

Sections and Successions in Successful Songs:
A Prototype Approach to Form in Rock Music

by

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Abstract

This dissertation tackles the open question of how listeners perceive form in rock music. Extant theories of form offer only limited explanations as to how we categorize the various components of a rock song and how these choices affect our overall understanding of form in this repertoire. Research in the field of cognitive psychology shows that our categorization process involves *prototype effects*. Consequently, this dissertation employs a prototype-based approach to form in rock music. A central task in this regard is the development of a broader understanding of the prototypical instantiations of *section roles*, including verse, chorus, refrain, bridge, solo, prechorus, intro, outro, and link. Using this information, we can see how these section roles interact with different *organizational schemes*. Three main organizational schemes are used as points of reference: the 12-bar blues, the 16-bar SRDC, and the 32-bar AABA. As various attributes of these schemes change from song to song, we see *conversions* of these schemes from one section role to another. As a result, we expose possible paths in the historical development of form within rock music. During this conversion process, various types of ambiguities between section roles can be found. Often, in fact, the choice between one section role and another inherently represents a false dilemma. The notion of *blends* – which describe amalgamations of two or more section roles – becomes useful to track these ambiguous cases. Ultimately, this research appraises those factors that drive analytical practice and attunes us to the complex ways that real-world songs engage with our expectations and sustain our fascination.

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Chapter 1: Prologue

Form has been the subject of intensive and diverse theorization throughout the history of music. More so than any other aspect of music, form allows for a wide variety of approaches because theories of form inherently engage with every possible musical parameter – harmony, counterpoint, motive, rhythm, meter, etc. – and thereby inherit the variety of approaches associated with these domains. The numerous methodologies that scholars have proposed to account for the form(s) found in the first movements of classical sonatas testify to the difficulties posed by just a single form category (see Burnham 2002). Spanning more than two centuries, theories of phrase and rhetoric (Mattheson and Koch), theme and development (Reicha and Marx), formal functions (Riemann, Ratz, and Caplin), and the “Will of the Tones” (Kurth and Schenker) offer a panoply of answers to the basic question: “What is form?”

In contrast to common-practice music, form in rock music may seem relatively straightforward. Indeed, theorists sometimes express basic satisfaction with the modern form terminology of rock and its analytical usage. For example, Jocelyn Neal writes: “The mere act of labeling sections of a song is little more than a rote exercise, one that is easily and frequently taught to undergraduate students of popular music” (2007, 44). With a similar connotation, Allan Moore writes that section labels such as verse, refrain, chorus, and bridge are “categories frequently used by writers and performers, and their ubiquity is sufficient to ensure their analytical value” (2001, 52). Yet despite the analytical value that Moore assumes these categories hold, he devotes very little ink to explaining what these labels mean or how they should be applied. The reader is left with only the brief glossary entries for these terms provided at the end of his book. Presumably, the meanings of these terms are self-evident.

As we examine published analyses for a variety of rock songs, however, it quickly becomes clear that the use of section labels is much less straightforward than these authors suggest. In many cases, different theorists provide different (if not contradictory) analyses of the same song (examples can be found throughout this dissertation). The extent and nature of this disagreement varies. In some cases, section labels differ; in other cases, section labels coincide, but their boundaries do not; often the issue is simply whether a particular group of measures deserves to be a separate section at all. Some scholars might not be concerned with this disagreement, as one could say that differing interpretations of a musical work testify to the richness and complexity of the work itself; undoubtedly, much great music supports multiple readings. But the large number of conflicting interpretations gives us cause to reconsider the presupposed self-evident nature of our section labels.

Recently, in fact, a number of theorists have bemoaned the state of terminology within the field. For example, Christopher Endrinal writes that “[in examining rock music,] one of the difficulties has been the terminology used to describe the form of rock songs and the fact that... little has been written regarding some general definitions of form in rock music” (2008, 61). Similarly, Paul Harris writes that “there are no settled definitions for what constitutes, and thus distinguishes, verses, choruses, and bridges, and the infinitely variable interludes acting as spacers between the main structural components” (2006, 62). Underlying these complaints is the general notion that, without a shared set of definitions for these terms, we cannot effectively communicate to one another our ideas about form in rock music. In other words, our understanding of form in rock relies heavily on these section labels and the definitions we assign them.

The importance of providing definitions for section labels may thus appear to be a central task for theorists of rock music. In this regard, it is worth considering what constitutes a definition. In formal terms, there are two main ways that a definition can be constructed. These are the *intensional* and *extensional* techniques (Hurley 2008, 97ff). With the extensional technique, meaning is assigned to a term by indicating which items belong to the category it encompasses. In essence, this technique involves simply a list of members (whether individuals or groups). For example, the statement “The Baltic states are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania” defines the term “Baltic states” through a complete inventory of its members. In contrast, a term defined via the intensional technique lays out the essential properties of the term itself. To put it another way, the intensional technique provides the means necessary to identify its members. For example, the statement “Ice is frozen water” states exactly what qualities are sufficient to classify something as “ice.” If something is frozen water, then it is ice. Conversely, if something is not frozen water, then it is not ice. It should be noted that with either the intensional or extensional technique, there is a strict process of inclusion and exclusion. Something either is or is not a “Baltic state” or “ice,” for instance.

Reading through the work of music theorists, we often find evidence of a definition-based approach, usually using the intensional technique. Take, for example, Endrinal’s analysis of “Elevation” (U2, 2000). This song contains a middle passage (beginning at 2:11) for which one might consider the label “bridge” to be appropriate. But Endrinal explicitly denies this reading. His reasoning is clear, as he writes, “[T]his section does *not* have transitional function; therefore, it cannot be called a ‘bridge’” (2008, 78; emphasis in the original). To Endrinal, therefore, bridge quality relies on this essential element of transition, without which we must abandon the term. Bradley Osborn takes a similar tack in his analysis of the song “Don’t Stop Believin’” (Journey, 1981). He states that, although most people

would consider the title-containing final passage (beginning around 3:21) to be the chorus of the song, this passage “is *not* a chorus” (2010, 19 and 111-2; emphasis in the original). Here again, we find an author denying a section label to a span of music despite apparent evidence to the contrary. In particular, Osborn explicitly divorces our perception of a passage from what that passage is (or is not). Note that both authors work under the assumption that category membership is an either/or scenario. In so doing, they strongly imply that certain elements are essential in the membership assignment process.

In many cases, though, we find that theorists ascribe non-essential properties to section types. For instance, Everett states that a bridge is a section “often beginning in an area other than tonic and usually leading to a dominant transition” (2001, 363). In a similar manner, he writes that a chorus is a section type “nearly always affirming the tonic [and] usually appearing in the song’s interior” (364). Although Mark Spicer refers to these statements by Everett as “precise definitions” (2005, ¶10), it seems that Everett’s statements are not very definition-like at all. With the semantic hedges of “usually,” “often,” and “nearly always,” Everett implies that some particular chorus, for example, might not affirm tonic or might not appear in a song’s interior. These qualities (harmony and position) thus do not appear to be essential elements of a chorus. The implication is rather that these elements are important to our understanding of chorus sections but are not determining factors. Instead of offering definitions, therefore, Everett is providing information as to the usual configurations of various section types in rock music. Why, one might wonder, does Everett not define these section labels more strictly? As we will see, the reasons for this apparent looseness derive from basic factors of human cognition.

A prototype approach

Since the 1970s, cognitive scientists have become aware that definitions do not model very well the way we understand the words and labels we use. The process by which we label something, in fact, turns out to be extremely complex – more complex than can be accounted for by any definition. Seminal work in this regard was done by Eleanor Rosch (e.g., 1973) and her colleagues. This research showed that when we categorize something (whether it be a physical object, a temporal event, or a social relationship), we rely less on definitions of these categories and more on abstract comparisons with what are judged to be the best examples of that category. (This and related research will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.) Rosch referred to such abstract comparisons as evidence of *prototype effects*, since certain category members are rated as more representative (i.e., prototypical) of the category than others. Subsequent psychological research has affirmed these findings. As a result,

much modern work within the field of cognitive science has taken a prototype-based approach to conceptual categorization.

A prototype-based approach is founded on the notion that there are no essential elements for our conception of a category. Rather, we understand categories through a panoply of attributes, none of which are required for membership in that category. Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance relationships (1953) is instructive here. Objects having attributes AB, BC, and CD may – because of these attributes – fall into the same category, yet some of the objects in this same category (those with attributes AB and CD) have no overlapping qualities. No essential element for that category can thus be said to exist. Certain attributes, of course, may be more perceptually central than others. Yet peripheral attributes can also trigger our perception of a category, and an amalgamation of peripheral attributes may trump one or more central attributes in our judgments of category membership. Membership itself, in fact, is not seen to be an all-or-nothing condition. Instead, categories are *graded*, meaning that different objects hold different degrees of membership within a category.

For the study of form in rock music, a prototype-based approach offers numerous advantages. To begin with, we can realize that the difficulty in coming up with definitions for section labels resides within the inadequacy of the way a definition-based approach models human perception. We must assume, for instance, that no definition of a chorus section exists. Instead, we ascribe chorus-like quality to a span of music based on a confluence of factors, none of which are in and of themselves necessary to the quality of the section. A prototype approach helps us appreciate that individual sections evoke form labels in various degrees of strength or weakness, harmony or dissonance, purity or mixture. Although theorists will, in all likelihood, continue to say that a particular section “is” or “is not” a verse, chorus, bridge, etc., a section may instead be viewed as manifesting qualities of one or more section types more or less prototypically. We can also imagine that by changing various attributes of a section type, we can transform one category into another (i.e., verse to chorus). Since section categories display graded membership, moreover, the potential for ambiguity and blends between section types is relatively high. Ultimately, the recognition that various attributes contribute to our categorization process in rock music opens up a complex research area, in which the effects of a host of factors should be considered with regard to their role in our categorization process.

In its current state, however, form theory in rock offers only limited information as to what musical effects activate our sense of the role (or roles) a section plays within a song. Existing descriptions of song sections are universally perfunctory, and few guidelines are provided as to how to apply these section labels. When describing the verse-chorus form, for

example, John Covach mentions that “the focus of the song is squarely on the chorus” (2005, 71), but how this focus is identified, generated, or measured remains unexplained in Covach's discussion. Theorists also provide many examples of songs to elucidate their section definitions, but the reader is usually left to infer the details of how and why a particular passage expresses a given label. When theorists do provide descriptions of section labels, the emphasis is mostly on lyric structure (Stephenson 2002, 135; Moore 2001, 52; Everett 2009, 145). But formal structures in lyrics and music are often not aligned, and the extent to which musical factors are involved in our perceptual process is an underdeveloped topic.

The development of a broader and deeper understanding of the prototypical elements of form in rock music is a central task of this dissertation. I have argued that we must put front and center in our theoretical system the prototype effects we find latent in theorists' descriptions of song sections. This dissertation thus aims to lay a more solid foundation for a prototype-based approach to form in rock music. The hope is that this will allow us to model more effectively how we hear this music and, perhaps, begin to unravel why it continues to so greatly sustain our fascination.

Dissertation overview

The following pages are organized into four central chapters, which are framed by this introductory chapter and an epilogue. In Chapter 2, a context will be created for the original work in the chapters that follow. This context will be divided into five overviews: 1) research within the field of cognitive science on theories of categorization – specifically, research that supports a prototype-based approach, 2) the use of the term “prototype” within the writings of music theorists, 3) current methodologies of form within the music theory community as well as the intersection of these methodologies with a prototype-based approach, 4) work in the field of music cognition on the perception and effects of form in general, and 5) mainstream approaches to form in rock music. The central task of Chapter 3 will be to develop prototypes for various section labels. These section labels – which will be referred to as section “roles” (for reasons to be discussed) – will be limited to verse, chorus, refrain, bridge, solo, prechorus, intro, outro, and link. An attempt to make explicit what is a complex perceptual process can never hope to achieve complete success. But a much more detailed understanding of section roles will emerge from this discussion. To come to this understanding, three basic methods will be employed: 1) the synthesis of criteria offered by other authors, 2) the identification of other criteria to help explain the more general observations of other authors, and 3) the presentation of original criteria derived from personal intuitions. In essence, the main goal of this chapter will be to present and describe clear cases of section roles. In Chapter 4, we will explore how these section roles interact (or

intersect) with different organizational schemes. Organizational schemes are particular types of melodic and harmonic patterns commonly found in rock music. Three main organizational schemes will be discussed: 1) the blues (12- and 16-bar), the SRDC pattern (16 bars), and the AABA pattern (32 bars). As various attributes in these organizational schemes change from song to song, we can see the schemes “convert” from one section role to another. A central benefit of examining this conversion process is that we expose potential paths in the historical development of form within rock music. The final main chapter (Chapter 5) will be devoted to exposing a particularly interesting subset of ambiguities between section roles. In many cases, we are confronted with strong evidence for one section role, yet the passage seems to also be playing the part of another role within the larger context of the song. In this regard, it appears as if we have blends or amalgamations of section roles. Specific types of blends often recur in rock songs. On its own, each blend might seem to be an isolated case of ambiguity between section roles. But the recurrence of particular types of blends in numerous songs argues for the importance of calling greater attention to such cases.

Some preliminary issues

Before concluding this introductory chapter, it will be helpful to address some preliminary topics. Specifically, it is worth discussing both the technical aspects of the musical examples as well as the repertoire under consideration. There are other preliminary issues that will need to be addressed (such as measure lengths), but these will be reserved for the introductory portions of later chapters so as not to overwhelm the reader with such concerns here.

This dissertation uses two primary means to convey information about a song to the reader: section succession charts and melodic-harmonic transcriptions. A section succession chart (e.g., Example 3.3.02 in Chapter 3) is used to provide a large-scale overview of the form of a song. These charts include the approximate start time for various segments of the song and, typically, the measure lengths of these segments. (When measure lengths are not included, it is often because these lengths are somewhat ambiguous.) These charts also usually contain labels for these song segments, information about potential larger-scale groupings of these segments, as well as useful yet limited glimpses into the attributes of selected domains (such as lyrics or texture). Section succession charts are often employed in the writings of music theorists on rock music; they are especially prevalent in the work of Covach (notably his 2005 and 2009 publications). Although these section succession charts are helpful tools to convey the “big picture” for a song, they have some inherent shortcomings.

The shortcomings of form charts derive from their basic structure, which is essentially a table with data cells organized into rows and columns. The nature of distinct rows implies that there is clear separation between two segments in a song. Of course, consecutive segments often overlap with one another in musical practice (e.g., the last downbeat of one section can also be the first downbeat of the following section). These overlaps are important moments in the form of a song (as we will see) that unfortunately get lost within a table format. Another shortcoming of these charts is that they inherently encourage analysts to choose a single label for a particular song segment. In particular, the small cells do not allow for much more than just a brief label. Despite these shortcomings, no superior method currently exists for representing (in a visual format) large-scale form in rock songs. Working within the system, therefore, we should exercise a certain amount of sympathy to the creator of the form chart. At times, one might feel that an argument put forth in this dissertation is more of a response to the limitations of the form chart medium than it is a meaningful disagreement with the analysis of an author. Certainly, the form chart medium may be seen as the primary culprit in many instances. Nevertheless, we should exercise caution when constructing these charts, for they are a central resource in how we understand (and convey our understanding of) form in rock songs.

The bulk of the other examples used in this dissertation are transcriptions. These transcriptions (e.g., Example 3.2.01 in Chapter 3) capture the basic melodic, harmonic, and lyric content of a short passage from a song. As a result, these transcriptions are inherently limited to only a few domains – in particular, those domains that are pitch-based. Many authors have complained about the emphasis on notation and pitch relationships within the music theory community, especially with regard to the analysis of rock music (Tagg 1982, 42; Middleton 1990, 105; McClary and Walser 1990, 281). Undoubtedly, the transcriptions in this dissertation inherently neglect many parameters – such as timbre, instrumentation, and dynamics – that fall outside of what transcription itself can easily capture. Even within the domains of pitch and rhythm, these transcriptions minimize many interesting aspects, such as rhythmic nuances and microtonal inflections. The purpose of these transcriptions, however, is not to unduly draw the attention of the reader to only a limited set of attributes. Instead, the transcriptions are provided primarily to help the reader refer to particular locations within the form of the song. There can be no substitute for listening directly to the original recordings, for many of the analytical observations presented in the following pages are predicated on qualities that cannot be adequately captured via notation. (Web sites such as youtube.com and groovesnark.com provide easy access to digital versions of the song examples.)

That being said, the transcriptions do act as useful visualizations for certain pitch-based aspects of a song. We should be aware, however, that they represent analyses of song segments. (Winkler 1997 describes in detail how the acts of transcription and analysis are fundamentally inseparable.) This subjectivity – inherent in the notation of recorded sound – is embraced within this dissertation. For example, the transcriptions herein often omit background vocals so that the organization of the primary vocal melody can be more clearly seen. The harmonic textures supporting this main vocal melody have also been reduced to Roman numerals. As is well known, Roman numeral analyses by different music theorists do not always agree (see de Clercq and Temperley 2011). The use of Roman numerals thus represents an interpretation of the harmonic context within a tonal framework. Also, for ease of reading, each song has been transposed to C (major or minor). (The melodic transcriptions may thus be considered to represent a scale-degree-based hearing that includes information on relative registral placement.) Other interpretative elements of these transcriptions include measure lengths and melodic phrase markings (a more in-depth discussion of these elements will be reserved for the introductory portions of Chapters 3 and 4, respectively). The purpose of these transcriptions is clearly one of a scholarly (i.e., non-commercial) nature, and their use is aimed at the enrichment of the academic community as well as the wider public at large. Because the transcriptions are analyses and interpretations of only portions of larger musical works, moreover, they do not supersede either the original recorded versions or commercial sheet music versions. As a result, the transcriptions in this dissertation are considered to fall under the purview of “fair use.”

A final preliminary issue to be addressed is the repertoire under consideration. In particular, the question remains unanswered as to what exactly constitutes “rock music” and “successful songs.” To begin with, the issue of what constitutes “rock music” has been a topic with which theorists have wrestled for many years. As discussed in de Clercq and Temperley 2011 (50-1), we can find both broad and narrow conceptions of this category in academic and journalistic writing. In a narrow sense (e.g., Temperley 2011), rock is a genre of popular music that is distinct from other closely-related categories, such as pop, soul, or rap. Even within these narrower conceptions, rock is seen as still encompassing a number of large sub-genres, such as hard rock, alternative rock, punk rock, and classic rock. We can also find conceptions of rock that cast a much wider net. In Covach’s textbook on the history of rock (2009), for instance, he presents examples ranging from Johnny Cash to Madonna to Public Enemy. Of course, Covach does not explicitly say that all of these artists clearly represent rock music. In fact, we can safely assume that early examples in his textbook (e.g., those by Judy Garland and Howlin’ Wolf) are included because they are part of the *history* of rock, not necessarily because these songs should be considered central examples of rock music.

Undeniably, rock music incorporates stylistic influences from a variety of pre-rock genres, such as blues, jazz, country, folk, and Tin Pan Alley music. As a result, we could say that the category of “rock music” evinces prototype effects, in that some examples seem to be more central than others (the narrower conception), while other examples seem to be less central (the broader conception). Evidence of asymmetrical category structure is to be expected, in fact, based on the naturally-developed meaning for the term “rock” (as will be explained in Chapter 2).

The conception of rock music used in this dissertation is of the broader variety, as reflected in its musical examples. This broader conception is sympathetic to the approach used in recent discussions of harmony in rock music (e.g., Everett 2004 and Doll 2007). The general feeling is that – whether via cross-pollination or some other vehicle – songs across a large swath of popular music share similar compositional practices. With regard to the study of form, the similarity in these compositional practices is reflected by that fact that music theorists use the same section labels (with the same implied meanings) over a wide range of popular music. Moreover, we find evidence of commercial musicians effortlessly shifting between what are often considered to be disparate styles. (Consider, for example, the three versions – pop/rock, country, and world – of the 2002 album “Up!” that were released by Shania Twain [as discussed in Neal 2008].) It is thus with a relatively inclusive approach to rock music that any comprehensive discussion of section labels should probably take place.

A prototype approach to the category of “rock music” ties into the “successful” aspect of the dissertation title as well. “Success” is understood here not as something that is necessarily determined in commercial or chart performance terms. For instance, the song “September Gurls” (Big Star, 1974) was never a big seller, yet it ranks within the top 200 greatest songs of all time (according to *Rolling Stone* magazine [2004]). Success, in other words, can be measured in a number of ways. While album sales or chart performance are certainly measures of success, we should also consider other factors – such as critical acclaim, concert ticket sales, or influence on other musicians – as viable indices of general success. Years of perspective make the issue of success somewhat more clear, as history tends to be the greatest arbiter. Nonetheless, certain songs seem to have garnered general success, whether via commercial sales, critical acclaim, or some other means. This dissertation attempts to primarily employ such songs in its examples. In doing so, there is no attempt to establish a canon of rock music (pace Moore 1992 or Hubbs 2008). Rather, there is an attempt to interact with the unstated canon that already exists within the community of rock musicians, scholars, listeners, and critics.

Chapter 2: Background

2.1: Introduction

This chapter lays out the theoretical context on which the dissertation is based. It begins with an overview of work on categorization within the field of cognitive psychology, since the way we categorize things in general presumably parallels how we categorize song sections in particular. As we will see, this work shows that the way we understand and use categories cannot be codified in any simple way. One theory that attempts to account for the complexities of our categorization process involves what have been referred to as “prototypes.” The term “prototype” requires its own dedicated discussion, though, as it has had a number of different meanings over the years, both in the field of cognitive psychology as well as music theory. Consequently, some time will be spent comparing and contrasting these meanings to better highlight the specific interpretation that is adopted herein. Following this discussion is a brief overview of some modern music-theoretic approaches to form. We will find, interestingly, that aspects of many of these approaches can be seen as responses to the nature of our categorization process. One might assume that the realm of music cognition would be able to offer some insights into these issues, but unfortunately, research on the perception of musical form is sparse and of questionable applicability. The final portion of this chapter summarizes contemporary theories of form in rock music. This summary is not framed directly in terms of prototypes, per se. Instead, it primarily presents some terminology and theoretical background that will be useful in the chapters that follow. It is in these following chapters that the reconciliation of prototypes and form in rock music will take place.

2.2: Cognitive Science and Categories

The standard section labels in pop/rock music (verse, chorus, etc.) are – on a fundamental level – categories into which we assign parts of songs. The words and labels we use represent concepts, and these concepts are essentially mental representations of a particular class of things or processes in the world (i.e., conceptual categories). In this regard, cognitive psychology has much to tell us about the mental processes we use in making section label assignments, since the past few decades have seen much research into aspects of conceptual categorization. Although our ability to parse songs into various sections may initially seem like an elementary task, experimental work in cognitive psychology suggests

that the way we learn, apply, and use categories is a rather complex topic. From the 1970s work of Eleanor Rosch and beyond, researchers have noted asymmetries – i.e., *prototype effects* – in the way we judge category membership, in that some members of a category appear to better represent that category than others. These effects challenge any simple explanation of the categorization process (musical or otherwise). The following pages provide an overview of this work. Very little of this research has much to say directly about music. Be that as it may, it is doubtful that the general principles we see in a variety of other domains (vision, linguistics, etc.) are not related in a significant way to the specific principles we observe in music.

The classical approach

Because we often identify things – such as a chair – in a seemingly quick and effortless manner, it is easy to assume that the process by which we go about this identification is relatively uncomplicated. Until about 1970, in fact, “the psychology of concepts” (as this field has been called) was considered to be a fairly straightforward topic. As a result, cognitive scientists worked for many years under the assumption (whether implicit or explicit) that we understand the words and labels we use through a definition-based approach (Murphy 2002, 12). The pervasive use of definitions has such a great history in Western thought, in fact (tracing all the way back to the formal logic of Aristotle), that Smith and Medin have dubbed it the *classical view* of concepts (1981). Others, such as Lakoff, refer to the use of definitions as *objectivism* (1987, xii), since it derives from a world view in which a particular attribute or feature is an integral part of the thing itself.

A definition-based approach indirectly asserts four different yet related aspects of categories. These aspects can be described as necessity, sufficiency, clarity, and uniformity (Murphy 2002, 15). The first aspect – necessity – is that a potential category member must *necessarily* have the specified attributes of the category in order to belong; otherwise it cannot be a member. The second aspect – sufficiency – describes the fact that if a potential member has these specified attributes, then we have *sufficient* information to accord it category membership. *Clarity* relates to the fact that – given the aspects of necessity and sufficiency – something is either in or not in a category. There can be no ambiguous cases since a definition does not allow for statements other than those that are true or false. Finally, the classical view does not make any distinction between category members. If something meets the requirements of a definition, then it is as good a category member as any other category member. This final aspect displays the quality of *uniformity*, in that all members of the category are equally good examples of the category, and correspondingly, anything outside the category is an equally bad example.

Problems for the classical view

For better or for worse, the way in which we interact with our environment does not seem to follow the simple, elegant design described in the classical view. Although we saw in Chapter 1 that some music theorists use a definition-like approach in their analysis of song sections, we also saw that there were aspects of other theorists' explanations that did not seem definition-like at all. A large body of both theoretical and experimental research shows that the issue of categorization is, in fact, much more complicated than can be accounted for by the classical view of category structure.

An early critique of the classical view can be found in the writings of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. The commonly-cited example is Wittgenstein's discussion of the category "game" (1953). Wittgenstein argues that – although we may assume that every sort of game has something in common – there is, in fact, no single thing that is common to all. Some games involve competition between players (tennis), while others do not ("Ring Around the Rosie"); some games involve multiple players (bridge), while others do not (solitaire); some games are amusing (charades), while others are not (a mind game). As we go through the list of things that we think are games, features crop up and disappear, creating an elaborate network of overlapping similarities. Wittgenstein describes this characteristic of the category "game" as a *family resemblance*, since members of a family share many features but do not all share a single common feature. Family resemblances create problems for the classical view – particularly with regard to the aspect of necessity – since category members do not necessarily have to have any one single feature for category membership.

Another issue for the classical view is how to account for the "fuzzy" nature of many categories (see Zadeh 1965). Categories such as "rich people" or "tall women," for example, do not have the aspect of clarity required by a classical approach because there are no clear or absolute conditions upon which we judge wealth or height. This aspect reveals the graded nature of our conceptual categories and raises the issue of category boundaries (Lakoff 1987, 21-2). Category membership in these cases is not an either/or situation. Instead, a category such as "rich person" is one in which some members more clearly belong, while the status of others is more ambiguous. This last example shows that the categorization process often involves taking a continuous parameter (e.g., wealth) and turning it into a discrete property (e.g., "is" or "is not" rich). The external world presents us with a variety of continuously-variable domains, and language (as a manifestation of the categorization process) divides up these continuous domains into discrete categories.

The domain of color, for example, is a physical continuum (the frequency of light waves) that language discretely partitions, and some of the earliest experimental evidence of prototype effects derives from work on color perception. Research by Berlin and Kay revealed

regularities in the way color was linguistically encoded by different cultures (1969, 1-2). In particular, these regularities appeared when subjects were asked to identify the best example of a specific color term. While one culture might have a basic color term covering the range of both blue and green, the best example for this term would not be turquoise (i.e., a mixture of blue and green). Instead, a standard focal blue or focal green would be the color chosen to best represent that color category. Such findings contradict notions of uniformity within a category, since certain members consistently appear to be better examples than others. Research reported in Rosch 1973 confirms these results. Consequently, Rosch argued that our perception of color centers on perceptually-salient “natural prototypes.”

Of course, a large component of color perception relates to physiological factors. But further research by Rosch and others extended these findings to other domains. In Rosch 1975b, for example, the domain of numbers was shown to exhibit asymmetrical structure. One study showed that when subjects were given the sentence, “X is virtually Y,” they reliably placed particular category members (i.e., those that were more prototypical) into the “Y” position. Statements such as “11 is virtually 10,” for example, were preferred to the opposite statement, “10 is virtually 11.” (This finding highlights the difference between the mathematical definition of numbers and our mental representation of numbers. More on that distinction below.) Similar results were reported in Rips 1975, which found a relationship between prototypicality and induction. Subjects were more willing, for example, to assume that birds as a whole would catch a disease if that disease were found in robins than if the same disease were found in ducks. (Robins are thus more prototypical birds than are ducks.) Prototypicality also appears to affect the speed with which people make judgments of category membership. Rips, Shoben, and Smith (1973), for example, found that subjects were able to categorize a robin as a bird much more quickly than they could categorize a chicken as a bird. These effects held for visual stimuli as well, in that identifying a picture of a robin was shown to be faster than identifying a picture of a chicken (Murphy and Brownell 1985, reported in Murphy 2002, 23). Other asymmetrical aspects of categories were found to relate to the lack of complete transitivity and hierarchy in conceptual categories. In studies by Hampton, for example, subjects reported that tree houses are in the category “dwellings that are not buildings” but also that tree houses are in the category “buildings” (as reported in Murphy 2002, 26-7). Similarly, subjects judged chairs to be furniture, car seats to be chairs, but denied that car seats were furniture. A definition-based approach to categories does not predict the lack of transitivity and hierarchy in these responses.

Types of categories

Overall, we can see that the qualities of necessity, sufficiency, clarity, and uniformity – all of which underlie a classical approach to categories – do not hold up well under scrutiny. Before continuing the discussion, however, it is worth clarifying what is meant by the term “category” itself. Not all categories are equal, and the skeptical reader has probably tried to imagine various counterexamples to those provided above.

Rosch uses the term “natural prototypes” because she is attempting to describe the cognitive mechanisms behind “natural categories.” We thus need to care to distinguish between *natural* categories and *artificial* categories. Artificial categories are those that have been consciously planned, devised, or determined by humans themselves. In essence, artificial categories *are* definitions. Such categories appear, for example, in rules, mathematical logic, and experimental designs. The category of “even numbers,” for example, is mathematically defined to be the category that includes integers divisible by two without a remainder. Yet our understanding of even numbers may not be so straightforward. For example, the number 444444443 seems to be “more even” than the number 375193713, even though both are mathematically defined to be equivalently even (see the discussion in Lakoff 1987, 148-51). We therefore understand numbers as natural categories as well. Natural categories arise in language through no conscious decision of an individual but rather as a result of our interaction with our environment. As a result, natural categories often have an unlimited amount of information that can be learned about them. The natural category of “dog,” for example, potentially contains information about dog behavior, dog diseases, dog anatomy, etc., not just what is or is not a “dog.”

A central question here is to which category type do section labels such as verse, chorus, and bridge belong. Or, more broadly, what type of categories should music theory concern itself with? To a certain extent, music theory is indeed a constructed language that has been consciously determined by its practitioners. We may define a Neapolitan sixth chord, for example, as a particular collection of pitch classes with respect to a particular tonal center. Then again, certain concepts from music theory are notoriously fuzzy, such as the distinction between tonicization and modulation. The difficulty that theorists have had in attempting to define song section categories points to the naturally-developed meaning of these categories. Qualifying words such as “usually” or “often” show evidence of the asymmetrical way in which we understand song section labels, since not all category members appear to be equal. The fact that section labels stand as natural categories can be seen to derive from the origins of these terms within the vernacular tradition of the popular music community (i.e., songwriters, performers, critics, and listeners). A classical, definition-based

approach cannot be considered to reflect our shared understanding, therefore, since – as we have seen – a classical approach fails to model natural categories very well.

Theories of conceptual categorization

While we find strong evidence of asymmetrical membership in our categorization process, it is not entirely clear as to how we should account for this evidence. The experimental phenomena themselves do not necessarily imply a particular theory of mental representation, and so the question remains as to how exactly we process and represent category information. A few theories have been presented in the field of cognitive psychology in this regard, three of which will be discussed here: the *prototype* model, the *exemplar* model, and the *knowledge* model.

The first view – the prototype model – posits that the observed effects derive from the existence of prototypes themselves. But what is a prototype? Sometimes, writers state that a prototype is the “best example” of a category (Lakoff 1987, 7; Murphy 2002, 28). Statements such as these potentially mislead the reader into thinking that there is a single best example for a category. In some cases, of course, there *is* a single best example. For instance, the focal color red is the central member of the category “red.” Unfortunately, many readers of Rosch’s work (especially those that were familiar with only her early work) interpreted her research to imply that there is a single prototype or best example for every category (Murphy 2002, 41). Yet while a single best member may exist in some categories, other categories do not appear to be represented this way. For example, what would an ideal dog look like? More importantly, how could this ideal dog represent the fact that some dogs are black, large, long-nosed, and short-haired while others are beige, small, snub-nosed, and curly-haired? One central issue is that a single ideal type gives no information about the amount of variation that exists within a category (Murphy 2002, 42). Some categories are relatively wide, while others are relatively narrow (e.g., compare the large variability in types of pet dogs to the small variability in the types of pet cats). A single best example does not capture the extent of this variability.

As a result, the “single best example” idea has not been widely adopted. Instead, the central tenet of prototype-based approaches has been their reliance on features (or attributes). One such view has been referred to as the *summary representation* model, which is illustrated in a statement by Zbikowski: “If the values of the prototype for *bird* were *small*, *brown*, *chirps*, and *flies*, then a wren would be most typical of the category” (2002, 42). “The” prototype that Zbikowski describes is obviously not the best example. Instead, it is a list of attributes. This view posits that natural categories are cognitively represented via some collection of features (Murphy 2002, 42). These features are weighted (some are more

important than others), and this collection describes the category as a whole. Note that because this collection of features is basically just a list, it can include contradictory features. A summary representation of a bird, for example, might include a high weighting for “brown feathers” and a lower weighting for “red feathers.” Prototype-based approaches do not always have to represent the category as a whole, however. The features may also be correlated in some way or describe subtypes of the category. For example, some researchers have presented *structured representation* models, which consist of dimensions (or *slots*) and values in those dimensions (*fillers*) (Murphy 2002, 47). Each dimension restricts the type of values it may contain, and thus concurrent contradictory values are avoided. If a bird is flightless, for example, it would also be associated with not flying south for the winter.

In this dissertation, a prototype-based approach will be the primary mode of handling categories of form in rock music. A “prototype,” in other words, captures the attributes of those members that are judged to be more central to that category. In some cases, this prototype involves a summary of the category as a whole, while in others it involves a structured representation of a particular class of members. In either situation, our understanding of the category is seen to strongly derive from the attributes themselves.

One important aspect to keep in mind when discussing attributes is the difference between frequency and typicality. In particular, the frequency of one type of member within a category is not necessarily directly linked to its typicality. It is undoubtedly true that frequency (or “norms”) and typicality are related; part of the prediction process must involve knowing which features are more likely than others. But atypical members may, in fact, be very common. For example, chickens are a type of bird that is very frequently discussed, thought about, eaten, and seen (at least in pictures). Yet compared to a robin (which is much less frequently discussed, thought about, etc.), a chicken ranks as a much less typical member of the bird category (Murphy 2002, 31). It appears, therefore, that our conceptual categories are not necessarily structured in terms of statistical distributions. For a theory of form, the good news is that typicality effects for natural categories are fairly consistent across individuals. In other words, research shows that subjects overwhelmingly agree in their judgments of what are good examples of a category, even when these same subjects disagree as to the exact boundaries (Rosch 1978). This insight is crucial because it implies that – even though we as theorists may disagree on the categorization of certain borderline musical examples – we should be able to find common ground with regard to the category in general.

Although a prototype-based approach explains a great deal of the experimental evidence on conceptual categorization, other theories have also been proposed in its stead. One of these is the *exemplar* model (derived from Medin and Schaffer 1978). The basic idea with this view is that subjects make classification judgments by retrieving stored exemplars,

i.e., specific remembered instances that have been previously encountered. Another model of conceptual categorization is the *knowledge* approach (also known as the “theory theory”). Basically, this view holds that we use knowledge, reasoning, and theories to decide whether a particular example should be in an existing category or some new category (Murphy 2002, 61). Overall, no single theory currently exists that can account for all of the results found in experimental studies on categorization. But this does not mean that these theories are necessarily incompatible. Rather, people may use different strategies for different tasks. Subjects have been shown, in fact, to switch between a prototype approach and an exemplar strategy within the same experiment (Smith and Minda 1998). We may even be able to integrate various approaches within the same categorization task. Presenting these theories as one versus another may thus be somewhat misleading. Nevertheless, a prototype-based approach has provided some of the best answers to date on the psychology of concepts, and consequently, this approach will serve as the backbone of the work herein.

2.3: Prototypes and Music Theory

The term “prototype” has been employed within music theory at various points throughout the history of the field. But this theoretical work has not always involved similar methodologies. Of course, the term “prototype” existed long before cognitive psychologists endowed any particular meaning upon it. The prefix “proto-” can mean “first in time,” “original,” or “primitive.” Thus a music theorist might simply use the word “prototype” in the vernacular sense – as referring to an underlying pattern. This situation appears to be the case with the concept of metric prototypes, for example, as found in Schenkerian theory (see William Rothstein [1989] and Carl Schachter [1987]). Schenker’s original term for this concept – *metrisches Vorbild* (1935) – might just as easily have been translated as “metric model” or “metric example.” Theories of music do not necessarily have the same goals as do theories of mental representation, so we should not expect usages to be the same between the two disciplines. Often, though, music theorists do use the term “prototype” with an explicit reference to work in cognitive psychology. A few of these usages are discussed below, which should help distinguish between various shades of meaning this term has held.

Approaches to prototypes

Sometimes, theorists adopt the “single best example” approach to prototypes. For instance, Agmon 1995 re-conceptualizes functional harmonic theory in terms of prototypes and categories. In this article, Agmon specifically mentions psychological research in the color domain (Harnad 1987), where each basic color category has a single focal prototype.

The functions of tonic, subdominant, and dominant are seen as cognitive categories, for which the pitch collections represented by I, IV, and V respectively stand as the prototypes. Other chords are viewed in terms of “degrees of triadic similarity,” which Agmon defines as the number of common tones a triad has with these prototypes (199). With respect to I, for example, certain chords are seen as maximally similar (III and VI), others as intermediately similar (IV and V), and yet others as minimally similar (II and VII). This conceptualization captures the graded membership of natural categories as well as the fuzzy nature of functional labels, in that certain triads may have dual citizenship (e.g., VI is maximally similar to both tonic and subdominant functions).

By adopting a “single ideal type” approach, Agmon limits the explanatory depth of these category labels. As Agmon himself admits, he separates out a theory of functions from a theory of chord progression. The standard T–S–D–T paradigm of functional succession is, in fact, not within the scope of his prototype theory (204). Yet part of our notion of dominant function certainly relates to its strong tendency (at least within the context of common-practice-era music) to move to tonic. Agmon, therefore, does not construct his theory of functions as an attempt to broadly model our understanding of these function categories. Rather, Agmon has specific goals for music theory – in particular, creating a context for non-standard usages of function labels. For instance, an apparent II chord may (albeit weakly) act in a dominant function, such as is found in the opening bar of Haydn’s Piano Sonata in D major, Hob. XVI: 37 (which alternates I and II chords).

Another setting within which we find the term “prototype” employed is within the writings of Matthew Brown (e.g., 2004 and 2005). In his work, we find Schenkerian theory re-formulated through the lens of cognitive psychology. As is well known, Schenker posits that every tonal composition can be derived from a single background model – the *Ursatz* – of which there are three possible configurations (1935). Each *Ursatz* is a soprano-bass framework that embellishes a simple tonic-dominant-tonic progression, the only difference being the starting soprano scale degree ($\wedge 8$, $\wedge 5$, or $\wedge 3$). Instead of referring to these three *Ursätze* by their common translation (“fundamental structures”), though, Brown calls them “prototypes” (2005, 66). These prototypes, according to Brown, capture the essence of tonal voice leading and harmony. The great composers internalized these prototypes and generated masterworks via the application of a recursive set of transformations (2004, 155).

It is not immediately obvious from Brown’s discussion what natural category (or categories) these prototypes might reflect. In fact, it does not appear that Brown is necessarily using prototypes to explain prototype effects – such as graded membership or unclear boundaries – within any particular category. We might surmise (especially on reading earlier work such as Brown et al. 1997) that the category accounted for by these

prototypes is tonal music itself. Yet that does not seem to be Brown's primary purpose here. Instead, Brown's prototypes represent internalized musical patterns. His prototypes are highly-structured mental models (whether conscious or unconscious) that capture information within a limited domain (pitch). Brown is thus positing a specific theory of mental representation, one that many have found useful to conceptualize the underlying melodic-harmonic structure of common-practice-era compositions.

One other work in which prototypes play a central role is Robert Gjerdingen's 2007 book, *Music in the Galant Style*. In this book, Gjerdingen presents a conceptualization of music that is strongly couched in categorization theory. Gjerdingen's primary purpose is to expose and explain various *schemata* that, he argues, are important structural conventions for mid-1700s music. What is a schema, though? According to Gjerdingen, a schema is the unspecified mental process or structure that we associate with a conceptual category (11). Gjerdingen goes on to present three contemporary approaches to the understanding of a schema – prototypes, exemplars, and theories – which map to those approaches discussed in the previous portion of this chapter.

In his explication of schemata, Gjerdingen relies on prototypes (and he specifically calls them prototypes). For example, the prototype for the *Ponte* schema involves a pedal on $\hat{5}$ in the bass, above which the soprano voice outlines a dominant chord via its arpeggiation through $\hat{5}$, $\hat{7}$, and $\hat{2}$ (461). But this prototype is not merely a soprano-bass framework. Gjerdingen also describes the metrical context in which this scale-degree structure typically occurs, along with central features and common variants of the schema. Additionally, he includes a discussion of the typical locations for this scale-degree structure within the form of a piece, to what common key area the structure leads, and general strategies for its use within a specific historical timeframe. All of these factors – the scale-degree network, the feature list, the typical usages, etc. – are wrapped up into the prototype for this schema. For Gjerdingen, therefore, the prototype is a representation that contains both structured (e.g., the scale-degree network) as well as unstructured (e.g., the feature list) components. Moreover, many of these components are conveyed through abstractions – such as the use of scale degrees instead of specific pitches – in order to most clearly convey the category to other music theorists. Thus while the objects of inquiry in Gjerdingen's work differ from those in this dissertation, the basic methodology can be seen to be the same. In essence, his prototypes capture the attributes (whether structured or unstructured) of those musical examples that are judged to best represent that category (or schema).

2.4: Music Theory and Form

For the most part, the term “prototype” is not employed in the writing of music theorists. Yet even though this term may be absent, we sometimes find that the approach taken by a theorist is in sympathy with a prototype-based approach. Contemporary conceptions of form in common-practice music, for example, can be viewed as different responses to prototypes effects found in form categories. Even though common-practice music may be far removed from rock music (stylistically speaking), a brief investigation into issues of form within common-practice music may benefit a study of form in rock.

One general issue is what M. Evan Bonds has called the “paradox” of musical form (1991, 13). In short, the term “form” encompasses two contrasting senses. In one sense, form is the explication of what certain musical works have in common. Theorists search for patterns among various works and then create abstract models to capture these similarities. In the opposite sense, form describes the unique structure of a single piece of music. Theorists want to be able to say why a particular work is in a particular structure. The term “form” is thus somewhat polysemic in nature, in that it appears to have multiple ways of being understood. These opposite connotations inherently create tension within any single perspective to form. In fact, we may categorize various perspectives to form based on the extent to which they lie on one side of this paradox or the other.

One way to characterize this paradox is as the pull between a “top-down” and a “bottom-up” approach. (This duality is somewhat similar to the “conformational” and “generative” approaches described in Bonds 1991 but framed in a more general way.) A top-down approach to form searches for similarities among a large number of works. These similarities are used to theorize abstract, ideal types, which then become reference points in analysis. Specifically, the analyst measures how much a particular piece exemplifies a given abstract type. Value judgments are typically made on this basis. The artistic merit of a particular piece, for instance, is often seen to directly relate to those unique features that set it apart from the more typical manifestations of the model. What is exceptional is seen to be valuable. In contrast, a bottom-up approach views the form of a piece primarily as the consequence of the content itself. The final form of the work is seen to result from the combination of various elements. In this regard, the bottom-up view inextricably intertwines form and content. Via this method, the artistic merit of a given piece relates to how closely lower-level units (e.g., motives) can be seen to determine higher-level units (phrases and sections). Unity, cohesion, and organicism are valued in this view.

The paradox to form could be framed in yet an even more basic way. Specifically, this paradox can be seen to derive from the fundamental divide between theory and analysis. To

paraphrase Arnold Whittall: theory generalizes, whereas analysis particularizes (2010). In other words, theory explains what kind of similarities we can expect to find in a body of music, while analysis unpacks this information within the context of a specific work. The two opposing meanings of form can thus be seen to reflect the two different roles that form plays within theory and analysis.

Modern methodologies

The changing tides of preference between top-down and bottom-up approaches (or theory and analysis) can be seen in contemporary approaches to form as well. William Caplin, James Hepokoski, and James Webster each discuss form in their recent book, *Musical Form, Forms, Formenlehre* (2009; edited by Pieter Bergé), and their discussion nicely encapsulates modern methodologies. More importantly, the work of these three music theorists can be viewed as varying responses to the prototype-based nature of form categories.

Webster presents an analytical method he calls “multivalence” (in Bergé 2009, 128). The multivalent approach takes for granted that a musical work encompasses multiple domains: tonality, rhythm, dynamics, instrumentation, register, etc. Each of these domains generates its own temporal patterns. At times, the patterns in these domains may be congruent; at other times, the patterns may conflict. When a particular form can be said to exist, writes Webster, it is the result of many factors that intangibly contribute to our final choice of a form label (129). Often, no clear form can be said to exist. In this view, the value of a great work is seen to directly relate to its “multifariousness.”

This description of form resonates strongly with a prototype approach. Notably, Webster describes the attribute-rich quality of real-world objects. For Webster, music and form are multi-dimensional, in that passages of a musical composition often interact with multiple form types at once. The implication, therefore, is that our conception of a particular form type (or category) encompasses multiple domains, and our perception of these form categories may be triggered by only a partial set of attributes. Webster’s multivalent analytic approach thus highlights the disconnect between the apparent simplicity of a category label and the complexity of our concept for that category.

In contrast, Hepokoski offers an approach grounded more firmly in theory-building. Based on his work with Warren Darcy (2006), Hepokoski describes his “Sonata Theory” as “dialogic” form. This approach posits that an individual composition should be contextualized within the culturally-available normative gestures that existed at the time the work was composed. Instead of providing rules concerning the parts of a sonata, Hepokoski and Darcy expose a set of common options or defaults. When these normative gestures are

denied or eschewed (a “deformation”), an interpretation is demanded. It is the composer that puts his or her work in dialogue with the conventions, and we are meant to listen in on this conversation. This approach can be seen to utilize top-down principles. Reference points are derived from the repertoire, and individual pieces are compared to these reference points. The approach in Hepokoski and Darcy departs from a typical top-down approach, however, in the extensive depth to which these authors specify the points of reference. Most notably, there is no single overarching sonata form. Instead, there are five different types, all of which have further subtypes. As well, there is no strict line between what is normative and what is not normative. Rather, there are hierarchies of default strategies, and these defaults adhere to specific contexts. The analyst who becomes an expert in Hepokoski and Darcy’s system has not merely memorized a few abstract models. Rather, to understand Sonata Theory is to have a complex awareness of the various possibilities that can occur within a sonata form movement.

This elaborate account of sonata form aligns closely with research into categorization. Overall, Hepokoski and Darcy argue that a single form category cannot be understood through a single best example or ideal type. There is a conscientious attempt to avoid defining sonata form too closely, and the question of whether a particular piece “is” or “is not” in sonata form is one that they specifically rebuff (in Bergé 2009, 75). In creating their theoretical system, therefore, Hepokoski and Darcy model the complex mental representation of the sonata form category in the mind of an educated listener.

William Caplin presents yet another approach, that of formal functions. In essence, formal functions describe the role played by a particular segment of music within the larger whole. The role of this segment is intimately tied to its temporal location, and so formal functions designate whether a musical chunk acts as a beginning, middle, or end. For example, the 8-bar sentence is a formal type in which Caplin posits three formal functions: presentation, continuation, and cadential. Each of these formal functions has its own salient characteristics that assist the listeners in locating themselves within the flow of the music. Continuation function, for instance, is seen to be generated via four compositional devices – fragmentation, harmonic acceleration, increased rhythmic activity, and sequential harmonies – though none of these qualities is a necessary condition of the function (1998, 40). Caplin uses a similar approach to describe formal functions for a variety of other formal types, such as the period (antecedent and consequent functions) and small ternary (exposition, contrasting middle, and recapitulation functions). Distinguishing between formal functions and formal types is a central strength of Caplin’s theory. It allows for an easy description of hybrid forms, which begin in the manner of one form type but end in the manner of another. As well, functions may fuse. Thus the second half of an 8-bar sentence typically combines

continuation and cadential functions into a single four-measure phrase. A single formal function may also be encompassed by numerous iterations of form types, such as when the cadential function of a subordinate theme is expanded to embrace multiple phrases (in Bergé 2009, 58).

In Caplin's approach, we see a number of concepts related to categorization theory. Caplin posits prototypical musical structures – e.g., the sentence – and argues that our perception of non-clear members derives from these clear examples. Caplin does not pass aesthetic judgment on whether something is or is not a clear member of a category. Instead, he uses membership to gauge what a particular span of music might be communicating to a listener in terms of its role within the work. In this regard, Caplin's approach overlaps a great deal with that taken in this dissertation, as we will see in the following chapters.

2.5: Music Cognition and Form

When music theorists enter into passionate debates on a topic – such as that seen between Webster, Hepokoski, and Caplin – it is often useful to balance these arguments with cooler observations. The field of music cognition has been helpful in this regard, as it can provide – through experimental research, computational modeling, or corpus study – objective answers to some of the questions that a theorist might ask. Unfortunately, existing work within the field of music cognition on the subject of musical form is rather limited, and the applicability of this work to form in rock music is unclear. A brief overview of this research is warranted, nonetheless, if only to show these limitations. In general, these studies investigate what sort of effects the re-ordering of musical units has on a listener.

Experiments in form manipulation

Most extant experiments involving the manipulation of form have failed to show that structural changes have any significant effects on listeners' responses. In Karno and Konečni 1992, for example, the authors tested the effects of structural changes to the form of the first movement from Mozart's Symphony in G minor (K. 550). Listeners evaluated – on scales of “pleasingness,” “interestingness,” “desire to own,” and “best overall structure” – both an original version of the piece as well as four altered versions, which were created by re-ordering large chunks of the movement (e.g., first theme, transition, second theme). Yet no clear preference for the original version was found; the rearranged versions were rated as highly as the original. Similar results were found in earlier experimental work (e.g., Konečni 1984; Gotlieb and Konečni 1985). Tillman and Bigand (1996) also report a lack of change in aesthetic responses between original versions of three piano pieces (by Bach, Mozart, and

Schoenberg) and “backwards” versions of these pieces, in which six-second chunks were linked in reverse order.

It should be noted, however, that most of the subjects in these studies did not have extensive experience in the musical styles in which their responses were being tested. In Tillman and Bigand 1996, for example, more than half the subjects had no musical experience, and the remaining subjects had relatively little instrumental practice (less than 5 years). Similarly, of the 53 subjects used in Karno and Konečni 1992, only one was familiar with the symphony. It may not be surprising, therefore, that the listeners were not attuned to aspects of structure above the phrase level since these listeners were probably not highly attuned to the style as a whole.

In general, existing music cognition research on the perceptibility of form is far too preliminary to allow any hard conclusions to be drawn. The failure of these experiments to show any significant aesthetic effects may simply reflect a failure of experimental design more than anything else. Notably, the relatively low familiarity of the subjects with the style of music under study may have been a considerable impediment. We should also be highly circumspect of how these results might relate to form in rock music. Rock music, for instance, has additional structural cues (e.g., lyrics) that are not present in the instrumental common-practice pieces chosen for these experiments. Moreover, the average person has a much higher exposure to (and thus familiarity of) rock music than classical styles. One inference we might draw is that small-scale and large-scale structures may not necessarily induce the same aesthetic effects in listeners. In Tillman and Bigand 1996 (discussed above), for example, the internal characteristics of musical segments appeared to much more strongly determine aesthetic response than any particular ordering of these segments. We thus might take care to differentiate between lower-level factors (i.e., internal section quality) and higher-level factors (i.e., succession patterns) in our studies of form.

2.6: Form, Music Theory, and Rock Music

As the final portion of this chapter, a brief summary of current approaches to form in rock music is presented below. This summary will help situate the chapters that follow within the context of modern theoretical methodologies. These methodologies will be discussed without any extensive commentary, since the goal here is only to create a baseline for the following pages. A few general issues will emerge, which will be discussed at the end.

Current theories of rock music generally use a two-stage approach in their explanations of form. First, the section categories themselves – verse, chorus, bridge, etc. – are described. Second, the standard succession patterns in which these sections occur are

discussed. In this regard, section quality is presented as somewhat independent of the particular succession pattern in which it participates. This separation of section quality from a particular succession pattern is not always possible, though, as we will see. Nevertheless, to best summarize extant theories of form in pop/rock music, it is most efficient to adopt a similar format as the original authors. The discussion below thus presents some standard descriptions of song section types followed by some standard descriptions of organizational patterns for these section types. The writings of Walter Everett, Ken Stephenson, and John Covach are used as representative accounts in this overview since – having each published a textbook dealing solely with rock music (2009, 2002, 2009 respectively) – these authors can be considered central figures in the current state of rock music theory.

A brief overview of song sections

The various qualities that affect our perception of song section categories will be detailed extensively in the next chapter. As one of its central methodologies, this upcoming chapter will digest extant descriptions and usages of section role labels as found in the work of music theorists. Consequently, a complete discussion of sections labels will not be presented here. In order to discuss descriptions of organizational patterns, however, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of a few section labels. One should be aware that only a small number of section labels are used in standard large-scale categorization schemes. In particular, the large-scale form types discussed below are contingent on only three section types: verse, chorus, and bridge. As a result, an understanding of only these three section types is necessary for a discussion of current approaches to form in rock music. Given below are glossary entries for verse, chorus, and bridge as found in the work of Covach, Everett, and Stephenson. The use of glossary entries here is not meant to oversimplify or distort each theorist's understanding of these sections. Certainly, more nuanced usages can be found in their writings. These glossary entries simply serve as a starting point for the reader.

Verse

(Covach 2009): “A section that most often features new lyrics with each repetition within a song, unlike a chorus, which tends to repeat the same lyrics with each recurrence. The verse is often used to tell a story or describe a situation.”

(Everett 2001): “A song’s section equivalent to the stanza, usually placed directly after any introduction, that nearly always appears with two or three (or, rarely, more) different sets of lyrics, but in rare early cases has one set only.”

(Stephenson 2002): “A section of a song that recurs a number of times with a different text every (or nearly every) time.”

Chorus

(Covach 2009): “Usually the most important or easily remembered section of a song, containing the title and the catchiest musical material. Not all songs have a chorus, but when one is present, it is the focus of the song.”

(Everett 2001): “A song’s section, nearly always affirming tonic, usually appearing in the song’s interior, with lyrics that remain constant with each hearing.”

(Stephenson 2002): “A musical section that recurs numerous times with a fixed text of several lines.”

Bridge

(Covach 2009): “A section in a song that provides contrast to other, more salient sections of the same song, such as the verse or the chorus. While bridge sections can be quite interesting musically, they are almost never the focal section of a song.”

(Everett 2001): “A song’s contrasting middle section, often beginning in an area other than tonic and usually leading to a dominant retransition.”

(Stephenson 2002): “A passage, usually introduced after the second chorus, used to lead back to the verse or the final repetitions of the chorus.”

It may be helpful to remind the reader that – while the discussion below summarizes the work of these authors with regard to various categorization systems for entire songs – the assignment of entire songs into categories is not the primary goal of this dissertation. As one reason, these large-scale form categories receive much less currency in discussions of rock form than do section labels themselves. While we will find many overlaps in the large-scale categorization schemes that these authors present, there are also clear differences in both terminology and meaning. One might say, in fact, that the categories into which these authors assign entire songs reflect artificial rather than natural categories, in that each author essentially develops his own unique system. In contrast, the same basic set of section role labels is used by all, and so it is these section categories that have more clearly developed a shared understanding (and are thus amenable to a prototype-based approach). Nevertheless,

it is important to discuss large-scale form categories, for the way an author categorizes the form of an entire song can shine a light on the way that author understands the section roles that participate in them.

Form in the writing of Ken Stephenson

Ken Stephenson presents four large-scale form types for rock music in his 2002 book. These types are the strophic, rounded binary, verse-chorus-bridge, and compound binary forms. The first category – strophic form – includes songs that contain two or more repetitions of the same musical material (139). In other words, strophic songs display a section succession pattern in which there is only a single letter (e.g., AAA). Stephenson further subdivides this category into one-part and two-part strophic forms. This subdivision is based entirely on harmonic factors. A one-part strophic form repeats a single harmonic pattern throughout. Thus songs in which both a verse and chorus appear over the same harmonic pattern (e.g., “Bad, Bad Leroy Brown” [Jim Croce, 1973]) are categorized as one-part strophic forms. In a two-part strophic form, there are two harmonically-contrasting parts, which represent separate verse and chorus sections. The two-part strophic form is still categorized as strophic because the two sections (verse and chorus) group together to create one large repeating unit. Within a top-level AAA pattern, for example, each “A” would represent a verse-chorus or chorus-verse unit.

Stephenson’s second main form type is the rounded binary (140). Like the two-part strophic form, the rounded binary also contains two section types. But instead of verse and chorus, the rounded binary contains either verse and bridge or chorus and bridge. The term “rounded” is used because the bridge (which is implicitly not the opening section) must always return to the opening section type. From this description, we can surmise that rounded binary songs display a variety of possible letter sequence patterns, such as ABA, AABA, AABAA, AAABA, or AABABA, where “A” represents either a verse or chorus and “B” represents a bridge. Unlike the strophic song, each letter in this pattern can refer to only a single section type. In other words, “A” cannot represent a verse-chorus unit as it did in the single-section strophic form. Stephenson thus makes no particular pattern of sections explicit, nor do his examples of rounded binary form display any consistent succession pattern.

The third form category Stephenson describes is the verse-chorus-bridge form, which plainly designates the section roles it involves by name (140). Stephenson presents the verse-chorus-bridge form as a hybrid of the strophic and the rounded-binary forms. Like the two-part strophic form, there exist two distinct sections – verse and chorus – that repeat a number of times. Like the rounded binary form, however, there is a bridge section that

occurs after two or three of these verse-chorus iterations. Stephenson describes two varieties of the verse-chorus-bridge form, one in which the bridge leads to a return of the chorus only and a second in which the bridge leads to yet another verse-chorus pair (141). Otherwise, Stephenson is not particular with regard to the ordering of song sections. In fact, one verse-chorus-bridge example he provides (Carly Simon's "Haven't Got Time for the Pain" [1974]) has a section succession pattern of VCBCVBC.

