorus function. I have found that while every chorus has a unique relationship with its song as a whole, rock's choruses generally divide into three types. The choruses described in the previous paragraph-anthemic with lyrical-melodic hooks and a sing-along quality—act as autonomous sections, related to but largely separable from the verses. One can easily extract these choruses alone and retain a self-contained piece of music (something car commercials frequently do). Because of their autonomous nature, I call these sectional choruses. Other choruses, on the other hand, do not begin their own musical idea but rather continue and conclude an idea begun in the preceding verse. Unlike sectional choruses, these continuation choruses are not generally extractable as stand-alone musical entities; rather, the verse and chorus together form the complete musical thought. The sing-along quality of sectional choruses is diminished in continuation choruses as listeners are caught off-balance by the unstable beginning. In the third type of chorus, the arrival at the beginning of the section is so strong that the chorus itself does not really go anywhere, instead simply sustaining the high energy level of its beginning. Instead of singing along or listening closely, the audience is invited to get up and move, reveling in an extended climax rather than leading toward a future musical goal. Because such choruses extend a song's teleological end, I call them *telos choruses*.

¹ The term "cycle" follows Summach 2012. Temperley 2018 and some others use "VCU" (for "verse–chorus unit") and "VRU" (for "verse–refrain unit").

The three chorus types have distinct thematic structures, lyrical functions, and expressive potential. As we will see, all of these differences arise from their particular harmonic structures. Just as verses are starting points, choruses are conclusions; harmonically, this means that they contain something that could act as the cadential portion of a functional circuit. Sectional choruses outline an entire circuit T–PD–D–T on their own, beginning on tonic and ending with a cadence. Continuation choruses also end with cadences but begin off-tonic, outlining only PD–D–T, with the initial T provided by the preceding verse. Telos choruses do not contain any large-scale harmonic motion, simply prolonging tonic throughout. Most often, a telos chorus's T will resolve a T–PD–D progression from previous sections; other times, though, the song contains no functional circuit at all, grooving on a nonstop tonic prolongation.

Identifying Choruses

A discussion of different chorus types assumes the ability to determine that a given section is indeed a chorus. While this task is often a trivial one even to the casual rock listener, it has proven rather difficult to identify exactly what makes a chorus a chorus. Analysts often define chorus quality based on lyrical invariance, since choruses' lyrics usually repeat on successive iterations while those of verses usually change-but lyrical invariance does not apply to all choruses (cf. the Beatles' "Lovely Rita") and does apply to most bridges, many prechoruses, and even some verses (cf. the Beatles' "Love Me Do"). Furthermore, listeners can generally identify a chorus the first time through the cycle, before knowing whether the lyrics will repeat. Two particularly reliable chorus markers are text-choruses' lyrics tend toward summarizing, non-narrative content, whereas verses more often give detail or tell a story-and texture-choruses usually have a thicker texture than their corresponding verses, most commonly through the addition of backing vocals, a shift from hi-hat to ride cymbal in the drumbeat, and/or a general increase in "loudness." Other factors come into play as well, such as the length of melodic units (they tend to be shorter in choruses), the rhythm of the vocal line (choruses tend toward longer notes), or the presence of the title lyric (more often in the chorus). Trevor de Clercq (2012, 38-56; 2017b) and David Temperley (2018, 158-66) have compiled statistics on the various differences between verses and choruses and suggest that from hearing hundreds of songs with hundreds of verses and choruses, listeners have internalized these subtle differences and learned to use them (subconsciously) to make a relatively accurate guess as to a section's role, even after hearing only a few seconds from any point in the song. In other words, we know something is a chorus because it sounds like other choruses.²

² Other authors have discussed chorus markers in similar terms, including Ken Stephenson (2002, chapter 6), Lori Burns (2005, 138), Jocelyn Neal (2007), Anna Stephan-Robinson (2009, 93–97), Walter Everett (2009, 145), and Brad Osborn (2013, 26–29).

The problem with relying on internal features to identify choruses is that a chorus is not simply a passage that sounds a certain way, but a formal function that plays a particular role in a song's formal context. A section with all the markers of a chorus might nevertheless function as a verse in a given song. (The Allman Brothers Band's "Midnight Rider" contains a particularly chorusish verse, for instance.) The basic form-functional definition of chorus is simple: a chorus is a section that concludes a multi-section cycle.³ This definition makes explicit the relational aspect of choruses: if a song contains a chorus, it must also contain a verse, the latter being the first section of the cycle. But how do we know when a group of sections forms a cycle? Well, we can always look at the layout of sections in a given song, find the repeating unit, and, if the unit contains more than one section, label the first section the verse and the last section the chorus. There's more to it than that, though. Cycles give the sense of a trajectory from verse to chorus. The chorus acts as the conclusion to the verse's opening, and the cycle as a whole coheres as a formal unit. The verse-to-chorus trajectory holds even when a song's first section is the chorus; in these cases, the first chorus acts as an introduction to the song proper, and the song's first cycle begins with the ensuing verse (see chapter 4's discussion of "overture choruses"). Our perception of chorus function depends on our perception of a verse-to-chorus trajectory. There is no consistent way in which songs display this trajectory; somehow the verse sounds like a beginning and the chorus sounds like an end. According to William Caplin, our sense of musical temporality-a central aspect of musical form-depends on "our ability to perceive that something is beginning, that we are in the middle of something, and that something has ended" (2009, 23; see also Agawu 1991, chapter. 3). (The "middle" of a verse-chorus cycle can come at various points—the latter part of the verse, the first part of the chorus, or an intervening prechorus—or not at all.) In short, a song's verse and chorus are distinguished not by their internal differences but by their temporal relationship.⁴

Our sense of a temporal process unfolding across a verse-chorus cycle can involve some or all of the chorus markers already described, such as through thinner-to-fuller texture or specific-to-general text. In general, these markers present a gradual increase in energy from the beginning of the verse through the end of the chorus.⁵ Harmony, of course, can give the strongest sense of teleology in a rock song. Depending on the harmonic layouts of a cycle's component sections, harmonic teleology can play a large or small role in the verse-to-chorus trajectory. Some cycles exhibit a single functional circuit from the verse through the chorus, solidifying the cycle as a unified process. (Notably, there is never

³ Chapter 4 discusses the *postchorus*, which follows a chorus in a cycle; the chorus remains the structural conclusion of the cycle, with the postchorus functioning as "after-the-end."

⁴ In general, theorists have tended to assume that a cycle's formal trajectory always flows from verse to chorus and never the other way around (Allan Moore even defines verse and chorus simply as, respectively, "the portion of a song that precedes a chorus" and "the portion of a song that follows a verse" [2001, 223–27]). Jay Summach (2012, 121–23) lays out some evidence supporting a verse-to-chorus trajectory, but most of the time this ordering is taken as axiomatic.

⁵ See Temperley 2018, 196–200, for more on energy trajectories in verse–chorus cycles.

a functional circuit beginning in the chorus and ending in the verse.) Other cycles compartmentalize their harmonic structure such that verse and chorus are harmonically independent. In these cases, harmonic teleology has little to do with the trajectory from verse to chorus (though harmonic elements may still contribute). In the previous chapter, we saw that verses can exhibit complete, closed harmonic structures on their own (sectional verses) or instead contain only an opening tonic, providing an opportunity to participate in a functional circuit across several sections (initiating verses). In this chapter, we will look at how choruses' harmonic layouts interact with their temporal closing function. Sectional choruses, like sectional verses, are harmonically self-contained, while continuation and telos choruses provide only the concluding portion of a functional circuit. As we will see, their contrasting harmonic structures give the three chorus types their own distinct features, resulting in three very different ways of projecting chorus function.

Sectional Choruses

Sectional choruses are the counterparts to sectional verses. They outline complete functional circuits (or sometimes half circuits), and often display tight-knit thematic layouts such as periods or srdc. In many songs that contain both sectional verses and sectional choruses, the two sections have nearly identical chord progressions and melodies (e.g., "Puff the Magic Dragon"). In such cases, harmony clearly does not play a role in identifying which section functions as the chorus. These choruses therefore tend to exhibit more non-harmonic chorus markers than continuation or telos choruses, such as thick instrumental texture, backing vocals, summarizing lyrics, and so on. Sectional verses, as we saw in the previous chapter, often contain refrains, especially tail refrains. While sectional choruses often contain refrain-like passages over their cadential gestures, I reserve the term "refrain" to describe the formal function of a melodic and lyrical hook within a verse. In other words, passages in choruses might sound like refrains, especially if they cadence with the title lyric (e.g., in the Beatles' "Strawberry Fields Forever"), but their position within a chorus rather than a verse removes much of the focus from those particular lines, especially since the entire chorus will normally have invariant lyrics. Thus, choruses cannot contain refrains, even if an identical passage would be considered a refrain in a verse. Nevertheless, the basic harmonic structure of sectional verses and sectional choruses is the same: they are both self-contained sections outlining a complete harmonic trajectory.⁶

⁶ The definition of refrain is one of the most inconsistent in the theoretical literature, and some authors do allow refrains to appear in chorus sections, such as Ken Stephenson (2002, 135) and Trevor de Clercq (2012, 57–70). The restriction of refrains to verse sections follows Allan Moore (2001, 225), Walter Everett (2009, 145), and Anna Stephan-Robinson (2009, 100–101). David Temperley (2018, 151) treats the refrain as its own section, separate from the verse, and restricts the term's use to tail refrains in songs without chorus.

A classic example of a sectional chorus comes from James Taylor's "Sweet Baby James" (Example 3.1). The "cowboy-waltz" feel of this section (Everett 2009, 146) is displayed in triply metered measures grouping into five four-bar phrases. We begin with a tonic-affirming I-IV-V-I progression in measures 1-4 supporting a $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ double-neighbor figure in the melody. Measures 5-9 introduce the title lyric, elevating the vocal line to 5 supported by a I chord in measure 7. The third phrase (measures 9-12) offers a variation of the second, but the fourth (measures 13-16) fails to cadence, as its melodic 2 is unearned with no linear connection to the previous 5. The chorus therefore must extend to a fifth phrase (measures 17-20), which returns to the title lyric while completing the melodic descent $\hat{4}$ - $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$, cadencing strongly to tonic. The graph in Example 3.1b shows the section's long tonic prolongation followed by the completion of the functional circuit in the fifth phrase. Though the second and third phrases begin on a vi chord, they ultimately service a tonic expansion by filling in motion from I to IV with a descending-thirds arpeggiation; the IV chord functions as a neighboring chord, returning to I in the third measure of each phrase as the melody achieves 5. The fourth phrase's melodic E (2) is not connected to the main upper-voice descent from $\hat{5}$, but rather comes from the first phrase's F# as part of an inner-voice descent $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ (stemmed downward in the graph). Though the chord in measure 13 is ostensibly a Bm7 chord, the E in the melody suggests that it more likely acts as a second-inversion E7 chord with the chord's A acting as a suspension resolving to G[#] in the next measure. (There is no audible F[#] in the chord, supporting this interpretation.) I thus analyze measures 13-14 as two measures of V/V followed by two measures of V (note the parallel suspensions over each harmony). The slowing harmonic rhythm in these measures tempers the chorus's forward momentum, ensuring that phrase 4 will not cadence to tonic. This phrase acts as a sort of "first pass" at pre-dominant and dominant functions; the IV chord in measure 17, which supports 4, ultimately provides the more satisfying pre-dominant arrival and finally leads us to our cadence. Notice that the structural melodic descent occurs entirely over the twice-occurring title line "Rockabye, sweet baby James": a $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$ appoggiatura figure in the second phrase followed by $\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ in the last phrase.

The chorus to "Sweet Baby James" exists in its own space separate from that of the verse. The harmonic and melodic journey through a functional circuit and linear descent gives us a beginning, middle, and end all within this section. Lyrically, too, the chorus is set apart: the first verse tells the story of a young cowboy sitting alone at his nighttime fire singing himself to sleep; the chorus then gives us his song, shifting the narrative voice from a third-party observer to the cowboy himself. The second verse moves to the first person and tells the story of a lone driver setting out for a long drive on a snowy highway who then sings the same song in the ensuing chorus. Though chorus and verse are lyrically autonomous, neither could exist without the other. The verses' stories set the context through which we understand the chorus's song; the different scenes give the chorus two different contexts, leading



Example 3.1 James Taylor, "Sweet Baby James" (1970): sectional chorus with a functional circuit.

us to search for a broader meaning underlying both. Ultimately, "Sweet Baby James" is revealed to be about neither the cowboy nor the driver, but the power of the chorus's song, a song for the lonely in need of self-comfort.⁷

Not all sectional choruses are set up as literal songs within songs, of course. But in a figurative sense, the idea that a sectional chorus is a microcosm of the whole song, providing its central message in a self-sufficient climactic section, is broadly applicable. Sectional choruses invite listeners to sing along, joining in the

⁷ Taylor has commented on the autobiographical nature of the lyrics, and in particular that the second verse's driver is Taylor himself. See James Taylor, "James Taylor talks about 'Sweet Baby James', 2007," YouTube video, 3:42, posted October 12, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay7cze4_KBg.

expression of the song's core. Regardless of its song's genre, there is a folkish element to a sectional chorus. Classic folk songs commonly alternate sectional sing-along choruses with verses, sung by the performer alone, that tell a story revolving around the chorus's broad theme-think again of "Puff the Magic Dragon." These choruses often appear before the first verse as a sort of instructional version to the listeners, as what I call overture choruses (see chapter 4). This layout is not exclusive to folk-related genres, also appearing in Kansas's prog-rock-infused "Carry On Wayward Son," Queen's arena-rock "Fat Bottomed Girls," and Twisted Sister's heavy metal protest song "We're Not Gonna Take It." Now, I am not claiming that the presence of sectional choruses in these songs means that they are "really" folk songs underneath their hard-rock exteriors. But the folk-derived idea of a catchy, sing-along chorus alternating with verses that give detail or tell a story is just as descriptive of these songs as it is of "Puff the Magic Dragon." (Notice that all three thicken the texture in the chorus through the addition of backing vocals, mimicking the audience participation.) The melodic, harmonic, and lyrical content of sectional choruses lends them an anthemic quality, no matter their generic context.

The effect of a sectional chorus is sometimes present even when the section does not lead to an authentic cadence to tonic. A chorus that begins on tonic with a strong sense of initiating function will sometimes lead to pre-dominant and dominant areas but withhold a resolution to tonic, thus completing a half circuit with a half cadence. In sectional choruses, even more so than in sectional verses, cadential closure on tonic is by far the normative situation, so a half-cadential ending represents a marked departure and thus carries expressive potential. In Don McLean's "American Pie," the 11-measure chorus begins with three iterations of a two-bar subphrase followed by two statements of the line "This will be the day that I die" (Example 3.2). This repeated line takes us from the dark vi chord-prolonged by a Dorian i-IV-i progression taken from the key of vi-to V, representing PD and D and effecting a half cadence. In the previous chapter, we saw that this song's 32-measure verses outline aaba structures with full functional circuits and cadence-affirming refrains ("the day the music died"). The verse is thus both longer and more conclusive than the chorus. Indeed, McLean could have constructed a perfectly serviceable strophic form by omitting the choruses and simply running through the song's six verses in order-and the song would still have clocked in at over twice the length of the typical early-'70s rock song. But the chorus adds an important dimension to the song's meaning. The song is not just about "the day the music died"-generally understood to refer to the February 3, 1959, plane crash that killed Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J. P. "the Big Bopper" Richardson-but about the perceived decline of American society from its "good ol' boy" 1950s values through the countercultural trends of the '60s. With the chorus, the song is set up as a eulogy to the way things once were, interspersing stories about how things went wrong around a toast of "whiskey and rye." The chorus's half cadences act as invitations to relay yet another story, as if to keep the fading dream alive for another



Example 3.2 Don McLean, "American Pie" (1971): sectional chorus with a half cadence.

few minutes with another verse. But after the stories have all been told, the last chorus—the seventh time through in the eight-and-a-half-minute song—finally does bring a cadence to tonic, as if to declare the good old days officially dead.⁸

Layouts of sectional choruses

Sectional choruses are, in general, similar in construction to sectional verses. There are plenty of periods, as in Billy Joel's "Piano Man" and Kansas's "Carry On Wayward Son," as well as **srdc** structures, as in the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" and the Foundations' "Build Me Up Buttercup." For the most part, these look just like the periods and **srdc** structures in sectional verses as described in chapter 2. Because of their sing-along quality, though, sectional choruses often exhibit little variation among their component subphrases. It is common, for instance, for **srdc** to present the same lyrics in **s**, **r**, and **c**, as in Paul Simon's "Slip Slidin' Away" or John Mellencamp's "Hurt So Good"; because there is no need to build to a refrain, the **c** gesture is not as much of a focal point as it is in sectional verses. Furthermore, sectional choruses seem more likely than verses to treat their layouts loosely, especially through hypermetric disruptions and insertions. Elton John's "Island Girl," for example, expands the typical **srdc** structure through the addition of a second **d** gesture (Example 3.3). The two **d** gestures differ in lyrics, melody,

⁸ Other sectional choruses that do not cadence to tonic include the Eagles' "Hotel California" (see Example 6.6), the Police's "Message in a Bottle," the Beatles' "She's Leaving Home," and Culture Club's "Karma Chameleon" (see Example 8.25).



Example 3.3 Elton John, "Island Girl" (1975): duplicate d gestures from chorus.

Example 3.4 The Beatles, "Strawberry Fields Forever" (1967): loosely constructed sectional chorus.



and chord progression, but both fulfill d's typical harmonic role of leading to the pre-dominant (in this case following harmonic model 3 as described in chapter 2).

Along these lines, a large number of sectional choruses do not follow a standard thematic pattern at all, adopting a more improvisational quality in pursuit of the cadence. We saw a somewhat loose structure in "Sweet Baby James"; despite its square four-measure phrase lengths, the odd number of phrases (five) and unconventional repetition scheme (abbcd) give the sense that the cowboy is singing the tune that comes to him naturally, rather than a precisely worked-out song. An even looser construction underlines the chorus from the Beatles' "Strawberry Fields Forever" (Example 3.4). According to Walter Everett, the song's lyrics are an expression of John Lennon's "awakening as a youth to the fact that his plane of awareness seemed higher than that of those around him," which "did not provide the composer with an air of superiority but, on the contrary, made him feel like an outsider." Lennon's outsider feelings are reflected in the large degree of irregularity

in the chorus's rhyme scheme, melody, meter, hypermeter, and voice leading. Everett goes on to note that Lennon "wanted the lyrics to be like a conversation," and the improvisatory aspect of the speech-like text seeps into the musical layer, resulting in a free-flowing section that takes us on a winding journey "down to Strawberry Fields" (1999, 75). Example 3.5 gives a chordal reduction of the chorus, with the top notes following the main melodic line. The first four measures of this reduction are straightforward, with $I-v^7$ supporting 3-2, but measures 5-6 require some explanation. Example 3.4 shows the chord in these measures as $G7^{(\flat 9)}$, and indeed the bass plays a G while the upper voices play B-D-F-Ab. However, the melodic line Ab-Bb-Cb over the lyric "nothing is real" suggests that the interval above Ab is a minor third (to Cb) rather than an augmented second (to Bb); this is especially clear given the parallel motive on "Strawberry Fields" two measures earlier. If the top note is heard as Cb and not Bb, then the chord in measures 5–6 might be considered a fully-diminished seventh chord on D with an added G in the bass. Since this chord leads to an Eb-major chord in measure 7, we can interpret it as vii⁶/IV, with the bass's G substituting for F as an escape tone. Following this reading, the previous Fm7 chord can be analyzed as ii⁷ in the key of Eb, making a ii-vii°-I progression tonicizing IV (as written below the staves). Yet the impression of some sort of G-major harmony in measures 5-6 is strong, especially in the song's first chorus, which omits the Ab in the accompaniment (it is still present in the vocal line, of course). The unequivocal G7 chord that occurs only three beats later (measure 8) suggests the possibility that VI^{\natural} is prolonged across measures 5–8. In some sense, the chord in measures 5-6 is simultaneously a G-major sonority, containing Bb, and a D diminished-seventh sonority, containing Cb, reflecting the sense that "nothing is real."

To return to the definition of chorus previously given, in what way does a sectional chorus complete a formal trajectory across its verse-chorus cycle? Sectional choruses are by definition harmonically and melodically self-contained,



Example 3.5 Annotated chordal reduction of the chorus of "Strawberry Fields Forever" showing a complete functional circuit and melodic descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$.

so the sense of a cycle-long process is minimized within those domains. However, as we will discuss in chapter 6, there remains a coherence to the combination of verse and chorus despite their separation: the purpose of the verse is to set up the chorus, and the purpose of the chorus is to explain the verse. By the time the chorus's final cadence arrives, the main message has been delivered and we have come to a satisfactory conclusion, ready to do it all over again or start down a new path. When the chorus is not sectional, the verse-to-chorus trajectory comes about in a different manner. Continuation choruses, the subject of the following section, do not share sectional choruses' self-contained nature, instead beginning with a turn in a new direction that more directly connects them to the previous verse. The result is a more unified trajectory across the entire cycle, with harmony, melody, and other elements combining to form a broad teleological process from the beginning of the verse through the end of the chorus.

Continuation Choruses

Whereas sectional choruses begin with a solid statement of tonic, continuation choruses do not attain stable tonic function until their end. The general harmonic outline for a continuation chorus is PD-D-T, beginning with the unstable pre-dominant function. Continuation choruses thus do not contain complete functional circuits on their own but rather continue a functional circuit begun in an earlier section. As we will see in chapter 7, continuation choruses most often follow tonic-prolonging initiating verses such that a single functional circuit spans the complete verse-chorus cycle. The chorus begins in the middle of the harmonic progression, ramping up the energy in preparation for the cadence. As a result, continuation choruses are less independent than their sectional counterparts, and the combination of verse and chorus is much more unified. It is not always immediately clear that a continuation chorus is indeed a chorus, and it is sometimes possible to hear them not as choruses but as tail refrains within a verse or, at least initially, as prechoruses. The sing-along quality typical of sectional choruses is not usually found in continuation choruses, since their unstable beginning engenders an apprehensive feeling-is this really the chorus? We might instead describe continuation choruses as "listen-closely" choruses.

The chorus from the Beatles' "Drive My Car" (Example 3.6) begins with a sinister move to vi, as if to underscore the snootiness of the girl's offer to be her chauffeur (especially upon our ultimate realization that she has yet to acquire the car itself). The section begins with three statements of a two-bar melodic motive, the first and third of which contain the title lyric. All three begin with vi, the first two involving the neighboring progression vi–IV^{b7}–vi supporting a chromatic wobble in the melody, 3-b3-3 (or $3-\sharp2-3$). In measure 6, the third two-bar group breaks off from the model and moves toward the cadence, doubling the harmonic rhythm with V/V–V–I as the melody descends to 1. The chorus's underlying





harmonic progression is vi–V–I representing PD–D–T, as shown in Example 3.6b. (As discussed in chapter 1, significant rhetorical emphasis on vi—such as its placement at the beginning of a chorus—can give it pre-dominant function, even if it proceeds to more traditional pre-dominant chord categories such as IV or V/V. The vi chord is a common choice to open a continuation chorus, and it is generally best interpreted as the structural pre-dominant.)

"Drive My Car" contains a typical continuation chorus. While the section presents many of the chorus markers already noted—thickened texture, inclusion of the title lyric, and so on—its effect is entirely different from that of a sectional chorus. In particular, it is heard as a continuation of the verse rather than an autonomous section. The lyrics support this connection as well, with the unnamed girl's explanation of her ambitions distributed across the verse/chorus boundary: "[verse] but you can do something in between: [chorus] Baby, you can drive my car …" Furthermore, as Trevor de Clercq points out, the verse and chorus *together* outline an **srdc** phrase structure, with **s** and **r** in the verse and **d** and **c** in the chorus (2012, 163–65). Because of this, de Clercq notes that it would be possible to consider the song to contain only verse material, with the eight measures in Example 3.6 acting as a tail refrain (though he admits that "no theorist has chosen to do so"). As we will see in chapter 7, it is very common for an overall **srdc** phrase structure to underlie an initiating verse (**sr**) and a continuation chorus (**dc**), further unifying verse and chorus.

Layouts of continuation choruses

Continuation choruses generally outline the functional progression PD–D–T. To increase harmonic activity and heighten the anticipation of the eventual cadence, many continuation choruses repeat the PD–D portion several times before resolving to tonic. The Cars' new-wave hit "My Best Friend's Girl" gives us three passes through a IV–V progression in the chorus before resolving to I in the seventh measure (Example 3.7). The arrival of the title lyric marks this section as the chorus, but the non-resolution of the harmonic progression in either statement of the lyric hints to us that there might be more to the story—that is, this is not just any attractive girl dating the narrator's friend. The cadence arrives when the plot twist is revealed: the girl "used to be mine." Other songs that repeat PD–D include Fleetwood Mac's "Go Your Own Way" (Example 1.12), and Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" (Example 7.2).

More common than repeating the PD–D portion of the progression is to include an arrival on tonic in the middle of the section but to undermine this arrival such that it does not act as the cadential conclusion of the functional circuit. Particularly common is a specific chord progression originating with the Beatles' 1963 single "I Want to Hold Your Hand." The four-measure passage shown in Example 3.8a gives us the song's title lyric over the chord progression IV–V–I–vi–IV–V–I, with two chords per bar until the final measure. The first three chords hint at a PD–D–T progression but do not cadence, as the melody devolves

Example 3.7 The Cars, "My Best Friend's Girl" (1978): continuation chorus that repeats PD–D several times before cadencing.



into a long melisma. The harmony, realizing that it needs to give it a second go, arpeggiates through vi back down to IV, after which the title lyric repeats and achieves a satisfying cadence. As shown in Example 3.8b, I consider the first five chords, IV–V–I–vi–IV, to prolong IV, with the I chord acting not as a stable tonic but as the upper fifth within a pre-dominant prolongation (recall the discussion of pre-dominant prolongations in chapter 1). Note that this progression rotates the typical "doo-wop" I–vi–IV–V chord loop to begin on IV, further supporting a prolonged IV through the first five chords.⁹

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the passage in Example 3.8 is not a chorus but a refrain, comprising the last four bars of a 12-bar verse. Nevertheless, its progression became a schema for continuation choruses by halving the harmonic rhythm to one chord per bar, heard intact in Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl," Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Have You Ever Seen the Rain" (with a second non-cadential IV–V–I–vi before cadencing on the third try), and Tom Petty's "American Girl" (Example 7.9), among others. Some songs modify the basic schema but can still be related to the "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression. The Youngbloods' "Get Together" omits the vi chord, simply giving us IV–V–I twice, doubling the harmonic rhythm the second time. Madonna's "Material Girl" omits instead the first I chord, giving us IV–V–vi three times, supporting 1-2-3 in the melody, before resolving IV–V–I and landing on 1 the fourth time through. Even Jackson Browne's "Doctor My Eyes," whose chorus presents vi–I–vi–V–I(${6-5} \\ 4-3$), can be seen to outline a similar harmonic structure: the first I chord prolongs the

Example 3.8 The Beatles, "I Want To Hold Your Hand" (1963): the refrain's chord progression became a schema for continuation choruses.





(b) Graph of bass line showing IV prolonged for two and a half measures

⁹ Walter Everett notes this rotation and relates the "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression to some earlier Beatles songs, several of them covers (2001, 201–2). Everett's prolongational interpretation differs from mine, though, as he reads a return to structural tonic in the middle of the progression (199).

pre-dominant vi by acting as its upper third, just as it acted as IV's upper fifth in "I Want to Hold Your Hand."¹⁰

Some continuation choruses contain a stronger medial arrival on I, suggesting the possibility that syntactical tonic function remains active for a bit. Jimmy Buffet's laid-back chorus to "Margaritaville" never strays too far from tonic; though each four-bar phrase begins on IV, the first two seem to settle back on I, albeit non-cadentially (Example 3.9). Yes, the I chord quickly turns into the unstable V⁷/IV in measure 4, but the title lyric and melodic pause in measure 3 make the I chord sound like a stable resting point. Perhaps the initial IV-V progression is merely a brief excursion rather than a shift in harmonic function, and tonic is prolonged at the middleground level from the beginning of the verse through much of the chorus. The third phrase (measures 9-12), more than the first two, deemphasizes I and pushes us further toward pre-dominant instability. Measure 11's I chord is quickly abandoned and the four-bar phrase comes to rest on IV in measure 12. At this point, it is possible to retrospectively perceive a prolongation of IV (as pre-dominant) beginning at the onset of the chorus: the IV-V-I progression in measures 9-11 mimics those in measures 1-3 and 5-7, and since measure 11's I chord seems subsidiary to measure 9's IV chord, the other I chords might also be subsidiary to IV. The cadential phrase (measures 13-16) offers a strong dominant-tonic cadence completing the verse-chorus cycle's

Example 3.9 Jimmy Buffet, "Margaritaville" (1977), chorus (main vocal line only): despite its off-tonic opening, the chorus does not unequivocally move to the pre-dominant until later in the section.



¹⁰ See Nobile 2014, 239–46, for more on this progression in these songs.

functional circuit. Within this phrase is hidden the song's overarching narrative: the gradual realization that the narrator's self-destructive behavior is not the fault of the woman who left him but his own. The narrative—projected through the "anti-refrain" of a single changing lyric within a lyrically invariant chorus—further emphasizes the cadence, drawing focus away from the title lyric and its tonic arrival in measure 3.

Whether one reads a pre-dominant arrival or a continued tonic prolongation through the first eight measures of the chorus, the sense remains that the section begins in the middle of a musical thought. For this reason, we can affirm that "Margaritaville" contains a continuation chorus, even if it takes a while to attain solid pre-dominant function. The continuous aspect of the form is clearer when the verse is taken into account (recall Example 2.27); the verse's non-cadential I–V–I outline suppresses IV, making the first chord of the chorus a logical next step rather than the onset of a new progression. Perhaps the chorus's frequent returns to tonic reflect the narrator's laid-back lifestyle (or alcohol-induced lethargy), with a constant need to sit down and relax; spending time in unstable harmonic areas is hard work, and certain songs might not have the energy to stray too far from the comfortable tonic. The chorus's off-tonic beginning retains the sense of a single harmonic trajectory across the verse–chorus cycle even without the sustained harmonic instability of more typical continuation choruses.¹¹

In contrast to sectional choruses' self-contained nature, continuation choruses contain only the middle and end of a complete musical thought. They start with an intensifying move to a non-tonic area and hold much of that tension until their final cadence. Continuation choruses depend on the verse to set up their plot twist; only by following the verse's established tonic can they achieve their intensifying effect. As mentioned, continuation choruses tend to make the audience sit up and listen, as if their unstable opening serves as a signal that something important is about to happen. Ultimately, the tension points toward the cadence as the moment of release. Lyrically, the cadence often contains a key line of text, whether a statement of the title lyric or a line revealing a central narrative element. While sectional and continuation choruses both project chorus function, they do so in different ways; the former are sing-along anthems independent of verses and other sections, while the latter are intensifying corollaries to their preceding sections. Despite this fundamental difference, though, both chorus types share an internal trajectory aimed at their concluding cadence. Neither has told the whole story at the onset; one must listen through to the end to get the message. The third type of chorus does not share this feature; telos choruses do not end with cadential motion, containing no internal teleology and instead prolonging tonic throughout.

¹¹ Another laid-back song whose continuation chorus frequently returns to tonic is the Eagles' "Peaceful Easy Feeling."
Telos Choruses

The passage in Example 3.10, taken on its own, does not seem like much of a chorus. It is only four measures long and consists of a single repeated line over a tonic-prolonging chord loop. Unlike a typical sectional or continuation chorus, this section does not end with a cadence, nor does it seem to go anywhere at all, instead sustaining a constant state of high energy. Citing its brevity and melodic sparsity, Trevor de Clercq suggests that the passage blends features of a chorus and a "link," a passage that connects the end of one cycle to the beginning of the next (2017a, [4.2-5]). Yet in context the passage unmistakably acts as the chorus: it arrives after a clear verse and energy-gaining prechorus and begins with a climactic point of arrival harmonically, melodically, and lyrically. Harmonically, the arrival on I resolves the prechorus's IV-V progression while the melodic line completes a linear descent to 1 (see Example 8.2 and accompanying discussion). And lyrically, the title line explains why the narrator has changed his ways: the verse begins by describing the way he used to be ("I used to be a renegade, I used to fool around, but I couldn't take punishment and had to settle down"), then the prechorus describes how he's changed ("Now I'm playin' it real strict, and, yes, I cut my hair! You might think I'm crazy, but I don't even care 'cause I can tell what's going on"). After this line, the band stops abruptly, as if to ask "What's going on, Huey?," and when we get our answer, the chorus begins.

The chorus to "Hip to Be Square" acts as what I call a *telos chorus*: a chorus that begins with an arrival and plateaus rather than pointing toward an arrival at its end. Harmonically, telos choruses prolong tonic throughout, with no internal structural motion. The Greek-derived term "telos" signifies "end, purpose, ultimate object, or aim" according to the Oxford English Dictionary and has been adapted into music-analytical practice most notably by James Hepokoski in his book-length discussion of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony (1993). A conception of chorus-as-telos focuses on the chorus's initial moment acting simultaneously as the attainment of a structural goal—the teleological end—and the onset of the principal section of the song—a formal beginning. The antithesis of structural end and formal beginning becomes a remarkable synthesis in which the climactic moment is prolonged throughout the entire section. The telos section itself is constructed as a musical plateau, neither increasing nor decreasing the musical energy. If sectional





choruses are sing-along choruses and continuation choruses are listen-closely choruses, then telos choruses are rock-out choruses, encouraging the audience to revel in the climactic section as long as it lasts. Because they begin with an arrival, telos choruses themselves often have low levels of melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and lyrical activity. "Hip to Be Square" exemplifies such inactivity: the chorus's single melodic line dances around 1 and vanishes immediately after the first downbeat before echoing verbatim two measures later; meanwhile, the harmonic progression cycles through a standard tonic-prolonging chord loop. There is thus a fundamental difference between telos choruses and sectional and continuation choruses: the latter types are end-oriented, with an internal harmonic journey toward a cadence, while the former type is beginning-oriented, with no journey but rather a celebration of the present place and time.¹²

Layouts of telos choruses

The defining harmonic feature of a telos chorus is a tonic prolongation throughout. The tonic prolongation may come about in many of the same ways discussed in reference to initiating verses; chord loops and shuttles are especially common. Many songs in fact present the same tonic-prolonging progression in their initiating verses and telos choruses, often with thickened texture in the latter. In addition to tonic prolongations, telos choruses often feature specific rhetorical devices that add to the sense of arrival and plateau. In particular, telos choruses often include (1) a strong emphasis on the chorus's first downbeat, and (2) a melody consisting of a single, short motive repeated several times. The former often comes about through combining an anacrustic rhythmic profile (i.e., a pickup leading into the downbeat) with an arrival on $\hat{1}$ at the end of the first melodic line. When these two elements support the title of the song in the lyrics, we are left with no doubt that we have arrived at a goal point. "Hip to Be Square" offers a clear example of anacrusis, arrival on 1, and the title lyric at the onset of its telos chorus; similar examples include Al Green's "Take Me to the River," the Beatles' "Hello Goodbye," and Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young" (Example 3.11a-c). The anacrusis to Van Halen's "Jump" seems to settle on 1 but the melody jumps up to 3 on the downbeat; similarly, Michael Jackson's "Bad" persona is too cool to stop at 1, climbing past it to reach $b\hat{3}$ an octave above the verse (Example 3.11d-e). Once the downbeat occurs and the chorus begins in earnest, the opening motive is frequently repeated a number of times, often repeating the same line of text as well. Again, "Hip to Be Square" is archetypal, as are Van Halen's "Panama," the Young Rascals' "Good Lovin," Bob

¹² Telos choruses, because of their rock-out aspect, are often examples of what Christopher Doll calls "breakout choruses": choruses that convey "an increase in intensity with regard to loudness, rhythmic and textural activity, timbral noise, lyrical content, and/or pitch level" (Doll 2011, abstract). Doll's article focuses on breakout choruses that involve a change of tonal center from prior sections, a topic I will return to in chapter 6.