The final form type Stephenson discusses is compound binary (141). Songs of this type divide into two seemingly unrelated halves. According to Stephenson, the first half often follows one of the previous three form types (thus the "compound" label), while the second half presents new material. This new material is typically structured around a repeating melodic line or chord progression. Examples of this form type include "Hey Jude" (The Beatles, 1968) and "Layla" (Derek and the Dominos, 1970). Stephenson admits that songs in this category often have their own idiosyncratic structure, though, so this category may simply serve to account for irregular song forms. For instance, Stephenson categorizes "Stairway to Heaven" (Led Zeppelin, 1971) as compound binary, yet to say that this song unambiguously divides into two (and only two) distinct sections is not beyond dispute.

Overall, the form types that Stephenson offers do not appear to be dependent on any particular succession pattern. Instead, his form types are based exclusively on the section roles they contain. Songs in strophic form, for instance, contain verse and/or chorus material only (no bridge). In contrast, rounded binary songs contain a bridge as well as either verse or chorus sections (but not both). Finally, verse-chorus-bridge songs contain all three section types. Standing somewhat outside this categorization scheme, the compound binary form captures the more unique structures found in rock music.

Form in the writing of John Covach

John Covach presents his own categorization scheme for large-scale form types in his 2005 essay, "Form In Rock Music: A Primer." In this essay, he offers five basic form types: simple verse, simple verse-chorus, contrasting verse-chorus, AABA, and compound form. These five form types can be seen to overlap with Stephenson's four form types, although some differences are worth noting.

Covach's categories of simple verse, simple verse-chorus, and contrasting verse-chorus all fall within Stephenson's category of strophic forms. In Covach's usage, simple verse form refers to songs in which only a single block of musical material is repeated throughout the song. In simple verse-chorus form, the song consists only of verse and chorus sections built over the same harmonic material. Finally, a song in contrasting verse-chorus form consists only of verse and chorus sections built over different harmonic material.

Covach's contrasting verse-chorus form thus maps to Stephenson's two-part strophic form. Similarly, songs in Covach's simple verse-chorus form would be included in Stephenson's one-part strophic form.

Other mappings are not so easy. A song that Covach would categorize as simple verse would be categorized by Stephenson as a one-part strophic form. In Covach's system, though, if a song has only a single repeating section, the analyst would view this repeating section only as a verse. In contrast, Stephenson's system allows for a single repeating section to be either a verse or a chorus. We can thus see some effects of how large-scale formal types potentially affect designations for the section labels themselves. For Covach, a chorus only exists in relationship to a verse, and thus a chorus cannot exist as a standalone section type.

The fourth form type Covach offers is the AABA form, which is similar to Stephenson's rounded binary. In an AABA form, verse material – the "A" part – is contrasted by bridge material – the "B" part. Unlike Stephenson's rounded binary, Covach's AABA form specifies a particular succession pattern (the AABA sequence itself). In his analyses, in fact, Covach views songs that depart from this AABA sequence as examples of "formal innovations" (2006, 44). One should also note that – like the simple verse form – the AABA form affects section designations. In Covach's view, an AABA form consists of only verse and bridge material. This approach differs from Stephenson's, as his rounded-binary form may contain either verse or chorus material for the "A" section. Again, Covach does not allow for a standalone chorus section without a complementary verse.

Also note the difference in Covach's system between the mechanisms that determine AABA form as opposed to those that determine verse-chorus form. For AABA, the form type is determined primarily through the succession pattern of the parts, and section labels derive from this pattern. For verse-chorus forms, in contrast, the section labels themselves primarily determine the form type and no particular succession pattern is implied. This system potentially creates a tricky situation for the analyst faced with choosing between these two form types, as it is not clear whether we should emphasize section quality or section succession until after the form type itself has been identified.

In Covach's final form type – the compound form – we find an emphasis on both section type and succession pattern. By virtue of the word "compound," this form type appears to map to Stephenson's compound-binary form. Yet there is not complete equality between the two. For example, Covach analyzes "Hey Jude" (which Stephenson views as compound binary) as an AABA form with a coda (2005, 71). Like Stephenson, though, Covach does use his compound form category to include songs for which no other form type seems appropriate. Thus Covach sees "A Day in the Life" (The Beatles, 1967) as a compound

ABA form (2006, 48). Yet this song lacks the large-scale AB pattern at the core of Stephenson's compound binary form type.

In practice, the term "compound" in Covach's system is used most often to describe a particular form type: the compound AABA form. The compound AABA form consists of verse and chorus material within each "A" part and a bridge section for the "B" part; this form type thus maps to Stephenson's verse-chorus-bridge form. Once again, however, Covach's system more strongly specifies a particular succession pattern. While Stephenson admits that certain configurations of verse-chorus-bridge songs are more common than others, Covach views departures from the compound AABA structure as valuable and "innovative" moments (2003, 185).

Covach thus presents a theoretical system in which AABA patterns (whether compound or non-compound) receive special status. This approach can be seen to include a strongly top-down aspect, as the analytical value of a work is seen to inversely relate to how well it aligns with a specific formal type. In fact, other theorists have explicitly noted the top-down aspect of Covach's approach, saying that his form types are "ideals against which actual songs can be measured" (Stephan-Robinson 2009, 105). It is unclear how the categories of simple verse, simple verse-chorus, and contrasting verse-chorus act as "ideals" in this regard, though, since Covach posits no particular ordering of sections for these form types. In fact, various configurations of these form types can be found in the examples that Covach provides (2005).

Overall, the categorization of songs into one of these five form types is a central task in the analytical system that Covach develops for rock music. Many of the historical and stylistic claims he makes rely on the form category to which a song is assigned (2003). As well, the artistic merit of a song is seen to derive significantly from the extent that it departs from a specific form type, particularly those in an AABA pattern (2006).

Form in the writing of Walter Everett

The conception of large-scale form found in the writings of Walter Everett is much looser than those found in the work of either Covach or Stephenson. Everett, in fact, gives very few specific form types with which to categorize songs. When these form types are presented, moreover, they are only briefly described.

Everett explains his point of departure for large-scale form rather succinctly in his 2009 book. He states that songs have "sections that function as verse, chorus, or bridge," and that songs "then combine a number of these different sections to create contrast in a balanced presentation" (141). This generic scheme, according to Everett, acts as a "norm" within rock music. Like other authors, Everett focuses his approach to form on the section categories of

verse, chorus, and bridge. But he does not prioritize any particular arrangement or combination of these parts. He offers a bit more detail in an earlier essay, in which he states that a pop song “typically alternates verses... and choruses... [which will] usually be balanced by one or two statements of a contrasting bridge” (2008b, 113). Overall, though, Everett does not seem concerned with grouping songs into different types based on the way these sections are ordered or used. If anything, we could say that – as his central form type – Everett posits something akin to Stephenson’s verse-chorus-bridge form.

Everett does mention what he calls the “one-part form,” which consists of a single part repeated throughout the song without any contrasting material. Like Stephenson, Everett defines the “material” and “part” through harmonic means. A song that is in a one-part form, for instance, may contain only a single section type (either a verse or chorus); or, a one-part song may contain both a verse and chorus (where the verse and chorus together function as the “part”) (2009, 142). Everett’s one-part form is thus identical to Stephenson’s one-part strophic form and overlaps with Covach’s simple verse and simple verse-chorus form types. But unlike these other authors, Everett takes a somewhat pejorative view of this particular form type. Notably, he states that “the unabating repetition [in the one-part form] can be a major flaw despite strong material” (2009, 142), after which he provides as an example the song “Where Did Our Love Go” (The Supremes, 1964). Again, the harmonic basis for the one-part form type is obvious in this example, as this song can be seen – despite its one-part status – to contain both verse and chorus sections as well as an instrumental bridge.

One other form type that Everett mentions is the “large SRDC” (2009, 141). (“SRDC” stands for Statement - Restatement – Departure – Conclusion and will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 4.) The large SRDC is a lot like Covach’s AABA form type; in fact, Everett states that the AABA structure is a very common instantiation of the large SRDC form type. Yet the large SRDC accounts for a broader set of songs than would be included in Covach’s AABA category. For example, a song in large SRDC form may – after the middle “D” section – include new material or only an abbreviated version of earlier material. (SRDC thus encompasses both AABA and AABC patterns.) As well, Everett seems to allow for almost any section type to participate in the large SRDC pattern. The “D” section, for instance, is discussed as possibly containing chorus or bridge material (143). This view noticeably departs from those of both Stephenson and Covach, who consider the contrasting middle material to always be a bridge section.

Aside from these specific cases, Everett does not posit any further form types. Moreover, form types do not appear to be a central concern within his analytical writing. One potential reason why form types play a relatively small role in Everett’s analyses is that Everett brings a strongly Schenkerian outlook to his work. In his 2008 essay “Pitch Down

The Middle,” Everett clearly states that aspects of pitch – especially the tension between a Schenkerian graph and the surface of a piece – are “of central interest” (139). Thus Everett can be seen to preference a “bottom-up” approach to form. For Everett – like many Schenkerians – the “structure” of a song relates more to the organic embellishment of a simple tonal framework than it does to any foreground arrangement of themes and sections. Section labels, therefore, are useful in their ability to communicate a song location to a reader or listener. Otherwise, these section labels appear to offer Everett little analytical grist.

Theories in analysis

In general, there appears to be a fairly high level of agreement between theorists with regard to basic large-scale form categories. Many of the form types in the work of one theorist map closely if not exactly to form types in the work of another. Yet certain differences can be found, and these differences can directly impact our analyses. If we use Stephenson’s “rounded binary” label, for example, a song exhibiting an AABAA succession pattern fits the label unproblematically and therefore may not warrant much discussion. With Covach’s “AABA” label, however, this AABAA pattern becomes the catalyst for an analytical explanation.

More broadly, we can say that when theorists offer various form types for rock songs, they are indirectly stating that these form types are meaningfully distinct from one another. Covach, for example, distinguishes between simple and contrasting verse-chorus forms. In so doing, Covach implies that it is useful to differentiate between those songs in which the verse and chorus sections share the same harmonic material and those in which the verse and chorus sections are built on different harmonic material. Yet it is not entirely clear what utility this classification scheme holds for analysis. Harmonic factors certainly play a central role in our perception of form in rock music, but an emphasis of this domain may draw our attention away from other important domains, such as timbre or melody.

The issue of emphasis also relates to the section roles used in determining large-scale form types. Because the form types discussed above are based exclusively on the existence and arrangement of verse, chorus, and bridge sections, these categorization methods emphasize certain section roles over others. If we use these form types in analysis, we are consequently encouraged to identify verse, chorus, and bridge sections in order to categorize a given song. The result is that other section types – such as the link, prechorus, solo, and refrain – may become subsumed under the verse, chorus, and bridge labels or ignored altogether. While verse, chorus, and bridge sections are undeniably principle elements in the form of a song, prioritizing these elements over others can potentially cause us to overlook some important moments within rock songs (as we will see in Chapter 5).

2.7: Summary

This chapter has laid out a theoretical framework on which the following chapters will be based. In essence, the epistemological basis of the work herein is derived from research in the realm of cognitive science. A central premise in this regard is that our method of conceptualizing categories in general can help us explain categories of musical form in particular. It seems clear, for example, that a definition-based approach poorly accounts for our shared understanding of section labels in rock music. Instead, this dissertation employs a prototype-based approach to form. While the term “prototype” has had a few different meanings within the realm of music theory (as seen in the work of Brown, Agmon, and Gjerdingen), the meaning used herein is strongly predicated on a feature-based model, in which the conceptual category encompasses the attributes of its typical members. With this model as the axis of a theoretical system, we will see that many interesting aspects of form in rock music can be revealed.

As a closing thought, it is worth pointing out that – since this dissertation is primarily concerned with the categorization of song sections – one underlying issue is the identification of the objects that are to be categorized. As we will see, it is not always clear what exactly constitutes a “section” in a rock song, and we often find ourselves asking questions such as: “Should this 16-bar passage be considered a single 16-bar section or two 8-bar sections?” Note that the issue of what object should be categorized is generally *not* a concern with other well-studied domains in cognitive psychology. When we are trying to decide whether a car seat, for example, belongs to the category of “furniture,” we take for granted that we know what object we are trying to categorize. Musical form thus involves a two-pronged problem for categorization, in that we have to not only make category assignments but also decisions as to what exactly constitutes the object of inquiry itself. This aspect is an important way in which musical form presents a rather different kind of problem from those discussed in research on conceptual categories. That being said, this issue comes into play only with those ambiguous cases (which constitute the bulk of Chapters 4 and 5). Prototypical instances of section roles (discussed in Chapter 3) – by their nature – offer clear evidence of their status as discrete sections (or portions thereof).

Chapter 3: Roles

3.1: Introduction

Given the context of the prior chapter, we can now turn to using a prototype-based approach to better understand the categories we use in the analysis of form in rock music. An initial issue in this regard is which categories to discuss. This chapter covers nine different section categories – verse, chorus, refrain, bridge, solo, prechorus, intro, outro, and link – all of which are labels commonly found in the analysis of form in rock music. What kind of information do these labels convey, though? Sometimes, theorists state that these labels describe the “function” of a section within the form of the song (e.g., Everett 2009, 141). Rarely, though, is the function of these section types directly stated beyond the label itself. Instead, we are meant to infer the function from descriptions, examples, etc. We might speculate, for example, that a prechorus functions to prepare the chorus; or perhaps the prechorus functions to transition between the verse and the chorus; or maybe its function is to provide contrast to the verse and chorus sections. If the prechorus has a single function, which one of these is it?

Instead of the term “function,” the categories described above will be referred to herein as section *roles*. A single role can embody multiple functions. The role of teacher, for example, includes the functions of instructing, encouraging, disciplining, grading, and so on. We can thus say that a particular span of music, for instance, fulfills the “role” of (or “acts” as) bridge material in the song. Knowing that a span of material acts in a particular role tells us something about how it functions (possibly in multiple ways) within the form of the song.

It should be mentioned that the nine section roles discussed in this chapter do not represent an exhaustive list of all section roles that have been employed in the analysis of rock music. Rather, these categories are the most common. In fact, it is not too difficult to find other labels in use. Covach, for example, uses the label “after-chorus” in his analysis of the 1992 Tori Amos song “Crucify” (2009, 544). Many moments within rock songs defy easy categorization into one of these nine roles, and authors may prefer to coin a one-time label in certain instances rather than misapply an existing one. Yet even though various supplemental labels have been adopted on an *ad hoc* basis, there is often an effort to reconcile them with the standard section roles (as evident in Covach’s term “after-chorus”). Consequently, an understanding of these typical role categories informs our understanding of those non-typical situations. (This will become especially evident in Chapter 5.)

The basic structure of the current chapter will be organized around the section roles themselves. After a brief consideration of a preliminary issue (below), each section label will be examined in turn. The close relationship between some terms (e.g., verse and chorus) will require that they be discussed in tandem. In general, the discussion of each role (or roles) will follow a similar format. First, extant theoretical descriptions of the particular section role(s) will be summarized. Following this summary, some common usages within analytical practice will be investigated. This survey of contemporary theory and practice provides a good foundation for our shared understanding of these section categories. From this foundation, some prototypical examples of these section roles will then be presented. In some cases, it will be useful to group these examples into a few subtypes. (Remember, not all categories can be represented with a single best example.) These prototypical examples will offer a window into other aspects (i.e., features and attributes) of these section roles that have not yet been made explicit. Some interesting cases will also be explored to help clarify specific points.

Measuring a measure

Before beginning this study, one preliminary topic is worth examining first: how measure lengths are determined. The length of musical spans is undeniably an important factor in our perception of form in rock music, and length is a central attribute in many of the form labels that we use. The term “12-bar blues,” for example, specifies an exact number of measures, and our perception of a 12-bar blues is predicated on this length. Length also affects our perception of section roles, as we will see, and some section roles seem to have prototypical lengths. Thus an investigation of section role prototypes involves some interaction with the issue of length.

Traditionally, lengths of musical units are measured by the measure itself. In other words, the number of bars in a musical span determines the length of this span. Yet how much music constitutes a “bar”? There is no obvious answer to this question, since rock songs do not typically come with a notated score. In general, theorists of rock music have relied on the rate of rhythmic events to determine measure lengths. Allan Moore, for example, discusses the “standard rock beat” (2001, 42), which he defines as a snare drum on the second and fourth beats of a measure. This pattern of rhythmic accentuation is often referred to as the “backbeat” (Everett 2001, 363), since the even-numbered beats (or the “off beats”) are more strongly accented than the odd-numbered beats (or the “on beats”). According to Moore, these off-beat accents alone determine measure lengths. He states explicitly, in fact, that “the consistent appearance of a snare drum on the second and fourth beats of a bar allows this length [that of a measure] to be standardized” (42). As the rate of

off-beat accents speeds up, the length of a measure becomes shorter; conversely, as the rate of off-beat accents slows down, the length of a measure becomes longer. Measure lengths are thus directly tied to the pattern of rhythmic accents.

A number of songs, however, provide evidence that determining measure lengths solely through the backbeat pattern may not be entirely representative of how we perceive musical spans in rock music. In some cases, the snare drum pattern changes at different points in the song, even though the measure lengths seem to stay the same. Consider the song “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” (The Clash, 1982), for example, in which the frequency of snare hits in the chorus (beginning at 1:08) is twice that found in the verse (beginning at 0:17). One might say that rate of measures in the chorus is double that found in the verse. Yet the verse and chorus of this song share the same basic harmonic rhythm. In fact, both the verse and chorus sections could easily be construed as iterations of a 12-bar blues, where the verse has a normal tempo and the chorus has a “double-time” feel. If the backbeat alone were to determine measure lengths, though, we would say that the chorus is a 24-bar blues. But calling the chorus a 24-bar blues when it is basically a variation of the 12-bar-blues verse seems to misrepresent the form of the song (and the chorus). Tempo, as measured through rhythmic accents, thus does not seem to always be directly tied to measure lengths. In other songs, the same section appears multiple times in a song with different backbeat patterns. Take, for example, “A Day in the Life” (The Beatles, 1967), in which return of the main material (at 3:18) has twice as many snare hits as its original instance (at 0:56). We could renotate the reappearance of the section according to this new backbeat, thereby creating twice as many measures for the same musical material. This renotation would, of course, capture the perceived change in tempo. But if measures are to be a useful tool for determining lengths in a theory of form, it seems somewhat problematic to have different measure lengths for what is basically the same musical span. The issue of measure lengths versus tempo arises also when we consider that two separate versions of the same song can have different rhythmic patterns, such as is found with the song “Horses” (by Will Oldham). The 1997 version (Palace Music) has a snare drum pattern half as fast as the 2004 version (by Bonnie “Prince” Billy) in terms of the harmonic and melodic pacing. Should measure lengths in such cases reflect the general harmonic/melodic pacing or the perceived tempo?

Published analyses show, in fact, that scholars do not always use the backbeat as a consistent metric in their judgments of measure lengths. In some cases, the analyst may judge that a measure contains only one kick and snare hit. This approach is used by Chris McDonald in his transcription of the 1991 Nirvana song “In Bloom” (2001, 360). In a similar fashion, Jocelyn Neal transcribes Sawyer Brown’s 1991 release “The Walk” in a cut time, where only one kick and one snare hit fill a single measure (2007, 47). In other cases, an

analyst might decide that a song section contains more than two off-beat accents hits per measure. For instance, Dan Harrison views what he calls the refrain of “Good Vibrations” (The Beach Boys, 1966) as eight bars long, despite the fact that the tambourine hits (which mimic a snare drum pattern) occur four times within his measure (1997, 45). Sometimes, a theorist seems to be torn between two different interpretations. For example, Timothy Koozin states in his analysis of the 1994 Sarah McLachlan song “Elsewhere” that the verse plus transition spans 10 measures (2008, 277), yet he transcribes this same span (in his Example 10.4) as if it were 20 measures. The inconsistency in Koozin’s designation of measure lengths may simply be an error. Yet it appears that Koozin was able to hear the music both ways.

It is worth noting that William Caplin – in his theory of form in the music of Haydn, Beethoven, and Mozart – has found it useful to differentiate between “notated” and “real” measures (1998, 35). As Caplin states, the experiential measure – i.e., what the listener perceives to be the measure – does not necessarily correlate to the measure as notated in the score. An analogous situation could be said to exist in rock music. In this regard, we might consider measure lengths as implied by the backbeat to correspond to the “notated” measure. Similarly, we could say that there exists some “real” measure, which better reflects our perception of musical spans as distinct from the prevailing tempo. Unfortunately, Caplin admits that it is impossible to specify exactly what parameters contribute to our perception of a “real” measure.

Nonetheless, it is clear that factors other than simply the backbeat itself affect our perception of measure lengths. What might these other factors be? One possibility is absolute time. For example, both the verse and chorus sections to “Should I Stay or Should I Go” last about the same length of time, even though their tempos are different. The effect of absolute time on our perception of meter has received a fair amount of research in the past century (see London 2004, 27ff). For example, Parncutt notes a “maximal pulse salience” for periodicities in the range of 600-700 milliseconds. In other words, listeners prefer to hear a tactus (i.e., the “beat”) at speeds of about 85-100 BPM (1994). This “maximal pulse salience” may help explain the situation in “Should I Stay or Should I Go,” as the tempo for the verse is around 112 BPM, whereas the tempo for the chorus (as implied by the backbeat) is twice that (around 224 BPM). Potentially, our sense of measure lengths is drawn to the middle-level tactus, and so the 224 BPM section is heard in terms of “real” measure lengths at a rate of 112 BPM. Unfortunately, the use of a mid-tempo tactus as a measure-length device is not a foolproof method. Take the song “Maybellene” (Chuck Berry, 1955) for instance. Based on the snare drum pattern, the song has an apparent tempo of about 240 BPM. This rate lies far outside the window of maximal pulse salience. One solution would be to cut this 240 BPM

rate in half. The result would be a rate of about 120 BPM. In fact, the 120 BPM rate coincides nicely with the alternation of bass notes in the guitar part. (Is the backbeat thus the off-beat accents in the drum part or the off-beat accents in the guitar part?) This 120 BPM rate may indeed be where we as listeners find it easiest to tap our foot along with the music. But we cannot necessarily conclude that this 120 BPM rate reflects the speed of a quarter note in a 4/4 meter. Most problematically, the 120 BPM rate (assuming a 4/4 quarter note) would mean that – instead of opening with a clear 12-bar blues structure – “Maybellene” opens with a 6-bar blues. This reading rubs directly against inherited notions of measure lengths and form types in rock music. Of course, we could maintain the 120 BPM rate and posit a meter of 2/2, which would preserve the 12-bar blues structure. But this solution only recasts the problem. When, for example, do we posit a 2/2 meter instead of a 4/4 meter?

Ultimately, a tidy formula for determining measure lengths in rock music is not currently available. Yet all is not lost. The calculation of measure lengths in many if not most songs is a clear and straightforward process. As a result, there has been a conscientious effort in this dissertation to avoid choosing musical examples in which measure lengths are ambiguous or debatable. Unless otherwise noted, all transcriptions imply either a 4/4 or 2/2 meter – the only difference being the rate at which one perceives “the beat” of the song. That being said, some especially useful examples will be included that raise the issue of measure lengths, and the reader may disagree with the chosen metric setting. The gist of the argument will hopefully shine through in these cases.

3.2: Verse and Chorus

Verse and chorus sections are two (arguably *the* two) basic section types found in rock songs. Every conception of form in rock music requires that at least one of these two section roles exists within a song, and most songs are seen to have both. In most extant theoretical descriptions, these two section types are discussed separately. This separation occurs in part because some songs are seen to have only one of these sections (typically, a verse without a chorus). Yet many qualities of verse and chorus sections are described by theorists in relational terms. That is to say, the attributes of a verse are construed in relation to a chorus, and vice versa. Because our conception of verse and chorus qualities appears to have a strong relational component, these two sections will be discussed in tandem here. As we will see, though, internal (or non-relational) factors can also be found to associate with our sense of verse or chorus quality. These internal factors can be helpful in making section designations in unclear situations, such as single-section songs or songs with multiple verse

or chorus candidates. Yet the difference between relational and non-relational factors is somewhat a matter of perspective, as will be shown.

Before delving into current descriptions of verse and chorus sections, one small caveat is necessary. The terms “verse” and “chorus” are often used in the discussion of songs that lie outside the rock repertory. This situation is most easily found in jazz, where many popular songs (“standards”) written in the first half of the 20th century are seen to contain introductory “verse” and 32-bar “chorus” sections. The use of these same form labels in both the jazz and rock repertoires is no coincidence, and some authors have offered explanations for this lexical overlap in terms of the evolution of song forms (e.g., Stephenson 2002, 141). This relationship will be explored somewhat in the next chapter during the discussion of the AABA organizational scheme, although a full exploration of the historical development of these labels is beyond the current scope. Needless to say, while some similarity between the usages is evident, the terms “verse” and “chorus” are considered by most theorists to carry distinct and different meanings in rock music as opposed to jazz.

Extant descriptions of verse and chorus sections

Theorists have identified a variety of attributes that comprise our perception of verse and chorus sections. One of the most basic of these is length. Stephenson touches on this issue, stating that the length of a single repeating section (whether verse or chorus) is typically eight, twelve, or sixteen bars (2002, 139). Yet as was discussed in the introduction to this chapter, determining how much musical material constitutes a single measure can itself be unclear. Consequently, other theorists concern themselves with relative instead of absolute lengths. Allan Moore, for example, posits that the lengths of verse and chorus sections are typically in 1:1 or 2:1 relationships, with the most common scenario being a verse that is twice as long as the chorus (2001, 52). The size of a section may thus be somewhat contextual. But – at least in Moore’s conception – the lengths of verse and chorus sections within a single song are not usually wildly dissimilar.

One common method of identifying different sections within a song, of course, is simply that a certain span of music differs in some meaningful way from the material surrounding it. This factor – we may call it “contrast” – appears in numerous descriptions of verse-chorus relationships. Sometimes contrast is presented as an explicit attribute of this relationship (e.g., Pattison 1991, 55), while other times contrast is implied through descriptions of how the two sections might differ (e.g., Stephenson 2002, 132). Contrast also plays an important role in the categorization scheme used by Covach to distinguish certain types of verse-chorus pairings (2005, 72). Yet while some element of contrast appears to be an important aspect of verse and chorus relationships, these two sections are seen to often be

highly similar. Covach, for example, foils his contrasting verse-chorus form with “simple” (or “non-contrasting”) verse-chorus form, in which the verse and chorus share the same harmonic material (2005, 73). Covach’s simple verse-chorus form highlights the fact that we may perceive separate verse and chorus qualities when the attributes of these two sections significantly overlap. In fact, multiple theorists describe verse-chorus pairings in which both sections share the same melody and harmony (Covach 2009, 102; Everett 2009, 145). Thus while some contrast is necessary to distinguish the two sections from each another, verse and chorus designations may also rely on aspects of their similarity.

Issues of section identity aside, a central theme in theoretical descriptions is that a chorus section demands our attention much more strongly than does a verse. Covach refers to this aspect in terms of focal quality, as he states that “in a verse-chorus song... the focus of the song is squarely on the chorus” (2005, 71). Stephan-Robinson conveys a similar sentiment when she notes that a chorus has more “energy” than a verse (2009, 94). Likewise, Everett states that a chorus often has a more “dramatic” harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic structure than the verse. Others couch the relationship in terms of our ability to recall the section, saying that the chorus is a more memorable portion of the song in comparison to the verse (e.g., Harris 2006, 63; Osborn 2010, 87). In all of these conceptions, there is something more compelling about the chorus and, consequently, something less compelling about the verse. In general, these explanations attempt to get at the essence of these two section roles, although how this “focus” or “memorability” is generated in the chorus is never made entirely clear.

One factor that seems to relate to this aspect of focus and memorability is the domain of texture, i.e., dynamics, timbre, and instrumentation. In particular, chorus sections are seen be thicker in texture – with an increase in instrumental resources and general volume – as compared to verses (e.g., Everett 2001, 49). Various authors trace the etymological derivation of the word “chorus” itself to the fact that background singers (the “chorus”) were often added to this section. Again, it is not surprising in light of this attribute that focal quality is something theorists associate with a chorus section. When one section is louder than another, it certainly has a much stronger pull on our attention. The term “chorus” also implies that we as listeners are meant to sing along – a task that requires a certain ease of memorability.

Another factor potentially related to focus and memorability is the lyric content of these sections. Often, for example, verses are found to develop a story or exemplify various aspects of a recurrent theme (e.g., Everett 2001, 49); in contrast, the chorus delivers a “more general message” (e.g., Burns 2005, 138). Stephan-Robinson also notes a characteristic perspective shift in many verse-chorus relationships. A verse might use a first-person,

individual point of view in order to narrate the action, whereas the chorus will switch to a second-person point of view in order to provide commentary (2009, 240). The presence of the title (or some variation of it) is also seen to be a common attribute of chorus sections (e.g., Endrinal 2008, 69).

One central factor in all descriptions of verse and chorus sections is the large-scale pattern of lyric repetition. Sometimes, this factor is presented as a defining attribute of verse and chorus quality. Harris, for example, states that “verses are recurring sections with the same music, but different text... [while] choruses, in contrast, are recurring sections with the same music and text” (2006, 63). More commonly, though, some flexibility is admitted. For instance, Covach writes that verses “often” feature new lyrics while choruses “tend” to use the same lyrics upon future iterations (2009, G-3). In general, chorus sections are widely described as repeating their lyric content on each appearance in the song, as opposed to verse sections that typically feature new lyrics. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that the chorus is described as the more memorable of the two sections. The more something is repeated and the more general this content is (as in the lyrics to a chorus), the more we are prone to remember it.

In describing large-scale text repetition patterns, theorists interact with the question of how verse and chorus sections are distributed in a song. In particular, verse and chorus sections are seen to be segments of music that reappear more than once in a song. (Otherwise, we could not judge whether the lyrics to these sections repeat or not on future iterations.) Because verse and chorus sections repeat within a song, descriptions of their typical order can sometimes sound like circular reasoning. Moore, for example, defines the chorus as “the portion of a song that follows a verse,” while the verse is defined as “the portion of the song that precedes a chorus” (2001, 223-7). Despite this latent circularity, the general implication – which is supported in the writings of music theorists – is that verse and chorus sections usually can be seen to group into larger units (or “supersections”), and that the verse section typically precedes the chorus in these larger units.

This aspect of grouping may, at least in some cases, relate to harmonic factors. It should be mentioned that harmony has been a central component of verse and chorus descriptions. For example, Everett states that verse and chorus sections “nearly always” prolong the tonic (2001, 49-50). In a similar manner, Neal states that tonal closure (i.e., ending on tonic) is a common attribute of verse and chorus sections (2007, 45). Yet Neal states that verse sections can be harmonically open as well. Tonal closure thus appears to be something that associates more strongly with chorus than verse quality. Other theoretical explanations, in fact, correlate an emphasis on tonic more strongly with chorus than verse sections (e.g., Endrinal 2008, 69; Stephan-Robinson 2009, 94). Our notion that verse

sections typically precede chorus sections may thus relate to the fact that choruses often impart a greater sense of closure (and thus of ending) than do verses.

Theorists have noted a few other common features of verse and chorus sections as well. In the harmonic domain, for example, Perricone notes that many songs include a verse that is centered on a minor tonic and a chorus that is centered on the relative major (2000, 129). In the melodic domain, Stephenson notes that choruses tend to have slower vocal rhythms than do verses (2002, 129). In terms of memorability, these slower rhythms may reduce the amount of information conveyed to the listener. Temperley accounts for the interaction between melodic and harmonic domains via his “loose-verse/tight-chorus” model (LVTC). This model describes how the verse sections to many songs contain “stratified” melodic-harmonic content, in that the verse melodies show strings of non-chord tones or clear violations of stepwise resolution (often due to their pentatonic construction); in contrast, the melodic-harmonic content in a chorus section is much more unified, in that melodic notes are either chord tones or resolved by step (335). Again, the coordinated melodic-harmonic content of a chorus may help listeners in remembering this section as compared to others in the song.

Verse and chorus designations in analytical practice

In analytical practice, the assignment of verse and chorus labels can often seem like a simple task. Given a song with two alternating and repeating sections, one of these sections will (for whatever reasons) inherently seem more like a focal point than the other. This focus might be generated via the pattern of lyric repetition, an increase in instrumental density, or something else. In this regard, verse and chorus labels can always be applied when two distinct repeating sections exist. This fact derives directly from the relational nature of these two sections types.

Because of the strong relational aspect that underlies conceptions of verse-chorus pairings, though, it is not entirely clear how an analyst should handle situations in which a song has only a single, main repeating section. As we found in the previous chapter, some authors refer – as a rule – to a single repeating section as a verse (e.g., Covach), while other authors allow a single repeating section to be either verse or chorus material (e.g., Stephenson). As we look more closely at what factors determine whether a single repeating section is a verse or chorus, it seems as if the pattern of lyric repetition plays an important role in the final choice. The pattern of lyric repetition, in fact, turns out to be one of the few non-relational attributes available to analysts based on existing descriptions of verse and chorus sections. If the lyrics to a section repeat on future iterations, for example, we can say (without any further information) that this section is chorus-like; we do not need to reference

any other section in the song to make this judgment. Perhaps for this reason, lyric repetition (or the lack thereof) often drives analytical practice in verse and chorus label assignments.

Nevertheless, it is relatively easy to frame non-relational attributes in relational terms (and vice versa). Take the attribute of lyric repetition, for example. Instead of saying that the lyrics to a typical chorus repeat on future iterations (a formulation that does not relate the chorus to any other section role), we can recast lyric repetition as a relational attribute by stating simply that the lyrics to a typical chorus repeat *more than* the lyrics to a typical verse. Similarly, we can frame relational attributes in non-relational terms. Chorus sections, for instance, are generally conceived of as being louder than their associated verse sections. We could simply reword this insight, though, to say that chorus sections are loud. “Loudness” may be a more difficult attribute to judge in non-relational terms than the binary issue of whether lyrics repeat or not. But it would be hard to deny, for example, that the chorus section to Nirvana’s 1991 hit “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (first heard around 1:06) is not loud (or texturally dense) in absolute terms.

One of the strengths of prototype theory is that it easily shuttles between relational and non-relational aspects, which may otherwise create a somewhat confusing analytical environment. Prototypical attributes can be cast in non-relational terms, and relational aspects fall out of gradations and extensions of these prototypical situations. Let us thus examine some musical situations with clear verse-chorus pairings in order to demonstrate this approach.

Prototypical verse-chorus relationships

Although it might seem counterintuitive, some of the clearest cases of verse and chorus quality occur when these two sections share the same harmonic material. In these situations, one might worry that it could be difficult to distinguish a chorus from merely a verse variation. Typically, however, the verse and chorus sections – despite shared harmonic content – are significantly different from one another, and so identifying separate sections is a straightforward task.

The Grammy-award-winning #1 single “Just the Way You Are” (Bruno Mars, 2010) provides a prototypical example of verse-chorus relationships using the same harmonic material. The song, in fact, basically contains only two separate parts, and it is clear that these two parts should be considered the verse and chorus sections of the song. The first iteration of the verse section is shown in Example 3.2.01, and the first iteration of the chorus section is shown in Example 3.2.02.

Example 3.2.01: “Just the Way You Are” (Bruno Mars, 2010); verse

(orig. F) I 0:18 vi

(Oh) Hereyes, her eyes make the stars look like they're not shin-in.' Her hair, her hair falls perfectly with out her try-in.'

She's so beau-ti-ful, and I tell her ever-y day. (Yeah)

I know, I know when I compliment her she won't believe me. And it's so sad to think that she don't see what I see.

But every-y-time she asks me "Do I look O-kay?" I say:

Example 3.2.02: “Just the Way You Are” (Bruno Mars, 2010); chorus

(orig. F) I 0:52 vi

"When I see your face there's not a thing that I would change, 'cause you're a-maz-

- ing just the way you are. And when you smile,

the whole world stops and stares for a while, 'cause Girl, you're a-maz-

- ing just the way you are." (Yeah)

There are many good reasons why we should consider the spans of music in these examples as the verse and chorus sections of the song. For example, the lyrics to the 16-bar span labeled as verse never reappear at any other point in the song. (Although the music

from this verse section reappears around 1:29, this music contains entirely new text.) In contrast, the next iteration of the 16-bar span labeled as the chorus (starting around 2:02) repeats the exact same text from its first iteration. The large-scale pattern of text repetition thus aligns with theoretical descriptions of verse and chorus sections.

The succession pattern for these two sections also provides evidence of their roles as verse and chorus. Specifically, the verse material appears first in the song, and the chorus material appears afterwards. Note that after this chorus material, we are presented with another verse section. Consequently, we could also say that the verse follows the chorus (at least at one point in the song). But it is clear that the reappearance of the verse material starts a new larger grouping, since it leads directly into another chorus section. We thus conceptualize two verse-chorus blocks here, each of which places the verse prior to the chorus.

Another factor that corresponds to theoretical descriptions is the standalone quality of these two sections. In particular, note that both sections are built on a single harmonic progression: I–vi–IV–I. Each chord in this progression lasts two bars, thereby creating an 8-bar repeating harmonic unit. Each verse and chorus contains two of these 8-bar units, which creates a 16-bar length for each section. It is natural to give each 16-bar span a separate label on the basis of size alone. Moreover, each 8-bar unit is a fully closed harmonic entity (spanning from tonic to tonic), as is each 16-bar section; this harmonic closure reinforces the sense of sectional closure. We might also say that these verse and chorus sections essentially prolong an underlying tonic harmony.

The texture also plays an important role in our perception of verse and chorus qualities here. There is, in fact, an increase in instrumental resources during the chorus section. Specifically, the verse section consists only of a drum, vocal, and piano part. In the chorus, though, a low bass line enters along with a high string-like part. That being said, it is hard to pinpoint exactly why the chorus sounds “bigger” than the verse. (More on that in a moment.)

Overall, the chorus undeniably sounds like the focal (or most memorable) section of the song in comparison to the verse. Some of the reasons the chorus section attains this focal (or memorable) quality certainly stem from factors just discussed, such as the increase in instrumental resources or the large-scale repetition pattern of the lyrics. Yet a number of reasons why we perceive a verse-chorus relationship here stems from additional factors – factors that have received little attention within the theoretical literature.

In general, these additional factors can be seen to relate to the more abstract qualities of “focus” and “memorability” that theorists associate with chorus sections. One noticeable difference between the chorus and verse sections in this song, for example, is the basic pace of

the vocal melody. As mentioned above, Stephenson observes that chorus sections often contain slower vocal rhythms than do verses. This is indeed the case we find here. But it is not simply the rate of the vocal rhythms that is different. Note that the verse section often syncopates at the sixteenth-note level. In contrast, the chorus section avoids this lower level of syncopation altogether. We could say, therefore, that the chorus presents a simplified rhythmic structure. If we are meant to sing along with this chorus, the simplified syncopation structure certainly helps us (and encourages us) to do so.

A side effect of the slower vocal rhythms (or perhaps the cause of them) is that the chorus section contains a smaller amount of lyric content than the verse. In the first eight bars of the verse, for example, we hear 30 words, as compared to the only 21 words found in the first eight bars of the chorus. Undeniably, it is easier to remember 21 words than it is 30 words, and thus the lyric pacing of the chorus section creates more memorable lyric content. Moreover, half of the lyrics in the first eight bars of the chorus are repeated in its second eight bars (“you’re amazing, just the way you are”). In contrast, the second eight bars of the verse do not repeat any of the lyrics from its first half. The repetition of a large chunk of text within the chorus aids memorability in at least two ways. Firstly, it reduces the number of words we have to remember. Secondly, the repetition reinforces certain parts of the text to this chorus in the mind of the listener. Thus while the fact that the lyrics to this chorus section repeat on future iterations certainly bolsters the memorability of this section, the internal lyric repetition can also be seen to contribute to this aspect of memorability as well. The fact that this internal lyric repetition includes the title of the song further causes this text and the section as a whole to sound like the focus of the song.

Differences in vocal phrase groupings also potentially affect our perception of verse and chorus qualities in this song. Note that in the verse, each vocal phrase begins – for the most part – on or after a hypermetric strong beat. The sense in this verse section is basically that the vocal melody is contained within the measures themselves. In the chorus, however, the vocal phrase organization shifts dramatically. Each vocal phrase seems much more strongly end-accented. In particular, the vocal phrases now sound as if they are leading towards (instead of away from) a hypermetric strong beat. The result is that each vocal phrase in the chorus sounds highly goal-directed. The anticipation for this hypermetric goal arguably contributes to the focal quality of the chorus (and to the feeling that this chorus is the end of something).

One other factor of the vocal melody is worth mentioning as well. Specifically, the vocal melody in the chorus is significantly higher in range than the melody of the verse. The height of this chorus melody undeniably imparts a sense of focal quality to the section overall, as we are drawn to the increased energy and effort that the singer has to impart in order to

sustain this higher tessitura. This factor of melodic height potentially relates to why the chorus sounds so much bigger than the verse.

In summary, the song “Just the Way You Are” provides an excellent example of prototypical ways that verse and chorus sections relate to one another. On one hand, the identical harmonic content of the verse and chorus sections imparts a close relationship between them. But the two sections differ in almost every other dimension. More importantly, the ways in which this chorus differs from the verse are prototypical means of generating chorus quality. The similarity of the harmonic content between these two sections has thus provided a window into how verse-chorus relationships manifest within a variety of non-harmonic domains, such as external and internal lyric repetition, melodic phrase structure, rhythmic content, instrumentation, and melodic range. Consequently, the remainder of this discussion will primarily consider harmonic factors that affect verse-chorus relationships. Some of these harmonic factors have been noted previously by other theorists, but most of this discussion will present new and supplemental views on how verse and chorus relationships are engendered.

The cadential quality of chorus sections

There is one aspect of the verse-chorus relationship in “Just the Way You Are” that was not addressed in the preceding discussion. This aspect was reserved until now because it is part of a more general feature of verse-chorus relationships. This aspect will be referred to here as the “cadential quality” of chorus sections, especially in relationship to a verse section.

The strongest evidence of this aspect can be found within the melodic structure of this Bruno Mars song. Note, for instance, that each 8-bar unit in the chorus section traces a general melodic path from $\hat{3}$ down to $\hat{1}$. More importantly, the melody that contains the title text of the song (in the sixth and seventh bars of each 8-bar unit in the chorus) presents what appears to be a cadential formula. Of course, this cadential formula in the melody is not supported by a dominant chord, as we might expect in a common-practice setting. Thus we may not sense any cadential quality here whatsoever. But cadences in rock music do not necessarily require a dominant chord. As discussed in Temperley 2011, the subdominant chord often acts in a cadential role. In fact, the chord progression to “Just the Way You Are” can easily be seen as substituting a subdominant chord for a dominant. Note how similar this repeating chord progression (I–vi–IV–I) is to another chord progression commonly found in songs from the early period of rock history: the “doo-wop” progression, which consists (at least in some formulations) of a I–vi–IV–V–I harmonic pattern (as found in the song “Stand by Me” [Ben E. King, 1961]). It is not too difficult, in fact, to imagine a clear IV–V–I harmonic cadence at the end of each 8-bar unit in “Just the Way You Are.” All things

considered, the chorus section to this Bruno Mars song is significantly more cadential than the verse. A related aspect in our sense of verse-chorus relationships, therefore, is thus how non-cadential the verse section is. Note, for instance, how the melody of the verse mostly just sits on a $\hat{5}$ throughout.

On investigating other songs, the correlation between cadential quality and chorus quality seems to manifest in different ways. Cadential quality, in fact, may be something we can remove from a specific metrical framework. The song “Little Red Corvette” (Prince, 1982) provides a good illustration of this situation. To begin with, the verse and chorus sections in this song are relatively clear via attributes in a number of domains. The verse section (Example 3.2.03), for instance, contains no internal text repetition, no text repetition on future iterations, relatively long, dense, and rhythmically complex vocal phrases, and a relatively spare instrumental texture. In contrast, the chorus section (Example 3.2.04) contains internal text repetition, text repetition on future iterations, relatively short, less dense, and rhythmically simple vocal phrases, and a relatively thick instrumental texture (via the addition of the background vocals and a supporting synthesizer part). As well, the succession pattern of the song (not shown) basically consists of blocks in which the verse material precedes the chorus material.

Example 3.2.03: “Little Red Corvette” (Prince, 1982); verse

(orig. Db)
0:21

The musical notation consists of two staves of music in treble clef. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the verse, with lyrics "I guess I should-a known by the way you park'd your car side ways... that it would n't last. See". The second staff contains the melody for the second line, with lyrics "you're the kind-a per-son that be lieves in ma-kin' out once; love 'em and leave 'em fast." Above the notes, Roman numeral chord markings are placed: IV, V, vi, and IV for the first line, and IV, V, vi, and IV for the second line. The melody is primarily based on the fifth degree of the scale.

IV V vi IV

I guess I should-a known by the way you park'd your car side ways... that it would n't last. See

IV V vi IV

you're the kind-a per-son that be lieves in ma-kin' out once; love 'em and leave 'em fast.

Example 3.2.04: “Little Red Corvette” (Prince, 1982); chorus

(orig. Db)
0:52

The musical notation consists of two staves. The first staff shows a melodic line with lyrics 'Lit - tle red__ cor - vette,_' and 'Ba - by, you're much too fast.____'. Above the staff, Roman numerals IV, V, I, IV, V, and vi are placed over the corresponding measures, with curved lines indicating the harmonic progression. The second staff shows a similar melodic line with lyrics 'Lit - tle red__ cor - vette,_' and 'you need a love that's gon-na last._____'. Above this staff, Roman numerals IV, V, I, IV, and V are placed over the measures, also with curved lines indicating the harmonic progression. The notation uses a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb).

We can also say, however, that the focal quality of the chorus to “Little Red Corvette” is reinforced by the repeated harmonic and melodic cadential motions found therein. Note that while the chorus section as a whole seems to end with a half cadence (and that this moment is arguably the “true” cadence of the section), there are strong cadence-like motions at the beginning of each 4-bar hypermeasure. Of course, these cadential motions are not literal cadences, in the sense that they do not engender closure of the section overall. Yet the coordinated melodic and harmonic motions towards the tonic chord and tonic scale degree on a downbeat create a distinct cadential quality. (This effect also has to do with the absence of the tonic in the verses. More on that in a moment.) Interestingly, it is within these cadential motions that we find the title text. It is also during these cadential motions that the background vocals and added synthesizer part appear, and these additional instrumental resources help draw our attention to these parts of the chorus. Admittedly, the verse section could also be seen as containing cadence-like motions, in that the IV–V–vi chord sequence seems like a deceptive cadence. Yet the cadential motions in the chorus section are much stronger, more coordinated, and more frequent, and thus focal quality adheres more strongly to the chorus section overall.

The cadential quality of a chorus section – in comparison to the verse – is an aspect that organizes the verse-chorus relationships in numerous songs. (Consider, for instance, “Light My Fire” [The Doors, 1967], “Hot Stuff” [Donna Summer, 1979], or “Material Girl” [Madonna, 1984]). This issue overlaps somewhat with the concept of a refrain, as we will see, and thus a further discussion of this issue will be reserved until Chapter 5. Nonetheless, the cadential quality of many chorus sections helps explain why the chorus sounds like a consequent of the verse. The cadential quality of a chorus, we could say, strengthens our sense that the chorus follows the verse (and not the other way around).

The emphasis on Ionian tonic in chorus sections

One other feature is important to note with regard to the verse and chorus sections in “Little Red Corvette.” Obviously, the cadential motions in the chorus section involve the tonic harmony; less obviously, the tonic harmony is absent in the verse sections of the song. We do not hear a major-mode tonic harmony, in fact, until the chorus itself.

In general, the arrival of tonic harmony can be seen to endow a strong sense of chorus quality to a section. In a song such as “Little Red Corvette,” the tonic chord is reserved for the cadential motions, and these cadential motions thus have an even stronger focal pull. The withholding of the tonic harmony until an important moment in the song (i.e., the chorus) is a particularly effective strategy for generating a sense of arrival and closure. This sense of arrival helps generate the more general aspects of focal quality that we associate with chorus sections.

One may wonder what constitutes the “tonic” in a rock setting. Many authors (e.g., Moore 2001 and Temperley 2001) contend that rock often operates within a modal harmonic system. Certainly, many sections of songs (or even entire songs themselves) may be construed as eschewing standard common-practice tonal harmony. In these cases, the arrival of the Ionian tonic – measured in terms relative to the primary diatonic collection used in the song – can help generate chorus quality and focus. For example, we might judge the verse section of “Little Red Corvette” to be in Aeolian mode, since there is no tonal dominant for any chord we might posit as a local tonic. In this regard, the appearance of the Db major chord in the chorus appears like the Ionian tonic in relation to the pitch material of the verse section. Indeed, other authors have argued that song sections should be considered separately on their own harmonic and voice-leading terms (e.g., Burns 2008). Temperley, for example, considers the song “So You Want to Be a Rock ‘n’ Roll Star” (The Byrds, 1967) to be entirely (or almost entirely) within the Mixolydian mode (2001, 259). This Byrds song does, in fact, consist mostly of a harmonic toggle between G major and A major harmonies, and this alternation between two chords separated by a whole step gives the song an overall Mixolydian feel. Yet even if we perceive this song as having mostly a modal flavor, the periodic arrivals of D major (at 0:39, for example) sound like instances of an Ionian tonic – retroactively reinterpreting the G and A chords as IV and V. Note, moreover, that it is exactly this arrival of the D-major harmony that feels like the most chorus-like moment in the song. The issue of whether song sections should be considered tonal or modal, therefore, is somewhat beside the point. Rather, the point is that the absence of the Ionian tonic in the verse causes its appearance later in the song to convey a strong sense of chorus quality.

Another example will help clarify this issue. Consider in this regard the song “Rockin’ in the Free World” (Neil Young, 1989). The verse material to this song (Example 3.2.05)

clearly has a pitch center of E, and most theorists would probably label the harmonies here as i–bVII–bVI. We thus have a minor tonic, although – because the (raised) leading tone is absent – we might say that this verse is in Aeolian mode.

Example 3.2.05: “Rockin’ in the Free World” (Neil Young, 1989); verse

(orig. E)
0:14

There's col-ors on the street, red, white, and blue... Peo-ple
shuf-fl - in' their feet, peo-ple sleep-'in in their shoes. There's a
warn-in' sign_ on the road a- head, there's a lot-ta peo-ple say-in' we'd be bet-ter off dead. Don't
feel like Sa-tan, but I am to them, so I try to for- get_ it an- y way I can.____

Example 3.2.06: “Rockin’ in the Free World” (Neil Young, 1989); chorus

(orig. E)
0:44

Keep on rock - in' in the free world.____
Keep on rock - in' in the free world.____

In the chorus section (Example 3.2.06), however, there is a pronounced shift to what sounds like the relative major. Yet it is not entirely clear how we should label the Roman numerals in this chorus section. If we hear the chorus as a modulation to G major, then the first four bars of Example 3.2.06 should be labeled as I–V–IV. At the end of each 4-bar

hypermeasure, though, the harmonies retreat back to the E-minor chord, which acted as the harmonic center for the verse. As a result, we might consider the chorus to still be – at least somewhat – within the pull of the E-minor harmony. The Roman numerals in Example 3.2.06 reflect this hearing, which is the one chosen by Temperley (2010). (The fact that the song ends with verse-like material further supports a large-scale center of E minor.) Whether we wish to see this move to G major as a tonicization or modulation, the important thing is the move to the Ionian tonic itself, which helps engender focal quality within this chorus.

It appears, in fact, that we might consider there to be slightly different situations in which an emphasis on the Ionian tonic can engender chorus quality. For example, we potentially saw two different scenarios in “Little Red Corvette” and “Rockin' in the Free World.” In the Prince song, one could say that we hear the verse and chorus sections as having the same tonal center and the same diatonic collection. Since the verse avoids tonic harmony, focal quality is generated in the chorus via the introduction of the tonic. In contrast, the verse and chorus sections of the Neil Young song use the same diatonic collection yet the tonal center is different. Chorus quality in this case is generated via a tonal shift to the Ionian center. For some cases, it is difficult to decide which of these scenarios is present. In the song “Tangerine” (Led Zeppelin, 1970), for example, it is not entirely clear whether the verse material (0:34) should be considered as A Dorian or simply G major with a strong emphasis on A minor. Our perception of tonal center, in fact, seems to change at various points during the verse section itself. (It seems more like A Dorian near the beginning of phrases and less so at the ends.) With whatever reading, the chorus section of the song (beginning at 0:55) obviously emphasizes the Ionian tonic (G major) much more strongly than does the verse section. This emphasis derives in strong part from the placement of the tonic chord on strong hypermetric downbeats.

This Led Zeppelin example points to the fact that the quality of “emphasis” is – like others that inform our perception of verse and chorus sections – a relational quality. We may thus find that chorus quality is engendered simply by an increased weight on the Ionian tonic, even if the chorus section does not appear to completely modulate to the key of the Ionian tonic. “Rockin' in the Free World” is one example, as we might consider the chorus section to still be in E minor. “Hotel California” (Eagles, 1976) is another example, as the chorus section (1:44) – which flirts with the Ionian tonic of D major at its opening – ends with a clear half cadence in B minor. Thus while we may not perceive that the chorus in this song is ultimately able to escape the pull of B minor, the emphasis on the Ionian tonic is undeniably stronger in this section than it is in the verse.

The notion that an emphasis on the Ionian tonic can engender chorus quality can also be useful in situations where the verse and chorus sections do not share the same basic

diatonic scale. In the song “Rio” (Duran Duran, 1982), for example, the verse (first at 0:39) is basically in E minor (allowing for the major subdominant chord [A]). The chorus (first at 1:09), however, shifts to a tonic of E major. The appearance of an Ionian tonic in the chorus section of this song is thus generated via a parallel move instead of a modal (or relative) one. Sometimes, the relationship between the key areas of the verse and chorus is even more remote. In “Don’t Stand So Close To Me” (The Police, 1980) for example, the verse (first at 0:36) is centered on G minor, whereas the chorus (first at 1:03) is centered on D major. Neither a parallel nor relative key relationship is evident here, but the switch to an Ionian mode still seems to help imbue a focal quality to the chorus section. We might even consider the Ionian tonic be a factor in verse-chorus relationships when both the verse and chorus sections are centered on major-mode tonics. Consider in this regard the song “Hungry Like the Wolf” (Duran Duran, 1982). The verse section (first at 0:08) is centered on E major, but includes a significant mixolydian flavor with the move to bVII. In contrast, the chorus (first at 0:38) opens with a clear I–V–IV progression in the new tonal center of C major, which thereby engenders a stronger Ionian feel upon its arrival than does the verse.

To summarize, an Ionian tonic can be seen to contribute to chorus quality in a number of separate scenarios: 1) The verse and chorus are in the same major-mode key but the verse avoids the tonic harmony; 2) The verse and chorus share the same diatonic collection but have different tonal centers (e.g., minor and relative major); 3) The verse and chorus have the same tonal center but different diatonic collections (e.g., minor and parallel major); or 4) The verse and chorus sections have different tonal centers and different diatonic collections. Each of these cases is somewhat distinct from the other, although it is not always clear which one is (or ones are) in play. In this regard, it is convenient to gather these various situations under the general notion that an emphasis on an Ionian tonic helps evoke chorus quality.

Chorus as shorter, faster, less static harmonic motions

Up until this point in the discussion, harmonic relationships between verse and chorus have been presented in terms of specific strategies – either local cadential motions or a more global arrival on an Ionian tonic. It is also useful to describe harmonic differences between prototypical verse and chorus sections in more abstract terms.

The song “Just What I Needed” (The Cars, 1978) is a good example in this regard. The verse and chorus sections in this song are relatively clear – made explicit to the listener most obviously through the difference in dynamics between each section. But something else adds to the sense of excitement within this chorus section. In the verse (Example 3.2.07), a 4-chord series of harmonies plods forward at the rate of one chord per bar. Although the

chorus section (Example 3.2.08) also uses a similar palette of chords, the rate of these harmonies has dramatically changed. Specifically, the chorus doubles the harmonic pacing of the verse such that we now see a basic rate of two chords per bar. This increase in harmonic motion imbues the chorus with a feeling of movement and action. In other words, the faster harmonic pace contributes to the chorus-like quality found here.

Example 3.2.07: “Just What I Needed” (The Cars, 1978); verse

(orig. E)

0:15 I

I don't mind you com-in' here, and wast-in' all my time.

'Cause when you're stand-in' oh so near, I kind-a lose my mind.

It's not the per-fume that you wear, it's not the rib-bons in your hair.

I don't mind you com-in' here, and wast-in' all my time.

Example 3.2.08: “Just What I Needed” (The Cars, 1978); chorus

(orig. E)

1:31 I

I guess you're just what I need-ed, I need-ed some-one to feed...

I guess you're just what I need-ed, I need-ed some-one to bleed...

As a result of this increase in the harmonic rate, the repeated harmonic pattern becomes shorter. In the verse section, the 4-chord sequence spans a 4-measure block. (To

put this another way, the 4-chord unit does not repeat until four bars later.) In the chorus, though, the faster harmonic motion creates a much shorter timeframe for repetition; now, the 4-chord unit repeats every two bars. This situation is similar to that seen in melodic phrase structures, where shorter phrase lengths are seen to adhere to chorus sections (a factor related to memorability). It is interesting to note that the phrase structures in the verse and the chorus sections of this song are relatively similar; each vocal phrase begins in the middle of a hypermetrically-strong measure and ends near the middle of the next. Because of the shortened length of the harmonic units, however, the grouping of the melodic phrases becomes shorter as well. Notice that the two melodic fragments in the first four bars of the chorus are much more similar (almost like a repeat) than the two melodic fragments in the first four bars of the verse material. This increased similarity between the groups in the chorus is reflected in the rhyme scheme as well. The chorus thus displays stronger evidence of 2-bar parallel groupings, which are inherently easier to remember than the longer 4-bar groups of the verse.

Because the harmonic pattern of the chorus is shorter than the verse, we should also note that the frequency of tonic iterations in these sections is not the same. Although the total amount of time that the tonic persists in each section is equal given a single 4-bar span (one bar of tonic equals two half bars of tonic), the tonic appears more frequently in the chorus (every two bars) than in the verse (every four bars). This aspect of tonic frequency may relate back to the attribute of Ionian arrival, in the sense that the arrival of tonic happens more often in the chorus than it does in the verse.

Similar effects of tonic frequency can be seen in other songs, such as “Highway to Hell” (AC/DC, 1979). Again, the chorus and verse sections to this song contain an equivalent amount of tonic material per 4-bar span. But the verse section contains a 4-bar harmonic progression that begins and ends on tonic, while the chorus section contains a 4-bar harmonic progression that basically alternates tonic and subdominant. As a result, the harmonies in the chorus group into shorter, smaller units (two bars long) that include more motions to tonic than found in the verse.

In other songs, the difference in harmonic motion between the chorus and verse is even more drastic. In the most obvious cases, the verse is harmonically static – basically just sitting on tonic for its entirety; in contrast, it is only in the chorus section that any sense of harmonic motion is introduced. This situation is typically seen in songs with a riff-based verse, such as “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” (The Rolling Stones, 1968). Note that Temperley 2007 uses this song as an example of “loose-verse/tight-chorus” construction. Since this construction relates to the concept of melodic-harmonic divorce, we can perhaps theorize somewhat on the role harmony plays in such situations. When the rate of harmonic change

increases (as in tight choruses), the melody has a tendency to follow the chord structure more closely. When the chord structure is more static – as is found in many verse sections – the melody has more freedom to explore the handling of non-harmonic tones in various ways. This possible explanation ties the loose-verse/tight-chorus construction to harmonic as well as melodic factors.

Looking back at some earlier examples, we can see a general correlation of shorter, faster harmonic groups with chorus quality. In “Little Red Corvette,” for instance, the harmonies in the chorus move at a faster pace than the verse, even though it is not clear that the chorus necessarily creates shorter grouping structures than the verse. In the case of “Rockin’ in the Free World,” though, it may not be immediately obvious that this property holds true. Compared to the harmonies of the chorus, the harmonies in the verse seem to group into shorter repeating units with faster internal harmonic motion. But while the verse material displays chord changes from a literal perspective, the overall harmonic activity in this verse can also be seen to be basically static. As a result, one can posit that it is only in the chorus of the song that we feel any real sense of harmonic motion. The difference between tonic elaboration and true harmonic motion is not something that is easily codified, however, and it raises issues of chord hierarchies for which there is no clear system in rock music. Ultimately, such decisions are best left to the realm of analysis for now.

Conclusion

This discussion has presented a number of ways that two sections can evince a verse-chorus relationship. When two sections share the same harmonic content, we find that verse and chorus qualities arise in other domains, such as lyrics, melody, phrase structure, and rhythm. We also find that various factors in the harmonic domain affect our perception of verse and chorus sections, such as the extent of cadential quality, emphasis on an Ionian tonic, or internal harmonic motion. While these aspects were often described in relational terms, we saw that we can easily translate relational terms into non-relational terms, and vice versa.

Overall, this discussion has not described every type of relationship between two sections for which we might employ verse and chorus labels. Rather, the relationships identified above were some of those that appear to most clearly affect our perception of these section categories. It is probable that the reader has thought of other situations in which verse and chorus labels are typically used. In Chapter 5, we will see that many usages of verse and chorus labels actually involve unclear situations, even if the situations themselves are common within rock music.

3.3: Refrain

The word “refrain” has received a broad variety of usages and definitions within theories and analyses of rock music. It may be, in fact, that the greatest disagreement can be found with regard to this single form label. Generally, theorists associate this term exclusively with lyric structure. Yet certain musical situations seem to trigger a stronger sense of (or expectation for) a refrain than others. Before investigating these situations, though, it is worth sketching out the prevalent understandings of this term in the literature.

The refrain as used in theoretical literature

Some authors appear to use the term “refrain” as a synonym or replacement for the word “chorus.” In their writing, the word “chorus” is notably and persistently absent. Harrison 1997, for example, discusses form in the music of the Beach Boys – including the songs “Good Vibrations” (1966) and “California Girls” (1965) – using only the word “refrain” to describe the central, title-containing sections of these tunes. In a similar manner, Alan Pollack’s “Notes on” series (2001) analytically tackles every song recorded by the Beatles without ever resorting to the word “chorus” in a form chart; in songs with long, title-containing sections (e.g., “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” [1967]), he employs the label “refrain” instead. Although these analytical systems are perhaps internally consistent, the conspicuous lack of the word “chorus” in these usages puts them at odds with modern form terminology.

More commonly, a refrain is presented as something related to but different from a chorus section. While refrains and choruses are discussed as having similar qualities, a refrain – unlike a chorus – is presented not as a section itself but rather as something existing within a section. In other words, the refrain is only a subsection – only part of a larger, standalone unit. Exactly what types of sections within which a refrain may nest – and exactly at what location in these sections a refrain may appear – varies from theorist to theorist. To a large extent, this variation in viewpoints relates to how one defines or conceives of a refrain.

Stephenson, for example, allows a refrain to occur in any main section type – verse, chorus, or bridge – and to appear potentially anywhere within these sections – beginning, middle, or end (2002, 135). This perspective falls directly out of the brief definition that Stephenson uses for a refrain: “one or two textual lines that recur periodically.” Although Stephenson goes on to say that refrains normally end verses or begin choruses, the definition he offers inherently allows for any musical situation to underpin a refrain. In this conception, the repetition of text at any point in the song is as good an example of a refrain as the repetition of text at any other point. Moreover, we would not necessarily expect any musical

similarity between the various repetitions of a refrain within even a single song. Any text repetition, no matter what the musical context, would qualify. This situation may be seen in one of the examples Stephenson cites, “Hard to Say” (Dan Fogelberg, 1981), in which the title text appears in a number of different musical settings over the course of the song form. A similar analytical methodology is described in Neal 2007 (45).

Other theorists take a more narrow approach to the word refrain, positing that it only exists within verse sections. Stephan-Robinson, for example, points out the potentially confusing theoretical situation that arises if refrains are allowed to exist within a chorus. Since the entire lyrics of a chorus section typically repeat on further iterations, the repeated line of the refrain is indistinguishable – assuming one relies solely on text repetition as a guide – from the multiple repeated lines of the chorus (2009, 100-101). (Any part of a chorus could thus be called a refrain.) In order to avoid terminological overlap, Stephan-Robinson disallows the use of the term “refrain” within a chorus. Note that this outlook treats all of the lyric text equally. In particular, the song title does not carry any special salience or weight that would trigger a sense of refrain more than any other repeated lyric. As a result, Stephan-Robinson limits the use of the term “refrain” to describe either the opening or closing text of a verse section. Everett 2009 echoes this limitation (145). Some theorists further limit the notion of a refrain by defining it as a lyric that repeats only at the end of a verse (Moore 2001, 225).

The refrain in analytical practice

Some issues arise when using the various theoretical conceptions provided by these authors in analytical practice. For instance, since a refrain is presented as something similar yet different from a chorus, the question arises as to how the two form types may be distinguished. As mentioned, one popular method is to cast the refrain as merely a subsection – as part of a larger, full-fledged verse (or chorus) section. This method can be couched in terms of lyrics as well. For example, Stephenson states that a refrain consists of only one or two lines of text; a chorus, in contrast, recurs with a fixed text of “several lines” (2002, 135). Both approaches take length or amount of content (whether in terms of lyrics or music) as the central criterion.

But although these approaches seem clear enough on the surface, some cloudiness remains. Exactly how much lyric content constitutes a single line of text as opposed to two or three lines? Many lyrics are merely sentence fragments or single words. Stephenson’s own analyses offer somewhat equivocal evidence in this matter. He views the song “Wrapped Around Your Finger” (The Police, 1983), for instance, as being in verse-chorus form, despite

the fact that the title line, “I’ll be wrapped around your finger,” is sung only twice in all but the last chorus section (2002, 140).

The distinction between a section and a subsection can be an equally complicated factor in musical terms as well. Cadences can help communicate section boundaries in rock music, and thus some theorists have tied the presence or absence of a cadence to refrain and chorus differentiation. Stephan-Robinson, for example, implies that if a verse ends in a cadence (which thereby marks a relatively clear section boundary), the music that follows will sound more like a new, full-fledged section (i.e., a chorus) than a refrain (2009, 100). But as we will see, theorists often posit separate verse and chorus sections without any cadential divider, so this guideline has limited applicability.

Aside from these difficulties, the modern consensus views a refrain as a unit that exists within some other larger unit of form (whether that larger unit be a verse, chorus, or bridge). As a result, one might argue that the refrain stands apart from the primary determinants of song form, in that the various sections of a song may be identified and delineated with or without the notion of a refrain. Especially if a refrain is conceptualized purely from the standpoint of lyrics, one can imagine a refrain potentially appearing in various places within a song. In this view, section designations would be analytically prior to the identification of the refrain.

Yet some interaction between the notion of a refrain and section designations seems evident. In those conceptions where a refrain is seen to exist only within a verse, for example, the refrain acts as a potential attribute of verse sections. Even in a looser conception such as that seen in Stephenson 2002, a relationship between the appearance of a refrain and section role is proposed. Stephenson notes that – for those cases where only a single section role alternates with a bridge (e.g., rounded binary [AABA] form) – the opening (A) section may be labeled as a verse if the refrain appears at the end of this section, whereas this opening section may be labeled as a chorus if the refrain appears at its beginning (140). Our understanding of a refrain thus appears to impact how we view the role of sections in the form of a song overall.

A prototypical tail refrain

As seen in the discussion above, a refrain is the section role (or subsection role) perhaps most strongly associated with lyric structure and least associated with particular musical qualities. Aside from its typical location(s) within the musical structure, no musical characteristics of a refrain appear in these descriptions. Yet on examination of many real-world refrains, we may specify many common and distinctive musical characteristics.

The verse material from “Stand by Me” (Ben E. King, 1961) contains an excellent and prototypical example of a refrain. As shown in Example 3.3.01, there is a long melodic phrase

with the text “Just as long as you stand, stand by me” at the end of each of the first two first verse sections. This moment acts as the refrain itself.

Example 3.3.01: “Stand by Me” (Ben E. King, 1961); verse material with refrain

(orig. A)
0:32

No I won't be a fraid, oh, I won't be a - fraid, just as long-

REFRAIN

as you stand stand by me.

Correspondences with theoretical descriptions give us good reason to consider this fragment from “Stand by Me” as a refrain. Notably, a single line of text – “Just as long as you stand, stand by me” – is repeated at both the end of the first and second iterations of verse material. As this line is not a complete sentence, we may say that – from a lyric perspective – this refrain exists within something else. This aspect may be seen on a variety of musical levels as well. On the most immediate level, the refrain exists within the final four-bar hypermeasure of verse material (allowing for a small anacrusis). On a slightly larger scale, the refrain lies within the overarching harmonic motion of the eight bars shown in this excerpt. The doo-wop harmonies trace a single tonal path (I–vi–IV–V–I) from the first bar to the seventh bar, and the refrain sits inside this clear tonal trajectory. This harmonic motion creates a standalone 8-bar unit, in that these eight bars begin and end on tonic and are hypermetrically regular. Yet these eight bars are themselves part of a larger 16-bar span of verse material that begins at 0:17 (see Example 3.3.02). In this regard, the refrain closes a single 16-bar stretch of music. The quadruple regularity of the hypermeter in this part of the song contributes to the sense that these bars should be grouped together and that the refrain lies within this structure.

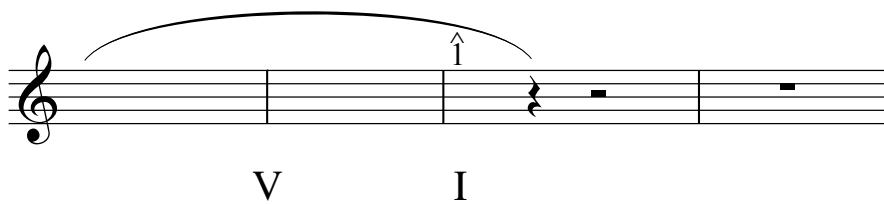
It is possible to identify other features of this refrain as well. Foremost, it has an overall phrase structure that ends on the last strong hypermetric beat within this section, as shown in Example 3.3.03. This phrase structure is a standard melodic organization for refrains. Note that with such a vocal phrase structure, a noticeable gap is left between the end of the refrain and the end of the section within which it lies. This buffer of melodic rest at the end of the hypermeasure helps convey the sense that the refrain exists clearly within the

larger section. (There is no overlap with the following chorus section, for example.) Additionally, the refrain occurs in concert with the cadential motion of the section as a whole. In fact, one could say that the refrain is the cadence. Not only do the harmonies that underpin the refrain show a clear sense of closure (a strong IV–V–I authentic cadence in this song), but also the melody consistently descends from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$ in its attempts to provide closure. The confluence of the harmonic and melodic cadential motions results in a unified and final cadence on the downbeat of the seventh bar. This sense of arrival in the seventh bar is heightened by the fact that the refrain area is preceded by off-tonic, pre-dominant material (the submediant in the third bar). Accordingly, the preparation of the refrain seems to require the refrain for completion (another indicator of the refrain being within something else).

Example 3.3.02: “Stand by Me” (Ben E. King, 1961); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Opening lyrics
0:00	8	introduction	---
0:17	8	verse	“When the night...”
0:33	8		“No I won’t...”
0:49	8	chorus	“Stand by me...”
1:05	8	verse	“If the sky...”
1:21	8		“I won’t cry...”
1:37	8	chorus	“Stand by me...”
1:53	8	instrumental solo	---
2:09	8		---
2:25	8	chorus	“Stand by me...”
2:41	8		“Stand by me...”

Example 3.3.03: Phrase structure of a prototypical tail refrain



As a final attribute, note that the refrain in “Stand by Me” contains the title of the song. It may be perceptually questionable as to whether the title of the song is somehow more meaningful in the mind of the listener than other text in the song (especially if the listener does not know the title beforehand). One might argue, in fact, that the musical structure of the refrain itself communicates the importance of the song title, rather than the reverse. If the listener does indeed know the song title, however, it is hard to argue that this bit of text

would not carry a certain perceptual salience. (In “Stand by Me,” the song title would certainly be extracted by a listener since the chorus section simply repeats the title lyric numerous times.) For these reasons, the use of the song title (or other prominent text) can further strengthen refrain quality for a passage of music.

In summary, the strongest and clearest sense of refrain occurs at the end of a section as the cadential material of the final 4-bar hypermeasure. Moreover, the clearest cases also have a specific melodic phrase structure and a corresponding cadential location (i.e., the last hypermetrically-strong downbeat of the section). Examples can be found in an overwhelming number of songs (see the many examples in Chapter 4), including from the 1964 output of the Beatles alone: “I Feel Fine,” “You Can’t Do That,” “I’ll Follow the Sun,” and “Everybody’s Trying to Be My Baby.” Since other types of refrains have been described in the theoretical literature (such as at the beginning of a verse or chorus), it is useful to refer to this type of refrain as a *tail* refrain, in that it is found at the end of a section. It is this subtype that can be seen to most strongly trigger our sense of the category as a whole.

The cadential quality of tail refrains

As mentioned previously, theorists have attempted to differentiate between a refrain and a chorus section via the presence or absence of a cadence. This relationship has been strengthened in this dissertation by saying that, in the case of a tail refrain, the cadence and the refrain are – from a musical perspective – one and the same. But cadences are often difficult to identify in a rock context. In these situations, it is necessary to consider the attributes of a cadence in terms of its constituent parts.

The song “All I Have to Do Is Dream” (The Everly Brothers, 1958; Example 3.3.04) provides a somewhat less clear example of refrain quality than in the case of “Stand by Me.” In this Everly Brothers song, the doo-wop harmonic progression cycles through the verse material instead of creating a single, large-scale tonal trajectory. As a result, Stephenson says that the harmonic structure provides no help in determining the end of the section; instead, he posits that the arrival of the title text – as a final independent clause – creates grammatical closure and is thereby responsible for creating our sense of refrain in this passage (2002, 125-6).

Yet various musical attributes of this title phrase contribute to its refrain-like quality. Foremost, the location of the end of the phrase on the last hypermetrically strong downbeat coincides with our prototype for a tail refrain, despite the fact that when this vocal phrase initially appears, its ending is elided by another phrase beginning on the word “dream.” (The standalone nature of this two-bar melisma on the word “dream” is established in the introduction to the song.) Refrain quality is further conveyed since this last hypermetrically

strong downbeat occurs within an 8-bar structure; the hypermetric regularity of these eight bars creates a clear expectation for the eventual location of the cadence. Although Stephenson is correct that the cycling of the doo-wop progression does not necessarily create a clear cadence on the first iteration of this section, the cycle does align with the cadential location of a typical tail refrain, in that there is a cadential IV–V motion in the sixth bar followed by a tonic chord on the downbeat of the seventh bar. In this regard, the cycling pattern of harmonies appears to be strategically placed to coincide with the harmonic framework of a prototypical refrain. During the second iteration of this verse material, moreover, the doo-wop cycle does finally come to a close and thereby reaffirm this seventh bar as the cadential location. (The I–IV–I motion that follows this coordinated cadence is a harmonic afterthought, and the passage can easily be imagined without this final embellishment.) But even prior to the first ending, the melody itself creates a strong expectation that a cadence will occur in this seventh bar. In the first two vocal phrases (in mm. 1–4), the melody rises from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ to create an open-ended structure. In the longer, third phrase – which conforms to the prototypical refrain phrase structure – the melody then rises to a high point of $\hat{6}$, after which the melody falls to its lowest point – the tonic – before the melisma on the word “dream.” This dip down to $\hat{1}$ forecasts our expected arrival and cadence on the tonic, much as the tonic note was emphasized in the refrain of “Stand by Me.”

Example 3.3.04: “All I Have to Do Is Dream” (The Everly Brothers, 1958); verse

(orig. E) 0:11

When I want you in my arms, when I want you and all your charms, when
 I vi IV V I vi IV V
 e-ver I want you_ all I have to do is dream, dream, dream, dream.
 I IV I
 dream, dream, dream, dream.

If we recognize this cadential aspect as the musical component of a prototypical refrain, we are not limited to positing that refrains can only occur within verse sections. Clear

cadences may also align with repeated title text to create strong instances of refrain-like qualities elsewhere in a song. This situation occurs within the chorus sections to many songs, such as the Buck Owens hit “I’ve Got a Tiger by the Tail” (1965; Example 3.3.05). In this song, we find a prototypical tail refrain within the final four bars of the chorus section. All of the attributes of a tail refrain are here: the song title, a cadential harmonic motion (dominant to tonic), a general descent to the tonic scale degree (the melody is in the lower voice), the arrival of this unified cadence on the last hypermetrically strong beat of the section, the existence of this cadence within an overall regular hypermetric structure (16 bars), the particular melodic phrase organization in these bars, and the repetition of this refrain text on future iterations of this section. Future iterations of this chorus section repeat exactly, so the repetition of the refrain text is linked to the repetition of the entire text of the chorus section itself. But we may distinguish the refrain from the chorus in this case because of the hallmark musical qualities of the tail refrain itself.

Example 3.3.05: “I’ve Got a Tiger by the Tail” (Buck Owens, 1965); chorus

(orig. E)
0:00

I've got a ti - ger by the tail___ it's plain to see,___

won't be much when you get through with me. Well, I'm a -

los - in' weight and I'm turn - in' migh - ty pale.____

Looks like I've___ got a ti - ger by the tail.____

A prototypical head refrain

The appearance of the song title in the chorus section of “I’ve Got a Tiger by the Tail” is not limited only to the tail refrain, however; the title text also appears as the opening text to the chorus section as a whole (refer back to Example 3.3.05). The use of title-based text at the beginning of a section is also a common strategy in rock music. But if we consider this

opening material as a refrain – which many theorists do, as mentioned above – it is certainly a different type of refrain than the tail refrain just described. Rather, we may refer to a refrain that begins a song section as a head refrain.

There are a variety of ways in which a recurring line may be placed at the beginning of a song section. In this regard, it is difficult to specify a single clear prototypical situation for a head refrain. Yet these various ways are not all equal in their ability to trigger a sense of refrain. Certain musical devices are more effective at highlighting the refrain text and thus conveying the importance of these moments within a song.

These musical devices may be seen clearly in the chorus of the song “Old Time Rock and Roll” (Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band, 1978), as shown in Example 3.3.06. Like other songs discussed above, this chorus material contains a relatively straightforward tail refrain that includes the title text. Although the melodic phrase length of this tail refrain is not strictly the same as seen elsewhere, we can imagine the smaller vocal phrases as existing within a larger grouping (as shown via the dashed slur) that does coincide with tail refrain quality. Moreover, many other musical aspects emphasize the refrain-like sound here. In particular, the closing phrase occurs in tandem with the harmonic and melodic motion towards a cadence on the last strong hypermetric beat of this section. There is a small bit of overlap of the vocal phrase beyond the arrival on the tonic harmony, but the unified cadence on the downbeat of the seventh bar is unmistakable.

Example 3.3.06: “Old Time Rock and Roll”

(Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band, 1978); chorus

(orig. Gb)

0:37 V

Still like that old time a rock and roll;_ that kind a mu sic just soothes mysoul. I re min isce a bout the

days of old,_ with that old_ time-a rock and roll.

Now compare this cadential tail refrain to the head refrain of this chorus section. Many of their features are highly similar. The opening vocal phrase has a long anacrusis (almost an entire bar) that leads strongly to the downbeat of the first bar. The sense of arrival on this initial downbeat is heightened by the cadence-like melodic descent to the tonic scale degree; additionally, the arrival on the tonic harmony is prepared here by a dominant chord.

We might say, in fact, that this chorus section begins with a coordinated cadential motion that overlaps (or is elided by) the beginning of the section itself. Not only is the harmonic and melodic motion aimed toward the opening downbeat, but also the phrase structure of the melody is clearly directed to emphasize the arrival of the section beginning as a whole. This is not to say that there is, per se, a cadence at the beginning of this chorus section. Rather, the sense of arrival at the beginning of the section mirrors the sense of arrival that occurs at the end of the section. In this respect, the musical mechanisms that triggered a sense of tail refrain can also be seen to be at work in this head refrain. Specifically, clear instances of both refrain types involve unified arrivals (whether cadential or not) on hypermetrically strong beats located near the section boundary. But while the tail refrain emphasizes the last hypermetric strong beat of the section, the head refrain emphasizes the first hypermetric strong beat.

The reader should contrast the head refrain from “Old Time Rock and Roll” to the first vocal phrase of the chorus from “I’ve Got a Tiger by the Tail” in the previous example. There is a distinct difference in the level of emphasis given to the title text at the beginning of these two chorus sections. In the Bob Seger tune, the title text becomes the basis for the rhyme scheme of the entire chorus (“roll” rhymes with “soul”). At the beginning of the Buck Owens song, however, the rhyme scheme does not highlight the title text; instead, the words “see” and “me” are emphasized. Of course, this difference falls directly out of the vocal phrase structure used to contain the lyrics for these songs. But it has a significant effect on how we perceive which words are central to the song. As a result, it is posited here that the beginning of the chorus section in “Old Time Rock and Roll” more clearly conveys a sense of refrain (and focal quality) than the beginning of the chorus section in “I’ve Got a Tiger by the Tail.”

Making heads or tails of heads and tails

The overarching category of “refrain” has been shown to be strongly conveyed by two similar yet distinct subtypes – the tail refrain and the head refrain. These subtypes involve a number of attributes in the domains of both lyrics and music. Most notably, a sense of arrival has been argued to be strongly correlated with clear instances of refrains. But the extent to which the refrain quality may be invoked by specific attributes is unclear. Foremost, it is not possible to specify any exact weighting that each factor plays with regard to our perception of refrains. Some general observations can be made nonetheless.

Lyric structure – particularly when it includes the title of the song – does appear to be a primary determinant of refrain quality. In a number of songs examined thus far, the musical material containing the refrain appeared in other locations of the song without repeated or title-based text. Yet these iterations did not seem to fully trigger a sense of

refrain, despite the musical similarities to the structure of the clear refrain. In “Stand by Me,” for example, the first half of the opening verse material (0:17–0:33) contains – from a musical standpoint – a viable tail refrain, but the text (“and the moon is the only light we’ll see”) seems to thwart hearing a standard refrain here, especially when compared to the later vocal statement. Similarly, the beginnings of the verse sections in “Old Time Rock and Roll” have the same basic phrase and melodic structure of the apparent head refrain in the chorus sections, but the lyrics (e.g., “Just take those old records off the shelf”) lack the focal quality of the repeated title text.

That being said, it is worth noting that musical factors may contribute to the denial of refrain quality in these instances as well. For example, while the verse sections in “Old Time Rock and Roll” do begin in a similar manner as the choruses, the sense of arrival at the beginning of the verse sections is comparatively weakened. In the chorus sections (back in Example 3.3.06), the vocal melody rests on the tonic scale degree at the end of the opening vocal phrase. Yet every iteration of verse material (e.g., Example 3.3.07) sees the vocal melody quickly move away from this tonic scale degree after the initial downbeat. This departure from the tonic makes the arrival at this moment somewhat less conclusive than in the chorus. As a result, the chorus sections have a noticeably stronger sense of arrival at their beginnings – and thus a stronger sense of refrain – than similar passages in the verses. In “Stand by Me,” similarly, we can posit a stronger cadential quality to the clear tail refrain than other similar verse moments. Notably, the main tail refrain occurs at the end of a large 16-bar unit (i.e., near a section boundary) rather than somewhere within the 16 bars. In both cases, therefore, the domains of music and lyrics work together to distinguish certain clear refrains from other passages in the song.

Example 3.3.07: “Old Time Rock and Roll”

(Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band, 1978); verse

(orig. Gb)

0:06 V

The musical notation is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It shows two measures of music. The first measure is labeled 'I' and the second 'IV'. The lyrics are 'Just take those old rec-ords off the shelf; I sit and lis-ten to'em by my self.'

Songs thus may have different types of refrains, and these moments of refrain quality may be conveyed in various strengths. The song “Every Breath You Take” by the Police (1983) provides some interesting instances of refrains that – while relatively clear – subvert the prototypical situations. To begin with, the opening vocal section of the song (Example

3.3.08) includes a clear instance of what appears to be a head refrain. The title lyrics are sung in a vocal phrase that melodically arrives on the tonic pitch (over a tonic harmony) on the first strong downbeat of the section. Many readers may be surprised to learn that this initial instance of the title lyric is the only time in the song during which the words “Every Breath You Take” are ever sung by the lead vocal. The expectation created by the structure of the music implies that this text is an important element of the song. But while variations of this text are found in the lead vocal, this title line does not otherwise receive prominent treatment. From a traditional standpoint of text, we might deny refrain status to this lyric because of the lack of its repetition in the song. Despite the fact that this text never recurs in the lead vocal part, strong factors argue for us to consider its initial appearance as a refrain event.

Example 3.3.08: “Every Breath You Take” (The Police, 1983); opening material

(orig. Ab)
0:15

Ev-ery breath you take, and ev-ery move you make, ev-ery bond you break,
ev-ery step you take, I'll be watch-in' you.

The opening vocal section contains a relatively clear tail refrain as well. From a musical standpoint, the fifth, sixth, and seventh bars in this excerpt are highly similar to the corresponding measures in the “Stand by Me” passage discussed earlier. As in “Stand by Me,” there is a clear harmonic and melodic motion through these bars to the cadence on the downbeat of the seventh bar (albeit a deceptive cadence now); the vocal line may also be seen to group into the general melodic phrase structure of a prototypical tail refrain despite the long anacrusis. Yet like the head refrain, the lyrics in these measures do not fully repeat in future iterations of this section; only the words “I’ll be watching you” reappear consistently. For this reason, we might consider only this text to be the refrain itself. While this is not necessarily an incorrect analysis, one should recognize that this repeated text occurs only at the end of what is – from a musical standpoint – a prototypical tail refrain. Other songs (e.g., “Roll Over Beethoven” [Chuck Berry, 1956]) may repeat only the beginning text of a tail refrain. Others might repeat all of the text in a tail refrain plus some additional preceding text (e.g., “I Saw Her Standing There” [The Beatles, 1963]). In these cases, the clear evidence

for a tail refrain found within the musical domain does not fully align with cues in the domain of lyrics.

One final aspect of head and tail refrains is worth discussing in “Every Breath You Take.” As mentioned earlier, a primary difference between the two main subtypes of refrain is that a head refrain typically ends on the first hypermetric strong downbeat of a section whereas the tail refrain typically ends on the last hypermetric strong beat. In many cases, these are two separate and distinct locations within the hypermetric structure. But if the last hypermetric strong beat of a section is – through overlap – also the downbeat of another section, we may posit a blend of head and tail refrain qualities.

This situation can be seen during the final iteration of the main vocal material from “Every Breath You Take” (shown in Example 3.3.09).

Example 3.3.09: “Every Breath You Take” (The Police, 1983); closing material

(orig. Ab)
2:30

Ev-ery move you make, and ev-ery vow you break, ev-ery smile you fake,
 — ev-ery claim you stake, I'll be watch in' you. ev-ery move you make,
 — ev-ery step you take, I'll be watch-in' you.
 I'll be watch-in' you.

The first eight bars of this closing material are basically identical to the opening vocal material (shown in Example 3.3.08). But instead of leading directly to a new section, this closing material undergoes what may be seen as a phrase expansion. After the initial eight bars, the four-bar hypermeasure containing the tail refrain is repeated. The end of the section as a whole is delayed further by a two-bar insertion that prolongs the submediant harmony. Only at 3:00 (the double barline in the transcription above) is a new section felt to have

arrived. The generating agent for this phrase expansion is the deceptive cadence itself, which denies – and, one might argue, effectively demands – the more final and satisfying closure of the major-mode tonic. But notice that because of this phrase expansion, our sense of the structural dominant for this passage has shifted. Although the dominant chord at the end of the original tail refrain seemed like the most important harmonic moment in the unexpanded version of this vocal section, the dominant chord at the end of the expansion seems to now more strongly herald the end of the section as a whole. As a result, the end of this 14-bar section may be seen as elided by the beginning of a new section. Since the tonic chord at this moment acts as both the final hypermetrically-strong downbeat of one section and the first hypermetrically-strong downbeat of another, the vocal melody in this area (using only the text “I’ll be watchin’ you”) appears to have both head and tail refrain quality. This final vocal phrase certainly derives from the original tail refrain, but its shape and location are much more indicative of a head refrain. Note, in fact, that the melody of this final vocal phrase is basically identical to the head refrain that opens this final main passage. In some instances, therefore, head and tail refrain quality can merge to create what – although a clear case of refrain quality – is not clearly one subtype or the other. (Chapter 5 will explore the implications of this type of blend in greater detail.)

Conclusion

As we can see, our general category of refrain involves at least two subtypes: the tail refrain and the head refrain. These subtypes involve a number of attributes in the domains of music and lyrics. Although there is some intersection with regard to the attributes of these subtypes, it would be problematic to attempt to characterize the general category of refrain solely via this intersection. Instead, our perception of refrain quality is predicated on (at least) these two particular configurations.

It was mentioned above that the existence of a refrain may be more strongly associated with a particular section role. In certain conceptions, for example, refrains are seen to only exist within a verse. From the examples seen above, however, this does not seem to be the universal case. Instead, refrain attributes can be found within various section roles. Nevertheless, the perception of a refrain may help trigger the perception of a particular section role. This aspect of refrain quality will be explored further in later chapters.

3.4: Bridge and Solo

The term “bridge” is one that has been applied to a great variety of musical situations. Consequently, it is difficult to come up with a single definition for this term. As we

investigate these various situations, we find that a few different usages commonly recur. Like the refrain, our understanding of the term “bridge” can be seen to rely on a few different subtypes. The bridge label has also been applied on different grouping levels within the form of a song. A prototype for the term “bridge” should reflect these multiple meanings. As will be shown below, our understanding of the role of a “solo” section participates in these multiple meanings. Consequently, a prototype for solo sections will be discussed here as well.

Extant descriptions of bridge sections

Although extant descriptions of bridge sections differ in terms of their details, a few attributes seem to be consistently associated with bridge quality. In particular, three general attributes commonly appear in theoretical descriptions: 1) contrast with other sections in the song, 2) a lack of harmonic (or tonal) closure, and 3) the particular position of the section within the song as a whole. This last aspect – more so than the others – is contingent on the nature of other sections in the song and is thus a strongly relational parameter.

The first quality of a bridge – its contrast with other sections in the song – might be considered a relatively trivial aspect of this section role. Contrast – one might easily point out – is inherently required to differentiate one section from another. (If two sections did not contrast with one another via some dimension, there could be no reasonable way of distinguishing between the two.) Recall, for example, that “contrast” was one aspect that was seen to differentiate a chorus section from a verse. Yet in discussions of bridge sections, theorists emphasize especially the element of contrast and imply that contrast itself is a primary function of this section role. One glossary entry, for example, states that “a bridge connotes a section that contrasts with the verse and chorus” (Stein 2005, 328). Everett offers one possible scenario, in which the verse and chorus sections are “diatonically bland” while the bridge is “far-ranging and chromatic” (2001, 50). In this scheme, the element of contrast is framed in terms of the harmonic domain. But theorists do not limit the aspect of contrast to harmony only. In later writings, Everett discusses bridge sections in terms of contrast within other domains, such as texture and lyrics (2009, 147).

Aside from this general aspect of contrast, however, specific factors within the domain of harmony are central to many descriptions. One frequent specification is that bridge sections typically end on a dominant chord (see, for example, Everett 2001, 50; Stein 2005, 328). Moreover, this dominant chord is usually labeled as a “retransitional dominant.” The implication of the word “retransitional” is that the dominant chord (and thus the bridge itself) prepares the listener for a return of thematic material (or a key center) that has previously been heard. Another feature mentioned in extant descriptions is that bridge sections often begin with a subdominant harmony (e.g., Stephan-Robinson 2009, 161-2). The

overall harmonic motion of a typical bridge, therefore, appears to be from an opening subdominant to a closing dominant sonority. It appears, therefore, as if bridge sections typically neither begin nor end on a tonic harmony, and we might consequently call such sections “harmonically open.”

In strong part because of this lack of an opening or closing tonic harmony, bridge sections are considered to be internal parts of a song. The nature of the term “bridge” itself implies that a bridge section is conceived as something that spans between two other section types. Consequently, some theorists advise that if a particular section begins or ends a song, this section should not be considered a bridge (Stephan-Robinson 2009, 98; Stephenson 2002, 137). The exact location of a typical bridge section is not always precisely specified in theoretical descriptions, though. Moore, for example, states that a bridge frequently occurs “somewhere between one-half and two-thirds through [the song]” (2001, 223).

Yet in most descriptions, the particular location of the bridge is a crucial feature of this section role. In fact, some theorists elevate the aspect of location to be the defining feature of a bridge. Stephenson states, for instance, that “any passage of music heard first only after the second statement of the chorus can be called a bridge” (2002, 137-8). Similarly, Covach – in his discussion of form in rock music – presents both AABA and compound AABA form types, in which the “B” material is the bridge section itself (2005, 74). In these letter sequence patterns of form, some main musical unit “A” (whether that musical unit is a verse, chorus, or combination thereof) undergoes a single repetition, after which new material (whatever that may be, as long as it is “not A”) must be the bridge. The generic nature of these alphabetic form labels highlights the importance of position over content. The retransitional nature of the bridge is apparent in these AABA form types (compound or not), in that the bridge is seen to simply return to the main repeating unit itself. The use of the AABA form type also implies that the bridge is not typically repeated after its initial appearance. Some theorists, such as Moore, specifically emphasize the fact that a bridge is normally heard only once in a song (2001, 223), although others do not hold this view (more on that below).

The bridge in analytical practice

Given these theoretical descriptions, a few questions come to mind. One issue is what influence the nature of the main repeating section(s) of the song (the “A” part) might have on the bridge itself. If the bridge is designed to transition between (or at least contrast from) iterations of a main formal unit, then one might conjecture that the role of the bridge is linked to the nature of the main repeating unit itself. Some evidence of this fact becomes clear if we compare songs in which the main repeating unit (“A”) is relatively short (e.g., eight measures)

as opposed to long (e.g., thirty-two or more measures). When the “A” unit is short, for example, the bridge section almost inevitably appears a second time in the song; the result is an overall AABABA pattern of sections, which Covach refers to as an AABA form with “abbreviated reprise” (2006). Song forms from the 1950s and 1960s, in fact, commonly include two iterations of what theorists label as a bridge section (Harris 2006, 64).

Considering that theorists view bridge sections as typically occurring only once in a song, some evidence of different subtypes of bridges (similar to subtypes of refrains) seems to exist.

If multiple bridge iterations appear in a single song, one might wonder whether or not the lyrics to these bridge sections repeat as well. Theorists are mostly silent on this issue, perhaps because the normative situation of bridge sections does not apparently involve section repetition. But since the external pattern of lyric repetition is such a central criterion with regard to verse and chorus identity, it is worth examining to what extent real-world bridges intersect with our perception of these other section types. Stephenson touches on this topic when he mentions that – if a bridge does appear twice in a song – it “generally carries the same text” (2002, 137). This bit of information is an important insight, as we will see.

A more central issue in the analysis of bridge sections is how harmonic openness should be measured. If a section ends with a dominant chord, we might assume that this section is harmonically open-ended. Neal, in fact, specifically refers to the dominant chord at the end of a typical bridge section as a half cadence (2007, 45). Yet some final dominant chords seem more important (or more half-cadential) than others. A common harmonic feature of 12-bar blues patterns, for example, is a dominant chord in the twelfth bar (the “turnaround”). It seems unlikely, however, that this final dominant chord significantly affects how we perceive the 12-bar blues section as a whole. More importantly, a dominant chord in the twelfth bar of the blues pattern seems to be a subordinate structural element in comparison to the more obviously cadential motion in the ninth through eleventh bars (e.g., the standard blues cadence: V–IV–I; see Chapter 4 for more details on a prototypical blues harmonic structure). The function of the opening subdominant chord in bridge sections could be discussed in a similarly problematic manner. The underlying issue – and a somewhat thorny one in the context of rock harmony – is how we can judge our perception of “harmonic openness” aside from the rote act of labeling the closing (and/or opening) harmonies of a section.

The generic quality of contrast is an aspect that allows for even greater interpretive leeway. Indeed, theorists hold somewhat different criteria for what constitutes contrast – or at least, the appropriate type of contrast for a bridge section. For example, one common type of contrast in rock is the use of an instrumental solo somewhere in the middle of the song. Whether or not this instrumental break may act as a bridge section is an open question in

analysis and often appears to be decided on a case-by-case basis. This particular issue of the instrumental break as bridge will be explored more below, although parts of this discussion will be reserved for Chapter 5. For now, note only that even in a case such as an instrumental solo – where contrast with other sections seems to be rather extreme – it is not clear if we should consider this an appropriate type of contrast to qualify as bridge material (e.g., see two different interpretations of instrumental sections in Stephenson 2002 [138] and Everett 2009 [150]).

Classic bridge sections

As mentioned above, there appear to be different subtypes of bridges (as seen in the case of the refrain) related to the character and length of the surrounding musical material. Some of the clearest cases of bridge material occur within songs from the 1950s and early 1960s. Because these examples are found so often within this early period of rock history, these cases will be referred to here as *classic* bridge sections, which constitute one subtype of the bridge category.

The song “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960) provides an excellent example of a classic bridge. A variety of factors contribute to the sense that this song contains a bridge section. One strong element is the location of the bridge with respect to other sections in the song (see Example 3.4.01). Specifically, the bridge section occurs as the B material in an AABA pattern. As Example 3.4.01 shows, two iterations of eight-bar A material (Example 3.4.02) are followed by eight bars of B material (Example 3.4.03), after which a third iteration of A material is presented. The grouping of this AABA pattern into a single unit is emphasized by the fact that the musical material immediately before and after the AABA core does not contain vocals with lyrics of any significance. Because the location of the B material so clearly evokes bridge quality, one common synonym for bridges from this era is the “middle eight” (Covach 2005, 69-70).

Example 3.4.01: “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960); form chart

Start	Mm.	Pt.	Lyrics
0:00	4	intro	---
0:07	8	A	“Hey girls, gather round....”
0:20	8	A	“I’m not the kind to use....”
0:34	8	B	“If your broken hearts....”
0:46	8	A	“Here is the main thing....”
1:00	8	solo	---
1:14	8	B	“If your broken hearts....”
1:25	8	A	“Here is the main thing....”
1:41	8+	outro	---

Example 3.4.02: “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960); A section

(orig. A)
0:09 I

Hey, girls, ga-ther round,_____ pick up what I'm_____ put-tin' down,____

IV V I

Trust me, Ba -by, I'm your hand - y man._____

Example 3.4.03: “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960); B section

(orig. A) IV
0:35 I

If your bro-ken hearts need re-pair, I - 'm the man_ to see._____ I

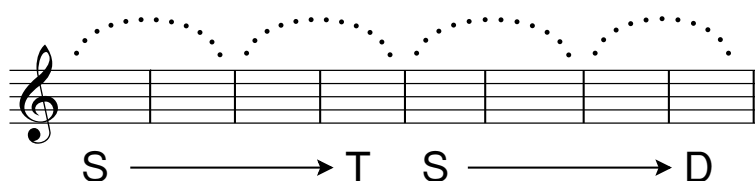
IV V

whis-per sweet things you tell all your friends; they'll come run-nin' to me._____

It is not only the location of this bridge that makes it sound so prototypical, however; its musical relationship to the A section is also a strong factor. To begin with, note that the A section is fully “harmonically closed”: it both begins and ends on tonic, and it has a clear cadence (using a clear tail refrain) on the downbeat of the seventh bar. In contrast, the bridge begins and ends off-tonic. More specifically, it begins on the subdominant and ends on the dominant, which are the standard opening and closing harmonies that theorists mention in their descriptions of bridge sections. Additionally, the texture in this bridge contrasts significantly (at least for the era) with the A section. Instead of the mostly half-note values in the bass line during the A section, the rate of the bass line in the bridge increases to once every quarter note. The background vocals change as well from their intermittent punctuations in the A section to the longer, held notes of the B section. The complete stop in the texture at the dominant chord at the end of the bridge further highlights its separate identity from the A section that follows. In sum, this bridge includes both the textural and harmonic factors of contrast that we expect from a prototypical bridge.

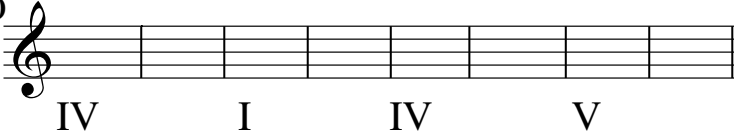
Yet we may be more specific with regard to the features of this bridge. The melodic phrase structure, for example, neatly groups into two-bar units. In this regard, the vocal phrase organization is contained within the two-bar units created by the underlying harmonies. These two-bar vocal groupings are common in classic bridge sections. More important is the specific harmonic progression found here: IV–I–IV–V. This particular sequence of harmonies is pervasive among bridge sections from the 1950s and early 1960s, and as a result, these chords act as a prototypical background structure for bridge harmonies in many songs from this era. Accordingly, we can conceptualize this particular progression in more abstract terms using Riemannian function labels, as shown in Example 3.4.04. (This example also includes the prototypical vocal phrase groupings, shown via the dotted lines.)

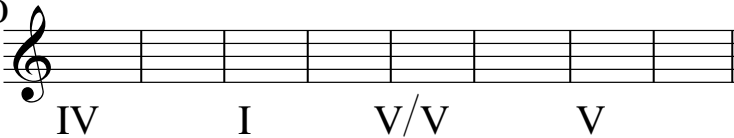
Example 3.4.04: Generic phrase organization for a classic bridge

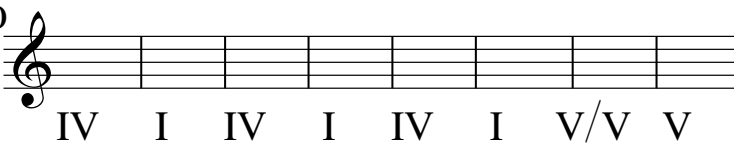


The generic S–T–S–D background structure may be realized in a variety of ways. Certain harmonic realizations, though, are strongly associated with classic bridge sections from this era. The three most prominent versions (including the literal IV–I–IV–V sequence) are shown in Example 3.4.05. In these prototypical realizations, the bridge section is shown to be eight bars long. This length is by far the most common (and fits within the 32-bar AABA structure). Of course, measure lengths are sometimes difficult to definitely notate (e.g., “Donna” by Ritchie Valens [1958] could be construed as either compound duple or compound quadruple). Other times, the 8-bar standard is obviously scaled upwards to last a full 16 bars (e.g., “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” by the Shirelles [1960]). As some small evidence of the pervasiveness of these particular harmonic progressions, Example 3.4.06 lists 32 songs from this era in which the harmonic material of the bridge conforms closely – if not exactly – to the abstract S–D–S–T background. (The fact that these sections are, in fact, considered bridges is attested to by the analyses of various theorists shown in this chart.)

Example 3.4.05: Prototypical harmonic realizations for a classic bridge

a) 

b) 

c) 

Example 3.4.06: 32 songs with classic bridge sections

Artist	Song	Yr	Analysis	Pg	Type
The Platters	The Great Pretender	'55	Everett 2009	147	a
Elvis Presley	Tryin' to Get to You	'56	Everett 2009	147	a
The Five Satins	In the Still of the Night	'56	Temperley 2010	--	a
Jerry Lee Lewis	Great Balls of Fire	'57	Covach 2009	105	a
Ritchie Valens	Donna	'58	Stephenson 2002	140	a
Jimmy Jones	Handy Man	'59	Everett 2009	148	a
The Coasters	Charlie Brown	'59	Perricone 2000	161	a
Elvis Presley	Stuck on You	'60	Stephenson 2002	139	a
The Miracles	Shop Around	'60	Stephenson 2002	140	a
Bobby Lewis	Tossin' and Turnin'	'61	Everett 2009	148	a
The Beach Boys	Little Deuce Coupe	'63	--	--	a
The Beatles	Chains	'63	Everett 2001	154	a
Hank Williams	Your Cheatin' Heart	'53	--	--	b
Elvis Presley	Love Me	'56	Everett 2009	148	b
Johnnie Ray	You Don't Owe Me a Thing	'57	Everett 2009	147	b
Bobby Darin	Dream Lover	'59	--	--	b
The Coasters	That Is Rock and Roll	'59	--	--	b
Bobby Vee	Devil or Angel	'60	Stephenson 2002	140	b
Patsy Cline	Crazy	'61	Temperley 2010	--	b
Hank Williams	Hey Good Lookin'	'51	Covach 2009	42	c
The Penguins	Earth Angel	'54	Temperley 2010	--	c
The Platters	One in a Million	'56	Stephenson 2002	132	c
Andy Williams	Butterfly	'57	Everett 2009	148	c
Fats Domino	I'm Walkin'	'57	Stephenson 2002	137	c
Sam Cooke	You Send Me	'57	Temperley 2010	--	c
Everly Brothers	All I Have to Do Is Dream	'58	Covach 2009	106	c
The Poni-Tails	Born Too Late	'58	Stephenson 2002	140	c
The Marcells	Blue Moon	'61	Everett 2009	148	c
The Shirelles	Will You Love Me Tomorrow	'61	Covach 2005	71	c
The Beach Boys	Surfer Girl	'63	Covach 2005	71	c
Sam Cooke	A Change is Gonna Come	'64	Temperley 2010	--	c
Percy Sledge	When a Man Loves a Woman	'66	Temperley 2010	--	c

Returning to “Handy Man,” it is worth noting that the instrumental solo and classic bridge sections are labeled as separate entities in the form chart of Example 3.4.01. In labeling these moments differently, an analytical choice has been made. That is to say, this labeling scheme implies that the solo is not bridge material. This approach is the one often taken by analysts when labeling parts of songs with an AABA core, in strong part because the instrumental solo does not fit neatly into the AABA structure that so clearly helps identify a classic bridge section (see, for example, Covach’s form chart for the 1957 Jerry Lee Lewis hit “Great Balls of Fire” [2009, 105]). As well, the instrumental solos in songs from this era often occur over harmonies from the A section (as is the case in this Jimmy Jones song), making a bridge label for the instrumental solo even more problematic. In general, classic bridge sections are seen to be distinct from instrumental solos in a variety of ways (although more on this in a moment).

It is also worth noting that the bridge section to “Handy Man” repeats after this instrumental solo. Of the 32 songs listed in Example 3.4.06, in fact, 19 (i.e., more than half) include a repetition of the musical material from the bridge after the initial AABA core presentation. (When songs do not repeat the musical material from the bridge, this can usually be seen to fall out of absolute time issues, in that songs with slower tempos do not get the chance to repeat the B section without becoming too long.) As discussed above, we might wonder whether the lyrics to these classic bridge sections repeat as well, since the external pattern of lyric repetition is a central attribute of verse and chorus sections. Of the 19 songs in Example 3.4.06 that include multiple iterations of the B section musical material, all but four also repeat the lyrics to the B sections. This piece of data – although admittedly drawn from a limited selection of songs – shows compelling evidence that lyric repetition is also associated with classic bridge sections.

In conclusion, our bridge label can be traced back to a set of clear cases from the early periods of rock. These cases are referred to here as classic bridge structures. These structures embody all three of the main attributes – location, harmonic openness, and contrast – that theorists associate with bridge quality. Yet these classic bridges also contain other distinctive qualities, such as a particular harmonic background and a tendency for multiple iterations within a song. These attributes thus trigger our sense of not only a classic bridge but also the more general category of bridge as a whole.

The harmonic quality of classic bridge sections

As is obvious, the S–T–S–D harmonic background that underlies a classic bridge avoids tonic harmony at both the beginning and end of the section. But we could also more broadly say that classic bridge sections generally avoid tonic harmony altogether, especially at

strong or important moments in the hypermeter. Although classic bridge sections typically do indeed include tonic harmonies, these tonic chords are placed in the weakest possible location with the hypermetric framework. For example, in both the prototypical progressions IV–I–IV–V and IV–I–V/V–V, the two bars of tonic harmony are not located at the beginning of either the first or second 4-bar hypermeasure. The third prototypical progression for classic bridges (shown in Example 3.4.05c) includes more iterations of tonic harmony, but each one arrives on a hypermetrically weak beat and is avoided near the end of the progression; again, tonic harmony is downplayed with regard to its placement within the section overall.

As we investigate songs from the middle of the 1960s and beyond, the tendency for a bridge section to avoid tonic harmony – especially in strong hypermetric or cadential locations – is found to be a prevalent attribute. Some examples from the Beatles help illustrate this characteristic. Example 3.4.07 shows the bridge section to the song “Ticket to Ride” (1965). This bridge appears as the B section in a core AABA pattern, after which the B and A sections immediately repeat (i.e., there is no instrumental solo section in the middle). The bridge in this song begins on a subdominant harmony and ends on dominant, as we expect of a classic bridge section, but tonic harmony is conspicuously absent. By lacking any tonic harmony whatsoever, the B section to “Ticket to Ride” harmonically contrasts even more strongly from the A sections (which each begin with a long span of tonic and end on tonic). Furthermore, the bridge can be said to convey an overall feeling of not just harmonic openness but harmonic instability. A very similar situation can be found in the Beatles song “I Saw Her Standing There” (1963).

Example 3.4.07: “Ticket to Ride” (The Beatles, 1965); bridge (B section)

(orig. A)
1:09 IV

The musical notation consists of two systems of a single melodic line in treble clef. The first system begins with a double bar line and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody starts on a half note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, Bb3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, Bb2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, Bb1, A1, G1, F1, E1, D1, C1, Bb0, A0, G0, F0, E0, D0, C0, Bb-1, A-1, G-1, F-1, E-1, D-1, C-1, Bb-2, A-2, G-2, F-2, E-2, D-2, C-2, Bb-3, A-3, G-3, F-3, E-3, D-3, C-3, Bb-4, A-4, G-4, F-4, E-4, D-4, C-4, Bb-5, A-5, G-5, F-5, E-5, D-5, C-5, Bb-6, A-6, G-6, F-6, E-6, D-6, C-6, Bb-7, A-7, G-7, F-7, E-7, D-7, C-7, Bb-8, A-8, G-8, F-8, E-8, D-8, C-8, Bb-9, A-9, G-9, F-9, E-9, D-9, C-9, Bb-10, A-10, G-10, F-10, E-10, D-10, C-10, Bb-11, A-11, G-11, F-11, E-11, D-11, C-11, Bb-12, A-12, G-12, F-12, E-12, D-12, C-12, Bb-13, A-13, G-13, F-13, E-13, D-13, C-13, Bb-14, A-14, G-14, F-14, E-14, D-14, C-14, Bb-15, A-15, G-15, F-15, E-15, D-15, C-15, Bb-16, A-16, G-16, F-16, E-16, D-16, C-16, Bb-17, A-17, G-17, F-17, E-17, D-17, C-17, Bb-18, A-18, G-18, F-18, E-18, D-18, C-18, Bb-19, A-19, G-19, F-19, E-19, D-19, C-19, Bb-20, A-20, G-20, F-20, E-20, D-20, C-20, Bb-21, A-21, G-21, F-21, E-21, D-21, C-21, Bb-22, A-22, G-22, F-22, E-22, D-22, C-22, Bb-23, A-23, G-23, F-23, E-23, D-23, C-23, Bb-24, A-24, G-24, F-24, E-24, D-24, C-24, Bb-25, A-25, G-25, F-25, E-25, D-25, C-25, Bb-26, A-26, G-26, F-26, E-26, D-26, C-26, Bb-27, A-27, G-27, F-27, E-27, D-27, C-27, Bb-28, A-28, G-28, F-28, E-28, D-28, C-28, Bb-29, A-29, G-29, F-29, E-29, D-29, C-29, Bb-30, A-30, G-30, F-30, E-30, D-30, C-30, Bb-31, A-31, G-31, F-31, E-31, D-31, C-31, Bb-32, A-32, G-32, F-32, E-32, D-32, C-32, Bb-33, A-33, G-33, F-33, E-33, D-33, C-33, Bb-34, A-34, G-34, F-34, E-34, D-34, C-34, Bb-35, A-35, G-35, F-35, E-35, D-35, C-35, Bb-36, A-36, G-36, F-36, E-36, D-36, C-36, Bb-37, A-37, G-37, F-37, E-37, D-37, C-37, Bb-38, A-38, G-38, F-38, E-38, D-38, C-38, Bb-39, A-39, G-39, F-39, E-39, D-39, C-39, Bb-40, A-40, G-40, F-40, E-40, D-40, C-40, Bb-41, A-41, G-41, F-41, E-41, D-41, C-41, Bb-42, A-42, G-42, F-42, E-42, D-42, C-42, Bb-43, A-43, G-43, F-43, E-43, D-43, C-43, 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D-251, C-251, Bb-252, A-252, G-252, F-252, E-252, D-252, C-252, Bb-253, A-253, G-253, F-253, E-253, D-253, C-253, Bb-254, A-254, G-254, F-254, E-254, D-254, C-254, Bb-255, A-255, G-255, F-255, E-255, D-255, C-255, Bb-256, A-256, G-256, F-256, E-256, D-256, C-256, Bb-257, A-257, G-257, F-257, E-257, D-257, C-257, Bb-258, A-258, G-258, F-258, E-258, D-258, C-258, Bb-259, A-259, G-259, F-259, E-259, D-259, C-259, Bb-260, A-260, G-260, F-260, E-260, D-260, C-260, Bb-261, A-261, G-261, F-261, E-261, D-261, C-261, Bb-262, A-262, G-262, F-262, E-262, D-262, C-262, Bb-263, A-263, G-263, F-263, E-263, D-263, C-263, Bb-264, A-264, G-264, F-264, E-264, D-264, C-264, Bb-265, A-265, G-265, F-265, E-265, D-265, C-265, Bb-266, A-266, G-266, F-266, E-266, D-266, C-266, Bb-267, A-267, G-267, F-267, E-267, D-267, C-267, Bb-268, A-268, G-268, F-268, E-268, D-268, C-268, Bb-269, A-269, G-269, F-269, E-269, D-269, C-269, Bb-270, A-270, G-270, F-270, E-270, D-270, C-270, Bb-271, A-271, G-271, F-271, E-271, D-271, C-271, Bb-272, A-272, G-272, F-272, E-272, D-272, C-272, Bb-273, A-273, G-273, F-273, E-273, D-273, C-273, Bb-274, A-274, G-274, F-274, E-274, D-274, C-274, Bb-275, A-275, G-275, F-275, E-275, D-275, C-275, Bb-276, A-276, G-276, F-276, E-276, D-276, C-276, Bb-277, A-277, G-277, F-277, E-277, D-277, C-277, Bb-278, A-278, G-278, F-278, E-278, D-278, C-278, Bb-279, A-279, G-279, F-279, E-279, D-279, C-279, Bb-280, A-280, G-280, F-280, E-280, D-280, C-280, Bb-281, A-281, G-281, F-281, E-281, D-281, C-281, Bb-282, A-282, G-282, F-282, E-282, D-282, C-282, Bb-283, A-283, G-283, F-283, E-283, D-283, C-283, Bb-284, A-284, G-284, F-284, E-284, D-284, C-284, Bb-285, A-285, G-285, F-285, E-285, D-285, C-285, Bb-286, A-286, G-286, F-286, E-286, D-286, C-2

(Neal 2007, 45). Indeed, a tonicization of the subdominant can be found in many cases. The Beatles songs “I Want to Hold Your Hand” (1963) and “From Me to You” (1963), for example, both have clear bridge sections that begin with chords drawn from the realm of the subdominant (e.g., ii/IV). Yet many bridge sections explore harmonies drawn from the sharp side as well. Example 3.4.08 shows the bridge from the song “You Can’t Do That” (The Beatles, 1964). Like other classic bridge sections, this bridge appears within an AABA core, after which an instrumental solo and a repeat of the B and A sections follow. The harmonic relationship of this bridge to the S–T–S–D pattern may not initially be clear. But if we construe the move to the submediant (vi) as a substitute for the move to the subdominant, we can see the same underlying harmonic framework. By using the submediant, the chord collection involves many “sharp-side” harmonies, including V/vi (i.e., III \sharp). The use of the supertonic, mediant, and submediant chords is, in fact, a common attribute of bridge sections in the music of the Beatles. (Consider, for instance, the bridge sections of “A Hard Day’s Night” [1964], “And I Love Her” [1964], or “Yesterday” [1965].) As a means of contrast, therefore, both flat-side and sharp-side chord progressions appear to provide ample harmonic relief from the tonic-based quality of typical A section material.

Example 3.4.08: “You Can’t Do That” (The Beatles, 1964); bridge (B section)

(orig. G)
0:52

Eve-ry-bo-dy's green _____ 'cause I'm the one who won your love.____ But if they'd seen _____

you talk-in' that way, they'd laugh in my face.__(oh...)

Bridge quality, therefore, is conveyed not only through the particular chords that bookend the section but also – and perhaps more importantly – through the harmonic content of the section as a whole. In fact, the more a bridge section can avoid tonic harmony, the more strongly it may contrast from verse and/or chorus sections that essentially prolong tonic. A simple yet effective example of this strategy can be found in the song “Get Up (I Feel Like Being a) Sex Machine” (James Brown, 1970). Almost the entirety of the song is one long groove on what is basically an Eb minor chord with an occasional added major-mode (Dorian) sixth. Around two minutes into the song, though, James Brown asks “Bobby” if he can “take ‘em to the bridge” (which he does). At 2:12, the band then shifts to a full 16 bars

rooted solidly on the subdominant. This subdominant area is followed by a set of staccato IVb7 chords (drawn from the opening) and a consequent return to the tonic groove. The bridge (as James Brown himself refers to it) lacks any clear dominant chord, yet it is doubtful that we hear the absence of this dominant as any significant evidence against this material acting as a bridge. From a harmonic perspective, it is instead simply the motion away from tonic that effects the clear sense of bridge quality.