Example 3.11 Telos choruses that emphasize their first downbeat with an anacrusis.

(b) The Beatles, "Hello Goodbye" (1967)



Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," and the Cure's "Boys Don't Cry" (Example 3.12a–d). Even when the initial arrival is not particularly stressed, the repeated motives can engender telos quality. In Foreigner's "Feels like the First Time," the chorus's vocal line begins halfway through the first bar, deemphasizing the downbeat, but the bass's tonic pedal and repeated melodic motive solidify the sense of extended

arrival (Example 3.12e). Similarly, in the Who's "Substitute," the first two notes of the melody— $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{7}$, forming the first half of a descending $\hat{1}-\hat{7}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ line—are suppressed in the main vocal part, appearing only in subsequent iterations of the motive (Example 3.12f). The chorus nevertheless prolongs $\hat{1}$ over its tonic-pedaling chord loop.

Not all telos choruses are so static. When telos choruses do more than repeat a single motive, a particularly common thematic layout is **aaab**, where three parallel melodic groups give way to a fourth contrasting gesture. Often, the contrasting group functions as a *turnaround*: a connective passage that leads into the following section (most often a return to the verse). In Bonnie Raitt's blues-derived "Something to Talk About," the chorus begins with three iterations of a chord loop followed by a two-measure turnaround bringing us back to the verse (Example 3.13). While the last two measures increase the harmonic activity, their progression is transitional and does not represent any structural motion within the functional circuit. The sense of turnaround in this song is made especially strong by the long vocal melisma and classic syncopated rhythms in the accompaniment (the same rhythm is often heard leading to V at the end of a twelve-bar blues





Example 3.12 Continued



Example 3.13 Bonnie Raitt, "Something to Talk About" (1991), chorus: aaab structure with **b** functioning as a turnaround.



progression). And while the turnaround does offer a new line of text ("How about love?"), that line is not vital to the song's message in the way that, say, a refrain's line would be. This particular line is somewhat redundant, as it is already rather clear that love is the "something to talk about." Other examples of telos choruses with turnarounds include the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" (chorus at 0:50), the Rolling Stones' "Get Off of My Cloud" (chorus at 0:41), and Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" (chorus at 1:07).

Alternatively, the final member of an **aaab** telos-chorus layout can act as a *tag*, a non-transitional concluding gesture that serves to signal the end of the section (like a miniature coda). In Big Brother and the Holding Company's "Piece of My Heart," three chord-looping gestures over the title lyric lead to a break in the drumbeat as lead singer Janis Joplin cries out, "You know you got it if it makes you feel good!" (Example 3.14). The final line occurs over a IV–I progression, coming to rest on tonic without connecting to the following section as a turnaround would. But this IV–I progression is not a cadence, as it does not complete a large-scale harmonic trajectory, instead simply punctuating rhetorically the end of the chorus (recall chapter 1's discussion of cadence-as-closure versus cadence-as-punctuation). As with turnarounds, the tag's lyrics are ancillary to the primary message of the rest of the chorus. Other examples of telos choruses with tags include Wham!'s "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go" (chorus at 0:37) and Billy Ocean's "Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car" (chorus at 1:21).

Example 3.14 Big Brother and the Holding Company, "Piece of My Heart" (1968), chorus: **aaab** structure with **b** functioning as a tag.



Telos choruses and the functional circuit

Though internal features give telos choruses their structure as tonic-prolonging plateaus, a large portion of their effect depends on the buildup to the chorus rather than the chorus itself. The chorus is set up as a celebration of an arrival, but the arrival itself is defined by the journey leading up to it. Most of the time, telos choruses slot into a functional circuit by providing its final tonic, with T-PD-D occurring in previous sections such that the telos arrival is also a cadence. This harmonic trajectory usually plays out across a cycle of initiating verse, prechorus, and telos chorus following the formal-harmonic layout shown in Example 3.15a. Most of the choruses analyzed so far in this chapter participate in this pattern, and many more will be analyzed in chapter 8. When telos choruses follow verses with no intervening prechorus, a cadential arrival can still occur through what I call "verse-prechorus fusion," where the prechorus's role of providing PD and D is fulfilled by the final portion of the verse (see chapter 8); the resulting layout follows Example 3.15b. Other times, though, a telos chorus comes after an initiating verse such that both sections prolong tonic, with no functional circuit at all in the verse-chorus cycle (Example 3.15c). These telos choruses do not begin with a cadence, nor do they conclude a broader harmonic process. Such songs do not dispense with the sense of a verse-to-chorus trajectory, but they do so in a more cyclical manner, more groove-oriented than cadence-oriented. Verse and chorus sometimes contain the same chord loop, as in Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama," and other times prolong tonic in different ways, as in the Commodores' "Brick House," but the basic structure of an unwavering stable tonic remains, projecting a sense of stasis and inviting the listeners to relax and ride the groove. A full discussion of this layout and its expressive potential appears in the final section of chapter 6.

Chorus Types: Summary

It might seem difficult to reconcile that sectional, continuation, and telos choruses are so different in construction yet all ultimately function as choruses. Then again,

|--|

a)	verse (initiating)	prechorus		chorus (telos)	b)	verse/prechorus fusion		chorus
	Т	PD	D	Т		Т	PD D	Т

c) verse chorus (initiating) (telos) T T

	Sectional	Continuation	Telos
description	self-contained section	instablity leading to release of tension	high-energy plateau
harmonic layout	T–PD–D–T; sometimes T–PD–D with half cadence	PD-D-T	Т
audience reaction	sing along	listen closely	rock out
thematic structure	srdc or period common; looser in construction than sectional verse	dc portion of larger srdc common	single repeated motive common; aaab also common with turnaround or tag
lyrical function	summarizing anthem	explanation and/or complication of verse	single line

Table 3.1 Summary of the three chorus types and their characteristic features

maybe it is not so difficult; following William Caplin's distinction between formal function and formal type (Caplin 2009), we might simply conclude that sectional, continuation, and telos are formal types that all can be used to project chorus function. But the differences among the three do not stem only from their internal structures. Rather, each type interacts with surrounding verses, prechoruses, and other sections in its own way, affecting not only the chorus's expressive connotations but also the song's broader formal process. One cannot just swap, say, a telos chorus for a sectional one and still expect the song to make sense.

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the three chorus types and their characteristic features. Each type is associated with a particular harmonic layout, audience reaction, thematic structure, and lyrical function. Not all choruses within a given type will reflect all of these features, of course, and many choruses combine aspects of two or more types; coming up with the "correct" label for every rock song's chorus is not the ultimate goal here. Rather, my intention is to consider each chorus's dialogue with these basic types and how its particular features participate in a song's formal process and expressive meaning. Often, the ways in which a chorus does not perfectly fit a model carry the deepest expressive significance. This chapter offered some basic examples, such as a stronger-than-usual tonic arrival within a continuation chorus conveying a sense of tranquility in "Margaritaville," and we will see many more variations and combinations in chapters 6, 7, and 8. The broader point is that simply identifying a particular section as a song's chorus says little about the experience of listening to or performing that section; choruses are far from homogeneous, and despite their shared formal function they can fulfill many different roles within a song's broader context.

Prechoruses, Bridges, and Auxiliary Sections

In support of a song's verses and choruses, we frequently encounter *prechoruses* and *bridges*. Prechoruses and bridges play important structural roles, affecting the contents of the surrounding sections and providing necessary contrast and/or instability. Prechoruses occur between verses and choruses, thus participating in a song's core cycle. As we will see, the prechorus is not simply an optional insertion but rather an important formal function generating a particular teleology across the verse–prechorus–chorus cycle. Bridges occur outside a song's core cycle, providing contrast and setting up a dramatic return to the main material. Contrast within bridges can come about in two different ways: through an increase in energy, accompanied by harmonic instability, or through a decrease in energy, with a harmonically stable respite from the song's core material. These two kinds of contrast divide the category of bridge into two distinct types.

Arrangements of complete rock songs combine the structural roles of verse, chorus, prechorus, and/or bridge with various *auxiliary* passages. Auxiliary sections fill out a song's formal layout but do not play a large role in its structural process. They are most often instrumental, usually prolong tonic, and generally can be removed, inserted, or relocated with little effect on the song's identity. The most common auxiliary section types are *intros* and *outros*, occurring, respectively, before a song's first cycle and after a song's final cycle. Intros and outros can be, as Walter Everett puts it, "two of the most important sections of a song from a marketing standpoint," but nevertheless remain the "least important from a structural point of view" (2009, 152). Other auxiliary sections occurring in a song's interior include solos and instrumental breaks. In addition, songs sometimes insert short transitional passages between successive sections; these transitions are neither structural nor even real sections, as they simply provide some buffer space as the song marches along.

This chapter will begin with detailed looks at the internal properties of prechorus and bridge sections, followed by a discussion of auxiliary passages. The chapter completes this book's investigation of individual song sections, setting up ensuing discussions of large-scale formal processes.

Prechoruses

Prechoruses are often described as transitional. Indeed, they do provide a smooth connection between a verse and chorus. Prechoruses are not, however, *merely*

transitional, in the sense of the song being "in transition" from an independent verse to an independent chorus. Rather, the prechorus's presence creates a teleology spanning the entire cycle wherein the beginning of the chorus is the structural goal. The teleology comes about in several domains, but the most consistent is harmony. Prechoruses generally outline the functional progression from pre-dominant to dominant such that a complete functional circuit spans the verse–prechorus–chorus cycle: T in the verse, PD–D in the prechorus, and T in the chorus. In other words, the presence of the prechorus projects a cadential arrival on the downbeat of the chorus. Removing the prechorus would move the cadence into the chorus, even if the verse and chorus remained unchanged. The prechorus thus completely alters the cycle's trajectory, changing the roles of both verse and chorus along the way.

In addition to their harmonic instability, prechoruses generally exhibit various non-harmonic momentum-building devices, enhancing the feeling of release upon arriving at the chorus. Two such devices are particularly common: motivic fragmentation (using shorter melodic groups than the previous verse) and textural intensification (higher melodic range and/or thicker instrumentation). Prechoruses also generally contain some sort of shift in the subject of the text, though this may or may not involve intensification. Harmonic instability, though, remains the defining aspect of prechorus function; these other intensifying features are neither sufficient nor necessary to define a section as a prechorus.

Basic prechorus layout: PD-D

The simplest harmonic layout for a prechorus involves just two chords, the first functioning as pre-dominant and the second as dominant. In the Who's "Substitute," the 10-measure prechorus begins with eight measures of ii followed by two measure of V (Example 4.1). Separating a tonic-prolonging verse (with a closed I–IV–V–I loop) and a tonic-prolonging chorus (with a tonic pedal under a I–V–IV–I loop), the prechorus's ii–V progression fulfills the PD–D portion of a full functional circuit. Outside of harmony, energy gain comes from shorter melodic groups (to two bars, from the verse's four) and textural intensification, mostly from the tambourine changing from backbeats to running 16th notes. Roger Daltrey's vocal line moves into a higher register and the lyrics begin to reveal the song's main point. All told, this prechorus provides most of the song's musical motion, carrying us from static verse to static chorus. The chorus remains the song's focal point, and the verse-to-chorus trajectory remains the primary formal arc, but the prechorus gives us all the action.

Prechoruses usually contain more than just two chords. Sometimes, two chords shuttle back and forth a few times, giving us a few passes through the functional circuit's PD–D portion. Unlike tonic-prolonging shuttles, where one chord acts as a neighbor embellishing the other, these prechorus shuttles contain two structurally

Example 4.1 The Who, "Substitute" (1966): a prechorus whose ii–V progression acts as PD–D within a cycle-spanning functional circuit.



equal chords. The shuttle blurs the temporal boundary between pre-dominant and dominant functions so that the prechorus seems to encompass both functions throughout. Prechorus shuttles occur in Blondie's "Call Me" (iv-V, at 0:29; see Example 8.11 in chapter 8), the Police's "De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da" (IV_4^6 -V, at 0:53), Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do with It?" (bVI-bVII, at 0:36), Van Halen's "Dance the Night Away" (vi-V, at 0:33; see Example 8.4 in chapter 8), and the Cure's "Boys Don't Cry" (iii-ii, at 0:34), among others. More common than shuttles, though, are embellishments of a two-chord progression. Usually, the opening pre-dominant is prolonged for most of the prechorus's span before a final arrival on the dominant. For instance, Heart's "Crazy on You" embellishes a iv-V progression with an initial motion to \flat VI, acting as iv's upper third (Example 4.2). The progression is related to the "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression discussed in chapter 3, here in minor with *b*III replacing i. (See also Example 1.14 in chapter 1.) This is probably a good place to note that while verses and choruses usually need eight measures or more to assert their status as individual sections, prechoruses are often just four measures long, as in "Crazy on You." A full discussion of phrase rhythm in verse-prechorus-chorus songs appears in chapter 8.

Prechoruses step up the song's energy, sometimes with literal upward steps of root-position chords. The Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin'

Feelin" follows its verse's tonic pedal with a ii–iii–IV–V climb in the prechorus (Example 4.3a). Not every ascending root progression feels like an energy increase, but here each step up feels like another stretch of the rubber, eventually released upon the arrival of the chorus's tonic. Wham!'s "Wake Me Up before You

Example 4.2 Heart, "Crazy On You" (1976): embellished iv-V progression in prechorus.



Example 4.3 Ascending-step progressions creating energy gain in prechoruses.



Example 4.4 Big Brother and the Holding Company, "Piece of My Heart" (1968): prechorus outlining vi–V as PD–D.



Go-Go" starts the same way but pulls back on the first pass, ii–iii–IV–iii–ii, before completing the ascent ii–iii–IV–V the second time through (Example 4.3b). Michael Jackson's 1987 hit "Man in the Mirror" reprises Wham!'s progression, replacing iii with I⁶ (prechorus at 0:47). In all three songs, we can understand ii as the primary pre-dominant harmony, prolonged by motion to its upper third IV before giving way to V as syntactical dominant.

Prechoruses tend to stick with traditional chord categories in pre-dominant and dominant roles. Layouts of IV-V and ii-V are normative, as we have seen in the previous examples. Both progressions involve an ascending step progression (in the latter case occurring in the I-ii progression from verse to prechorus) and take advantage of the V chord's voice-leading push toward I. Many prechoruses opt instead for vi in the pre-dominant role, as in Big Brother and the Holding Company's "Piece of My Heart" (Example 4.4). As we saw in chapter 1, vi is a common rock pre-dominant, capable of signaling a move to harmonic instability despite having two tones in common with I. The vi chord's prominent placement at the beginning of a prechorus solidifies its role as the pre-dominant, even in cases where it proceeds to IV or ii before moving on to the dominant. Thus, the vi-IV-ii-IV-ii-IV-V progression in Van Halen's "Jump" (at 0:58) as well as the vi-ii-IV-V-vi-ii-IV-V progression in the J. Geils Band's "Centerfold" (at 0:33) can be understood as embellishments of vi-V as PD-D. Mediant chords (iii and bIII) occasionally begin a prechorus, as in Judas Priest's "Living after Midnight" (bIII⁵–II⁵–V, at 0:50) or the circle-of-fifths progressions in Peter Frampton's "Baby I Love Your Way" (iii-V7/ii-ii-V, at 0:41) and the Ronettes' "Be My Baby" $(III^7 - VI^7 - II^7 - V^7)$, at 0:21, a chain of secondary V⁷ chords borrowed from jazz's "Rhythm" changes).

Prechoruses with non-V syntactical dominants crop up occasionally, though V is by far the normative choice. \flat VII often takes on the role of dominant, especially in the minor mode; Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do with It" (prechorus at 0:36; see Example 1.15a) and Kiss's "Rock and Roll All Nite" (prechorus at 0:39; see Example 8.13) both give us \flat VI– \flat VII as PD–D. Other chords can appear in the dominant slot as well; Foreigner's "Feels like the First Time" ramps up the energy with ascending major chords II[#]–III[#], followed by a quick IV–I cadence into the chorus (prechorus at 0:44). The Cure's "Boys Don't Cry" is based on barre chords sliding up and down the guitar fretboard, so its prechorus pulls us down from iii as pre-dominant to ii as dominant (prechorus at 0:34). And as we saw in chapter 1, both Al Green's original and the Talking Heads' cover of "Take Me to the River" contain non-V dominants: both versions begin the prechorus on the pre-dominant \flat VI, with Green's ending up on IV and the Talking Heads' exhibiting the rare use of i⁷ as syntactical dominant (recall Example 1.16).

A handful of prechoruses prolong V throughout. A single prolonged chord in the prechorus generally functions as dominant, resulting in a T–D–T layout across the verse–prechorus–chorus cycle. In Billy Ocean's "Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car," the prechorus begins and ends on V, interrupted only by a brief pullback to IV (Example 4.5). Tension builds from the drawn-out V chord, hammered home with a one-bar extension right before the chorus where the band drops out. The prechorus's prolonged V participates in an overall I–V–I motion across the cycle; the preceding verse prolongs tonic via the first eight bars of a 12-bar blues progression (recall Example 2.25), and though the prechorus breaks the blues progression, it nevertheless fulfills the expected V–I harmonic layout (with the final tonic prolonged via a I–IV–V chord loop in the chorus). On the other hand, some prechoruses that both begin and end on V might nevertheless exhibit a



Example 4.5 Billy Ocean, "Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car" (1988): prechorus prolonging V as dominant throughout.

Example 4.6 Bruce Springsteen, "Glory Days" (1984): prechorus prolonging V that can be interpreted as containing both pre-dominant and dominant functions.



functional progression from pre-dominant to dominant. Bruce Springsteen's "Glory Days" tells the story of aging characters whose lives peaked in high school. Chord shuttles in the verses underscore descriptions of past glory, while the prechorus's shift to V move us to the present, less-glorious days (Example 4.6). In both lyrics and harmony, then, there is the sense of moving toward the middle of the story, suggesting pre-dominant function. We ultimately cadence with the title lyric over IV–V–I, resolving on the chorus's downbeat. Though the cadential V chord returns to the prechorus's initial harmony, its final occurrence arrives under more urgent circumstances, not sounding entirely like a continued prolongation from earlier. The two main contributors to this hearing are the preceding IV chord, making the last V chord sound like the arrival of a new harmonic area, and the lyrics, which announce the punch line with the setup lines "talking about," "thinking about," and "stories of" in the song's three cycles. These factors lead to the possibility of V as both syntactical pre-dominant *and* dominant, the former function governing the prechorus's first seven bars and the latter arriving in its last bar.

Prechoruses and tonic

Avoidance of tonic function is a defining feature of the prechorus. Nevertheless, prechoruses do not all stay away from I chords. Prechoruses frequently recast I chords not as stable tonics but as prolongational chords within the pre-dominant area, most often as IV's upper fifth or VI's upper third. For instance, Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" shuttles between \flat VI and i three times before the fourth iteration gives us \flat VI–V–i as PD–D–T (Example 4.7a). The metrically weak i chords seem subsidiary to \flat VI, acting more like brief pullbacks than stable tonics. Both the

Example 4.7 Prechoruses that prolong the pre-dominant with a shuttle involving the I chord.





Ronettes' "Walking in the Rain" and the Monkees' "I'm a Believer" do the same with a IV–I shuttle, the latter eliminating the return to IV before the dominant arrival (Example 4.7b and c). Tommy James and the Shondelles' "I Think We're Alone Now" gives us iii–I three times followed by bVII–V, which we can interpret as an overall iii–V progression as PD–D (Example 4.7d; recall Example 1.22c). Similarly, some prechoruses that divide into two thematic halves begin on the pre-dominant, settle on I at the end of the first half, and restart with the pre-dominant in the second half,

Example 4.8 Huey Lewis and the News, "Hip to be Square" (1986): prechorus with a PD–(T–PD–)D–T layout.



this time pushing through to the dominant and a cadence to tonic (Example 4.8). This layout mirrors a typical layout of classic bridges, which will be discussed later.

In all of those examples, the I chords exist within the prolonged pre-dominant area. That is, they are functionally subordinate to the main pre-dominant chords that arrived at the beginning of the section, whether IV, vi, VI, or iii. Prolongational I chords embellishing non-tonic harmonies are familiar from Schenkerian theory; Carl Schachter has dubbed these chords apparent tonics, chords "constructed like a tonic but without a tonic's function" (1990, 171). Situations warranting an apparent-tonic interpretation involve elements of (rhetorical, metrical, etc.) instability overcoming the I chord's pitch stability. While such a determination must ultimately be made in the context of individual songs, when a prechorus begins off-tonic and returns to I in a (hyper)metrically weak position, it generally makes sense to consider the I chords to be subordinate to the section's first chord. In the five prechoruses in Examples 4.7 and 4.8, I find all of the I chords to be sufficiently destabilized to make them sound not like the return of tonic function but instead like brief pauses within the pre-dominant's forward drive. All five place the I chords in hypermetrically weak locations. In "Billie Jean," "Walking in the Rain" and "Hip to Be Square," the I chord separates two instances of the same pre-dominant chord, suggesting a connection across the I chord in the middle. Even in "I'm a Believer" and "I Think We're Alone Now," where the last I chord leads directly to the syntactical dominant area, the chord shuttle groups I with the previous chord, so the impression is a PD-D succession (similar to the diagram in Example 1.6). Prolongationally, then, it seems appropriate to consider these I chords as IV's upper fifth, or vi's upper third, or a 5-6 shift above iii.

Prechoruses, in general, do not begin on tonic. Immediate motion away from I is central to the perception of prechorus function. Passages placed between a verse and chorus that begin on I generally represent either the second half of a two-part verse (to be discussed later) or an instance of *verse* \Rightarrow *prechorus fusion*, where a single section combines verse and prechorus functions (discussed in chapter 8).



Example 4.9 Queen, "Don't Stop Me Now" (1978): the prechorus begins on I due to an elision with the verse's cadence.

On rare occasion, however, it is possible for a standalone prechorus to begin on a I chord. This usually occurs in one of two ways. The first is when an overlap of the end of the verse and the beginning of the prechorus makes the prechorus begin before the pre-dominant arrives. In Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now," for instance, the third measure shown in Example 4.9 is simultaneously the sectional verse's cadential arrival and the first measure of the prechorus. This measure's I chord quickly destabilizes to V⁷/IV and proceeds to pre-dominant and dominant. A similar elision appears in Bon Jovi's "Bad Medicine" (prechorus at 1:00). The second way for a prechorus to begin on I involves a mode shift (from minor i to major I, e.g.) so that the new I chord represents a harmonic departure from the verse's tonic. The altered I might be seen to represent pre-dominant function, despite its relative pitch stability. In Daryl Hall and John Oates's "I Can't Go For That (No Can Do)," a funky C-minor verse gives way to an ethereal prechorus in C major (Example 4.10). The mode shift along with the mood and texture changes make it difficult to perceive this section as a continuation of the verse. The stark contrast suggests that major I might represent pre-dominant function, with the ensuing IV⁹ acting as syntactical dominant. The chorus that follows can't go for major and reclaims the minor mode, though it does not yet return to tonic, instead sustaining iv⁹.

Prechorus or more verse?

A prechorus by definition comes between a verse and a chorus. Not everything that follows a verse and precedes a chorus has prechorus function, though. Sometimes it is just more verse. The two main tasks of a prechorus are to destabilize the verse and provide a transition to the chorus. Destabilization can come from many domains,

Example 4.10 Daryl Hall and John Oates, "I Can't Go For That" (1981): within a minor key, a major I chord beginning a prechorus might function as pre-dominant.



but in general, some degree of harmonic instability is required for prechorus function. In other words, prechoruses for the most part cannot prolong tonic. Some cycles contain what seem like two different verses before the chorus, where the second builds momentum much like a prechorus would, e.g., through motivic fragmentation and textural intensification. Nevertheless, if the second does not depart from tonic, I have trouble ascribing to it prechorus function.

To some degree, associating the prechorus with non-tonic harmony is a definitional matter. That is, there is nothing "wrong" with calling a tonic-prolonging section a prechorus if it follows a verse and precedes a chorus; I have simply chosen to define prechorus function based on harmonic instability, in keeping with this book's theory that harmony is the primary determinant of song structure. Jay Summach, for instance, bases his formal categories primarily on length and motivic features. He thus ascribes prechorus function to any passage between a verse and chorus that lasts eight or more measures and exhibits motivic fragmentation (Summach 2012, 128–33). Trevor de Clercq employs a prototype approach based on common characteristics of each section type; a given section might then be seen as having some characteristics of a verse and some of a prechorus, rather than being entirely one or the other (2017a, 3.5–8).

However, there are some good reasons beyond definitional convenience to consider harmony as the primary determinant of prechorus function. One is that some songs contain both a two-part verse and a prechorus. Def Leppard's "Photograph" presents three eight-bar sections before arriving at its chorus (see Example 4.11): the first two sections (measures 1–16) loop a guitar riff over a tonic pedal, and the third (measures 17–24) gives us PD–D, modulating to the key of \flat III. The third section is a rather straightforward prechorus, with a marked texture change accompanying the expected harmonic instability. The second section (measures 9–16) also involves some prechorus-like elements: the

Example 4.11 Def Leppard, "Photograph" (1983): two-part verse followed by prechorus and chorus.



texture intensifies with the vocal line doubled with backup singers (and, in the first cycle, the arrival of the bass layer), and the melodic units gradually fragment down to two-note motives. However, these momentum-building devices do not accompany any harmonic change; instead, the same guitar riff continues, even as the texture thickens. It would be quite a stretch to analyze the second section as part of the prechorus, grouping it with the following, harmonically contrasting section rather than with the first, which contains the same basic accompaniment. Instead, the layout strongly suggests a two-part verse in measures 1–16 followed by prechorus and chorus.

It follows that similar two-part verses can arise without an ensuing prechorus. The Cars' "My Best Friend's Girl" (Example 4.12) gives us 16 measures of a I–IV–V Example 4.12 The Cars, "My Best Friend's Girl" (1978): two-part verse with no prechorus.



chord loop followed directly by a chorus, specifically the continuation chorus we encountered in Example 3.7. Though the first 16 measures divide into two distinct halves, with the second building momentum, the continued tonic-prolonging loop places the entire passage within verse function. Admittedly, the verses' second parts in both songs are more prechorus-like than the first parts—de Clercq might therefore interpret them as "ambiguous" sections—but I do not think they approach any sort of formal gray area. Either verse's second half could itself be the entire verse, if the first half were not there—with nothing from which to gain momentum, it would simply be a somewhat intense verse.

Bridges

The three section types we have encountered so far—verses, choruses, and prechoruses—are all part of a song's core cycle. Whichever of these appear in a given song group together as a cohesive unit comprising the song's primary identifying material. Though many songs contain nothing but cycles, most include some sort of additional material. The most significant song sections occurring outside the core cycle are *bridges*. A bridge is defined as a section of eight or more measures that is (a) external to the song's primary cycle, (b) occurs after the first cycle and before

the last, and (c) contains a texted vocal line.¹ The bridge's main role is to provide something new to break up a song's succession of cycles. The word that comes up in nearly every theorist's discussion of bridges is *contrast*—in particular, contrast with material from the song's core cycle. Of course, any two distinct sections will contrast with one another to some degree; bridges, though, more than any other section type seem to steer the form in a completely new direction, setting up a climactic return to the main material. Different ways of expressing contrast divide bridge sections into two categories: *classic bridges* increase the song's energy and tension through harmonic instability, while *groove bridges* take the energy level down, offering us a break within the song's formal process. While both fulfill general bridge function, they offer quite different internal features and expressive potential.

Classic Bridges

In the early rock era, bridge sections generally appeared as B sections within the Tin Pan Alley–derived AABA form (see chapter 5). These B sections generally acted as unstable counterparts to stable, refrain-containing A sections; they were, in Jay Summach's words, "region[s] of change and instability whose function is to reinvigorate interest in A and to make the return of A seem imperative" (2012, 60). Trevor de Clercq coined the term "classic bridge" to refer to the B sections of early AABA rock hits; these bridges characteristically avoid tonic and end on a half-cadential V chord (2012, 74–81). Even as AABA's popularity waned in favor of verse–chorus forms, the basic structure of AABA's B sections remained the default for bridge sections within any song form. For this reason, I will expand de Clercq's use of the term "classic bridge" to refer to any harmonically unstable bridge section, regardless of song form or year of release.

Classic bridges generally project harmonic instability by beginning and ending off tonic, often with a weakly stated I chord somewhere along the way, giving rise to an overall PD–D harmonic layout. They thus have pretty much the same harmonic profile as a typical prechorus. Indeed, John Covach considers the prechorus "a special kind of bridge" (2018, glossary), and one could make the case that the word "bridge" is more descriptive of prechoruses, which provide a connecting path between two different sections, than of actual bridges, which frequently separate two instances of the same section. There is an important difference between the two sections' harmonic functions, though: prechoruses provide the unstable middle of a complete functional circuit spanning a verse–prechorus–chorus cycle, while classic bridges end with a large-scale half cadence, not connecting to a concluding tonic. Sections that follow classic bridges thus restart the harmonic process, usually (but not always) leading through a full functional circuit and achieving a cadence to tonic.

¹ There does not seem to be a consensus as to whether instrumental sections such as solos and breaks can qualify as bridges; for reasons described later, I find it best to lexically distinguish between instrumental and texted internal sections.

De Clercq identifies three specific chord progressions that crop up repeatedly in early classic bridges; these three progressions are shown with prolongational interpretations in Example 4.13 (see de Clercq 2012, 76-77). All three outline PD-D by beginning on IV, hitting I in a hypermetrically weak position, and ending on V. (Note these progressions' similarity to several prechorus progressions discussed earlier.) Good examples of the three bridge progressions include James Brown's "I Feel Good" (progression A at 0:48), Dusty Springfield's "Son of a Preacher Man" (progression B [modulating to IV] at 1:22), and Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman" (progression C at 1:14); see de Clercq 2012, 77, for a longer list. Instances of these particular progressions peaked in 1955-63, but the general layout of pre-dominant to dominant with weak statements of I remained a norm for classic bridges throughout the '60s, '70s, and '80s. For instance, the Beatles' "Misery" replaces progression A's IV with vi (Example 4.14a); Bob Dylan instead uses III[‡] in "Just Like a Woman" and inserts a passing IV chord at the end to crawl up III[#]-IV-V (Example 4.14b). Blondie's "Heart of Glass" combines progressions A and B to give us IV-I-IV-V/V-V (Example 4.14c), and Dobie Gray's "Drift Away" replaces progression A's IV chords with ii-IV, resulting in ii-IV-I and ii-IV-V in its bridge's two three-measure phrases (Example 4.14d). John Mellencamp's "Hurts So Good" alternates IV and I as in progression C, but skips the V/V chord and extends V for ten measures (Example 6.22 in chapter 6).

Classic bridges seem more likely than prechoruses to include a I chord somewhere in the middle. I do not think that is a particularly significant difference between the two sections, though; plenty of classic bridges outline PD–D with

Example 4.13 De Clercq's three archetypal chord progressions for classic bridges with prolongational interpretations.



Example 4.14 Classic bridges based on the chord progressions in Example 4.13 but with slight modifications.

(a) The Beatles, "Misery" (1963)



no intervening I chord. Like prechoruses, many classic bridges shuttle between their pre-dominant and dominant harmonies, as in Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" (iv–V shuttle at 3:21) or the Beatles' "Ticket to Ride" (IV–V shuttle at 1:09). Others have more varied progressions prolonging PD–D, such as the descending steps in the Rolling Stones' "Miss You" and Culture Club's "Karma Chameleon" (Example 4.15). A more significant difference between prechoruses and classic bridges is the latter's almost exclusive reliance on V to carry syntactical dominant function. Even if other sections of the same song use IV, \flat VII, or other chords in the role of dominant, classic bridges almost always stick with V. In minor-mode songs, the bridge's V chord often contains the song's only instance of the raised leading tone (as is the case in "Miss You"). The appearance of \sharp ⁷ in an otherwise Aeolian **Example 4.15** Classic bridges that prolong the pre-dominant with descending-step progressions.



(a) The Rolling Stones, "Miss You" (1978)

context adds significant voice-leading tension to an already tense formal moment. Classic bridges do not necessarily exhibit the motivic tension-building features common to prechoruses (fragmentation, etc.), so any tension comes almost entirely from harmony. A half-cadential V chord is thus attractive due to its pitch-based instability. Deviations from this norm, such as the i⁷ dominant we encountered in the bridge of the Talking Heads' "Take Me to the River" (Example 1.19), are highly marked and can call into question our perception of bridge function.²

However, not all classic bridges end with half cadences at all. Sometimes the opening pre-dominant pushes all the way through to an authentic cadence, completing a PD–D–T partial circuit. Tonic closure deflates much of the bridge's

² Corpus studies with statistics on chord placement support the strong association between classic bridges and the V chord; see Summach 2012, 189, and de Clercq 2017b, 164. These two studies suggest that between 75% and 85% of bridges that do not end on I end on V. Everett 2009 does not provide hard data but similarly claims that bridges "nearly always" conclude on a V chord. There are some caveats on this data, however: Summach includes only AABA songs in his calculation, and de Clercq includes any section that he or his collaborator David Temperley labeled as a bridge, presumably including groove bridges and instrumental sections. Finally, these statistics are based on a section's final chord, which is not always the syntactical dominant representative—in David Bowie's "Changes," for instance, V represents dominant function at the end of the bridge, but the section technically ends on IV, a bluesy passing chord connecting back to the verse (see Example 4.17).

expected tension; initial instability is defused as pre-dominant and dominant resolve to a stable tonic within bridge space. Compare the classic bridge in the Beatles' "Yesterday" (Example 4.16) with those of the band's earlier hits. Here, the mop-top shaking and falsetto "woo"-ing of "From Me to You" is absent, replaced by the narrator's resignation to the fact that his lover has left him. Though authentic cadences conclude only a small minority of classic bridges, they are common enough not to represent a significant deformation. Other examples include the Doobie Brothers' "China Grove" (bridge at 1:36), Jackson Browne's "Running on Empty" (at 2:07), and the Jackson 5's "I'll Be There" (at 0:53). I should mention here the related but distinct process of $B \Rightarrow A$ fusion, discussed in chapter 5, where a classic bridge and the final A of an AABA form fuse into a single section; there, the authentic cadence is not really part of the bridge, but instead arises within verse function, to which the bridge has gradually given way.