Modern bridge sections

As discussed above, classic bridge sections derive from a 32-bar AABA structure found in songs from the early period of rock history. Of course, we also find clear bridge sections in more modern song types – in particular, those songs that have both clear verse and chorus sections. Many of the qualities of the classic bridge section can be found in the bridge sections to these verse-chorus songs. Yet as we shall see, the situation is not exactly the same. For this reason, it is worth discussing the subtype of a *modern* bridge section.

The song “1979” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1995) provides a good example of a modern bridge section. The bridge to this song shows many of the same qualities found in a classic bridge section. To begin with, the verse and chorus sections to “1979” (not shown) all start clearly on tonic harmony and return to this tonic on strong parts of the hypermeter; consequently, the verse and chorus sections can be said to basically prolong tonic. In contrast, the bridge section (Example 3.4.09) avoids any instance of tonic throughout; one might analyze this bridge, in fact, as one long expansion (or embellishment) of an underlying dominant harmony. In this regard, the bridge section displays the generic harmonic quality of a classic bridge – both through its internal harmonic content as well as the contrast this harmonic content creates with other sections of the song. Note the bridge also contains contrast in other domains: at the beginning of the bridge, for example, we hear the first instance of a buzzy, distorted guitar – the only appearance of this instrument in the whole song.

Like classic bridge sections, the bridge section to “1979” also appears as the B material within an AABA pattern (as shown in Example 3.4.10), and thus the location of the bridge in this song is prototypical as well. But the content of the AABA pattern here is much different than in the classic case. Within the classic 32-bar AABA framework, the bridge is more strongly connected to the surrounding material; often, the final A material seems more like a consequent phrase to the B material than the restart of a section. The bridge in “1979,” however, seems more like a standalone unit as compared to the surrounding material (despite its unstable harmonic nature). Notice that – although it appears to end on a dominant chord – the bridge more obviously ends with an authentic cadence that overlaps the beginning of

the verse material. Even though the vocal melody of the verse starts soon after this cadence, it would not be too difficult to image a few bars of blank filler after this overlap (similar to the four bars of vamp material at 1:34).

Example 3.4.09: “1979” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1995); bridge

(orig. Eb)

2:31 V

To the lights in towns be - low,

Fast - er than the speed of sound,

Fast - er than we thought we'd go, be - neath

the sound of hope.

Example 3.4.10: “1979” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1995); core AABA pattern

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Section	Group
0:41	14	“June bug, skipping....”	verse	A
1:08	14	“And I don’t even care....”	chorus	
1:34	(4) + 14	“Don’t cross the vacant....”	verse	A
2:08	12	“And we don’t even care....”	chorus	
2:31	14	“To the lights....”	bridge	B
2:57	18	“Justine never knew....”	verse	A
3:32	14	“And we don’t even care....”	chorus	

In a modern bridge, therefore, there is not the same necessary and immediate return of the A material as exists with a classic bridge. This quality derives from the relative looseness of the compound AABA pattern. In fact, many songs with compound AABA patterns contain only a partial return of the A material. (For example, “You’ve Got a Friend” [Carole King, 1970], which Covach labels as compound AABA [2009, 348-9], contains a return of only the chorus material but not the verse.) Certainly, issues of absolute time are at

work here. In a classic 32-bar AABA pattern, the length of the pattern as a whole is relatively short and can be more easily retained in short-term memory; “Handy Man,” for example, has an AABA succession that lasts only 53 seconds. But as the A and B material expand in length, it is harder for the listener to chunk the entire pattern into one conceptual unit. The AABA core in “1979,” for instance, lasts roughly 3 minutes and 15 seconds. The symmetry and balance of the four 8-bar segments in the classic AABA pattern are lost; as a result, the regularity of the hypermetric framework no longer acts as a structural agent. As the pattern itself becomes looser, the content within this pattern becomes more loosely conceptualized as well.

Location still plays a central role in both bridge subtypes, in that they both are expected to appear after two iterations of some essentially tonic-prolonging material (or, more generally, within the middle of something). But due to factors of length and time, the classic bridge is much more prone to appear a second time in a song, whereas the modern bridge typically occurs only once. Of course, both bridge subtypes trigger our sense of bridge quality; but realizing that at least two distinct situations contribute to this sense is important to untangling our understanding of the category as a whole.

Solo sections and instrumental bridges

In the preceding analysis of “Handy Man,” the solo and bridge sections were seen as two distinct formal units within the song. This distinction between solo and bridge does not always exist, however. As we look at the role that solo sections play within the form of rock songs, in fact, there seems to be a great amount of overlap between the roles of solo and bridge sections. Consequently, the category of “solo” deserves some discussion at this point.

Few theorists have discussed the solo section as a section category, *per se*. Presumably, the instrumental nature of solo sections makes their identity so obvious that theorists do not feel any prolonged discussion is necessary. Nevertheless, when theorists do discuss solo sections, these descriptions align strongly with basic attributes of bridge quality. Harris, for example, says that solos are experienced as “contrasting sections” (2006, 64). Similarly, Everett describes a solo as “perhaps the strongest contrast” that can be brought to a song (2009, 150). As discussed above, the aspect of “contrast” is a basic means of differentiating any section type from another, and thus “contrast” can seem like a trivial attribute. Yet the extent of contrast in solo sections – like bridges – appears to be far greater than other material in the song.

As a testament to the similarity of bridge and solo roles, the term “instrumental bridge” is sometimes used to label what are clearly solo sections. For example, Stephenson states plainly that “rock songs tend to have instrumental bridges” (2002, 138), and his

analysis of “Let It Grow” (Eric Clapton, 1974) refers to the solo section as an instrumental bridge. Looking at other analyses, we find additional evidence of the overlap between solo and bridge quality. Take, for instance, the analysis Covach provides for the song “More Than a Feeling” (Boston, 1976) in his 2005 essay (74). The sections and succession pattern as identified by Covach are shown in Example 3.4.11. As can be seen, Covach labels the material beginning at 2:30 as the bridge section of the song. A primary reason for this label likely relates to the standard position of this bridge section within the form of the song as a whole. In particular, note the large-scale compound AABA pattern into which the various sections group. More importantly, this bridge section does not contain any vocal melody or lyrics. Instead, it includes two guitars playing in parallel. Thus there is a significant amount of textural contrast between this section and the surrounding material. (Interestingly, note that despite the fact that this bridge section contains two simultaneous guitars lines [not one], Covach refers to this section as a “guitar solo” [74]. We can say, therefore, that while the prototypical case of a solo section involves a single instrumental melody, our understanding of the category allows for situations with multiple melodic lines.) One final aspect of the instrumental bridge in this song is worth mentioning. Specifically, its harmonic content differs from the harmonic content of the verse and chorus sections. This contrasting harmonic content reinforces the sense of contrast manifest in the domain of instrumentation and thereby heightens the bridge-like quality of this solo. What is important to note here is that Covach posits the solo section and instrumental bridge to be one and the same part in this song.

Example 3.4.11: “More Than a Feeling” (Boston, 1976);
form chart in Covach 2005 (74)

Start	Section	Group
0:18	Verse 1	A
0:42	Chorus	
1:17	Verse 2	A
1:51	Chorus	
2:30	Bridge	B
2:55	Verse 3	A
3:48	Chorus	

Yet solo and bridge sections may not always be in complete alignment. The song “Whole Lotta Love” (Led Zeppelin, 1969) provides a good illustration of this situation. Both Covach (2003, 183) and Temperley (2010) identify verse, chorus, and bridge sections in this song, and these sections can be grouped into a compound AABA pattern (as shown in Example 3.4.12). The bridge section in this song is obviously an instrumental bridge, as it

contains no clear vocal melody or substantial lyric content. In fact, most of this instrumental bridge does not even contain any distinctive sense of melody or harmony whatsoever; a large chunk of it is just swirling guitar noises and vocal moans/wails overtop a bed of non-pitched percussion. At 3:05, harmony and melody return – specifically, in the form of tonic chords supporting a guitar solo. The span of music from this point until the beginning of the verse at 3:22 is clearly the solo section of the song. Note, however, that the solo section now lies within the larger section of the instrumental bridge.

Example 3.4.12: “Whole Lotta Love” (Led Zeppelin, 1969);
form chart in Covach 2003 (183)

Start	Section	Group
0:11	Verse	A
0:35	Chorus	
0:47	Verse	A
1:10	Chorus	
1:21	Bridge	B
3:22	Verse	A
3:50	Chorus	

In fact, it is not clear that the bridge section identified by Covach and Temperley necessarily acts on the same level of grouping structure as do the verse and chorus sections. Note, for example, that the A part of the compound AABA form is a supersection that includes both verse and chorus material. The bridge can also be considered a supersection, in that it lies on the same level as the A parts and includes what appear to be two different types of material (a unique non-harmonic section and the solo section). This issue of grouping level and bridge quality adds an additional layer of complexity to our understanding of the bridge label. More evidence of this aspect will be seen in the following example. (Chapter 5 will also explore further the implications of bridge quality at different levels of structure.)

A modern classic

As discussed above, different types of bridges create different expectations, such as whether the bridge will return, in what form it will return, and what type of material will follow it. If we accept that our broad category of bridge is triggered by multiple subtypes, we can craft our analyses to be more sensitive to these distinct cases and realize connections with other songs. This approach has its most obvious benefits when we can clearly find more than one type of bridge within a single song. In “Every Breath You Take” (The Police, 1983), for instance, we see clear examples of multiple subtypes of the bridge role.

To begin with, the song contains a prototypical classic bridge section (as shown in Example 3.4.13). This classic bridge section is made apparent through its melodic phrase structure, its use of the standard S–T–S–D harmonic background (specifically, the realization shown in Example 3.4.05b), as well as its placement within a 32-bar AABA core pattern of 8-bar units. Example 3.4.14 shows the section labels used by Covach (2005, 75), in which this classic bridge is labeled as “Bridge 1.” (The introductory and closing materials will not be discussed here and are thus omitted from the form chart.) Additionally, the closely interlocked relationship of this classic bridge and the A section that follows is audibly conspicuous; when the A material returns at 1:06, it feels like the natural consequent of the preceding bridge.

Example 3.4.13: “Every Breath You Take” (The Police, 1983); classic bridge

(orig. Ab) 0:48

Oh, can't you see, you be-long to me? How my poor heart

aches with ev-ry step you take.

Example 3.4.14: “Every Breath You Take” (The Police, 1983);
form chart in Covach 2005 (75)

Start	Section	Group
0:17	Verse	A
0:33	Verse	
0:49	Bridge 1	
1:06	Verse	
1:22	Bridge 2	B
1:43	Verse	A
1:59	Verse	
2:15	Bridge 1	
2:32	Verse	

Interestingly, the song contains other material that also seems to demand a bridge label. The most obvious candidate – which Covach labels as “Bridge 2” – is shown in Example 3.4.15. This second bridge section starkly contrasts with the rest of the song. Instead of the restrained and controlled textures heard through most of the song, this second bridge opens up dramatically: the melody explores a higher register, the voice quality is less

intimate, the drummer moves to the ride cymbal with frequent cymbal crashes, and a new descending piano part is introduced. Some of these features might, in fact, give this middle vocal section something of a chorus-like quality. Yet this middle section occurs only once in the song (at about the midpoint) and avoids tonic harmony throughout. In particular, the pervasive use of bVI and $bVII$ chords makes this second bridge harmonically unstable, especially in comparison to A section material, and these flat-side chords further accentuate the contrast with the A section. For these reasons, the material shown in Example 3.4.54 seems very bridge-like.

Example 3.4.15: “Every Breath You Take” (The Police, 1983); modern bridge

(orig. Ab)

1:22 bVI $bVII$

Since you've gone, I've been lost with- out_ a trace. I dream at night; I can on - ly see_your face.

bVI $bVII$

I look a-round but it's you I can't_ re-place. I feel so cold, and I long for your_ em-brace.

bVI I

I keep cry - in' "Ba - by, ba - by, please!"

Note as well that this second bridge does not demand (or properly prepare) a return of the A material as did the first bridge. Even though the harmonic material from the A section returns, the A-section vocal melody does not. This vocal melody does not (or perhaps cannot) return because – like the modern bridge from the song “1979” – the end of the second bridge overlaps with the beginning of the next section. In this regard, the second bridge in “Every Breath You Take” should probably not be considered a completely harmonically-open unit (like the first bridge) but rather something like a tonally-closed, standalone unit. (As previously discussed, form charts like Example 3.4.14 unfortunately make cases of section overlap difficult to notate.) The second bridge section thus displays prototypical features of a modern bridge not found in a classic bridge section.

With at least two different bridge sections within this song, Covach posits an overall form of compound ABA (as shown in the rightmost column of Example 3.4.14 above). In terms of harmony, Covach has valid reasons to group the sections of the song in this manner. After the initial AABA presentation and second bridge, the harmonic content of the entire

AABA group is repeated. Yet the label of compound ABA makes the form of this song seem more atypical – and more unrelated to other songs – than might be appropriate.

An alternative grouping structure for “Every Breath You Take” is shown in Example 3.4.16. This grouping structure shows that the form of this song is only slightly different from a standard AABA song with abbreviated reprise. In particular, note that the return of the BA unit from the AABA core (at 2:15) also includes a repeat of the lyrics from the initial appearance of the BA unit. This repeat of lyrics is a standard attribute of an abbreviated reprise, as seen we saw in previous examples. In the case of “Handy Man,” we also found an instrumental section over harmonies from the A material prior to the abbreviated reprise itself. This organization (AABA-instrumental-BA) is quite common for songs from the 1950s and ‘60s (e.g., Willie Dixon songs: “Violent Love” [The Big Three, 1951], “Pain in My Heart” [Willie Dixon, 1955], and “When the Lights Go Out” [Jimmy Witherspoon, 1954]). As a result, the form of “Every Breath You Take” seems relatively typical. The only difference is that a modern-style vocal bridge has been inserted between the end of the AABA core and the instrumental section prior to the abbreviate reprise (as shown in the “Subgroup” column of Example 3.4.16).

Example 3.4.16: “Every Breath You Take” (The Police, 1983); alternative grouping

Start	Section	Lyrics	Subgroup	Group
0:17	Verse	“Every breath you take...”	AA	AABA
0:33	Verse	“Every single day...”		
0:49	Bridge 1	“Oh can’t you se...”	BA	
1:06	Verse	“Every move you make...”		
1:22	Bridge 2	“Since you’ve gone...”	Modern Bridge	Bridge
1:43	Verse	---	Instrumental Bridge	
1:59	Verse	---		
2:15	Bridge 1	“Oh can’t you se...”	BA	abbreviated reprise
2:32	Verse	“Every move you make...”		

Based on our deepened understanding of the term “bridge,” in fact, we might posit other types of bridge quality in this song as well. For example, the non-texted material that lies between the modern bridge and the abbreviated reprise could be considered as not simply an instrumental section but as an instrumental bridge. Admittedly, this instrumental bridge does not provide any harmonic contrast from the rest of the song. Yet from a textural standpoint, it provides great contrast, as it is the only area within the main body of the song that lacks a lead vocal. We could also say that the modern bridge and the instrumental bridge together provide aural relief between the AABA core and its abbreviated reprise (as shown in the rightmost column of Example 3.4.16). In this regard, the entire span of music from 1:22

to 2:15 in this song acts as a bridge, much like the higher-level bridge quality that grouped together the swirling middle section and instrumental solo in “Whole Lotta Love.” We thus find evidence of four different meanings of the term “bridge” within this single song.

In summary, our understanding of this Police song involves aspects of multivalence. For instance, the form conveyed via the harmonic patterns rubs against the form conveyed via the patterns of texture and instrumentation. Each one of these forms interacts with section labels in their own way, and our prototype-based approach helps us appreciate this multivalent aspect. With this methodology, the relationship of the form of this song with more prototypical arrangements becomes clear.

Conclusion

Our perception of bridge quality is molded through our experience with a large set of songs that involve a number of different musical situations. Yet certain properties – including contrast, harmonic instability, and section location – more strongly evoke our sense of a bridge than others. We may further identify particular attributes that adhere to specific subtypes of bridges, such as the classic bridge, modern bridge, and instrumental bridge.

From the perspective of prototype theory, we may encounter sections that convey strong bridge quality yet lack (or thwart) certain expected attributes. Bridge sections, for example, do not typically begin or end a song. As noted above, some theorists consequently state that if a section begins or ends a song, it cannot be a bridge (e.g., Stephan-Robinson 2009, 98). Yet numerous songs challenge this restrictive view. In both “(The Best Part of) Breakin’ Up” (The Ronettes, 1964) and “What’s Going On” (Marvin Gaye, 1971), for example, the final fadeout of the song occurs within what seems – for a variety of reasons – to act as bridge material (at least this same material acts as a bridge in other portions of the song). A complete analysis of these examples requires a better understanding of the intro, outro, and link roles, though, which will be discussed in a later portion of this chapter.

3.5: Prechorus

The prechorus has received relatively little theoretical attention, especially compared to verse, chorus, and bridge sections. In fact, only a handful of descriptions are available in the scholarly literature from which to infer any consensus. Yet when this section role is discussed, enough agreement exists to offer evidence of a shared understanding.

The prechorus in theory

Some authors seem to avoid any reference whatsoever to the term “prechorus.” In his 2001 book, for example, Allan Moore lists the “conventional formal divisions found in rock: verse, refrain, chorus, bridge, introduction, playout, and solo (break)” (52). Noticeably absent from this list is any mention of the prechorus. Similarly, Ken Stephenson’s 2002 book on rock includes index entries for bridge, chorus, refrain, and verse yet no entry for prechorus. The omission in Stephenson’s index does not appear to be an error, since none of the analyses in his chapter on form employ the term “prechorus” either. Other textbooks – e.g., Stein 2005, Covach 2009 – also lack glossary and/or index entries for the prechorus while including entries for verse, chorus, bridge, and refrain.

One factor that might explain the exclusion of the term “prechorus” from a standard set of form labels is the variety of alternate names that seem to exist for this section type. Pattison, for instances, lists many other equivalent terms, including: climb, lift, ramp, transitional bridge, and verse extension (1991, 61). It is possible that each of these different terms refers to a slightly different musical and lyrical situation; each variation may reflect a subtle shade of analytical insight. Nevertheless, all seem to describe a section role (or roles) that falls outside the purview of the verse, chorus, bridge, and refrain labels.

A number of theorists do, in fact, provide descriptions of the prechorus (and specifically use the term “prechorus” in their discussions). Everett writes that the prechorus is a “very common way” to “join” verse and chorus sections (2009, 147). In this statement, Everett highlights one aspect found universally in extant descriptions: the location of the prechorus within the form of the song. As the term “prechorus” itself implies, the prechorus is seen to lie before a chorus and, consequently, after a verse. We can view this aspect of location as two separate attributes: 1) the position of the prechorus with respect to the chorus, and 2) its position with respect to the verse. Recognizing these as individual attributes turns out to be a useful analytical distinction, as we will see.

Note that Everett uses the word “join” in his description of the prechorus. This verb touches on another aspect of this section role: its transitional nature. Harris, for example, uses the word “transition” in his description of the prechorus (2006, 64-5). More radically, Endrinal discards the term “prechorus” and replaces it with the term “transition” itself. After mentioning the close similarity between a traditional prechorus and his “transition” label, Endrinal defines a transition as “any section that contains lyrics and bridges [!] two other sections” (2008, 67-8). Endrinal obviously wants to broaden the definition of a prechorus to allow it to exist in various locations, but he is thwarted by the inclusion of the word “chorus” in the term itself; thus, he adopts this new section label. Endrinal then mentions transitional aspects in a number of domains, including harmony, rhythm, and meter.

Harmonic content, in fact, appears to be another distinguishing feature of prechorus sections. Everett says that prechoruses are, in general, “harmonically probing” (2009, 146). Harris offers more details, saying that these sections are “usually harmonically unstable” (2006, 64-5). He goes on to state that prechorus sections often begin and end off-tonic. The description that Jocelyn Neal offers provides more specific details yet. She states that prechorus sections often extend predominant-to-dominant progressions and conclude with a half cadence (2007, 45). The similarity between these descriptions and those of a bridge (discussed earlier) is striking. In particular, the large-scale subdominant-to-dominant motion that Neal posits for a typical prechorus aligns with the prototypical S–T–S–D harmonic progression for classic bridge sections. It should not be surprising, therefore, that one of the synonyms mentioned above for a prechorus is a “transitional bridge,” since at least some traits seem very similar.

As additional evidence of the similarity between prechorus and classic bridge sections, one final attribute is worth mentioning. Harris states that prechorus sections “often repeat (or nearly repeat) text” (2006, 64-5). Harris then notes the overlap in characteristics this creates between the prechorus and the chorus categories. As well, we should note the overlap this aspect creates between the prechorus and the classic bridge, which also typically repeats its lyrics on future iterations. Apparently, a number of different section roles (not just the chorus) are seen to commonly involve external lyric repetition.

The prechorus in analysis

It was mentioned above that some theorists avoid any reference to the prechorus in their descriptions of section roles. We may wonder why some theorists choose to discuss this section role while others do not. One reason may be that few songs include prechorus sections. Even though (as noted earlier) Everett states that the prechorus is a “very common” section type, the use of the prechorus label seems to be relatively uncommon in published analyses. For example, Covach’s 2009 textbook – which does not include an index entry for the prechorus – does, in fact, use this term in some of its song analyses; but only 4 out of the 81 analyses in his book employ the prechorus label. In my own survey of published analyses from a variety of authors, the proportion of songs which are seen to have a prechorus section is a bit higher, but not by any great margin: out of songs that are viewed as containing both a verse and a chorus, less than 10% have been analyzed as also containing a prechorus. In other words, far more songs appear to lack a prechorus than contain one.

Another reason that theorists might choose to not recognize the prechorus as a standard section role relates to its length. Neal states that prechoruses are typically “four or eight measures of music” (2007, 45). If some prechoruses are only four measures long, we

may not be sure whether such a short passage deserves to be a section in its own right. Perhaps the prechorus – like the refrain – is simply a moment within some larger, full-fledged section. With this view, the recognition of a prechorus might seem somewhat optional; the prechorus may only add detail to the basic form of the song, which can be described using the more standard section labels of verse, chorus, and bridge. There is something of a catch-22 situation here in the relationship between theory and analysis, however. If a theorist does not view the prechorus as a standard or common section role, then that theorist may only rarely use this label in analysis. But since this theorist is using this section label only rarely in analysis, it will consequently not seem like a standard section role. We can see how a term can get lost in this loop.

In general, the analytical use of the prechorus label follows a conservative approach. When in doubt, theorists tend to avoid its use. This inclination is understandable since it avoids the mis-employment of a term that is only marginally explained in the theoretical literature. Yet the under-usage of the term may itself be a type of analytical error. Of course, many song examples do not provide clear evidence one way or the other, so to speak of “errors,” per se, may be insensitive. Yet we should perhaps be more attuned to the possibility that prechorus quality is evoked in a variety of musical situations. This issue will be more fully explored in Chapter 5.

A prototypical prechorus

There are a variety of songs in rock music for which the existence of a prechorus section is undeniable. In these cases, to not posit the existence of a prechorus section would be a conspicuous misrepresentation of the form of the song. As we investigate these clear cases, we find that they exhibit the basic attributes described above for prechorus quality.

Consider, for example, the song “You Belong with Me” (Taylor Swift, 2008), which includes a prototypical prechorus section. But before examining this prechorus, it is helpful to first discuss the verse and chorus material of the song so that the prechorus can be put into a musical context. To begin, both the verse material (Example 3.5.01) and the chorus material (Example 3.5.02) are built on the same eight-bar harmonic pattern (I–V–ii–IV), in which each chord lasts two bars. In the verse, this chord progression seems harmonically open-ended; its final subdominant even implies something like half-cadence (see Temperley 2011 on IV in a cadential role). Yet in the chorus, the phrase overlap of the final vocal melody into the following hypermetric downbeat makes the progression overall seem harmonically closed. The chorus section thus, in a typical way, sounds like the end of a larger block, whereas the verse material leads forward. Overall, the basic harmonic content of both the verse and chorus material seems to be relatively stable – as if it is elaborating or prolonging

an underlying tonic – in strong part because the progression opens with two bars of tonic. Over top of this stable harmonic material, the verse and chorus qualities for the song manifest themselves in other prototypical ways. In the chorus, for example, the vocal melody moves to a high register and emphasizes \wedge_3 , \wedge_2 , and \wedge_1 (cadence-like motions). The instrumentation becomes noticeably thicker as well. Additionally, the lyrics to the chorus include the title (which itself is repeated), and these same chorus lyrics return on future iterations of the section. All in all, the verse and chorus roles in this song are relatively unambiguous.

Example 3.5.01: “You Belong with Me” (Taylor Swift, 2008); verse

(orig. Gb)
0:08

You're on the phone with your girl-friend, she's up - set. She's go-in' off a-bout some-thin' that you said,
— 'cause she does - n't get your hu - mor like I do.

Example 3.5.02: “You Belong with Me” (Taylor Swift, 2008); chorus

(orig. Gb)
0:52

If you could see that I'm the one who un-der-stands you, been here all a long, so why can't you
see you be- long with me, you be- long with me.

Between iterations of this verse and chorus material, we find the eight-bar section shown below in Example 3.5.03, which acts as the prechorus of the song. These eight bars present something different – and thus distinct from – either the verse or chorus material, if only because its harmonic content contrasts from that of the sections surrounding it. Instead of the two-bar harmonic rhythms, for example, the harmonic rate in the prechorus increases to one chord per bar. More importantly, the tonic-centered quality of the verse and chorus material is absent. Instead, the prechorus is much more harmonically unstable. (The overall harmonic progression could, in fact, be mapped to the standard S–T–S–D harmonic

functions found in a classic bridge.) One might say that the unstable harmonic content of the prechorus acts to transition between the two stable tonal areas surrounding it. Yet the harmonic content of the verse and chorus sections are identical. As a result, there is nothing really for the prechorus to transition between, since we begin and end in the same place. The prechorus, we can say, is simply the unstable harmonic material between the two stable tonal areas of the verse and chorus sections. This harmonic organization is by far the most common scenario for songs that contain clear verse, prechorus, and chorus sections (e.g., “Sara” [Starship, 1985], prechorus at 0:38; “You Give Love a Bad Name” [Bon Jovi, 1986], prechorus at 0:47; “Smooth Criminal” [Michael Jackson, 1987], prechorus at 0:47).

Example 3.5.03: “You Belong with Me” (Taylor Swift, 2008); prechorus

(orig. Gb)
0:37

But she wears short skirts; I wear T-shirts. She's cheer cap-tain and I'm on the bleach-ers,
dream in' of the day when you wake up and find that what you're look in' for has been here...the whole time.

Although we might not be able to ascribe transitional quality to the harmonic content of the prechorus section in “You Belong with Me,” a host of transitional elements are evident in other domains. Consider, for example, the instrumentation of the song. In between the extremes of the tiny, drum-machine-like percussion of the verse and the big rock drum kit of the chorus (replete with crash cymbals on every quarter note), the prechorus presents a more middle-ground drum sound: a natural kit that stays confined to the hi-hat for time-keeping. Similarly, the muted guitar texture in the verse thickens somewhat in the prechorus with the addition of the acoustic guitar strums on each downbeat, and this prechorus then leads to the thickest guitar texture yet in the chorus.

The prechorus vocal melody itself also displays aspects of transition from verse to chorus. If we consider the register of the vocal in the verse to generally be low and its register in the chorus to be high, then the vocal register in the prechorus seems to be somewhere in the middle. We might even posit that the vocal range is expanded (and thus transitions from low to high) over the course of the entire prechorus section, in that the vocal melody consists of mostly upward-directed phrase shapes until the last two bars. It is also possible to sense elements of transition in the rhythmic content of the vocal melody as well. In the verse, for

instance, the first two vocal phrases begin with non-syncopated rhythms (“You’re on the phone with your girlfriend”) and end with syncopation (“she’s upset”). In contrast, the opening vocal phrases of the chorus begin with syncopation (“If you could see that I’m the one”) and end in a rhythmically-straight manner (“who understands you”). The prechorus may be viewed as a large-scale move between these two rhythmic organizational strategies. The first half of the prechorus uses only non-syncopated vocal rhythms (which are emphasized in the verses due to their hypermetric location), and the second half uses mostly syncopated vocal rhythms (which are similarly emphasized in the chorus). The last two bars of the prechorus, in fact, display the same basic syncopation pattern that opens the first two-bar unit in the chorus. Whether or not one finds this analysis plausible, we can say – at minimum – that the prechorus seems to internally transition between two different vocal syncopation strategies.

Of course, one of the strongest attributes that argues for the material in Example 3.5.03 to be a prechorus is its relationship to other sections within the succession pattern of the song. As Example 3.5.04 shows, the eight-bar prechorus is in its prototypical location – after the verse material and before the chorus. Yet it is not simply its location that makes this prechorus example so clear; it is also its length and its relationship to other section lengths that causes it to seem like its own section. For example, the verse section consists of two iterations of the eight-bar verse material found in Example 3.5.01 (albeit sometimes with variations). The prechorus – being eight bars long – aligns with this basic 8-bar grouping structure, and so we have strong evidence that it is as structurally important as other 8-bar units. The regularity of the 8-bar unit, moreover, can as strongly determine what is inside a section as it can determine what is outside. Had the prechorus only been four bars long (hypothetically speaking), this prechorus would still have seemed like something external to both the verse and chorus sections, since the internal 8-bar regularity of these sections effectively seals them off as standalone sections. It is thus both the hypermetric regularity of the sections surrounding the prechorus as well as the length of the prechorus itself that contributes to our sense that it requires its own section label.

Example 3.5.04: “You Belong with Me” (Taylor Swift, 2008); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Lyrics
0:08	8	Verse	“You’re on the phone with....”
0:23	8		“I’m in the room, it’s a typical.... “
0:37	8	Prechorus	“But she wears short skirts....”
0:52	8	Chorus	“If you could see that I’m the one....”

As a final factor, it should be mentioned that the lyrics to this prechorus – for the most part – repeat on the future iteration of this passage. From the third bar forward, the lyrics in the second prechorus are basically identical to the lyrics from the first prechorus. Although the first two bars of the second prechorus do not include the same lyrics as its initial appearance, the basic structure is very similar (1x [0:37]: “She wears short skirts; I wear T-shirts” 2x [1:40]: “She wears high heels, I wear sneakers”). Consequently, we might say that it is within the prechorus section that we transition from the non-externally-repeated lyrics of the verse to the externally-repeated lyrics of the chorus. Yet it is difficult to precisely say how external patterns of text repetition (or lack thereof) relate to prechorus quality. (My own sampling of clear prechorus sections shows that – more often than not – its lyrics do, in fact, repeat on future iterations.) Nonetheless, given that a typical prechorus moves away from a verse and towards a chorus, it seems plausible that text repetition on future iterations can act as a cue that the focal moment of the song is about to arrive. (The label of “prechorus” emphasizes its role as harbinger of the chorus rather than as the conclusion to the verse.) In other words, by repeating text from earlier iterations, the prechorus may communicate to the listener that something important is happening or about to happen.

Prechorus as intermediary contrast between verse and chorus

In the discussion of “You Belong with Me,” we were able to see how our perception of prechorus quality derives (in an abstract way) from aspects of transition, and that transitional elements may manifest in a variety of domains, such as rhythm, lyric repetition patterns, and melodic register. In Chapter 5, the implications of the relationship between a sense of transition and our perception of prechorus quality will be explored further. As we might expect of a prototype-based approach, of course, prechorus quality is not necessarily predicated on transitional elements. Indeed, we may also cast prechorus quality simply in terms of the contrast it provides between clear verse and chorus material. The song “Building a Mystery” (Sarah McLachlan, 1997) provides a good illustration of this situation. In this song, the verse (Example 3.5.05) and chorus (Example 3.5.05) sections are quite similar on numerous levels. (The choice of section role labels here is corroborated in Koozin 2008.) As seen in “You Belong with Me” above, the verse and chorus sections of this song share the same harmonic content. But the similarity goes beyond this harmonic relationship. Note, for instance, that the general range explored by the melodies in the verse and chorus sections are highly similar, as both stay confined to about a third above and below the tonic pitch. There also does not seem to be any dramatic difference in texture between subsequent iterations of verse and chorus. Without intervening material, therefore, a direct succession from verse to

chorus would potentially create only a weak sense that a new section had arrived. In other words, the lack of a prechorus would arguably weaken the focal quality of the chorus itself.

Example 3.5.05: “Building a Mystery” (Sarah McLachlan, 1997); verse

(orig. D)
0:48

The musical notation for the verse of "Building a Mystery" is shown in two staves. The first staff contains the lyrics "You live in a church where you sleep with voo-doo dolls. And you" and the second staff contains "won't give up the search for the ghosts in the halls." Above the notes, Roman numerals indicate the harmonic structure: vi, IV, I, and V. The melody is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

vi IV I V

You live in a church where you sleep with voo-doo dolls. And you

vi IV I V

won't give up the search for the ghosts in the halls.

Example 3.5.06: “Building a Mystery” (Sarah McLachlan, 1997); chorus

(orig. D)
1:24

The musical notation for the chorus of "Building a Mystery" is shown in two staves. The first staff contains the lyrics "'Cause you're work-in', build-ing a mys-ter-y," and the second staff contains "Hold-in' on and hold-in' it in." Above the notes, Roman numerals indicate the harmonic structure: vi, IV, I, and V. The melody is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

vi IV I V

'Cause you're work-in', build-ing a mys-ter-y,

vi IV I V

Hold-in' on and hold-in' it in.

Example 3.5.07: “Building a Mystery” (Sarah McLachlan, 1997); prechorus

(orig. D)
1:12

The musical notation for the prechorus of "Building a Mystery" is shown in two staves. The first staff contains the lyrics "You're so beau-ti-ful, with an edge and a charm, and..." and the second staff contains "You're so care-ful when I'm in your arms." Above the notes, Roman numerals indicate the harmonic structure: II, IV, and V. The melody is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

II IV V

You're so beau-ti-ful, with an edge and a charm, and...

II IV V

You're so care-ful when I'm in your arms.

But of course, “Building a Mystery” does contain a clear prechorus section, as shown in Example 3.5.07. This prechorus presents a significant departure from the music of the verse and chorus sections, especially in terms of harmonic content. For one, the harmonic pace changes (slowing down now instead of speeding up as in the Taylor Swift example). As

well, the generic diatonic content of the vi–IV–I–V progression found in the verse and chorus sections is foiled by the non-diatonic addition of a major II chord. (We might also consider this to be a Dorian IV chord given a pitch center of B minor for the song overall.) While it may not be clear whether we should consider the verse and chorus sections in this song to be tonally stable, certainly the harmonic content of the prechorus is markedly less stable. Overall, the effect of the prechorus is one of obvious departure from the sound world shared by the verse and chorus sections. When the chorus begins, consequently, it sounds much more like an arrival or a homecoming because of the departure generated by the prechorus itself. The prechorus section can thus be said to strengthen the focal quality of the chorus in the face of great similarity between the verse and chorus material.

This ability of a prechorus to strengthen the sense of arrival or focal quality of the chorus is an important aspect of the prechorus role. As a final example, consider the song “Bad Romance” (Lady Gaga, 2009). The sections of this song are not transcribed here, as the effect of the prechorus (beginning at 1:05) is predicated primarily on mechanisms other than melody and harmony. In fact, it is hard to say what the melodic and harmonic content of this prechorus in this song is exactly, since the voice becomes more spoken than sung and few supporting pitch-based elements persist. In essence, the bottom drops out of the music as the texture becomes dramatically reduced. There is thus no clear element of transition between verse (starting at 0:33) and chorus (starting at 1:13) sections during the prechorus. Instead, this prechorus creates a high level of contrast (in a variety of domains) between the verse and chorus material. Unlike the Sarah McLachlan example, however, the verse and chorus material of “Bad Romance” are not very similar. Nevertheless, we could say that the verse and chorus sections of “Bad Romance” are more similar to each other than they are to this prechorus section. Again, the prechorus section generates a stronger impact and sense of arrival for the chorus section than would have existed had the verse material progressed directly to the chorus without any intervening material. In this regard, the prechorus amplifies and clarifies the focal quality of the chorus section that follows.

Conclusion

In summary, clear prechorus quality is conveyed not only through the attributes of the prechorus section itself but also by the attributes of the sections both before and after it. Specifically, clear and standalone verse and chorus sections will contribute to the sense that material found in between them acts as a prechorus. As we have seen, one prototypical function of a prechorus is to transition between clear verse and chorus sections in a variety of domains. Yet another prototypical function of the prechorus is to provide contrast between similar verse and chorus material.

To a certain extent, the aspects of “transition” and “contrast” potentially present opposite qualities for our perception of prechorus quality, especially as found in the examples provided above. On the one hand, the transitional elements of a prechorus cause it to be similar to verse and chorus material. On the other hand, the quality of contrast can cause a prechorus to depart greatly from verse and chorus material. This apparent contradiction creates problems for those attempting to define what exactly constitutes a prechorus section. Yet it is these contradictory functions that play a strong part in our understanding of the prechorus role.

In the discussion of the prechorus section, the reader may have noticed many similarities between this section role and that of a bridge. As we will see, in fact, many attributes of a clear prechorus section overlap with those of a classic bridge. From the perspective of harmony, for example, the first supersection of “You Belong with Me” (shown in Example 3.5.04) can be organized into a basic AABA pattern. Consequently, some connection between the verse-chorus and AABA forms seems evident. These insights will be tabled for now until Chapter 4, where a more complete discussion of AABA patterns is possible.

3.6: Intro, Outro, and Link

The categories of refrain, verse, chorus, bridge, solo, and prechorus stand as a valuable group of form labels for the analysis of rock songs. Most musical material in rock songs interacts with or evokes qualities of these section roles in some manner, and many songs include clear examples of one or more of these roles. That being said, a few remaining song components are worth discussing. Specifically, the terms “intro,” “outro,” and “link” are useful to describe song sections that – in their prototypical cases – clearly fall outside the scope of the refrain, verse, chorus, bridge, and prechorus labels.

It should be mentioned that the terms “intro,” “outro,” and “link” are not necessarily the standard category labels shared among music theorists. Instead of “intro,” for example, many theorists prefer the longer term “introduction” (a small difference, admittedly). The term “link” has also been called “interlude” by some authors (see below). Similarly, the term “coda” seems to be generally preferred over the term “outro” (e.g., Stephan-Robinson 2009, 102-3). Stephan-Robinson’s explanation of why she prefers the term “coda” is instructive here and explains my own preference for the terms “intro,” “outro,” and “link.” She writes that, although the term “outro” is used by musicians and writers, it has a “nonacademic connotation.” Consequently, she prefers the term “coda” (presumably because it has an academic connotation).

Yet it is precisely because the term “coda” has an academic connotation that it will be avoided here as the basis for a cognitive category. The term “coda” carries with it a long and rich history of common-practice musical conventions that does not necessarily apply in modern songwriting. In other words, the term “coda” potentially evokes more exemplars and prototypes than are valid for rock music. That is not to say that one cannot find attributes of classical codas in rock songs per se. Rather, an outro and a coda are not necessarily the same thing. Since the term “outro” is commonly used in the songwriting community and – perhaps more importantly – not used much outside of rock, the term “outro” serves as a better cognitive locus for this repertoire. The terms “intro” and “link” are preferred here for similar reasons.

Intros, outros, and links in theory

If we consider the verse, chorus, refrain, bridge, solo, and prechorus sections to be the primary parts of a song, then any moments not covered by these terms might be considered secondary or “spare” parts. This subsidiary status is generally assigned to intro, outro, and link sections within the hierarchy of a song. Everett, for example, states that intros and outros are “the least important from a structural view” (2009, 152). Similarly, Stephan-Robinson says that these section roles are “formally inessential” (2009, 92-3).

Because of the relative unimportance accorded these sections roles, we should not be surprised that explanations for intros, outros, and links are universally brief. The sections labels themselves arguably provide sufficient information as to their primary functions: an intro begins a song, an outro ends a song, and links are the “various musical spacers that may exist between the main sections” (Harris 2006, 64-5; Harris uses the term “interlude” instead of “link”). This description adds further evidence that identifying the “main sections” of a song is a significant factor for intro, outro, and link identity – perhaps a more significant factor than any internal attributes that these secondary sections may display.

Nevertheless, one internal attribute does seem to be a central factor. Specifically, theorists note that intros, outros, and links often do not contain a lead vocal part. This aspect helps explain the secondary status accorded to these sections. The primary parts of a song – one could easily argue – are those parts that include singing. (That is why we call it a “song” after all.) Since intro, outro, and link sections are often instrumental, it is understandable that one might consider them subsidiary to those sections that include vocals and lyrics. There are reasons to disagree with this stance, but let us table this topic for the moment.

In some conceptions, the instrumental nature of intros, outros, and links appears to define these section types. For example, Stephenson states that “any instrumental music occurring before the entrance of the voice is called an introduction” (2002, 134). Similarly,

Endrinal states that a link is “a short instrumental passage that is used between two major sections” (2008, 68-9). Yet these authors may not intend to have their descriptions so narrowly interpreted. Certainly, we can find looser descriptions, in which intros, outros, and codas are said to only “usually” be instrumental (e.g., Harris 2006, 64).

Further details on internal attributes of these section types are not available. Some general aspects are worth mentioning, though. In particular, intro, outro, and link sections are seen to often be based on the same musical material. Moore, for instance, says that “introductions may recur as playouts or breaks” (2001, 52), by which we should interpret Moore to be saying that the *music* to the intro may recur as the music to the outro or link sections. Additionally, theorists note that this shared musical content often derives from (or is identical to) musical material found in the verse and/or chorus sections (Harris 2006, 64). It seems, therefore, as if many intro, outro, and link sections may be similar to or even indistinguishable from each other or the surrounding material.

Intros, outros, and links in analysis

In general, theoretical descriptions offer an extremely loose framework through which to understand these section labels. Any musical content or situation appears to possibly stand as an intro, outro, and link – as long as it occurs in the correct temporal location (the beginning, end, or middle of the song, respectively) and is not obviously a main section of the song. Consequently, analysts have great leeway in the application of these labels to the form of particular songs. This loose framework operates under the assumption, however, that main sections (and their boundaries) are always easy to identify. Of course, this is not always the case. We might wonder what effect these unclear situations have on our perception of intro, outro, and link sections (and vice versa). As we shall see, it turns out that the distinction between a main section and a subsidiary section is not always straightforward.

It is also not clear what value necessarily exists in creating – out of hand – a distinction between main and subsidiary sections. Many instrumental sections – such as the guitar solo – obviously have important structural roles within the form of the song. As well, many intro, outro, and link sections are undeniably focal moments in a song. A signature guitar riff, for example, often acts in this capacity. It would be difficult to argue that the famous riff from “Walk This Way” (Aerosmith, 1975) is not a main section of the song, despite the fact that no vocals ever occur along with it.

Another issue when dealing with intro, outro, and link sections is how they should be treated in terms of large-scale form. Especially in the case of link material, analysts have adopted a variety of approaches as to what relationship these sections have to the other sections of the song. It will be helpful in this regard to consider analyses of four different

songs as found in Covach 2009. (Note that Covach uses the term “interlude” instead of link.) In “Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)” (Sly and The Family Stone, 1969; Example 3.6.01a), Covach labels the link as a distinct section from the verse and chorus, and this link is grouped as the final part of a larger supersection (370-1). While Covach also considers the instrumental link material in “One” (Metallica, 1988; Example 3.6.01b) to be a separate section, it is now grouped as the opening section in a larger supersection (494-5). Note that in neither song does the link material consistently appear as “post-chorus” or “pre-verse” material. After the third chorus in “Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin),” for instance, no link occurs before the onset of the “contrasting verse” at 3:19. Similarly, the third link in Metallica’s “One” does not precede another verse but rather comes before a third chorus. In other analyses, the link material is subsumed within the neighboring verse or chorus sections. In his form chart of “More Than a Feeling” (Boston, 1976; Example 3.6.01c), for example, Covach shows that the second verse is fifteen bars long (as opposed to eleven bars like the first verse) because it contains four bars of instrumental (i.e., link) material at the beginning (418-9). The opposite approach is taken in the analysis of “All I Wanna Do” (Sheryl Crow, 1994; Example 3.6.01d), where the link material is positioned within the end of the chorus (530-1). What appears to be a sixteen-bar chorus starting at 1:06 is actually twelve bars of clear chorus material plus four bars of an instrumental link (Covach himself admits this fact).

Example 3.6.01: Four different treatments of an instrumental interlude (link)

a) *Interlude as post-chorus*: “Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)”
(Sly and The Family Stone, 1969); form chart in Covach 2009 (370-1)

Start	Mm.	Section	Supersection
0:00	8	Introduction	
0:18	16	Verse	
0:54	8	Chorus	
1:12	4	Interlude	
1:21	16	Verse 2	
1:57	8	Chorus	
2:15	4	Interlude	
2:24	16	Verse 3	
3:01	8	Chorus	
3:19	8	Contrasting Verse	

Example 3.6.01 (continued):

b) *Interlude as pre-verse*: “One” (Metallica, 1988);
form chart in Covach 2009 (494-5)

Start	Mm.	Section	Supersection
0:20	25	Introduction	
1:31	8	Interlude	
1:46	16	Verse 1	
2:13	4	Chorus	
2:20	8	Interlude	
2:34	16	Verse 2	
3:02	4	Chorus	
3:09	16	Interlude	
3:37	10	Chorus	

c) *Interlude as verse*: “More Than a Feeling” (Boston, 1976);
form chart in Covach 2009 (418-9)

Start	Mm.	Section	Supersection
0:00	6	Introduction	
0:18	11	Verse	
0:42	16	Chorus	
0:49	15	Verse	
1:26	18	Chorus	

d) *Interlude as chorus*: “All I Wanna Do” (Sheryl Crow, 1994);
form chart in Covach 2009 (530-1)

Start	Mm.	Section	Supersection
0:00	6	Introduction	
0:14	20	Verse 1	
0:54	6	Pre-Chorus	
1:06	16	Chorus	
1:38	12	Verse 2	
2:02	6	Pre-Chorus	
2:14	12+8	Chorus	

These four analyses are given not to argue that any one of these approaches is necessarily wrong. Indeed, there appear to be consistent reasons why Covach makes these analytical choices. For example, when the musical material of the link is different than that of the verse and/or chorus, Covach posits the link to be a standalone section. Conversely, when the musical material of the link is basically the same as that found in the verse and/or chorus, the link becomes contained within a main section. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that – although the link material in each of these songs seems to be playing the same basic role in terms of overall form – various conceptual groupings can be found in extant analyses. Part of the reason for these various treatments surely derives from the limitations of the table format

itself. As noted earlier, overlaps and elisions are difficult to capture in such settings. Be that as it may, the fact remains that there does not seem to be consensus (even within the work of a single author) as to how to handle these sections in terms of the large-scale form of the song.

A prototypical link section

As seen in Covach's four song examples, intro, outro, and link sections are most clear when they contain musical material not found in any other section. We might say, in fact, that the analyst is encouraged (or forced) to posit a separate section under these circumstances. These clear examples are thus central members with regard to a prototype of these categories.

In this regard, the song "In Bloom" (Nirvana, 1991) provides a good case study. The track opens with a characteristic chord progression that could be said to be the riff (or at least a riff) of the song. This riff is a repeating cycle of power chords built on $\wedge 1$, $\wedge 6$, $\wedge 5$, and $\wedge b7$ (or, using Roman numerals despite no clear third: I–VI–V–bVII). The riff appears at various points throughout the song, as shown in Example 3.6.02.

Example 3.6.02: "In Bloom" (Nirvana, 1991); form chart

Start	Subsection	Section	Supersection
0:00	Riff	Intro	
0:12	Blank Verse		
0:25		Verse	A
0:49		Chorus	
1:26	Riff	Link	A
1:38		Verse	
2:03		Chorus	
2:40	Riff	Link	A'
2:52		Solo (Verse)	
3:16		Chorus	
3:59	Riff	Outro	

Even though the riff material is the same on each appearance, it can be seen to act in different roles during the song. When at the end of the song, we might say it acts as an outro. When grouped with the un-texted (or "blank") verse material that begins at 0:12, we could say it forms part of the intro. As well, when it is sandwiched between the chorus and verse/solo sections, the riff clearly acts as a link. A distinction is thus made between the riff itself and the roles of intro, outro, and link. It seems somewhat redundant, however, to employ three different section labels for what is essentially the same musical material happening at different points in the song. If we ignore the blank verse section, in fact, then the intro, outro,

and link sections would all be comprised of the same material; the only difference would be how this material is preceded or followed by other sections in the song.

Generally speaking, it appears as if the categories of intro and outro do not necessarily act on the same level of grouping structure as other section roles. Often, the intro and outro are more simply conceived of as acting on a different level of grouping than, say, an individual verse or chorus section. As the chart in Example 3.6.03 shows, a simplified picture of the form for this song results if we consider the intro and outro material as supersections. With this revised view, the link material can act as part of the intro and outro yet also be distinct from these moments in the song. This approach also allows us to consistently refer to the link material no matter where it is positioned within the overall form. It may seem somewhat counterintuitive to say that a “link” section occurs at both the beginning and end of this song (what is it linking in these cases?), but the vernacular meaning of the term outside of a musical context does not have to override the prototypical usage of this section type in rock music.

Example 3.6.03: “In Bloom” (Nirvana, 1991); alternative form chart

Start	Section	Group
0:00	Link	Intro
0:12	Blank Verse	
0:25	Verse	A
0:49	Chorus	
1:26	Link	
1:38	Verse	A
2:03	Chorus	
2:40	Link	
2:52	Solo (Verse)	A'
3:16	Chorus	
3:59	Link	Outro

The distribution of the link material in Example 3.6.03, in fact, is a prototypical usage. Link quality is strongly conveyed when this section appears as part of the intro and/or outro material and also appears between chorus and verse sections. As opposed to the approach(es) seen in Covach, the link material is not shown as belonging to either a verse/chorus section or any larger grouping within the body of the song (aside from the intro and outro sections). Instead, the link role encompasses two functions: it acts as a consequent of the chorus section as well as a preparation for the verse. Note, as shown in Example 3.6.04, that each chorus from “In Bloom” has its vocal melody overlap into the link section. This vocal overlap causes the first tonic chord in the link to sound like the cadential arrival towards which the entire chorus had been leading. Moreover, the link section in this example

continues the same thick, heavy texture of the chorus itself. As a result, the link sounds something like a postlude to the chorus. Since the link was also heard at the beginning of the song, however, the link also sounds like it is beginning something again – as if it is the start of another verse-chorus iteration. In essence, the supersections of the song overlap the link. (Unfortunately, this overlap is impossible to adequately capture in the table format of Example 3.6.03, but we can consider the link material to belong to the larger grouping structures both before and after it.)

Example 3.6.04: “In Bloom” (Nirvana, 1991); chorus into link

(orig. Bb)
1:20

But he don't know what it means, don't know what it means when I say yeah.

I VI V bVII

The prototypical link, therefore, acts as both a beginning and an ending. (Jay Summach has referred to link sections as “Janus” modules – an allusion to the two-faced Roman God who looks both forward and backward [personal e-mail].) Since it acts as both a beginning and an ending, prototypical link material – as seen in “In Bloom” – typically reinforces tonic harmony. In particular, the first chord of a prototypical link will be the tonic harmony itself (either major or minor) in order to provide the cadential arrival for the chorus (or other prior section). In this regard, the tonic harmony acts as the final chord of the chorus. Additionally, a tonic harmony on the opening downbeat of the link material helps make the link seem like the beginning of a new group.

On levels of grouping

In the form chart of Example 3.6.03, the rightmost column (“Group”) is shown to reflect the highest-level conception of the structure for the song. That is to say, one might infer from this chart that “In Bloom” is an A–A–A song (or an intro–A–A–A–outro song), since these parts are the uppermost groups that have been identified. Consequently, the intro and outro roles in this depiction may appear more important than the verse and chorus roles, since the verse and chorus sections exist at a lower level of grouping. The apparent high-level

status granted to the intro and outro sections seems counterintuitive, though, in light of statements by theorists with regard to the subsidiary status of the intro and outro roles.

Simply put, moving higher within the grouping structure of form does not necessarily imply an increase in structural importance. Rather, the primary material of the song can be found at some middle level of the grouping structure. With “In Bloom,” for example, it is the basic alternation between verse and chorus sections that is the main structural agent (link material notwithstanding). Unlike a traditional hierarchy, therefore – in which the highest level is considered to be the most important – the grouping structure of a rock song has its chief parts at a more central level. (From the perspective of cognitive psychology, this middle-level may be analogous to what is referred to as the “basic level” [Rosch et al. 1976], in that we are most prone to categorize something at the middle level of a naming hierarchy. For example, we are more apt to say that we are sitting on a chair than on a rolling chair [the subordinate category] or piece of furniture [the superordinate category].)

Making heads or tails of link material

The final vocal phrase of the chorus from “In Bloom” should remind the reader of similar situations in other songs discussed thus far. In particular, the vocal phrase overlap into the next section is comparable to that seen in the final lead vocal phrase from “Every Breath You Take” (Example 3.3.09). In the Police example, it was argued that what had – in prior instances – been clear a tail refrain was then hypermetrically shifted to merge aspects of head refrain and tail refrain quality on its final appearance.

This Nirvana song contains no clear refrain, however. Although the title text does appear at the end of the second verse, the musical setting for this text is nothing like that found in a prototypical refrain. If any moment in the song could be considered refrain-like, it would be the last line of the chorus (“.... don’t know what it means when I say ‘yeah.’”). The vocal phrase, for example, is involved in both a melodic and harmonic cadence (with IV acting in a cadential role). As well, this lyric receives the highest level of repetition of any text in the song. As in the example of “Every Breath You Take,” though, the final vocal phrase in each chorus of “In Bloom” seems to show aspects of both a prototypical tail and head refrain, in that the vocal phrase ends on what is both the last strong hyperbeat of a section (i.e., tail-refrain quality) and the first strong hyperbeat of a section (i.e., head-refrain quality). In this regard, the dual (or merged) refrain quality evident here mirrors the role of the link material itself. Much like the merged refrain – which ends on both the first and last hypermetrically-strong beats of a section – so too does the link itself act as a beginning and ending.

This relationship between a merged refrain and link material is common in rock music and derives from the ability of each to sustain dual interpretations as both a beginning

and an ending. In many songs, this relationship is strengthened further by having iterations of the refrain gesture continue into the body of the link material. The song “My Happy Ending” (Avril Lavigne, 2004) provides a good example of this situation. The form of “My Happy Ending” is very straightforward, and it is easy to create a form chart for this song (as shown in Example 3.6.05).

Example 3.6.05: “My Happy Ending” (Avril Lavigne, 2004); form chart

Start	Section	Group
0:00	Refrain	Intro
0:05	Link	
0:18	Verse	A
0:41	Prechorus	
0:52	Chorus	
1:14	Link	
1:26	Verse	A
1:48	Prechorus	
2:00	Chorus	
2:22	Bridge	B
2:45	Chorus	A'
3:07	Chorus	
3:30	Link	Outro
3:47	Ambient	

The succession pattern of sections in this song is a prototypical structure: two verse-prechorus-chorus supersections (or “groups”) are joined by a link, these two groups lead to a bridge, and this bridge is followed by only a partial return of the main group. The overall form can thus be said to be an AABA pattern with an abbreviated final section. All section types can be clearly found (verse, prechorus, chorus, bridge, link), and the existence of each section type helps reinforce section identity in the other sections. (For example, the clear verse and clear chorus material enhances the sense that the intervening material acts as a prechorus.)

Example 3.6.06 shows the end of the chorus material and the beginning of the link section. Many aspects of this excerpt are similar to the previous chorus-link boundary from “In Bloom” (including the cadential IV chord). Although the link material to this Avril Lavigne song does not begin on the major-mode tonic, the submediant (vi) arguably acts as a minor tonic here. (One could, in fact, convincingly re-notate the Roman numerals here in the key of B minor instead of D major.) The fact that the lead vocal melody does not directly overlap onto the downbeat of the link material does somewhat weaken the sense that there is any phrase overlap at the chorus-link boundary. Yet the harmonic motion strongly drives to the arrival on vi, and it is consequently very difficult to hear any sort of stopping point (or half

cadence) on the IV chord. We could say instead that the tonic arrival in the vocal melody slightly anticipates the downbeat, and – in a similar manner as described in Temperley 1999 – we could posit an underlying metrical structure that would “de-syncopate” the vocal melody such that it would end on the following downbeat.

Example 3.6.06: “My Happy Ending” (Avril Lavigne, 2004); chorus into link

(orig. D)
1:09 ii

The musical notation is presented in two staves. The first staff shows the chorus, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, chord symbols are placed: 'ii' at the beginning, 'I⁶' above the first measure of the second line, and 'IV' above the second measure of the second line. The lyrics 'All this time you were pre-tend - in', so much for my hap-py end - in' are written below the staff. The second staff shows the link section, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody is written in eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, chord symbols are placed: 'vi' at the beginning, 'IV' above the first measure, 'I' above the second measure, 'V' above the third measure, and 'vi' at the end. The lyrics 'So much for my hap-py end - in' are written below the staff. Brackets are used to group the lyrics 'so much for my hap-py end - in' across the two staves.

Given this reading, the phrase “so much for my happy ending” seems to clearly act in the role of a refrain – including the use of the title text. But as was seen in “Every Breathe You Take” and “In Bloom,” this refrain merges head and tail refrain qualities. In the case of “In Bloom,” one may not have considered that the final phrase of the chorus could be seen as a part of the link. Yet this Avril Lavigne example challenges that notion. Here, the final phrase from the chorus is repeated within the link section itself. By repeating this refrain material, the link material more strongly seems like a postlude to the chorus (or perhaps a “post-chorus”). But at the same time, the link – which appeared in exactly this way at the beginning of the song – seems like a restart of the song. In particular, the harmonic content of the various sections reinforces this feeling that the link should be seen as a pre-verse. While the chorus section is clearly centered on the major tonic (D major), both the link and verse material seem to emphasize the relative minor (B minor) as the tonal center. Note also that harmonies in the verse are exactly the same as those in the link (vi–IV–I–V), except that the duration of each chord is doubled in the verse.

As we look again at the pattern of sections for “My Happy Ending,” it is obvious that the link material does not consistently act as only a post-chorus or a pre-verse. Exceptions to either function can be found. Instead, the link takes on both functions at various points in the song. On one hand, the appearance of the title text over the link emphasizes its relationship and connection to the chorus. But on the other hand, the link relates to and prepares the verse as well. These two functions are thus wrapped up in our prototype for the link role.