Occasionally, a classic bridge seems to end like a prechorus, its final dominant resolving into the following section's tonic. Consider the bridge in David Bowie's "Changes" (Example 4.17). The section chugs along with a standard classic-bridge chord progression—specifically progression A from Example 4.13—but instead of a half-cadential pause, the progression tumbles into the ensuing chorus effecting what sounds very much like a bluesy V–IV–I cadence. The transition here from bridge to chorus is nearly identical to the song's earlier prechorus–chorus transitions, where an authentic cadence would normally be expected. At the same time, one might argue that though there is a rhetorical dominant–tonic resolution from bridge to chorus, the syntactical function of a half cadence remains: this chorus does not conclude a verse–chorus cycle but instead represents the return of the main material after a contrasting bridge, thus functioning as a formal beginning

Example 4.16 The Beatles, "Yesterday" (1965): classic bridge with authentic cadence to tonic.



Example 4.17 David Bowie, "Changes" (1971): classic bridge that seems to resolve into the chorus with an authentic cadence.



set off from the previous section. The apparent authentic cadence could thus be interpreted as a post-cadential connection, akin to what Yosef Goldenberg has called "interruption-fill" (2012). Situations like this demonstrate that syntax and rhetoric are often not only contradictory but also mutually inextricable; subtle rhetorical cues that differentiate between half and authentic cadences can have broad syntactical ramifications (see Burstein 2014). As for "Changes," I am content to leave the matter unresolved, or, more accurately, fuzzy; the end of the bridge is sort of a half cadence, and sort of an elided authentic cadence. Similar situations arise in the Ronettes' "Walking in the Rain" (bridge at 2:11) and both Al Green's and the Talking Heads' versions of "Take Me to the River" (Example 1.19).

Finally, a small number of classic bridges begin on tonic. These sections often reveal their bridge function gradually, since an opening tonic might signal another verse or chorus. In the Allman Brothers Band's "Melissa," the bridge's first measure could easily begin a third verse (Example 4.18); it is not until the section is underway that instability takes over and we are sure we are in classic bridge territory. Sometimes an opening tonic signifies narrative slowness, as in Otis Redding's "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," where the narrator accepts that "nothing's gonna change" as a tonic-prolonging chord loop persists for most of the bridge (Example 4.19).

Groove bridges

The previous paragraph's two examples approach a feature antithetical to classic bridge function: harmonic stability. Both eventually leave tonic, though, and end

Example 4.18 The Allman Brothers Band, "Melissa" (1972): classic bridge beginning on tonic.



Example 4.19 Otis Redding, "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" (1968): classic bridge with a tonic-prolonging chord loop in its first six measures.



with a half cadence on V, achieving the requisite instability, albeit slightly delayed. Groove bridges, on the other hand, never leave the harmonic stability of tonic. These bridges act more like pauses in the formal process than agents of tension, relaxing on tonic and inviting us to dance, tap our feet, or simply take a mental break before the main material comes roaring back. Unlike classic bridges, groove bridges are not common in AABA form, where instability is key to the B section's purpose of reenergizing A, but tend instead to crop up within verse–chorus forms, where they usually lead back to the chorus alone. Groove bridges generally contain little in terms of thematic material, eschewing hummable melodies in favor of improvisatory vocal lines over sparse accompaniment. Nevertheless, they often play a central expressive role, frequently including the singer's most intimate communication.

Consider the bridge to the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" (Example 4.20). After two verse-prechorus-chorus cycles, the texture thins to a single bass line echoed by a high vibraphone; over 13 iterations of a two-measure chord loop, producer Phil Spector's trademark "wall of sound" reemerges bit by bit, as singers Bill Medley and Bobby Hatfield trade pleas, Hatfield eventually wailing in an anguished falsetto. The section has no real melody, its interest coming from the textural buildup and vocal back-and-forth. In the text, though, the narrative tone shifts from the cycles' disengaged reporting, using mostly second-person pronouns, to a personal plea to "bring it on back," focusing now on first-person pronouns. The ensuing chorus replaces "you've lost" with "bring back" in the title lyric; the bridge seems to have brought out the narrator's desperation, which now infiltrates the post-bridge choruses.

Clearly harmonic instability is not in play in this groove bridge. The I–IV–V–IV chord loop forms a non-teleological backdrop to other, non-harmonic processes.

Example 4.20 The Righteous Brothers, "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin" (1964): groove bridge over a tonic-prolonging chord loop.



In classic bridges, harmony is the guiding force, its instability giving the section a broad sense of forward motion. In groove bridges, on the other hand, harmony recedes from the spotlight. In other words, groove bridges are not so much about the presence of tonic function as they are about the absence of harmonic instability. Lyrics, texture, and other elements run the show; sometimes harmony is literally absent, with pitched instruments sitting out some or all of the section. In the Jackson 5's "ABC," for instance, a textural breakdown occurs after the second chorus, leaving the drums alone over sounds of applause (at 1:44). After a couple measures, Michael Jackson shouts "Sit down, girl!" (echoing the first verse's line "Sit yourself down, take a seat") before changing his mind with "No, get up girl!" The preceding verse-chorus cycles presented a school-like lesson about relationships (see Example 6.7 and accompanying discussion in chapter 6), and one can imagine the scene shifting to a different classroom for this bridge (a dance venue perhaps?) as the lesson changes from a verbal one to a physical one. The "student" is invited up to dance as Jackson encourages her with cries of "Shake it, shake it, baby." The chorus's accompaniment pattern enters piece by piece in the instrumental parts throughout the remainder of the section, and after a total of 13 measures the full chorus returns, repeats, and fades out. The groove bridge's emergent accompaniment does center on tonic, riffing over a I-IV shuttle, but the focus is squarely on the dance scene. Even when the section's last measure recapitulates the chorus's cadential gesture ("That's how easy love can be"), there is no sense of harmonic arrival; instead, the gesture signals a transition back to song space as we fall into the chorus.

Groove bridges often provide an opportunity for singers to engage directly with listeners. Michael Jackson's "P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)" begins its groove bridge with a drum break followed by a call-and-response portion bringing the audience into the song (or at least those identifying as "pretty young things") (at 2:11). The J. Geils Band's "Centerfold" loops the song's hallmark guitar riff sung in chorus on "na," similarly inviting the audience to join in (at 1:40). Some singers speak over the groove bridge, as if to pull the listener's ear right up to their lips. This practice originated with doo-wop groups such as the Ink Spots, reappearing in later songs such as Elvis Presley's "Are You Lonesome Tonight" (at 1:26), the Shangri-Las' "Leader of the Pack" (at 1:32), Barry White's "Can't Get Enough of Your Love, Babe" (at 2:56 in the extended non-single version), and the Velvet Underground's "I Found a Reason" (at 1:42). In all of these songs, we can see that groove bridges provide a different sort of contrast from classic bridges; instead of increasing the formal tension, they move us away from structural song space to focus on lyrics, texture, and audience engagement.

Solos and Instrumental Breaks

Perhaps the section type most associated with capital-R Rock is the guitar solo. The singer has ushered us through a minute or two of verse, chorus, and bridge material but now steps aside to give the guitarist the spotlight for a short time. It is not an overstatement to say that rock songs are carried by their singer—as Allan Moore describes, "When we listen to a track, our attention is focused particularly on the identity of the singer" (2012, 179). The absence of that central voice plus the emergence of a different, competing voice makes the guitar solo stand apart from the central song sections. In many ways, guitar solos are like bridges, providing contrast to the song's main material. However, the contrast here arises not from thematic or harmonic elements but from the change to a new communicative agent. Indeed, guitar solos usually do not present new harmonic material, most often retaining the chord progression from the verse, and sometimes even reusing an earlier section's melody (e.g., Madonna's "Papa Don't Preach," solo at 2:29).

The idea of the guitar as communicative voice is puzzling, since it does not use language. I use the word "voice" here in the same way that Allan Moore and others use the word "persona," analogous to Simon Frith's formulation of "voice as person" (Moore 2012, chapter 7; Frith 1996, chapter 9). When a guitar takes center stage in a solo, it ceases to be a mere instrument and becomes the sonic representation of the person playing it. Jimi Hendrix's solo on "Foxey Lady" (at 1:47) is not a disembodied guitar solo that happens to be performed by Jimi Hendrix; it is Jimi Hendrix *soloing*, in his own voice. Hearing the guitar as Hendrix's voice involves interpreting it as what Frith calls "willed sound," where both the notes played and how they sound are a result of Hendrix's conscious decisions. It is important to note, as Frith does, that the perceived agent is not identical to the individual performer; Jimi Hendrix-as-guitarist is a persona, distinct from Jimi Hendrix the person. Further, both are distinct from Jimi Hendrix-as-singer, whose voice we hear during the song's verses.

Not all solos are guitar solos, of course, and not all soloists have as loud a persona as Jimi Hendrix. Nevertheless, the sense of the singer's persona being replaced by another voice remains a defining aspect of solo sections. The underlying chord progression, then, is less of a central issue in solo sections. Most often, the instrumental persona simply takes the singer's place over a previously occurring accompaniment, whether a verse (Michael Jackson, "Beat It," at 2:49 [solo played by Eddie Van Halen]), a chorus (the Cars, "My Best Friend's Girl," at 2:00), or an entire verse-chorus cycle (Deep Purple, "Smoke on the Water," at 2:57). Other times, the harmonic material is new, sometimes involving instability in the manner of a classic bridge. In Aretha Franklin's "Respect," for instance, the saxophone solo at 1:11 occurs over an F♯m-B chord shuttle, breaking away from the home key of C major but ultimately returning to settle on G7 (V). Van Halen's "Jump" involves a similar harmonic fissure, the guitar solo occurring over a vi-IV-V-I loop in the key of bII. Despite the unstable harmonies, however, these solos do not have the same structural function as a texted classic bridge. Replacing the singer with an instrumental persona gives the section an auxiliary role, supporting the overarching song form but external to it. For the most part, a rock song could

omit its solo section—or, alternatively, add a new solo section—without affecting its underlying formal structure. Solo sections, however, are rarely *unimportant*, and indeed are often a song's most memorable portion; some songs even seem entirely built around an explosive solo section (one could argue that the band Van Halen's sole purpose is to provide a venue for Eddie Van Halen's virtuosic guitar solos). An analogy with jazz can illustrate the distinction between structural weight and musical importance: bebop-style songs usually begin with a 32-bar "head"—a melody over a given chord progression—followed by rotating solos over iterations of that same progression. The most important parts of a Charlie Parker or John Coltrane tune are the solos, but it is still the head that defines the song.

Some internal sections contain neither a vocal line nor an instrumental solo. Following Everett 2009, I will refer to these sections as instrumental breaks, or just breaks. Breaks are essentially groove bridges without any text. As with solos, the singer's absence is a central aspect of the section, but instead of being replaced by a different voice, here there simply is no primary voice. If the typical singer/band texture represents the relationship between a persona and his or her environment, as Allan Moore describes (2005), then a break is all environment. Accompanimental environments in general offer the strongest signifiers of style, genre, and what Moore calls the "attitudinal tone" of an individual song, "laying out a particular manner of approach to which the singer then conforms" (2005, [5]). In breaks, where environment is the listener's sole focus, these signifiers often deepen. Genesis, for instance, reminds us of their prog-rock roots in the instrumental break from their 1986 resurgence hit "Invisible Touch" (at 1:45), where the song's generic '80s-pop texture morphs into a mélange of synthesizer sounds over a Db/Eb "soul dominant" sonority. In Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love," the percussion-centric breakdown beginning at 1:18 moves the song from Robert Plant talking about sex to a sonic representation of sex itself. Plant is not entirely absent from the section, but he is reduced to primal vocalizations as he becomes engulfed by the sexual environment.

Other Auxiliary Passages

Transitions

From the perspective of formal process, a rock song begins with its first verse and ends after its final chorus (or, if there is no chorus, its final verse). Between these goalposts is some combination of the sections we have encountered: verses, choruses, prechoruses, bridges, solos, and breaks. Not every section fits neatly into one of these categories, but for the most part they act in dialogue with one or more of them. Sometimes a short transition connects one section to the next. These transitions are not full-fledged sections but simply add some breathing room between two adjacent sections. Theorists have used various terms for these transitions, including "interlude" (Covach 2005), "link" (de Clercq 2012, Temperley 2018), and "mid-song intro" (Summach 2012). Transitions are generally instrumental and can theoretically separate any two sections (Guns 'n' Roses's "Welcome to the Jungle" contains a four-bar transition between classic bridge and guitar solo [2:39–2:47], e.g.), but they are most often found between the end of one cycle and the beginning of the next (and thus are more specifically *re*transitions). Most often, they reprise material from the song's intro to prepare the next verse, as in the Monkees' "Last Train to Clarksville" (0:46–0:51), John Mellencamp's "Hurts So Good" (1:11–1:18), Kansas's "Carry On Wayward Son" (1:51–2:03), and Abba's "Dancing Queen" (2:00–2:14). In all but "Carry On Wayward Son," the chorus ends on the downbeat of the transition, creating a metrical overlap such that the transition is simultaneously the end of the chorus and the intro to the verse.

Postchoruses

A similar but distinct section that crops up occasionally has earned the name postchorus.³ As the term implies, postchoruses follow choruses, but they do not really connect to the following section as would transitions. Further, postchoruses frequently include text, suggesting more structural weight than a typical transition. However, postchoruses remain auxiliary to the main formal process; their role is what Caplin would call "after-the-end," lying outside the verse-to-chorus trajectory and playing the role of a miniature coda (Caplin 1998, 15). Despite their similar names, postchoruses are not at all related to prechoruses, the latter playing a central structural role within a song's core cycle. In Donna Summer's "Hot Stuff," the continuation chorus ends with a cadential arrival on a hypermetrical downbeat (on the third measure of Example 4.21). The downbeat arrival elides into an eight-measure postchorus where Summer and her backup singers repeat the title lyric over a repeated accompanimental riff. This passage is neither a transition back to the verse (the transition comes later) nor part of the chorus, which ended with the cadence. Instead, it acts as an afterthought, reinforcing the cadential arrival and reiterating the chorus's lyrical ideas while defusing some of its built-up energy. Songs with postchoruses do not always employ them after all of their choruses, reinforcing their auxiliary status; in Stevie Wonder's "I Wish," for instance, a postchorus appears after the first chorus only (the "do-doo-do-doo-do" section at 1:30). The distinction between transition and postchorus is not always clear-cut; in Wham!'s "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go," the eight-measure passages following the first two choruses (at 0:59 and 1:58) seem to combine elements of both. The same can be said for the instrumental passages in Thin Lizzy's "The Boys Are Back in Town" (at 1:05) and the Cars' "My Best Friend's Girl" (at 1:00).

³ The term's origins are unknown; a brief discussion appears in Spicer 2017, [9].



Example 4.21 Donna Summer, "Hot Stuff" (1979): postchorus and transition between the first and second verse-chorus cycles.

Intros

A rock song's formal process may begin with the first verse, but the verse is rarely the first thing we hear. Instead, we usually get an intro of anywhere between a few measures and a few minutes of music.⁴ Anything that precedes the first core section is part of the intro; the norm is four or eight bars of instrumental accompaniment deriving from the song's verse or chorus (e.g., John Lennon's "Imagine" or Michael Jackson's "Rock with You"), sometimes with an instrumental melody added on top (e.g., Daryl Hall and John Oates's "Private Eyes" or Aretha Franklin's "Respect"). Intros often include a signature riff, which Everett 2009 calls a "tattoo" (e.g., the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" or Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze"); an unaccompanied virtuosic display (e.g., Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" or Heart's "Crazy on You"); or a combination of two or more of these techniques (e.g., Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" or Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train"). A common device is a textural buildup where instrumental parts are added one by one over a looped groove (e.g., the Cure's "Just Like Heaven" or Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean"; see Spicer 2004 and Attas 2015). Intros are most often instrumental, but texted intros do exist, such as those found in Queen's "Somebody to Love" or the J. Geils Band's "Looking for a Love." There are countless other options; you can essentially do anything in an intro.

⁴ In Jay Summach's corpus of Billboard's Annual Top 20 songs, 90% contain an intro. Summach notes that this percentage increased over time, from 85% in the 1960s to 98% in the 1980s. See Summach 2012, 40–43 and 170.

An intro is simultaneously one of the most powerful and one of the least structurally significant sections in a rock song. Positioned at the beginning of the song, the intro immediately frames the listener's interpretive environment; as Robin Attas puts it, "Over just a few seconds, the music establishes genre, tempo, and mood; creates a context for pitch, meter, timbre, instrumentation, and other musical parameters; captures listener attention; and pulls that attention into the main body of the piece" (2015, 275). Introductions often provide necessary harmonic grounding as well; Bob Dylan's strummed F-major chord that opens "Mr. Tambourine Man" ensures that the ensuing chorus's first chord is heard as IV, while the vocal less chorus riff (in E) that opens Van Halen's "Runnin' with the Devil" casts doubt on A's tonic status when the first verse arrives. Given the normativity of a short instrumental introduction, its omission can have an expressive effect; think of the intimacy projected by Freddie Mercury's unaccompanied opening line of Queen's "We Are the Champions," for instance, or the snap-to-attention effect of Carl Wilson's sighed "I" beginning the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations." At the same time, intros are decidedly external to their song's structural core. They set the stage, but the main act does not begin until the first verse arrives.

Overture Choruses

What if the first main section is not a verse? Kansas's "Carry On Wayward Son" opens with its chorus, sung a cappella in three-part harmony. The opening chorus lasts 15 seconds and proceeds to a nearly minute-long instrumental passage alternating two distinct grooves and involving a brief guitar solo along the way. The instrumental passage seems more like an intro than a transition (the later transition at 1:51 is only eleven seconds long), and the disembodied opening chorus seems more like a pre-intro than part of the song's formal core. I think of it like an overture to the song proper, a preview of what is coming before we hear it in its formal context. "Carry On Wayward Son"'s structural starting point remains the beginning of the first verse at 1:07; the instrumental passage from 0:15 to 1:07 is an intro, and the a cappella opening is what I will refer to as an overture chorus. Overture choruses can also be found in Queen's "Fat Bottomed Girls," Prince's "7," Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It," and Guns 'n' Roses's "Paradise City." In the last two of these, the overture choruses follow their own short instrumental intro. As we saw in the previous chapter, overture choruses evoke the folk tradition of instructional choruses, which are sung right away in order to teach the audience the words so they can sing along with future iterations. Mainstream folk-rock examples include Peter, Paul, and Mary's "Puff the Magic Dragon," Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" (Example 6.5), and Dolly Parton's "Jolene." Some overture choruses include only part of the chorus, as in Bon Jovi's "You Give Love a Bad Name" (the first half) or Abba's "Dancing Queen" (the second half; see Example 8.14). John Covach (2006)

has pointed out the Beatles' tendency to place a modified chorus in an introductory role (e.g., in "Help!" or "I'm a Loser"), resulting in a sort of intro/chorus hybrid. In short, overture choruses involve core material making its way into an external formal area, thus functioning as "before the beginning."

Outros

Material occurring after the last verse or chorus performs the non-structural role of outro. When the formal process is complete, the party is not necessarily over. Sometimes, it is just getting started; outros can sometimes eclipse the rest of the song in terms of length and energy (e.g., Derek and the Dominos' "Layla"). Often, the party goes on forever, or at least that is the implication when the track fades out over a looped progression. Fadeouts like this are typical, usually drawing their repeated progressions from the song's verse or chorus and frequently adding improvised vocal and/or instrumental lines on top. In the Temptations' "My Girl," for example, the outro features lead singer David Ruffin riffing over iterations of the refrain's I-ii-V progression (at 2:26). Sometimes outros introduce new material and/or bring back material from intros or bridges. The short outro in Big Brother and the Holding Company's "Piece of My Heart" (at 3:56) contains material previously encountered in the song's intro and solo section, culminating in a sustained ii chord ending the song. The outro to Madonna's "Material Girl" begins with an ethereal passage featuring echoey vocals and no beat before returning to the material world by looping a passage from the earlier groove bridge (outro at 3:13; groove bridge at 2:13). In general, an outro's formal purpose is to extend the song's closure.

Two outro techniques are common enough to warrant specific labels. The chorus outro is an outro that begins like a repetition of the chorus but gradually devolves into a concluding loop. There is no single moment when the chorus ends and the outro begins; instead, the chorus's energy continues while its melodic material dissolves, as if the chorus fades into the background leaving only its surrounding environment. In Dobie Gray's "Drift Away," the third cycle involves a breakdown chorus with sparse accompaniment (at 2:36); this subdued chorus leads to another iteration of the chorus, now in full force with the song's thickest accompaniment (3:01). Gray's vocal improvisations over this louder chorus signal that we're entering closing space; soon the vocal improvisations are all that's left, and eventually the band swallows even that, completing the chorus's transformation into an instrumental outro. Other examples of chorus outros include Madonna's "Papa Don't Preach" (at 3:24) and Sam and Dave's "Soul Man" (at 2:18). The term solo outro can be applied to solo sections placed at the end of the song, as heard in Dire Straits' "Sultans of Swing" (at 4:48) or the Allman Brothers Band's "Ramblin' Man" (at 2:39). Long solo outros are often prime contributors to a song's "epicness," especially when
they occur over a new accompaniment. Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird" contains the archetypal epic solo outro, lasting four and a half minutes and shifting from the main material's major-mode ballad to an up-tempo bluesy I-bIII-IV loop (at 4:42). Guns 'n' Roses's "Paradise City" combines the epic solo outro with the chorus outro, with singer Axl Rose and guitarist Slash shouting/shredding over each other for the song's final two minutes (at 4:47). In certain genres, such as heavy metal or jam-band psychedelia, solo outros are normative and expected; archetypes include Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" or the Grateful Dead's "Dark Star" as performed on their album *Live/Dead.*⁵

As with intros, outros are often central contributors to a song's meaning despite their non-structural status. In Prince's "1999," the final chorus gives way to a long outro based on the verse's tonic groove, eventually over cries of "paaartyyy" (outro at 4:13). In the verses and choruses, various lead singers respond to the constant threat of instant nuclear annihilation by deciding to live it up while they are still alive. The outro represents them doing just that-at least until the bottom drops out after a minute and half (at 5:43) leaving only funky guitar and percussion (the nuclear aftermath?). In the Eagles' "Hotel California," the singer's final realization that he is trapped in the titular (and metaphorical) hotel leads to a two-plus-minute solo outro circling through the verse's progression (at 4:19). The guitar's interrupting entrance after the final verse-producing a rare omission of a concluding chorus-strips the singer/protagonist of his agency in the song's story and sucks him permanently into the Californian vortex. A few theorists have identified certain song designs where a texted outro functions as the song's expressive climax, most notably Mark Spicer's "cumulative form," where musical fragments are layered together in a final section (e.g., Journey's "Don't Stop Believin"), and Brad Osborn's "terminally climactic form," where a new, concluding section usurps the chorus's status as the song's focal point (e.g., the Doobie Brothers' "Black Water") (Spicer 2004; Osborn 2013). Similarly, Frank Samarotto has identified a "trope of expectancy/infinity" present in certain songs, such as the Beatles' "Hey Jude," where a complete song structure is followed by a climactic outro representing a cosmic shift from the finite world to the infinite realm (Samarotto 2012). See also chapter 5's discussion of climactic outros in strophic forms.

Formal Layout versus Formal Process

Having now introduced rock's primary and auxiliary sections and passages, the next step is to look at how those elements are arranged to form complete songs. Example 4.22 presents a quasi-flowchart showing what this arrangement typically looks like. A rock song centers on its core cycle, which is made up of a verse, a verse and chorus, or a verse, prechorus, and chorus (occasionally tacking on

⁵ See Schumann 2014 for other heavy metal examples.



Example 4.22 Most rock songs' formal layouts can be traced along this flowchart-like diagram.

a postchorus). Other than this core cycle, all components of Example 4.22 are optional; some songs contain nothing but cycles, with no intro, outro, or internal section (Queen's "We Are the Champions," e.g.). Songs generally require at least two complete cycles; after two, ensuing cycles often contain the chorus only or, especially after a solo, prechorus and chorus only (of course, this is impossible if the cycle contains only a verse). Anything occurring before the first cycle is either an intro or an overture chorus, and anything occurring after the final cycle is an outro. A cycle can proceed to another cycle, either directly or via a transition, or to a bridge, solo, or break. Bridges, solos, and breaks rarely arrive before the end of the second complete cycle, following what David Temperley calls the "start-with-two rule" (2018, 178), and must eventually lead back to cycle material, though there can be several such sections in a row.

Example 4.22 is remarkably robust in its applicability. Most rock songs can be mapped by following its arrows, skipping certain nodes as necessary. Many songs eschew conventional formal patterns, of course, including suite-style compositions like Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" or Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," groove-based funk tracks like Parliament's "Flash Light," experimental album cuts like the Police's "Voices inside My Head," and the majority of the progressive-rock output. Other songs engage in dialogue with Example 4.22's normative patterns but depart from them in some significant way, whether by interrupting a cycle before arriving at the chorus (Queen, "Don't Stop Me Now"; Foreigner, "Feels like the First Time"), arranging component sections in odd ways (the Beatles, "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band"), or exhibiting generally ambiguous section roles (the Eagles, "Desperado"; the Who, "Baba O'Riley"). For the most part, though, songs follow the general layout of a recurring cycle punctuated with excursions to bridges or instrumental sections and flanked by intros and outros.

But there remains something unsatisfying about arriving at Example 4.22. Figuring out what sections occur in what order is certainly useful, but it says nothing about how a song's component sections relate to one another. In particular, it says nothing about how they combine into a song, being a discernible entity and not merely an amalgamation of discrete sections. The idea that a succession of sections gives rise to a cohesive musical structure is fundamental to a conception of form as process. Schematics like Example 4.22, listing song components in order, are often presented as the end goal of a theory of form, but I think they are just the beginning. Once we get there, we can start to look at how the map of song sections—the *formal layout*—interacts with the content of those sections to create a cohesive large-scale song structure. In the remainder of this book, I aim to do just that, synthesizing the previous discussions of individual sections into analyses of complete songs. Further, as I have made clear from the beginning, I consider a song's formal process to be inextricable from its harmonic process. The ensuing chapters look at the various ways form and harmony interact on a large scale, taking the core cycle as a starting point and generating a song's complete structure outward from there. Each chapter investigates a particular cycle arrangement, whether verse only (chapter 5), verse and chorus only (chapters 6 and 7), or verse, prechorus, and chorus (chapter 8). The chapters demonstrate that form and harmony synchronize into a consistent set of normative patterns, against which individual songs act in dialogue.

AABA and Strophic Forms

In rock's early period, choruses were not so prevalent, and many songs were based on cycles containing only a verse. Verse-only cycles entered the rock toolkit from two sources. Professional songwriters within the Tin Pan Alley lineage inherited a 32-bar song form consisting of two eight-bar verses followed by an eight-bar bridge and finally a third eight-bar verse rounding out the form. This design is known as AABA form and was the preferred song form for Brill Building songwriters in the early '60s as well as the pre-1966 Beatles. Songwriters coming from folk and blues traditions frequently employed stanzaic poetic texts (that is, a series of stanzas with regular rhyme and metrical scheme), each stanza of which would be set to the same music, resulting in a string of verses. This formal layout, with no contrasting bridge, is known as strophic form (or sometimes simple verse form). Both AABA and strophic forms peaked in popularity in the early 1960s but quickly fell out of favor as verse-chorus forms became rock's default; by the '70s, AABA and strophic forms had declined to under 25% of Billboard's Annual Top 20 from over 60% in the '60s (see Summach 2012, Examples 2.44, 4.3, and 5.2). In their mid-'60s heyday, AABA and strophic forms seem to have been more popular with white artists than black artists; for instance, in 1963-66, only 25% of Top 40 hits by the most successful black songwriters were in AABA or strophic form (compared to 61% overall), while 73% followed a verse-chorus form (compared to 34% overall) (see Fitzgerald 2007, 122).

Notwithstanding their distinct historical lineages, AABA and strophic forms are not so different from a structural perspective. Both revolve around a single repeated section (the verse), usually occurring three or more times. The verse begins and ends the song, except for any intro or outro, and contains all of the song's main thematic and lyrical content. AABA and strophic forms are distinguished by the presence or absence, respectively, of a contrasting bridge section. In AABA form, the bridge section is nearly always a classic bridge appearing after the second verse, though a groove bridge occasionally appears instead (e.g., in the Shangri-Las' "Leader of the Pack").¹ Solos and instrumental breaks cannot fulfill the role of B within AABA form. It is true that many songs present the layout verse–verse–solo/break–verse; some theorists consider such songs to exhibit AABA form, thus restricting the strophic label to songs with no internal section at all. However, these solos and breaks are usually instrumental versions of the song's verse, not at all resembling an unstable and energy-building classic bridge; further,

¹ AABA songs with groove bridges, including "Leader of the Pack," often relate to what John Covach has called "dramatic AABA form," where some sort of narrative climax occurs in the bridge. See Covach 2010. similar solos and breaks are often seen in addition to the bridge in AABA form (e.g., as AABA–solo–BA), where they are clearly distinguished from the B section. (Compare Examples 5.1a and 5.2a, for instance; the latter's layout is essentially the former's with the bridges removed.) As described in the previous chapter, solos and breaks are best considered auxiliary passages inserted within a large-scale formal process rather than structurally significant sections. (Again, this does not mean they are unimportant; structural significance is not the same as musical importance.) I thus consider songs with only verses and solos or breaks to exhibit strophic form; AABA form requires a texted bridge.

Examples 5.1 and 5.2 give exemplars of '60s-era AABA and strophic forms. Rock's AABA forms from the '60s and beyond usually extend their AABA core layout. The layout of Example 5.1a, AABA-[A]BA, is probably the most common, with other common extensions shown in Example 5.1b, d, and e. ("[A]" indicates an instrumental section based on the A section's accompaniment.) Unextended AABA layouts do crop up occasionally, especially in songs with longer verses, as shown in Example 5.1c. Strophic forms can display various layouts, but they generally contain three or more verses, at least two of which occur before any solo or break. "Proud Mary," Example 5.2a, displays the most common layout, where an instrumental section splits the second and third verses; most blues songs follow that layout as well, as seen in Example 5.2c. Other strophic songs, especially those engaging with the folk tradition, contain nothing but verses (Example 5.2b). Instrumental passages in strophic form do not always derive from the verse's accompaniment; in the Temptations' "My Girl" (Example 5.2d), the instrumental break begins like the verse but veers off after four measures to send us into a new key a whole step higher. In Aretha Franklin's "Respect" (Example 5.2e), the saxophone solo-appearing after three verses—occurs over harmonically unstable chords, ending up on V, not unlike a classic bridge. After the ensuing verse, we get what is probably the song's most climactic and memorable passage: four bars of stop time where Franklin virtuosically spells the title of the song. All that follows is an outro based on the refrain's I⁷-IV⁷ shuttle. The short climax does not play the role of bridge, nor does it call into question the song's overall strophic form. Examples like "Respect" demonstrate that strophic form can be just as dynamic and varied as other forms, even while it is built from a single repeated section.

Verses in AABA and Strophic Forms

Sectional verses

All of the songs in Examples 5.1 and 5.2 contain sectional verses. Indeed, sectional verses are far more common than initiating verses in both AABA and strophic forms; with no other section in the cycle, the verse must provide the beginning,

Example 5.1 Typical layouts in 60s-era AABA form ("[A]" indicates an instrumental section based on the chord progression from A).



middle, and end of any harmonic or thematic process. Further, most verses in these forms include a tail refrain over their cadential phrase. More than just a repeated lyric, the refrain acts as the culmination of the verse's trajectory. With a tight-knit melodic layout, a complete functional circuit, and an explanatory tail refrain, the thematic, harmonic, and lyrical processes all act in sync to project coherence and



Example 5.2 Typical layouts in '60s-era strophic forms.

closure. In particular, both forms express a marked preference for **srdc** structures. **Srdc** is a particularly teleological layout, each component building momentum so that the cadence-containing **c** ties the whole section together. (Period structures, on the other hand, exhibit less forward drive and occur more often in verse–chorus forms.) AABA's preference for **srdc** layouts reflects Tin Pan Alley's preferred layout (see Callahan 2013); the Beatles were particularly fond of **srdc** verses in their early AABA forms, their use likely solidifying the association in the ensuing rock output (see Everett 2001, 132, and Nobile 2011). In addition to those identified in Examples 5.1 and 5.2, most of the **srdc** verses we encountered in chapter 2 come from AABA and strophic songs, including the Beatles' "Misery" and "A Hard Day's Night" (both AABA; Examples 2.7 and 2.14), Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs' "Sugar Shack" (strophic; Example 2.13), the Allman Brothers Band's "Melissa" (AABA; Example 2.15), and Van Morrison's "Moondance" (strophic; Example 2.12). Jay Summach's data shows that in the period from 1955–89, 46% of strophic and AABA songs within Billboard's Annual Top 20 contained **srdc** verses, while only 29% of all songs exhibit **srdc** in any section (2011, Example 11).

Another sectional verse schema that crops up a lot, especially in strophic form, is the 12-bar blues. In chapter 2 we saw how blues layouts resemble **srdc**, often through an omission of **d** resulting in the three-phrase layout **src**. The genre of blues—which is not the only place we hear blues progressions—involves a lot of instrumental solos, so we often get the 12-bar blues pattern repeated throughout the entire song, underlying the verses and one or more solo sections, as in BB King's "The Thrill is Gone" (Example 5.2c), ZZ Top's "Tush," and Led Zeppelin's "Rock and Roll" (based on a 24-bar blues); Bob Dylan's "Rainy Day Women #12 and 35" and KC and the Sunshine Band's "Boogie Shoes" retain this layout outside the blues genre. Blues progressions are somewhat less common in AABA forms, the latter uncharacteristic of the blues genre, but there remain plenty of examples, including James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)" (Example 2.20), Herman's Hermits' "I'm Into Something Good," and Bruce Springsteen's "Cover Me," all of which contain textbook classic bridges to go along with their 12-bar-blues verses.

Looser sectional verses

Sectional verses in AABA and strophic forms usually contain tail refrains, but not always in the context of a tight-knit form such as **srdc** or the 12-bar blues. In looser formats, tail refrains are not necessarily in sync with the harmonic trajectory, reducing the teleological drive without removing the verse's sense of completeness. In the Beach Boys' "In My Room," for instance, the refrain line "in my room" first arrives not at the cadence but halfway through the section as the harmony moves away from tonic to the unstable pre-dominant (Example 5.3). The line repeats over the cadence, but seemingly only because we need *some* melodic material there; thematically and lyrically, measures 5–6 seem like the conclusion of the phrase (I can even imagine a period with measures 1–6 forming the antecedent, leading to a similar six-measure consequent). Other refrains seem tacked onto the end of a verse rather than a natural consequence of the prior material. In the Beatles' "Come Together," the first verse contains two four-bar phrases, the first on tonic and the second giving us V–IV (Example 5.4, through first ending). In the next verse (and all subsequent verses), these two phrases reoccur but then we get a two-bar Example 5.3 The Beach Boys, "In My Room" (1963): looser sectional verse within AABA form.



refrain cadencing into the four-bar transition (second ending of Example 5.4). If this refrain were longer, it could easily function as a continuation chorus, but here it simply acts as a cadential appendage to the previous eight bars. A similar design underlies the verses to Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," though the refrain's cadential quality is somewhat weak.

AABA and strophic songs without a tail refrain in the verse forgo a lyrical punctuation mark signaling a cycle's completion. Often, these songs use a head

Example 5.4 The Beatles, "Come Together" (1969): sectional verse with two-bar refrain tacked on after two four-bar phrases.



refrain instead, placing the lyrical crux at the onset rather than the conclusion of each cycle. In a sectional verse, harmonic and thematic trajectories can provide plenty of closure on their own, making up for any lack of concluding lyrical hook. In Gerry and the Pacemakers' "How Do You Do It?" for instance, an src thematic layout creates a cadential arrival in the verses' ninth measure (Example 5.5); the refrain line, though, is the initial "How do you do what you do to me?," while the concluding line is different in each verse. In Bob Dylan's "Positively 4th Street," on the other hand, there are no refrains at all, nor are there authentic cadences, each verse exhibiting an antecedent + antecedent period structure with two half cadences (Example 5.6; the text's rhyme scheme defines the verse, and thus a cycle, as two eight-bar phrases, even though the phrases are melodically and harmonically the same). The closest thing to lyrical repetition is the pronoun beginning every verse—"you" in the first, second, and fourth and "I" in the third, fifth, and sixth—but the lack of closure allows Dylan to really twist the knife with his repeated contemptuous jabs, as if to say "No, I'm not done yet!" at the end of every verse. Other songs without refrains include Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit" (AABA) and Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing" (strophic).

Initiating verses

At the end of chapter 2, we briefly encountered the Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows," a defining track of '60s psychedelia consisting of C-Mixolydian verses and sound effects-laden instrumental breaks, all over a persistent tonic bass pedal. The

Example 5.5 Gerry and the Pacemakers, "How Do You Do It?" (1963): sectional verse with head refrain.



Example 5.6 Bob Dylan, "Positively 4th Street" (1965): sectional verse with no refrain or authentic cadence.



lack of harmonic motion focuses our attention on the present moment rather than our progress toward a future goal, paralleling the lyrical theme of letting an acid trip wash over you. Such is the effect of a strophic form made up of initiating verses: a perpetual groove rather than harmonic teleology. Sometimes this structure is meant to move the spotlight away from sung sections and toward the instrumental solos or jams, as in Santana's cover of Tito Puente's "Oye Como Va"; other times, it allows the melody to resemble a stream of consciousness instead of grouping into well-defined verses, as in Jefferson Airplane's "Volunteers." In the latter, two-bar units lead to the repeated refrain "We are volunteers of America," all over what amounts to a $I-\flat$ VII shuttle. Genres emerging from the late-'70s punk movement often eschew harmonic teleology or thematic development, with tracks such as Gary Numan's new-wave "Cars" and Joy Division's post-punk "Love Will Tear Us Apart" set in strophic form with initiating verses. Despite the lack of cadences, initiating verses in strophic form still tend to contain lyrical tail refrains, which is the case in both "Cars" and "Love Will Tear Us Apart."

Initiating verses are somewhat more rare in AABA form than in strophic form. When AABA songs do contain initiating verses, a classic bridge provides the song's only harmonic instability, the remainder perpetuating a tonic groove. Even with the bridge's instability, there generally remains no authentic cadence

in the entire song (assuming the standard PD-D bridge structure). In Blondie's "Heart of Glass," for instance, an initiating verse with two similar four-bar phrases leads to a particularly classic classic bridge (Example 5.7). A melodic descent to 1 provides some measure of closure in the verse, but the harmony just shuttles between tonic and the chromatic and diatonic submediant as the singer describes a previous failed relationship. As the bridge moves us away from tonic, the lyrics shift from past to present tense and introduce the pronoun "you," presumably referring to the same third-person "love" described in the verse. The bridge might be a flashback to the relationship itself, when harmony was still goal-oriented (but never achieved tonic closure); in the verse's non-teleological harmonic structure, the story is settled in the past. In the Rolling Stones' "Miss You," a i-iv shuttle underlies the initiating verses as the narrator idly waits for his lover to return. In the classic bridge (Example 4.15a)—which appears almost two minutes into the song, after three texted and two untexted verses-we sense some urgency as he shouts "Come home, come home!" on the song's only occurrence of the raised leading tone.



Example 5.7 Blondie, "Heart of Glass" (1978): initiating verse and classic bridge in AABA form.

Large-Scale Trajectories

AABA as a cohesive unit

An AABA layout is more than just a few repetitions of a verse with something else inserted in the middle. Instead, the four sections cohere as a musical unit, with an overall trajectory from the beginning of the first A to the end of the third. This trajectory is not unlike that found in classical rounded-binary forms, which comprise the formal functions of exposition, contrasting middle, and recapitulation (see Caplin 1998, chapter 6). In particular, the recapitulation (= final A) is not only a restatement of prior material but acts as the formal conclusion of the entire passage, rounding out the form and closing the three-part process. Tin Pan Alley-era AABA forms-rock's more direct forebears-exhibit similar cohesion, the final A providing formal closure for the AABA layout as a whole. In both classical rounded-binary and Tin-Pan-Alley AABA, the final A's closing function is predicated on the B section's (or contrasting middle's) motion away from tonic. The B section's instability reopens the harmonic process, giving the final A section a concluding function even without necessarily producing new material. Seen this way, AABA is akin to a large-scale srdc, as Walter Everett has pointed out (2009, 143), with B acting as a departure and the last A acting as a conclusion.

Rock's AABA inherited the cohesion of Tin Pan Alley's AABA, even as it extended the formal layout with solos and additional verses and bridges. That is, the initial verse-verse-bridge-verse portion acts as a unit, presenting the song's main formal process set apart from any extension that follows. As in Tin Pan Alley's AABA (and classical rounded binary), rock's B sections nearly always depart from tonic, thus reinvigorating the return to A; in other words, rock's AABA songs for the most part contain classic bridges as opposed to groove bridges. The harmonic layout of a typical rock AABA song thus resembles Example 5.8a: closed functional circuits in the first two As are reopened as the bridge moves to deeper-level pre-dominant and dominant areas; a large-scale interruption divides the harmonic structure into two branches, the second of which is contained within the final A. Example 5.8b shows this structure in the Beatles' "From Me to You" (refer also to Examples 2.9, which transcribes the verse, and 5.1a, which diagrams the formal layout). These graphs show that even when the third A is identical to the first two, its functional circuit operates on a deeper level, answering the bridge's half cadence with a conclusive authentic cadence.

Trajectories in strophic form

Without an intervening bridge, verses in strophic form do not group into a broader harmonic trajectory as they do in AABA form. That is not to say that these songs **Example 5.8** Large-scale structure in AABA form showing an interrupted structure with the first branch in AAB and the second in the final A.



(a) Normative large-scale harmonic structure in AABA form

contain no large-scale process, however; such processes, if they exist, often arise from other domains such as text or texture. Folky strophic forms often tell a single story throughout the song, producing a coherent narrative trajectory. Jimi Hendrix's "Hey Joe," for instance, tells the story of a man who murders his adulterous lover across four initiating verses (Example 5.9). Each verse's text is set in the form of a conversation, with the narrator trading lines with Joe, under which a four-bar chord loop persists for the whole song. (The loop has been cited as a rare occurrence of a "quadruple plagal" progression, beginning on \flat VI and proceeding through four descending fourths to the tonic.) In the absence of cadences and a circular chord progression, the text is the song's main element providing a sense of forward motion, reinforced by a gradual intensification in texture and vocal delivery. The fourth verse acts as a sort of coda, with the characters' lines reversed (the narrator here responding to Joe) and neither line repeated. Strophic songs do not need a story in their lyrics to exhibit a narrative process; a common device is for the **Example 5.9** The Jimi Hendrix Experience, "Hey Joe" (1966): strophic form with a narrative trajectory in the lyrics.

	"Quadruple plagal" loop repeats throughout
	: VI III VII IV I :
Verse 1	Hey Joe, where you goin' with that gun in your hand? (2x) I'm goin' down to shoot my old lady; you know I caught her messin' 'round with another man. (2x)
Verse 2	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} {\rm Hey \ Joe, \ I \ heard \ you \ shot \ your \ woman \ down. \ (2x)} \\ {\rm Yes \ I \ did, \ I \ shot \ her; \ you \ know \ I \ caught \ her \ messin' \ 'round \ town. \ (2x)} \end{array} \right.$
	[solo]
Verse 3	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Hey Joe, where you gonna run to now? (2x)} \\ \text{I'm goin' way down south, way down to Mexico way. (2x)} \end{array} \right.$
Verse 4 (short)	Ain't no hangman gonna put a rope around me. Hey Joe, you better run on down!

Example 5.10 Bob Dylan, "The Times They Are A-Changin" (1964): strophic form with a summarizing final verse, giving the text a narrative cohesion even with musically identical verses.

Verse 1	Come gather 'round people wherever you roam And admit that the waters around you have grown And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone If your time to you is worth savin' Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone For the times they are a-changin'.
Verse 2	Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pen
Verse 3	Come senators, congressmen, please heed the call
Verse 4	Come mothers and fathers throughout the land
Verse 5	The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast The slow one now will later be fast As the present now will later be past The order is rapidly fadin' And the first one now will later be last For the times they are a-changin'.

final verse to provide a summation of the theme present in prior verses. In Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin," the first verse calls everyone together ("Come gather 'round, people"); the second, third, and fourth verses address specific groups of people (journalists, politicians, and the older generation); and the final verse summarizes the message: get hip to the new times, or get out of the way (Example 5.10).

Along the same lines as a summarizing final verse, some strophic songs append a climactic outro acting as the culmination of a large-scale process. We already saw one such example, namely Aretha Franklin's "Respect," where the four-bar "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" passage provides the song's energetic peak after its fourth and final verse. In Neil Young's "Heart of Gold," the narrator sings of his desire to become a better person in the song's two verses, the first of which is transcribed in the top half of Example 5.11. Tonally, the verses mostly settle on the key of G major, but E minor lurks as a competing key, especially considering the repeated Em7–D–Em progression appearing in the introduction and transition between the verses. After the second verse, this neighboring progression gives rise to a new, climactic final section, labeled "outro/climax" in Example 5.11. The section begins as a modified refrain, with vocal cameos from James Taylor and Linda Ronstadt,



Example 5.11 Neil Young, "Heart of Gold" (1972): strophic form culminating in a climactic, texted outro.

who join Young in three-part harmony. The focus on E minor lasts seven measures, after which the chord loop breaks, opening up to a dramatic G-major chord, which Ronstadt reinforces with a high riff on the title lyric. This final section is, structurally speaking, an outro, but at the same time it represents the song's textural high point and, in resolving the E-minor material to a G-major cadence, reconciles the song's harmonic dilemma. A similar climactic outro occurs in David Bowie's "Heroes," a strophic song whose three verses exhibit a gradual textural intensification, mostly in the vocal parts (Example 5.12). Here, the climactic outro does not offer any new harmonic information, but rather completes the narrator's triumph over adversity as the backup vocals-previously heard only as echoes-now join his melody in chanting their mantra-like anthem. Such climactic outros relate to what Brad Osborn calls "terminally climactic form," describing songs that build to a thematic high point at the end rather than focusing on a repeated cycle (Osborn 2013). Osborn reserves the term for songs whose final section contains entirely new material, though, so neither "Heroes" nor "Heart of Gold" quite qualifies; these songs are perhaps more akin to Mark Spicer's "cumulative form," but that term properly applies only to a specific type of process where the climactic section layers several previously heard themes on top of one another (Spicer 2004). Regardless of the particularities of terminology, both concepts aim to describe a formal process involving a song-spanning buildup to a climactic concluding section; in "Heroes" and "Heart of Gold," the presence of such a section contributes to the sense of large-scale trajectory across their strophic forms.

Example 5.12 David Bowie, "Heroes" (1977): strophic form with a gradual textural intensification culminating in a climactic outro.



Issues in AABA Form

AABA as historical topic

By the 1980s, AABA form had fallen so far out of the mainstream that its use became expressively marked, representing a backward look to pre-psychedelic rock styles. In this way, the form itself can be seen as a musical *topic*, a device used within a particular repertoire to signify some non-musical element (here, a specific time period). In Billy Joel's 1980 hit "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me," for instance, the form accompanies lyrics bemoaning rock culture's need to constantly reinvent its image, arguing that rock's musical lineage is not so fragmented ("Everybody's talking 'bout the new sound—funny, but it's still rock and roll to me"). In Queen's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," also from 1980, it is not the lyrics but rather the playing and singing styles that hark back to the early days of rock, as singer Freddie Mercury does his best Elvis impersonation over the refrains ending the song's blues-shuffle sectional verses. Both songs incidentally follow an overall AABA–solo–A layout, but the solo occurs over the bridge's chord progression, rather than the verse's as would be typical in '60s-era AABA forms.

A combination of AABA form with standard '50s- and '60s-era chord progressions gives the Police's 1983 "Every Breath You Take" a solid dose of nostalgia (see Example 5.13). A "doo-wop" I-vi-IV-V progression underlies the verses, followed by a IV-I-V/V-V progression in the classic bridge (embellished with bIII), the latter employing progression B from Example 4.13. In the initial AABA portion, the lyrics are aggressive and threatening, the sinister refrain line "I'll be watching you" set over a deceptive move to vi in the first and third verses. However, after the AABA layout completes, the song takes an unexpected turn. The distortion pedals click on, the synthesizers start playing, and Sting's vocal line shoots up to his high register as we hear the passage labeled "Bridge 2" in Example 5.13. The lyrics' threatening tone here gives way to a raw, personal plea, as the narrator reveals his inner torment. Gone is any trace of the '60s-rock veneer that saturated the earlier sections; the band, like the song's protagonist, has pulled off its mask, revealing its true '80s new wave colors. After ten measures, the section's mood evaporates as quickly as it arrived, and the song finishes in standard '60s style: with an instrumental break over the verse's chords followed by a reprise of the bridge and final verse.

The "Bridge 2" section is undoubtedly an interpolation into an otherwise tight-knit AABA form. The question is how the interpolation fits within the overall formal process. John Covach (2005, 75) analyzes the song as a "compound ABA" form, where each of his As corresponds to a complete AABA layout (the second of which is partially instrumental). In other words, Covach views the Bridge 2 section as relatively separate from the remainder of the song, functioning as a contrasting middle between two similar self-contained passages (AABA | B² | [AA]BA). Trevor

Example 5.13 The Police, "Every Breath You Take" (1983): AABA form with second bridge.



de Clercq (2012, 85–89), on the other hand, groups Bridge 2 with the following instrumental break, together forming a large-scale "bridge" (AABA | B^2 [AA] | BA). From the perspective of formal process, it is notable that both authors consider there to be a deep-level formal separation between the first AABA unit and the second bridge. Since AABA form in general takes on the layout of AABA + extension, that would place the second bridge as part of the extension, occurring after the



Example 5.14 Graph of "Every Breath You Take" interpreting the second bridge as a harmonic interpolation delaying the final tonic within the initial AABA portion.

core process is complete. A potential complication to that analysis comes from the harmony: specifically, the third verse that concludes the first AABA portion does not achieve tonic closure, ending instead with a deceptive V–vi progression. The vi chord then slides down to \flat VI for the second bridge, and it is not until the instrumental break that we reclaim the tonic. Perhaps, then, the second bridge groups with the *prior* AABA portion as a cadential expansion inserted between the third A's dominant and tonic, both delaying harmonic closure and completing the narrative with a look inside the protagonist's hidden emotions (AABAB² | [AA]BA). Seen this way, the song's layout derives from AABA–[AA]BA where the third A is expanded via a vi– \flat VI–I progression comprising the deceptive cadence and second bridge (Example 5.14).

Chorus-like B sections

The Beatles' "Can't Buy Me Love" presents an uncommon ambiguity between a classic bridge and a chorus. The section shown in Example 5.15 exhibits the harmonic profile of a classic bridge but also exhibits some more chorus-like content, especially its inclusion of the title lyric and its placement (varied) at both the beginning and end of the song (see de Clercq 2012, 191–94). In my view, a consideration of the song's full context makes a classic bridge analysis more convincing (e.g., removing the opening and closing sections results in the common AABA–[A]BA layout, the Beatles' default in 1964). Nevertheless, the song reveals a potential analytical problem: ambiguity between bridge and chorus function **Example 5.15** The Beatles, "Can't Buy Me Love" (1964): classic bridge with some chorus quality mixed in.



results in two wildly divergent potential formal interpretations of the same song. Classic bridges and choruses are supposed to be so internally different that listeners could never confuse one for the other. When the distinction is fuzzy, the section in question could be heard as either a subordinate, disconnected area meant to provide contrast with a central verse (i.e., as a bridge) or as a climactic, focal section completing a formal trajectory begun with the subordinate verse (i.e., as a chorus). In other words, the ambiguity is not only a matter of that particular section's function but also affects our perception of the entire song's formal process.

If "Can't Buy Me Love" mixes some chorus quality into an otherwise typical classic bridge, Simon and Garfunkel's "The Boxer" approaches a more equal mixture of the two formal functions. The song is built upon five poetic stanzas underlying the song's five verses; a solo over the verse's progression gives the song six A sections in total (Example 5.16). After the second, fourth, and sixth A sections, we hear the B section transcribed in Example 5.17. The B section in many ways resembles a classic bridge: it begins off tonic, has no lyrics, and participates in a standard AABA–[A]BA layout through the fourth verse, as shown in Example 5.16. However, two aspects of these first B sections make them stand out more than a typical bridge section: the famous gunshot effects on beat 3 of odd-numbered measures—the only

Example 5.16 Simon and Garfunkel, "The Boxer" (1969): a standard AABA–[A]BA layout leads to a climactic "summation" statement of A and B.





Example 5.17 B section of "The Boxer" combining elements of bridge and chorus function.

percussion in the entire song-give the section a relative textural intensity more typical of choruses, and the strong authentic cadence at the end of the section-the strongest cadence in the entire song-suggests a more central role for this section. In fact, of the few sources I have come across that identify a formal role for this section, none label it a bridge: Anna Stephan-Robinson (2009, 352) and Walter Everett (2009, 25) call it a chorus, and James Benninghof (2007, 46-47) calls it a refrain. The likely reason for deciding against a bridge label is of course the end of the track, labeled "summation" in Example 5.16. After the AABA-[A]BA portion, a final verse arrives, set off from the previous by a brief transition, followed by a long, looped version of B wherein instrumental and vocal parts accumulate into a textural climax. The final verse's text summarizes the song protagonist's struggle: The first four verses present a first-person narrative of moving to New York City following some vague "promises" but, once there, finding no work or companionship and eventually giving up and going back home. The last verse shifts to the third person, comparing the protagonist to a boxer who quits the sport but can never shed the scars of a lifetime of fighting. If the first two B sections, with their gunshot effects, represented the protagonist's battles with urban poverty, then the final loop might represent the permanence of those battles, seared into the protagonist's psyche for the remainder of his life. With this narrative function, it is not such a stretch to hear the wordless B section not as a bridge but instead as the song's chorus, the central, focal section providing a natural conclusion after the verse.²

$B \Rightarrow A$ fusion

In some AABA songs, the functions of bridge and final verse appear within a single section. That is, after the first two verses, we get a section that begins like a classic bridge but ends with the verse's refrain, providing both unstable

² A similar textless blend of bridge and chorus functions occurs in Lou Reed's "Take a Walk on the Wild Side" (the "doot-da-doot" sections at 1:15 and 3:09); here, the entire song exhibits a I–IV chord shuttle, so the ambiguity is between a groove bridge and telos chorus.

contrast and final closure. These sections exhibit what I will call " $B \Rightarrow A$ fusion," where two distinct formal functions fuse together into a single section. (Compare verse⇒prechorus fusion, discussed in chapter 8; see also Caplin 1998, 45–47, for more on form-functional fusion.) Consider the Bobby Fuller Four's "I Fought the Law," shown in Example 5.18. The first two verses contain a two-bar idea followed by a four-bar refrain (with a 3=1 metrical deletion eliding into the four-bar transition). The ensuing section begins as a classic bridge (following Example 4.13's progression A), but in its seventh measure (measure 17), right when we expect the retransitional V chord, the section dissolves into the verse's refrain. The first two bars of the refrain (measures 17-18) complete the eight-bar hypermeasure from the beginning of the section as well as a four-line rhyme scheme in the text ("I guess my race is run" rhymes with "I fought the law and the law won"); in other words, they clearly group with the previous bridge-like passage, the ensuing measures (measures 19-21) acting as a hypermetrical extension providing the cadential progression. In Hall and Oates's "You Make My Dreams," B⇒A fusion comes about via a short bridge-like passage followed by a modified statement of the verse's refrain (Example 5.19). The modification makes the refrain statement begin with the same chord progression as the abbreviated bridge; until the ninth measure of the example, we likely assume that we are in the second half of a two-part







Example 5.19 Daryl Hall and John Oates, "You Make My Dreams" (1981): B⇒A fusion.

bridge where each part gives us ii–IV–V. In other words, the realization that we have transitioned from bridge function to verse function occurs after the refrain passage begins. In neither song does the B⇒A section lead to another verse, itself serving as the completion of an AABA unit; in "I Fought the Law," it leads to a guitar solo followed by two more verses and another B⇒A section for an overall AAB⇒A–solo–AAB⇒A layout, whereas in "You Make My Dreams" it simply leads to an outro based on the refrain. These layouts make clear that the B⇒A section fulfills the roles of both bridge and recapitulatory A.³

In Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," $B \Rightarrow A$ fusion causes the srdc verse's dc portion to break off and function as an independent entity. A separation between sr and dc is a common process underlying continuous verse-chorus form, where sr becomes the verse and dc the chorus (see chapter 7). Here, however, dc does not function as a standalone section, but rather slots in as the second half of many sections with different first halves. Example 5.20 diagrams

Example 5.20 Tears for Fears, "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" (1985): formal layout showing $B \Rightarrow A$ fusion and a persistent return to the verses' **dc** portion.



³ Jay Summach uses the term "rounded bridge" for what I call B⇒A fusion (2012, 77–79). I do not retain his term because it implies that the section in question is fundamentally a bridge, rather than a section fulfilling two formal functions equally. Summach finds an example of B⇒A fusion as early as 1958 in Ricky Nelson's "Stood Up": at 0:26, a bridge begins with a IV–I oscillation before ending with the refrain line "Stood up, broken hearted again."

Example 5.21 Tears for Fears, "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" (1985): transcription of initial AAB \Rightarrow A layout with **srdc** phrases indicated.



the song's formal layout, and Example 5.21 gives a transcription of the verses and the $B \Rightarrow A$ section. As the former shows, every section except the instrumental break ends with the verse's **dc** portion, the **c** phrase of which contains the refrain line "Everybody wants to rule the world." The **sr** portion, on the other hand, appears with its melody only twice, in the song's two initial verses. Following these

verses, the $B \Rightarrow A$ section begins as a classic bridge, prolonging IV, but after six measures dissolves into the verse's **dc** portion. Up to this point, we have a typical fusion-containing AAB \Rightarrow A unit, similar to what we saw in "I Fought the Law." After that unit, an extension gives us an instrumental break, another verse with a solo over its first half, and then another fusion-like section with an instrumental break flowing into the **dc** passage. The overall layout, then, can be seen to derive from the common AABA–[A]BA, as indicated in Example 5.20.

Though the dc passage appears six times throughout the song, only twice does it achieve a cadence to tonic. Tonic function in this song is carried by the groove labeled " α " in Example 5.21, with the bass pedaling on $\hat{1}$ under dyads suggesting a V-IV oscillation; with the exception of the intro's first few seconds, a pure I triad does not appear at all in the song. As the reduction in Example 5.22 shows, the verse outlines an overall I-ii⁷-V-I functional circuit (with "I" referring to the tonic groove) supporting a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ melodic descent. The final tonic arrival elides into the next section via a 3=1 hypermetrical reinterpretation; the first time through, shown in the example, that section is the transition to the second verse. The second time through, however, that section is the $B \Rightarrow A$ section, which begins on IV (the second ending in Example 5.21). Here, the melody resolves to 1 but the harmony skips the I chord, resulting in the progression V-IV. Looking back at Example 5.20, we see that a similar V–IV progression occurs after the $B \Rightarrow A$ section and again after the third, partially instrumental A section. Only in the approach to the song's outro do we get another tonic resolution. The song's persistent return to the dc passage might be seen as a series of attempts to achieve the tonic closure that was missing from the second verse; only once closure is achieved can the song finally end.

Example 5.22 Reduction of the first verse of "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" showing a I–ii⁷–V–I functional circuit, a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ melodic descent, and a hypermetrical elision on the cadential arrival.



6

Sectional Verse-Chorus

Verse-Chorus Forms

Since the mid-1960s, most rock songs have included a chorus.¹ Because the presence of a chorus implies the presence of a verse (recall chapter 3), many theorists describe these songs as being in verse-chorus form. The use of "form" here is instructive. Verse-chorus songs can arrange their component sections in many different ways: some begin with the chorus, some present two verses before getting to the chorus, some have prechoruses, and so on. So "verse-chorus form" does not refer to a specific layout. Rather, it implies that the interplay between verse and chorus is the song's central guiding principle, regardless of the literal succession of song sections. But is this general principle enough to define a form? Perhaps it would be if verses and choruses always exhibited the same relationship. Indeed, the prevalence of the term "verse-chorus form" has led to the assumption that the verse-chorus relationship is broadly consistent. From the perspective of formal process, however, this does not prove to be the case. Just as individual verses and choruses can take on several different shapes, as we saw in chapters 2 and 3, the combination of the two sections can come about in several different ways. I divide the various verse-chorus forms into three basic categories: sectional verse-chorus, continuous verse-chorus, and verse-prechorus-chorus. Each arises out of a particular formal process underlying its verse-chorus cycles.

The basic distinction between separation and cohesion differentiates sectional and continuous verse-chorus forms. In the former, verse and chorus are independent, closed entities, giving the sense of restarting at the beginning of each section. In the latter, on the other hand, the two sections are co-dependent, such that the beginning of the verse through the end of the chorus represents a single broad trajectory. Including a prechorus between verse and chorus entirely alters the song's trajectory, affecting the contents and functions of the surrounding sections. Verse-prechorus-chorus is thus a fundamentally different form from the others. The recognition of the prechorus's central role in a song's formal process is a hallmark of my theory of form, as many theorists toss it off as an insignificant add-on. The differences among the three verse-chorus forms extend broadly, affecting melody, lyrics, texture, and expressive potential. But, of

¹ According to Jay Summach's statistics, in the period from 1965 to 1989, 71% of Billboard's Annual Top 20 songs contained a chorus (Summach 2012, 230). Similarly Trevor de Clercq and David Temperley find choruses in 59% and 68%, respectively, of the 200 songs in their corpus (de Clercq 2017b, 151).

course, these differences trace back to harmonic design. Each form's verse-chorus cycles interact in a particular way with the functional circuit, as summarized in Example 6.1. In sectional verse-chorus, verse and chorus are harmonically independent, each normally containing a full circuit. In continuous verse-chorus, the two are harmonically unified, the verse providing an initial tonic and the chorus continuing the circuit from the pre-dominant through the cadence. And in verse-prechorus-chorus, verse and chorus provide the opening and closing tonics of a functional circuit, with all harmonic instability occurring in the prechorus.

Example 6.1 Basic harmonic layouts of the three verse-chorus forms.

Sectional verse-chorus



Continuous verse-chorus



Verse-Prechorus-Chorus



There are other possible harmonic layouts for each form, as shown in the example, but the broad harmonic trajectory remains consistent.

Sectional Verse-Chorus Form

In sectional verse-chorus form, verse and chorus are separate and autonomous. Verse-chorus cycles feel like an alternation of two distinct ideas rather than the single, two-part idea of continuous verse-chorus form. The formal opposition is ultimately reconciled into a single broad expressive statement: a Hegelian synthesis of the two antithetical formal roles. Autonomy and separation generally play out in many domains at once—harmony, text, length, hypermeter, and the like—such that each section is relatively complete on its own and the boundary between sections is clearly delineated. Importantly, separation does not imply contrast, as some verses and choruses contain very similar melodies and chord progressions. Even in these cases, there is usually no question as to which is the verse and which is the chorus.

Text is the most consistent aspect of sectional verse-chorus form. Each section begins a new thought, which it carries through to its end. The lyrics usually shift from specific details in the verse to general statements in the chorus. Shifting from specifics to generality is common in any verse-chorus cycle, but sectional verse-chorus form often shifts the discursive level as well. Discursive shifts can arise by changing from *narrative time* (telling a story; time is passing) to *lyric time* (expressing sentiments; time is arrested), varying the type of address (e.g., going from "I" pronouns to "we" or "you"), and/or altering what Allan Moore calls the song's *proxemic zone* (the degree of perceived distance between the singer-persona and the listener).² Richard Middleton's distinction between words-as-speech and words-as-song often applies as well (1990, 231–32). In sum, the verse relays information from singer to listener, and the chorus joins the two together.

There are three common combinations of verse and chorus types generally seen in sectional verse-chorus form: sectional verse + sectional chorus, initiating verse + sectional chorus, and initiating verse + telos chorus. While all three follow the basic principle of separate and autonomous sections, they do so through different means. I will discuss each combination individually, focusing on the dialectical relationship at hand in the verse-chorus cycles. In sectional verse-chorus form, the verse-chorus cycle generally comprises a song's core material. The arrangement of this core material into a complete song—through the addition of intros, outros, and/or internal sections such as bridges and solos—is vital to a song's reception and commercial success but does not greatly affect its formal process. Considering bridge sections in particular to be formally subordinate to verses and choruses runs counter to most existing theories of form. In sectional verse-chorus form, though,

² On narrative versus lyric time, see Monelle 2000, 115–21, and Klein 2004, 37–44. Matt BaileyShea (2014) discusses types of address in rock lyrics. Moore's concept of proxemic zones is explored in chapter 7 of *Song Means* (2012).

bridge sections act more as breaks from the main action than a venture down a new formal/harmonic path. Relatively few sectional verse-chorus songs contain classic bridges like those in AABA forms; internal sections, when they occur, are more often solos or interludes. This chapter's final section will discuss the roles of bridges and other auxiliary sections in sectional verse-chorus form. Despite their subordinate formal status, these sections are often expressively significant.

Sectional Verse + Sectional Chorus

The combination of a sectional verse and sectional chorus provides the most straightforward layout for sectional verse-chorus form. Both sections outline a complete harmonic trajectory, beginning on tonic and ending with a cadence (though not always an authentic one). With strong beginnings and endings framing a dynamic process, each section presents a closed and complete idea in its harmony, melody, and lyrics. There remains a coherence to their combination, however; their juxtaposition in the context of a repeated verse-chorus cycle invites us to consider them as parts of a connected whole. Specifically, the verse is heard through the lens of the chorus, and the chorus is understood in reference to the verse. With the previously discussed lyrical layout—a summarizing chorus with details in the verse—the verse's stories present as evidence of the chorus's message, while the chorus's message is clarified by the verse's details. In other words, a verse-chorus cycle retains the sense of formal trajectory from verse to chorus, even while each section is musically self-contained: a synthesis through opposition.

Contents of verse and chorus

When verse and chorus are both sectional, they are often similar in construction. John Covach divides all verse-chorus forms into "simple verse-chorus," with the same chord progression in both sections, and "contrasting verse-chorus," with different chord progressions in verse and chorus (2005, 2006, 2018). According to Jay Summach's statistical analysis, one quarter of verse-chorus songs in his sample follow Covach's simple verse-chorus form (Summach 2012, 108–9).³ When the two sections' melodies are also similar—what Summach calls "super-simple"—only lyrics and texture differentiate them. Example 6.2 shows the verse and chorus from the Allman Brothers Band's "Ramblin' Man," with the two sections' vocal lines aligned vertically to show their similarity. The harmony, basic melodic structure, and instrumental texture are essentially identical in the two sections, the

³ Neither Summach nor Covach, of course, differentiates based on verse or chorus type, nor even based on the presence or absence of a prechorus, so this statistic should not be considered meaningful in specific reference to sectional verse-chorus form. As we will see in chapter 8, it is rather common for songs with a prechorus to have the same chord progression in their verse and chorus; the effect, though, is quite different from the equivalent situation in sectional verse-chorus form.

Example 6.2 The Allman Brothers Band, "Ramblin' Man" (1973): sectional verse-chorus form in which the verse and chorus have similar melodies and nearly identical chord progressions.



only exception being an embellishing *b*VII chord inserted in the chorus's second measure. Each section gives us a 16-measure **srdc** structure following harmonic model 2 (as described in chapter 2): **s** and **r** prolong tonic (with motion to a back-related V in **r**), IV enters as pre-dominant in **d** (arpeggiated in the bass to make a IV–I–vi–IV progression), and a V–I cadence underlies **c** (the former chord embellished with the cadential I [see chapter 1]). Example 6.3 shows this structure in a voice-leading graph, which could apply to either section.

The vocal texture differentiates the sections somewhat, the chorus employing three-part harmony, but mostly the sections' roles are identified through the lyrics. The chorus, framed with statements of the song's title, provides a first-person character portrait of a man who lives on the road, with a warning to anyone he might meet that he should not be expected to stick around. The two verses, on



Example 6.3 Graph of "Ramblin' Man" that could apply to either verse or chorus.

the other hand, provide stories demonstrating the narrator's ramblin'-man-ness: the first describes how he was literally "born a ramblin' man," coming into the world on a moving bus, and the second (not given in the transcription) shifts to the present tense, showing that even at this very moment he is on the move from Nashville to New Orleans. The narrative/lyric distinction is in full force, with temporal stories in the verses and general statements in the chorus. But while each section is self-contained on many levels, neither makes much sense without the other. Without the unifying theme given in the chorus, the verses' stories would seem unrelated and without a clear point. At the same time, the narrator's claims in the chorus would be unsubstantiated without the verses' anecdotes. The chorus is the hypothesis; the verses are the supporting data. Together, they provide the narrator with a good excuse for leaving women behind—or so he hopes.⁴

Most of the time, verse and chorus do not contain the same melodic or harmonic material. Queen's "Fat Bottomed Girls" (Example 6.4) begins with an overture chorus, an **srdc** paean to the titular characters sung a cappella by what sounds like a hundred-person choir (achieved by repeatedly overdubbing vocal parts). Guitar and drums then enter with an instrumental transition, followed by two verses presenting anecdotal evidence of the narrator's lifelong devotion to fat bottomed girls. After the second verse, singer Freddie Mercury yells "*Come on!*" inviting us all to join in as we return to the chorus. The verses exhibit period structures with straightforward harmonic design, using only I, IV, and V with no prolongational chords except for the cadential I in the penultimate measure. Despite their different thematic layouts, verse and chorus are not entirely contrasting, as their second halves exhibit the same chord progression, and their cadences are similar. (The chorus's **srdc** structure is not entirely airtight, with **d** beginning not

⁴ Other examples of nearly identical sectional verses and choruses: Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It," in which the chorus's lines all begin on downbeats while the verses' begin on beat 2, and Jim Croce's "Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown," in which the chorus changes the first note to 1 rather than 3. Both, like "Ramblin' Man," differentiate the formal functions mainly through the meaning of the lyrics.