Conclusion

Of the three section roles discussed above, the link section was found to be most similar in its role to the standard section types of verse, chorus, bridge, and prechorus. Intro and outro roles – while often very clear within a song – are somewhat different, in that these two roles can be seen as operating on a larger (yet subsidiary) grouping level than the standard section roles. In the form chart for “My Happy Ending” (Example 3.6.05), for example, we might just have easily have said that the outro includes the final chorus (a repeat of the chorus prior) as well as the link and closing ambient music.

Nevertheless, we may still generate expectations as to the type of material that constitutes a typical intro or outro. One typical member in these higher-level roles is the link section. Prototypical link sections display a certain amount of ambiguity with regard to the function(s) they play within a song. Although the link sections discussed above were clear – in strong part due to the difference in their harmonic organization from other sections in the song – other link sections may be less clearly distinct from the surrounding section types. In the song “When I Come Around” (Green Day, 1994), for example, the verse and link sections are – aside from the existence (or lack) of the lead vocal – identical in every way. These less clear situations hold great potential for various ambiguities of song form, as we shall see in Chapter 5.

3.7: Summary

This chapter presented nine different categories of section roles that are common within rock music: verse, chorus, refrain, bridge, solo, prechorus, intro, outro, and link. To say that each of these categories represent “sections,” however, is somewhat of a grammatical convenience. The refrain, for example, was seen to typically represent only a subsection of a song, and thus does not – in its prototypical setting – achieve the same status as do full-fledged sections, such as a verse or chorus. In other cases, a section role seemed to typically act on a larger grouping level. The intro and outro roles, for example, seemed more often like supersections within the overall form of the song. Yet in other cases, a section role might be found on multiple levels. The category of “bridge,” for instance, seemed to have multiple meanings, and these multiple meanings did not all operate on the same level of grouping structure.

Nonetheless, these nine categories operate within a cohesive labeling system for the roles different parts of a song play within the form of a song as a whole. Even though the refrain typically acts as a subsection, for instance, theorists often state that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a refrain and a chorus (e.g., Stephenson 2002, 133). These

nine categories thus share a common purpose in the types of things they are attempting to describe. This issue will be taken up further in the following chapters.

Succession patterns and section clarity

One broader aspect of section perception that we may infer from the preceding pages is that section clarity is strongly dependent on the clarity of other sections in the song. In other words, the categorization of one section is intertwined with our categorization of other sections. Consider, for example, the case of some musical span for which we are not entirely sure what section label might be most appropriate. If this musical span is preceded by a clear verse section and followed by a clear chorus section, there is a high probability that we will consider the musical span in question to be a prechorus, no matter what the content of this section might be. In isolation, this musical span may not clearly evoke prototypical prechorus quality. Yet its positional relationship to other sections in the song plays an important part in how we categorize it.

This relationship derives from the conventions governing the overall succession pattern of sections within songs. In the discussion of prototypes in this chapter, the location of a section within the overall form of the song was an important attribute of every section role. From this discussion, the reader should be able to infer a specific succession pattern that would enhance the clarity of each section role. Nonetheless, it would be helpful to provide a specific example of this succession pattern, if only to confirm the reader's suspicions.

In Example 3.7.01 below, the succession pattern is shown for the various parts of "You Might Think" (The Cars, 1984). This particular sequence of sections strongly reinforces our sense of section roles within the form of the song. After the intro, for example, there is a verse-prechorus-chorus (VPC) block (a larger-level grouping) that positions these three sections in a prototypical configuration. This first VPC block is separated from another VPC block by instrumental music that evinces link quality, in strong part due to its position between these two blocks. Moreover, the second VPC block reinforces the prototypical configuration of sections within the block and thus adds further evidence that they act as such. The position of the bridge and solo material after two VPC blocks (plus link material) aligns with our understanding of prototypical locations for these sections, and so our sense that these labels are appropriate is strengthened further. A final VPC block at the end of the song reaffirms the roles of these sections once again, and the identity of the outro material becomes distinct via the cohesive nature of the final VPC block. The overall pattern of blocks (or groups) is an AABA form, which is a standard grouping sequence in rock music.

Example 3.7.01: “You Might Think” (The Cars, 1984); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group
0:00	11	Intro	
0:19	8	Verse	A
0:34	4	Prechorus	
0:41	7	Chorus	
0:53	2	Link 1	
0:57	8	Verse	A
1:11	4	Prechorus	
1:18	7	Chorus	
1:31	2	Link 2	
1:35	12	Bridge	B
1:56	11	Solo	
2:16	8	Verse	A
2:30	4	Prechorus	
2:37	7	Chorus	
2:50	4	Outro	

It would be nice to say that the succession pattern shown in Example 3.7.01 is a typical succession pattern for rock songs. While the abstract AABA pattern is indeed quite pervasive, the specific organization in Example 3.7.01 is actually rather rare. In fact, it is very difficult to find songs that contain clear examples of every single section role distributed in a pattern that constantly and consistently reinforces section identity. As one possible explanation, we could posit that such songs would simply be too long. In “You Might Think,” for example, the section lengths are on the shorter side. (N.B. The chorus to this song is basically an 8-bar unit, but its last measure is metrically reinterpreted in every case to be the first measure of the following section.) While the succession pattern in this song thus clarifies section roles, the lengths of the sections might compromise section clarity. (Is the 4-bar span labeled as “prechorus” long enough to stand as its own section?)

The vast majority of songs, in fact, do not contain clear examples of every single section role. One song might not include a solo, for example, while another might have no link material. Consequently, there are almost always situations that challenge our categorization process, and these situations hold great potential for ambiguities and blends between section roles. Many of these ambiguities and blends occur again and again in rock music. This topic requires its own dedicated discussion, though, and cannot be fully addressed at this point. The reader will thus have to wait until Chapter 5, in which a full exposition of this topic will take place.

Compilation of role attributes

As a final summary of this chapter, it is worth taking stock of the section role attributes that have been discussed herein. In the chapters that follow, the central narrative is strongly predicated on these section role attributes. The reader could comb through this preceding pages – role by role – to compile a list of all the role attributes that were presented. To save the reader this hassle, though, it seems more useful to simply provide such a compilation in one convenient location. Accordingly, listed below are the nine section role categories, along with attributes found to be associated with those roles. When appropriate, these attributes have been organized into specific domains (designated via *italics*) or role subtypes (designated via **boldface**).

Before presenting this compilation of role attributes, however, a strong warning should be given. Foremost, the reader should remember that our conceptual understanding of these section roles is more complicated than any explicit listing of attributes can provide. This chapter has identified some but certainly not all of the aspects that factor into our perception of these categories. Some of these aspects are relatively noncontroversial, while others represent a significant element of conjecture. As well, some significant issues remain unresolved, such as how to weight these attributes and the extent to which these attributes interact. A list like the one below inherently runs the risk of overemphasizing certain features by their inclusion or underemphasizing others by their exclusion. One should thus be careful not to treat the compilation below as simply an expanded set of definitions, as if the lack of one or some of these attributes were directly correlated to the degree of prototypicality. The correlation between lack of attributes and prototypicality is certainly true in a general way. But our perceptual process is more nuanced than a simple one-to-one relationship.

The reader should also notice that the wording of each attribute in this list differs from that found in a standard definition. Instead of saying, for example, that a prototypical chorus section “has text repeat on future iterations,” the list below posits that “having text repeat on future iterations” is an attribute of a prototypical chorus section. (Note the change from “has” to “having.”) This difference in wording may seem trivial, but substantive reasons exist to adopt this particular grammatical structure. Take, for instance, two seemingly paradoxical attributes found with regard to verse sections. In some cases (such as in Covach’s “simple verse-chorus form”), a clear verse might prolong a tonic harmony. In other cases (such as in Covach’s “contrasting verse-chorus form”), a clear verse might emphasize tonic harmony less strongly than the chorus section. We cannot say, therefore, that a prototypical verse section both prolongs tonic and avoids tonic without sounding contradictory. Yet our perception of verse quality is influenced by factors of harmony in both cases. The main issue here is that there is no single prototypical verse situation but rather different (although

related) situations that can trigger our perception of a verse role. Therefore, “prolonging tonic harmony” is one attribute that can influence our sense that a span of music acts as a verse, while “emphasizing tonic harmony less strongly than another main repeating section” is an attribute that can also participate in engendering verse quality.

Overall, structured information is somewhat difficult to represent in a feature list. A few subtypes of section role categories are given (along with their associated features), but most role attributes are presented in an unstructured way. Perhaps it would be worth developing a few structured verse and chorus subtypes. (Covach’s “simple” and “contrasting” verse-chorus subtypes might be useful distinctions in that regard.) As of yet, though, no significant correlations between features have been found to warrant any further partitioning of these categories.

• CHORUS •

General: acting as a main section role; being a highly memorable part of the song; contrasting with verse material; having the highest focal quality of song; having a more dramatic musical structure than the verse; having musical material that is basically the same on future iterations; conveying a sense of arrival

Position: recurring at a future point (or points) in song; being 8-16 bars long; being shorter than verse material; following a prechorus section; following a verse section; preceding a link; not presenting the first vocal material of the song

Texture: being the loudest part of the song; having more energy than the verse; including background singers; having a thick texture or instrumentation

Lyrics: having text repeat on future iterations; including a high level of internal text repetition; delivering a more general message; including the title of the song; containing a small amount of lyric content

Melody: having slow rhythmic values in the melody; having short melodic phrases; emphasizing ^1 in the melody; descending to ^1 in the melody; having a high melodic register; having melodic phrases begin on or before hypermetric strong beats; having melodic content more unified with harmonic content; having a melody that is rhythmically simple; avoiding syncopation in lower levels of the metric hierarchy; having a cadential quality to the melody

Harmony: providing tonal closure; having motion towards tonic; prolonging an underlying tonic; sharing the same harmonic material as the verse; including frequent arrivals of tonic harmony; having short harmonic motions; having fast harmonic motions; lacking static harmony; having a standalone harmonic quality; including a cadential quality to the harmony; employing Ionian mode; emphasizing tonic harmony

• VERSE •

General: acting as a main section role; contrasting with chorus material; having low focal quality; being a relatively unmemorable part of the song; having musical material that is basically the same on future iterations; having a melody and harmony that are not unified (in terms of stepwise resolutions)

Position: recurring at a future point (or points) in the song; being 8-16 bars long; being longer than the apparent chorus; preceding a chorus section; following a link; preceding a prechorus; presenting the first vocal material of the song

Texture: being a quiet part; having a less thick in texture or instrumentation; not including background singers; having less energy than the chorus

Lyrics: having text that does not repeat on future iteration; including a low level of internal text repetition; developing a story or exemplifying aspects of a theme; including a large amount of lyric content

Melody: having faster rhythmic values in melody; violating traditional non-chord tone resolution; having a low melodic register; syncopating the melody at lower levels of the metric hierarchy; having a rhythmically complex melody; emphasizing ^5 in the melody; having melodic phrases begin on or after hypermetric strong beats

Harmony: prolonging an underlying tonic harmony; emphasizing tonic harmony less strongly than another main repeating section; having a standalone harmonic quality; using motion away from tonic harmony; having long harmonic motions; having infrequent harmonic motion; having static harmony; having less frequent arrivals on tonic harmony than the chorus; sharing the same harmonic material as the chorus; employing a non-Ionian mode; when in Ionian mode, avoiding the tonic

• REFRAIN •

General: including the title of the song; providing tonal closure; acting on a lower grouping level than the main section roles; having only one or two lines of text; conveying a sense of arrival

Tail Refrain: being 4 bars long; tracing a single melodic phrase that begins on the first downbeat of the final 4-bar hypermeasure in a larger section; having a harmonic progression that moves to tonic on the last strong hyperbeat of the final hypermeasure in a larger section; having the melodic phrase end on the last strong hyperbeat of the final hypermeasure; being at the end of a verse; being at the end of an 8- or 16-bar section; being tonally-closed; having the melody move towards the final tonic scale degree; having the melody stop before the end of the larger section; having a strong cadential quality

Head Refrain: having a melodic phrase that ends on the first downbeat of a larger section; being at the beginning of a chorus section; having its harmony begin on tonic with the first downbeat of a larger section

• BRIDGE •

General: including the highest level of contrast with other sections in the song; occurring roughly halfway to two-thirds into the song; following the second iteration of main material in the song; leading to a return of main material in the song; having a dramatic textural change from main material; lacking harmonic (or tonal) closure; being harmonically far-ranging and chromatic; being harmonically unstable; being modulatory; avoiding tonic harmony; not opening the song; not ending the song

Classic Bridge: recurring at a future point in the song; occurring in conjunction with relatively short main material (8 or 16 bars); acting as B material in an AABA pattern; occurring after material that ends with a tail refrain; occurring after material that is tonally closed; including background vocals; having a thick texture; being found in songs that lack a clear verse-chorus unit; demanding the return of previous material; having lyrics that repeat on future iterations; including a textural break before the return of main material; ending on a dominant chord; beginning on a subdominant chord; beginning off-tonic; ending off-tonic; positioning tonic harmony in a weak hypermetric location; manifesting an S-T-S-D harmonic progression; having melodic phrases group into two-bar units; acting on the same grouping level as main section roles

Modern Bridge: not recurring at a future point in the song; preceding the final verse or chorus of the song; having a unique texture within the scope of the song; overlapping the return of main material; including tonal closure; occurring in conjunction with relatively long main material (16 bars +); being found in songs with clear verse and clear chorus sections; not demanding the return of the main material; leading to an abbreviated version of the main material; acting on a larger grouping level than main section roles

• SOLO •

General: being an instrumental section; occurring before or after a bridge section; including a single instrument playing a prominent melody; including a virtuosic performance; occurring roughly halfway to two-thirds into the core of the song; contrasting greatly with other sections of the song; acting on the same grouping level as main section roles

• PRECHORUS •

General: being 4-8 bars long; contrasting with verse and chorus sections; transitioning between verse and chorus; following a verse section; preceding a chorus section; having a medium-level thickness in texture and/or instrumentation; having a medium-level loudness; recurring at a future point (or points) in the song; having musical material that is basically the same on future iterations; heightening anticipation for the chorus section; strengthening the sense of arrival for chorus section; acting on the same grouping level as main section roles

Lyrics: having a moderate level of internal text repetition; having lyrics repeat on future iterations

Melody and Harmony: having its melodic register be in the middle of the vocal range; being a harmonically unstable passage; beginning off-tonic; ending off-tonic; extending a predominant-to-dominant progression

• INTRO •

General: being an instrumental section; being subsidiary to the main section roles; containing material from main section roles; containing link material; being the first musical material heard in a song; fading in; acting on a larger grouping level than main section roles

• OUTRO •

General: being an instrumental section; being subsidiary to the main section roles; containing material from the main section roles (especially the chorus); being the last musical material heard in a song; fading out; acting on a larger grouping level than main section roles

• LINK •

General: being an instrumental section; being 4-8 bars long; being subsidiary to the main section roles; occurring after a chorus section; occurring before a verse section; overlapping with the end of a chorus; providing cadential arrival for a chorus section; containing the main riff of the song; appearing as part of intro and/or outro material; sounding like both the beginning and ending of a larger grouping; acting on the same grouping level as main section roles

Chapter 4: Conversions

4.1: Introduction

The previous chapter presented prototypes for a number of different categories into which we can assign portions of a rock song. Yet these are not the only categories that we might use to describe the parts of a song. We might say, for example, that some passage in a rock song is an example of a 12-bar blues. This label of “12-bar blues” is, undeniably, a category into which we have assigned the passage. At the same time, we might say that this same 12-bar blues passage acts as verse material within the song. Note that we have no problem saying a span of music belongs both to the 12-bar blues category as well as to the verse category. There are thus multiple ways of categorizing a segment of music within a rock song, and these different categories are not mutually exclusive. Although this situation might imply that parts of a song can fall into any and all categories (including multiple categories at once), we find that such is not the case in practice. Instead, some section labels are used by analysts in a mutually-exclusive way, while others are not.

Categorization systems

The section categories described in the last chapter – verse, chorus, refrain, bridge, solo, prechorus, intro, outro, and link – can be seen as belonging to one cohesive labeling system. In general, categories within the system of section roles are considered to be mutually exclusive. If we label something as a verse, for example, we are traditionally positing that this span of music is not, for instance, a chorus or a bridge. This is not to imply that there is no ambiguity between the categories within this system of section roles. Rather, the more a section is in one role, the less we consider it to be in another. The fact that section roles can act on different grouping levels of a song might seem to contradict this aspect of mutual exclusivity. For example, we have no problem considering part of a song to be both a refrain and the end of a verse. We can simply say, though, that these section roles are mutually exclusive within a single level of the grouping structure.

Other labels for song sections can be seen as belonging to a different categorization system. The category of “12-bar blues,” for instance, is not used by theorists to describe the role of a section. Rather, to label a section as a 12-bar blues makes no direct statement about how it functions in the form. That being said, we might have some good ideas about what types of roles a 12-bar blues plays within a song. Yet the label of “12-bar blues” does not inherently tell us anything about the role of the musical span within the form of the song per

se. (Theorists sometimes present statements to the contrary, but we will see that such statements are problematic.) As a result, categories such as the “12-bar blues” will be referred to here as *organizational schemes*. There are a number of different organizational schemes that can be found within rock music, including the SRDC and AABA patterns. This chapter will describe specific instantiations of these organizational schemes in detail. As categories, these organizational schemes are not always as well-established as the categories of section roles. The SRDC pattern, for instance, is not a category commonly discussed outside the realm of music theory.

Unlike section roles, organizational schemes are perceived more by their internal characteristics than by their relationships with other spans of music. We understand a 12-bar blues pattern, for example, primarily through its particular melodic and harmonic structure, and our perception of a blues section is not dependent on other material in the song. As these organizational schemes become larger and larger – such as the 32-bar AABA pattern – the “internal characteristics” of the scheme may encompass a broad chunk of music. In essence, organizational schemes are categories just like section roles, so our understanding of these schemes is inherently a complicated matter that involves multiple domains.

The distinction between a section role and an organizational scheme may be seen as similar to William Caplin’s distinction between a formal function and a formal type, respectively (see Bergé 2009, 21ff). Caplin states, for example, that “the various ‘formal’ functions are all manifestations of general ‘temporal’ functions. But the formal ‘types’ have no such determinate temporal expression” (32). A musical “sentence,” therefore, is an example of a small-scale formal type, and large ternary form is an example of a large-scale formal type. In contrast, the main theme of a large ternary form is considered to be a formal function. Thus a musical sentence may function as the main theme of a large ternary form. In a similar way, a 12-bar blues – as an organizational scheme – may act in a verse role. To say that function and role – or type and scheme – are equivalent, however, might be too strong a statement given the great difference in musical style between rock and common-practice music.

Because our perception of organizational schemes is less contextual than that for section roles, we can specify some common melodic and harmonic structures that associate with particular organizational schemes. To do so, we require a more detailed method than is currently available of talking about structures within the domain of melody. Consequently, a brief discussion of some typical melodic structures and their relationships within rock music is warranted.

Melodic organization

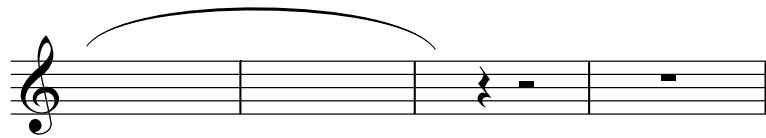
The examination of melodic organization in rock has received some attention in earlier work, most notably that of Ken Stephenson (2002). Stephenson refers to a variety of what he calls “phrase rhythms” (7), a term that embraces both grouping and metric structure. In this regard, Stephenson makes reference to the work of William Rothstein. It is worth clarifying the meaning of this term in the work of both authors, for they are not entirely identical. In his 1989 book, Rothstein describes phrase rhythm as the combination of phrase structure and metric structure. For Rothstein, phrase structure involves the entire musical content of a passage, i.e., its melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic organization (13). Yet for Stephenson, phrase rhythm refers only to the interaction of the melody (i.e., the vocal phrase) and the metrical structure (7). In other words, harmony does not factor into phrase rhythm for Stephenson (except, perhaps, in that harmony affects our perception of metrical structure). In essence, Stephenson is talking only about the phrase rhythm of the melody (the *vocal* phrase), not phrase rhythm in general. Accordingly, the term “melodic phrase rhythm” will be employed here to refer to what Stephenson calls “phrase rhythm.” Melodic phrase rhythm describes how different vocal phrases lie within the underlying metric framework.

In rock music, the underlying metric framework typically consists of a regular pattern of 4-bar units, i.e., hypermeasures. As a result, we can sketch out some typical melodic phrase rhythms for rock music. Stephenson offers a number of different labels for these melodic phrase rhythms, such as the “2+2 model,” the “extension-overlap model,” and the “first-downbeat model” (2002, 7ff). These labels will not be used in this dissertation, for reasons that will become clear in a moment. Instead, the actual phrase lengths within the hypermetric structure will be directly illustrated, as shown in Example 4.1.01 below. Example 4.1.01 gives a few common melodic phrase rhythms found in rock music, although this collection is certainly not exhaustive. For reference, Stephenson’s labels are shown here as well. As should be evident, Stephenson’s “2+2” model – which is named for its two bars of melodic content followed by two bars of rest – does not actually divide cleanly into two halves. Rather, the melodic content spans through the first two bars and ends on the downbeat of the third measure. Many of these melodic phrase rhythms, in fact, can be characterized more simply by the location at which the initial melodic phrase ends. The first three melodic phrase rhythms shown in Example 4.1.01, for instance, end earlier and earlier within the hypermetric framework, while d) ends on the first downbeat of an entirely new hypermeasure. The last melodic phrase rhythm, e), captures the situation where a long up-beat ends on the downbeat of the hypermeasure. We could also easily imagine additional melodic phrase rhythms. Not shown, for example, is one that spans from the first measure all the way until the downbeat of the fourth measure. Stephenson refers to this melodic phrase

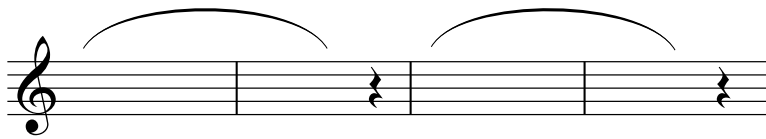
rhythm as the “traditional model” (6), which he posits is more rare in rock music than in folk songs, nursery songs, and 19th-century popular songs.

Example 4.1.01: Phrase rhythms in rock music, *à la* Stephenson 2002

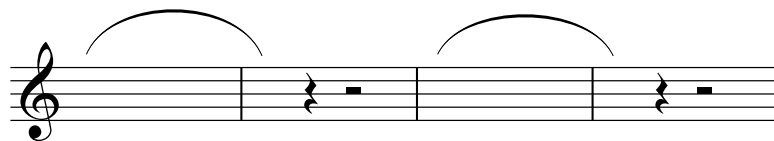
a) 2+2 model



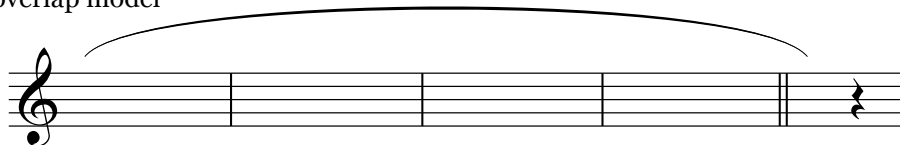
b) (untitled)



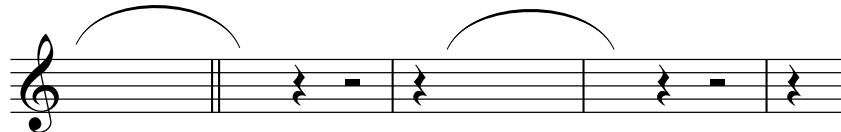
c) 1+1 model



d) extension-overlap model



e) first-downbeat model

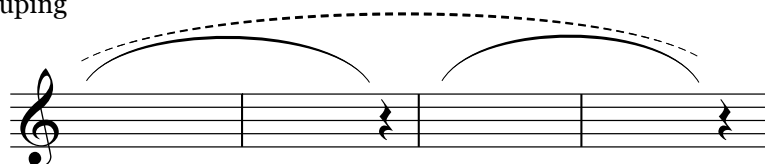


Of course, these melodic phrase rhythms are highly predicated on the ability to identify what constitutes a measure of music. With a different metrical reading, we would interpret the melodic phrase rhythm in a different way. Take, for example, some hypothetical passage that would conform to the 1+1 model. If we were to read the same span of music with measure lengths half as long (for a total of eight bars instead of four), then we would see two instances of the 2+2 model instead of one instance of the 1+1 model. Some of the effects of measure lengths discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3, therefore, impact our use of melodic phrase rhythms. Stephenson tries to avoid this issue by framing these melodic phrase rhythms in terms of the relationship between melodic motion and rest (i.e., 2+2). Nevertheless, he cannot escape the issue of measure lengths, as evident in the ease with which we can shift between the 2+2 and 1+1 models.

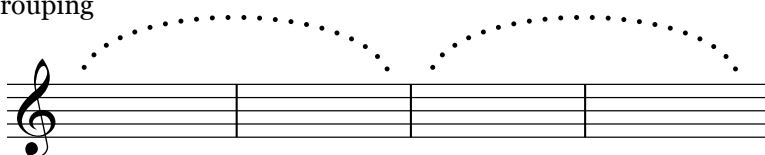
An important aspect of organizational schemes is how these melodic phrase rhythms relate to one another. To illustrate these relationships, it is helpful to employ a few notational devices. In Example 4.1.02, three conventions are shown that each represent different melodic relationships. (Some of these should be familiar from examples in Chapter 3.) In a), the curved dashed phrase marking shows that the two smaller phrases on the surface of the music can be conceived as one instance of the larger grouping. In b), the curved dotted lines represent an abstract grouping – a partitioning of a span of music – that may be instantiated by various types of melodic phrase rhythms. The abstract grouping shown in b), for example, could be realized by both Examples 4.1.01b and 4.1.01c. Finally, the dashed bracket in Example 4.1.02c reflects a parallelism between the two phrases. This parallelism is sometimes strong, as in the case of a literal repeat. More often, the second vocal phrase is some variation of the first. A musical parallelism is often reinforced in the domain of lyrics through a rhyme.

Example 4.1.02: Melodic phrase relationships

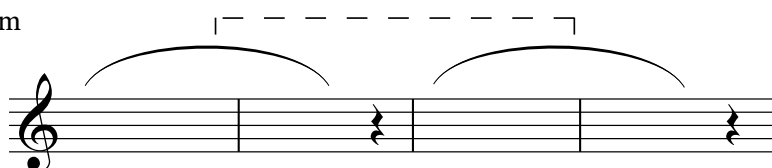
a) larger grouping



b) abstract grouping



c) parallelism



Conversion

In the previous chapter, section roles were seen to encompass a number of different attributes in a number of different domains. When we attempt to reconcile a particular span of music with sections roles (whether consciously or unconsciously), at least part of the process involves reconciling the attributes of the musical span with those associated with the section role. It is not too difficult to imagine, therefore, that – given a certain musical passage – various attribute changes can shift our perception of this passage from one role to another.

A musical passage with a low level of internal text repetition, for example, would seem less verse-like and more chorus-like if its lyrics were altered to create a high level of internal text repetition. In such a case, we might say that this change *transforms* the passage from less of a verse role to more that of a chorus. The term “transformation” has developed a particular meaning in music theory within the realm of mathematically-based work (e.g., that of David Lewin, Richard Cohn, and Brian Hyer [see Cohn 1998]). Accordingly, this term (and its various forms) will be avoided in the context of this discussion.

Instead, the term “conversion” will be used here to describe shifts in our perception of section roles. The word “conversion” has developed a specific meaning within the field of linguistics, and it is this meaning that is alluded to here (in a metaphorical way). In linguistics, conversion describes the process by which a word changes from one part of speech to another (Denham and Lobeck 2009, 197). For example, the noun “mother” is converted to a verb when we say, “She mothers him too much.” Such linguistic conversions can occur between a number of categories. Nouns can be converted to verbs (“the trash” becomes “to trash”), verbs can be converted to nouns (“to commute” becomes “the commute”), adjectives may be converted to verbs (“clean” becomes “to clean”), adjectives can be converted to nouns (“crazy” becomes “a crazy”), and so on. In these cases, the basic word stays the same. Via a change in context, though, the word shifts from one lexical category to another.

As this chapter will show, similar shifts can be seen within rock music. Often, the same organizational scheme acts in different contexts to convey different section roles. The B section in an AABA form, for example, sometimes behaves as a bridge and other times as a chorus. This chapter will primarily explore the conversions of three basic organizational schemes common to rock music: the 12-bar blues, the 16-bar SRDC, and the 32-bar AABA. All three of these schemes interact with section roles in numerous ways. In some cases, the conversion results from a fundamental change to the musical structure itself. For example, we will see the effects on categorization when a 12-bar blues pattern changes into a 16-bar blues. In this regard, the use of the term “conversion” departs somewhat from its particular meaning within the field of linguistics. (The term “derivation” may be somewhat more appropriate in this case.) Nevertheless, the central process under investigation here is how similar harmonic and melodic structures can be altered so as to affect significant shifts in our perception of what role these structures play within the form of a song.

The study of conversion in rock music offers further evidence of the many prototype-like aspects of section roles. In our investigation of conversion, we can more easily see the continuum on which these section roles lie. As we move from the discussion of blues to SRDC and AABA schemes, we discover just how permeable the boundaries between these section roles are.

As a final note, it should be mentioned that almost all of the musical examples in this chapter are drawn from the 1950s and 1960s, with no examples from the 1980s or later. One reason for this narrow historical window is simply that clear blues, SRDC, and AABA organizational schemes seem to be more prevalent in these early years than in later decades. More importantly, full-fledged verse-chorus-bridge form (to use Stephenson's term) or compound AABA form (to use Covach's term) was not as pervasive during this early era as it is today (see Covach 2005, 75). Consequently, many songs around the 1960s appear to be waypoints between older and newer approaches to song form. We could even say that – within the music of these early years – we see the evolution (or “genesis” as Summach 2011 puts it) toward modern song forms. That being said, the following discussion is not meant to represent any particular historical narrative of form within rock music. Rather, this chapter shows how changes to a few particular organizational schemes can affect their relationship with section roles. Nevertheless, we can see via these conversions the various paths by which form types may have developed over the course of rock history. The study of conversions thus offers a potential window into the development of different form types in rock music.

4.2: The Blues

Blues-based harmonic patterns are some of the most common harmonic patterns found within rock music, especially during the early years of rock. Interestingly, blues patterns can be found to act in a number of different roles. Sometimes, a blues progression underpins a verse section. In other cases, it underpins a chorus. We also find situations where both the verse and chorus sections of a single song are built over blues-based harmonies. There are also many instances where – despite a clear blues pattern – it is difficult to judge what section role label (or labels) might be most appropriate for a blues passage.

Because blues patterns act in these different capacities, they provide a window into the ways our perception shifts from one section role to another. Within the rock repertoire, of course, we find a number of different blues patterns – such as the 12-bar and 16-bar blues – and each of these blues patterns has its own way (or ways) of interacting with section roles. In fact, it is possible to see – via changes in various domains – how a given blues structure can be converted from the role of one section to another. One important waypoint in this process is the “hybrid blues,” which is a particular phrase organization that presents ambiguous information with regard to section roles. By recognizing the ambiguous nature of the hybrid blues (and blues patterns in general), we can better understand some of the persistent issues we face when analyzing rock songs.

Classic 12-bar blues structures

Of all blues patterns, the 12-bar blues is by far the one most frequently described in the writings of music theorists. A central aspect of the 12-bar blues is its pattern of harmonies, yet exactly what chords make up this harmonic progression is not entirely clear. In Example 4.2.01, for instance, we see five different harmonic patterns for the 12-bar blues as proposed by five different authors. While there seems to be general agreement among these authors, it appears that the category of the 12-bar blues – like other conceptual categories – defies any strict definition.

Example 4.2.01: Harmonic realizations of the 12-bar blues in various authors

Source	Bar #											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Everett 2001, 54	I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V ₇	V ₇	I	I / V
Middleton 1990, 48	I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	(IV)	I	I
Moore 2001, 59	I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	IV	I	I
Perricone 2000, 154	I	I	I ₇	I ₇	IV ₇	IV ₇	I ₇	I ₇	V ₇	IV ₇	I	(V ₇)
Covach 2009, 99	I	(IV)	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	(IV)	I	(V)

In their descriptions of the 12-bar blues, theorists mention not only a characteristic harmonic structure but also a specific phrase organization. In particular, theorists usually refer to the 12-bar blues as a bar form (e.g., Everett 2009, 138-9). This bar form may be represented via a sequence of letters, such as *a-a'-b* (Everett 2001, 54) or *a-a-b* (Stephan-Robinson 2009, 24-25), where each letter refers to a separate 4-bar segment. Alternatively, the bar form may be conceptualized as a “question-question-answer” metaphor, in which the “first phrase poses a question, the second poses the same question in a slightly different way, and the third phrase answers the question” (Covach 2009, 98). These descriptions represent standard presentations of the 12-bar blues form, and many song examples can be found that adhere to this format. Consequently, characterizations such as these will be considered here as referring to a *classic 12-bar blues*.

As a prototypical example of classic 12-bar blues form, consider the song “Crossroads” (Cream, 1968), the first vocal section of which is shown below in Example 4.2.02. The general harmonic structure of the 12-bar blues is obvious, and the bar form should be conspicuous as well. Note, for example, that the second phrase basically repeats the same text and melody of the first (despite a different harmonic setting), while the third phrase departs from this rhyme scheme (in concert with the harmonic cadence). It is worth clarifying what is meant by the term “phrase” here, since theorists often use the term “phrase” in slightly different ways when discussing the 12-bar blues. Take, for instance, Walter

Everett's statement that the 12-bar blues consists of "three four-bar phrases, with the first two phrases having the same or a rhyming text and the third a contrasting text" (2001, 54).

Notice how Everett's use of the term "phrase" involves two separate elements: 1) hypermetric structure ("four-bar phrases") and 2) melodic organization ("phrases having the same or a rhyming text"). As will be shown, it is useful to distinguish between the hypermetric structure of the 12-bar blues, its harmonic structure, and its melodic phrase structure, since all of these elements impact our perception of the role this structure plays within a song.

Example 4.2.02: "Crossroads" (Cream, 1968); opening vocal material

(orig. A)
0:21

I went down to the cross-roads, fell down on my knees. Down
to the cross-roads, fell down on my knees.
Ask'd the Lord a-bove for mer-cy, Take me if you ple-ase.

Example 4.2.03: Classic 12-bar blues phrase structure

I (IV) I IV I (V) (V) I (V)

An abstraction of the harmonic and melodic phrase structure for "Crossroads" is shown above in Example 4.2.03. This abstraction represents a prototypical organization for a classic 12-bar blues. As can be seen, a classic 12-bar blues has three vocal phrases, each of which (roughly speaking) begins in a hypermetrically-strong measure, spans two full bars, and then ends on the downbeat of the third bar. The second long vocal phrase parallels (or repeats) the first, and each of the large vocal phrases often subdivides into two smaller subphrases. This prototype also captures some of the common harmonic options of a classic

12-bar blues within a single illustration. In many descriptions of the 12-bar blues, bar form is presented as a quality that derives directly from this harmonic structure (e.g., Covach 2005, 67). Certainly, the cadence in the final four bars departs strongly from the prior harmonic material. Yet the organization of the vocal melody – in particular the way the second vocal phrase repeats the first – is undeniably a central factor in our perception of the 12-bar blues as a bar form. As we will see, bar form quality begins to weaken as we move away from this particular melodic organization.

One open question with regard to classic 12-bar blues form is how this scheme interacts with section labels. Some authors present the 12-bar blues, for instance, as a structure that supports only verse material (e.g., Everett 2001, 54). Indeed, when we find a classic 12-bar blues structure within a song, this structure most often supports different sets of lyrics on future iterations. Yet the role of a classic 12-bar blues as verse material is not unequivocal. Take, for example, the opening vocal section to “Crossroads” discussed above. Since the first two vocal phrases are identical, we are immediately presented with internal text repetition; moreover, the title of the song is included in this repetition. These factors draw our attention to this section as a somewhat focal moment in the song. Many songs with classic 12-bar blues organizational schemes adopt a similar strategy, in which the title text is repeated in the opening phrases of the song (e.g., “Do Me Right” [Lowell Fulson, 1955] and “Young Fashioned Ways” [Muddy Waters, 1955]). We should not overly emphasize a single domain here, for danger of falling into definition-like thinking. Yet we should be aware of these chorus-like aspects, since – as will be discussed – they potentially affect our section designations in other settings. In essence, the classic 12-bar blues (as an abstract organizational scheme) can be seen to present somewhat ambiguous evidence as to what role(s) it might play within a song.

12-bar blues as verse and chorus

Although many instances of a 12-bar blues harmonic pattern articulate the melodic phrase rhythm of a classic 12-bar blues organizational scheme, other instances do not. In some cases, departures from bar form structure help to create a more verse-like section. In other situations, the departures emphasize chorus-like aspects.

A good example in this regard is the song “Shake, Rattle and Roll” (Big Joe Turner, 1954). This song has been used an exemplar of blues-based verse-chorus structure within the theoretical literature (e.g., Covach 2005, 67-8). Indeed, section identity in this song is – in many respects – rather straightforward. The verse sections continuously present new lyrics while each chorus section contains identical lyrics; the chorus sections also include a thickening of texture via the introduction of background singers. Important differences

between the melodic phrase rhythms of the verse (Example 4.2.04) and chorus sections (Example 4.2.05) can be found as well, and these differences can be seen to contribute to our perception of separate verse and chorus areas in this song.

Example 4.2.04: “Shake, Rattle and Roll” (Big Joe Turner, 1954); verse

(orig. Eb)
0:07

Get out - ta that bed, wash your face and hands_ Get out-

- ta that bed, wash your face and hands_ Well you

get in that kitch - en, make some noise_ with those pots and pans_

Example 4.2.05: “Shake, Rattle and Roll” (Big Joe Turner, 1954); chorus

(orig. Eb)
1:02

I said, Shake, ra- ttle, and roll Shake, ra- ttle, and roll

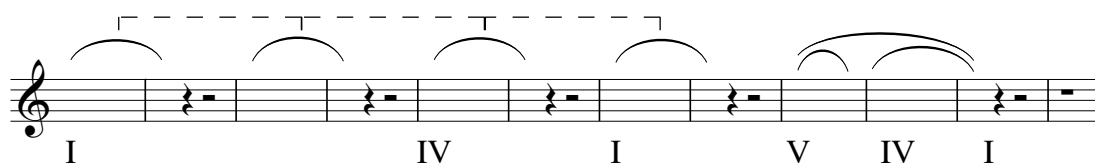
Shake, ra- ttle, and roll_ Shake, ra- ttle, and roll Well you

won't do right to save your dog - gone soul.

While the verse sections exhibit classic 12-bar blues melodic phrase structure, the chorus sections depart from this organizational scheme. Instead of containing three long vocal phrases, the chorus sections contain multiple iterations of what is basically the same short melodic fragment. Because of this fragmentation, the title lyric undergoes a relatively high level of repetition within each chorus. This high level of internal text repetition – particularly

since it involves the title itself – helps highlight the role of this section as a chorus, especially since the verses themselves include some internal text repetition. The specific melodic phrase structure found in the chorus section (as shown in Example 4.2.06) thus not only helps differentiate the verse and chorus sections from each other; it also acts to engender chorus quality itself. This phrase structure turns out to be a common organizational strategy in blues-based chorus sections, as we will see.

Example 4.2.06: Phrase structure for chorus of “Shake, Rattle and Roll”



In other situations, the general structure of the classic 12-bar blues may be preserved in both verse and chorus sections, yet appreciable changes in melodic organization help clarify section roles. The song “Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)” (The Crew Cuts, 1955) provides a good example of this case. Like “Shake, Rattle and Roll,” “Ko Ko Mo” displays clear verse and chorus sections via attributes in multiple domains: each verse of this song presents new lyrics, each chorus repeats the same lyrics, the choruses are noticeably thicker in texture than the verses, and the chorus melody is higher than that of the verse. Again, though, important differences can be found in terms of melodic phrase rhythms, and these differences can be seen to contribute to our perception of section roles in this song.

While the verse sections (Example 4.2.07) display a classic 12-bar blues melodic organization, the melodic phrase rhythm in the chorus (Example 4.2.08) is not exactly the same. Note that while the melodic content of each 4-bar hypermeasure in the verse lies mostly after the hypermetric downbeat, the first vocal sub-phrase in each 4-bar hypermeasure of the chorus lies mostly before the hypermetric downbeat. In other words, each opening sub-phrase in the verse is beginning-accented, while each opening sub-phrase in the chorus is end-accented. Example 4.2.09 shows this difference clearly when compared to the classic 12-bar blues organizational scheme shown in Example 4.2.03.

Example 4.2.07: “Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)” (The Crew Cuts, 1955); verse

(orig. F) 0:42

I heard what you told me, heard what you said. I heard what you told me, heard what you said. Don't worry my pret-ty, won't lose my head.

Example 4.2.08: “Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)” (The Crew Cuts, 1955); chorus

(orig. F) 0:59

Don't you know, I love you so? Don't you know, I love you so, when I hol-ler "Hey, Ko - ko - mo!"

Example 4.2.09: Phrase structure for chorus of “Ko Ko Mo” (The Crew Cuts, 1955)

I IV I V I

Of course, the overall phrase structure in the chorus still adheres to the basic question-question-answer metaphor of the 12-bar blues (the lyrics show this aspect rather

clearly), and the large dotted phrase lines in Example 4.2.09 capture this aspect. Yet by shifting the opening vocal sub-phrase in each four-bar hypermeasure forward within the hypermetric structure, something very important has happened. With this arrangement, every sub-phrase in the chorus ends on a strong hypermetric beat and thereby conveys a sense of arrival. As well, the shift of the opening sub-phrases puts a greater distance between each sub-phrase in the chorus as compared to those in the verse. Because of this increased distance between vocal sub-phrases, we have the same fragmentation effect found in the chorus section of “Shake, Rattle and Roll.” Although the fragmentation within the chorus of “Ko Ko Mo” is not used to create the same high level of internal text repetition, the rhyme scheme does take advantage of this fractured grouping. Compare the rhyme scheme in the chorus of “Ko Ko Mo” (*aa/aa/ba*) to that in its verse (*ab/ab/ab*). The heightened internal repetition of the rhyme now draws our attention. In this regard, the effects of changes to the melodic phrase structure can once again be seen to participate in our sense of section roles.

Modifications to the classic 12-bar blues structure may thus amplify the chorus-like potential of a 12-bar blues harmonic pattern. We find additional evidence of these effects in other songs as well. Take, for instance, the song “Maybellene” (Chuck Berry, 1955), which has clear verse and chorus sections from the perspective of external lyric repetition patterns. In the chorus of this song (Example 4.2.10), we find a clear question-question-answer format (evident in the lyrics as well).

Example 4.2.10: “Maybellene” (Chuck Berry, 1955); chorus

(orig: Bb)
0:04

May - bel - lene_ Why can't_ you be true?_ Oh_ May - bel - lene

Why can't_ you be true? You done

star - ted do - in' the things_ you used to do_

But like the chorus of “Ko Ko Mo,” the opening vocal sub-phrases of the “questions” are end-accented. Additionally, these sub-phrases contain the title lyric. The hypermetric arrivals on this title lyric draw our attention to this moment and the section as a whole. We thus find

evidence within this 12-bar blues pattern that it has a chorus-like quality. This chorus-like quality is further heightened when this section is compared to the other material in the song, as shown in Example 4.2.11. This other material, which displays little evidence of a 12-bar blues organizational scheme despite its length, clearly stands as the verse material of the song when compared to the chorus. For instance, the melody of the verse is rather limited in range and never reaches the high notes found in the chorus. The verse section is also static in terms of harmony. As well, the melodic phrase organization of the verse – unlike a classic 12-bar blues – has a much lower level of internal text repetition (if any). Consequently, the chorus-like quality of the 12-bar blues material is enhanced (or more fully realized) not only by the particular internal structure of this chorus but also by how it compares to the other main musical material within the song.

Example 4.2.11: “Maybellene” (Chuck Berry, 1955); verse

(orig: Bb) I
0:17

As I was mo-ti-va-ting o-ver the hill, I saw May-bel-lene in a Coupe de- Ville. A

Ca-dil-lac a-roll-in' on o-pen road, No-thin' out-a run my V-8 Ford. A

Ca-dil-lac do-in' 'bout nine-ty five, 'twas bum-per to bum-per, roll-in' side to side.

The melodic organization found within the verse sections of “Maybellene” can actually be found to engender verse quality within a 12-bar blues harmonic context as well. For example, the song “Johnny B. Goode” (Chuck Berry, 1958) contains a clear verse section (Example 4.2.12 below) that uses the same rhyme scheme, melodic phrase rhythms, and melodic parallelism as found in the verses to “Maybellene.” We thus find a strong departure from a classic 12-bar blues melodic phrase organization. In particular, the *aab* form does not appear to exist any longer (at least in terms of the melody). Admittedly, the melody within the second 4-bar hypermeasure basically repeats the melody within the first hypermeasure, but so does the melody within the third hypermeasure. One could posit that an *aab* pattern is still conveyed via the harmonic structure, in that the cadential move from V to I affects how we hear the melody in the third phrase. In other words, the melody in the third hypermeasure sounds more like an “answer” than those in the first two hypermeasures

because of the chords that underpin it. While this hearing is valid, one must admit that the *aab* form is communicated much less strongly here than in a classic 12-bar blues. Notably, some chorus-like qualities of the classic 12-bar blues – in particular the internal text repetition – are now missing. The melodic phrase rhythm in the verse sections of this song (Example 4.2.13) thus contributes to our sense that these sections do, in fact, act in a verse role.

Example 4.2.12: “Johnny B. Goode” (Chuck Berry, 1958); verse

(orig. Bb)
0:17

Deep down in Loui-si-a-na close to New Or leans, way back up in the woods a-mong the e-ver greens, there stood a log ca-bin made of earth and wood where lived a coun-try boy na-med John-ny B. Goode, who ne-ver e-ver learn'd to read or write so well, but he could play a gui-tar just like a - ring-in' a bell...

Example 4.2.13: Phrase structure for verse of “Johnny B. Goode”

I IV I V I

This verse role is made especially clear through a comparison with the chorus section of this song (Example 4.2.14). In this chorus, we find a melodic phrase organization much like that found in other chorus sections discussed so far. The vocal melody consists of separate small fragments, these fragments end on strong hypermetric downbeats, each fragment repeats the same text (aside from the final fragment), and this text derives from the song title itself. Again, we could posit a bar form structure in this chorus, as the melody in the third hypermeasure contrasts with those in the first two. But it is the departure from a classic 12-bar blues structure that strengthens chorus quality here and, as a byproduct, also clarifies the role played by the verse material.

Example 4.2.14: “Johnny B. Goode” (Chuck Berry, 1958); chorus

(orig. Bb)
0:34

Go, go! — Go, — John-ny, go, go! — Go, — John-ny, go, go! —

— Go, — John-ny, go, go! — Go, — John-ny, go, go! —

— John-ny B. Goode...

In summary, the classic 12-bar blues displays attributes of both verse and chorus sections within a single structure. Through alterations in melodic, phrase, and lyric organization, however, songs may shift our perception of the role played by a particular instantiation of the 12-bar blues pattern. This perception is relative, of course, and hinges on the structure of other sections in the song.

In some cases, it seems as if exploring that boundary between verse and chorus perception is an integral aspect of the song itself. The song “Hound Dog” (Elvis Presley, 1956) is a good illustration of this situation. Some authors consider “Hound Dog” to be simply a succession of verse sections (e.g., Covach 2005, 67-8). Indeed, the same basic 12-bar blues structure permeates all of the vocal sections in the song, and this blues structure contains different sets of lyrics on future iterations. But the situation is not as clear-cut as this brief explanation implies. For instance, there are only two different sets of lyrics used in the song (see Example 4.2.15), and each of these sets of lyrics is eventually sung three times. So on one hand, we have large-scale lyric repetition (like a chorus), but on the other hand, we do not (like a verse).

Example 4.2.15: “Hound Dog” (Elvis Presley, 1956); form chart with lyrics

Start	Section
0:00	1 (“hound dog”)
0:17	2 (“high class”)
0:33	1 (“hound dog”)
0:51	solo + bg vox
1:06	2 (“high class”)
1:23	solo + bg vox
1:38	2 (“high class”)
1:55	1 (“hound dog”)

The melodic organization also provides ambiguous evidence as to section roles. The melodic phrase rhythm of the song is basically similar to that found in the chorus of “Maybellene,” as shown in the transcription of the opening vocal section (Example 4.2.16). Because of this melodic organization, the title text receives a special emphasis; indeed, this opening vocal section presents what appears to be a prototypical head refrain. Yet the second section (the first hypermeasure of which is shown in Example 4.2.17) has an almost identical melodic phrase rhythm.

Example 4.2.16: “Hound Dog” (Elvis Presley, 1956); section 1

(orig. C)
0:00

You ain't no-thin' but a hound dog, cry - in' all the time. You ain't a no-thin' but a

hound dog, cry - in' all the time. Well, you ain't

ne-ver caught a rab-bit and you ain't no friend of mine.

Example 4.2.17: “Hound Dog” (Elvis Presley, 1956); section 2 incipit

(orig. C)
0:16

Well they said you was high class, well that was just a lie.

The close similarity between the melodies of the first and second sections certainly encourages us to hear a succession of verses (at least up through 0:33). But head refrain quality is somewhat diminished in this second section. As one reason, the title text is absent. Moreover, note that the melody in this second section – in contrast to the melody of the first section – avoids coming to rest on the tonic at the hypermetric downbeat. Instead, the strong sense of arrival that was felt in the first section is denied, as the melody floats up to $\wedge 3$. The melody in the second section has therefore been changed just enough, we might say, to perceptibly weaken its focal quality. When the first section returns at 0:33, we have further

reason to consider the first section as a chorus, since – like other choruses – its text is now returning. Eventually, the text to the second section also returns, of course; in fact, it returns as many times as does the text to the first section. But the first section both opens and closes the song, and section placement within the song as a whole undeniably impacts our perception of section roles as well. All in all, the first section is undoubtedly more memorable – and thus more chorus-like – than the second section. This insight should not be taken to imply that this song is, in fact, in verse-chorus form (or, conversely, is not an unabated succession of verses). Rather, this song stands as an ambiguous example, one whose sections situate themselves – in many ways – right on that verse-chorus boundary.

Hybrid 12-bar blues

Although many of the 12-bar blues examples discussed thus far showed varying degrees of departure from the *aab* model, it was possible in every case to posit some remnants of an underlying *aab* form. In both the verse and chorus sections of “Johnny B. Goode,” for example, we saw that – despite significant departures from a classic 12-bar blues organizational scheme – the second melodic phrase in each section paralleled the first. Consequently, the question-question-answer metaphor may still have seemed valid, even though some examples showed a more coordinated realization of this metaphor than others.

As we examine other 12-bar blues songs, departures from the *aab* form become too great to allow the question-question-answer metaphor to remain appropriate. Many 12-bar blues songs, in fact, consistently show a particular phrase structure that is fundamentally incompatible with bar form. Take, for example, the song “Evil” (Howlin’ Wolf, 1954). This song includes multiple iterations of 12-bar blues-based vocal sections (the first of which is shown in Example 4.2.18), yet none of these 12-bar vocal sections display *aab* structure. Rather, each section has one melodic phrase organization in the first 4-bar hypermeasure, a different melodic phrase organization in the second hypermeasure, and then a cadential phrase in the final four bars. If anything, the phrase structures in the second and third hypermeasures seem more closely related than the phrase structures in the first and second hypermeasures.

Example 4.2.18: “Evil” (Howlin’ Wolf, 1954); opening vocal material

(orig. G) 0:01

If you long way from home, can't sleep at night, grab your tel-e phone; some thin' just ain't right. That's e-

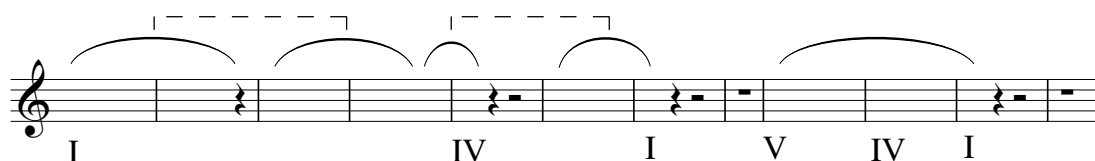
- vil E - vil is go - in' on wrong. I am

war - nin' you bro - ther, you'd bet - ter watch your hap - py home.

How then, we might ask, can we make sense of the phrase organization in “Evil” with regard to the classic 12-bar blues scheme or some of the common departures that we have seen earlier? If we compare the phrase structure of this song to previous examples, we find some interesting intersections with melodic phrase rhythms and section roles. Note, for example, that the melodic organization in the first hypermeasure of “Evil” evokes a similar pattern as found in some clear verse examples, such as those in “Johnny B. Goode” and “Maybellene.” In contrast, the melodic organization in the second hypermeasure evokes patterns found in the chorus sections of these songs. The overall melodic organization in “Evil” thus seems to be a hybrid between those that have previously acted in relatively clear verse and chorus roles. Interestingly, the large-scale lyric structure in this song bolsters this sense of separate roles. In “Evil,” the lyrics within the first hypermeasure change on each future iteration (like a verse), whereas the lyrics within the second and third hypermeasures stay constant throughout the song, include the title text, and internally repeat this title text (like a chorus). The addition of the piano riff each time in the fifth bar further emphasizes the chorus-quality of these bars. The fact that the verse material precedes the chorus material also aligns with our expectations of typical verse-chorus relationships. We can thus say that there are multiple factors reinforcing our sense that the first four bars of this vocal section are verse-like while the rest of the 12-bar pattern is chorus-like. Consequently, songs with this phrase structure will be referred to as instances of a *hybrid 12-bar blues*, an abstraction for which is provided in Example 4.2.19. (Often, as in “Evil,” the first large vocal phrase breaks into two smaller sub-phrases.) Many instances of hybrid 12-bar blues structures can be found

in the repertoire (some of which will be discussed below), including passages within “Honky Tonk Blues” (Hank Williams, 1952), “Peggy Sue” (Buddy Holly, 1957), “Stuck on You” (Elvis Presley, 1960), and “You Can’t Do That” (The Beatles, 1964). Hybrid 12-bar blues organizational schemes – despite having a 12-bar blues harmonic pattern – do not display bar form. Instead, we find a four-bar statement, a four-bar departure, and a four-bar cadence, i.e., an overall *abc* pattern.

Example 4.2.19: Hybrid 12-bar blues phrase structure



Although the song “Evil” seems to have 12-bar sections that split into areas of verse-like and chorus-like material, it would be unreasonable to say that we have a clear case of a 4-bar verse followed by an 8-bar chorus. For one thing, the length of the verse section is – at four bars long – unusually short. As well, the 12-bar blues harmonic pattern traces a single tonal motion, and thus we are encouraged to consider these twelve bars as a single section acting in a single role. For these reasons, some authors view “Evil” as simply a succession of verses with an 8-bar refrain (e.g., Covach 2009, 50). Such an analysis is certainly justifiable, although one must admit that the ostensible refrain in this song is beginning to exceed the length of what we might reasonably consider to be a refrain. At minimum, this refrain presents a less prototypical case than that seen in other songs. Overall, we may say the “Evil” presents a different dilemma than that faced with the classic 12-bar blues. Instead of considering whether the entire 12-bar section is a verse or chorus, we are now considering whether portions of this 12-bar section might play distinct verse or chorus roles.

While many instances of hybrid 12-bar blues patterns exist in the history of rock, not all cases take advantage of the dual-role potential of this organizational scheme. Some songs, in fact, significantly downplay aspects of bifurcation. In these cases, verse-like qualities are brought to the fore. Consider “Strange Brew” (Cream, 1967), for example. Although the main vocal material in the song (Example 4.2.20) shows the same melodic organization as found in a hybrid 12-bar blues structure, the large-scale form of the song does not seem like anything other than a succession of verses. In particular, each iteration of the opening vocal section includes new lyrics up through the ninth bar, and the texture of the song stays fairly consistent throughout. In other words, the potential for separate areas of verse-like and

chorus-like material found in the melodic grouping structure of “Strange Brew” is not realized by other domains in the song.

Example 4.2.20: “Strange Brew” (Cream, 1967); opening 12-bar blues

(orig. A)
0:27

She's a witch of trouble in electric blue... In her own mad mind she's in love with you, with you

now what you gon-na do? _____

Strange brew, kill'n' what's in-side of you. _____

Although the compound aspect of the hybrid 12-bar blues organizational scheme was muted in “Strange Brew,” most other instances of this scheme amplify the compound aspect via changes in various domains. It is worth looking at two examples of this situation because there are, of course, many ways to shift our perception of section roles. To begin with, “Long Tall Sally” (Little Richard, 1956) presents a good illustration of something that often happens in hybrid blues patterns. Specifically, the verse-like area of the structure (i.e., the first four bars in a 12-bar hybrid) includes a stop-time texture. (This texture change cannot be adequately captured in a melodic/harmonic transcription, of course.) In most of the 12-bar blues iterations in this song (all vocal sections through 1:50), the ensemble provides only short “hits” to clarify the downbeats during the first four bars and is otherwise silent; only in the fifth bar does the full force of the ensemble come roaring back. The textural contrast is extreme and amplifies the sense that the 12-bar structure divides into two parts. Stop-time texture is a feature that theorists have previously associated with the opening phrase of 12-bar blues structures (e.g., Everett 2009, 312). Yet this opening stop-time texture rarely if ever occurs within classic 12-bar blues patterns. This negative correlation makes sense considering that a bifurcation of the blues pattern in the fifth bar of a classic 12-bar blues scheme would rub strongly against the *aab* model. Instead, an opening stop-time texture seems to be an attribute highly correlated with hybrid blues patterns. It should be noted that “Long Tall Sally” displays typical qualities of a hybrid blues in other respects as well. The

lyrics to the first four bars change on each iteration of this 12-bar passage while the lyrics to the last eight bars do not, and the general melodic organization reflects a hybrid structure as well (see Example 4.2.21). The sense of chorus (or refrain) in the final eight bars of each 12-bar section is perhaps not very strong, though. The vocal melismas on the word “Baby” – even though they consistently occur with each appearance of this section – do not feel as memorable as might some other text, especially if this text were part of the song title. The “Baby” lyrics seem like a placeholder, and they do not convey any real semantic content. Many songs that contain hybrid 12-bar blues organizational schemes have similar throwaway or nonsense text within the chorus-like area of the 12-bar pattern (e.g., “What’d I Say” [Ray Charles, 1959]), and this lack of focal quality within the lyrics certainly compromises our sense of chorus quality in these instances.

Example 4.2.21: “Long Tall Sally” (Little Richard, 1956); opening vocal material

(orig. F)
0:00

Gon-na tell Aunt Ma-ry 'bout Un-cle John. He claims he has the mis-'ry, but he hav-in' a lot of fun. Oh

Ba-by; ye - s, Ba-by; Woo - oo, Ba

- by; a - hav-in' me some fun to- night.