Example 6.4 Queen, "Fat Bottomed Girls" (1978): sectional verse-chorus form where verse and chorus contrast but nevertheless retain some structural similarities.



as a departure but as a "dissolving" third statement of s and r [see BaileyShea 2004, 11-12]; coupled with motion to V at the end of r, this gives the section some measure of period quality.) That said, the presence of the title lyric and refrain-like summarizing line ("Fat bottomed girls, you make the rockin' world go 'round") give the chorus's cadence significantly more emphasis than the verse's. The second and third choruses even repeat their c phrases after the cadence, as if to make absolutely sure that the song's message is heard.

Cadence dialectic

By definition, when both verse and chorus are sectional, each ends with a cadence. In principle there is no necessary relationship between the two cadences, but in practice the verse's cadence is usually weaker than the chorus's. The latter can thus be understood to provide closure not only for the chorus but also for the entire verse–chorus cycle. The weak–strong cadential relationship can arise even when both sections end with an authentic cadence, for instance, by giving the chorus's cadence a more conclusive rhythmic profile (ending on a stronger beat than the verse's), stronger melodic motion (stepwise to 1̂), and/or the inclusion of the title lyric as in both "Fat Bottomed Girls" and "Ramblin' Man." A sectional verse that

ends instead on a half cadence, on the other hand, sets up a highly anticipated authentic cadence at the end of the chorus. Ending with a half cadence can serve as an early signal that a chorus is coming, since one might otherwise expect a strophic or AABA form upon hearing a sectional verse. We saw one such example in chapter 2—the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" (Example 2.6)—where the verse's period layout places half cadences at the end of both phrases. The chorus's **srdc** structure ultimately leads to a strong authentic cadence to tonic ("Love is all you need").

Example 6.5 Bob Dylan, "Mr. Tambourine Man" (1965): the chorus exhibits a tight-knit 16-bar period structure, while the verses exhibit a looser structure resulting from phrase-rhythmic expansions of the chorus's antecedent.



* Though their lowest note on Dylan's guitar is a D, I analyze these chords as rootposition rather than first-inversion IV chords. Given Dylan's drop-D tuning (with a third-fret capo), it would have been quite a finger stretch to play the B^b bass note, so he instead opted for the easier D; nevertheless, I believe the "true" bass note is B^b, which might have been heard had Dylan played with a bassist.

An interesting combination of inconclusive cadences and phrase-rhythmic disruptions characterizes the verses of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" (Example 6.5). The verses' weak cadences and loose metrical structure contrast with the tight-knit and tonic-confirming chorus. Like "Fat Bottomed Girls," this song opens with an overture chorus, giving us a rather straightforward period, albeit with a delayed initial arrival of tonic. Each phrase lasts eight measures, with the consequent's final I chord extended by between one and three measures throughout the song. The verses present two phrases based on the chorus's antecedent phrase. A verse-chorus cycle therefore takes the form of three antecedents answered by a consequent. But the verses' antecedent phrases have an additional destabilizing feature: their third and fourth measures, which contain the progression I-IV, are repeated, broken-record style, a varying number of times such that each successive verse is longer than the previous one. In the first verse, the expansion is minimal: the two-measure passage is repeated just once in each phrase such that instead of 8 + 8 measures we get 10 + 10. In the second verse, the first phrase cycles through the repeated unit four times to encompass 14 measures, while its second phrase goes back to the first verse's 10-measure length. And so on: verse 3's phrases are 12 + 14measures, the harmonica solo gives us 16 + 12 (plus an additional three-measure extension of the final tonic), and finally verse 4 settles on a symmetrical 16 + 16, fully doubling its basic (non-expanded) length. One can imagine these expansions representing the narrator's journey deeper and deeper into reverie, led by the titular character's song. It should be noted that the expansions are not simply a result of Dylan's characteristically free relationship to meter and rhythm, as they are written into the lyrics and are thus fundamental to the song's composition.⁵

The general expectation of sectional verse-chorus form is that the chorus will close on tonic. When a sectional chorus ends instead with a half cadence, the sense is that the trajectory toward closure has been frustrated. Songwriters often use half-cadential choruses for expressive effect, as we previously saw in "American Pie" (Example 3.2). The Eagles' "Hotel California" contains no authentic cadences at all, beautifully reflecting the protagonist's gradual realization that the titular hotel is ultimately inescapable. (Members of the band have frequently told interviewers that the Hotel California is a metaphor for mid-'70s Los Angeles and its hedonistic allure, though Glenn Frey has claimed that the song is "just a movie; it doesn't have to make sense.")⁶ Both verse and chorus end on V, with the vocal line stubbornly refusing to descend from 5. As shown in Example 6.6's reduction, the melody's 5 persists for most of the verse, dropping to 4 twice—as the seventh of V⁷ and again over the pre-dominant iv chord—but both times stubbornly rising back up to 5 in defiance of its downward pull. The chorus begins with a feint toward D major, giving

⁵ The Byrds' famous cover of "Mr. Tambourine Man" omits all verses except the second, producing the irregular layout of intro-chorus-verse-chorus-outro. On Dylan's idiosyncratic rhythmic and metrical style, see Murphy 2015 and Rings 2013.

⁶ BBC interview from 2008, accessible in video on the BBC website at http://www.bbc.com/news/ entertainment-arts-35347075.



Example 6.6 Eagles, "Hotel California" (1976): the melody does not descend from $\hat{5}$ and the harmony never cadences to tonic.

hope that the song might move away from its minor tonic to this more uplifting key. Though the melodic line manages to descend $F\sharp-E-D$, which would be 3-2-1 in D major, hopes are dashed as the first phrase sinks back to the somber B-minor tonic. (The V⁷-i progression in B minor does not represent a satisfactory cadence in the tonic key, as it is too early, the melody is on 3 rather than 1, and it serves more as a negation of D major than a confirmation of B minor.) The second attempt (measures 21–24) is similarly fruitless, as the melody remains stuck on that pesky 5 as we end up in another half cadence. The inconclusive ending leads us to cycle back through another verse and chorus, hoping that we will eventually find our way to an authentic cadence—that is, until the song's final line assures us that "you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!" After this horrifying revelation, the song devolves into a two-plus-minute double guitar solo circling through the verse's progression, never once approaching authentic cadential closure.

Initiating Verse + Sectional Chorus

The easiest way to give the chorus a stronger cadence than the verse is for the verse not to have a cadence at all—in other words, by beginning with an initiating verse. The combination of initiating verse and sectional chorus is not altogether different from the combination of sectional verse and sectional chorus; however,
the lack of functional circuit in the verse puts all of the deep-level harmonic motion in the chorus, making that section even more of a focal point. Though the text often presents the same specific/general dialectic we saw earlier, when the verse is initiating there is sometimes more of a sense of setup/payoff from verse to chorus. That is, rather than providing a self-sufficient anecdote that is then contextualized, the verse anticipates the chorus with an introductory and/or vague text, which the chorus then clarifies. The Jackson 5's "ABC" contains a tonic bass pedal throughout its verse (along with the piano riff we encountered in Example 1.5), followed by a full functional circuit in the chorus (Example 6.7). The verse's lyrics boil down to "I am going to teach you a lesson; ready?" and the chorus gives us that lesson (which seems to be that A-B-C, one-two-three, do-re-mi, and you-and-me are all things that go together well). Although Michael and Jermaine Jackson show off their virtuosic singing in the verse, the melody is not particularly memorable and essentially mimics spoken dialogue. In the chorus, the bass line is more active and the melody is more, well, melodic: a three-note motive (shown in brackets) repeats several times, setting each of the aforementioned things that go together well. The punch line "you and me" completes the melody's descent to 1 over a cadence to tonic.

An initiating verse functions as a beginning; the expectation is that it will eventually proceed to a middle and an end. The tonic that it prolongs is specifically an initial tonic as opposed to a final one; by itself, it presents an incomplete harmonic structure. While the expectation of tonal closure through a functional

Example 6.7 The Jackson 5, "ABC" (1971): the initiating verse prolongs tonic and melodic $\hat{5}$ throughout, while the sectional chorus contains a functional circuit and $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent.



circuit is not as strong in the rock repertoire as in common-practice tonal music, when a song contains an initiating verse and (later) a cadence, it is likely that the latter will be heard as realizing an implication of the former. This brings up an issue considering the large-scale structure of a song with initiating verse and sectional chorus: Does the chorus's initial tonic represent a continuation of the verse's tonic or the beginning of a new, unconnected harmonic trajectory? In a sense, the answer is both. The chorus begins anew, with an initial tonic that sets off motion through a functional circuit. The verse's tonic is at first left behind, replaced—not continued—by the chorus's new beginning. The chorus's cadence, however, serves to some degree as the fulfillment of the initiating tonic's promise; that is, we can interpret a single harmonic trajectory not only in the chorus alone but also across the verse–chorus cycle as a whole.

Again, the idea that the chorus's cadence closes both the chorus individually and the entire cycle also applies to cycles where both verse and chorus are sectional. In that situation, the verse's functional circuit is subsumed within a larger circuit spanning the entire cycle; Example 6.8a graphs this interpretation in "Fat Bottomed Girls." Here, the chorus's functional circuit exists at the deepest level, with its

Example 6.8 In sectional verse–chorus form, a cycle's deep structure is similar whether the verse is initiating or sectional.







PD–D–T connecting back to both the chorus's and verse's initial tonics. Two details are important to note: (1) the chorus's initial tonic is displayed with an open notehead, signifying that it does not simply continue the verse's tonic but restarts the functional progression; and (2) the chorus's functional circuit connects specifically to the verse's initial—rather than final—tonic, representing the idea that the verse's cadence is superseded, not restated, by the chorus's. Example 6.8b shows a similar graph for "ABC," where the verse contains no functional circuit at any level; the only real difference between the graphs is that the verse does not contain any middleground motion. In other words, the lack of functional circuit in this song's verse does not greatly affect the deep-level harmonic structure.

Verse and Chorus in Different Keys

The ability for the chorus to connect back to the verse's initial tonic assumes that the two sections are in the same key. Though the majority of rock songs remain in a single key throughout, many touch on multiple tonal centers at various points. Because of its relative infrequency, modulation acts as a stylistically marked feature of rock music and hence acquires expressive meaning. Several authors have noted the expressive possibilities of rock modulation, especially Christopher Doll (2011), Scott Hanenberg (2016), Lori Burns (2008), and Guy Capuzzo (2009). Though the specific significance of a modulation must be read through its individual context—both the content of the lyrics and the relationship of the two keys—it seems that modulation generally conveys a sense of distance. For instance, the Beatles' "Penny Lane" sets the verse's vignettes about the titular Liverpool neighborhood in B major while the narrator's daydreams and "foggy memories" in the chorus (Everett 1999, 86) sound in A major. The different key centers reflect that the narrator is no longer in Penny Lane, but the song's final transposition of the chorus back up to B major solidifies that "Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes." Most rock modulations correspond to section boundaries: with the occasional exception of brief connecting passages, each individual section tends to remain in a single key, and the shifts occur from section to section. As one can imagine, a prime spot for modulation is the boundary between verse and chorus. Beginning a chorus in a new key contributes to what Doll refers to as the "breakout" aspect of a chorus section-essentially, an immediate increase in intensity when the chorus arrives. Because motion to a new key generally signals the beginning of a new musical thought, songs that modulate from verse to chorus usually follow sectional verse-chorus form. The different key centers add to the sense of separation between the two sections.

In Paul Simon's "Kodachrome," a sectional verse in E major gives way to a sectional chorus in A major (both sections are periods; see Example 6.9). In the two verses, Simon sings cynically about his past, first lamenting the "crap" he was

Example 6.9 Paul Simon, "Kodachrome" (1973): sectional verse in E major and sectional chorus in A major.



taught in high school and then admitting that his prior sexual encounters were not as spectacular as they are in his imagination. But in the choruses, he celebrates the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia (represented metaphorically by the "bright colors" of Kodak's Kodachrome film), through which the negative elements of past events fade from view and "all the world" looks like a "sunny day." The change in key center highlights the split between reality and memory, suggesting that the two cannot be reconciled in a single tonality. The two worlds are not kept entirely separate, though, as both verse and chorus contain intrusions of the other section's key: the end of the chorus presents a brief V^7 –I progression borrowed from the verse's E-major tonality, as the singer worries that someone will "take my Kodachrome away"; conversely, the verse's first phrase tonicizes A major, which in the second verse sets the text "sweet imagination" before swinging back to E major as we are reminded that "everything looks worse in black and white." The song's narrator acknowledges that his Kodachrome snapshots are not necessarily reflective of reality, but he would rather live in the A-major world of nostalgia than have to grapple with actual past events. And he ultimately gets to: after two iterations of the verse-chorus cycle, the song remains centered on A throughout its long coda, which loops a I-iii-vi progression while repeating the chorus's final line, "Mama, don't take my Kodachrome away."

Large-scale key relations

Songs that pass through multiple keys potentially complicate an assumption of monotonality. Is there a hierarchy to the various key centers such that a single one assumes the role of global tonic? If so, do the subordinate key areas represent deep-level prolongations of harmonies within the primary key? Is hierarchical superiority associated with certain formal functions (e.g., is the chorus's key usually superordinate to others)? Though music theorists generally take the Schenkerian view of monotonality as the default for common-practice tonal music, I am not sure that assumption is as valid in the rock repertoire. Guy Capuzzo's concept of "sectional tonality," which he applies to songs with multiple equally weighted key centers, reflects the desire to get away from equating "tonality" with "monotonality" (Capuzzo 2009). In "Kodachrome," there is no clear hierarchy between the verse's E major and the chorus's A major. Given the descending-fifth relationship of the keys and the fact that the song begins in E and ends in A, one could decide to read the song as outlining a broad V-I auxiliary progression in A major, with the verse's key representing V at the deepest level. Reading A as the global tonic would suggest that the song's message is that there is no reality beyond our perceptions, whether filtered through Kodachrome or not. But the sense of resolution to A major is not particularly strong at the beginning of the chorus; it is not until the B-minor chord three measures in that we even suspect that we've left E major. In other words, A major at first sounds like IV, setting up a possible continuation chorus that would lead to a cadence in E. We could thus instead interpret E as the global tonic, with each verse-chorus cycle exhibiting a large-scale I-IV progression. The chorus's refusal to cadence in E, or even to return to E at all after the second chorus, can be interpreted as the narrator's refusal to acknowledge reality. But neither monotonal option is entirely satisfying; rather, I find the interplay between the two keys a central feature of the song. The narrator bounces back and forth between reality and memory, ultimately choosing the latter despite knowing it is unnaturally colored. Each key has its own associative meaning but neither emerges as superior to the other.

On the other hand, the Animals' hit single "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" *does* exhibit a clear hierarchical relationship between its two keys (Example 6.10). This song's verses and choruses are centered on C and F, respectively, the former



Example 6.10 The Animals, "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" (1965): initiating verse centered on C and sectional chorus centered on F; the global key is F major.

associated with the "dirty old part of the city" and the latter with the imagined place in which the narrator and his "girl" will find a "better life." The modulation up a perfect fourth from verse to chorus presents the same relationship we saw in "Kodachrome." But two features of this song subsume C within a global F-major tonality: (1) the verse is an initiating verse, not a sectional one, and contains basically no harmonic motion over the bass ostinato; and (2) the verse projects a Mixolydian modality on C (with Bb rather than Bb) such that both sections are rooted in the same diatonic collection. Regarding the first point, the absence of a functional circuit in C leaves that tonal center unconfirmed and thus less stable than the chorus's F major, the latter expanded through a period structure (with a somewhat unusual vi-I cadence at the end). And regarding the second, the Mixolydian mode does not on its own signal an unstable tonic; many theorists acknowledge rock's propensity for modal collections, with Mixolydian particularly common (see, e.g., Moore 1992 and 2001, Everett 2004, and Biamonte 2010). Yet when a Mixolydian tonal center gives way to the major tonic a fifth below, I find it difficult to avoid hearing a resolution into the latter key such that the large-scale progression is V⁽⁷⁾–I. This is especially true in "We Gotta Get Out of This Place": upon the arrival of the chorus's initial F-major chord, we retrospectively interpret the verse as prolonging V^7 and resolving to the song's global tonic. It is important here to distinguish between global and local functions. In saying that the verse prolongs V^7 , I am speaking globally; at the local level, the verse is centered on C, not F.

The discussion of "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" brings up a feature of verse-chorus modulations that several theorists have noticed: when there is a modulation from verse to chorus, the chorus is usually in a straight major mode. Trevor de Clercq notes that when two sections are in different modes, the section emphasizing an "Ionian tonic" is most likely the chorus (de Clercq 2012, 50-53). Though this dialectic can arise between two modes with major tonic chords, as in "We Gotta Get Out of This Place," more expressive potential arises when the verse's tonic chord is minor. A shift from a minor tonic to a major tonic often arises when the verse and chorus are placed in relative keys. Brad Osborn cites modulation to the relative major as an indicator of a "syntactic climax" (2013, 27-28) and Christopher Doll claims that these modulations often "indicate when you mean it most" (2011, [16]). The juxtaposition of major and minor tonics often reflects some positive/negative dichotomy in the song's lyrics. For instance, in Neil Young's "Keep On Rockin' in the Free World," the E-minor verses' bleak pictures of homelessness and addiction contrast with the G-major chorus's uplifting cries of the title lyric. Whether one reads the chorus's key as the global tonic will depend upon whether one interprets the song's overall message as one of optimism.

"We Are the Champions"

Queen's "We Are the Champions" uses an expressive minor-to-major modulation to project its powerful anthem of triumph over adversity (Example 6.11). There is no question that the overall message is positive; whatever hardships the singer faces in the verses are ultimately overcome. Pronouns separate the narrator from the audience in the verses (*"Ive* paid my dues ... *you* brought me fame") but bring them together in the chorus (*"We* are the champions"). The textural buildup puts an exclamation point on the triumph narrative: Freddie Mercury's subdued vocal line begins accompanied by only his piano and John Deacon's bass, and the verse intensifies from there, first with the addition of clean guitars (measure 5), then drums and distortion (measure 7), and finally employing Queen's signature multiply overdubbed vocal harmonies (measure 9), which overpower Mercury even as he shouts at the top of his vocal range. Using Allan Moore's terminology, we can trace a progression from an *intimate* address, in which the song's persona speaks directly to the listener in close proximity, to a *public* one, in which the persona shouts from the rooftops, so to speak (Moore 2012, chapter 7).

All of this is set over a tonal backdrop that takes us from the verses's C minor to the chorus's F major. The verse creeps in with a C-minor tonic supporting melodic 1. Measure 5 opens up to an $E\flat$ -major chord with $E\flat$ in the melody. At this point, we might begin to sense the song's optimism, as it has not taken long for minor



Example 6.11 Queen, "We Are the Champions" (1977): the verse-chorus cycle modulates from C minor through E-flat major to F major.

to give way to major. By measure 8, the melody has climbed a seventh to Bb and we have arrived on V of Eb. Given the textural intensification and the insistent half cadence, we are well set up for a strong chorus in the relative major. But at some level that would be disappointing, since we already heard Eb major in the second half of the verse. Instead, using what is often referred to as a "pump-up" or "truck-driver" modulation, V of Eb shifts up a whole step to V of F, leading to what Walter Everett calls a "transcendent effect of hyper-arrival" into the chorus (Everett 2009, 283). This song's pump-up has structural as well as rhetorical purpose: it allows the melodic line to complete a linear ascent through an octave to high C in measure 9. The high C is first introduced as Bb's upper neighbor ("on and on and on and...") but ultimately receives consonant harmonic support ("...on!"). The high register is at first left hanging, as the chorus's vocal line begins a fifth lower on F (now 1), outlining a series of increasingly compressed descending thirds. But in measure 15, the melody-now supported by the full vocal ensemble-shoots up an octave to a high Bb, followed by a chromatically-inflected stepwise descent $\hat{3}-\hat{y}\hat{3}-(\hat{2})-\hat{1}$ in measures 16–19. Measure 15's Bb can be understood to connect back to the verse's high C (and ultimately to the verse's initial, lower C), forming an overall stepwise descent $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ through the entire verse-chorus cycle.

Example 6.12 graphs the verse-chorus cycle. The graph interprets F major as the song's global tonic, engulfing the verse's keys of C minor and Eb major as secondary key areas. Eb is subsidiary even to C minor, representing its upper third;



Example 6.12 Graph of "We Are the Champions" interpreting F as global tonic.

I analyze the C-major chord at the end of the verse to connect to the initial C-minor harmony such that the entire verse prolongs V of F, with Eb shifting chromatically to Eb in an inner voice (shown on the top staff with downward stems). I consider the I chord in measure 16 to represent not a return to tonic function but the initiation of an "expanded dominant progression"; in other words, it is an unstable harmony that initiates dominant function and resolves to the V chord two measures later (see chapter 1). The chorus's functional circuit is thus I–ii–V–I. (In the first chorus, the final tonic is minor, setting up the modulation back to C minor in the ensuing verse; the final chorus of the song ends on the suspended V chord, leaving it up to the listener whether the unrealized resolution would be to major or minor.)

Modulation into telos choruses

With one exception, all of these modulating songs contain sectional choruses. A sectional chorus, with its complete functional circuit and (usual) authentic cadence, provides the fullest confirmation of its key. The preceding verse can be initiating or sectional; in the former case, the lack of cadential confirmation makes the verse's key more likely heard as subsidiary to the chorus's (e.g., "We Gotta Get Out of This Place"). "Rockin' in the Free World," however, does not contain a sectional chorus (Example 6.13). Instead, four statements of the title lyric twirl around a I–V–IV chord loop, making it an archetypal telos chorus. The telos chorus comes after an initiating verse with no intervening prechorus, meaning there are no cadences in the entire song (there is no bridge, just a guitar solo over the verse's loop). Verse and chorus are differentiated largely by the shift in tonal center from E to G, with the slower harmonic rhythm and repeated text contributing to chorus quality as well. Despite the lack of functional circuit or unstable harmonic areas,

Example 6.13 Neil Young, "Rockin' in the Free World" (1989): the telos chorus is centered on the initiating verse's relative major.



the effect of sectional verse-chorus form remains, in that the verse and chorus are generally autonomous and separated. Both begin on tonic (different ones), span 4×4 metrical structures (four hypermeasures of four measures each), and provide grammatically complete sentences in their lyrics. Within each section, the material is unified, whereas the sections contrast with one another—each contains an unbroken chord loop and presents a coherent thought in the lyrics, while the two have different tonal centers, and their lyrics would seem unrelated if they were not presented in the context of a single song.

I have deliberately avoided the word "key" in reference to "Rockin' in the Free World." With no cadences, neither E minor nor G major is unequivocally its own key, nor is there unequivocally a change of key from verse to chorus. Trevor de Clercq, following David Temperley, in fact analyzes both sections in E minor, with the chorus representing an "emphasis" on the relative major but not a modulation (2012, 51). The opposite analysis would be plausible as well, that is, analyzing the whole song in G major with the verse prolonging vi. Analysts sometimes differentiate between "tonal center" and "key," the former referring to a single pitch class that is hierarchically superior to all others and the latter referring to a broad web of functional relationships revolving around the centric pitch class. Keys are confirmed by cadences, but tonal centers are determined in all sorts of ways, such as rhythmic or metric stress, or simply by being heard more often than other notes.⁷ In "Rockin' in the Free World," there is a clear shift in tonal center from E in the verse to G in the chorus. But because neither tonal center is confirmed with a cadence, it is not clear if the different tonal centers represent two distinct keys, two different Stufen of the same key (whether vi-I in G, i-bIII in E minor, or an

⁷ Christopher Doll enumerates 13 types of information that contribute to our sense of tonal center (2017, 221–29). Guy Capuzzo provides a succinct discussion of centricity in rock music, drawing heavily from the work of Joseph Straus (2005) and others; see Capuzzo 2009, 158–61.

Example 6.14 Men at Work, "Down Under" (1982): centric shift from B minor in the verse to D major in the chorus by substituting a D-major chord for a B-minor one (after Doll 2011, Example 2).



ambiguity between these two options), or something stranger like the two tonics of a "double-tonic complex."⁸

Without veering too far off course, I will simply add that, besides the absence of cadences, the closeness of the two potential keys in "Rockin' in the Free World" is the prime contributor to its tonal ambiguity. A minor tonic and its relative major exhibit the same basic pitch collection (especially when the former employs the Aeolian mode), and two of the three notes are held in common between the two tonic triads. The shift in center can be thought of as a spotlight moving from one location to another with no change in the broader scenery. In Men at Work's "Down Under," a shift from B minor to D major arises simply by changing the first chord of the loop (Example 6.14; see Doll 2011, [4]). Though the chords in question are sufficiently emphasized to signal different tonal centers, the sense of tonal reorientation is minimal, given that the rest of the progression and the melody are identical. We might, of course, be conditioned a priori to hear a major tonic as more stable than the minor version, especially when the former is heard in the chorus. But in other songs like Van Halen's "Runnin' with the Devil," there is no preconceived hierarchy between the two centers: the verse's A major and the chorus's E major do not give us any indication of which (if either) is superior to the other, as each section for the most part pounds its tonic bass note with no harmonic motion (Example 6.15). The point is this: when there are no cadences, shifts in tonal center do not always entail the broad harmonic reorientation of a full-scale modulation. Instead, the sense is more that we will groove around one note for a while, and then groove around a different note for another while.

⁸ The double-tonic complex was originally devised to describe late-Romantic music by Wagner, Mahler, and others (Bailey 1985) but has been applied to rock music by Robert Gauldin (1990) and me (forthcoming). A double-tonic interpretation of "Rockin' in the Free World" would consider E minor and G major *both* to represent the tonic within a more abstract governing tonal structure.

Example 6.15 Van Halen, "Runnin' With the Devil" (1978): centric shift from A to E across initiating verse and telos chorus with neither center tonally superior to the other.



Initiating Verse + Telos Chorus

This lack of cadential closure can also occur when a song's tonal center does not change. That is, sectional verse-chorus form can arise with an initiating verse and telos chorus, with or without a centric shift. In many ways, this layout has the same effect as the combination of sectional verse and sectional chorus already discussed, in that the two sections are structurally similar and differentiated primarily through text and texture. But at the same time, the initiating/telos layout is unique in that there is no harmonic trajectory at all-indeed, this is the only verse-chorus arrangement discussed in this book that does not arise from a functional circuit. Closure, to the extent that it exists, comes about in non-harmonic realms such as meter and text. That is, the sections signal that they have come to an end by the completion of eight measures of music (or sometimes four or 16, etc.) combined with the end of a grammatical sentence and/or the completion of a pair of rhyming lines (recall Example 1.25 and surrounding discussion). Songs with this layout are focused on the present moment rather than a journey toward a future goal. The message to the audience is: relax, bob your head, and enjoy the groove as long as it lasts.

In chapter 5 I mentioned that in the mid-'60s, rock's overall preference for AABA and strophic forms was reflected much more strongly in the output of white songwriters, with black songwriters preferring verse-chorus forms much earlier than rock as a whole. In particular, those black songwriters gravitated toward the layout of initiating verse and telos chorus, each section usually set

over a constant chord loop or shuttle. Examples include the Temptations' "Just My Imagination (Running Away with Me)" and "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," Sam and Dave's "Soul Man," Aretha Franklin's "Chain of Fools," Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On," Sly and the Family Stone's "Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)," and most '70s funk tracks by James Brown and Parliament/Funkadelic. One might be tempted to connect this layout to the oft-cited relationship between African diasporic music and cyclical, non-teleological processes, though as Robert Fink cautions, overemphasizing that relationship can contribute to the musical "othering" of black styles. (Fink demonstrates that mid-'60s African-American pop songs exhibit distinct *rhythmic* teleologies even when their harmonic progressions are more static, questioning the notion that a cyclical approach is inherent in "musical blackness"; see Fink 2011.) Of course, all rock music traces its lineage through African diasporic styles, and the use of cyclical harmony is certainly not restricted to the output of black artists (nor do black artists dispense with more teleological harmonic processes); other examples of the initiating verse/telos chorus layout include Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love," Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama," Yes's "Owner of a Lonely Heart," and Madonna's "Express Yourself."

Example 6.16 transcribes the first verse-chorus cycle of "Just My Imagination." The verse features lead singer Eddie Kendrick relaying the details of an idyllic relationship with his dream girl. The accompaniment bobs back and forth between I and ii⁷ chords, forming a tonic-prolonging shuttle giving the sense of temporal stasis. As the voices of the other Temptations enter in the chorus, the song reveals that the relationship is playing entirely inside the narrator's head, and that "in reality, she doesn't even know me." The harmonic oscillation is possibly a hint that the whole thing is just a daydream, with no forward motion but only timeless reverie. Though the chord shuttle persists throughout the cycle, verse and chorus are clearly delineated (and not only by the presence or absence of backup singers). The verse's melody seems like an improvisation over the lyrics' four sentences, each of which fits into four measures making a 16-measure section. (The second verse's melody is mostly unrelated to the first verse's, furthering the improvisatory sense.) The chorus, on the other hand, presents four short melodic units resulting in a tight motivic structure outlining an up-and-down arpeggiation $\hat{1}-\hat{3}-\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ (shown in the example). The text reflects the typical layout for sectional verse-chorus form: the verse provides details and stories while the chorus relays the main message.

Telos choruses, as we saw in chapter 3, are set up as arrival points. In their typical placement following a prechorus, they begin with a cadential arrival concluding a functional circuit. When they instead follow a tonic-prolonging initiating verse, there is no harmonic arrival—they simply continue a previously existing tonic—but nevertheless the sense remains that we have gotten to where we were going. The chorus itself is a cyclical celebration of the arrival. An initiating verse opens up the possibility of an ensuing move to unstable harmonic areas and ultimately to a cadence, but when the next thing that happens is a telos chorus,



Example 6.16 The Temptations, "Just My Imagination (Running Away with Me)" (1971): a chord shuttle persists throughout the verse–chorus cycle.

we understand right away that there will be no harmonic journey. This feeling arises not simply because the chorus begins on tonic—as we saw earlier, initiating verses frequently lead to sectional choruses, which begin on tonic but ultimately outline a functional circuit; rather, the telos rhetoric leads us to recognize the chorus as an arrival rather than the beginning of its own trajectory. Contributors to telos rhetoric, as discussed in chapter 3, include an anacrustic melodic rhythm, a downbeat arrival on 1, a statement of the title lyric, and/or a pause in the accompaniment right before the chorus. "Just My Imagination" contains all of these features except the last, and the whole chorus section is simply two statements of the title line over the never-ending chord shuttle.

In Michael Jackson's 1987 hit "The Way You Make Me Feel," a 16-measure verse presents what could be the first two phrases of a 24-bar blues progression (a 12-bar blues with doubled proportions, making eight- rather than four-measure phrases; Example 6.17). The first phrase introduces a tonic-prolonging riff, with a bass pedal on $\hat{1}$ and upper voices sliding between I and \flat VII triads. The second

Example 6.17 Michael Jackson, "The Way You Make Me Feel" (1987): initiating verse and telos chorus.



phrase outlines IV–I, transposing the riff up a fourth before returning to tonic for the final four measures. The expectation of a third phrase outlining V–IV–I and completing the blues progression is thwarted by the arrival of the chorus. The telos aspect of the chorus is immediately apparent: the accompaniment stops after the downbeat of measure 16, and Jackson gives us the title line over an anacrusis. The anacrusis—along with the intentionally obvious tape splice of Jackson's vocal track between the first and second beats of measure 16—articulates a strong arrival on the downbeat and solidifies the ensuing section's status as the chorus. (Note that the anacrustic A–B \flat –C–A motive inverts the metacrustic A–G–F–A of the verse's phrases.) The continuation of the tonic riff is ultimately what negates the blues potential and confirms the absence of a functional circuit. Once we realize that we are not going to cadence, the chorus simply proceeds in typical telos fashion, with three repetitions of its initial motive.

In chapter 3, I described telos choruses as "rock-out" choruses. When a telos chorus does not complete a functional circuit, we get more of a laid-back, live-in-the-moment kind of rocking out, as we stop waiting for the music to take us somewhere else and bask in its perpetual groove. As we saw in the two previous examples, it is common for a song's initiating verse and telos chorus to present the same chord loop or shuttle. In these songs, the cyclical chord progression and melody become part of the song's backdrop, more like a drumbeat than anything else, and the vocal line floats above it. Differentiation between verse and chorus



Example 6.18 Tom Petty, "Free Fallin" (1989): texture, lyrical meaning, and melody differentiate verse and chorus over an unchanging chord loop.

is achieved through texture, lyrical meaning, and melody. We saw earlier that it is not uncommon for *sectional* verses and choruses to present the same harmonic material, but the effect is quite different when neither section leads to a cadence. For another example outside the Motown sphere, Tom Petty's "Free Fallin" begins as if it is going to recount a story about a "good girl" (Example 6.18). But once the chorus begins (after two verses), we realize that whatever story there was has already passed; the focus shifts from the good girl to the narrator, who is celebrating that story's end. Petty's cry "And I'm free!" provides all the confirmation we need that this is indeed the chorus, though there is also a notable textural intensification through the addition of tambourine and more active guitar strumming. Once the chorus clarifies the song's message, we stop waiting for the plot to advance and instead nod along with the narrator's excitement, as the two-measure chord loop continues to dance around the tonic.

When verse and chorus do not contain the same harmonic material, the verse sometimes seems like a holding pattern between iterations of the chorus. During the verse, the audience sits and waits for the arrival of the chorus, at which point the real rocking out begins. In the Commodores' "Brick House," the verse's accompaniment is static, presenting essentially a repeated two-beat unit with almost no changing notes (Example 6.19). The chorus then projects an active funk texture with intertwined melodic lines in bass and horns. In Duran Duran's "Rio," a cacophonous verse texture gives way to a more texturally unified chorus in the parallel major (Example 6.20). The bass's simplified rhythms and the common I–V– \flat VII–IV chord loop bring the chorus back to the realm of familiarity. (Note also the shift from second- to third-person pronouns, as if the singer turns to address the audience for the chorus.) In both songs, the verse's holding pattern projects a certain degree of tension that is then released when the chorus starts. In this way, the sense of formal trajectory from verse to chorus remains, despite the perpetual tonic prolongation.

Example 6.19 The Commodores, "Brick House" (1977): the initiating verse acts as a "holding pattern" setting up the telos chorus's more active texture.



Example 6.20 Duran Duran, "Rio" (1986): cacophonous verse texture stabilizes in the telos chorus.



Bridges and Full-Song Layouts

Sectional verse-chorus form is all about verse and chorus. The two opposed sections combine at a deeper level into a coherent expressive statement. Because of this central dialectic, there is not a huge need for additional sections to complete a formal process; the song's primary structure lives in the verse-chorus cycle. Of course, a single verse-chorus cycle cannot form a complete song on its own. But two cycles certainly can. Many sectional verse-chorus songs simply present, in order, verse-chorus-verse-chorus. To add some extra length at the end (making sure to hit the FM-radio sweet spot of three to four minutes), many songs repeat the final chorus ("We Are the Champions," e.g.) and/or tack on an outro with new material ("Kodachrome") or an instrumental solo outro ("Ramblin' Man"). Folk songs, and more generally songs that narrate a single continuous story, often contain more than two verse-chorus cycles to allow the text narrative to develop ("American Pie"). And, of course, instrumental intros often precede the first main section, ranging from just a few measures ("Mr. Tambourine Man") to an entire section's worth of material ("Hotel California").

Besides non-structural intros and outros, many sectional verse-chorus songs break up the succession of verse-chorus cycles with internal sections. When this occurs, the typical arrangement seems to be to present two complete cycles, do something different, and then return to the main material, either with more cycles or just the chorus. John Covach refers to this layout as "compound AABA form," where "A" refers to a verse-chorus cycle and "B" is a bridge, solo, or instrumental break (2005, 2010). But in sectional verse-chorus form, the sections Covach calls B are not at the same structural level as the verse-chorus cycles surrounding them. Most often, this internal section is an instrumental break or solo over the same chord progression as the verse and/or chorus (if not the same progression, then a tonic prolongation nonetheless). Many songs discussed in this chapter have this type of section, including "Rockin' in the Free World," "Down Under," "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Runnin' with the Devil," "Rio," and "The Way You Make Me Feel." As discussed in chapter 4, these types of internal section act as filler: they provide textural contrast and extra length without adding much in the way of structural material. As with introductions and codas, solos and instrumental interludes are rarely unimportant in individual songs. Nevertheless, they have little in common with the classic bridges of AABA form, the latter presenting new lyrics, an off-tonic beginning, and an energetic ramp-up to the return of the verse. For this reason, I do not employ Covach's "compound AABA" term in reference to sectional verse-chorus songs, even if the arrangement of sections resembles AABA. (As the following chapters will show, the compound-AABA label is more appropriate in continuous verse-chorus form and, to a lesser degree, verse-prechorus-chorus form.)

Some sectional verse-chorus songs contain texted bridges. The presence of the singer-persona affords more weight to these sections than their instrumental equivalents. The majority of sectional verse-chorus form's texted internal sections, though, are groove bridges representing a break in the main action. The harmonic activity slows, the energy drops, and the narrative enters an auxiliary space. "ABC," for instance, presents the groove bridge we encountered in chapter 4 after its second chorus; as we saw, that bridge acts as a recess breaking up the classroom lessons of the verse and chorus. Similarly, in "Just My Imagination," a section with new material emerges after two verse-chorus cycles, shown in Example 6.21. This groove bridge breaks the previously consistent I-ii⁷ chord shuttle with essentially a drawn-out I chord, over which the protagonist admits that "in reality, she doesn't even know me." The static tonic harmony and melodic bouncing between 1 and 3 belie any increase in energy; rather, the section seems to project verse material, almost as an alternative third verse based on a different accompaniment than the others. The protagonist's admission, though, seems appropriate for a bridge, as he pauses his daydreaming to acknowledge reality. After the bridge, he falls right back into reverie, as the chorus repeats and fades out.

Classic bridges—beginning off-tonic, ramping up the energy, and ending with peak intensity on a retransitional dominant—are somewhat unnecessary in sectional verse–chorus songs. Given that verse and chorus provide plenty of formal contrast, the effect of adding a classic bridge can be one of excess, as if the songwriter wants to ensure that there is no lack of energetic ebbs and flows. This type of bridge

Example 6.21 The Temptations, "Just My Imagination (Runnin' Away With Me)" (1971): groove bridge within sectional verse-chorus form.



is relatively uncommon in sectional verse-chorus form; none of the songs analyzed so far in this chapter contain one, for instance. But they are certainly not unheard of. A sectional verse-chorus cycle pairing with a classic bridge gives some credence to a possible compound-AABA interpretation. John Mellencamp's breakout hit "Hurts So Good" gives us two verse-chorus cycles (initiating verse + sectional chorus), then the classic bridge shown in Example 6.22, then two more run-throughs of the chorus and an instrumental fadeout. The bridge follows one of the most common harmonic schemas for classic bridge sections: an alternation of IV and I followed by an arrival on V. Here, a vi chord arpeggiates between IV and I in the second phrase, and the V chord expands from two to ten measures as the couple "walk[s] around all day long." The expansion effects a palpable drop in energy, the vocals and organ dropping out after four measures, removing much of the reinvigorating function of a classic bridge's retransitional dominant. The ensuing return to the chorus thus seems less like a necessary recapitulation as in AABA and more of a coda-like summary. Sam and Dave's "Soul Man" precedes its classic bridge, shown in Example 6.23, with *three* verse-chorus cycles (of the initiating + telos variety). The bridge begins on *bVI* and leads to V (in the form of the aptly named "soul dominant"), and then pumps up a half step to move us from G major to Ab major. Due to the lack of dominant function in either the initiating verse or telos chorus, the classic bridge is the only place that such a pump-up could convincingly occur. After the bridge, the song recapitulates its four-measure introduction in the new key leading to a fadeout over the title lyric representing a chorus outro (see chapter 4). The recapitulated intro creates an energy drop similar to that in "Hurts So Good," making the ensuing chorus outro seem disconnected from the bridge rather than its natural consequence.9



Example 6.22 John Mellencamp (John Cougar), "Hurts So Good" (1982): classic bridge within sectional verse-chorus form.

⁹ Other examples of classic bridges in a sectional verse-chorus context include John Denver's "Take Me Home Country Roads" and Carole King's "You've Got a Friend."

Example 6.23 Sam and Dave, "Soul Man" (1967): classic bridge within sectional verse–chorus form effecting a pump-up modulation up a half step.



In short, a verse and a chorus, plus lyrics to one or more additional verses, provide all the musical material one needs to create a sectional verse-chorus song. The addition of introductions, codas, solos, interludes, and/or bridges constitutes the *arrangement* of the basic material into a complete song. The arrangement process is of course neither trivial nor insignificant; as Walter Everett points out, the non-structural roles of introduction and coda are often the most important from a marketing perspective, and that is before issues of timbre and production are factored in (Everett 2009, 152). But I will reiterate a point made in this book's introduction: while many elements contribute to a song's reception, what ties together various songs, artists, and genres throughout the rock repertoire is a common approach to song structure. Sectional verse-chorus presents a central dialectic between autonomous and separated verses and choruses; arrangements and expansions of this central dialectic might individualize a song but do not alter its basic form.

Continuous Verse-Chorus

The defining feature of continuous verse-chorus form is a chorus that does not establish a new beginning. The verse and chorus together project a single unified trajectory, giving rise to a structure entirely unlike that of sectional verse-chorus form. The elements that separate the two sections into distinct formal functions act against harmonic and lyrical elements that unify the verse-chorus cycle into a coherent whole. In continuous verse-chorus songs, it is not always clear that there are even two sections; the passage labeled as a chorus can often be interpreted instead as an extended refrain and thus part of the verse. Though there are often good reasons to read a section boundary, the potential for ambiguity is a central aspect of the form. Partly due to this ambiguity, classic bridge sections are both more common and more structurally significant in continuous verse-chorus form than in sectional verse-chorus layouts, combining the dialectical elements of verse and chorus with a larger-scale formal structure.

As in the previous chapter, I will begin by focusing on individual verse-chorus cycles before discussing full-song layouts. All cycles in continuous verse-chorus form contain a continuation chorus. The verse is usually an initiating one, resulting in a single functional circuit across the verse-chorus cycle. Sometimes the verse is instead sectional, resulting in a dialectic between the cadences ending verse and chorus (recall Example 6.1). I will look at these two combinations individually, taking a break in between to offer two detailed analyses of phrase-rhythmic expansions within continuous verse-chorus cycles. A concluding discussion of large-scale trajectory discusses how cycles combine into song-spanning processes, with or without the addition of other sections such as bridges or solos.

Initiating Verse + Continuation Chorus

When an initiating verse combines with a continuation chorus, it is as if a single section has been divided in two. The verse is a beginning with no middle or end, and the chorus is a middle and end with no beginning. The perception of two distinct formal functions is not always clear-cut, and it is often possible to hear the entire passage as a single verse with refrain (recall the discussion of refrains vs. choruses in chapter 2). Refrain/chorus ambiguity is strongest when the passage in question (1) is eight bars long, (2) begins off tonic, and (3) is the same length as the preceding verse material—in other words, when it could be analyzed as a continuation chorus.

Example 7.1 The Beatles, "Ticket to Ride" (1965): the verse-chorus cycle could be interpreted as a single verse with eight-measure refrain.



In the Beatles' "Ticket to Ride," a 16-measure passage projects both cohesion, with a single functional circuit and overall resemblance to **srdc**, and division, with the second half seeming to break off as a continuation chorus (Example 7.1). Theorists have interpreted these 16 measures both ways—as verse and chorus and as a single verse with refrain (see de Clercq 2012, 161–62, for a summary). In my opinion, a verse–chorus reading is more convincing, based largely on the chorus's length and division into four melodic groups. My opinion is not the issue, though; the point is that there are elements that make the whole passage cohere as well as elements that make it divide in two.

Many continuous verse-chorus songs are less ambiguous than "Ticket to Ride," such that few would argue against identifying separate verse and chorus. Nevertheless, the elements of cohesion never entirely go away. Recalling the beginning-middle-end paradigm (chapter 1), we can see that the verse functions as a rhetorical beginning and the chorus as a rhetorical middle and end. Compare "Ticket to Ride" with Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger," the latter best known as the theme song to the 1983 film *Rocky III* (Example 7.2). Both verses present two four-measure phrases prolonging tonic, much like the s and r phrases of an srdc verse (a connection that will be explored in more detail later). The two verse phrases are mostly identical except for a slight weakening of the second phrase's ending, by moving to V in "Ticket to Ride" and going upward in the melody in "Eye of the Tiger." The choruses begin with the melodic fragmentation typical of medial formal



Example 7.2 Survivor, "Eye of the Tiger" (1982): structure similar to "Ticket to Ride" with more defined verse and chorus roles.

areas, shortening the melodic groupings to two measures. Finally, the choruses settle on cadences as they return to tonic. Texture and other elements give "Eye of the Tiger" a clearer separation between verse and chorus, but its process is basically identical to that of "Ticket to Ride."

Of course, the greatest contributor to cohesion is harmony. With an initiating verse prolonging tonic and a continuation chorus giving us PD–D–T, a single functional circuit spans the entire verse–chorus cycle. Alone, each section is incomplete, but together they provide a full and closed trajectory. The harmonic restart that characterizes choruses in sectional verse–chorus form is absent, as the verse's stable tonic flows directly into the chorus's unstable pre-dominant. Example 7.3 graphs the verse–chorus cycles of "Ticket to Ride" and "Eye of the Tiger," showing the single circuit across both sections. The energetic trajectory of a functional circuit is distributed across both sections: the verse is stable, while the chorus begins with instability, increasing the energy and heightening the anticipation of the eventual cadence, which returns us to our restful tonic state. In "Ticket to Ride," the vi chord sets the progression in motion, inflected with a

Example 7.3 Graphs of "Ticket to Ride" and "Eye of the Tiger" showing a single functional circuit across the verse–chorus cycle, with T in verse and PD–D–T in chorus.



neighboring \flat VII chord involving a striking use of the melodic-harmonic divorce. The bluesy chromaticism of this neighboring chord foreshadows the melodic use of \flat 7 over the cadential V chord, which participates in an ascent from 5 to 8.¹ In "Eye of the Tiger," instability arrives in the form of a iv chord, setting off three two-bar units that move from iv to \flat VII (hinting at ii–V in E \flat major). The fourth and final melodic unit (measures 15–17) begins with parallel tenths between melody and bass—the former extending to a climactic high C—before cadencing to tonic. Though the accompaniment cuts out in the second half of measure 16, I interpret a silent \flat VII chord there, implied by the bass's stepwise ascent, the melody's unharmonized F, and the fact that the three previous units all ended on a \flat VII chord.

¹ Note that the verse contained an earlier foreshadowing of b[↑] over tonic. The three appearances of that scale degree—as an added seventh over I, as the root of bVII, and as a dissonant minor third over (major) V—represent Naphtali Wagner's three types of blue notes: (normal) blue notes, consonant blue notes, and structural blue notes. Wagner's graph of "Ticket to Ride" identifies the same 5-ô-b[↑]-⁸ melodic line as I do, though he interprets IV, not vi, as the structural pre-dominant. See Wagner 2003, 360–61.

Continuous verse-chorus form and srdc

Trevor de Clercq points out that "Ticket to Ride" and other songs exhibit an srdc structure across the whole verse-chorus cycle, with sr in the verse and dc in the chorus, as shown in Example 7.4 (de Clercq 2012, 161-65). As it turns out, an srdc overlay is characteristic of continuous verse-chorus cycles. "Eye of the Tiger" has one, as do most other songs discussed in this chapter. At some level, an srdc layout grows organically from the component sections: in chapter 2 we noted that initiating verses often comprise two similar phrases, and a continuation chorus's off-tonic start and cadential ending makes it naturally sound like a departure and conclusion. The basis in srdc further underscores the sense that a continuous verse-chorus cycle acts as a single cohesive unit. In de Clercq's terminology, srdc is simply an organizational scheme comprising four melodic groups, with no inherent relationship to section roles. In other words, srdc can underlie a sectional verse with a refrain in c; a verse-chorus cycle with verse over sr and chorus over dc, or even a verse over sr, prechorus over d, and chorus over c, as we will discuss in chapter 8.

The basic length of a continuous verse-chorus cycle is 16 measures, with each section lasting eight measures and each srdc component lasting four. Some cycles double this basic length to span 32 measures. In both "Ticket to Ride" and "Eye of the Tiger," the melody undergoes fragmentation at the onset of the chorus, moving from four-bar to two-bar groupings. The fragmentation obscures the boundary between **d** and **c**. Both choruses exhibit an *aaab* thematic distribution (2 + 2 + 2 + 2), making it possible to interpret a six-bar **d** and two-bar **c** rather than four and four. (In "Eye of the Tiger," the chorus is extended to 10 measures, so the fragmentation is more like 2 + 2 + 2 + 4, with the cadence arriving on bar 9.) Verse-chorus cycles spanning 32 measures rather than 16 often make such a division more stark-that is, their choruses seem divided into a 12-bar d followed by a four-bar c. Jimmy Buffet's "Margaritaville"-previously encountered in Examples 2.27 (verse) and 3.9 (chorus)—provides a case in point (Example 7.5). Despite the couplet rhyme scheme in the lyrics, the chorus resists a division into two eight-bar halves with its *aaab* phrase structure, and the final four bars provide a relatively clear conclusion phrase. The broader point is that when srdc divides into verse and chorus, d and c are delineated less strongly than in a sectional verse with refrain over c. The result is akin to what William Caplin calls "form-functional fusion" (1998, 45-47): the chorus projects both departure and conclusion functions, but the two blend together rather than occurring one after the other.

Example 7.4 Srdc thematic structure across the verse-chorus cycle in "Ticket to Ride".

verse	5

s: I think I'm gonna be sad, I think it's today

r: The girl that's driving me mad is going away

chorus **d**: She's got a ticket to ride, she's got a ticket to ride **c**: She's got a ticket to ride, and she don't care

Example 7.5 Jimmy Buffet, "Margaritaville" (1977): 32-bar srdc structure across the verse-chorus cycle.



As we saw in chapter 2, **srdc** not only is a thematic layout but also has a harmonic component. **Srdc**'s harmonic layout fits perfectly into continuous verse-chorus form: the tonic prolongation in **sr** becomes the initiating verse, and PD-D-T in **dc** becomes the continuation chorus. This layout specifically reflects model 2 as discussed in chapter 2, in which the cadence occurs at the end of **c**; see Example 7.6. Comparing the graphs of "Ticket to Ride" and "Eye of the Tiger" with that of, say, "From Me to You" (Example 2.9) shows that despite different chord progressions, their basic structures are the same. The only difference—the extension of the pre-dominant into **c** in the verse-chorus examples—reflects the blurred boundary between the **d** and **c** phrases. That is, the melodic-motivic relationship between **srdc** and continuous verse-chorus is also borne out in the harmonic structure.

Example 7.6 "Ticket to Ride" and "Eye of the Tiger" follow **srdc**'s harmonic model 2 across verse and chorus.



"Margaritaville" and some other continuous verse-chorus songs do not unequivocally give up tonic at the onset of the chorus. In chapter 3 we saw how "Margaritaville"'s chorus gradually shifts its focus from I to IV so that by the end of **d** we feel fully ensconced in pre-dominant function. The still-active tonic at the beginning of the chorus suggests a basis in srdc model 3 rather than model 2 (Example 7.7). The difference between a continuous verse-chorus cycle with tonic extending into the chorus and a sectional verse-chorus cycle is that the former's chorus begins by destabilizing the tonic, retaining the sense of continuation even though the pre-dominant has not yet begun. The easiest way to destabilize the tonic is by beginning off-tonic but quickly moving back to I. Beginning off-tonic makes it more likely that one will perceive a medial rather than initiating function, thus connecting the chorus's progression to the verse's. Smokey Robinson and the Miracles' "I Second That Emotion" offers another, possibly clearer example (Example 7.8). Here, the chorus's initial IV chord functions as an accented neighboring chord that returns to tonic; the twice-occurring c phrase contains the full T-PD-D-T progression. Not every chorus that begins off-tonic signals continuous verse-chorus form, of course; recall "Mr. Tambourine Man," for instance (Example 6.5), a sectional verse-chorus song that began each section with a IV-V-I auxiliary progression. But in that song, there was no srdc structure, and verse and chorus both began with that same IV-V-I progression; furthermore, that chorus's period structure marked it unmistakably as a sectional chorus.

Example 7.7 "Margaritaville" follows srdc's harmonic model 3 across verse and chorus.



Example 7.8 Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, "I Second That Emotion" (1967): continuous verse-chorus form based on **srdc**'s model 3.



Expansions

Songwriters often stretch and obscure the basic **srdc** layout in continuous verse-chorus form. Here, I will look at two songs exhibiting such expansions; the first expands the verse and the other expands the chorus. In both songs, the resulting verse-chorus cycle is asymmetrical, with the expanded section at least twice as long as the other. Nevertheless, each can be traced back to a symmetrical **srdc** prototype.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' "American Girl" gives us a 16-measure verse and an eight-measure chorus. The verse's 16 measures do not divide neatly into four four-bar phrases, but rather comprise three phrases of varying length. As shown in Example 7.9, the verse is based on three iterations of a chord loop. The first iteration lasts the prototypical four measures, but the second is expanded to five by extending the loop's final chord to span two bars (measures 8–9). The third iteration swaps the second and third chords and further expands the phrase rhythm with

Example 7.9 Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, "American Girl" (1977): continuous verse–chorus form with a rhythmically expanded verse.



Example 7.10 Rhythmic reduction of the verse from "American Girl" showing three four-bar phrases with the second and third expanded to five and seven bars respectively.



three extra bars in measures 14–16. Example 7.10 gives a hypermetrical reduction of the verse's outer-voice counterpoint, with each quarter note representing one measure of the original. In this reduction, each of the three phrases takes up one $\frac{4}{4}$ hypermeasure, with the hypermeasure's fourth beat elongated in the second and third phrases. In the third phrase, the fourth beat's expansion in measures 13–16 creates a hypermeasure of its own.² Example 7.10 shows that the expansions also result from stretching out the melodic E–F[#] motive that ends each phrase.

After the expanded verse, the chorus gives us the common "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression, which, as discussed in chapter 3, outlines PD–D–T as IV–V–I, with IV prolonged through the first five measures. Melodically, the chorus begins by reversing the E–F \sharp motive to become F \sharp –E, ultimately completing this descent through a third to D. Since each verse phrase gives us D–E–F \sharp , we can observe a basic structure of ${}^3_1 | {}^2_{IVV} V {}^1_1$ across the verse–chorus cycle. Example 7.11 graphs this cycle. Note that the verse's melodic F \sharp (3) is not a member of the A-major chord over which it appears; rather, it is consonant with the prolonged chord—here, the I chord prolonged via the chord loop. A melodic tone that is dissonant on the foreground

Example 7.11 "American Girl" : graph of verse-chorus cycle.



² The concept of an additional (hyper)measure growing out of an expansion of a single beat is related to the Schenkerian concept of *Dehnung*, which Carl Schachter has applied in reference to Mozart. Schenker's original description of *Dehnung* is opaque (Schenker 1979, 124–25); thankfully, Schachter's explanation is much clearer (Schachter 1980, 62–65). Schachter's Example 2.8e is quite similar to my Example 7.10.

but consonant with a deeper-level harmony reflects what I have called a "hierarchy divorce" between melody and harmony (Nobile 2015). Similarly, E in the chorus $(\hat{2})$ is not a member of the IV chord that supports it. Here, IV is the prolonged chord, so there is no hierarchy divorce. This instead reflects what I call a "syntax divorce": $\hat{2}$ is the melody's unstable middle between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{1}$, and IV is the unstable middle between tonic and the final cadence. Though the two are not consonant with each other, they both fulfill the same syntactical function.

The expansion in "American Girl" takes an eight-bar prototype and turns it into a 16-bar verse. The 16-bar prototype would look just like measures 1-8 without 9-16: a four-bar s followed by a 4-bar r. The first-level expansion adds a third (varied) repeat, making srr', and the second-level expansion elongates the second and third phrases as already described. The stretched-out verse contrasts with a relatively normal eight-bar continuation chorus.

Elton John's "Philadelphia Freedom" gives us the opposite expansion: a normal-size verse followed by a sprawling chorus that more than doubles the section's expected length (Example 7.12). The 16-measure verse projects another 16-measure section outlining PD–D–T. What we get instead is 38 harmonically meandering measures, as if the song's protagonist is flaunting his newfound freedom. To begin to make sense of this run-on chorus, we can divide it into four phrases of 8 + 8 + 8 + 11 measures, followed by three bars extending the final tonic. The first eight-bar phrase begins like many continuation choruses with an alternation of IV and I. The second phrase increases the energy, acting like a typical **d** phrase and priming us for a strong cadence in its second half. The cadence never materializes, though, as the energy fizzles with chromatically descending dominant-seventh chords sinking us back to IV. Despite all that chromaticism, we find ourselves right back where we started; the graph in Example 7.13 shows the Eb harmony prolonged via a decorated bass arpeggiation Eb-Bb-(Ab)-G-Eb.

Measure 33 gives the chorus a second go. A seemingly solid tonic leads right back to a prolongation of IV in the phrase's third bar. Given the melodic Ab—suggesting an unstable V^7/IV rather than a stable I—this seems like the beginning of a continuation chorus based on **srdc** model 3. It's as though we started with the model-2 version back in measure 17 but wanted to see what model 3 sounded like as well. The return to IV in measure 35 sets off a chromatic bass ascent from Eb to G through Et (end of measure 38), F (measure 39), and Ft (as the third of the D7 chord in measure 40, where the surface bass note is a "cast-out root"). As before, measure 41 builds energy signaling an impending cadence. This time, we actually get one—but not without a few more detours on the way. What would normally be an eight-bar phrase cadencing in its eighth measure 51. For a song that builds up so much tension in anticipation of a cadence, the cadence itself is, rhetorically speaking, rather weak. The arrival on tonic is strong, but where was the syntactical dominant? The V chord in measure 47 is significant, as its only

Example 7.12 Elton John, "Philadelphia Freedom" (1975): expanded continuation chorus after a 16-measure initiating verse.



Example 7.13 Graph of measures 17–24 of "Philadelphia Freedom" showing IV prolonged through the chorus's first two phrases.



prior appearance in the chorus was in measure 39 as a part of the chromatic bass ascent. The presence of the title lyric supports reading measure 47 as the arrival of dominant function. This would make the chorus look like IV–V–I, as shown in Example 7.14a. But measure 47 is hypermetrically weak, and its V chord winds its way down the scale before resolving to I. Instead, perhaps ii is prolonged across measures 46–50, with this V chord part of a ${}^{5-6-5}_{3-4-3}$ prolongation of ii, as shown in Example 7.14b. The long "wait for it …" pause on ii⁷ in measures 48–50 supports reading ii as syntactical dominant. However, a metrically normalized version of this phrase—reducing its 11 measures to a basic eight-bar length—shows that the long ii chord results from an extension of just a single beat (Example 7.15); if we accept the normalized version as the phrase's basic form, ii seems like a passing chord coming down from V. Either way, syntactical dominant function is weakly projected. The

Example 7.14 Two interpretations of the chorus's structure in "Philadelphia Freedom".







Example 7.15 Normalized final phrase of "Philadelphia Freedom" (measures 41–54) showing its basic eight-bar form.

anticipation of tonic resolution comes more from the phrase-rhythmic expansions of the chorus than from any specific harmonic motion.

Sectional Verse + Continuation Chorus

On occasion, a continuation chorus arrives after a verse with cadential closure—that is, after a sectional verse. This layout seems most common when the verse exhibits a period structure. The verse's antecedent and consequent thus take on the roles of **s** and **r** in the larger **srdc** structure. At a basic level, the presence of a sectional verse does not significantly alter the cycle's harmonic trajectory; the verse's functional circuit can be seen to exist at a shallower level than the larger circuit as shown in Example 7.16. To reinforce this hierarchy, the verse's final cadence is often rhetorically weak, signaling that a stronger one is still to come, as is the case in Steely Dan's "Josie" or James Taylor's "Fire and Rain" (the latter omitting any final tonic). Nevertheless, the presence of a cadence at the end of the verse—even a weak one—adds a measure of separation between verse and chorus, partially contradicting the cohesion inherent in continuous verse–chorus form. One might perceive the chorus as embarking on a new direction rather than continuing what the verse started, giving it some qualities of a bridge.

Example 7.16 Harmonic structure of continuous verse-chorus form with sectional verse.

Verse Chorus T (PD D // T PD D T) PD D T

In Don McLean's "Vincent," the singer speaks to Vincent van Gogh, responding to what he perceives as the artist's direct communication through his masterpieces. Verses and choruses reflect the two conversational dimensions: in the former, the narrator imagines the artist speaking through his painting, and in the latter the narrator assures the artist that he received the message, even if no one else perceives it. The verse is set to a period (recall Example 2.3), and the chorus is a continuation chorus based on the "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression-here modified to begin on ii rather than IV and expanded through the use of a deceptive cadence in its seventh measure (Example 7.17). The verse's self-sufficiency-with a head refrain and conclusive cadence-contrasts with the chorus's unstable opening. To some degree, the chorus's initial ii chord negates the verse's final cadence, reopening the song's initial tonic as we uncover a deeper harmonic level. The lyrical rhyme between the verse's last line and the chorus's first contributes to this hearing by blurring the section boundary ("snowy linen land/Now I understand"). On the other hand, the chorus does not announce itself particularly strongly (as it would with, say, the title lyric and a thickened texture), and it is possible to hear its opening bars as a move to a bridge area. In fact, the song's actual bridge begins nearly identically to the chorus before veering off toward the narrative climax of the artist's suicide (see Example 7.18). In this song, we essentially have two types of section: periods describing the artist's work, and PD-D-T structures in which the narrator expresses his understanding of the artist's emotional state.

In songs with sectional verses and continuation choruses, the verse's autonomy contrasts with the chorus's instability. The chorus depends on the verse, but the verse does not depend on the chorus, at least not to the same degree. The usual hierarchical relationship involving a central chorus and subordinate verse is less clear in these situations. Instead, the verse ends up commanding more than its usual share of attention, often resulting in two sections of equal status. Furthermore, as we



Example 7.17 Don McLean, "Vincent" (1971): continuation chorus after a sectional verse.



Example 7.18 "Vincent"'s classic bridge is similar to its continuation chorus.

saw in "Vincent," we are not always sure at first that the chorus is indeed a chorus; while the verse's cadence makes the section boundary clear (unlike "Ticket to Ride" and others already discussed), one might perceive a move to a bridge or other formal area. Text and texture, as the strongest signifiers of chorus function, can tilt this perception in one direction or the other. In Looking Glass's "Brandy (You're a Fine Girl)," the title lyric and thickened instrumentation at 0:45 announce the arrival of the chorus, despite the move to vi after the verse's clear cadence. However, in the Eagles' "Desperado," we are never entirely sure if there is a chorus at all; despite textural buildups after the first two parallel-period verses (at 0:55 and 2:00), the sections that follow do not present summarizing text (and furthermore contain different lyrics each time), and the song ends after its third verse, undercutting any chorus credentials the other section may have earned. It is important to note that despite the potential for ambiguous section roles, there is little if any potential for perceiving sectional verse-chorus form. Even though the verse is sectional, the chorus's initial instability provides none of the "new beginning" basic to sectional verse-chorus form. The sense of a unified verse-chorus cycle remains.

Large-Scale Trajectory

Compound AABA

The unified nature of continuous verse-chorus cycles gives them more in common with single, sectional verses than with the verse-chorus cycles in
sectional verse-chorus songs. They derive from breaking a sectional verse in half-sometimes giving the first half its own cadence-but not from the juxtaposition of two self-sufficient sections. Since a continuous verse-chorus cycle acts as a cohesive formal unit (with a single functional circuit), songwriters looking to provide thematic contrast must do so outside of the verse-chorus cycle. It makes sense, then, that continuous verse-chorus songs often take on an overall AABA layout, with each A containing a verse-chorus cycle and B representing a bridge. These songs embody John Covach's "compound AABA" form, in which "the features of a contrasting verse-chorus form are combined with those of an AABA form" (Covach 2005, 74). ("Contrasting verse-chorus form" here refers to songs in which the verse and chorus contain different chord progressions.) Take "Ticket to Ride," for instance. Most of the Beatles' singles through 1965 follow AABA form (almost always with one of the standard extensions described in chapter 5), so "Ticket to Ride"'s AABA-BA layout fits right in. Whether we consider the A sections as single verses or as verse-chorus cycles does not greatly affect our perception of the overall form.

The broader AABA layout acts as a large-scale formal trajectory, with the final A providing closure for the entire group. As in non-compound AABA form, continuous verse-chorus form's bridges are usually classic bridges (unlike sectional verse-chorus form, in which internal sections are more often groove bridges, solos, or breaks), and it usually presents another complete verse-chorus cycle after the bridge (unlike verse-prechorus-chorus form, where a bridge more often leads to the chorus alone). The AABA trajectory is frequently reinforced rhetorically, and often reflects a lyrical element. In the Eagles' "New Kid in Town," for example, the choruses' cadences get progressively stronger as the lyrics take us from the excitement of being the new kid in town through the letdown when that novelty has worn off. The compound AABA layout is clear and regular: we see the overall sequence verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-verse-chorus framed by a short introduction and a long outro. Each verse lasts 16 measures, while each chorus and bridge lasts eight. An idiosyncrasy is that the third verse-chorus cycle (after the bridge) is transposed to the key of bIII until its final cadence. Example 7.19 shows that the three chorus-ending cadences progress from a half cadence, to an authentic cadence overlapping the guitar solo, and finally to a "revelatory" authentic cadence as we re-achieve the tonic key of E major. Lyrically, the successive choruses show the protagonist's decline in popularity, culminating in his love interest leaving him for another, newer kid in town. (The entire text is set in the second person following what Matt BaileyShea calls "covert address" [2014]; to me, it presents like an internal monologue, as if the protagonist is speaking to himself ["so don't let them down," etc.].) The bridge is the turning point, modulating to G major along with the breakup; the ensuing verse-chorus cycle describes the rival's arrival in terms similar to the original description of the protagonist. The climactic final cadence puts the nail in the coffin, so to speak, with our protagonist looking on as the new

Example 7.19 Eagles, "New Kid in Town" (1976): compound AABA with progressively stronger cadences after each chorus.



relationship forms in front of him. The melody reaches its apex on G^{\ddagger}, completing a gradual ascent from B begun in the first verse as shown in Example 7.20.

Compound strophic

Many continuous verse-chorus forms do not contain a bridge, corresponding to what Ken Stephenson calls "two-part strophic form" (Stephenson 2002, 139–40). In Stephenson's formulation, any song form based on two or more repetitions of the same musical material is strophic, even if the repeated material contains both a verse and chorus. In sectional verse-chorus form, though, the comparison to strophic form does not seem appropriate, since it negates the fundamental opposition between verse and chorus. But with continuous verse-chorus form's unified cycles, a strophic-like process might emerge. To mirror Covach's "compound AABA," we might refer to continuous verse-chorus form without a bridge as "compound strophic." Like the strophic forms discussed in chapter 5, many compound strophic songs contain instrumental solos over verse progressions. When a strophe is a verse-chorus cycle, the instrumental solo often leads to a complete, texted iteration



Example 7.20 Middleground graph of "New Kid in Town": the melody exhibits a stepwise ascent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$ across the entire compound AABA form.

of the chorus (not unlike when strophic forms contain a solo over the s and r phrases of an srdc verse, as in Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary" [Example 5.2a]). The Beatles' "Drive My Car" can be analyzed as a series of four verse–chorus cycles, where the third cycle replaces its text with a guitar solo over the same progression (Example 7.21a). Jackson Browne's "Doctor My Eyes" exhibits a similar layout, but here the solo does not play over the verse's progression; nevertheless, its tonic pedal fulfills the verse's harmonic role, so that when the chorus returns, we do not feel that we've skipped over the first part of the progression (Example 7.21b). On the rare occasion that solos exhibit a classic bridge-like chord progression, it cannot replace a verse within a cycle; the resulting layout more often resembles compound AABA, as in Fleetwood Mac's "Say You Love Me" (Example 7.21c).

Example 7.21 Some ways of including an instrumental solo within continuous verse-chorus form.

(a) The Beatles, "Drive My Car" (1965): the guitar solo takes the verse's role in the third verse-chorus cycle.



(b) Jackson Browne, "Doctor My Eyes" (1972): the solo does not follow the verse's progression but nevertheless provides a tonic prolongation, forming the first half of a functional circuit completed by the chorus.



(c) Fleetwood Mac, "Say You Love Me" (1975): the solo exhibits harmonic instability akin to a classic bridge.



Even with no broader compound-AABA layout, a larger trajectory often emerges across a compound strophic layout. Sometimes the trajectory is seen in the text: in "Drive My Car," for instance, the third verse (within the fourth cycle) provides a lyrical climax by revealing that the unnamed girl has "got no car." In "Eye of the Tiger," there is little differentiation among the three cycles besides a slightly expanded cadence in the last one, but the reprisal of the opening lyric at the beginning of the third verse ("Risin' up ...") rounds out the form, as if to say "We're back where we started, but now things are different." Other times, the trajectory occurs in the song's texture: in Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge over Troubled Water," three cycles gradually thicken their texture, beginning with Art Garfunkel's hushed singing alongside a solo piano and ending up with Garfunkel's highest range soaring above strings and a full rhythm section. As in "New Kid in Town," each chorus-ending cadence in "Bridge over Troubled Water" is rhetorically stronger than the previous one. Finally, as in standard strophic form, some compound strophic songs lead to a climactic outro providing some sort of large-scale closure for the entire song. The Doobie Brothers' "Black Water" contains just two verse-chorus cycles but ends with an extended "terminal climax" (Osborn 2013) based on a folky pentatonic melody extracted from a line in the second verse ("I'd like to hear some funky Dixieland..."). Besides offering the song's most memorable melodic content, the terminal climax provides solid support for a D-major tonic, which was lacking in the verse-chorus cycles. The cycles exhibit a series of chord shuttles that can be seen to outline an overall I-IV-V-I-V progression centered on D, as shown in Example 7.22; nevertheless, D's status as tonic is somewhat fragile in verse and chorus, with competition from G major and possibly A minor. But in the final section, the a cappella entrance of the climactic melody and subsequent reemergence of the verse's shuttle underneath it seal the deal in favor of D major.