It is possible for chorus quality to adhere to nonsense lyrics, though, given the right conditions. Consider the song “Ooby Dooby” (Roy Orbison, 1956). The repeating 12-bar section in this song (Example 4.2.22) can generally be construed as a hybrid blues structure. As usual, the text to the first four bars repeats on future iterations of this passage while the text in the final eight bars repeats each time. Like “Long Tall Sally,” moreover, the ensemble lays back for the first four bars of each 12-bar segment until its dramatic entrance in the fifth bar. While the closely-spaced repetitions of the title text that begin in the fifth bar depart from other hybrid structures discussed thus far, these repetitions serve a similar function. As seen before, the melodic phrase fragmentation allows the title text to undergo an extremely high level of repetition. Additionally, the metric placement of these vocal phrases (end-

accented) causes a sense of arrival to adhere to each iteration of the title lyric. Overall, we hear this title lyric eight times on each appearance of the 12-bar segment, and thus this area of the 12-bar blues scheme becomes highly memorable. Throughout the song, this hybrid 12-bar blues scheme is foiled only by instrumental breaks. With no other candidates for verse and chorus section labels, we are encouraged to hear the two highly-differentiated parts of the 12-bar section as representatives of these two different section categories.

Example 4.2.22: “Ooby Dooby” (Roy Orbison, 1956); opening vocal material

(orig. Eb)

0:00 I

Hey, ba-by, jump ov-er here, when you do the oo-by doo-by I got-ta be near_ Oo-by

doo-by, oo-by doo-by, oo-by doo-by, oo-by doo-by, oo-by doo-by, oo-by

doo-by, oo-by doo-by, oo-by doo-by oo-by doo-by doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah.

In the examples presented thus far, the hybrid 12-bar blues pattern was the main organizational scheme for the song. Part of what makes us potentially hear distinct verse and chorus roles in these songs (particularly “Ooby Dooby”) is that no other moment in the song significantly vies for these section labels. The situation changes when a song contains other, contrasting parts. The song “Boys” (The Shirelles, 1960) offers a good illustration of this effect. As shown in Example 4.2.23, the opening vocal section of the song displays hybrid 12-bar blues construction. The bifurcation here is relatively strong, too, as the ensemble – in a typical manner – does not fully kick in until the fifth bar. Like other hybrid 12-bar blues instances, though, the lyrics beginning in this fifth bar are rather disposable, and the title lyric is nowhere to be found within the last eight bars of the pattern. Nevertheless, because of the division created through the textural changes and the repeat of the lyrics in the last eight bars on future iterations, we might consider some chorus-like aspects to adhere to the final two-thirds of this 12-bar blues pattern. If this were the only musical material in the song, we might even be tempted to use separate verse and chorus labels. But this is not the only musical material in the song. Example 4.2.24 transcribes the twelve bars that come after two

iterations of the hybrid 12-bar structure. In this new material, we are presented with a much clearer chorus candidate. Like other clear blues-based chorus sections, the melodic phrase grouping in this chorus section consists of short fragments that repeat the title lyric. This title lyric is also emphasized through its arrival on strong hypermetric beats. Overall, any sense that part of the opening vocal material potentially acted as a chorus is erased with the arrival of this new part. The final labels we would most probably choose are shown in Example 4.2.25, which makes the form of the song seem relatively straightforward. Yet even though our final analysis may appear simple, what hides beneath is a complicated network of attributes that does not necessarily engage our perception of section labels in a simple way.

Example 4.2.23: “Boys” (Shirelles, 1960); opening vocal material

(orig. G)
0:07 I

I been told when a boy kiss a girl, she takes a trip a - round the world... Yeah, yeah.
He - y, he - y. He - y, he - y, hey, please sa - y you do.

Example 4.2.24: “Boys” (Shirelles, 1960); chorus

(orig. G)
0:47

I'm talk-in'bout boys. Don't you know I mean boys. Well, I'm talk-in'bout boys.
Don't you know I mean boys. Well, I'm talk-in'bout boys.
Hey! What a bun-dle of joy.

Example 4.2.25: “Boys” (Shirelles, 1960); form chart

Start time	Section
0:00	intro
0:07	verse (lyrics 1)
0:28	verse (lyrics 2)
0:47	chorus (“Boys” reps)
1:09	instrumental break
1:29	chorus (“Boys” reps)
1:50	outro fade on “Boys” reps

To summarize, the hybrid 12-bar blues holds the potential to create a strong division of the 12-bar blues pattern into distinct areas of verse-like and chorus-like quality. Some songs maximize this potential, while others do not. Whether we choose to label the final eight bars of a 12-bar blues as a refrain, chorus, or verse depends on various factors in various domains, each of which help convert this basic framework from one role to another. Moreover, these labels are dependent not only on factors within the material under consideration but also on its relationship to other material within the song.

Hybrid 16-bar blues

As we have seen, some factors inevitably discourage us from identifying separate verse and chorus sections within a single hybrid 12-bar blues scheme. Even though strong verse and chorus qualities may sometimes be evident, one central problem is that the resultant verse section would be only four bars long – too short, one might feel, to truly act as a standalone section. Our perception can shift, though, if certain alterations are made to the hybrid 12-bar blues structure. In particular, if the organizational strategies of a hybrid 12-bar blues are mapped into a 16-bar setting, we find that the potential to perceive separate areas of verse and chorus greatly increases.

The expansion of a hybrid 12-bar blues structure into a 16-bar structure can be directly observed within the song “Blue Suede Shoes” (Elvis Presley, 1956). In Presley’s version, the first twelve bars of the song (Example 4.2.26) clearly present a prototypical hybrid 12-bar blues structure. These aspects are evident through the melodic phrase rhythm, the placement of the title lyric, and the strong instrumental contrast created between the first four bars and the rest of the opening material. Like other occurrences of a hybrid 12-bar blues, we probably avoid assigning separate verse and chorus labels to this material because – for one thing – a relatively short verse length would result. Yet the material that follows this hybrid 12-bar structure presents a different situation. Fifteen seconds into the track, a 16-bar blues pattern is heard (the first eight bars of which are shown in Example 4.2.27). In many ways, this new 16-bar structure is basically a repeat of the opening hybrid 12-bar blues

structure. For example, the last eight bars of both the 12- and 16-bar structures are identical (and have thus been omitted from Example 4.2.27). As well, the first eight bars of the 16-bar structure seem to be basically just two iterations of the first four bars of the 12-bar structure. Consequently, the expansion from a 12-bar structure to a 16-bar structure has occurred via an extension of the tonic-based area of verse-like material.

Example 4.2.26: “Blue Suede Shoes” (Elvis Presley, 1956); opening vocal material

(orig. A)
0:00

Well it's a one for the mo-ney, two for the show, three to get a-rea-dy now go, cat, go. But don't

— you— step on my blue suede shoes. Well you can

do an - y-thing, but stay a - off a - my— blue suede shoes.

Example 4.2.27: “Blue Suede Shoes” (Elvis Presley, 1956); 16-bar blues opening

(orig. A)
0:15

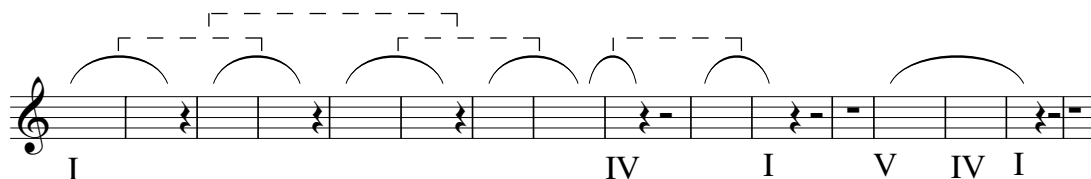
Well you can knockme down, step in my face,— slan-der my name all— o-ver the place.— Well

do an-y- thing that you want to do,— But uh-huh ho-ney lay off— of them shoes.

The resulting 16-bar structure is what will be referred to here as a *hybrid 16-bar blues*, which is schematized below in Example 4.2.28. Hybrid 16-bar blues structures are similar to hybrid 12-bar structures, as both organizational schemes contain multiple factors that cause the first part to seem more verse-like and the second part more chorus-like. Many instances of hybrid 16-bar blues structures can be found in the early years of rock (some of which will be discussed in the following pages), including portions of “Crazy for My Baby”

(Willie Dixon, 1955), “Money Honey” (The Drifters, 1953), “Rockin’ Robin” (Bobby Day, 1958), and “Dead Presidents” (Little Walter, 1963).

Example 4.2.28: Hybrid 16-bar blues phrase structure



Like a hybrid 12-bar blues, a hybrid 16-bar blues scheme departs significantly from the *aab* model of the blues. This departure should be obvious, of course, since the hybrid 16-bar blues structure is not twelve bars long. What model, then, adequately represents the form of the hybrid 16-bar blues? As discussed previously, a hybrid 12-bar blues can be conceptualized as an overall *abc* pattern, in which we find a four-bar statement, a four-bar departure, and a four-bar cadence. Since the hybrid 16-bar blues essentially results from an extension (or repeat) of the first four bars in a hybrid 12-bar blues, we can conceptualize the hybrid 16-bar blues as an overall *aabc* pattern. This *aabc* pattern represents a four-bar statement, a similar four-bar statement (or restatement), a four-bar departure, and a four-bar cadence. (As will be evident to some readers, this *aabc* pattern has much in common with Everett’s SRDC concept. This relationship will be explored in the next portion of this chapter.) We should be careful not to treat these letter-based form patterns too literally. Note especially that the letters within the *aab* bar form of the classic 12-bar blues do not directly map to those in the *aabc* form of the hybrid 16-bar blues. Although both form types have two 4-bar opening statements with parallel melodic content, the move to the subdominant, for example, happens at different locations within each letter sequence. Thus *a* ≠ *a* and *b* ≠ *b* when comparing these two schemes. While this distinction may seem obvious here, not all authors highlight it; as we will see below, recognizing this distinction can significantly impact the analytical insights we draw.

In “Blue Suede Shoes,” the 12- and 16-bar versions are obviously variations of the same musical material, and thus we are encouraged to analyze them in parallel ways. Consequently, we might avoid using separate verse and chorus labels within the 16-bar iterations if only because we would avoid using them within the 12-bar versions. An entirely different situation occurs when a song consists only of 16-bar versions of a hybrid blues. One good example is “Jailhouse Rock” (Elvis Presley, 1957). Throughout this song, the vocal

material is organized into clear hybrid 16-bar blues structures, the first of which is transcribed in Example 4.2.29.

Example 4.2.29: “Jailhouse Rock” (Elvis Presley, 1957); main section(s)

(orig. Eb)
0:06 I

War-den threw a par-ty in the coun-ty jail. The pri-son band was there, they be - gan to wail. The
band was jump-in' and the joint be - gan to swing. Youshould-a heard those knocked-out jail-birds sing. Let's
IV I
rock, ev - 'ry - bo - dy, let's rock. Ev - 'ry -
V IV I
bo - dy in'the whole cell block— was dan - cin' to the jail-house rock.

In a typical hybrid-blues fashion, each 16-bar unit splits into distinct areas of verse-like and chorus-like quality. For example, the first eight bars of each 16-bar unit receive new lyrics with each iteration, the second eight bars repeat the same lyrics, and these repeated lyrics include a high level of repetition as well as the title lyric. Additionally, the first eight bars consistently feature a stop-time texture, which is followed by a dramatic return of the full ensemble in the ninth bar. Melodic phrase rhythms further align with verse and chorus patterns seen previously. Interestingly, theorists are themselves divided on how to categorize the form of this song. Some authors view the song as simply a succession of verses (e.g., Covach 2005, 69; Stephenson 2002, 127), while others see each 16-bar blues segment as splitting into an 8-bar verse followed by an 8-bar chorus (e.g., Temperley 2010; Doll 2011). Of course, the final form labels are a personal analytic choice. But because this song lacks any other vocal material (especially a 12-bar version of the hybrid blues structure), there are few reasons not to divide this 16-bar segment into equal spans of verse and chorus. The one principal reason relates to harmonic factors. Presumably, Covach and Stephenson do not divide the repeating 16-bar segment in “Jailhouse Rock” into two separate sections because they want to account for the entire blues structure with a single role label. Certainly, our

sense of section separation is enhanced when a segment both begins and ends on tonic (i.e., it represents a single tonal motion). But it may be too definition-like to require that chorus sections encapsulate a single tonal motion from start to finish. In the upcoming discussion of SRDC patterns, in fact, we will see many cases of relatively clear chorus sections that do not begin on tonic. No matter what final labeling scheme one chooses, it seems beyond question that “Jailhouse Rock” shows verse and chorus structures on the verge – if not past the verge – of splitting the blues structure into two distinct parts.

Thus while the hybrid 12-bar blues structure may not have escaped the confines of a single section label, the hybrid 16-bar blues more strongly emphasizes separate section roles. In what is perhaps an unexpected twist, our identification of a separate chorus section in the 16-bar version hinges on the fact that the verse material expands from four to eight bars. In other words, our perception of chorus quality strongly derives from our sense of separate verse quality. Covach has mentioned in a recent article that some Coasters songs display what he calls an “incipient” form, in which it is unclear whether the main musical material should be considered a verse–refrain structure or a verse–chorus structure (2010, 6-7). The songs “Turtle Dovin” [The Coasters, 1956] and “Young Blood” [The Coasters, 1957] are two examples Covach provides. On closer inspection of these songs, both turn out to be examples of a hybrid 16-bar blues organizational scheme, so the indecision Covach expresses as to section labels is quite understandable. Covach states that the form of these songs begins to pull away from the verse–refrain structure “under the force of a refrain that seems to have outgrown its role within the structural confines of the verse.” If the refrain itself were solely responsible for this pulling away, however, then a song such as “Evil” would have as strong an incipient verse-chorus quality as these Coasters examples. While the expansion of the refrain (as Covach would say) is certainly a factor, we should recognize as well that the size of the verse-like material contributes to our sense of incipient verse-chorus structure. Here again, we see evidence that our categorization process often has as much to do with the relationship between different sections as much as it has to do with qualities inherent to the section under consideration itself.

Deconstructing a hybrid 16-bar blues

In all of the blues examples presented thus far, the harmonic structure of the blues was clear. The issue was never the extent to which these songs were exemplars of the blues. Rather, the issue was how various conversions could shift our perception of the roles that blues structures played within the form of a song. Hybrid blues schemes were seen to be an important waypoint in this process. One of the advantages of identifying phrase organizations beyond the classic *aab* blues model is that we may gain insight into the form of

songs that are not so directly based on blues harmonies. A good example of this can be seen in “Taxman” (The Beatles, 1966). This song has been analyzed in a number of different ways, and the conflict between some of these analyses can be seen to derive from the complex manner in which this song interacts with both blues schemes as well as section roles.

Example 4.2.30: “Taxman” (The Beatles, 1966); opening vocal material

(orig. D)
0:08

Let me tell you how it will be. There's one

for you nine-teen for me. 'Cause I'm the

tax-man, ye-ah, I'm the tax-man.

Most of the conflict found between analyses of “Taxman” concerns the main vocal material of the song (Example 4.2.30). This 13-bar segment conveys a strong sense of the blues via a number of aspects, such as the dominant-seventh chords and pentatonic collections that pervade the bass and guitar parts. Blues quality can be found to reside in the phrase organization as well. Pollack, for example, remarks that these thirteen bars impart a “strong hint of the 12-bar blues” (2001, #92). Similarly, Biamonte refers to these opening measures as a “modified 12-bar blues” (2010, 101). These authors make this classification based on the *aab* form found in these opening measures: the first and second vocal phrases (starting in the first and fifth bars) are melodically identical, while the third vocal phrase (spanning the ninth through the twelfth bar) contrasts from the first two in terms of its melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structure. There is an apparent connection with the harmonic content of a 12-bar blues here as well. The bVII–IV motion beginning in the ninth measure can be mapped to the V–IV motion in the final four bars of a standard 12-bar blues pattern. Yet mapping this opening 13-bar material to a classic 12-bar blues structure is not without its problems. Most noticeably, the lack of a subdominant chord in the fifth bar is extremely atypical of a classic 12-bar blues. Nevertheless, the abstract *aab* model does seem clear. Perhaps in strong part for these reasons, Pollack and Biamonte label these opening

measures as a verse–refrain structure. This same labeling scheme can also be found in Covach 2006 (50).

Other theorists view these thirteen bars as a verse–chorus structure (Temperley 2007, 336; Everett 1999, 48). With this view, the last five bars of this repeating material act as the chorus of the song. This labeling scheme is rather incompatible with the view that these opening bars are a modified 12-bar blues structure. In particular, it would be highly unusual to label what correlates to the final cadence of a 12-bar blues as a chorus. While we have seen many ways that verse and chorus qualities can be conveyed within a blues pattern, in no case was a chorus designation (or a strong chorus sense) conveyed solely through the last four bars of a 12-bar blues organizational scheme. Something strange (or interesting) thus seems to be afoot in this song.

There is another way to conceive of this opening material, however, aside from a modified 12-bar blues pattern. Since the *aab* pattern also constitutes the first three quarters of a hybrid 16-bar blues structure, we could also consider this opening material to be a partial hybrid blues. A few factors directly support this reading. For one, the eight bars of tonic during the *aa* parts align much more closely with a hybrid 16-bar blues structure than a classic 12-bar blues. Additionally, the short end-accented melodic phrases that begin in the ninth bar map directly to the ninth bar of a hybrid 16-bar blues. These vocal phrase fragments, moreover, contain the title lyric and accent this title lyric through placement on a hypermetric strong beat. With this view, the bVII does not substitute for a dominant sonority; rather, it embellishes an underlying subdominant chord within the gestalt of a hybrid 16-bar blues scheme. In this reading, the last five bars of this opening material are only part of a longer background prototype. Even though we do not get a longer chorus section here, our interaction with other hybrid 16-bar blues structures conceivably causes this five-bar fragment to remind us of other chorus-like sections we have heard. Consequently, our sense of chorus quality is triggered despite the relatively short chorus length found on the surface of the music.

One issue with this view is that the melodic phrase rhythm in the first eight bars does not seem very typical of a hybrid blues verse. Most notably, the close succession of rhyming vocal phrases is absent here. Instead, the vocal phrases include large gaps, which – when coupled with the rhyme scheme – undoubtedly remind us of a classic 12-bar blues organizational scheme. In a later section of the song, though, an important change occurs. Specifically, the vocal material beginning at 0:54 strengthens the relationship between the main vocal material and a hybrid blues verse. This middle vocal section (Example 4.2.31) contains a sort of call-and-response between back-up singers and a lead vocal. If we merge these melodies into a single line, we find that it is the same melody as the vocal phrases that

begin each main passage. The close succession of rhyming phrases found in a hybrid blues verse now becomes apparent. In other words, the melodic organization of these eight bars is highly reminiscent of the melodic organization found in the first eight bars of a 16-bar hybrid blues. Of course, this middle section does not clearly evoke a hybrid blues, as there is a move to bVII in the last bar of each 4-bar hypermeasure. Nevertheless, we could say that the hybrid blues pedigree of the opening material comes more to the fore in this middle part.

Example 4.2.31: “Taxman” (The Beatles, 1966); middle vocal material

(orig. D)
0:54

I bVII

I'll tax the street. I'll tax your seat.

If you drive a car, car, If you try to sit, sit, If you get.

I bVII

I'll tax the heat. I'll tax your feet.

too cold, cold, If you take a walk, walk,

The most compelling evidence that the opening material derives from a hybrid 16-bar blues structure can be found within the final vocal passage (Example 4.2.32). Here we encounter a complete realization of a 16-bar blues pattern. While the first eight bars still lack the close melodic phrase groupings found in other hybrid examples, the remaining bars present the full background chorus structure that has been implied (but withheld) thus far in the song. As a slight complication, the final 4-bar hypermeasure (which includes the lyric “And you’re working for no one but me”) has its last two bars elided (or metrically reinterpreted) by the first two bars of the outro. Many listeners may not hear this elision, though. In fact, the first bar of the following guitar solo could easily be heard as a pickup to the beginning of a new 4-bar hypermeasure. With either hearing (elided or not), the final 4-bar hypermeasure of the closing vocal material presents what appears to be the standard closing phrase of a blues pattern. But instead of a V chord, a bIII chord acts in the cadential role. The introduction of this new chord (the entire piece has been I, bVII, and IV up until

this point) undeniably imparts a strong sense of closure, even though the vocal melody ends on $\hat{5}$ as it has been stubbornly doing throughout the song. In the first twelve bars of this closing vocal material, we also find a normalized version of the 13-bar main passage, further confirming the derivation of the opening material from a 16-bar structure. Note especially that it is now obvious that the extra bar does not arise via an insertion between the $bVII$ and IV chords (as would be posited if we read these measures as derived from a $V-IV$ blues cadence). Instead, the extra bar prolongs the tonic chord, which is itself embellished by the IV chord.

Example 4.2.32: “Taxman” (The Beatles, 1966); closing vocal material

(orig. D)
1:57

And my ad - vice for those who die: De - clare
the pen - nies on your eyes. 'Cause I'm the
tax - man, ye - ah, I'm the tax - ma - n. And you're
work - ing for no one but me.

In summary, “Taxman” can be seen as a deconstructed hybrid 16-bar blues, as shown in the form chart of Example 4.2.33. In this song, various fragments of a hybrid blues are used to create a complicated song structure that goes beyond any prototypical blues form. Recognizing the dramatic (and artistic) deconstruction process that underlies this song falls directly out of a more detailed understanding of blues-based structures and their interaction with section roles. If we see the opening vocal material simply as derivative of a classic 12-bar blues, we may not understand why a chorus label within these measures has any validity. But through our study of blues-based conversions, we can appreciate some of the complex interactions that successful songs such as “Taxman” have with their musical heritage.

Example 4.2.33: “Taxman” (The Beatles, 1966); form chart

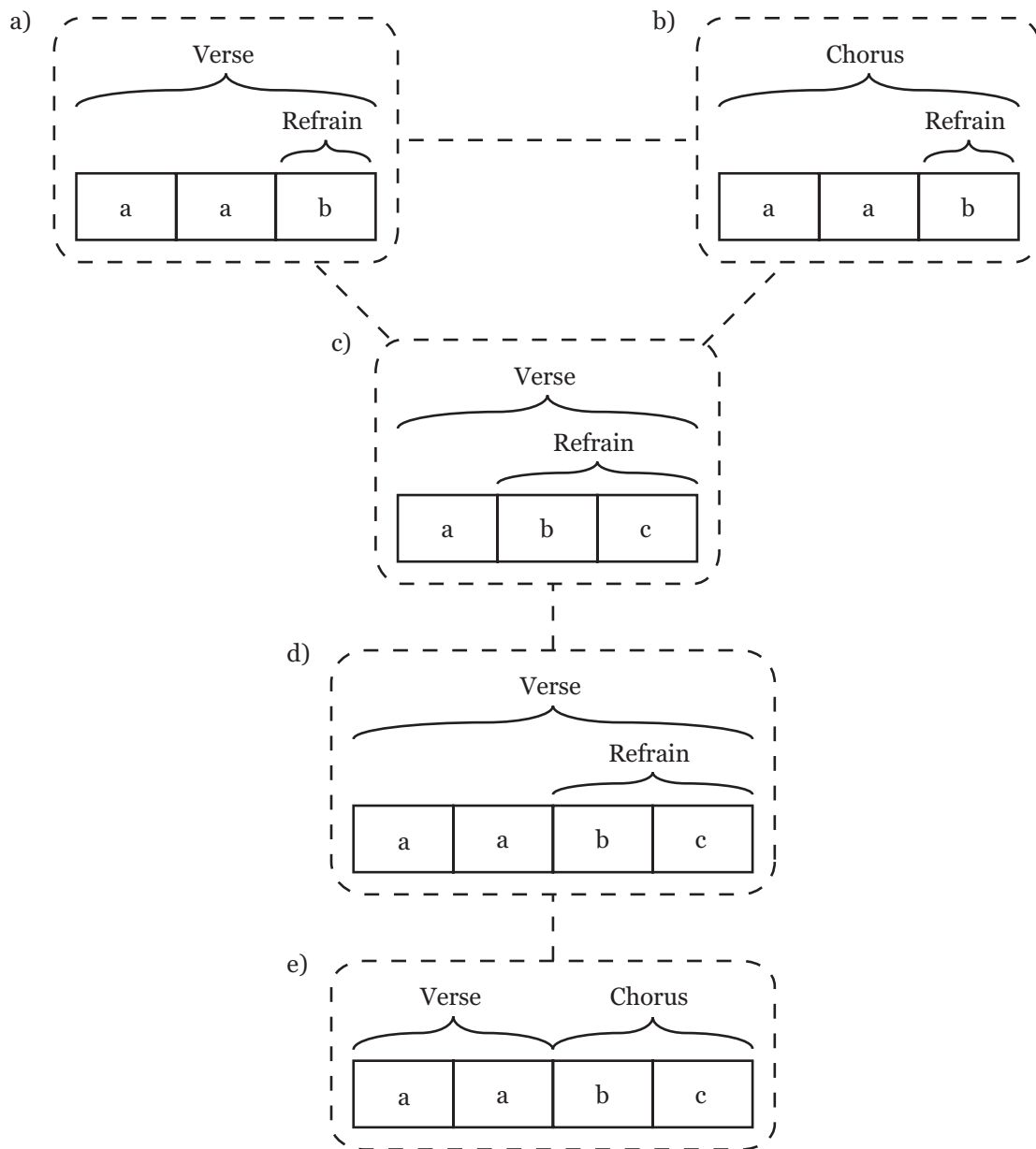
Start	Section	Mm.	Scheme	Mm.
0:05	intro	2		2
0:08	verse (lyrics 1)	8	partial hybrid blues	13
0:22	refrain/chorus fragment	5		
0:31	verse (lyrics 2)	8	partial hybrid blues	13
0:45	refrain/chorus fragment	5		
0:54	verse intensification	9	half of hybrid blues	9
1:10	solo (verse)	8	partial hybrid blues	13
1:25	refrain/chorus fragment	5		
1:34	verse (lyrics 3)	8	partial hybrid blues	13
1:48	refrain/chorus fragment	5		
1:57	verse (lyrics 4)	8	full hybrid blues	14 (16)
2:12	refrain/chorus fragment	4		
2:19	cadence (elided)	2		
2:23	outro (solo)	n/a		n/a

Conclusion

As the preceding discussion has shown, blues patterns do not necessarily interact with our sense of verse and chorus roles in simple or direct ways. Even the classic 12-bar blues bar form holds the potential to act as a verse or chorus. Moreover, many songs can be seen to go beyond the *aab* model of a classic 12-bar blues. In so doing, these songs individually maximize or minimize the potential for verse or chorus quality through various means. These conversions were seen to often rely on a few common strategies, especially within regard to melodic phrase rhythms.

One recurring family of organizational schemes found within many blues-based songs involves hybrid structures. Unlike other blues structures, hybrid structures contain separate verse and chorus qualities within a single blues-based harmonic pattern. 12-bar versions of these hybrid structures are fundamentally incompatible with the *aab* model of the 12-bar blues. The *aab* pattern does return as a component of the hybrid 16-bar blues. Yet the relationship between a hybrid 16-bar blues and a classic 12-bar blues is not as straightforward as this letter pattern might imply, as seen in the song “Taxman.”

It is possible to sketch a chart of the various interactions between blues-based organizational schemes and section roles, as shown in Example 4.2.34.

Example 4.2.34: Relationships between blues schemes and section roles

In this chart, each boxed lower-case letter represents a 4-bar unit. Each particular configuration of 4-bar units and section roles is bounded by a dotted box, and dotted lines between these dotted boxes represent the most seamless path from one configuration to another. For instance, in Example 4.2.34a, we find a classic 12-bar blues organizational scheme, in which the entire 12-bar structure represents verse material. Through small changes, this classic 12-bar blues configuration can convert into a 12-bar span of chorus material (e.g., “Maybellene” or “Ko Ko Mo”), as shown in b). In c), we find a hybrid 12-bar

blues configuration (e.g. “Evil”), which can be seen to merge aspects of different 12-bar blues schemes. Via a front-end expansion of this hybrid 12-bar structure, we arrive at the hybrid 16-bar blues structure shown in d). (This process was seen most clearly in “Blue Suede Shoes.”) With enough supporting evidence from various domains, we may feel – as shown in e) – that this hybrid 16-bar blues structure eventually splits into separate areas of verse and chorus quality (e.g. “Jailhouse Rock”). This brief chart thus represents one hypothetical way that larger forms could have arisen out of the basic 12-bar blues structure, although no particular historical derivation is necessarily implied here.

Although all of the blues-based song examples discussed above were drawn from the 1950s and 1960s, blues structures undeniably participate in the form of songs from the later decades of rock as well. For example, relatively clear hybrid 16-bar blues organizational schemes can be found in the songs “Travelin’ Band” (Creedence Clearwater Revival, 1970), “Gotta Serve Somebody” (Bob Dylan, 1979), “Cover Me” (Bruce Springsteen, 1984), and “Mystery Dance” (Elvis Costello, 1993). In some cases, the hybrid 16-bar scheme is altered in interesting ways, such as within “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For” (U2, 1987). Overall, these blues structures can help explain our perception of verse and chorus roles outside of strict blues settings. In the following discussion, in fact, we will see how the general gestalt of the hybrid 16-bar blues can become converted into song structures that seem far removed from any clear blues context.

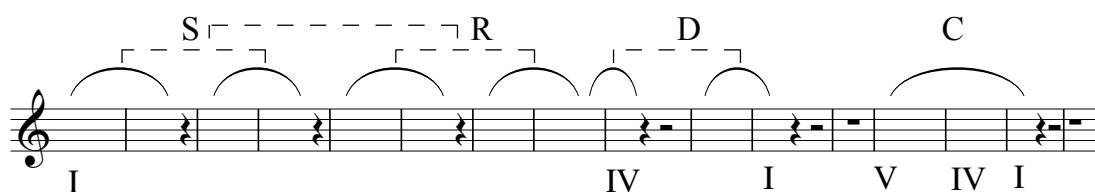
4.3: SRDC Structure

As we have seen, the form of a hybrid 16-bar blues can be conceptualized as an *aabc* pattern, in which each letter refers to a 4-bar unit. This *aabc* succession pattern overlaps with another form type found within rock music: the SRDC. But unlike the relatively limited harmonic palette available for prototypical blues-based patterns, the SRDC structure can accommodate a wide variety of harmonic progressions.

While hybrid 16-bar blues patterns often appear to split into areas of verse and chorus quality (especially under certain conditions), some may feel that clear verse and chorus sections do not exist within these 16-bar spans. SRDC structures often show a similar ambiguity, especially when SRDC instantiations are similar to a hybrid blues. But because the SRDC framework supports a diverse array of harmonic realizations, it has an even greater potential to interact with our perception of section roles in various ways. Consequently, SRDC structures can be seen to extend the aspects of conversion seen in the previous portion of this chapter beyond a blues context.

SRDC overview

The SRDC label describes phrase structure and phrase function. In particular, the letters “SRDC” stand for *Statement*, *Restatement*, *Departure*, and *Conclusion*. Walter Everett introduces this acronym in his two-volume work on the music of the Beatles (1999, 2001), in which he defines the SRDC pattern in terms of four “gestures”: “the statement [S] of a melodic idea, a restatement [R] at the same or contrasting pitch level, a departure [D] that introduces contrasting material, and a conclusion [C] that may or may not recapitulate the opening phrase” (1999, 16). The SRDC concept proves to be a useful analytical tool for Everett throughout his writings on the Beatles and elsewhere, in part because it allows a significant amount of flexibility with regard to the musical content it can describe. For instance, it is easy to map the SRDC pattern onto a prototypical hybrid 16-bar blues structure, as shown in Example 4.3.01. Each letter in the SRDC acronym captures the phrase organization of each 4-bar hypermeasure and its function within the 16-bar whole. Looking back at some of the hybrid 16-bar blues song examples discussed earlier (e.g., “Jailhouse Rock”), the SRDC pattern should be readily apparent.

Example 4.3.01: SRDC pattern within a hybrid 16-bar blues phrase structure

Some readers may notice the similarity between the concept of SRDC and the traditional notion of a musical *sentence*. While Everett himself – in his brief discussion of SRDC structure – does not explore its relationship with sentence structure, other theorists have proposed this connection (e.g., Summach 2011). It would be problematic to consider the two structures identical, of course, due to differences between rock and common-practice music in terms of harmony, phrase structure, etc. (Moreover, the classical sentence typically describes an instrumental passage while the SRDC label typically describes a vocal passage.) Yet an examination of sentence structure potentially offers some insights into other aspects of SRDC quality.

A detailed description of sentence structure can be found in the writing of William Caplin. Caplin states that a sentence comprises a presentation phrase followed by a continuation phrase (1998, 35ff). These two phrases can be seen as mapping to the first and

second halves of the SRDC pattern. Similar to the first half of an SRDC pattern, the presentation phrase of a sentence consists of a “basic idea” and its repetition. Regarding the second half of a sentence, Caplin states that it contains both “continuation” and “cadential” function. We might initially consider that continuation function maps to the departure gesture of an SRDC pattern and that cadential function maps to the conclusion gesture. Yet Caplin (45) sees the second half of a sentence as containing both continuation and cadential functions simultaneously (a “form-functional fusion”). This creates a problem for a one-to-one mapping, since Everett sees the departure and conclusion gestures as two distinct parts. Nevertheless, as we learn more about the aspects of continuation function from Caplin, its qualities seem to coincide with notions of departure. For instance, Caplin characterizes continuation function via four main traits (presented in order of typicality): 1) fragmentation, which involves a shortening of phrase units, 2) an acceleration of the harmonic pace, 3) an increase in rhythmic activity, and 4) sequential harmonies (1998, 41). Additionally, Caplin states that fragmentation does not necessarily involve any motivic connection to prior material; instead, fragmentation concerns only the length of the musical units. If we reconsider the hybrid 16-bar blues organizational scheme in light of this description, we find that some of these continuation characteristics – especially fragmentation and an increase in harmonic pace – describe quite well the musical organization of the departure gesture. Caplin’s description of a classical sentence thus highlights some important qualities we might expect for an SRDC structure.

Overall, the notion of SRDC is much more abstract and flexible than any blues template. Everett, for example, does not specify any particular number of measures for the SRDC pattern. In fact, it is not difficult to find instantiations of SRDC construction in a range of different measure lengths. The main repeating material of “From Me to You” (The Beatles, 1963) (shown below in Example 4.3.02), for instance, shows an SRDC pattern that is eight bars long. Yet as we examine various instances of the SRDC pattern – especially those that Everett himself identifies – the great majority of cases are 16 bars long. The 16-bar SRDC structure will thus act as a reference point by which to focus the following discussion. As well, we find that – despite the relatively abstract description of SRDC quality – a few specific melodic phrase rhythms and harmonic realizations consistently appear within the 16-bar SRDC framework. Even if we identify some common strategies for SRDC construction, however, these strategies do not always interact with our perception of section roles in the same way. Like the blues patterns discussed earlier, SRDC organizational schemes offer an interesting case study into how our perception of section roles may be converted through changes in various domains.

Example 4.3.02: 8-bar SRDC pattern in “From Me to You” (The Beatles, 1963)

0:07 (orig. C) I vi I V

If there's an - y-thing that you want, if there's an - y-thing I can do, just

IV vi I V I

call on me and I'll send it a- long with love from me to you.

SRDC as verse, C as refrain

As we might expect based on our examination of blues-based structures, the SRDC pattern sometimes imparts a strong sense of verse quality. Consider, for example, “I’ll Cry Instead” (Beatles, 1964), in which the main repeating unit clearly shows SRDC organization. (A somewhat harmonically-simplified transcription of the initial iteration is shown in Example 4.3.03 below.) The similarity between the harmonic content of this 16-bar unit and a 16-bar hybrid blues should be readily apparent: generally speaking, there is an 8-bar tonic prolongation, a move to the subdominant in the ninth bar, and a cadential gesture in the final four bars. The melodic phrase rhythms are also reminiscent of those found within hybrid blues contexts. In particular, this 16-bar unit begins with same melodic organization as found at the beginning of a classic 12-bar blues, while the melodic organization in the ninth bar mirrors that found in blues-based choruses. Even though this SRDC pattern is rather different than a prototypical hybrid 16-bar blues, therefore, some evidence of hybrid verse-chorus quality exists here.

Despite these factors, this particular SRDC instantiation does not give a strong impression of separate verse and chorus sections. One central reason is that most of the lyrics in this 16-bar unit do not repeat on future iterations. Moreover, while the vocal phrases in the departure gesture are somewhat parallel (in that they rhyme), the shorter phrase lengths do not maximize internal text repetition, nor do they include the title lyric. Additionally, the entire 16-bar span has a uniform instrumental texture throughout. There is thus no instrumentation-based cue that might help trigger our sense that separate sections exist within this 16-bar unit. As a result, verse quality is relatively strong here. The prototypical tail refrain in the last four bars undeniably acts as a focal point. (Note that a tail refrain is an

extremely common instantiation of the conclusion gesture.) But while the third hypermeasure may hold a potential for chorus quality, the musical and lyrical elements do not take advantage of it. All in all, the harmonic and melodic organization of this main repeating unit stands as a prototypical realization of the 16-bar SRDC structure. It is useful, in fact, to create an abstraction of this structure (shown in Example 4.3.04), since this same organizational scheme appears in other songs (as we will see) – although not necessarily with the same implications for section roles. For reference purposes, this structure will be referred to here as a *classic 16-bar SRDC*.

Example 4.3.03: “I’ll Cry Instead” (The Beatles, 1964); SRDC in main material

(orig. G)
0:02

S I
I've got ev - 'ry rea-son on Earth_____ to be mad_____ 'cause

R I V
I've just lost the on - ly girl I had_____ If I_____

D IV
_____ could get my way_____ I'd get my - self locked up to- day, but I can't

C I V I
_____ so I'll cry_____ in - stead_____

Example 4.3.04: Classic 16-bar SRDC phrase structure

S R D C

I (V) IV V I

SR as verse, D as non-verse, C as refrain

In other instances of SRDC patterns, we see a shift away from this sense that the entire 16-bar unit acts wholly as verse material. Yet as this shift occurs, it is not always

obvious that a split into separate areas of verse and chorus is entirely appropriate either. The song “Please Please Me” (The Beatles, 1963) provides a good example of this situation. As shown in Example 4.3.05, the main repeating unit of the song exhibits – in terms of harmonic and melodic phrase structure – the same classic 16-bar SRDC organization as found in “I’ll Cry Instead.” As well, we find another relatively prototypical tail refrain within the final 4-bar hypermeasure. But despite the strong similarities between the main parts of these two songs, an overarching verse label seems somewhat less applicable here than it did in the previous example. In particular, the 16-bar span seems less strongly to be one single cohesive unit. Generally speaking, the sense of departure in the third 4-bar segment is much stronger now. Rather than a static subdominant chord, the harmonies are constantly moving (even though the underlying harmony still seems to be a prolonged subdominant). Additionally, the melodic fragmentation beginning in the ninth bar is dramatic, as the lead vocal breaks into small, end-accented bursts. The internal text repetition also becomes very high, and this same text is repeated on future iterations of the larger 16-bar unit. Finally, there is a perceptible change in texture between the first eight bars and this departure gesture. While not as extreme as the change in texture within many hybrid blues schemes, there is a noticeable intensification – most obviously in the snare drum part – as the instruments become more active (if only because of the increased harmonic rhythm).

Example 4.3.05: “Please Please Me” (The Beatles, 1963); SRDC pattern

(orig. E)
0:07

The musical score is presented in four staves, each with a label on the left: S (Soprano/Vocal), R (Rhythm), D (Drum), and C (Bass). The lyrics are written below the notes. Chord symbols (I, IV, V, ii, vi, bIII) are placed above the staves to indicate the harmonic structure. The S and R staves show a melodic line with a 16-bar span, while the D and C staves provide harmonic support. The D staff includes a snare drum part with a pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The C staff shows a bass line with a similar rhythmic pattern. The lyrics are: "Last night I said these words to my girl", "I know you ne - ver e - ven try, girl.", "Come on, come on, come on, come on, please, please me, woh yeah, like I please you.".

S Last night I said these words to my girl

R "I know you ne - ver e - ven try, girl. Come

D on, come on, come on, come on, please,

C please me, woh yeah, like I please you."

For these reasons, one could make the argument that – as seen in the case of a hybrid blues – this 16-bar unit from “Please Please Me” breaks into eight bars of verse-like material and eight bars of chorus-like material. Yet the situation here is not the same as a hybrid blues, and our perception of section roles is thus not necessarily the same either. Foremost, the entire third hypermeasure of this song avoids tonic altogether. These four bars consequently seem much more unstable than the equivalent passage of a hybrid 16-bar blues. As well, the final melodic phrase begins and ends on tonic. This motion is undeniably the cadential moment of the 16-bar span, but it has a much different feel than a blues cadence (which typically begins on the dominant). These factors combine to make the beginning of the tail refrain itself sound like a point of arrival. This sense of arrival is amplified by the fact that – at the beginning of the refrain – the vocal parts hit the highest note (and leap the greatest distance) of the entire 16-bar span. The end result is that the departure gesture seems much more like a preparation for the refrain than part of a section that would include the refrain (such as a chorus). Sandwiched between the verse-like quality of the opening eight bars and the focal quality of the refrain, this departure gesture embodies, therefore, a strong sense of what could be considered prechorus quality. The prechorus-like aspect of departure gestures is not an entirely novel insight, as Everett (2009, 146-7) and Summach (2011) have articulated similar views in their work. Of course, to say that the third hypermeasure in this SRDC pattern is, in fact, a prechorus would be something of a stretch, since this third hypermeasure clearly precedes a refrain, not a chorus. Because most theories of form posit that a refrain exists within something else, moreover, it would be difficult to say that the departure gesture lies outside of the verse since that would cause the refrain to lie outside of the verse as well. Yet the prechorus-like quality of the departure gesture is unmistakable, in that its musical and lyrical content acts as contrast between the opening and closing tonic-based material. At minimum, we can say that the SRDC structure in this song splits in half, such that the SR gestures seem like clear verse material while the DC gestures seem like something different, whatever that may be.

The departure gesture – almost by nature – thus has a strong potential to split a 16-bar SRDC pattern into two halves. But while it may seem clear to label the first half as verse material, it is not always obvious how to handle the second half. Another good example of this situation can be found in the song “Dream Lover” (Bobby Darin, 1959). Like other songs examined thus far, the main repeating unit (Example 4.3.06) clearly shows SRDC organization.

Example 4.3.06: “Dream Lover” (Bobby Darin, 1959); SRDC in main material

(orig. C)
0:07 I

S
Ev - 'ry night I hope and pray a dream lov - er will come my way;—

R
A girl to hold in my arms and know the ma - gic of her charms. 'Cause I

D
want a girl to call my own, I want a

C
dream lov - er so I don't have to dream a - lone.

As in previous examples, the first eight bars of this SRDC pattern seem rather verse-like. In this case, a tonic prolongation is embellished with a move to the submediant, and the melodic phrase rhythm harkens to the verse-like vocal phrase structures found in the first half of hybrid 16-bar blues songs. With the departure gesture, however, we have a situation similar to the previous example. Again, the vocal melody breaks into short, end-accented fragments; the harmonic rhythm increases to a rate of one chord per bar; the lyrics from the ninth bar onward are repeated on future iterations; and a prototypical tail refrain appears within the conclusion gesture. This departure gesture also conveys a strong sense of transitional quality. In this third hypermeasure, for instance, the harmonic rhythm lies halfway between that in the first eight bars and the final four bars; as well, the melody linearly ascends measure by measure to prepare the final descent within the tail refrain. We may feel, therefore, that the departure gesture has something of a prechorus-like quality, despite the fact that a prechorus label might be problematic. Yet there is something less prechorus-like about this departure gesture than the one found in “Please Please Me.” Most notably, the harmonic content is much more stable here, in that a tonic chord occurs on each strong hyperbeat. We may, in fact, wonder whether we should consider the last half of this SRDC pattern as a chorus, particularly since the entire 8-bar span is tonally closed and is repeated note-for-note and word-for-word on each appearance of this larger 16-bar unit. Perhaps this DC gesture would be an example of Covach’s “incipient” verse-chorus form. Yet the stop-time

texture that occurs at the beginning of the departure gesture somewhat thwarts the feeling of arrival we might expect of a chorus section. All in all, it is hard to come to any final conclusion with regard to appropriate section labels for this song. The safest bet may be simply to label the entire 16-bar span as verse material. The simplicity of this verse label hides some important underlying qualities, though, of which we will see further evidence in the following examples.

SR as verse, DC as chorus

Since the SRDC pattern of a hybrid 16-bar blues splits (given certain conditions) into areas of relatively strong verse and chorus quality, we might expect to see similar situations within non-blues-based SRDC patterns. In fact, this situation is not difficult to find, as shown via two examples by The Beatles. To begin with, consider the main repeating unit of the song “Ticket to Ride” (The Beatles, 1965), which is transcribed in Example 4.3.07.

Example 4.3.07: “Ticket to Ride” (The Beatles, 1965); SRDC in main section(s)

(orig. A)
0:07 I

The musical score for "Ticket to Ride" is presented in four staves, each with a label on the left: S (Song), R (Rhythm), D (Drum), and C (Chorus). The lyrics are written below the staves, and Roman numeral chord markings are placed above the notes. The first staff (S) starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff (R) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The third staff (D) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The fourth staff (C) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "I think I'm gon-na be sad, I think it's to-day yeah. The girl that's dri-vin' me mad is go-in' a-way. She's got a tic-ket to ride. She's got a tic-ket to ride. She's got a tic-ket to ride, but she don't care." The Roman numeral markings are: I, ii, V, vi, IV, vi, bVII, V, I.

S I think I'm gon-na be sad, I think it's to-day yeah. The

R girl that's dri-vin' me mad is go-in' a-way.

D She's got a tic-ket to ride. She's got a tic-ket to ride.

C She's got a tic-ket to ride, but she don't care.

This main repeating unit displays a highly similar melodic and harmonic framework as found in a classic 16-bar SRDC organizational scheme (compare to Example 4.3.04). Interestingly, these 16 bars have received conflicting interpretations within the analytical literature. Both Pollack (2001, #65) and Stephenson (2002, 32), for instance, view this 16-bar unit as comprised entirely of verse material. In contrast, Everett (2001, 283-4) and

Moore (2001, 52-3) see this SRDC pattern as cleaving into an 8-bar verse followed by an 8-bar chorus. Each group of theorists can be seen to have valid reasons for their choices. Like “I’ll Cry Instead,” for example, the instrumental texture within this 16-bar unit remains fairly consistent throughout (despite one small pause before the final hypermeasure). As well, these 16 bars basically trace one single tonal motion. Consequently, the entire SRDC structure here could be considered as one single verse section.

Nonetheless, some important differences exist between “Ticket to Ride” and “I’ll Cry,” and it is to these differences that Everett and Moore are most likely responding with their chorus label. Most notably, the lyric and melodic structure in the departure gesture takes greater advantage of the chorus-like potential offered by the melodic phrase rhythms. The two short vocal phrases in this third hypermeasure are almost identical, and each contains the title text. Moreover, these short vocal phrases parallel the final vocal phrase in both lyric and melodic terms, and this continued parallelism causes the latter half of the 16-bar structure to sound like one cohesive section. The harmonic structure of the departure gesture potentially strengthens chorus quality as well. In particular, note how the strong hyperbeats beginning in the ninth bar are harmonized with a submediant chord. This submediant can of course be seen as a substitute for the subdominant – a chord that underpins many departure gestures. Yet this submediant harmony may also act as a substitute for tonic. As a result, the departure gesture in “Ticket to Ride” may be seen as somewhat more harmonically stable than the corresponding passage in “I’ll Cry Instead.” This aspect of increased stability may be subtle, but it potentially helps explain why one theorist (e.g., Everett 2001, 241) would analyze these two highly-similar SRDC organizational schemes in different ways.

Example 4.3.08: “Ticket To Ride” (The Beatles; 1965); form chart

Start	Section	Pt.
0:00	intro	
0:08	SRDC	A
0:38	SRDC	A
1:09	bridge	B
1:27	SRDC	A
1:58	bridge	B
2:16	SRDC	A
2:47	outro / fade	

As a final factor, we should consider that the overall form of the song might be a central factor in our decision about section roles. To elucidate this point, the large-scale succession pattern for “Ticket to Ride” is shown above in Example 4.3.08. (The bridge section will not be discussed here since it is a relatively clear-cut case.) Perhaps not

surprisingly, this succession pattern is the same as that found in “I’ll Cry Instead,” the only exception being the addition of an outro. The strong similarity between the large-scale forms of these two songs may encourage us to label the lower-level sections in similar ways. As seen in “I’ll Cry Instead,” this AABA–BA succession pattern – a common succession pattern in pop/rock music from this era (as has been discussed earlier) – often has A sections that clearly comprise verse material only. A theorist may thus be led to consider that other instances of the AABA–BA pattern also contain only verse and bridge material (e.g., Covach, as discussed in Chapter 2). The numerous similarities – on local, global, and historical levels – between these two Beatles songs may thus prompt us to categorize them in similar ways, despite the particular instantiation of the SRDC material itself.

Further changes may be even more effective at causing a 16-bar SRDC organizational scheme to split into separate areas of verse and chorus. A good example of this situation can be found in “Drive My Car” (The Beatles, 1965). As shown in Example 4.3.09, the four 4-bar hypermeasures within the main repeating unit create a basic SRDC pattern.

Example 4.3.09: “Drive My Car” (The Beatles, 1965); SRDC in main section(s)

(orig. D)
0:05

S
Asked a girl what she want-ed to be... She said, "Ba-by, can't you see?...

R
I wan-na be fa-mous, a star of the screen. But you can do some-thing in be- tween...

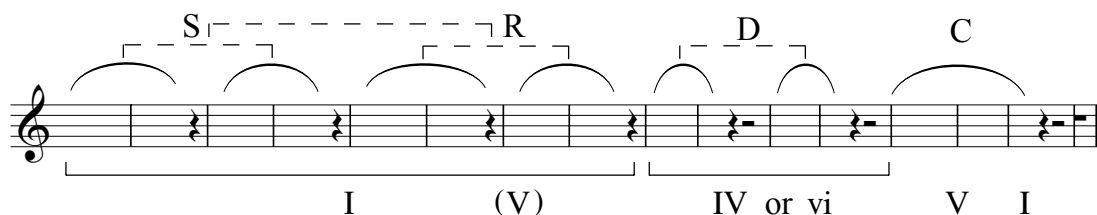
D
Ba-by, you can drive my car... Yes I'm gon-na be a star...

C
Ba-by, you can drive my car, and may-be I'll love you..."

From a harmonic perspective, this SRDC pattern is highly similar to those found in “Ticket to Ride” and “I’ll Cry Instead.” (In fact, the tempos of “Drive My Car” and “Ticket to Ride” are basically identical, at around 122-123 BPM.) While the general melodic

organization of the first half of this SRDC structure differs from these earlier examples (see Example 4.3.10), it does show strong similarity to other SRDC instances we have seen before, such as “Dream Lover” or a hybrid 16-bar blues. Despite the strong similarity with other examples discussed thus far, theorists – interestingly enough – seem to unanimously agree that this SRDC structure splits into a first half of verse material and a second half of chorus material (Covach 2006, 45; Everett 2001, 315; Pollack 2001, #77; Temperley 2007, 336). Some of the reasons that such a strong sense of chorus quality exists here duplicate those discussed with regard to “Ticket to Ride”: the departure gesture begins a series of parallel melodic phrase constructions, these phrases contain the title lyric, and the submediant is emphasized on strong hyperbeats. Instrumentation certainly plays an important part here as well. Unlike the fairly static instrumental texture throughout the SRDC pattern in “Ticket to Ride,” the DC gestures in “Drive My Car” sound noticeably louder and thicker – most obviously through the addition of the piano – than their preceding SR gestures. As a result, we can say that the potential for separate areas of verse and chorus that was latent in “I’ll Cry Instead” and amplified in “Ticket to Ride” is now maximized in “Drive My Car.” We appear to have passed a tipping point in our perception of verse and chorus qualities in a 16-bar SRDC pattern – a tipping point that had yet to be clearly surpassed in any previous example.

Example 4.3.10: SRDC phrase structure in “Drive My Car” (The Beatles, 1965)



There is one remaining factor, however, that may also significantly influence our perception of section qualities in “Drive My Car,” aside from any particular aspect of the SRDC pattern itself. This factor is the large-scale form of the song. As Example 4.3.11 shows, “Drive My Car” is simply a succession of 16-bar SRDC units (plus intro and outro). In contrast to “I’ll Cry Instead” and “Ticket to Ride,” the song lacks a classic bridge section. Without this classic bridge, the form of “Drive My Car” does not have the same fundamental opposition between two sections (A and B) as seen in these other songs. While it would be easy enough to conceive of “Drive My Car” as simply a succession of verses, no theorist has chosen to do so. Without the contrast of a bridge, the contrast between the two halves of the SRDC structure conceivably moves to the forefront of our analytical attention. As we have seen in previous examples, the existence (or lack) of one section role can considerably affect

our perception of other section roles. One other aspect of large-scale form also potentially influences our perception of section categories here, too. In particular, note how the first half of the third SRDC iteration (starting at 1:07) supports a guitar solo instead of a vocal melody. Yet in the second half of this SRDC iteration, the vocal melody returns. Consequently, the DC material seems to be treated separately from the SR material within the composition as a whole. The guitar solo thus helps engender the chorus quality of the DC gesture by making it seem like an independent part. Overall, “Drive My Car” contains a number of factors – both local and global – that act together to convey distinct sections of verse and chorus quality in the song. The form of the song, in fact, appears to be relatively unambiguous given the agreement found among analysts. We have thus reached the end of the line, so to speak, in one conversion process of the 16-bar SRDC organizational scheme.

Example 4.3.11: “Drive My Car” (The Beatles, 1965); form chart

Start	Section	Alt.
0:05	verse	SRDC
0:20	chorus	
0:36	verse	SRDC
0:52	chorus	
1:07	guitar solo	SRDC
1:23	chorus	
1:39	verse	SRDC
1:54	chorus	

SR as verse, D as prechorus, C as extended refrain

At this point, we have explored a few ways that a 16-bar SRDC pattern can interact with section roles. These shifts were found to derive from changes in not only the musical and lyrical content of the SRDC pattern itself but also from external factors, such as the large-scale succession pattern or the quality of other sections within the song. In all of these cases, the 16-bar length of the SRDC structure was maintained. Our perception of section roles may also be shifted through changes that affect the length of the SRDC structure. One common change involves the conclusion gesture. As the conclusion gesture is elongated, it begins to seem less like a refrain and more like a chorus. The underlying verse- and prechorus-like qualities of the SRD gestures further encourage this hearing.

The most obvious way that a conclusion gesture can be elongated is simply by doubling it. The song “La-La (Means I Love You)” (The Delfonics, 1968) provides a good illustration of this situation. As shown in Example 4.3.12, the main 20-bar repeating unit of

the song divides cleanly into a series of 4-bar hypermeasures, and these 4-bar hypermeasures can be viewed as an SRDCC pattern.

Example 4.3.12: “La-La (Means I Love You)” (The Delfonics, 1968); main unit

(orig. G) 0:24

The musical score for Example 4.3.12 is presented in five systems, each with a vocal line (S, R, D, C) and a corresponding instrumental line (C). The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The first system (S) starts at 0:24 and features a 4-bar hypermeasure. The second system (R) continues the melody. The third system (D) includes a 4-bar hypermeasure. The fourth system (C) features a 4-bar hypermeasure. The fifth system (C) continues the melody. Chord annotations are provided above the notes: I⁷, V¹¹, iii, vi, ii, V¹¹, V/vi, vi, iii, ii, V¹¹, I⁷, iii, vi, iii, ii, V¹¹, I⁷.

Man y guys have come to you with a line that was n't true... and you passed them... by... Though you're
 ___ in the cen ter ring and their lines don't mean a thing, why don't you... let me... try?... Now
 I don't wear a dia-mond ring, ___ I don't e - ven know a song to sing, ___ All I know is
 "La - la - la - la - la - la - la - la - la" means I love you...
 "La - la - la - la - la - la - la - la - la" means I love you...

Example 4.3.13: Abstraction of SRDCC structure in “La-La (Means I Love You)”

The abstraction of the SRDCC structure in Example 4.3.13 is shown in a single system. The structure is represented by a sequence of notes and rests, with brackets indicating the hypermeasures. The structure is: S (4 bars), R (4 bars), D (4 bars), C (4 bars), C (4 bars). The structure is labeled as I (V) unstable V I V I.

The background SRDC structure may not be as clear here as in other songs due to the high level of embellishment in the lead vocal melody. But if we abstract the basic harmonic and melodic organization of this main repeating unit (Example 4.3.13), we find that it is

reminiscent of a classic 16-bar SRDC structure. Specifically, the statement and restatement gestures essentially prolong tonic, the departure gesture introduces shorter vocal phrase lengths and non-tonic harmonies, and the conclusion gestures display prototypical tail refrain construction. The question remains open, though, as to how we might categorize the form of this 20-bar repeating unit. In particular, does the repeat of the tail refrain encourage us to consider the final eight bars as a standalone chorus section? On the one hand, the doubled conclusion gesture – by virtue of its length alone – arguably feels more chorus-like than a simple 4-bar tail refrain. On the other hand, the final eight bars are so clearly just a doubled tail refrain that a chorus label might seem somewhat inappropriate. One central factor that potentially discourages us from hearing chorus quality here is the strong cadential quality of this doubled tail refrain. Each tail refrain begins with a falling melodic motion and a relatively fast, unstable harmonic motion that both drive towards the cadence in the third bar. This clear cadential quality helps give the sense that these tail refrains lie within something else and that – despite being doubled – they do not stand on their own as a separate section.