Example 7.22 The Doobie Brothers, "Black Water" (1974): verse-chorus cycle centered on D but with weak tonic statements.

Verse-Prechorus-Chorus

Sectional and continuous verse-chorus forms contrast with one another based on the separation or coherence of verse and chorus. Nevertheless, they share a common teleology: they both point to a structural goal at the *end* of the chorus. Their choruses have the purpose of carrying us to the structural conclusion; when we get there, the cycle is over. In contrast, verse-prechorus-chorus songs point toward a structural goal at the *beginning* of the chorus. A stable, tonic-prolonging verse and unstable, off-tonic prechorus project a climactic return to stability when the chorus begins. The chorus itself has no structural work to do, itself representing a prolonged arrival. It is no surprise, then, that verse-prechorus-chorus cycles usually culminate in telos choruses. Preceded by an initiating verse and prechorus, the telos chorus revels in the structural arrival, offering no teleology of its own. A single functional circuit spans the entire cycle, with the prechorus's unstable PD–D flanked by tonic in verse and chorus (recall Example 6.1).

This chapter's basic premise is that verse-prechorus-chorus form is fundamentally different from both sectional and continuous verse-chorus forms. Further, as we have seen over and over again in this book, the differences both stem from and extend beyond the form's harmonic profile. The chapter begins with a detailed look at this basic cycle layout, where the prechorus separates an initiating verse and telos chorus. In this context, I look at modulating cycles, phrase-rhythmic expansions and contractions, and a particular situation I call *verse-prechorus fusion*, where verse and prechorus functions occur within the span of a single section. I proceed to consider verse-prechorus-chorus cycles with non-telos choruses. When the chorus is sectional, the effect is one of plenitude; an initial return to stability solidified with a concluding cadence saturates listeners with the release of tension. The rare occurrence of a continuation chorus after a prechorus involves delaying a highly anticipated cadential arrival; done carefully, this can have a transcendent effect. A concluding section considers the roles of bridges and other internal sections in the context of full-song layouts.

Initiating Verse + Prechorus + Telos Chorus

A telos chorus most naturally follows an initiating verse and prechorus. When it does, its telos aspect comes to the fore. The initiating verse begins by establishing a solid starting point, often through a chord shuttle or loop. The prechorus sets the plot in motion with unstable harmonic areas, gaining energy by fragmenting

Example 8.1 Huey Lewis and the News, "Hip to be Square" (1986): verse–prechorus–chorus form with initiating verse, prechorus, and telos chorus.



the melodic groups and intensifying the texture. The energetic peak and release of tension come at the moment of telos, the downbeat of the chorus. This moment represents the goal point of the cycle. Rather than deflating after hitting the goal, the telos chorus sustains the peak energy level for as long as the section lasts. Like its preceding initiating verse, the telos chorus tends to engage in cyclical processes such as shuttles or loops, especially accompanying a single repeated melodic motive.

With an initiating verse, prechorus, and telos chorus, all of the cycle's harmonic and melodic tension occurs in the prechorus. Verse and chorus both prolong tonic, the former an initial tonic and the latter a concluding one. These respective tonics are connected by pre-dominant and dominant in the prechorus. We saw in chapter 3 that telos choruses commonly emphasize 1 in the melody; initiating verses will often prolong some other tonic tone (3 or 5), with the prechorus connecting the two by step. The telos moment thus completes both harmonic and melodic trajectories. A song we have previously encountered in pieces provides an archetypal illustration: Huey Lewis and the News's "Hip to Be Square" (Example 8.1). The song's verse embellishes a I \leftrightarrow IV shuttle with a bass and guitar riff, the melody meanwhile falling off from 3. The prechorus outlines IV, with I acting as its upper fifth, and ends on V as the melody descends $\flat 3-2$. Finally, the title lyric takes us to the downbeat of the chorus, settling on 1 over a return of the verse's tonic-prolonging riff (the full chorus is transcribed in Example 3.10). Example 8.2 graphs the verse–prechorus–chorus cycle, showing the functional circuit and melodic descent across all three sections.



Example 8.2 Graph of the verse–prechorus–chorus cycle in "Hip to be Square" showing a single functional circuit spanning all three sections.

In chapter 3 I described telos choruses as "rock-out" choruses. The idea of a climactic arrival extending throughout the section would certainly seem to elicit some sort of physical response. There is some evidence that as pop charts began to skew toward dance hits-in the late '70s with the disco explosion and again in the mid-'80s with the advent of MTV-the number of successful verse-prechorus-chorus songs increased. Jay Summach's analysis of Billboard's Annual Top 20 shows not only that verse-chorus forms gradually pushed strophic, AABA, and other forms off of the charts (to only 10% in 1985-89) but also that the subset of verse-chorus forms containing a prechorus rose from 20% in the '60s to 52% in the '80s (Summach 2011, Example 26; see also Summach 2012). Indeed, many quintessential '80s dance tracks follow the initiating verse-prechorus-telos chorus layout, including Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," "Bad," "Smooth Criminal," and "Man in the Mirror"; Madonna's "Papa Don't Preach," "Open Your Heart," and "Like a Virgin"; DeBarge's "Rhythm of the Night"; Kenny Loggins's "Footloose"; and Wham!'s "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go." The '80s' predilection for initiating verse-prechorus-telos chorus layouts is not limited to the dance-pop output; it also appears in many heavy metal tracks, such as Van Halen's "Dance the Night Away," "Jump," and "Panama"; Ratt's "Round and Round"; Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer"; and Def Leppard's "Pour Some Sugar on Me," as well as mainstream rock hits such as Air Supply's "Lost in Love," Genesis's "Invisible Touch," and many singles by Daryl Hall and John Oates.

I will be careful not to overplay the significance of any correlation between verse-prechorus-chorus form and dance genres. The buildup to a telos chorus can enhance that moment's rock-out, but most of what gets us out of our chairs comes from a track's timbre and texture. Put a pounding beat under a sectional verse-chorus song and it will bring more dancers to the floor than any verse-prechorus-chorus form sung over an acoustic guitar. The correlation between dance songs and verse-prechorus-chorus form might stem from two independent trends rather than any causal relationship. However, my guess is that it is more than pure coincidence. The rock-out potential of a climactic telos chorus was likely attractive to songwriters in dance genres, which may have accelerated rock's overall trend toward favoring verse-prechorus-chorus form. Alternatively, it might be that verse-prechorus-chorus songs rose to the top of the charts, leading others to copy that layout without much thought as to the reason for its success. Either way, the association is tenuous but present; you do not need verse-prechorus-chorus form for a successful dance track, but if you have one, you might just inject an extra measure of danciness into the harmonic structure to support an already dancey timbre and texture.

In any case, the teleology of initiating verse, prechorus, and telos chorus does not always signify an invitation to get up and move. Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," an early verse-prechorus-chorus song, builds to a spiteful chorus as the singer relishes the addressee's fall from grace (Example 8.3). The lyrics follow a similar outline to those of "Hip to Be Square": how things used to be in the verse, how things are now in the prechorus, and some sort of assessment of the change in the chorus. (This narrative seems particularly paradigmatic in verse-prechorus-chorus form.) "Like a Rolling Stone" is set aggressively in the second person-using the vitriolic "Bob Dylan 'you" also heard on "Positively 4th Street" from the same year-culminating in a telos chorus whose repeated jabs pummel the addressee with contempt. The verse and prechorus engage in a search for $\hat{3}$ (E) supported by tonic harmony. This scale degree occurs prominently in both sections-over V in measures 3 and 7 and over IV in measures 9-12-but does not appear over a I chord until the moment of telos in measure 21. We can understand the arrival at 3 here to complete a stepwise melodic ascent from 1 in the verse via 2 in the last two measures of the prechorus (see Example 8.3b). The chorus's telos aspect is certainly present, but the type of rocking out it elicits is not so much the dance-around variety; instead, we cheer on the singer as he lays into the addressee, imagining ourselves delivering the satisfying barbs. Simon Frith's comment about "Positively 4th Street" is just as applicable to "Like a Rolling Stone": "The pleasure of these lines is as a means of sounding our own feelings of contempt and hauteur" (Frith 1996, 184).

Similar Verse and Chorus

Initiating verses and telos choruses are both commonly set to chord loops. In many verse-prechorus-chorus songs, the verse and chorus contain the same loop. We have already encountered this feature in "Hip to Be Square," and other instances abound, from the Young Rascals' 1966 "Good Lovin" to Foreigner's 1977 "Feels





like the First Time" to many of the '80s songs already mentioned including "Billie Jean," "Like a Virgin," "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go," "Jump," "Panama," and so on. Paul McCartney highlights the similarity of verse and chorus in Wings' "Silly Love Songs" by adding the chorus's vocal line as a countermelody under the second verse. Verse and chorus sharing a chord progression is a feature not only of verse-prechorus-chorus form; chapter 6 gave several example of

sectional verse-chorus songs with nearly identical verse and chorus, combining both sectional verse with sectional chorus (e.g., "Ramblin' Man," Example 6.2) and initiating verse with telos chorus (e.g., "Just My Imagination," Example 6.16). John Covach even has a term—"simple verse-chorus"—for any song whose verse and chorus share a chord progression (2005). When a prechorus intervenes, though, the situation is rather different from the sectional verse-chorus examples. Inserting pre-dominant and dominant functions recontextualizes the loop from its initiating function in the verse to a concluding one in the chorus. Using the same progression in verse and chorus spotlights the circularity of a functional circuit: we have undergone a journey and returned to the place we started. As with any such journey, things aren't exactly the same when we return. Melody, texture, and lyrics differentiate its beginning and end; as we saw in chapter 3, telos choruses often emphasize 1, exhibit anacrustic rhythmic profiles, begin with the title lyric, and contain short melodic units—none of which is typical of initiating verses, and all of which increase the telos chorus's conclusive quality.

Let's take a look at Van Halen's "Dance the Night Away." The initiating verse does not exactly contain a chord loop; its eight measures alternate two-measure I-V-IV and I-IV-V progressions (Example 8.4). It is not impossible to hear the verse as two four-measure antecedent phrases, with half cadences in measures 4 and 8. The prechorus, again eight measures long, also seems to come to a half-cadential pause halfway through in measure 12. Each phrase involves the interrupted melodic descent 3-2, over I-V in the verse (twice) and vi-V in the prechorus. The prechorus's second half begins just like the first but resolves its final V chord—and melodic 2-to tonic on the downbeat of the chorus. The chorus's reprise of the verse's progression supports a decidedly telos-like melody, with two statements of the title lyric beginning and ending on 1. The chorus recontextualizes the verse's progression to remove any sense of a half cadence after four bars; here, it really does resemble a chord loop, despite the scrambled chord order. Placing the verse's progression in a tonic-prolonging context retrospectively supports the verse's initiating function, solidifying the sense of a broad trajectory across the verse-prechorus-chorus cycle.

Modulation in verse-prechorus-chorus form

Sometimes, the prechorus's harmonic instability tosses us into a new key. Unlike key changes in sectional verse-chorus form, where each key governs its own self-contained section, tonal shifts in verse-prechorus-chorus form involve a harmonic transition from one key to another. With few exceptions, this transition occurs in the prechorus: the verse establishes one tonal center, the prechorus destabilizes that center, and the cadence into the chorus lands on a new center. The result is a functional circuit whose initial and final tonics are different. Again in **Example 8.4** Van Halen, "Dance the Night Away" (1979): verse–prechorus–chorus form with several half cadence-like arrival points before the authentic cadence into the chorus.



contrast to sectional verse-chorus modulations, this structure gives a distinct tonal trajectory *from* the verse's key *to* the chorus's, resembling what theorists have called *directional tonality*. Directional tonality describes pieces that begin and end in different keys with neither key hierarchically superior to the other (see Krebs 1981, e.g.). In modulating verse-prechorus-chorus cycles, the chorus's key may be the tonal goal, but it is not necessarily the song's global tonic; rather, the transition from the verse's key to the chorus's is itself the governing tonal structure.

Most modulating verse-prechorus-chorus cycles move from a minor key to its relative major, taking advantage of the two keys' shared pitch-class content. Foreigner's "I Want to Know What Love Is" modulates from Eb minor to Gb major by way of the prechorus's Abm7-Cb/Db progression, representing iv-bVII and ii-V in the respective keys (Example 8.5a). In Carly Simon's "You're So Vain," the prechorus begins and ends on an F chord, representing bVI in the verse's key of A minor and IV in the chorus's key of C major (Example 8.5b). The prechorus itself gradually reveals that the key is changing, so we could interpret an overall

Example 8.5 Modulations within verse-prechorus-chorus cycles.

	0									
Verse	Prechorus early pivot to new key, confirmed at chorus									
	starts at 1:10									
eb: i	iv^7 6 — G: ii^7 4 —	-5 - 3			IV I ⁶	ii I	${ m V}_{4}^{9}$	Ι		
B∳m	Abm7 Db/Ab	A♭m7	D♭/A♭ A♭m7	D♭/A♭ A♭m7	C♭ G♭/B	• A♭m G♭	C>/D>	GÞ		
т	PD						D	Т		

(a) Foreigner, "I Want to Know What Love Is" (1984)

(b) Carly Simon, "You're So Vain" (1972)

	Verse	Prec	horus	gra	dual tr	ansitior	n to new key			Chor	JS
		starts	at 0:38								
1	a: i	♭VI ⁷	♭VII ⁷	v	i	♭VI	⊧III	♭VII	⊧VI		
		C: IV ⁷	V^7	iii ⁷	vi 7	IV	Ι	V	IV	Ι	
	Am	Fmaj7	G7	Em7	Am7	F	С	2 4 G	44 F	С	
	Т	PD							D	т	

(c) Daryl Hall and John Oates, "Private Eyes" (1981)

Verse	Precho	us pro	echoru:	Chorus		
	starts at 0	:33				
C: I	ii ⁷	vi ⁷	iii ⁷	\mathbf{VII}_{4}^{9}	$V_{4}^{\frac{9}{7}}$	
	a: iv ⁷	i ⁷	v^7	?	VII_{4}^{9}	i
С	Dm7	Am7	Em7	Aþ/Bþ	F/G	Am7
Т	PD			D		Т

(d) The Beach Boys, "Don't Worry Baby" (1964)

Verse	Precho	us direct s	hift in middle o	Chorus	
	starts at 0	:33	1		
C: I	ii	V	F♯: ii	V	Ι
E	F#m	В	G#m	C#	F#
т	PD	D ——	→ PD	D	Т

progression from *b*VI in A minor as syntactical pre-dominant to IV in C major as syntactical dominant—both of which are the same chord. Daryl Hall and John Oates's "Private Eyes" swaps the key progression to take us from C major to A minor (Example 8.5c); the prechorus's progression resembles that of "I Want to Know What Love Is," outlining ii–V in one key and iv– \flat VII in the other. Non-relative key relationships occasionally crop up as well, such as the whole-tone ascent in the Beach Boys' "Don't Worry Baby" (Example 8.5d); here, the prechorus is based on a PD–D shuttle but shifts up a whole step between its two iterations.

Modulation within a functional circuit reinforces the syntactical nature of the circuit's component functions. That is, the progression from tonic stability to a pre-dominant departure, dominant return, and tonic arrival does not go away when the first and last tonics come from different keys. The syntactical process has very little to do with specific notes. If a prechorus shifts the location of pitch stability, then tonic function will arise from a different chord. The function is the same—only the chord has changed. Verse–prechorus–chorus cycles that modulate therefore generally follow the same formal-harmonic process as those that do not. A key change, of course, is often a primary expressive feature of a song; songs that modulate into their choruses, especially in a minor-to-relative-major relationship, can lend a sense of harmonic triumph. That triumph, or whatever expressive effect a particular modulation may have, arises within, not instead of, the harmonic trajectory of verse–prechorus–chorus form, a somewhat unexpected twist in an overall normative process.

Verse-prechorus-chorus and srdc

Ever since Walter Everett identified **srdc** as one of rock's fundamental thematic layouts, authors have noted its commonalities with verse-prechorus-chorus form. Everett was one of the first to make the connection, writing, "The SRDC scheme and verse-prechorus-chorus pattern are in fact closely related; in songs that do not contain a chorus, ... the Departure-gesture that precedes each refrain ... has the same formal function as a prechorus, but clearly the stage is smaller" (2009, 146–47). Jay Summach (2011) traces the genesis of verse-prechorus-chorus form to an elongation of **d** and **c** within the **srdc** scheme such that they are each as long or longer than **s** and **r** combined (see also von Appen and Frei-Hauenschild 2015, 66–69). Summach identifies considerable gray area between **srdc** and verse-prechorus-chorus, an idea further pursued by Trevor de Clercq, who identifies various intermediate steps between the two layouts (2012, 153–78). All trace the connection to the same process: the **d** and **c** portions cleave apart to become separate prechorus and chorus sections, with the verse encompassing **s** and **r**.

Verse-prechorus-chorus form thus has something in common with continuous verse-chorus form: the sense that a single thematic process unfolds across an entire cycle. As with continuous verse-chorus form, the **srdc** overlay of verse-prechorus-chorus is a matter not only of thematic structure but also of harmony. Chapter 7 showed that continuous verse-chorus cycles tend to exhibit **srdc**'s model 2 or model 3 as defined in chapter 2, where the cadence arrives at

Example 8.6 Verse-prechorus-chorus's harmonic structure derives from model 1 for srdc.

srdc model 1
$$\begin{bmatrix} s & r & d & c \\ T & PD & D & T \\ & & & \\ Verse & Prechorus & Chorus \end{bmatrix}$$

the end of c. Verse-prechorus-chorus form is based instead on model 1, where the cadence arrives at the beginning of c, as shown in Example 8.6. Connecting verse-prechorus-chorus to srdc model 1 makes perfect sense, since c becomes a telos chorus, prolonging tonic after an initial cadential arrival. It is significant that verse-prechorus-chorus and continuous verse-chorus derive from distinct srdc models. That is, the difference between the two forms is more than just a matter of slicing srdc up in a different way. Chapter 2 discussed how the three srdc models associate with distinct lyrical and melodic structures; likewise, verse-prechorus-chorus and continuous verse-chorus cycles offer substantially different processes despite their shared basis in srdc. In other words, "Hip to Be Square" and "Like a Rolling Stone" resemble "Misery" and "Sugar Shack," while "Ticket to Ride" and "Eye of the Tiger" resemble "From Me to You" and "Joy to the World."

Phrase Rhythm

The srdc organizations in verse-prechorus-chorus and continuous verse-chorus forms, besides being based on different harmonic models, also differ in their hypermetrical frameworks. In continuous verse-chorus, an srdc structure simply splits in half, resulting in an initiating verse over sr and a continuation chorus over dc. Each srdc component is the same length, and the division into two sections is mostly a result of lyrical and textural maneuvers. But in verse-prechorus-chorus, the srdc layout undergoes an expansion into three equally sized sections by doubling the length of d and c. The basic length for a verse-prechorus-chorus cycle is 24 measures: a four-bar s and four-bar r combine into an eight-bar initiating verse, followed by an eight-bar prechorus (d) and eight-bar chorus (c) (see Example 8.7). These proportions are sometimes doubled, making a basic cycle length of 48 measures. More often than not, the basic length is stretched and/or contracted in some way, but one can usually relate the result to the 24-measure model. For instance, "Hip to Be Square" follows the model exactly in its second cycle, but its first and third are modified: the first cuts the length of the chorus in half to four bars, resulting in a 20-measure cycle, and the third adds five measures to the prechorus by repeating its first half with a one-bar extension, resulting in a 29-measure cycle. "Like a Rolling Stone" has a swollen prechorus, with three four-bar phrases forming a 12-measure prechorus within a 28-measure cycle.

Example 8.7 Verse-prechorus-chorus, unlike continuous verse-chorus, involves a metrical expansion of **srdc** in which **d** and **c** are twice as long as **s** and **r**.



In general, verses are the most phrase-rhythmically regular section, most often sticking to their basic eight-bar length (or 16 in the case of doubled proportions). Prechoruses, on the other hand, very often exhibit various types of phrase-rhythmic expansion, adding metric instability to their harmonic instability. Internal prechorus expansions can come in the form of an extra four-bar unit, as in "Like a Rolling Stone"; repetition of some material, as we will see in "Come See about Me" and "Like a Virgin" (Examples 8.9 and 8.17); or simply longer phrase lengths, as we will see in "Born to Run" (Example 8.10). A common external expansion involves sitting on the prechorus's final dominant for an extra measure or two, increasing the anticipation of the chorus's arrival. In the Ramones' "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker," the extended dominant adds to the prechorus's energy gain leading into the chorus's telos arrival (Example 8.8). The song begins with an eight-measure verse giving us s and r, here of the statement-response rather than statement-restatement variety. The prechorus begins on vi and ends on V, the former prolonged through a 5-6-5-6 motion involving IV and the latter prolonged with the cadential I. The final V chord doubles its length from the expected two measures to four measures as lead singer Joey Ramone holds his final "oh yeah!" The extension increases the tension of the functional dominant and emphasizes the leading tone in the melody, which participates in a $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ ascent across the whole cycle. Extensions like these often serve as confirmation that the song has a prechorus and chorus and that we are not just making our way through an srdc verse. In "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker," measure 9 could easily have been the beginning of a four-bar d; the song's fast tempo and topical reference to pre-psychedelic '60s rock certainly support such a hearing. One can easily imagine a recomposed version where measures 9-12 lead right to measures 23-26, in which case the latter would act as a refrain within a single srdc verse. Even in measures 13-14 of the original version, we might not yet know we are leading up to a chorus. But the V chord's extension puts all doubts to rest; we know measure 19 will be the start of a chorus before the music even confirms it.¹

¹ My discussion of internal and external phrase-rhythmic expansions draws heavily on William Rothstein's book *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (1989, chapter 3).

Example 8.8 The Ramones, "Sheena is a Punk Rocker" (1977): the prechorus's final dominant is extended for two extra measures.



Choruses that come after prechoruses tend to stick to their expected eight-bar length. However, since telos choruses are often built from a short motive repeated over and over, they can easily expand or contract by varying the number of repetitions. The chorus to "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker," for instance, runs for 16 measures, double the expected eight. While this doubling adds considerable length to the cycle, the expansion does not feel particularly meaningful—an extra few statements of the title lyric, as opposed to a super-sized chorus. "Hip to Be Square"s first chorus is half the expected length, presenting its two-bar motive only twice; later choruses normalize to eight bars, but it is unlikely that most listeners even notice the difference. "Like a Rolling Stone" gives us five two-bar motives in its first chorus, while later choruses give us six; again, unless you were counting, you probably would not detect any asymmetry. Telos choruses achieve their goal on their first downbeat; everything else celebrates that goal. Some celebrations last for a while, and others are brief.

Minimal choruses

Some telos choruses are so brief that they barely seem like choruses at all. The verse-prechorus-chorus cycle then seems like an srdc verse where d grew into a prechorus but c remained in its original form as a four-bar refrain. In the Supremes' "Come See about Me," the verse and chorus might have bookended a 16-measure srdc structure if the intervening material had remained close to a four-bar length. Instead, they are separated by a 10-measure prechorus, built from two four-bar ideas where the second is extended to six bars through an internal repetition (see Example 8.9). The result is something like the hybrid structure sr-prechorus-c; the prechorus seems too significant to be merely a d phrase, while c seems too fleeting to be a true chorus. A related process involves a telos chorus that is not necessarily shorter than expected, but rather contains no melodic activity after the initial arrival. In Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run," an eight-measure verse and sprawling 14-measure prechorus lead to a chorus that vanishes as soon as it begins (Example 8.10). Not only that, but the second cycle does not even give the title lyric at the climactic moment, replacing "Baby, we were born to run" with "I wanna know love is real." Though what I have labeled as the chorus spans eight measures, the vocal line ends on the downbeat, with Springsteen offering only an incidental comment in the remainder of the section. Citing this lack of melodic activity (as

Example 8.9 The Supremes, "Come See about Me" (1964): short four-bar chorus after eight-bar verse and expanded prechorus.



Example 8.10 Bruce Springsteen, "Born to Run" (1975): telos chorus with minimal melodic content after eight-bar verse and expanded prechorus.



well as the non-fixed lyrics), Trevor de Clercq implies that the passage at measure 23 cannot be a chorus, calling it instead a "link." Indeed, these eight measures provide a smooth transition back to the verse by reprising the song's introduction, itself based on the verse's chord loop (de Clercq 2012, 259–62).

When we put "Come See about Me" and "Born to Run" in the context of telos choruses, however, the internal differences do not seem so significant. Many archetypal telos choruses repeat a two-bar anacrustic motive four times (cf. Example 3.12); would "Come See about Me" be meaningfully transformed if its four-measure chorus were repeated to make an eight-measure section? Would we perceive an entirely different form if Bruce Springsteen had sung "Baby, we were born to run" again instead of "Yes, girl, we were" in measures 26–27? It is true that either section could, in another context, act as a refrain (or maybe a "link"), as could many other telos choruses whose identity is not in question. The sense of telos is determined as much by the buildup to the chorus as by the chorus itself. If we perceive a verse and prechorus, almost anything that follows will take on the role of chorus if it completes a cadence and extends it for some period of time. This is where the hypermetrical extensions in "Come See about Me" and "Born to Run" come in. In both songs, the prechorus is the longest of the three sections, strongly indicating that it is indeed a prechorus and not just the **d** phrase of a larger verse. With a clear verse and prechorus followed by a climactic arrival on the following (hyper)downbeat, the signs that the ensuing section is the chorus are so strong that the section itself does not need to do much to confirm its identity.²

Short prechoruses

The same logic does not quite apply when the prechorus is short. A verse-prechorus-chorus cycle of 8 + 4 + 8 measures might sound more like **srd** + chorus, in which case the sense of a full-fledged prechorus is not unequivocal. Consider Blondie's "Call Me" (Example 8.11). Jay Summach has this to say about the verse-chorus cycle:

A four-bar harmonic progression in c is repeated, creating an eight-bar passage that cleaves off as a two-part (aa') chorus, leaving behind a three-part (aa'b) verse. The d portion of the sentence is too short to be considered a separate module, but the fragmentation and increased rate of harmonic changes, in combination with the singer's rising melodic line and more focused vocal tone, produce an unmistakable prechorus effect. Musicians sometimes refer to a nascent prechorus of this sort as a "climb" or "ramp." (Summach 2011, [22])

In other words, **d** fulfills prechorus function but, according to Summach, is too short to be considered its own section. In addition to the motivic and timbral features Summach describes, the passage also fulfills the harmonic function of a prechorus, providing PD–D with its repeated iv–V progression, resolving into the chorus's tonic-prolonging chord loop.

I would not be as quick to dismiss d's potential identity as a prechorus. Yes, it is short, but it remains separated from both the verse and the chorus.

² In categorizing minimal choruses as choruses, I do not mean to dismiss the potential for formal ambiguity. Trevor de Clercq often resists such discrete categorization, preferring to identify "blends": individual sections that exhibit elements of more than one section type (e.g., "prechorus/chorus" or "chorus/link"). De Clercq's point that analysts too often minimize ambiguity is well taken (2017a, abstract); music theory's desire to categorize can often force messy things into overly neat packages. Such blends certainly pervade the rock repertoire; my discussion of verse-prechorus fusion later in this chapter identifies one such type. However, de Clercq's blends-in particular those involving choruses-neither take into account the surrounding context nor acknowledge that a given section type might have more than one prototype. To de Clercq, a prototypical chorus is essentially what I call a sectional chorus. So even the most normative telos and continuation choruses seem to him to deviate significantly from the prototype, leading him to question their status as choruses. If we acknowledge individual prototypes for all three chorus types, then most of de Clercq's "chorus/link blends" become telos choruses, and most of his "prechorus/chorus blends" become continuation choruses. For instance, de Clercq analyzes the choruses of both "Hip to Be Square" and "Jump" as chorus/link blends, and two of his lead prechorus/chorus blends—John Mellencamp's "Pink Houses" and the Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again"-I would analyze as standard continuation choruses. (Curiously, he also identifies measures 9-22 of "Born to Run" as a prechorus/chorus blend, seemingly because an online analysis by David Temperley labels this section as the chorus. I find it hard to hear measure 9 as anything other than a standard prechorus; de Clercq even admits that "had [mm. 9-22] led to some sort of chorus-like material..., we would have undoubtedly considered [it] to be the prechorus of the song" [2012, 261].) That said, plenty of de Clercq's prechorus/chorus blends seem truly ambiguous; for instance, Bryan Adams's "Summer of '69" and Huey Lewis and the News's "Power of Love" have passages that combine aspects of prechorus and chorus functions. See de Clercq 2012, chapter 5, and 2017a.

Example 8.11 Blondie, "Call Me" (1980): four-measure prechorus surrounded by eight-measure verse and chorus.



Sr and c each present complete eight-bar hypermeasures, and d is stuck in the middle. A normative 16-bar srdc structure divides into two eight-bar units, with r and c on weak hyperbeats and s and d on strong hyperbeats (Example 8.12a). Srdc's expansion into a 24-bar verse-prechorus-chorus cycle divides instead into three eight-bar units (Example 8.12b). The situation in which d is only four bars long resembles the latter more than the former in that it divides into three hypermeasures, the second shortened by what Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff call "metrical deletion" (1983, 101ff.; see Example 8.12c). Songs with short prechoruses thus retain the sense of three distinct metrical units corresponding to three distinct thematic groups. (Compare with verse⇒prechorus fusion, to be described later, where verse and prechorus fuse into a single metrical span.) The ambiguity is whether or not the short passage between verse and chorus deserves its own section label. That, of course, depends on what one prioritizes in section labeling. Summach prioritizes length, so in his view a four-bar passage cannot be its own section. But from the perspective of large-scale formal process, these metrically distinct passages fulfill the formal function of prechorus despite their brevity. I am thus comfortable labeling these short passages as full-fledged prechoruses.

Some prechoruses are even shorter than half the length of the other sections. Kiss's "Rock and Roll All Nite" sandwiches a four-measure prechorus between a verse and chorus of 16 measures each (Example 8.13). The prechorus in fact contains only two measures of material, with the next two a drums-only extension. Nevertheless, those two measures provide PD–D (as \flat VI– \flat VII) resolving into a telos chorus. ABBA's "Dancing Queen" offers a teeny-tiny two-measure prechorus separating 16-measure verse and chorus sections (Example 8.14; later verses omit

Example 8.12 Hypermetrical structures underlying **srdc** layouts within a single verse (a) or verse–prechorus–chorus cycles (b–c).

(a) A 16-bar srdc verse contains two eight-bar hypermeasures. Verse 2 3 3 hypermeter: 1 4 1 2 4 5678 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 m · 1 2 3 4 d S r C (b) A 24-bar verse-prechorus-chorus cycle contains three eight-bar hypermeasures. Verse Prechorus Chorus hypermeter: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 m.: 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 S r d C (c) A verse-prechorus-chorus cycle with short prechorus contains three eight-bar hypermeasures as in (b) above, but the second is shortened via metrical deletion. Prechorus Chorus Verse 3 4 2 3 = 12 3 hypermeter: 1 2 1 4 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 m.: 1 S r d C

Example 8.13 Kiss, "Rock and Roll All Nite" (1975): 16-measure verse and chorus with four-measure prechorus.

metrical deletion



the repeat and thus contain only eight measures). The chorus divides into two parts, the second of which departs from the first's tonic prolongation, ending with something resembling a cadence. The cadence is somewhat weakened by the melody's hovering around 1 for the entire chorus section, but the chorus certainly has more activity than your typical telos chorus. Perhaps the chorus's somewhat sectional nature is making up for the quick roll through the functional circuit in the two-measure prechorus by reiterating the cadence. Example 8.14 ABBA, "Dancing Queen" (1976): 16-measure verse and chorus with two-measure prechorus.



Verse-Prechorus Fusion

Verse-prechorus-chorus form's tripartite structure unfolds in two domains: melodic grouping—through a series of three metrically distinct sections—and formal function—displaying the three functions of verse, prechorus, and chorus. In chapter 4, we encountered cycles with three distinct thematic groups but only the two formal functions of verse and chorus. The middle group often displayed some prechorus-like energy gain but never departed from the verse's tonic prolongation. The result looks like a sectional or continuous verse–chorus cycle with a two-part verse; despite the three thematic groups, these songs bear little resemblance to verse–prechorus–chorus form due to the absence of prechorus function. Some cycles exhibit the opposite situation: two thematic groups but all three formal functions. These cycles play out as verse–prechorus–chorus with verse and prechorus fused together. I will refer to this phenomenon as *verse-prechorus fusion*. My concept of fusion parallels William Caplin's "form-functional fusion," where a single phrase or group expresses two successive functions (Caplin 1998, 45–47). There are two basic ways verse-prechorus fusion can come about. In the first, prechorus function emerges toward the end of the verse section, retaining the sense of progression from verse to prechorus without a distinct thematic or metrical boundary. In the second, the verse exhibits the harmonic profile of a prechorus; here, there is no progression from one to the other, but both occur simultaneously.

Verse⇒prechorus

When the harmonic and rhetorical functions of a prechorus occur within the verse's hypermetric span, it is difficult to perceive two distinct sections. In other words, a verse begins with a tonic prolongation, but before it finishes, it moves to PD and D with the energy increase expected of a prechorus. The functional circuit then concludes with a resolution to tonic at the onset of a telos chorus. This layout is distinct from sectional verse–chorus songs that combine an initiating verse and telos chorus, since those songs contain no functional circuit or energy trajectory; it also does not resemble a half-cadential sectional verse followed by a telos chorus, since that situation would involve a strong sense of conclusion and re-beginning between verse and chorus. Instead, the functions of verse and prechorus are fused together, giving the sense of a verse–prechorus–chorus cycle with only two distinct sections. We are not always aware of the precise moment when verse function gives way to prechorus function; rather, the section presents a verse *becoming* a prechorus. Following Caplin as well as Janet Schmalfeldt (2011), I will notate the process of verse becoming a prechorus with a double arrow: verse prechorus.

Dobie Gray's "Drift Away" gives us two eight-bar hypermeasures across the verse-chorus cycle (Example 8.15). The first hypermeasure exhibits an **abac** thematic layout, with each unit lasting two bars in Gray's laid-back tempo. The **abac** layout is typical of a period structure, but that is not what we have here. The first three units (**aba**) are similar, each spanning one instance of a IV–I chord shuttle (with a V inserted in **b**). The fourth (**c**) departs both harmonically and melodically. In these final two bars, the chord shuttle breaks, the melodic groups shorten to one bar each, the vocal melody jumps up to $\hat{4}$, and the texture begins to thicken. Add **Example 8.15** Dobie Gray, "Drift Away" (1973): verse⇒prechorus fusion where the seventh and eighth measures of the verse exhibit prechorus function.



to that the sense of pre-dominant and dominant functions plus a strong resolution into the chorus's tonic, and we have all the ingredients of a prechorus. However, in contrast to "Call Me" or "Dancing Queen," there is no complete verse preceding this potential prechorus; rather, it occupies the fourth two-bar slot of an eight-bar section, as shown in Example 8.15b.³ The result is two formal sections with three formal functions: an eight-bar verse \Rightarrow prechorus section followed by an eight-bar telos chorus. (The first two choruses are actually seven bars long due to a deletion making their two phrases 3 + 4 rather than 4 + 4 measures; the sense of an eight-bar hypermeasure nevertheless remains.)