Because of the loose nature of the SRDC concept, though, a conclusion gesture does not necessarily have to be so obviously cadential. As cadential quality within the conclusion gestures is weakened, in fact, our sense that the final eight bars of an SRDCC pattern function as a chorus can become strengthened. Consider the song “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” (Marvin Gaye, 1968). Like the previous example, we can posit a 20-bar SRDCC pattern within the main repeating unit of the song (Example 4.3.14). The background SRDC structure may be somewhat less clear here than seen in previous cases, though. The harmonic structure of the first 4-bar hypermeasure is obviously repeated in the second 4-bar hypermeasure (thus creating an ostensible SR gesture), but the lead vocal melody is so improvisatory that motivic connections between the melodic content within these hypermeasures are not clear. In the third 4-bar hypermeasure, we find the typical accelerated harmonic rhythm of a departure gesture as well as a de-emphasis of tonic harmony, although melodic phrase fragmentation appears to be absent since the melody basically continues the same melodic phrase rhythm from the previous measures (see Example 4.3.15). Finally, the last eight bars do have a conclusion-like quality, mostly due to the return of the tonic on the strong hyper-downbeat. But unlike conclusion gestures seen in previous examples, the conclusion gestures here do not clearly show tail refrain quality. In particular, there is no cadential motion within each 4-bar hypermeasure. Instead, the tonic arrival occurs at the beginning of each conclusion gesture. (One might say there is more evidence of head refrain quality here than of tail refrain quality.) Because each hypermeasure begins on tonic, these final eight bars sound a lot like a closed unit, i.e., something that can stand on its own (especially as compared to the pair of tail refrains seen in the previous example). Our sense

that a standalone chorus section exists in this song is thus somewhat stronger than in “La-La (Means I Love You).” Nevertheless, we could say that “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” uses a similar strategy as found in the Delfonics song, in that the SRDCC pattern results from a doubling of the conclusion gesture. Because of differences between the structures of the conclusion gestures in each song, however, the resultant effect (in terms of chorus quality) is not necessarily the same.

Example 4.3.14: “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” (Marvin Gaye, 1968);
main repeating unit

(orig. Eb) 0:22

S I bet you won't drink how I knew, 'bout your plans to make me blue with some other guy

R you knew before. Between the two of us guys you know I love you more. It took me by sur

D prise, I must say, when I found out yesterday. Don't you know that I heard

C it through the grape vine, not much longer would you be mine. Oh, I heard

C it through the grape vine. Oh, I'm just about to lose my mind, Honey Honey, yeah.

Example 4.3.15: Vocal phrase organization in “I Heard It Through the Grapevine”

S R D C C

In these last two examples, the underlying 16-bar SRDC pattern from which the 20-bar repeating unit derived was fairly clear. We could easily posit that the extended length resulted simply from a doubling of the conclusion gesture. In other songs, we can also posit that the musical surface results from the expansion of the conclusion gesture in an underlying 16-bar SRDC structure. But the mechanism by which this expansion occurs is not always so obvious. Many theorists, in fact, may not recognize an underlying SRDC framework because the conclusion gesture seems so different than a typical case. As changes to the conclusion gesture make it seem less like part of the SRDC structure, the standalone quality – and thus the chorus quality – of the conclusion gesture increases even further.

One good example of this situation can be found in “I Can See for Miles” (The Who, 1967). The overall form of this song is not entirely straightforward, and there are a few different versions of various sections throughout. Nevertheless, the music beginning at 0:40 seems to be the core material of the song. The first twelve bars of this core material (Example 4.3.16) exhibit a rather clear SRD structure (i.e., SRDC without the C), and verse–prechorus labels could be applied here for reasons discussed earlier.

Example 4.3.16: “I Can See for Miles” (The Who, 1967); main material

(orig. E)
0:40

S I bIII IV I bIII IV
If you think that I don't know a-bout the lit-tle tricks you play,—

R I bIII IV I
I ne-ver see when de-li-berate-ly you put things in— my way— Well, here's a

D IV V IV V
poke at you, you're gon-na choke on it, too. You're gon-na lose that smile, be-cause all the while...

Note that after this SRD pattern, we do not get a typical conclusion gesture (i.e., a 4-bar tail refrain). Instead, we are presented with the material shown in Example 4.3.17. While this new material does not display prototypical tail refrain structure, it does have many refrain-like characteristics. Most notably, this new material has a marked cadential quality, as each vocal phrase drives to a coordinated harmonic and melodic close on tonic. This repeated cadential quality helps make the new material sound a lot like an extended

conclusion gesture – or an extended refrain – since these measures undeniably impart a strong sense of closure. That being said, this new material does have a significant chorus-like feel as well. (In fact, Stephenson explicitly refers to this material as a chorus [2002, 129].)

Example 4.3.17: “I Can See for Miles” (The Who, 1967); extended conclusion

(orig. E)
1:03

I can see for miles and miles. I can see for miles and miles. I can see for
miles and miles and miles and miles and miles. Oh, yeah—

The chorus quality of this new material is conveyed in strong part by the dramatic contrast between the stop-time texture in the preceding departure gesture and the thick texture of the full band that follows. But the difference between this new material and a prototypical tail refrain also plays a central role in our perception of chorus quality. It would not be too difficult, for example, to imagine a potential tail refrain that could have appeared here (Example 4.3.18).

Example 4.3.18: “I Can See for Miles” (The Who, 1967); potential tail refrain

(orig. E)

I can see for miles and miles and miles.

Had we been presented with two iterations of this hypothetical tail refrain, though, it would not have seemed as chorus-like as the material we do hear. Unlike a doubled tail refrain, the actual conclusion gesture traces a single, long motion over more than eight bars. This sense of a single motion derives from the fact that none of the cadential motions conclude on a hypermetrically strong beat until the end of the last long melodic phrase. Consequently, this conclusion gesture seems like one large unit, not the repetition of two smaller units. The extension to this conclusion gesture, therefore, is of a different sort than

that engendered in the previous examples, and this difference plays into the increased sense that this conclusion gesture acts as a standalone chorus section.

Hypermetric reinterpretation

If the conclusion gesture of an SRDC structure is altered such that we perceive it to be a chorus section, something important has happened not just to our sense of section roles but also to our sense of phrase rhythm. In particular, what used to be the final four bars of a structure (the 16-bar SRDC) become the opening four bars of a new structure (a chorus). We could say, therefore, that the end is reinterpreted as a beginning. This phenomenon is something that has yet to be significantly discussed within the music theory community, even in writings on common-practice-era music. As we will see, this phenomenon plays an important role within rock music, especially as we attempt to explain the relationship between various different form types.

Music theorists have documented a similar, albeit smaller-scale situation, which is typically referred to as “metric reinterpretation” (e.g., Rothstein 1989, 52). In a nutshell, metric reinterpretation occurs when the last bar of one hypermeasure acts as the first bar of a new hypermeasure, as illustrated in Example 4.3.19.

Example 4.3.19: Metric reinterpretation

The diagram illustrates metric reinterpretation using two musical staves. The first staff contains four measures, each represented by a horizontal line with a single dash. Below the staff, the measures are labeled 'Measure: 1', '2', '3', and '4'. The second staff begins with a bracketed measure containing a '4' over a '1', followed by measures labeled '2', '3', and '4'. A dashed line labeled 'Metric Reinterpretation' points from the end of the first staff to the start of the second staff, indicating that the final bar of the first hypermeasure is reinterpreted as the first bar of the second hypermeasure.

As should be evident from this description, a central component of metric reinterpretation is a strong sense of a prevailing hypermetric structure. In other words, metric reinterpretation can only occur when a listener comes to expect – for whatever reasons – a strong-weak alternation of measures. The term “reinterpretation” is not the only way of conceiving of this phenomenon, however. Other authors (e.g., Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983, 101ff) refer to this situation as a metric “deletion,” since one could also say that the fourth bar in the first hypermeasure is deleted by the appearance of the first bar in the second hypermeasure. The term “deletion” unveils an important aspect of the standard view of metric reinterpretation. Specifically, there is no (or very little) sense that the reinterpreted

measure is perceived for any significant amount of time as both an ending and a beginning. Rather, the sense that the reinterpreted measure acts as the fourth bar of an existing hypermeasure is almost immediately erased by the sense that this measure acts as the first bar of a new hypermeasure.

If we extend the notion of metric reinterpretation up one level in the metric hierarchy, we have what will be referred to here as a “hypermetric reinterpretation.” (The term “hypermetric reinterpretation” has been used by others as a synonym for metric reinterpretation [e.g., Neal 2007, 56-7], but the two phenomena will be considered distinct in this discussion.) As shown in Example 4.3.20, a hypermetric reinterpretation occurs when the final hypermeasure of a multiple-hypermeasure structure becomes reinterpreted as the first hypermeasure within another multiple-hypermeasure structure. From a purely theoretical standpoint, hypermetric reinterpretation assumes that we can hear a strong-weak alternation of hypermeasures. Yet some authors have argued that our sense of regularity becomes weaker and weaker as we reach higher and higher levels of metrical structure (e.g., Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983, 21). Admittedly, the phenomenon of hypermetric reinterpretation is less immediately perceptible than that of metric reinterpretation. It is posited here, though, that listeners are, in fact, often aware of their location with metric structures larger than a 4-bar hypermeasure. This “hyper-hypermetric” awareness is especially salient within form types commonly found in rock music. The SRDC structure is a good example of this situation, since we can easily track our location within clear instances of the 16-bar SRDC pattern.

Example 4.3.20: Hypermetric reinterpretation

The diagram illustrates hypermetric reinterpretation using two musical staves. The top staff represents a 16-bar structure divided into four hypermeasures, each consisting of 4 bars, labeled 1, 2, 3, and 4. The bottom staff represents the same 16-bar structure, but with a reinterpretation. The first hypermeasure (bars 1-4) is now considered a single hypermeasure of 1 bar, labeled 1. The remaining 12 bars are divided into three hypermeasures of 4 bars each, labeled 2, 3, and 4. A dashed arrow labeled "Hypermetric Reinterpretation" points from the end of the first hypermeasure in the top staff to the start of the first hypermeasure in the bottom staff.

As examples of hypermetric reinterpretation, we can reconsider some of the songs just discussed. In “I Can See for Miles,” for instance, our sense that the material following the SRD gestures acts as the final hypermeasure in a 16-bar structure is quickly erased by the onset of the new material itself. Almost immediately, the chorus feels like the beginning of something. In this regard, the notion of hypermetric “deletion” seems appropriate. The chorus so strongly draws our attention to its own internal metric structure, we might say, that

it causes us to abandon any pre-existing sense of hyper-hypermetric structure that we may have been tracking. Not all cases of hypermetric reinterpretation are so instantaneous, however. Consider the circumstances in “I Heard It Through the Grapevine.” We might expect the main repeating unit to end after the sixteenth bar. (It would not be too difficult to imagine this situation.) But the music continues and – whether we are conscious of this happening or not – the repeat of the refrain gesture reorients our hearing such that the first conclusion gesture no longer sounds as if it is a weak hypermeasure. The first conclusion gesture now sounds like a beginning, since it is the first of two instances of the same thing. This shift in hearing does not necessarily occur at any precise moment, though. In fact, the change in hearing is somewhat retroactive, since it does not fully become clear that the conclusion gesture will be repeated until the onset of the second iteration. (Admittedly, this perception changes with our familiarity of the song.) As a result, the first conclusion gesture can be heard as both a strong and a weak hypermeasure, and our sense of it as one or the other is somewhat contingent on our own conscious choice of how we want to hear it. Note that this ability of an entire hypermeasure to act in both a strong and weak role presents a different situation than that traditionally described for metric reinterpretation. With hypermetric reinterpretation, there appears to be a potential element of large-scale metric ambiguity, where the reinterpreted hypermeasure acts in a dual role. The possibility for this ambiguity may derive from the weakened sense of metric regularity that exists at higher levels of metric structure. Hypermetric reinterpretation may thus involve a direct reinterpretation or something less clear. In either case, hypermetric reinterpretation provides a useful way of understanding the mechanism by which an SRDC conclusion gesture may be converted to act in the role of a standalone chorus.

SR as verse, D as prechorus, C as chorus

In the previous examples, extensions to the conclusion gesture still retained some sense of refrain quality. Even though chorus quality may have been stronger in certain cases, we may not have felt that the extended conclusion gesture resulted in something that could be considered a full-fledged chorus section. With the concept of hypermetric reinterpretation, though, we can see conversions of the 16-bar SRDC structure into clear verse-prechorus-chorus arrangements.

As one step forward in this process, consider “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” (The Rolling Stones, 1965). The first sixteen bars of the main repeating unit in this song are transcribed in Example 4.3.21. Compare these sixteen bars to the 16-bar SRDC structure found in “Dream Lover” (Example 4.3.06). The similarity of the SRD gestures in these two songs is uncanny. The melodic phrase rhythm is basically identical. The harmonic content is

also extremely close, the only difference being – in the latter half of the SR gestures – the use of IV versus vi (which arguably conveys the same harmonic function anyway). Even the melodic structure is highly similar: each statement and restatement gesture introduces a motive in the first two bars, and this motive is repeated at a lower pitch level in the second two bars; as well, the melody in the departure gesture linearly ascends by step toward a conclusion gesture. Some background SRDC pattern thus seems to organize this main passage in “Satisfaction.” Yet something very different occurs after the departure gesture. Both songs arrive on a tonic chord; but while the conclusion gesture in “Dream Lover” presents a tail refrain, the equivalent material in “Satisfaction” is not obviously a conclusion gesture at all. Instead, the main guitar and bass riffs reappear, and there is no drive towards a cadential moment whatsoever. In fact, this main riff continues on for many measures afterwards and supports a variety of new lyrics. In our analyses of this song, both Temperley and I considered this return of the main riff to be the beginning of the chorus section (de Clercq and Temperley 2011).

Example 4.3.21: “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” (The Rolling Stones, 1965);
main vocal material

(orig. E)
0:14

The musical score is divided into four staves labeled S, R, D, and C. Staff S (Soprano) and R (Soprano) show the main vocal melody with lyrics: 'I can't get no sa-tis-fac-tion'. Staff D (Soprano) shows a variation of the melody with lyrics: 'and I tried, and I tried, and I tried. I can't'. Staff C (Soprano) shows a bass line with lyrics: 'get no... I can't get no...'. Harmonic annotations (I, IV, V, bVII) are placed above the staves to indicate the underlying chords. The score is in 4/4 time and the key signature has one flat (Bb).

We could say, therefore, that this moment in “Satisfaction” involves a hypermetric reinterpretation, in that what could have been the final 4-bar conclusion gesture is replaced (or deleted) by the onset of a chorus section. Yet the situation is not entirely so straightforward. For instance, note that the “I can’t get no...” lyrics always follow the end of

the SRD gestures. After this title line, we hear a batch of new lyrics, and these new lyrics are different on each iteration. The first four bars of this main riff thus seem like something separate from the material that follows. In fact, the vocal melody and lyrics of these first four bars act – despite the main riff – as if they are attempting to present a conclusion gesture. (Note the end-accented, title-containing, tonic-directed aspect of the vocal part.) But the static nature of the main riff foils these cadential attempts. (Dare we say that the vocal part “can’t get no [cadential] satisfaction?”) The lyrics reflect this cadential denial, too, as the title line is never fully completed during this portion of the main material. Thus even though a new section seems to begin here, some remnants of a conclusion gesture persist. We might say that this case is one of those ambiguous instances of hypermetric reinterpretation, where the reinterpreted material sounds like both a beginning and an ending. Despite some underlying ambiguity, the main riff undeniably reorients our hearing, such that conclusion-gesture quality recedes into the background as chorus quality comes more strongly to the fore.

The final stage of this conversion process is reached when no remnants of a conclusion gesture can be found after the SRD gestures. Such is the case with the song “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin’” (The Righteous Brothers, 1964). Again, the song includes very clear S, R, and D gestures in its main material (Example 4.3.22). But after the departure gesture, we hear the material shown in Example 4.3.23.

Example 4.3.22: “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin’” (The Righteous Brothers, 1964); opening material

(orig. Db)
0:00

The musical score is presented in three staves. The top staff is for the vocal line (S), the middle for guitar (R), and the bottom for bass (D). Chord annotations are placed above the staves: $bVII/\hat{I}$ and I for the vocal and guitar parts, and ii , iii , IV , and V for the bass part. The bass part includes triplet markings over the IV and V chords. Lyrics are written below each staff, with some words underlined to indicate phrasing.

S (Vocal): You ne-ver close your eyes__ an-y - more when I kiss your lips.___ And there's no

R (Guitar): __ ten-der- ness like be - fore in your fin - ger tips.___ You're try-ing

D (Bass): hard not to show it, but, Ba-by, Ba-by I know it.___

Example 4.3.23: “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin’” (The Righteous Brothers, 1964);
chorus

(orig. Db)
0:32

You've lost that lov - in' fee - lin' whoa-oh that lov - in' fee - lin'.

You've lost that lov - in' fee - lin', now it's gone, gone, gone, whoa-oh whoa-oh

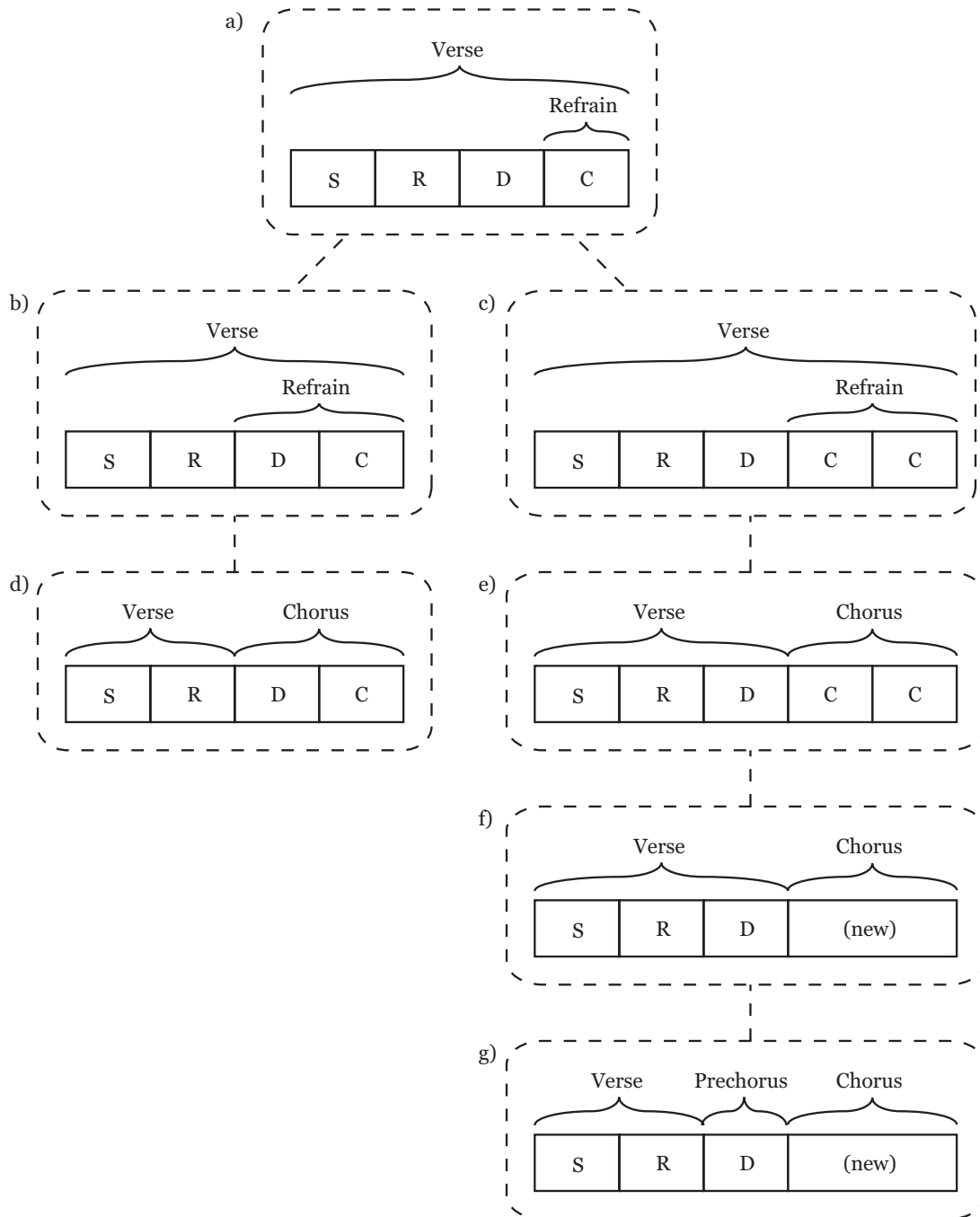
This new material is undoubtedly the chorus section of the song, as evident in analyses by multiple theorists (e.g., Covach 2005, 74; Stephenson 2002, 141; Temperley 2010). While this chorus section occurs in the location of a prototypical conclusion gesture, its first phrase denies any sense that it acts as an ending to anything. For instance, this chorus is tonally walled off by tonic chords at its beginning and end, and it also lacks any internal cadence on a strong hyperbeat until the very end. We clearly hear the onset of the chorus as a point of arrival – as the start of a new section. Any expectation that the measures following the departure gesture were going to be the end of something is immediately erased once the chorus starts. If a hypermetric reinterpretation can be seen to occur here, it is an immediate one, as the perceptual pull of the chorus causes us to abandon whatever sense of strong-weak hypermeasures we had been tracking up to this point. With a clear chorus section, the prechorus quality of the departure gesture is also amplified, since it now precedes a full-fledged chorus. The end result is a clear yet nascent example of a modern formal structure: verse-prechorus-chorus. The scale of this formal structure is relatively small, of course, as the prechorus is only four bars long. Nevertheless, we have reached a stage in the conversion of the basic 16-bar SRDC structure in which the SRDC pattern has largely disappeared into the background.

Conclusion

In this examination of 16-bar SRDC structures, we have seen how a single abstract framework can take on a number of different roles within a song. From acting wholly as verse material to laying the foundation for verse-prechorus-chorus structure, the SRDC pattern may be converted into various section roles through large and small changes in a variety of domains. The concept of hypermetric reinterpretation helped explain this process in some cases, particularly those in which the conclusion gesture was expanded beyond the 4-bar

norm. Yet in very few of these cases were section roles entirely clear. The simplicity of whatever final section labels we might choose, therefore, hides just how malleable and tenuous our sense of section quality may be in these situations.

Examples 4.3.24: Relationships between SRDC schemes and section roles



As with blues-based organizational schemes, we can create a chart of the interactions between section roles and SRDC organizational schemes, as shown in Example 4.3.24. Once again, different configurations are bounded by a dotted box, and the simplest path between configurations is shown via the dotted lines. The chart begins in Example 4.3.24a with a classic 16-bar SRDC structure (e.g., “I’ll Cry Instead”), in which a tail refrain ends what is wholly verse material. In b), we see this refrain-like area grow (as in “Please Please Me”), such that – through changes in a number of domains – we reach the situation in d) where the 16-bar SRDC scheme splits into two 8-bar spans of verse and chorus material (e.g., “Ticket to Ride” or “Drive My Car”).

An alternative path from the classic 16-bar classic SRDC scheme is shown in the right-hand branch of Example 4.3.24. In c), a doubling of the tail refrain elongates the 16-bar scheme into a 20-bar structure (as seen in “La-La (Means I Love You)”). In e), this doubled tail refrain converts into a single chorus section (e.g., “I Heard It Through the Grapevine”). Through hypermetric reinterpretation, we move beyond any clear sense that there is a full SRDC structure. This situation is shown in f), where new chorus material supplants the final conclusion gesture (e.g., “I Can See For Miles”). As a result of this change, we are not far from a relatively straightforward verse-prechorus-chorus structure, as shown in g), such as that found in “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin’.” Again, the reader is reminded that this chart of relationships between section roles and SRDC structures does not necessarily represent a historical document of how form types evolved from the early years of rock. Rather, this chart shows the most direct connections between different configurations. Nevertheless, these types of conversions certainly play a part in the changing landscape of form types found in the history of rock music.

4.4: AABA Form

In the previous portion of this chapter, conversions of SRDC patterns were discussed primarily in terms of a 16-bar framework. This 16-bar framework provided a useful reference point from which we could compare and contrast different song examples in order to view shifts in our perception of section qualities. As was mentioned, though, we can find SRDC patterns in other measure lengths. One example given was the 8-bar SRDC found in the Beatles song “From Me to You” (1963). We can also find larger groupings of measures, such as 32- and 64-bar frameworks, that seem to exhibit SRDC construction. There appear to be some important differences between these longer instantiations of the SRDC pattern and their shorter brethren, though, as Everett is careful to distinguish between “large” and “small” SRDC structures (2009, 141).

As noted earlier in Chapter 2, one very common instantiation of these “large SRDC structures” is the form type that some theorists refer to as “AABA.” (This situation occurs when the conclusion gesture repeats the statement and restatement gestures.) While AABA forms are similar to SRDC patterns, the ways these AABA forms interact with section labels differ significantly. One reason for this difference is simply that the constituent parts of an AABA form are longer than those in a 16-bar SRDC pattern. A 32-bar AABA form, for example, divides into four 8-bar parts, and these 8-bar parts are much easier to perceive as standalone sections than the 4-bar gestures in a 16-bar SRDC pattern. As discussed in the introduction to Chapter 3, however, measure lengths are not always easy to determine. In some cases, it may not be clear whether we should consider a span of music to be a 16-bar or 32-bar unit. As a result, it is sometimes unclear as to whether part of a song should be considered a 16-bar SRDC structure or a 32-bar AABA form. Some of the songs discussed below potentially show the effects of this issue.

Nevertheless, the majority of AABA forms are clearly distinct from their shorter, 16-bar counterparts. Many AABA-patterned songs, in fact, display characteristic organizational schemes in the domains of harmony and melody. Like the 12-bar blues and 16-bar SRDC structures, certain configurations of AABA form are particularly common. Moreover, these similar configurations act as valuable reference points from which to track shifts in our perception of section qualities. AABA form thus provides further evidence of the permeable and continuous boundary between section roles.

AABA overview

As discussed at the end of Chapter 2, theorists present different views on which section roles may be contained within a standard AABA form (whether this form is called large SRDC, AABA, or rounded binary). Covach, for instance, consistently views A sections as verse material and B sections as bridge material (2005, 69). In contrast, Everett views A sections solely as verse material but allows for B sections to be either a bridge or chorus (2009, 143). Stephenson presents yet another perspective, as he allows for A sections to contain either verse or chorus material but refers to B sections only as bridges (2002, 140). Covach offers the common-ground view here, as all theorists agree that A sections may act as verse material and that B sections may act as bridge material. Given the descriptions in Everett and Stephenson, though, A and B sections both seem to potentially act as chorus material as well.

Although not necessarily explicit, these three views share one important aspect. Specifically, these descriptions all imply that each letter in an AABA form represents only a single section role. (Everett and Stephenson present their different labels for the same part

using the conjunction “or.”) That being said, theorists do recognize that combinations of multiple section roles often group into large-scale AABA patterns. Covach’s “compound AABA” form, for example, describes instances where each A section contains both a verse and a chorus (2005, 74). Analyses by a variety of other theorists also show multiple section roles being grouped into large-scale AABA succession patterns (as found in Endrinal 2008, Stephan-Robinson 2009, and others). It seems worthwhile, therefore, to differentiate between those songs in which the AABA pattern contains only a single section role per letter (a “simple” AABA) versus those in which the letters represent multiple section roles (a “compound” AABA).

The difference between simple and compound AABA forms is not always clear, of course. Covach’s “incipient” form, for example, describes those cases in which we may be unsure as to whether the A section contains one or two section roles (2010, 6-7). One central factor here is the overall size and length of the AABA structure itself. As the A section becomes longer, there is inherently a greater potential for multiple sections to be contained within it. In the previous discussion of SRDC patterns, for example, we looked at a number of songs (e.g., “I’ll Cry Instead,” “Please Please Me,” and “Ticket to Ride”) that could be considered examples of AABA form. In these songs, a 16-bar SRDC structure served as the A material, and this 16-bar structure seemed to sometimes split into multiple section roles. 16-bar SRDC patterns, in fact, are quite common structures for the A material of AABA-structured songs, and thus we should have a relatively good understanding – given the preceding portion of this chapter – of some possibilities for the conversion of AABA forms. Evidence of the continuum between simple AABA form and compound AABA form – at least from one approach – should thus be quite clear.

Nevertheless, it is worth looking at one AABA example in which the A material contains a 16-bar SRDC structure, if only because the AABA form as a whole has not been directly addressed here as of yet. The song “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” (The Shirelles, 1960) presents a typical case. The song includes two main 16-bar units, the first of which (Example 4.4.01) is clearly an SRDC structure and the second of which (Example 4.4.02) manifests very bridge-like qualities. These two parts (A and B) organize into a straightforward 64-bar AABA pattern, as shown in Example 4.4.03. After this 64-bar AABA pattern, we hear a repeat of the final SRDC structure, although the first half (the SR gestures) is now an instrumental solo. Repeated iterations of the conclusion gesture serve as the fadeout material for the song.

Example 4.4.01: “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” (The Shirelles, 1960); A section

(orig. C)
0:07 I

To- night_ your mine_____ com - plete - ly.

You give_ your love_____ so sweet - ly. To- night

the light_____ of love is in your_ eyes,_____

but will you love me to - mor - row?

Example 4.4.02: “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” (The Shirelles, 1960); B section

(orig. C)
1:03 IV

To - night with words un spo - ken,

you said that I'm_____ the on - ly one._____

But will my heart be bro - ken when the

night_____ meets the morn - in' sun._____

Example 4.4.03: “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” (The Shirelles, 1960); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Sub.	Part	Group
0:00	4	---- (vamp)	intro		
0:07	8	“Tonight you’re mine completely....”	SR	A1	AABA
0:21	8	“Tonight, the light of love is....”	DC		
0:35	8	“Is this a lasting treasure....”	SR	A2	
0:49	8	“Can I believe the magic....”	DC		
1:03	8	“Tonight with words unspoken....”	B1	B	
1:17	8	“But will my heart be broken....”	B2		
1:31	8	“I’d like to know that your love....”	SR	A3	
1:45	8	“So tell me now and I won’t ask....”	DC		
1:59	8	---- (solo on SR harmonies)	(SR)	solo	
2:13	8	“So tell me now and I won’t ask....”	DC	A3’	
2:27	~ 8	“Will you still love me....”	ref.	outro	

Covach uses this song as an exemplar of AABA form (2005, 71). Indeed, this song presents many of the hallmarks of AABA forms in which a 16-bar SRDC structure comprises the A material. As one factor, the 16-bar SRDC structure itself is very typical: the S and R gestures begin in identical ways, with the restatement ending on the dominant; the departure gesture includes shorter melodic phrase lengths as well as harmonies that move away from the major-mode tonic; and the conclusion gesture includes a prototypical tail refrain. The B material of the song also seems like a classic bridge section, most obviously because the harmonies reflect an underlying S–T–S–D pattern. From the perspective of lyrics, there is not much repetition of text within the 64-bar core AABA structure aside from the tail refrain. As a result, we might judge the A sections to be quite verse-like throughout. That being said, there does seem to be a schism between the SR and DC gestures (as reflected in Example 4.4.03), in part because of the entrance of the background vocals in the initial DC gesture as well as because of the way the SR and DC gestures are treated differently (one with solo, one with vocals) near the end of the song. Temperley, in fact, labels these SR and DC gestures as verse and chorus sections, respectively (2010). Overall, we can see that this song raises the same kinds of issues with regard to section labels that we explored earlier. Consequently, these longer AABA forms will not be the focus of the following discussion.

Historic AABA forms: A section as chorus, B as bridge

A different set of issues arises when we investigate AABA patterns in which the A material is shorter than 16 bars. In fact, AABA forms as long as 64 bars may not be the clearest examples of AABA form, since their A sections potentially split into multiple section roles. Indeed, when Covach presents AABA form, he derives it from an earlier (pre-rock) 32-bar scheme (2005, 69). It thus appears that the 32-bar framework may be a clearer model for a “non-compound” AABA form.

The 32-bar AABA form was a common structure in American popular song during the first half of the 20th century, i.e., the Tin Pan Alley years (Covach 2005, 69). Yet the relationship between this older 32-bar AABA structure and AABA form in rock music is not entirely straightforward, as section label usage differs between the two eras. For instance, both Covach and Stephenson present the song “Over the Rainbow” (by E. Y. Harburg and Harold Arlen, 1938) as a classic example of the old-style 32-bar AABA format. Interestingly, musicians from the Tin Pan Alley era referred to this entire 32-bar AABA span as the “chorus” of the song. Yet no theorist of rock music has presented a labeling scheme in which the entire AABA form is referred to as a chorus. So while the older 32-bar AABA form seems to have musically influenced form types in rock music, the labeling scheme has not necessarily followed. To differentiate between this earlier usage of the term “chorus” and its more modern meaning, Covach refers to the 32-bar AABA form as a “sectional chorus” (2009, 26). Doing so, Covach can adopt his standard practice of labeling the A section of the AABA form as a verse and the B section as a bridge without the apparent conflict of having a verse inside a chorus.

It should be noted that the original version of “Over the Rainbow” also includes an additional section that precedes the famous 32-bar AABA sectional chorus. This part (beginning with the words “When all the world is a hopeless jumble”) was referred to at the time as the “verse” of the song (Stephenson 2002, 136). (N.B., This verse is not part of Judy Garland’s famous recording of the song.) Many songs from the Tin Pan Alley era, in fact, include both a “sectional verse” and a “sectional chorus” (to use Covach’s terminology). Typically, the sectional verse is a forgotten appendage of the song, and it is the 32-bar AABA-structured sectional chorus that we remember. In this regard, earlier usages of the terms “verse” and “chorus” appear to mirror modern usages, as the chorus (or sectional chorus) is clearly the more memorable part of the song. Consequently, we may not be able to entirely discount the overlap in terminology between the two eras.

The chorus-like quality of the entire 32-bar AABA pattern in songs from the Tin Pan Alley era is, in fact, a central part of why Stephenson uses the chorus label for the A sections of AABA patterns in rock songs. Of AABA patterns in rock songs, he writes: “since the [sectional] verse is absent and the chorus, in the old sense of the word, constitutes the whole song, it may be better to use the word *chorus* to refer only to the most repeated musical passage [i.e., the A section]...” (2002, 137). This practice may seem somewhat confusing, as the term “chorus” has shifted from encompassing the entire 32-bar structure to just the A part of this structure. Nevertheless, we find other evidence that chorus quality adheres to the A sections of AABA patterns within the descriptions of other authors as well. For instance, Covach states that in a verse-chorus form, the focus is on the chorus, while in an AABA form,

the focus is on the verse (i.e., the A section) (2005, 71). If we associate focal quality with the term “chorus,” it is not unreasonable to then assume that some similarity exists between the chorus of a verse-chorus song and the A section of an AABA form. In this regard, the term “verse” for the A section of an AABA song may not always be well-suited.

In fact, a number of rock songs in AABA form seem to challenge the notion that the A material functions as a verse. For instance, consider the song “Love Me Do” (The Beatles, 1963). As shown in Example 4.4.04, the song has a clear AABA pattern of parts. As we listen to the song, the A section seems to have a strong chorus-like quality. As one reason, each iteration of the A section begins with the title lyrics. Moreover, this A material (Example 4.4.05) consists mostly of short melodic phrase fragments, similar to those we have seen associated with other chorus sections (e.g., “Shake, Rattle and Roll”). The rhyme scheme takes advantage of the close spacing of these phrase fragments, drawing our attention to this section. As well, the title lyric reappears as part of an extended tail refrain at the end of the section. But perhaps the strongest evidence for chorus quality in this song is that the musical and lyrical content of each A section is identical. Consequently, these A sections are undeniably the most memorable and most focal moments of the song. A verse label thus seems wholly mismatched to our perception of the role played by the A sections in this song. Rather, the song form appears to be a sequence of choruses interrupted by a lone bridge. (The song “Mama Said” [The Shirelles, 1961] can be viewed as a similar case.) The chorus-like quality of A section material will be an important factor in other examples discussed below.

Example 4.4.04: “Love Me Do” (The Beatles, 1963); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Part	Group
0:00	8	----	intro	
0:13	13	“Love, love me do....”	A	AABA
0:34	13	“Love, love me do....”	A	
0:56	8	“Someone to love, somebody new....”	B	
1:09	13	“Love, love me do....”	A	
1:30	12	----	solo	
1:49	13	“Love, love me do....”	A	
2:10	4+	----	outro	

Example 4.4.05: “Love Me Do” (The Beatles, 1963); A section

(orig. G)
0:13 I IV I IV

Love, love me do, you know I love you. I'll

al - ways be true, so please love me

do. Whoa - oh, love me do.

Classic 32-bar AABA form

Overall, we can say that some sort of connection exists between the use of AABA forms in the first half of the 20th century and the rock era. In fact, the 32-bar framework of early AABA forms proves to be a useful reference point from which to view conversions of AABA form. On the simplest level, one can easily imagine replacing the 8-bar A section with longer spans of music, such as a 12-bar blues or a 16-bar SRDC structure, to create larger and larger structures. This technique is the basic process described in Covach 2005 (70). Deriving compound AABA forms (with clear verse and chorus sections) from the simple 32-bar AABA form becomes a straightforward procedure of filling the A sections with longer spans of music.

Other changes to the 32-bar AABA form create a different set of interactions with section roles. To more fully appreciate these situations, it is helpful to have a more detailed reference point for AABA form than simply the letter sequence itself. (As the reader should recall, specific harmonic and melodic organizations helped track conversions of 12-bar blues and 16-bar SRDC patterns.) In this regard, the song “I’m Walkin’” (Fats Domino, 1957) is worth examining, since it displays a very common structure for 32-bar AABA forms prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s. As Example 4.4.06 shows, the song has a clear 32-bar AABA core, which occurs multiple times during the song. More importantly, though, the harmonic and melodic organization of the AABA core is typical of many 32-bar AABA songs in rock. The B section (Example 4.4.07), for example, presents a classic bridge section. Bridge quality for this B section derives strongly from the S–T–S–D harmonic background, especially its prototypical realization as IV–I–IV–I–IV–I–V.

Example 4.4.06: “I’m Walkin’” (Fats Domino, 1957); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Part	Group
0:00	4	----	intro	intro
0:05	8	“I’m walkin’, yes indeed....”	A1	AABA
0:14	8	“I’m lonely as I can be....”	A2	
0:22	8	“What you gonna do when the well run dry....”	B	
0:31	8	“I’m walkin’, yes indeed....”	A1	
0:40	32	---- (over AABA harmonies)	solo	solo
1:15	8	“I’m walkin’, yes indeed....”	A1	AABA
1:23	8	“I’m lonely as I can be....”	A2	
1:32	8	“What you gonna do when the well run dry....”	B	
1:40	8	“I’m walkin’, yes indeed....”	A1	
1:49	16	---- (fadeout on AA....)	solo	outro

Example 4.4.07: “I’m Walkin’” (Fats Domino, 1957); B section

(orig. A)
0:23 IV

What-cha gon-na do when the well run dry? You gon-na run a - way and hide.

IV I V

I'm gon-na run right by your side. For you pret-ty ba-by I'll e - ven die.

Example 4.4.08: “I’m Walkin’” (Fats Domino, 1957); A section

(orig. A)
0:05 I

I'm walk-in', yes in- deed, and I'm talk-in' 'bout you and me. I'm

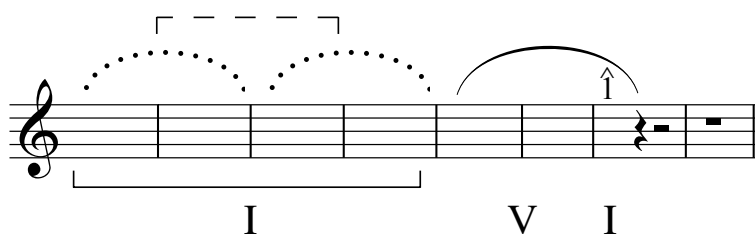
I V I

ho - pin' that you'll come back to me.

The A section of the song (Example 4.4.08) also presents a typical construction, which will be referred to here as a *classic 8-bar A section*. This scheme is characterized by numerous features. In particular, the first two bars contain a melodic motive, which is followed in the next two bars by a restatement or response to this opening motive. The connection between these two melodic motives is reinforced through a rhyme in the lyrics

(“indeed” rhymes with “me” here]). As well, the harmonic structure of these opening bars basically prolongs an underlying tonic. In the final four bars, a prototypical tail refrain provides both melodic and harmonic closure in the seventh bar. (In this regard, a classic 8-bar A section is somewhat similar to a small-scale SRDC pattern, although the departure gesture is missing [or has merged with the conclusion gesture].) The general harmonic and melodic organization of this passage is captured in the abstraction shown in Example 4.4.09. The combination of this classic 8-bar A section and a classic 8-bar bridge section within an AABA pattern creates what will be referred to here as *classic 32-bar AABA form*. Many songs can be found to evoke this basic configuration, as we will see. (Some examples from 1957 alone include: “Butterfly” [Andy Williams], “Everyday” [Buddy Holly], “Great Balls of Fire” [Jerry Lee Lewis], “You Don’t Owe Me a Thing” [Johnnie Ray], and “Come Go with Me” [The Del-Vikings].)

Example 4.4.09: Phrase organization for a classic 8-bar A section



Although the B sections to “I’m Walkin’” clearly act as bridge sections, the question remains open as to whether these classic A sections act as verses or choruses (or both). It might be difficult to make a final decision, considering that no other verse or chorus candidates exist within the song. In Covach’s system, these A sections are considered to be verses. Indeed, the lyrics to the A section do change on future iterations. Stephenson, though, refers to these A sections as choruses (2002, 137). His reasoning is basically that, since the title text appears at the beginning of some of these A sections (particularly the first one), these A sections draw our attention more strongly than do A sections without an opening title lyric. Yet there is much more to say about the intersection of section roles and lyric structure here. Note that the entire 32-bar AABA unit (lyrics and all) is repeated after the instrumental solo (refer back to Example 4.4.06). As a result, we might be tempted to consider the entire 32-bar unit as the chorus of the song – much like the standard labeling practice of the Tin Pan Alley era. In general, the lyric structure seems highly repetitive. In each A section, for example, the lyrics to the tail refrain are identical. Moreover, four of the six A sections have the same lyrics throughout. If we consider each A section to be comprised

of three lines of text, this means that – of the fifteen lines of text in A sections after the initial A section – only four differ from the initial iteration of A material. From the perspective of lyric structure, therefore, the A sections of this song do seem to convey strong chorus-like qualities.

Some other aspects of classic 32-bar AABA form are worth discussing, as these aspects play a part in our perception of section roles. The song “True Love Ways” (Buddy Holly, 1960) provides a useful illustration here. The song has a clear 32-bar AABA core, with which the song immediately begins. The opening two A sections of this 32-bar AABA core are shown in Example 4.4.10. (Note that the 16-bar span in Example 4.4.10 shows the first two 8-bar A sections.)

Example 4.4.10: “True Love Ways” (Buddy Holly, 1960); first two A sections

(orig. Bb)
0:00

Just you know why Why you_ and_ I Will by_ and

by_ know true_ love ways. Some- times_ we'll_

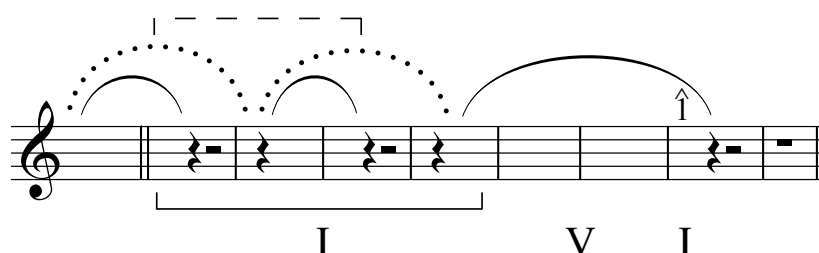
_ sigh,_ some-times we'll_ cry,_ and we'll_ know

why_ just you_ and I_ know true_ love ways.

For the sake of discussion, let us first look at the second A section (which begins with the lyrics “Sometimes we’ll sigh”). This second A section can be seen to evoke the basic harmonic and melodic organization found in “I’m Walkin’.” Although the first two vocal phrases in this second A section are shifted earlier in time to end on the downbeats of each strong hypermeasure, this change does not significantly affect the intrinsic motivic and melodic phrase structure. As shown in Example 4.4.11, it is easy to account for these vocal phrase shifts within the basic framework of a classic 8-bar A section. The harmonic structure

found here – in which the I–iii–IV–V progression is repeated – affirms this underlying statement-restatement organization. The prototypical tail refrain that ends this second A section further confirms its classic 8-bar A section structure.

Example 4.4.11: “True Love Ways” (Buddy Holly, 1960); organization of consequent A section



The first A section, however, departs somewhat from a classic 8-bar A section scheme. For example, the melodic fragments in the second 4-bar hypermeasure are not the long concluding phrase of a prototypical tail refrain. That being said, the break between the two short vocal phrases (“Will by and by” / “know true love ways”) is relatively small compared to other vocal breaks in the song, and thus it is not hard to imagine an overarching melodic grouping (as shown via the dotted phrase marking in Example 4.4.10). The more obvious difference is in the seventh bar, where the typical cadence on tonic is eschewed. Instead, the harmonic progression comes to rest in the eighth bar on a dominant chord, creating the feeling of a half cadence. A half cadence at this point in an AABA form is a feature that has been noted by other theorists (e.g., Stephan-Robinson 2009, 161-162). But this half cadence is not simply an attribute of classic 32-bar AABA form. Rather, it is a critical alteration in the conversion of classic AABA structures. Instead of two separate, closed sections (A and A), the addition of the half cadence links these two sections into something more like a single, large 16-bar unit. One could say, in fact, that these two A sections exhibit what theorists of common-practice music would call a “period” form (e.g., Caplin 1998, 49), in which the first A section functions as an antecedent and the second A section functions as a consequent. For now, though, a more in-depth discussion of how this change potentially affects our sense of section roles will be tabled.

A few final insights are worth noting with regard to “True Love Ways.” The B section of this song (shown in the first half of Example 4.4.12) generally conveys a strong bridge-like quality. In a typical fashion, the tonic chord is in a relatively weak hypermetric position; as well, the section begins on subdominant and moves to a dominant chord, which is intensified via its own dominant.

Example 4.4.12: “True Love Ways” (Buddy Holly, 1960); B and A sections

(orig. Bb)
0:46

Through - out the days, our true love ways will bring us
joys to share with those who real - ly care. Some times we'll
sigh, some-times we'll cry, and we'll know
why just you and I know true love ways.

Example 4.4.13: “True Love Ways” (Buddy Holly, 1960); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Part	Group
0:00	8	“Just you know why....”	A1	AABA
0:25	8	“Sometimes we’ll sigh....”	A2	
0:48	8	“Throughout the days....”	B	
1:11	8	“Sometimes we’ll sigh....”	A2	
1:34	8	---- (over A2 harmonies)	solo	solo
1:57	8	“Throughout the days....”	B	BA
2:20	8+	“Sometimes we’ll sigh....”	A2	

Bridge-like quality is also conveyed through the succession pattern of the song (see Example 4.4.13). The song has a clear AABA core, followed by an instrumental solo, and then a repeat of the BA material. This distribution of parts (AABA, instrumental break, BA) is a prototypical large-scale succession pattern for classic 32-bar AABA songs – so much so that all five of the classic AABA examples from 1957 mentioned above have this overall form. The placement of the B section in the large-scale succession pattern of the piece thus helps convey its bridge-like quality. With regard to the quality of the A section, it is once again not entirely clear whether a verse or chorus label might be more appropriate. As seen in “I’m Walkin’,” the lyric structure provides evidence to support both readings, and – lacking any other candidates – little else in the song helps in the decision process. Finally, note that the B

section is followed by the consequent A section, not the antecedent. The return of the consequent section gives the 32-bar structure as a whole tonal closure. It is interesting, though, that – by directly following the B section – the consequent A section is treated as a separate entity from its antecedent partner. In a way, the B section acts as a sort of antecedent substitute. (Note that the B section and antecedent A section both end with strong dominant harmonies.) The antecedent-like role of the B section creates an interesting possibility for the conversion of AABA forms (as we will see later in the example of “Sin City”).

AA as verse, B as chorus

Thus far, we have investigated how the A section in an AABA form can seem chorus-like (as Stephenson implies), but we have yet to explore how the B section might seem chorus-like (as Everett implies). A useful example in this regard is the song “Can’t Buy Me Love” (The Beatles, 1964). Before delving into issues of chorus quality, though, it is worth addressing another aspect of the song. To begin, this song has a repeating 12-bar unit (as shown in Example 4.4.14) that basically expresses a classic 12-bar blues structure.

Example 4.4.14: “Can’t Buy Me Love” (The Beatles, 1964); A section

(orig. C) 0:09

The musical notation shows three staves of music in treble clef, each with a 12-bar blues structure. The first staff is labeled with a Roman numeral 'I' above the first measure. The second staff is labeled with 'IV' above the first measure and 'I' above the fifth measure. The third staff is labeled with 'V' above the first measure, 'IV' above the fifth measure, and 'I' above the ninth measure. The lyrics are written below the notes.

I'll buy you a dia-mond ring__ my friend if it makes you feel all right.__ I'll

get you an - y - thing__ my friend if it makes you feel all right.__ 'Cause

I don't care too much for mon-ey, but mon-ey can't buy me love.__

Admittedly, the melodic phrases in the first two 4-bar hypermeasures extend past their prototypical endpoint within a classic 12-bar blues organizational scheme (i.e., the downbeat of the third measure in each 4-bar hypermeasure). But then again, this extension occurs in the vocal phrase of the final 4-bar hypermeasure as well. In fact, the subdominant chord within the tail refrain seems to partake in this extension by bleeding through the typical cadential measure (the eleventh) up until the downbeat of the twelfth. More evidence that

this musical material results from an extension of the classic 12-bar blues can be found just before the instrumental solo (around 1:07), where an extra bar is added to this 12-bar unit to give us the standard two bars of rest before the beginning of the next section. Overall, evidence for a classic 8-bar A section appears to be absent here. Yet a classic 8-bar A section and a classic 12-bar blues are not so different. Both structures present a melodic motive grounded strongly in tonic harmony, followed by a repeat or response to this melodic motive, followed by a prototypical tail refrain. The main difference is that, in a classic 8-bar A section, the motives are contained within two 2-bar spans, whereas within a classic 12-bar blues, the motives are contained within two 4-bar spans. The close similarity between these two form types may help explain why the classic 12-bar blues so often acts as the A material in an AABA form.

If we look at the large-scale form of the song (Example 4.4.15), we see that this 12-bar blues unit indeed acts as the A material within a typical AABA succession strategy. Ignoring for now the opening and closing sections (marked “B-alt”), we find here as well the standard *AABA–break–BA* formula so common to classic 32-bar AABA songs. In fact, the original arrangement of this song did not have an opening B section. Instead, the song launched immediately into the *AABA–break–BA* pattern. Only in production did George Martin (the famed producer of The Beatles) suggest that the song begin with an altered version of the B section (Martin 1979, 133). The classic AABA roots of this song thus seem relatively clear, both in terms of large-scale form as well as the harmonic and melodic organization of the A sections.

Example 4.4.15: “Can’t Buy Me Love” (The Beatles, 1964); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Part	Group	Alt.
0:00	6	“Can’t buy me love....”	B-alt	intro	chorus
0:09	12	“I’ll buy you a diamond ring....”	A1	AABA	verse
0:26	12	“I’ll give you all I’ve got....”	A2		verse
0:42	8	“Can’t buy me love....”	B		chorus
0:53	12+1	“Say you don’t need no diamond....”	A3		verse
1:12	12	---- (over A section harmonies)	solo		
1:29	8	“Can’t buy me love....”	B	BA	chorus
1:40	12	“Say you don’t need no diamond....”	A3		verse
1:57	8	“Can’t buy me love....”	B-alt	outro	chorus

Example 4.4.16: “Can’t Buy Me Love” (The Beatles, 1964); B section

(orig. C)
0:41

Can't buy me love, _____ ev - 'ry-bo-dy tells me so. _____ Can't buy me love, _____

no, no, no, _____ no. _____

The B section of this song does not clearly act as a bridge, however. In fact, George Martin refers to this B section as the chorus (1979, 133). As we examine this B section (Example 4.4.16), we can appreciate its ambiguous role within the song. The harmonic structure, for example, conveys a strong sense of classic bridge quality. As one factor, the B section moves strongly to a retransitional dominant chord at its end. Also, its 8-bar length accords with our notion of classic bridge sections. While the opening iii–vi progression may not immediately jibe with our notion of bridge openings, the emphasis on the submediant is a common enough substitution for a subdominant harmony (as seen in SRDC patterns). Yet certain important features exist within this B section that strengthen its chorus-like quality. The use of a submediant chord instead of a subdominant (as noted in the discussion of DC gestures) may be seen to give the section a somewhat more stable harmonic quality overall. More importantly, the vocal melody includes what appear to be two head refrains at the beginning of each 4-bar hypermeasure. These end-accented, title-containing, title-repeating phrases strongly demand our attention. Part of the effectiveness of these head refrains is the way in which they contrast with the other melodic material in the song. In this regard, note how the melody of the A section (or verse) is fairly flat-footed, metrically speaking. The verse melody begins rather squarely on the downbeat and continues using strong hyperbeats as a starting point. With the beginning of the B section, though, the melodic phrase rhythm dramatically shifts forward in time (from the beginning-accented melodic phrases in the verse section to the end-accented melodic phrases in the chorus). This forward shift calls attention to itself, as it disturbs the more regular interaction between the melodic grouping and meter as seen in the A section. In the third measure of the B section, we hear a shift back to the flat-footed melodic organization of the verse. This shift allows the next melodic phrase (directed towards the downbeat of the fifth bar) to achieve the same perceptual salience as it shifts back again to the end-accented strategy. George Martin must have been keenly aware of the chorus-like quality of the B section to make the suggestion that this part open the song as a

whole. Via this rearrangement, the chorus quality of the B section is heightened further, since we do not expect a song to open with the bridge.

Overall, “Can’t Buy Me Love” seems to lie in some sort of perceptual middle-ground, in which the A sections clearly act as verse material, but the B sections evince both bridge- and chorus-like qualities. We might say, therefore, that this song is a mix of AABA and verse-chorus forms. A good number of other Beatles songs show similar issues. Consider, for example, “She Loves You” (1963), “Eight Days a Week” (1964), “Penny Lane” (1967), or “P. S. I Love You” (1963). This latter song, in fact, has had its B section referred to as a bridge in one publication (Everett 2001, 127-8) and then as a chorus in another publication (Everett 2004, Fig. 6) by the same author. This internal debate may not be so obvious in the act of listening to these songs, but the inherent ambiguity may be an important factor in our subconscious fascination with them.

Hypermetric reinterpretation revisited

The conversion of a B section into something more chorus-like is seen clearly in “Can’t Buy Me Love.” Yet a straightforward verse-chorus form is absent, as the succession pattern of sections in this song does not align with our expectations for verse-chorus forms. Notably, the AABA structure is still latent within the large-scale form.

To explain how a classic 32-bar AABA structure could be converted into a typical verse-chorus form, it is helpful to revisit the concept of hypermetric reinterpretation (introduced earlier in the discussion of SRDC structures). The song “Blitzkrieg Bop” (Ramones, 1976) provides a useful example here. Many aspects of this song evoke a classic 32-bar AABA organizational scheme. Consider, for instance, the 8-bar passage that first appears around 0:32 (Example 4.4.17).

Example 4.4.17: “Blitzkrieg Bop” (Ramones, 1976); A section

(orig. A)
0:32

They're for-min' in a straight line, They're go-in' through a tight wind, The

kids are lo-sin' their minds, Blitz-krieg Bop.

In its opening two bars, this passage presents a short melodic motive grounded in tonic harmony. This melodic motive is then repeated over the same harmonic structure in the next two bars. A rhyme in the lyrics highlights the basic statement-restatement format. In the final four bars of this passage, we hear what seems like a prototypical tail refrain (as shown via the dashed line), including the title text at the cadential moment. For these reasons, these eight bars strongly evoke classic 8-bar A section organization.

After two iterations of this material, another 8-bar passage appears (Example 4.4.18). In strong part because of its S–T–S–D harmonic backbone, this new passage evokes conspicuous bridge quality. In terms of harmonic and melodic organization, therefore, the parts of this song appear to be prototypical examples of classic A and B sections. The succession pattern of these parts – at least initially – bolsters this hearing as well. As Example 4.4.19 shows, the first two A sections are followed by a B section, which proceeds to yet another A section. This pattern – at least up until this point in the song – is exactly what we would expect of a classic 32-bar AABA form (see the right-most column in the form chart).

Example 4.4.18: “Blitzkrieg Bop” (Ramones, 1976); B section

(orig. A)
0:54 IV

Ay Oh Let's go! You shoot 'em in the back now.

What they want, I don't know. They're all rev'ed up and rea-dy to go.---

Example 4.4.19: “Blitzkrieg Bop” (Ramones, 1976); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Part	Group	Alt.
0:00	16	---- (blank A section)	intro		
0:22	8	---- (vamp)			
0:32	8	“They’re formin’ in a straight line....”	A1	AA	AABA
0:43	8	“They’re pilin’ in the back seat....”	A2		
0:54	8	“Ay, oh, let’s go!....”	B	B	
1:05	8	“They’re formin’ in a straight line....”	A1	AA	
1:16	8	“They’re pilin’ in the back seat....”	A2		
1:26	8	“Ay, oh, let’s go!....”	B	B	
1:37	8	“They’re formin’ in a straight line....”	A1	AA	
1:48	8	“They’re pilin’ in the back seat....”	A2		
1:59	8	---- (vamp)	outro		

Yet the overall succession pattern of these parts makes an AABA reading rather problematic. After the return of the A section, for instance, we hear another A section (at 1:16), which is then followed by a B section and two more A sections. In this regard, the large-scale succession pattern obscures the sense that there is an AABA core to this song. The lyric structure somewhat challenges this notion of an AABA core as well. Although some previous AABA examples had lyrics in an A1-A2-B-A1 pattern (e.g., “I’m Walkin’”), the consistent repetition (or pairing) of the A1 and A2 sections encourages us to hear them as a single block. Consequently, the most obvious means of grouping these sections is into an AA-B-AA-B-AA sequence.

This grouping pattern represents a subtle yet critical aspect of the form of this song. With our experience of classic 32-bar AABA structures, we might expect (perhaps unconsciously) that the A section beginning at 1:05 would be followed by an instrumental break. In fact, it is not too difficult to consciously listen to the song with this expectation. But this instrumental break never arrives. Instead, the entire 8-bar A section at 1:05 is hypermetrically reinterpreted to become the start of a new AA block. As seen in other cases, this reinterpretation is somewhat retroactive, in that it is only with the arrival of the A section at 1:16 that we fully realize the A section prior is the beginning of something, not (just) the end. Since this hypermetric reinterpretation happens at a higher level of the metrical hierarchy than seen before (instead of four bars in the case of SRDC structures, eight bars are now reinterpreted), our sense of strong and weak alternations – of beginnings and endings – is extremely weak. It is this perceptual weakness on which the hypermetric reinterpretation relies. By the time we reach the end of the second A1 section, we are easily encouraged to abandon any sense that this second A1 section was potentially acting as the end of some larger 32-bar structure.