³ Perceiving a 4=1 metrical deletion to make measure 7 the beginning of a new hypermeasure is unlikely given the text's rhyme scheme ("strain" and "shame" rhyme with "rain") and our cognitive preference for what Lerdahl and Jackendoff call "binary regularity," i.e., patterns of alternating strong and weak beats (1983, 101ff.). Furthermore, that hearing would require another deletion at the onset of the chorus, this time 2=1, resulting in the odd sequence 1–2–3–1–1–2–3–4.

The process through which verse becomes prechorus is sometimes more gradual than in "Drift Away." We can pretty easily divide "Drift Away"'s verse⇒prechorus section into six measures of verse function and two measures of prechorus function. In AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long," the transition is more fluid. This song's verse is 16 measures long, dividing into four four-bar phrases, each of which iterates an embellished I-IV-V-I chord loop (Example 8.16). The final iteration sustains the penultimate V chord as the band ramps up the energy, bursting into the chorus with a resolution to tonic in both harmony and melody. The chord loop's breakage and the textural intensification elevate the verse's final IV-V to represent PD and D such that the chorus's T completes a functional circuit. The realization that the chord loop is breaking and we are heading to a cadence is gradual; measures 13 and 14 lead us to expect another variant of the first three phrases, and even as the bass enters and the texture thickens in measure 15, we might not yet anticipate a cadential arrival. When the V chord fails to return to I in measure 16, though, we start to realize that we've moved toward prechorus land, and when we explode into the chorus, the sense of climax-cadential and otherwise-is unmistakable. The arrival on the lyric "you"-presumably referring to the same person as the verse's "she"-signifies both a shift in address (third to second person) and the confirmation of the feminine addressee's position of sexual dominance: in the verse, the singer narrates the sexual experience as a purely passive



Example 8.16 AC/DC, "You Shook Me All Night Long" (1980): verse \Rightarrow prechorus fusion in the verse's fourth four-bar phrase.

participant, unable even to speak directly to his partner, and when it is all over he finally turns to her and acknowledges that she was the one doing all the shaking.

Expansions within a verse⇒prechorus section can heighten the perception of prechorus function. In these cases, the verse's fourth phrase—the \Rightarrow prechorus part-becomes elongated in some way. There is a subtle difference between expansions of this type and instances of short prechoruses following complete verses, even though the total number of measures might be the same in both. The former case derives from expansion within a prototype of an 8- or 16-bar verse (8 becoming 10, e.g.), whereas the latter derives from deletion within a prototype of two complete hypermeasures (8 + 8 becoming 8 + 4, e.g.). The key difference is whether prechorus function emerges before or after the completion of the verse's hypermetrical unit. In Madonna's "Like a Virgin," the verse projects a 16-bar hypermeasure in which the final four-bar group acquires prechorus function. This final group expands to a six-measure length through the repetition of its first two bars (see Example 8.17; a transcription is given in Example 1.1b). The result is an 18-measure verse⇒prechorus section resolving into a telos chorus. Compare with "Dancing Queen," where the verse and prechorus also spanned 18 measures; there, however, prechorus function did not emerge until the verse had completed its 16-bar hypermeasure, resulting in a 16-measure verse and two-measure prechorus. The metrical expansion in "Like a Virgin" puts additional emphasis on its prechorus function, but does not change the form-functional fusion of verse and prechorus within a single section. Notice that the fourth phrase here begins a lot like the second, with ii supporting 2, giving some sense of an abab layout. As was the case in "You Shook Me All Night Long," the transition from verse function to prechorus function is fluid, the former gradually becoming the latter within the metrically expanded passage.

Verse/prechorus

Daryl Hall and John Oates's "Rich Girl" begins right away with its chorus, with Hall's voice accompanied by only a barking Fender Rhodes. An opening chorus

Example 8.17 Madonna, "Like a Virgin" (1984): verse \Rightarrow prechorus fusion with hypermetrical expansion.



with sparse accompaniment is often heard in sectional verse-chorus form, as we saw in chapter 6 in songs such as "Carry On Wayward Son" and "Fat Bottomed Girls." "Rich Girl"'s chorus has many features of a sectional chorus, especially in its eight-bar period structure (see Example 8.18). Weakening the sense of sectional chorus is the melody's prolongation of 1 throughout the section, made possible by Hall and Oates's signature "soul dominant" in measure 4 ($V_4^{\frac{9}{4}}$, or a IV triad over the bass note 5; see Spicer 2017). The prolonged 1 plus the anacrustic title lyric give the chorus some measure of telos quality. The ensuing verse further complicates the potential for sectional verse-chorus form. The verse contains no stable tonic at all. Its two four-bar phrases go from IV⁷ to vi and IV⁷ to V, respectively. The vocal melody for the most part hangs from 3, eventually descending to 2 in the last measure. If we look at what happens across a verse-chorus cycle, we can see a melodic descent 3-2-1 supported by IV⁷–V–I representing PD–D–T, as shown in the graph in Example 8.19. In other words, what seems to be the song's verse has the harmonic profile of a prechorus.

Though this book is premised on formal function being rooted in harmonic design, I am not quite comfortable saying that "Rich Girl" has only prechorus and chorus with no verse. I doubt that many people who have not read this book would label the non-chorus section as anything other than a verse. Furthermore, verse-like features are far from absent, especially in the lyrics—the chorus lays out the song's theme while the provisional verse gives detail—and in any case I believe that in order for chorus function to exist there must also be verse function (recall chapter 3).⁴ "Rich Girl" instead exhibits the deepest level of verse/prechorus fusion, in which the two formal functions occur *at the same time*. The label "verse/prechorus"—with the slash—thus tells the story: the section acts as the verse, balancing out the chorus, but exhibits the harmonic profile of a prechorus.

Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young" offers another instance of this type of verse/prechorus fusion. Here, the verse/prechorus section opens the song after a piano introduction. Example 8.20 gives a melodic reduction of the verse/prechorus-chorus cycle. The verse/prechorus section begins on IV, which reappears every odd-numbered bar. With this hypermetrical emphasis, we can understand IV to be prolonged for seven measures, with motion to its upper third vi in measures 2 and 6 and to its upper fifth I in measure 4. The unresolved leading tone and weak metrical position place measure 4's I chord beneath IV in the harmonic hierarchy; this chord represents what Mark Spicer would call a "fragile tonic" (Spicer 2017). In the eighth measure, the groove stops on a V chord, resolving

⁴ When the chorus comes first in a song, we do perceive chorus function right away before knowing if there will be a verse. But we assume that we will eventually hear a verse, and likely right away. If nothing that could be called a verse materializes, we will either revise our initial interpretation of chorus function or we will perceive a comical omission, as employed in Herman's Hermits' "I'm Henry VIII, I Am." (Despite singer Peter Noone's announcement after the first section that we are approaching the "second verse: same as the first," the repeated section really acts as a chorus, as the original music-hall version of the song confirms: there, this section was preceded by a verse and prechorus.)

Example 8.18 Daryl Hall and John Oates, "Rich Girl" (1977): verse/prechorus fusion where the verse exhibits a prechorus-like PD-D harmonic structure.



Example 8.19 Graph of "Rich Girl" showing a partial circuit PD–D–T across its verse/prechorus-chorus cycle.



Example 8.20 Billy Joel, "Only the Good Die Young" (1977): contrapuntal reduction of verse/prechorus and chorus outlining a IV–V–I harmonic structure.



on the second pass to the chorus's tonic across a title lyric-containing extra bar. Melodically, the verse/prechorus section dances around $\hat{1}$, moving to $\hat{7}$ over V and resolving back to $\hat{1}$ for the chorus. The chorus does not have any of the sectional qualities we saw in "Rich Girl," instead exhibiting typical telos structure with a chord loop and improvisatory restatements of the title lyric.

The tonic-avoiding and melodically steady verse/prechorus leaves room for the bridge to take on some of the verse's usual features. The bridge, appearing after two verse/prechorus-chorus cycles, immediately claims the high vocal register hinted at in the lead-in to the chorus. The high G proceeds to descend by step, all the way to 1 on the first pass (supported by IV) but stopping on 2 the second time (see Example 8.21a). While the classic bridge begins away from tonic as expected, the

∏#

T

V (IV V)

I

Example 8.21 "Only the Good Die Young" : the bridge might provide the beginning of a harmonic trajectory concluded by the verse and chorus.



arrival on I in the third measure is sufficiently emphasized to make it seem like a solid statement of tonic function: the band drops out for the first two measures, hitting the chords once on each downbeat, making the V-IV progression seem like a prelude to I. If measure 3 contains a true tonic, then the pre-dominant begins in measure 5 leading, after the progression circles back, to the retransitional dominant at the end of the section. Though we achieve the expected inconclusive half cadence, the verse/prechorus-chorus cycle does not quite provide its conclusive counterpart. The bridge's $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent is not answered with $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ but simply with 1-7-1. Likewise, the bridge's T-PD-D half circuit does not lead to a full circuit but rather to an auxiliary cadence PD-D-T. It is not implausible to hear the return to the verse/prechorus as a continuation of the bridge's progression. The bridge's melodic descent might continue from the bridge's final 2 through the verse's 1 down to 7; the bridge's concluding V chord might then connect to V at the end of the verse/prechorus, with the prolonged IV in between acting as its lower neighbor. This reading is shown graphically in Example 8.21b. Heard this way, the bridge, verse/prechorus, and chorus together outline a $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}(-\hat{1}-\hat{7})-\hat{1}$ descent over a full T-PD-D-T circuit. In other words, the bridge could be understood to provide the first part of the harmonic/melodic trajectory that was missing in

the verse/prechorus-chorus cycles. The song started in the middle, and only in its bridge—the form's middle—do we get the beginning. This reading is certainly not indisputable, and I admit that it takes an active decision for me to hear it this way. However, I would argue that the absence of verse harmony in the song's main cycles opens up the possibility of hearing an unusual trajectory such as this—nonstandard structures prompt nonstandard interpretations.

Verse-Prechorus-Chorus Form with Sectional Chorus

Verse-prechorus-chorus form comes about most naturally with a telos chorus. The energy buildup in the prechorus pairs well with the chorus's tonic-prolonging plateau. Replacing the telos chorus with a sectional chorus alters the form's trajectory. The prechorus projects a climactic arrival on the downbeat of the following section, but a sectional chorus takes us through its own harmonic trajectory, suggesting that its final cadence-not its initial tonic-serves as the cycle's goal point. The theoretical possibility of competing cadences at the beginning and end of the chorus-similar to what we saw in "Dancing Queen"-does not usually materialize in practice. Instead, prechoruses that precede sectional choruses tend to take on a half-cadential quality, minimizing the sense of resolution at the chorus's onset and elevating the final cadence's structural status. The resulting harmonic layout looks like Example 8.22. Railroad tracks at the end of the prechorus (//) indicate that its dominant effects a half cadence and does not resolve into the chorus's initial tonic. At the same time, the dotted arrow connecting the prechorus's dominant to the chorus's concluding tonic indicates that the final cadence provides harmonic closure for both the chorus on its own and the cycle as a whole. The idea that a cadence can provide closure for its local functional circuit as well as an earlier half circuit is analogous to Schenker's description of interruption in Free *Composition* as $\hat{J}_{I-V}^{\hat{3}-\hat{2}} || (\hat{J}_{I-V}^{\hat{3}-\hat{2}})_{-I}^{-\hat{1}}$, where the second branch's first part is subsidiary to the first branch (see Schenker 1979, Fig. 21b).

Let's look at three examples, one each from the '60s, '70s, and '80s. The Foundations' "Build Me Up Buttercup" begins with its 16-bar sectional chorus (see Example 8.23, bottom lines). The chorus provides a standard **srdc** structure exhibiting harmonic model 3: a chord loop prolongs tonic in **s** and **r**, **d** destabilizes tonic and moves to the pre-dominant, and **c** cadences, making use of the cadential I. (Notice that the **dc** portion has a nearly identical chord progression to the **dc**

Example 8.22 Verse-prechorus-chorus harmonic layout with sectional chorus.

Verse Prechorus Chorus (sectional) T PD D // T PD D T **Example 8.23** The Foundations, "Build Me Up Buttercup" (1968): verse-prechoruschorus form with sectional chorus.



portion of Three Dog Night's "Joy to the World" [Example 2.11]; this relates to what Christopher Doll calls the "saint schema" [2017, 180–84].) When the full cycle eventually arrives, we might be surprised to hear both a verse and prechorus preceding the chorus—an overture chorus usually signals sectional verse–chorus form. After the eight-measure verse, the prechorus extends to 10 measures by holding its final V chord for an extra two bars, not unlike what we saw in "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker." When V first arrives in measure 15, a triplet drum fill ramps up the energy, setting up a climactic cadence. However, the energy suddenly drops in measure 16: singer Colin Young switches to a quiet falsetto, and all instruments drop out except the bass and sparse percussion. This drop in energy drives a wedge between the prechorus and chorus, and despite the melody's anacrusis, it is difficult to hear the chorus's downbeat as resolving the prechorus's dominant. Instead, we sense half-cadential closure after the prechorus and the beginning of a new trajectory with the chorus. Having already encountered the entire chorus helps with this hearing, since we already know we are leading to a cadence. The

melodic structure also contributes: the melody climbs chromatically $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\sharp\hat{4}-\hat{5}$ in the verse and prechorus, then starts over in the chorus, again climbing $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$. The reattainment of $\hat{5}$ at the beginning of the chorus's **d** phrase sets off a linear descent $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$, providing melodic closure for the entire cycle.

In my other two examples-Stevie Wonder's "Sir Duke" and Culture Club's "Karma Chameleon"-the choruses are less conclusively sectional. In "Sir Duke" (Example 8.24), the chorus repeats a four-measure phrase beginning on I and leading to a suspended V chord. The chorus's chord sequence involves jazzy chromaticism, but we can understand it as a variant of the common descending-thirds progression I-vi-IV-ii-V: the second chord, ostensibly a minor-seventh chord built on E#, contains a complete G#-major triad, so we might interpret it as a major VI^{\sharp} with a substitute bass note. The melodic fall $G\sharp -F\sharp -D\sharp$ supports this hearing. The chordal extensions derive from the melody's arpeggiation $\hat{5}(-\hat{6}-\hat{5})-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$, outlining the tonic triad with little regard for the local chord progression. (The counterpoint exhibits what I have previously termed a "syntax divorce," where the melody and harmony follow independent processes; see Nobile 2015.) So is the chorus's progression a chord loop? The lyrics-the single line "They can feel it all over" stated four times—are well-suited for a telos chorus. On the other hand, Wonder makes a significant effort to separate the prechorus and chorus such that there is little sense of cadential resolution across the boundary. The prechorus comes to a full stop before the chorus enters, and the melodic line is discontinuous between the two sections, jumping up to 5 after hovering around $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$. These factors make the onset of the chorus sound like a new beginning.

Example 8.24 Stevie Wonder, "Sir Duke" (1976): verse-prechorus-chorus form with sectional chorus and postchorus.



Further, despite the chorus's repeated progression, a potential cadence emerges at the instrumental postchorus. The postchorus starts with an emphasized B in unison before proceeding with a long pentatonic riff; one could hear its downbeat as a cadence to tonic, with the chorus's final V chord acting as dominant and the preceding IV and ii chords providing the pre-dominant. It is possible, then, to perceive the postchorus—not the chorus—as the cycle's telos section.

Rhetorical elements make "Sir Duke"s prechorus sound half-cadential, in turn making the chorus sound like the beginning of a new functional circuit and suggesting a cadential arrival into the telos-like postchorus. Similarly, in "Karma Chameleon" (Example 8.25), a rhetorical pause at the end of the prechorus separates it from the ensuing chorus. The chorus progresses as a straightforward period until the consequent fails to arrive at an authentic cadence. (The hypothetical IV–I cadence shown under the staff in Example 8.25 would provide a normative consequent and is likely what we expect after hearing the antecedent.) If the prechorus indeed ends with a half cadence, then there are no authentic cadences in the entire song. One might be tempted to analyze some measure of closure across the prechorus–chorus boundary, but I find it nearly impossible to hear the chorus's downbeat as a point of arrival. The half cadences in the prechorus and the chorus's





consequent progression

first phrase generate a strong expectation of cadential closure; a third half cadence concluding the chorus's second phrase is quite a surprise. Frontman Boy George has revealed that the lyrics describe frustration from a homosexual relationship with a closeted partner, who chameleonically assumes the colors of mainstream (homophobic) culture rather than the gay pride colors of red, gold, and green (see Pemberton 2012). The feeling of tonic being just out of reach seems an appropriate musical analog for the lyrical theme.

Verse-Prechorus-Chorus Form with Continuation Chorus

On rare occasion, an initiating verse and prechorus lead to a continuation chorus. With the chorus beginning off-tonic, the prechorus's dominant neither resolves into its downbeat (as with a telos chorus) nor ends half-cadentially leading to the beginning of a new functional circuit (as with a sectional chorus). Instead, the apparent move to an unstable pre-dominant backs us up in the harmonic trajectory, announcing that we're not done yet. The prechorus's dominant remains active as an unanswered question; the continuation chorus extends the prechorus's tension until releasing it in its final cadence, producing a transcendent effect. In chapter 3 I described continuation choruses as "listen-closely" choruses; that moniker especially applies when a continuation chorus follows a prechorus, as we furrow our brows and try to figure out what exactly is going on.

I have not come across enough examples of this layout to make many general observations about it. I will instead offer a look at the form's locus classicus: John Lennon's "Imagine" (Example 8.26), the structure of which Lennon essentially replicated a decade later (in the same key) in "Watching the Wheels." Both songs begin with an eight-measure initiating verse based on a I-IV chord shuttle followed by a shorter prechorus beginning on IV and ending on V. The first time through, the prechorus leads not to a chorus but to the second verse; at this point, what I am calling the prechorus does not really seem like a prechorus, since it is too short and is not pre the chorus. The second time through, though, the prechorus in both songs leads to a clear chorus. The two songs' similarities fade in their choruses, but both begin on IV with a version of the "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression (IV-V-I-III⁷ in "Imagine" and IV-V-I-vi in "Watching the Wheels") and end with a cadence to tonic. As we saw in chapter 3, the "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression can be understood to prolong IV until its final cadential V-I. So, in both "Imagine" and "Watching the Wheels," we have prolongations of I in the verse, IV-V in the prechorus, and IV-V-I in the chorus.

"Imagine"s first cycle—the one without a chorus—exhibits a relatively straightforward functional circuit: a melodic ascent $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ over I–IV–V–I, as shown in Example 8.27a. (Note the structural similarities between this passage and the **srdc** verse in the Beatles' "Misery," also in C major with a I–IV shuttle


Example 8.26 John Lennon, "Imagine" (1970): verse-prechorus-chorus with continuation chorus.

and a $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ ascent; with references to both "Misery" and "I Want to Hold Your Hand," Lennon's interweaving of early Beatles material within his solo output suggests that he never lost sight of his musical roots even as he tried to distance himself from them.) In the second cycle, however, the chorus's initial IV chord leaves the prechorus's V in a state of limbo. The off-tonic chorus thwarts any cadential resolution while also continuing the progression. The chorus circles around the "I Want to Hold Your Hand" progression a few times, each potential IV–V–I cadence negated by a fall to III⁷. When the fourth try ultimately succeeds, the melody has climbed above its previous goal of 1; the cadential IV–V–I in measures 18–19 supports $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$, pushing above the tonic note and ascending into dreamworld. The harmony's non-resolution at the chorus's downbeat allows for such a transcendent arrival, negating the worldly cadence we heard in the first cycle as Lennon now describes his post-political utopia. Example 8.27b shows

the continuation chorus in the second cycle.



the second cycle's transcendent voice leading, with V prolonged from the end of the prechorus through most of the chorus and the chorus's IV-V-I providing the harmonic foundation for the melody's rise to $\hat{3}$.

Full-Song Layouts

A verse-prechorus-chorus cycle does most of the formal work for the whole song. The dynamism of the three sections provides enough energetic ebb and flow that the harmonic instability of a classic bridge is not required. In this way, verse-prechorus-chorus form resembles sectional verse-chorus form. However, a verse-prechorus-chorus cycle is much more unified than a sectional verse-chorus cycle by virtue of its single harmonic trajectory. Instead of a complementary explanation, the chorus is the logical conclusion to the verse and prechorus. In this way, verse-prechorus-chorus form resembles continuous verse-chorus form. Because verse-prechorus-chorus cycles act as unified structures, more than two in succession risks monotony. Songs with more than two cycles usually break up the succession with some sort of contrasting internal section-sometimes a classic bridge, but just as often a solo or other instrumental passage. Tellingly, though, a compound-AABA layout of cycle-cycle-classic bridge-cycle is not so common. Classic bridges, when they occur, most often lead to an instrumental section before returning to the main material; when they do not, they usually lead back to the chorus alone rather than a full cycle. In all cases, there is little sense that the final material provides closure for a broader AABA cycle.

Table 8.1 lists some representative examples of the most common layouts seen in verse-prechorus-chorus form. As the table shows, the layout begins highly

Example 8.27 Graphs of "Imagine"'s first two cycles, showing the transcendent effect of

constrained but gradually diverges as it goes on. An initial statement of two complete cycles is virtually required (with or without an intro), after which most songs move to a contrasting section. The table divides the examples based on what type of contrasting section follows the first two cycles: a solo or other instrumental passage, a classic bridge, or both. The bottom row lists verse-prechorus-chorus songs with no contrasting material. Of these, only "Like a Rolling Stone" continues with more complete cycles after the first two; "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" gives an incomplete third cycle, but the others simply repeat their choruses as a concluding gesture. In the examples that do contain contrasting sections, there are no consistencies in what follows the contrasting material; the only generic requirements are that the main material comes back and that the final section is the chorus (not including any outro). We might get a full cycle, but we might get only the chorus, repeated until it fades out, or prechorus and chorus with no verse (often following a solo over the verse's progression, thus resembling a cycle with instrumental verse). Other times, the material is reorganized in pieces, with verses leading directly to choruses, alternate versions of sections, or even material from more than one section superimposed.

The two initial cycles provide the exposition of the song's main material. Contrasting sections guard against any potential monotony an unbroken string of cycles might cause, but the ensuing return to the main material does not act as the culmination of a large-scale formal process. Even when the return is a complete cycle, it plays the role of a structural coda. That it more often takes on a fragmentary and/or improvisatory format supports this reading. From a processual point of view, the first two verse-prechorus-chorus cycles do all the work; there is no "problem" that needs solving in the remainder of the song, nor is there any sense of unfinished business. That is not to say that the contrasting material and subsequent return are insignificant; often the song's most exciting passages occur after the two main cycles. Pump-up modulations in later choruses can turn the energy up to eleven, so to speak, giving that chorus even more of a telos climax (examples in Table 8.1 are labeled "mod"). Metal and related genres place their requisite virtuosic guitar solo after the first two cycles, often functioning as the song's energetic peak (Ratt, "Round and Round"; most Van Halen songs, e.g.). And while classic bridges in verse-prechorus-chorus songs often contain minimal lyrical interest-think of Whitney Houston's "somebody whooo, somebody whooo ..." in "I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)"-they occasionally offer some twist or clarification. In the bridge to Wings' "Silly Love Songs," Paul McCartney assures us that love is serious business, clearing up the parsing of the title-the songs, not the love, are what is silly. After this clarification and a brief saxophone interlude, McCartney channels Brian Wilson with an accumulative buildup of melodies and countermelodies based on the chorus.⁵ Though the song

⁵ The quiet chorus at 4:11 followed by the addition of two other vocal lines in counterpoint evokes the passage at 1:59 in the Beach Boys' "God Only Knows," a song that McCartney famously admired, even citing it

Layout through contrasting material	Examples	Layout after contrasting material
2 cycles + solo/instrumental	Huey Lewis and the News, "Hip to Be Square" Genesis, "Invisible Touch" Big Brother and the Holding Co., "Piece of My Heart" Ratt, "Round and Round" Wham!, "Wake Me Up before You Go-Go" DeBarge, "Rhythm of the Night"	 (2:10) 3rd cycle + outro (1:59) chorus + 3rd cycle (mod/rpt/fade) (3:10) chorus × 2 + outro (3:04) 3rd cycle w/alt inst prechorus + outro (solo) (2:22) prechorus + chorus (inst) + chorus (rpt/fade) (2:22) prechorus + chorus (mod/rpt/fade)
2 cycles + classic bridge	Dobie Gray, "Drift Away" Madonna, "Like a Virgin" Al Green, "Take Me to the River" Heart "Crazy on You" Whitney Houston, "I Wanna Dance with Somebody"	 (2:13) 3rd cycle w/breakdown + outro (2:08) 3rd cycle w/only half of verse + outro (2:52) chorus + 3rd (rpt/fade) (2:52) chorus + verse + chorus + bridge (inst) + chorus (2:57) prechorus + chorus (mod) + outro
2 cycles + classic bridge + solo/instrumental	Blondie, "Call Me" Culture Club, "Karma Chameleon" Billy Ocean, "Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car" Tommy Tutone, "867-5309/Jenny" Wings, "Silly Love Songs"	 (2:43) chorus (rpt/fade) (2:29) prechorus + chorus (rpt/fade) (3:35) prechorus + fakeout + chorus (mod) (2:40) prechorus + chorus + outro (3:10) alt chorus + sax solo 2 + quiet chorus w/accumulation + sax solo 3 + verse!
no contrasting material	Stevie Wonder, "Sir Duke" Bob Dylan, "Like a Rolling Stone" Tommy James and the Shondelles, "I Think We're Alone Now" Michael Jackson, "Man in the Mirror" The Beatles, "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"	After two cycles: (2:41) chorus \times 3 + postchorus (3:00) two more cycles + outro (1:42) chorus/outro (2:33) chorus + chorus (mod) + long outro (2:09) 3^{rd} cycle with no prechorus (rpt/fade)

is less than half over at the end of its classic bridge, the remainder comes across as compositional play over the main chord loop rather than essential formal material.

Modifications of the two-cycle norm crop up occasionally. In both Foreigner's "Feels like the First Time" and Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now," the second cycle is interrupted before its chorus. In the former, a sudden drop in energy follows the second prechorus at 1:56, accompanying a move to the relative minor and a proggy synthesizer riff. Singer Lou Gramm comes in with the title lyric in the same rhythm as the chorus. This bridge-like section leads to the chorus, thus acting as an interpolation within the second cycle. (It is also a *harmonic* interpolation: the $I-II^{\sharp}-III^{\sharp}-III^{\sharp}-IV-I$ layout of the first cycle becomes $I-II^{\sharp}-III^{\sharp}=V/vi-vi-V/vi]-IV-I$.) A second cycle just like the previous one might have contradicted the lyrical insistence that it feels "like the first time," "like it never has before," and "like it never will again." In "Don't Stop Me Now"-whose chorus is sectional-the second prechorus leads to a drums-only breakdown at 1:58. Lead singer Freddie Mercury riffs over backup vocalists chanting "Don't stop me, don't stop me," and the section builds to a climactic Brian May guitar solo. The second cycle's interruption seemingly defies the title's imperative. However, recall that when the chorus is sectional, the prechorus usually ends with a half cadence, in effect "stopping" the harmonic trajectory as the chorus begins. The breakdown section leaves the prechorus's final dominant hanging; the explosive arrival of the guitar solo at 2:13 sounds like its tonic resolution, potentially forming a telos arrival absent from the first cycle. Perhaps the second cycle, more than the first, is the one that obliges the title. Overall, both songs play with the normative layout of two cycles-solo-main material, with modifications to the second cycle. In other words, expressive significance arises from their dialogue with the established norms.

Conclusion

This book has presented both a methodology for analyzing form in rock songs and a theory of formal organization in the rock output of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. The methodology grows out of the general concept of form as process described in the introduction, where rock songs are seen as cohesive entities unfolding through time. From this point of view, we approach a rock song by listening for broad trajectories, identifying points of stability and tension in small-scale phrases and sections as well as large-scale cycles and entire songs. More specifically, we focus first on a song's harmonic trajectory, interpreting a prolongational progression through a functional circuit (or noting one's absence), and then aligning that trajectory with the layout of formal functions. From this methodology comes the theory that the rock repertoire in question is based on a small set of conventional formal-harmonic patterns, what I have been calling rock's forms. Chorus-less songs follow AABA or strophic form, whereas songs with chorus divide into sectional verse-chorus, continuous verse-chorus, or verse-prechorus-chorus forms depending on their formal-harmonic process. These forms express their component formal functions in various ways based on their overall harmonic design, allowing us to distinguish sectional and initiating verses; sectional, continuation, and telos choruses; classic and groove bridges; and so on. The section types and full-song forms represent standard models with which individual songs act in dialogue; departures from the models are thus interpreted not as imperfections but as expressively significant features.

Both methodology and theory are intended to provide a starting point for analyzing any rock song. When you approach a rock song with analytical intent, consider how its harmonic structure creates a sense of motion toward a goal, and consider how that motion unfolds across the song's verses, choruses, and other sections. If a song engages directly with a conventional model, consider how that model contributes to the song's meaning. Does a sectional verse-chorus song present distinct narrative ideas in its verses and choruses? Does a verse-prechorus-chorus song resolve an unanswered question in the lyrics as the harmonic trajectory concludes on the chorus's downbeat? Does a strophic song exhibit a song-spanning process outside the realm of harmony? If a song instead seems to break away from the standard models, consider how it subverts normative expectations for expressive effect. Does it set up a tonic arrival that never occurs, producing a sense of unfulfillment? Does it place a bridge-like chord progression in a verse, giving a normally stable starting point a solid dose of tension? You will inevitably encounter some songs that do not seem to engage with conventional forms at any level. That perception in itself is to some degree meaningful; if most songs follow a certain procedure, the decision not to do so is marked, prompting us to ask why that decision was made. In certain genres, such as progressive rock, eschewing normative formal models is expected, with each song's unique and often expansive formal process designed to produce a particular expressive effect. Other tracks seem built upon different principles from the typical ones, such as the "cumulative forms" identified by Mark Spicer (2004), which are based on the gradual addition of melodic layers until a complete groove is formed. Even when normative models do not apply, a consideration of formal process can frame meaningful analyses: Can we identify a functional circuit, and if so, how do its stability relations play out in time? Do harmonic elements serve a non-teleological purpose, and if so, do other elements create large-scale trajectories?

Finally, I hope that this book can speak not only to the act of analyzing rock music but also to the general practice of *listening* to rock music. As I discussed in the introduction, there exists a belief that rock musicians and fans do not "hear" harmony or large-scale structure. Milton Babbitt—no stranger to accusations of engaging with things we can't hear—offers the following retort: "Of course you can hear these [things] ... but it's not a matter of whether you hear it, it's a matter of the way you think it through conceptually with your musical mind; it's a matter of how you conceptualize it, how you conceive it" (Babbitt 1987, 23). Babbitt's point summarizes the difference between hearing and listening: the former involves passive reception of a sonic stimulus, but the latter is an active, participatory effort—listening, in other words, is something we do. I don't doubt that most rock fans do not by default actively engage with harmonic elements at the level discussed in this book (though I maintain that these elements still significantly affect their perception). But I am not out to describe our default listening practices; I am here to offer both an invitation to listen—actively—to such structural-harmonic matters and a guide to opening up that mode of perception. My belief is that doing so is a valuable and important endeavor, one that both enriches engagement with the rock repertoire and reveals essential features of the style that might otherwise remain below the conscious level.

Looking Ahead

As we look beyond our focal repertoire's end date of 1991, we begin to see a move away from engagement with normative formal-harmonic conventions. That move comes not from other patterns replacing those identified in this book but instead from a rather abrupt shift in the role of harmony. Grunge and hip-hop, the two genres responsible for the first shakeup of mainstream rock and pop styles in the early '90s, both tend to move harmony into a non-teleological role, setting the scene but allowing the primary syntactical process to unfold in other domains; the dance styles that took over mainstream charts later in the decade (and still dominate today) furthered this trend. In particular, teleological processes often fall to the domains of timbre and texture, with many songs based on large-scale textural trajectories over unchanging harmonic progressions. For instance, in Nirvana's 1991 breakout hit "Smells Like Teen Spirit," which ushered grunge into the national spotlight, stark textural shifts create the sense of a verse-prechorus-chorus structure not unlike those described in chapter 8, with a stable, low-energy verse followed by forward motion in the prechorus leading to a moment of maximum tension resolving in climactic fashion on the downbeat of the chorus. With a persistent $I^5 - IV^5 - \phi III^5 - \phi VI^5$ chord loop, harmonic functions do not play into this process, ceding their role to what Asaf Peres calls "sonic functions" (2016): the verse's hollow bass, closed-hi-hat drumbeat, and sparse clean-guitar accents provide a textural starting point akin to an initial tonic; the prechorus's distorted guitar and open hi-hat along with singer Kurt Cobain's ethereal repetitive "hello, hello" hint that something big is about to happen; and when Cobain shouts his anacrustic "With the lights out" over a drum fill, the sense of a climactic arrival concluding a cycle-long process is as palpable as in any of the telos choruses previously discussed. Similar texture trajectories, especially underlying a verse-prechorus-chorus layout, crop up across genres in the decades since 1991, from alternative-rock tracks such as Alanis Morissette's "You Oughta Know" (1995), to pop hits such as Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone" (2004), to contemporary EDM-infused hip-hop such as Flo Rida's "My House" (2015). On top of the changing role of harmony in mainstream genres, the world of experimental rock music expanded dramatically, aided by the proliferation of peer-to-peer file sharing such as Napster, facilitating broad distribution outside mainstream venues; as Brad Osborn shows, these experimental artists picked up where '70s prog-rock bands left off, eschewing standard formal paradigms in favor of more expansive and unique designs (Osborn 2010). Finally, the advent of classic-rock radio created a cultural separation between "old" rock and "new" rock, encouraging artists to distance themselves from prior norms (or embrace them so as to highlight the disjunction, as in the postmodern practices of sampling and mashups; see Leydon 2010 and Boone 2011).

That said, the formal-harmonic patterns that defined rock for 30 years did not simply disappear, and those conventions remain the basis for rock's use of large-scale harmonic trajectories through today. But conceiving of form as harmony is now only one of many available approaches to song creation. As genres and subgenres proliferate, it is getting harder and harder to assert the presence of a single overarching rock *style*. What has never changed, though, is the ability for rock songs to embark on a temporal journey from beginning to end, each portion doing its part to take us wherever we are going. Though such journeys play out in numerous ways, it does rock a disservice to treat it as a purely visceral medium, devoid of syntax and structure, appealing only to our primal instincts rather than our intellect. That critics hail such perceived antistructural properties as both desirable and indicative of rock's cultural value is no less problematic, the implication being that music serving a particular social purpose cannot exhibit structural complexity, lest it lose its populist credentials. I hope that this book will help lay to rest such views, but not simply by asserting that rock does indeed have interesting structure. Rather, I hope to have made the case that rock's structural properties are inherent in its cultural value; that rock speaks to us not only with words and sounds but also through its expression of organized time; that a combination of intellectual *and* visceral engagement is what gives rock music its ultimate social currency. Asserting rock's sophistication in both structural and non-structural realms does more than merely establish that "low" art has cultural value—it ultimately breaks apart the notion that there was any difference between "high" and "low" art to begin with. And what could be more rock and roll than that?

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