Interestingly, this reinterpretation seems to have the potential to impact our sense of section roles. Had this song been in a straightforward AABA succession pattern, the B section would most probably have been heard as a bridge. (This is the label chosen by Temperley in his analysis of the song [2010]). Yet the clear AA-B-AA-B grouping structure that occurs up through 1:37 puts the B section in the position traditionally held by a chorus. Thus, we should not be surprised to find that – since March 3, 2009 – the wikipedia.org entry for “Blitzkrieg Bop” has referred to this B section not as a bridge but as a chorus (accessed August 22, 2011). There are, of course, other aspects of the B section that evoke chorus-quality (such as the repetition of the lyrics on future iterations). But even the evidence provided by the succession pattern is somewhat ambiguous. Unlike a typical verse-chorus form, the song ends with two iterations of the A material. In this regard, the A sections (which also repeat their lyrics on future iterations) seem to vie for status as the focal material of the song as well.

For these reasons, the song “Blitzkrieg Bop” appears to stand somewhere between clear AABA and verse-chorus forms. There is a strong reference to earlier decades in the musical and lyrical content of the song (including the word “Bop” in the title). Yet the distribution of this content departs from the typical sequence of sections for this content. Instead, some evidence of verse-chorus thinking seems to be evident in the overall succession pattern. (See Covach 2003 for a similar case involving the music of The Cars.)

When the effect of hypermetric reinterpretation is combined with changes to the internal structure of song sections and their large-scale succession pattern, the classic 32-bar AABA form can be converted into a relatively clear verse-chorus song. Take, for example, the song “Suspicious Minds” (Elvis Presley, 1969). In Example 4.4.20, we can see that the opening musical material begins much in the manner of a classic 32-bar AABA organizational scheme. Most noticeably, the harmonic and melodic organization of the first eight bars strongly evokes a classic 8-bar A section. The second eight-bar section (starting at 0:21) also seems a lot like a classic A section. But rather than the normal cadence on tonic in the bars leading up to the B section, the harmony shifts back to a dominant chord. With this change, we are denied the feeling of closure imparted by a typical “pre-bridge” A section. Instead, the dominant chord creates an open-ended section that increases our anticipation for the section that follows.

Example 4.4.20: “Suspicious Minds” (Elvis Presley, 1969); verse material

(orig. G)
0:04 I

We're caught in a trap. I can't walk out

be-cause I love you too much, Ba by

Why can't you see what you're do-ing to me

when you don't be-lieve a word I'm say-in'?

This anticipation is, in fact, fulfilled by the next section (Example 4.4.21), in that this next section appears to clearly be the chorus of the song. The melody, for instance, now explores a significantly higher range than the previous musical material. As well, this section contains the title text, and this title text is repeated such that it accounts for half of the lyric content in this section. We also hear a thickening of the texture, as the drum part shifts from its previously tight, closed pattern to a more standard rock beat with cymbals. Yet this chorus section seems highly similar to a classic bridge. This bridge quality is due in large part to the generally unstable character of the harmonic content. Note, for instance, that tonic harmony is avoided on any strong hyper-downbeat. As well, the opening subdominant and closing dominant chords create an open-ended harmonic structure that makes this new passage feel as if it is moving between two stable harmonic areas. Since this new passage is preceded by what appear to be two classic 8-bar A sections, moreover, the succession pattern also aligns with our expectations of classic 32-bar AABA structure (at least up until this point).

Example 4.4.21: “Suspicious Minds” (Elvis Presley, 1969); chorus material

(orig. G)
0:38

We can't go on to- geth - er with sus - pi - cious minds;

and we can't build our dreams on sus - pi - cious minds.

But – as seen in “Blitzkrieg Bop” – the large-scale succession pattern (Example 4.4.22) makes an AABA reading problematic. It seems clear that the A and B material groups into AAB–AAB units as we would find in a verse-chorus song. Although it is not too difficult to consciously hear a classic 32-bar AABA form that would end just prior to the 1:11 mark, the introduction of more verse material at 1:11 reorients our hearing. Via hypermetric reinterpretation, the A3 material sounds more like the beginning than the end of something.

The sense that these A and B sections act as verse and chorus material respectively is further reinforced by the contrasting material that appears at 1:45. At this point in the music, a dramatic shift in the texture occurs: the meter changes from simple to compound, and the instrumentation becomes much more sparse. Moreover, this new material arrives at just the location we would expect for a bridge section within a verse-chorus song. For these reasons,

the material at 1:45 sounds a lot like the bridge section of the song as a whole (even though it arguably ends on a strong tonic chord – atypical for a bridge – before the final dominant turnaround). The bridge-like quality of this new material heightens our sense that the B material – which may have seemed somewhat bridge-like – acts not in a bridge role but rather as a chorus.

Example 4.4.22: “Suspicious Minds” (Elvis Presley, 1969); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Part	Group	Alt.
0:00	2	---	intro		
0:04	8	“We’re caught in a trap....”	A1	Vr-Ch	AABA
0:21	8	“Why can’t you see....”	A2		
0:38	8	“We can’t go on together....”	B		
0:55	8	“So with an old friend I know....”	A3	Vr-Ch	
1:11	8	“But here we go again....”	A4		
1:28	8	“We can’t go on together....”	B		
1:45	12	“Oh, let our love survive....”	Bridge		
2:15	8	“We’re caught in a trap....”	A1	Vr	AA
2:31	8	“Why can’t you see....”	A2		
2:48	8 (6x)	“.... caught in a trap....” (fade)	outro		

The conversion of a classic 32-bar AABA form into a clear verse-chorus form may be so complete here that few remnants of AABA form may be apparent to a listener. Yet the AABA roots of this verse-chorus song can help explain interesting features of its construction. In particular, note the unique way in which this song ends. At 2:15, the verse-like material returns after the modern bridge. This post-bridge return to verse material is certainly not a surprising turn of events in the context of a verse-chorus song. What is surprising is that the chorus never returns after the modern bridge. Instead, the song presents numerous iterations of the opening musical material. These iterations eventually fade out, but not before we hear multiple repeats performed at high levels of dynamic intensity. The song does not end, in fact, until around the 4:30 mark. This means that basically half of the song (from 2:15 to 4:30) consists of repetitions of the opening 8-bar unit, most of which include identical lyric content. By the third or fourth iteration of this 8-bar unit, the listener may very well begin to feel that the repeated section (“We’re caught in a trap”) is actually the most important or most focal part of the entire song. The apparent focal quality of this music should be somewhat understandable, though. As discussed above, focal quality – if not chorus quality – is something that theorists associate strongly with the A sections of classic 32-bar AABA organizational schemes. Thus while the A and B sections in the first half of this song act in a relatively clear verse-chorus relationship, some focal quality still adheres to the

A material. It is this focal quality – a weak trace of the classic 32-bar AABA heritage from which the form of this song seems to derive – that is revealed at the end of the song.

Verses versus verses

“Suspicious Minds” raises another important issue with regard to song form – in particular, the issue of what exactly constitutes “the verse” of the song. With a verse-chorus reading of “Suspicious Minds,” one would traditionally consider the entire 16-bar span from 0:04 to the beginning of the chorus at 0:38 as “the verse.” As we saw, however, there were underlying elements of classic 32-bar AABA structure, and it was not difficult to hear the first 32 bars of the song as a standalone AABA form. With this reading, each 8-bar A section would traditionally be considered “the verse” material of the song. (See, for example, the AABA analyses in Covach 2005.) It may seem somewhat trivial to debate whether the first 16 bars of vocal material should be considered as one verse or two successive verses. Indeed, this distinction is not necessarily valuable in and of itself. Nonetheless, we should recognize that what might seem like a single verse in one analysis may be two individual verses in another. In the past, theorists have made statements to the effect that the AABA and verse-chorus forms are incompatible, e.g., “AABA form is fundamentally different from.... verse-chorus form” (Stephan-Robinson 2009, 125) or “The strategy of a verse-chorus song differs in a fundamental way from that of an AABA tune” (Covach 2005, 71). Part of this incompatibility may derive from the difference in how verse lengths are conceived. “The verse” of an AABA form does not necessarily equal “the verse” in a verse-chorus form. Being able to recognize this difference helps us navigate some of the more subtle relationships in song forms.

In short, different conceptions of verse lengths can obscure relationships between AABA and verse-chorus forms. This situation becomes most extreme when the verse and chorus lengths are the same size and exist within a standard verse-chorus succession pattern. The song “Sin City” (The Flying Burrito Brothers, 1969) provides a useful illustration of this issue. Listening to the song, it should be obvious that we have a 16-bar verse (Example 4.4.23) followed by a 16-bar chorus (Example 4.4.24). This verse-chorus structure is confirmed through the pattern of text repetition, as each verse contains new lyrics and each chorus contains the same lyrics. A verse-chorus reading is also confirmed by the succession of sections in the song, which comprises a core pattern of Vr–Ch–Vr–Ch–solo–Vr–Ch. As well, the fact that the chorus and verse sections are the same size makes the 16-bar length seem like the fundamental unit of the song. For these reasons, this song appears to be an exemplar of verse-chorus form.

Example 4.4.23: “Sin City” (The Flying Burrito Brothers, 1969); verse material

(orig. Eb) 0:08

This old town's filled with sin it'll swallow you in if
you've got some money to burn. Take it
home right away, you've got three years to pay, but
Satan is waiting his turn.

Example 4.4.24: “Sin City” (The Flying Burrito Brothers, 1969); chorus material

(orig. Eb) 0:43

This old earth quake's gonna leave me in the poor-house. It
seems like this whole town's insane. On the
thirty first floor, a gold-plated door won't
keep out the Lord's burning reign.

Upon closer examination, however, the song displays many attributes of a classic 32-bar AABA organizational scheme. For example, the verse section can be considered – via its

harmonic, motivic, and melodic phrase groupings – as a typical pair of classic 8-bar A sections in antecedent-consequent organization. Moreover, this pair of ostensible A sections is followed by what seems to be a classic 8-bar bridge section (heard as the first eight bars of the chorus). Consequently, a first-time listener might expect a return of the consequent 8-bar A section after this bridge-like material. Had this return occurred, we would have had a clear case of classic 32-bar AABA structure.

Of course, the consequent A section does not return. Instead, there is a restart of the IV–V–I progression that was found at the beginning of the chorus. Rather than ending in a half cadence, however, this restart proceeds to a coordinated melodic and harmonic cadence on tonic. The overall effect is that this 16-bar chorus section – despite beginning off-tonic – is organized in a similar way to the 16-bar verse. Specifically, there is a substantial feeling of antecedent-consequent pairing. Overall, the period-like structure of both the verse and chorus makes each 16-bar span seem like a single unit. The sense that we have two cohesive 16-bar units here is reinforced by the vocal arrangement as well. During the opening sixteen bars, the higher of the two vocal parts is in the left channel while the lower part is in the right channel. This arrangement swaps in the following 16 bars, as the higher vocal part now appears in the right channel with the lower part in the left channel.

In summary, we could say that “Sin City” displays an AABB form in the way it structures its verse and chorus material. But – because of the difference in labeling methodologies between AABA and verse-chorus forms – we would most probably label this song simply as an alternation of 16-bar verse and chorus sections. The standard verse-verse-bridge-verse pattern of AABA forms thus seems far removed. Yet it is only a small change that has converted the classic 32-bar AABA structure into this clear verse-chorus form. In particular, note how similar the last eight bars of the chorus are to the last eight bars of the verse in terms of harmony, melody, and phrase organization. It is that short yet crucial moment around the ninth bar of the chorus that dramatically shifts our perception away from a classic AABA hearing to a straightforward verse-chorus hearing. With this song, the boundary between a 32-bar verse-chorus structure and 32-bar AABA form can be seen to be a rather delicate and permeable one indeed.

AA as verse, BA as prechorus-chorus

Up until this point in the discussion, the various parts of an AABA structure have been mapped only to verse, chorus, and bridge qualities. There exists one other way in which changes to a classic 32-bar AABA organizational scheme can affect our perception of section roles. This conversion relies on the similarity between a classic bridge and a prechorus section. The similarity between these section roles was mentioned briefly in the previous

chapter. Both section roles, for example, are characterized by unstable harmonic content. As well, classic bridge and prechorus sections are both found to often repeat their lyrics on future iterations. The position of these two section categories within the overall form of the song, of course, is a primary distinguishing factor. While a classic bridge section typically leads to a return of an A section, a prechorus typically leads to a chorus. As we have seen above, however, classic A sections are not necessarily incompatible with chorus quality. Consequently, we can find songs in which the classic 32-bar AABA structure is converted into something more like a verse-prechorus-chorus form. This conversion is accomplished via changes to the BA material that make it seem more like a prechorus-chorus structure. Two song examples will help elucidate this process.

The first example, “Handy Man,” provides an excellent introductory illustration, as two versions – one by Jimmy Jones and one by James Taylor – differ in subtle but important ways. In its original hit version (Jimmy Jones, 1960), the song is a prototypical example of the classic 32-bar AABA organizational scheme. The opening vocal material (Example 4.4.25) exhibits classic 8-bar A section quality. Notice the short, rhymed, parallel opening vocal phrases in the first hypermeasure, which are followed by a prototypical tail refrain. The song also includes a classic 8-bar bridge section (shown in the first half of Example 4.4.26), made clear via its S–T–S–D harmonic organization and 2-bar vocal phrase fragments. Of course, one central reason why classic 32-bar AABA structure is so explicit in this song relates to the succession pattern of its parts. As shown in Example 4.4.27, the song displays a typical succession scheme for AABA-structured songs: after the initial AABA core, a short instrumental break (or solo) precedes an abbreviated reprise, in which the original BA sections are repeated exactly.

Example 4.4.25: “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960); A section

(orig. A)
0:09 I

Hey, girls, ga-ther round, pick up what I'm put-tin' down,

IV V I

Trust me, Ba -by, I'm your hand - y man.

Example 4.4.26: “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960); B and A sections

(orig. A) 0:35

If your bro-ken hearts need re-pair, I - 'm the man_ to see. I

whis-per sweet things you tell all your friends; they'll come run-nin' to me.

Here is the main thing I want to say: I'm bu-sy twen-ty four hou-rs a day_ I

fix bro-ken hearts I know I real-ly can.

Example 4.4.27: “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Pt.	Group
0:00	4	“Come-a, come-a, come-a....”		intro
0:07	8	“Hey girls, gather round....”	A1	AABA
0:20	8	“I’m not the kind to use....”	A2	
0:34	8	“If your broken hearts....”	B	
0:46	8	“Here is the main thing....”	A3	
1:00	8	---		solo
1:14	8	“If your broken hearts....”	B	BA
1:25	8	“Here is the main thing....”	A3	
1:41	8+	“Come-a, come-a, come-a....”		outro

Although this Jimmy Jones version of “Handy Man” is a relatively clear example of a classic 32-bar AABA organizational scheme, one interesting wrinkle is important to mention. In particular, note how the melody in the post-bridge A section (A3) does not begin as do the melodies of the other A sections (refer to the second half of Example 4.4.26). Instead of starting on a $\hat{5}$, the voice descends from a high $\hat{1}$. The necessity of this alteration derives from the ending of the B section. As Jones sings “they’ll come runnin’ for me,” he leaps up into an extremely high register, and the beginning of the A3 section necessarily transitions between this high ending and the more moderate vocal tessitura of the A section. The

alteration does not last very long, though, and by the second bar of the final A section, the vocal melody is back on track.

Let us now compare this original version to the version by James Taylor (1977). In many ways, Taylor's version is faithful to the original. The opening two A sections (Example 4.4.28), for example, closely hew to those performed by Jones. As well, the B section in Taylor's version (shown in the first half of Example 4.4.29) has an almost identical melody as the original. Taylor does alter the harmonies somewhat in this B section (note the addition of a dominant chord in the third bar and a V/V in the seventh bar), but these alterations seem mostly to act as intensifiers to the chords they precede.

Example 4.4.28: “Handy Man” (James Taylor, 1977); A section

(orig. D)
0:22 I

Hey, girls, ga-ther round, list-en to what I'm put-tin' down.

Hey, Ba-by, I'm your han-dy man.

Example 4.4.29: “Handy Man” (James Taylor, 1977); B and A sections

(orig. D)
1:04

If your bro-ken heart should need re-pair, then I am the man to see, yeah. I

whis-per sweet things you tell all your friends; they'll come run-nin' to me.

Here is the main thing that I want to say: I'm bu-sy twen-ty four hou-rs a day. I

fix bro-ken hearts, I know, but I tru-ly can.

In Taylor's version, however, a critical change occurs in the last A section of the AABA pattern. Like Jones, Taylor descends from a high tonic pitch at the beginning of this A₃ section. But Taylor underpins this melodic descent with IV–V–I harmonies instead of just tonic harmony. This seemingly small change potentially creates a dramatic effect on our perception of section roles in this song. Instead of sounding like a return to the opening material, this altered A section sounds like something different. The A₃ section feels more like an ending – more like it drives to the eventual cadence on tonic in its seventh bar. There is something distinctly chorus-like about the A₃ section as a result, in that this section more clearly acts as a closing part to the larger whole. At minimum, the “pre-B” and “post-B” A sections are not obviously the same, and many casual listeners may not realize that any return to the A material whatsoever occurs immediately after the B material.

The standalone and chorus-like quality of the A₃ section is emphasized in the succession pattern of the song as well. Unlike in Jones's version, the succession pattern in Taylor's version (Example 4.4.30) does not include a separate instrumental break and B section prior to the last A₃ section. Instead, the 8-bar unit starting at 1:46 merges the first six bars of intro material from Jones's versions (“Come-a, come-a, come-a”) with the last two bars of the B section (“They'll come runnin' to me”). With this format, the A₃ section seems even less connected to the AABA pattern as a whole. Since the A₃ section at 2:08 basically repeats the lyrics from its early instance, it also begins to sound somewhat chorus-like. Interestingly, the one lyric change Taylor makes in this second A₃ iteration is that the tail refrain now includes the title text. Consequently, the focal quality of this final A section becomes even stronger still. (Note that the Jimmy Jones version does not include the title text in the second BA iteration.)

Example 4.4.30: “Handy Man” (James Taylor, 1977); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Pt.	Group
0:00	8	---	intro	
0:21	8	“Hey girls, gather round....”	A1	AABA
0:43	8	“I’m not the kind to use....”	A2	
1:04	8	“If your broken hearts....”	B	
1:25	8	“Here is the main thing....”	A3	
1:46	8	“Come-a, come-a, come-a....”	(intro/B hybrid)	
2:08	8	“Here is the main thing....”	A3	A
2:29	8	“Come-a, come-a, come-a....”	outro	
2:50	8	“Come-a, come-a, come-a....”		

Overall, a subtle yet tangible sense exists that the B and A₃ sections in Taylor's version act as prechorus and chorus material, respectively speaking. Admittedly, these section roles are not entirely clear. In fact, it would be possible to make an argument that the

“Come-a, come-a, come-a” sections have a certain chorus-like quality about them as well. Nonetheless, the differences between Jones’s and Taylor’s versions show an important step in the continuum between AABA and verse-chorus forms. In particular, the unstable nature of typical B-section material focuses our attention on the material that follows. In this regard, a “post-B” A section has the potential to become more chorus-like than earlier iterations of A sections in a song. As the “post-B” A-section material becomes more chorus-like, our perception of the B material as something closer to a prechorus becomes stronger as well.

One final example – the song “God Save the Queen” (The Sex Pistols, 1977) – provides an even clearer illustration of this effect. This song is a particularly good example because the “post-B” A section seems to be conceived as a chorus by the songwriters themselves. In Example 4.4.31, the large-scale succession pattern for the song is mapped out. As can be seen, the song clearly divides into separate 8-bar units. More importantly, there appears to be some evidence of 32-bar AABA thinking, as these 8-bar units consistently organize into an AABA pattern (as the “Group” column shows).

Example 4.4.31: “God Save the Queen” (The Sex Pistols, 1977); form chart

Start	Mm.	Lyrics	Part	Group
0:00	4	----	vamp	intro
0:06	8	---- (using A1 harmonies)	link	
0:19	8	“GSTQ, the fascist regime....”	A1	AABA
0:32	8	“GSTQ, she ain’t no human being....”	A2	
0:44	8	“Don’t be told what you want....”	B1	
0:57	8	“GSTQ, we mean it man....”	A3	
1:10	8	“GSTQ, ‘cause tourists are money....”	A4	AABA
1:23	8	“God save history....”	A5	
1:36	8	“When there’s no future....”	B2	
1:49	8	“GSTQ, we mean it man....”	A3	
2:02	8	---- (over A1-like harmonies in F#)	solo	solo
2:17	8	“GSTQ, we mean it man....” (alt.)	A3’	A3’
2:30	8	“No future, no future....”	C	outro
2:43	8	“No future, no future....”	C	
2:56	8+	“No future, no future....”	C	

In a general way, the internal characteristics of the 8-bar units corroborate this 32-bar AABA structure. For example, the opening vocal material (Example 4.4.32) displays similar qualities to a classic 8-bar A section. Tonic harmony is basically prolonged here, and we also find two parallel, rhyming vocal phrase fragments in the first 4-bar hypermeasure. Although a prototypical tail refrain is absent, there does seem to be some sort of a coming-to-rest in the seventh bar, as the harmonic motion pauses on a tonic chord. The B material (not shown) is somewhat different than a classic bridge, in that only two chords – E and B major – comprise its harmonic content. In the context of the prevailing tonal center of A major, we

would label these E and B major chords as V and V/V respectively. (In isolation, though, the B section sounds as if it is in E major, so Roman numerals I and V might be more appropriate.) In this regard, the B material can be seen to basically prolong an E major harmony and thus act as an unstable harmonic area in the tonal context of the A sections. Classic A section construction is more evident within the A3 part (Example 4.4.33). Now, prototypical tail refrain quality becomes more obvious, as the addition of a dominant chord creates a strong drive to the cadence in the seventh bar. As well, the vocal melody comes to a rest closer to the seventh bar downbeat than in the A1 or A2 sections. Overall, the internal characteristics of these 8-bar units align with our general expectations of typical A and B sections in a 32-bar AABA organizational scheme.

Example 4.4.32: “God Save the Queen” (The Sex Pistols, 1977); A1 section

(orig. A)
0:19

God save the queen, the fas-cist re-gime. They
made you a mor-on, po-ten-tial H-bomb.

Example 4.4.33: “God Save the Queen” (The Sex Pistols, 1977); A3 section

(orig. A)
0:57

God save the queen, we mean it, man. We
love our queen. God saves.

From a number of perspectives, though, it appears as if the A3 section should be considered to fulfill a separate role than the A1 and A2 sections. Obviously, the differences in harmonic and melodic organization between the “pre-B” and “post-B” sections encourage us to hear them in different section roles. Further differences can be found, though. Note how –

despite that fact that every A-like section begins with the title phrase – the lyrics to the A3 section are the same on its first and second iterations. In contrast, the post-title lyrics in the other A-like sections are constantly changing. In this regard, the A3 section seems to be conceived as the chorus section of the song. Further evidence of this chorus-like aspect can be found in the domain of instrumentation. The “pre-B” sections are notably restrained in terms of dynamics: we hear palm-muted chords in the electric guitar, and the drummer plays mostly a closed hi-hat. In contrast, the “post-B” sections are much thicker sounding: the electric guitar chords are now fully strummed, and the drummer moves over to the ride cymbal for a bigger sound. The combination of these factors draws our attention to the A3 section as the focal moment in the song. As a final factor, consider the large-scale grouping of sections. Having two complete AABA iterations, followed by a solo and a return of the A material, is a rare format for an AABA song. Rather, we see evidence of a “compound” AABA form (here, AABA’), which we associate with a large-scale grouping structure for verse-chorus material.

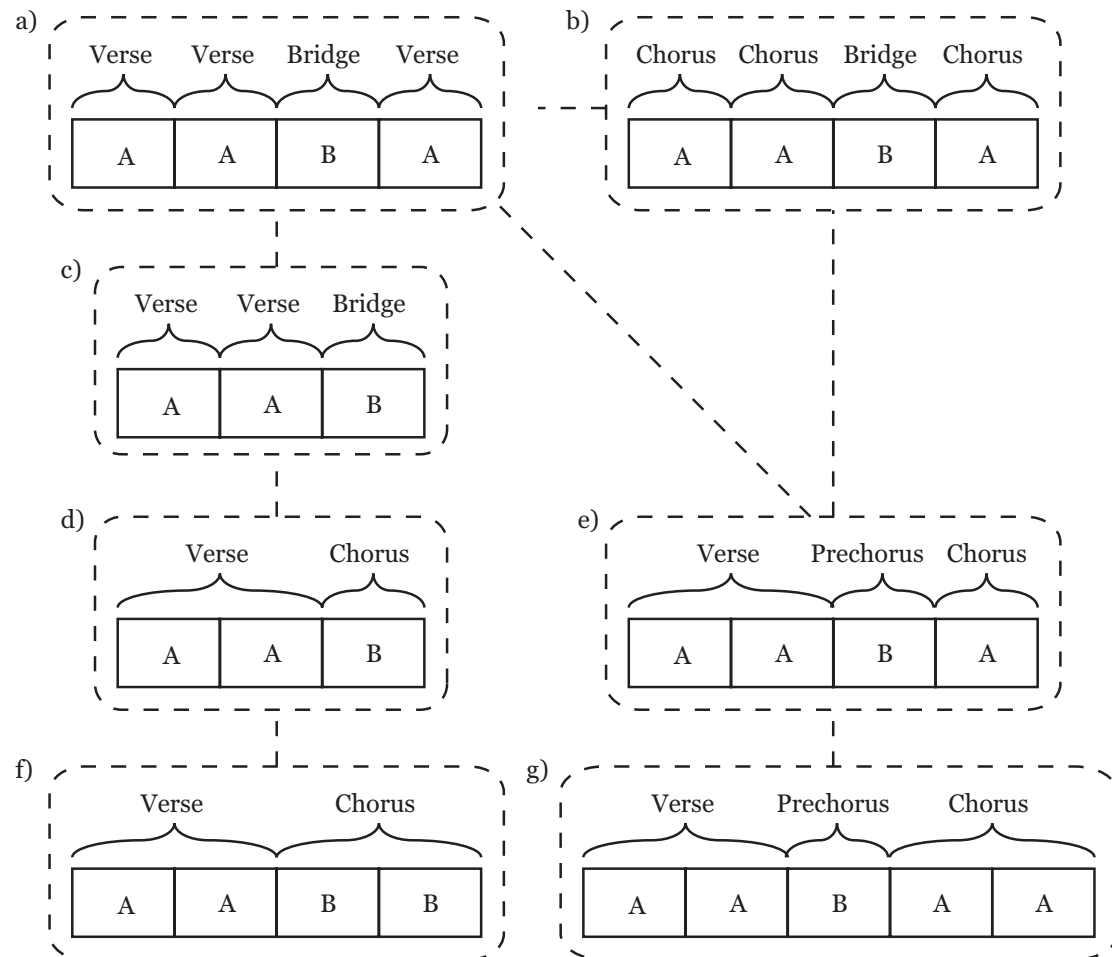
Overall, “God Save the Queen” seems to have some A-like sections that act as verse material and others that act as chorus material. In this regard, the B material – which might otherwise be considered a bridge – seems to take on the role of prechorus as it prepares for the arrival of the chorus-like A3 sections. We thus have a form that – while highly similar to a classic 32-bar AABA scheme – exhibits apparent verse-prechorus-chorus construction. The verse, prechorus, chorus qualities within “God Save the Queen” are admittedly weak in comparison to other song examples. It is not too difficult, however, to extend the conversion process seen in this example to other songs. Many songs with a clear prechorus section, for instance, use the same harmonic content within the chorus section as the verse. Good examples of this situation include “End of the Road” (Boyz II Men, 1992), “Feels Like the First Time” (Foreigner, 1977), “Billie Jean” (Michael Jackson, 1983), and “Cool It Now” (New Edition, 1984). From a harmonic perspective, these songs have highly similar “pre-B” and “post-B” material (where the “B” section is the prechorus). But through changes in various domains other than harmony, the “post-B” material clearly acts as the chorus material, not a return to the verse.

Conclusion

In the preceding discussion of AABA forms, we primarily investigated one single type of AABA structure – classic 32-bar AABA form – and how the parts of this form can become converted to take on different roles. As we have seen, the way in which classic AABA form interacts with verse-chorus form are numerous. For instance, the A section might be expanded to include both verse and chorus material; or the B section might – in concert with

hypermetric reinterpretation – take on the role of chorus; additionally, the B section may appear to act as a prechorus in preparation for a final A section that has taken on a chorus-like role. As in the case of blues and SRDC organizational schemes, we can chart out the changing relationships between section roles and conversions of the 32-bar AABA organizational scheme. Example 4.4.34 gives such a chart.

Example 4.4.34: Relationships between AABA-derived schemes and section roles



Unlike similar charts presented earlier in this chapter, each box containing an uppercase letter now represents an 8-bar unit. The classic 32-bar AABA form is shown in Example 4.4.34 and we can see that this organizational scheme spawns numerous branches. In one lineage, a hypermetric reinterpretation creates the configuration shown in c), as found in the song “Blitzkrieg Bop.” From this configuration, we move to d), in which the chorus-like quality of the B material becomes emphasized (as in “Suspicious Minds”). The path to f), in

which we have similarly-sized verse and chorus sections (as in “Sin City”), can be seen as the natural outgrowth of these changes.

An alternative path from the 32-bar AABA organizational scheme is shown on the right-hand side of the chart. To begin with, we should recognize the chorus-like quality inherent in the A material of many AABA songs, as shown in b) (e.g., “She Loves You”). If we consider that the A section thus may evince either verse or chorus quality, we can understand the configuration shown in e). This configuration (seen in songs such as “God Save the Queen” or James Taylor’s version of “Handy Man”) also reveals the close relationship between a classic bridge section and a prechorus role. From this configuration, the standard verse-prechorus-chorus form, shown in g), can be seen to arise through a simple expansion of the chorus material.

Of course, theorists view AABA form within a variety of settings aside from the classic 32-bar scheme. Other instantiations of the generic AABA pattern potentially interact with section labels in additional ways. Overall, AABA form encompasses a large network of relationships between specific musical structures and the section labels that attempt to describe the role these structures play within the form of a song. Nevertheless, the connections between AABA form and verse-chorus form appear to be much closer than has been previously discussed within the existing theoretical literature.

4.5: Summary

In this chapter, we have seen how section roles interact with a variety of differently-sized musical units. Section roles were discussed, for example, in the context of 4-bar units (the individual gestures of a 16-bar SRDC pattern), 8-bar units (the individual parts of a 32-bar AABA pattern), 12-bar units (the classic blues structure), and 16-bar units (the SRDC pattern and half of the AABA pattern). We have thus moved from a bottom level of the formal hierarchy up through some of the larger spans of music for which a single section role can account. As musical spans extend further and further beyond the 16-bar threshold, it becomes harder and harder to posit that only a single section role would be appropriate for the span as a whole. (How many 64-bar chorus sections can you think of?)

The 12-bar blues, 16-bar SRDC, and 32-bar AABA organizational schemes stood as useful reference points in this discussion. By focusing on a particular scheme, we could view how it (or parts of it) could be converted from one section role to another. We found that modern song forms could develop out of these smaller schemes in many ways. This developmental process was not necessarily meant to imply any particular history of song form. Rather, this process gave evidence of the continuum of attributes and attribute

strengths that contributes to our perception of form in rock songs. Nonetheless, we saw potential paths from the song forms commonly used in the early years of rock to those used more often in more modern songs. A necessary limit in this regard was that the song examples in this chapter were primarily drawn from earlier decades in the history of rock. In the following chapter, we will shift gears to investigate the interplay of section roles within songs from more recent times.

Chapter 5: Blends

5.1: Introduction

One of the assumptions in the previous chapter was that our labeling system for section roles is predicated on the mutual exclusivity of these roles. If we choose to refer to a section of music as a verse, for example, we are inherently implying that this passage is not a bridge, chorus, or some other section role. As we found when looking at conversions of blues, SRDC, and AABA organizational schemes, though, there are often cases in which it is not clear what section role might best apply to a particular span of music. As a particular span “converts” from one role to another, there is often some middle stage in which it appears as if we have evidence for more than a single section role. “Can’t Buy Me Love,” for instance, seems to stand as a transitional form in the conversion process between AABA and verse-chorus forms. As a result, the title-containing passage in this song (e.g., starting at 0:42) appears to contain aspects of both bridge and chorus roles.

There are, in fact, many recurring situations in rock music that challenge categorization via a single section role label. Yet theorists rarely if ever choose to refer to a particular passage of music with two section role labels. As this chapter will show, however, the choice between one label and another often represents a false dilemma, in that a robust understanding of how we perceive many musical passages necessarily requires us to recognize multiple roles acting at once.

In this chapter, the term “blend” will be used to describe those situations in which aspects of two (or more) section roles appear to exist within the same span of music. Like the term “conversion,” the term “blend” has been borrowed (in a metaphorical way) from the field of linguistics. In linguistics, a blend is a word that is created through the union of two or more words (Denham and Lobeck 2009, 197). For example, the word “smog” derives from a marriage of the words “smoke” and “fog.” Sometimes, a blend will involve taking the beginning of one word and adding it to the end of another (e.g., “simulcast” derives from the words “simultaneous” and “broadcast”). In other cases, a blend takes advantage of a sound that is shared by both words (e.g., “motel” results from the overlap of the “ot” sound in “motor” and “hotel”). More importantly, a blend represents the combination of two different concepts (or conceptual categories). The word “smog” does not just combine the words “smoke” and “fog”; it also combines the separate concepts of “smoke” and “fog” into one single idea. As conceptual combinations, blends sometimes involve categories that are traditionally considered to be mutually exclusive within a single labeling system. For

example, the categories of “breakfast,” “lunch,” and “dinner” are considered mutually exclusive with regard to the type of meal one is eating. (If someone is said to be eating breakfast, then we consider that person to not be eating lunch or dinner.) Yet the term “brunch” stands as a blend (and conceptual combination) of breakfast and lunch. The notion of a blend can thus be seen to hold great metaphorical power for explaining the combination of section roles in rock music, since theorists have mostly treated these roles as mutually exclusive labels within the form of a song.

It was discussed earlier (at the beginning of Chapter 4) that section roles can be seen as parallel to what William Caplin refers to as “formal functions” in music of the classical era. In this regard, blends are similar to “form-functional fusion.” For Caplin (1998, 45), form-functional fusion occurs when two different functions are present in a single group. (A “group” is simply some span of measures.) The second half of a musical sentence, for example, fuses both the continuation and cadential functions. In a similar way, we find that certain passages of rock appear to blend multiple section roles within a single span of music. Nevertheless, we will not assume that functional fusion and role blends are equivalent because of the great difference between the styles of music for which these terms apply.

One practical issue is how we should refer to blends of section roles. One seemingly appropriate technique would be to employ a blend of the role labels themselves. For instance, the term “vorus” could be used to describe a passage that blends verse and chorus qualities. But this approach results in some extremely awkward-sounding terms. (Consider “vidge” or “brerse” as blends of the verse and bridge labels.) As a result, blends of section roles will instead be referred to using a slash to separate the two terms. A blend of link and chorus roles, for example, will be referred to as a “link/chorus.” In English, the slash is often used to represent two seemingly equivalent choices, such as “either/or,” so its usage here to label role blends seems suitable. The potential for different meanings in the order of role labels before and after the slash is something that will be utilized at certain points in this chapter. A “verse/bridge,” for example, will be considered to describe a different situation than a “bridge/verse.” That being said, the order of section labels when referring to a blend will not be critical in most cases. For the sake of consistency, though, a secondary role label will always precede a primary role label (verse, chorus, bridge).

There are a number of different ways that blends can occur in rock music. One common situation occurs when a passage has strong melodic and harmonic characteristics of one section role yet the positional characteristics of a different role. Other blends can be seen to result from differences between local and global aspects of a passage. In some cases, the blend is simply an ambiguity between section roles. In other cases, the type of amalgamation is too complex to precisely pin down. As we will see, blends always involve a main section

role and some other role (whether that be another main role or something else). This aspect derives in strong part from the central status that the verse, chorus, and bridge labels enjoy within existing systems of large-scale form categorization (as discussed at the end of Chapter 2). The current chapter will thus be organized around the three main section roles themselves.

5.2: Verse Blends (part 1)

In Chapter 4, we saw that it is sometimes unclear whether a particular span of music should be categorized as a single verse section or subdivided into multiple section roles. With “incipient” verse-chorus forms (such as “Jailhouse Rock”), for instance, it may not be clear whether the last eight bars of a 16-bar span should be considered as a separate chorus section or simply more verse material. Outside of clear blues, SRDC, or AABA settings, we find similar situations where the choice between a separate chorus and “more verse” seems just as difficult. In his analysis of “Take It Easy” (Eagles, 1972), for example, Covach labels the main 24-measure block of the song (0:17-0:58) entirely as verse material (2009, 355); but he also admits that the middle phrase of this 24-bar block (starting at 0:31) sounds like it might be a chorus. This type of ambiguity can be found in songs ranging from “Sunshine of Your Love” (Cream, 1967) to “Nuthin’ But a ‘G’ Thang” (Dr. Dre, 1992). (Compare analyses in Covach 2009 [287, 554] to Temperley 2010.) If we investigate these kinds of situations more closely, we find the reasons for this ambiguity to be much the same as those found within the incipient verse-chorus forms described earlier. Consequently, they will not receive much discussion here.

There are other situations where it is not entirely clear whether a section acts as a verse or some different role. Two common cases will be discussed in this chapter. The simpler case involves the decision between prechorus and verse roles, which will be discussed below. The more complicated case involves a blend between bridge and verse roles. This latter case intersects with some other types of section ambiguity, and so its discussion will be reserved until the end of this chapter.

Prechorus or verse

In the discussion of the prechorus role in Chapter 3, it was noted that theorists generally take a conservative approach in their application of this label. By far the most common situation is when an area of apparent prechorus material is labeled simply as “more verse.” The distinction between blocks of verse-chorus material or blocks of verse-prechorus-chorus material is, in fact, often quite unclear. The song “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (Nirvana,

1991) provides an excellent illustration of this situation. To begin with, note that there are clear areas of verse (Example 5.2.01) and chorus (Example 5.2.02) in this song, and theorists do not disagree with regard to the labels for these spans of music.

Example 5.2.01: “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (Nirvana, 1991); verse material

(orig. F)

0:33 i iv bIII bVI i iv bIII bVI

Load up_ on guns_ bring_ your friends_ It's fun_ to lose_ and to_ pre tend.

i iv bIII bVI i iv bIII bVI

_ She's o - ver board_ and self_ as sured_ Oh no,_ I know_ a dir - ty word.

Example 5.2.02: “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (Nirvana, 1991); chorus material

(orig. F)

1:05 i iv bIII bVI i iv bIII bVI

With the lights_ out, it's less dange - rous. Here we are_ now, ent-er tain_ us. I feel stu

i iv bIII bVI i iv bIII

- pid and con-ta - gious. Here we are_ now, ent-er tain_ us.

Sandwiched in between these clear verse and chorus sections is the musical material shown in Example 5.2.03. In analyses by both Covach (2009, 512) and Temperley (2010), this material is considered to be simply more verse material. Christopher Doll, however, refers to this material as the prechorus section of the song (2011).

The reasons for this analytical disagreement are not too difficult to infer. Presumably, Covach and Temperley are responding to the lack of harmonic change between the opening eight bars of the verse section and the eight bars that follow. Our association of harmonic instability with prechorus quality (e.g., Everett 2009, 146) is such that the continuation of the 2-bar, tonic-initiated chord progression from the beginning of the verse into the chorus denies any strong sense that there is a significant departure away from the verse role. Nevertheless, there are distinct prechorus-like qualities to the music transcribed

in Example 5.2.03, and it is to these qualities that Doll is most likely responding with his label choice. Most obviously, the texture in this middle section stands somewhere between the thin, light instrumentation of the opening verse material and the thick, heavy instrumentation of the chorus. (The hi-hat opens up in this middle part, and the electric guitar becomes distorted and more active.) As well, the lyrics to these eight bars show a high level of internal repetition and repeat on future iterations. This internal and external lyric repetition rubs strongly against our sense that verse quality continues all the way up until the arrival of the chorus.

Example 5.2.03: “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (Nirvana, 1991); prechorus candidate

(orig. F)
0:50

Hel- lo, hel- lo, hel- lo, hel - lo. Hel- lo, hel- lo, hel- lo, how_ low.

Hel- lo, hel- lo, hel- lo, how_ low. Hel- lo, hel- lo, hel- lo....

All told, it is not clear whether the music shown in Example 5.2.03 is a standalone prechorus section or simply more verse material. We could say, therefore, that this case is ambiguous. But we could also think about these eight bars in a different way. Rather than trying to decide between one role and another, we could also say that verse and prechorus roles have merged here, with verse qualities appearing in some domains and prechorus qualities appearing in others. Of course, to say that both section roles are active here goes against the notion that section roles are mutually exclusive. A great analytical weight is lifted, though, if we do not have to make the false choice between the verse and prechorus labels in a situation such as this. Indeed, many songs include spans of music prior to the entrance of the chorus where a decision between a verse and prechorus label is basically impossible (see below). Nonetheless, the labeling issue is somewhat beside the point. What is important to recognize is the compositional insight imparted by the notion of a prechorus/verse blend. In particular, we find that the addition of prechorus-like attributes can be a useful mechanism by which to herald (or prepare) the onset of the chorus, even if the addition of these attributes does not result in what might be considered a prototypical prechorus section.

The continuum of prechorus and verse

In the Nirvana example, it was clear which span of music might be considered to act in the prechorus role. Although the question of whether this span of music was, in fact, a full-fledged prechorus was not clear, at least we could see plainly where prechorus quality potentially began and ended. A theorist who tended more towards using a prechorus label than not, for example, would have an easy task applying a prechorus label in cases such as this. In some situations, though, it may not even be clear where a prechorus label should begin, even if prechorus qualities are apparent in the music. This situation occurs when the arrival of various prechorus-like attributes have staggered entrances.

A good illustration of this scenario can be found in the song “Run To You” (Bryan Adams, 1984). A transcription of the music from the beginning of the verse through the end of the chorus is shown in Example 5.2.04. The beginning of this excerpt is clearly verse material, and the material in the last eight bars clearly acts as the chorus of the song. (The reasons should be obvious to the reader by now.) But what about the middle eight bars of Example 5.2.04? Is there a prechorus candidate in this span of music, and if so, where exactly? In the ninth bar (“Oh, but her love is cold”), the melodic phrase rhythm fragments into smaller spans (much like the departure gesture in an SRDC). As a result, the rhyme scheme in the lyrics becomes more frequent (going from a rhyme every four bars to a rhyme every two bars). This increased pace in the rhyme scheme (which continues until the chorus) can be seen as a transition towards the 2-bar repetitions of the title text in the chorus itself. Moreover, the melodic content beginning in this ninth bar emphasizes the high Eb, which foreshadows the arrival of the high Eb that is accented on hypermetrically-strong downbeats in the first half of the chorus section. In this regard, there are transitional aspects in the third 4-bar hypermeasure of this excerpt that seem fairly prechorus-like. Yet, like the prechorus candidate in “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” the harmonic content of these bars does not depart from the same repeating chord progression found in the clear verse material. We thus lack any strong sense that a new section has arrived. Instead, it feels as if we are still within the confines of the verse material.

Example 5.2.04: “Run to You” (Bryan Adams, 1984); main material

(orig. F#)

0:15 i bIII IV i bIII IV

She says her love for me— could ne-ver die.

i bIII IV i bIII IV

But that -'d change if she e-ver found out a-bout you and I.

i bIII IV i bIII IV

Oh, but her love is cold.—— Would-n't hurt her if she did -n't know, 'cause....

bVI bVII V

When it gets too much, I need to feel your touch. I'm gon-na

i bIII bVII IV i bIII bVII IV

run to you. I'm gon-na run to you. 'Cause when the

i bIII bVII IV i bIII bVII

feel-in's right, I'm gon-na run all night, I'm gon-na run to you.

In the fourth 4-bar hypermeasure (“When it gets too much”), we hear a significant harmonic move away from this repeating chord pattern. Specifically, the bVI–bVII–V motion in this fourth hypermeasure strongly prepares the arrival of tonic at the beginning of the chorus section. These harmonies evoke a strong sense of prechorus quality via their unstable nature (especially the underlying subdominant-to-dominant motion). Additionally, the texture noticeably thickens in these bars, as the drums shift from a sparse snare rim pattern to a standard kick-snare pattern. The bass guitar also intensifies the feeling of forward drive through its straight 8th-note part. Combined with the continuation of the closely-spaced rhyme in the lyrics, prechorus qualities come even more to the fore in this fourth hypermeasure. As a final factor, note that – although the lyrics prior to the chorus section do not generally repeat on the second iteration of these measures – the line “I need to feel your

touch” does repeat when this musical material returns later in the song. Consequently, the most prechorus-like moment of these middle eight bars can be said to be the last two bars prior to the entrance of the chorus itself.

Overall, the main musical material of “Run To You” presents neither a clear prechorus section nor a clear location at which we might argue for or against a standalone prechorus. Rather, there is an increase in prechorus-like attributes as the clear verse material moves toward the clear chorus material. Because of the difficulty in assessing if and where a prechorus label could be applied in this song, it is probable that an analyst would simply label the 16 bars of music prior to the chorus entirely as verse material. (No published analyses of this song are currently available.) But here again, we should recognize that the principle of the prechorus helps explain the particular organization of the main material in this song. Indeed, there are significant musical and lyrical changes prior to the onset of the chorus, and it is worth drawing our attention to these changes since they represent an important compositional procedure. It is this procedure that is captured by the notion of a prechorus/verse blend.

Conclusion

The types of ambiguous situations between prechorus or verse quality seen above can be found in a variety of other songs. In “Whole Lotta Love” (Led Zeppelin, 1969), for example, the second half of the material prior to the chorus (starting at “Way down inside....”) exhibits prechorus-like aspects through external and internal text repetition as well as important shifts in the melodic phrase rhythm, even though the continuation of the main riff denies any strong sense that a new section has arrived. In “Nothin’ But a Good Time” (Poison, 1988), similarly, the second half of the material prior to the chorus (starting at “I’m always workin’, slavin’, everyday....”) shows external text repetition as well as important changes in melodic register and grouping structure that imply a prechorus-like role. Nevertheless, one might just as easily consider this span of music to be more verse material, in strong part because no harmonic changes occur. And although Stephan-Robinson analyzes “Him” (Rupert Holmes, 1980) as containing only verse and chorus material, her 8-measure “Verse (part 2)” shows departure-like attributes that imply a possible prechorus role (2009, 75).

As we can see, there is a continuum between clear verse quality and clear prechorus quality, and many songs have material that lies somewhere along this line. In ambiguous cases, it may be most appropriate to say that there is a blend of prechorus and verse roles (a prechorus/verse). The question of whether or not a prechorus section exists in a song can instead be framed in prototype-based terms. We might consider instead to what extent

prechorus quality is conveyed in spans of music between clear verse and clear chorus material. Doing so shines a spotlight on the significant melodic, harmonic, and textural changes that occur in a song to prepare for the arrival of chorus material.

5.3: Bridge Blends

In Chapter 3, we saw that the “bridge” label includes multiple subtypes, such as the classic bridge, the modern bridge, and the instrumental bridge. Moreover, it was found that the term “bridge” could be applied on various grouping levels. In a classic 32-bar AABA form, for example, the A unit comprises only verse material, and thus the verse (A) and bridge (B) labels operate on the same levels of form. Yet we also find the AABA pattern on a larger scale, such as in “Whole Lotta Love.” Since the bridge role can be seen to exist on a larger level than other section roles, we find that the bridge label is not necessarily exclusive of other section roles. As will be shown, in fact, bridge quality can often be found to encompass a number of different section roles at the same time, since these roles derive from separate levels of the grouping structure. A few common situations will be explored below, including the solo as bridge, the verse as bridge, and the prechorus as bridge. Using the concept of a “breakdown” section, moreover, we will see that any section role may potentially be blended with bridge quality, even when that section role may otherwise seem quite clear.

Solo as bridge

The role of the instrumental solo section was discussed previously in Chapter 3. As one should recall, the instrumental solo section was found to intersect with the bridge role, such that the instrumental bridge was proposed as a particular subtype of bridge. In relatively clear cases of instrumental bridge sections (such as those found in “More Than a Feeling” [Boston, 1976] or “Tangerine” [Led Zeppelin, 1970]), the instrumental solo occurs over what may be viewed as new and unique harmonic material. Together, this new harmonic material and the textural relief of the instrumental solo itself combine to convey a solid sense of departure and contrast that strongly triggers our sense of bridge quality. In other cases, though, the instrumental solo occurs over harmonic material from earlier passages in the song. In fact, the recycling of harmonic content to support an instrumental solo is probably the most common arrangement for solo sections in rock music. In these situations, it seems most appropriate to say that there is a blend of two roles: that of the bridge and some other section. Positing this type of blend helps explain the large-scale patterns found in many songs that might otherwise seem non-standard.

For example, consider the song “Smoke on the Water” (Deep Purple, 1972). The core parts of this song are essentially a riff (acting as a link), a verse, and a chorus section. Indeed, the form chart that Covach offers for this song (shown in Example 5.3.01) employs these three fundamental units exclusively.

Example 5.3.01: “Smoke on the Water” (Deep Purple, 1972);
form chart in Covach 2005 (73)

Start	Mm.	Section	Group	Harmonic content [in G]
0:00	24	introduction		(riff)
0:51	16	verse		i i bVII i
1:25	6	chorus		IV bII i IV bII
1:38	8	interlude		(riff)
1:55	16	verse		%
2:28	6	chorus		%
2:41	8	interlude		(riff)
2:58	16	verse (instrumental)		i IV i
3:31	4	chorus (instrumental)		IV bVII
3:39	8	interlude		(riff)
3:56	16	verse		%
4:29	6	chorus		%
4:42	16+	coda		(riff)

As Covach’s chart shows, the solo material can be conceived as basically instrumental versions of the verse and chorus sections. Undeniably, this is the easiest way of thinking about this solo material. From this perspective, there is no strong sense that we have departed from the main section roles of the song, and thus we could simply say that this song does not contain any bridge material. At the same time, our sense of a bridge role is not completely absent here. In particular, the location of these instrumental sections coincides with our expectations for prototypical bridge material: after two iterations of the main musical material (in this case, the verse-chorus blocks), a contrasting section provides relief, and this contrasting material is followed by a final iteration of the main musical material. This large-scale strategy is, of course, the ubiquitous AABA pattern. In this case, however, the AABA pattern manifests itself primarily within the domain of instrumentation. (Interestingly, the harmonies in the instrumental verse and chorus sections are somewhat different from those found in the vocal iterations of this material, and thus we might judge AABA quality to be subtly evident in the domain of harmony as well.) In other words, the instrumental versions of the verse and chorus sections act together to create a large-scale B group. One might argue that a “B group” (or “B section”) in a large-scale AABA pattern and a “bridge” are not necessarily the same thing. But the qualities of contrast and location – which are so central to our prototypical notions of the “bridge” category – are integral aspects

of the B section in any AABA pattern. By viewing these instrumental solo sections as blends of verse, chorus, solo, and bridge roles, we can offer an explanation as to why this material occurs in the location that it does within the large-scale form of the song. In other words, the principle of a bridge can be helpful to explain song form even when a prototypical bridge is absent.

A significant insight gained from the example of “Smoke on the Water” is that bridge quality may adhere to section roles that might otherwise appear to be straightforward instances of non-bridge roles. This insight impacts our conception of form within a number of songs (and extends beyond the more simple notion of solo and bridge blends, as we will see). As another example, consider the song “Angel” (Aerosmith, 1987). In this song, two blocks of verse-prechorus-chorus (VPC) material are followed by an instrumental solo over harmonies from the chorus, this solo section leads to a bridge section with vocals, and then chorus material returns to close the song as a whole (see Example 5.3.02).

Example 5.3.02: “Angel” (Aerosmith, 1987); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group	Alt.	Harmonic content [in Db]
0:03	9	intro (chorus)			I . . V IV . . V
0:28	8	verse	A	%	I IV I vi iii IV
0:50	8	prechorus			V vi IV
1:13	9	chorus			I . . V IV . . V vi . . V IV . . I
1:38	8	verse			%
2:00	8	prechorus	A	B	%
2:23	8	chorus			%
2:45	8	solo (chorus)			%
3:07	8	bridge	B		V IV I vi IV V
3:30	8	chorus	A'	A'	%
3:52	8	chorus			%
4:15	8+	outro (chorus)			%

One way of grouping the solo material is shown in the “Group” column of this example. With this conception, the solo simply prolongs the chorus section that precedes it. Consequently, the second “A” group extends all the way up until the vocal bridge section at 3:07. At the same time, this instrumental solo section provides great textural contrast to the blocks of verse, prechorus, and chorus material that have preceded it. Within the domain of texture, therefore, we can posit a different large-scale grouping, as shown in the “Alt.” column. In this conception, the bridge role is split between the solo section and the vocal bridge. We can, in fact, relate the reason for this split to the nature of the vocal bridge itself. Notice, for example, that the vocal bridge shares a very similar instrumentation to the chorus section of the song. As a result, the textural relief of the solo section helps the vocal bridge stand more clearly apart from the chorus sections themselves. (The way that the song comes

to a halt on the dominant chord around 3:28 can be seen to fulfill a similar purpose at the end of the vocal bridge.) It is important to note that neither conception of the solo material is meant to supersede the other. We can say, rather, that the solo section in this song appears to blend chorus and bridge quality.

We can also find the opposite situation in other songs. Consider, for example, “Buddy Holly” (Weezer, 1994), a succession pattern for which is shown in Example 5.3.03.

Example 5.3.03: “Buddy Holly” (Weezer, 1994); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group	Alt.	Harmonic content [in Ab]
0:00	8	verse	A	%	vi I
0:16	6	prechorus			IV iii vi IV iii vi IV iv
0:28	8	chorus			I IV V
0:43	4	link (verse)			vi I
0:51	8	verse	A		%
1:07	6	prechorus			%
1:19	8+2	chorus			%
1:39	8	bridge	B	B	I vi vi I
1:55	6+2	solo (prechorus)	A'		%
2:11	8+6	chorus		A'	%

One way of conceptualizing the large-scale form for “Buddy Holly” is reflected in the “Group” column. This grouping structure accords priority to the harmonic contents of the various parts of the song. In this reading, the return of the prechorus harmonies in support of an instrumental solo becomes grouped with the chorus section that follows (since it would in this case belong to the final “A” group). Yet we might also consider that this instrumental solo provides textural contrast within the song form as a whole; in this light, we can say that this instrumental solo section evokes bridge-like quality. Moreover, this solo section directly follows the vocal bridge of the song, and thus it potentially participates in a broader “B” group overall, as shown in the “Alt.” column. Comparing this “Alt.” grouping structure with the “Alt.” grouping structure for “Angel” above, we find a close alignment between the basic organizational strategies. In both songs, we find two VPC blocks, a B group consisting of a vocal bridge and instrumental solo material, and then closing chorus material. The ordering of the vocal bridge and instrumental solo sections is different, and so is the harmonic relationship of the solo section to other sections in the song. But the general principle remains the same: a large-scale AABA pattern organizes the song as a whole, while the final A group is only an abbreviated version of earlier A group material. As in “Angel,” we may also posit reasons for the disbursement of the bridge role across what appear to be two separate sections. Specifically, note that the vocal bridge does not depart very strongly from tonic harmony. In fact, this vocal bridge can be seen to be constructed out of a 2-bar riff that

begins and ends on tonic. The harmonic departure that one expects of a prototypical bridge section is fulfilled instead by the instrumental prechorus section that follows. In this regard, the large-scale bridge role is fulfilled by multiple sections within the song.

The ability of an instrumental solo section to act in a bridge role is a useful concept even when the instrumental solo seems strongly based on a specific section type. For instance, consider the role of the solo section in “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (Nirvana, 1991). One straightforward way of conceiving of the song form is sketched in Example 5.3.05 (which has been adapted from Covach 2009 [512]). (The verse-prechorus blend described in the previous portion of this chapter is ignored here for the sake of simplicity.)

Example 5.3.04: “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (Nirvana, 1991);
form chart in Covach 2009 (512)

Start	Mm.	Section	Group
0:00	16	introduction	
0:33	16	verse	A
1:06	20 + 12	chorus	
1:47	16	verse	A
2:20	16	chorus	
2:53	20	instrumental verse	B
3:34	16	verse	A
4:05	21	chorus	

In this reading, the solo section is considered to be an instrumental verse. Indeed, the guitar solo plays note-for-note the melody of the verse material in this song. In other words, it is not just the harmonic content of the verse that reappears in this solo section, but the melodic content as well. Nevertheless, there is something very non-verse-like about this instrumental solo. Notably, it is played over the same heavy texture of distorted guitars and pounding drums that is found in the chorus. (Basically, the texture in the preceding chorus continues through the solo section.) From the aspect of instrumentation, therefore, the solo section departs significantly from the quiet, restrained quality of the verse material in this song. As in other songs we have seen, we can consequently posit a basic AABA pattern that organizes the succession of sections in this song. The AABA pattern acts as a useful concept in understanding the form of this song, for it helps explain why an instrumental verse section occurs at that particular location within the sequence of sections. The instrumental section in “Smells Like Teen Spirit” thus stands a unique, climatic moment in the song – a climax in which verse, chorus, solo, and bridge roles are blended into a single span of music.

Verse as bridge

The notion that bridge quality may adhere to sections that otherwise play non-bridge roles can be extended past instrumental solo sections as well. One revealing example in this regard is the song “Wrapped Around Your Finger” (The Police, 1983). In short, the form of this song can be conceptualized as a series of verse and chorus sections. Indeed, Stephenson offers this song as a representative example of verse-chorus strophic form in his 2002 book (140). In so doing, Stephenson implies that the song contains no bridge.

Yet the notion of a bridge role helps explain the particular configuration of musical material in this song. To see this effect, let us first look at the opening verse material. In Example 5.3.06, we find what Stephenson would undoubtedly choose to call the 16-bar verse section.

Example 5.3.06: “Wrapped Around Your Finger” (The Police, 1983); verse

(orig. A)

0:30

You con - si - der me the young a - ppren - tice,
 Caught be - tween the Scyl - la and Char - yb - dis,
 Hyp - no - tized by you if I should lin - ger,
 Star - in' at the ring a - round your fin - ger.

This material shows many verse-like qualities. From a harmonic perspective, this passage is extremely static. It sits mostly on an A-minor chord, which is embellished somewhat by a few minor-ized dominant harmonies. The melody is relatively static as well. Note how the melodic phrases in each 4-bar hypermeasure begin almost identically. The main difference is that the first and third phrases avoid a strong ending (stopping on $\hat{5}$), while the second and fourth phrases end more strongly on the tonic scale degree. (This

difference creates a latent feeling that these phrases are paired into 8-bar antecedent-consequent units.) As an additional static element, the instrumentation during this initial span of verse material is relatively constant throughout. After this verse material, we are presented with what appears to be the chorus of the song (“I’ll be wrapped around your finger”). (For the sake of this discussion, the role of this chorus section will be taken for granted.)

The particular succession of sections for this song is shown in Example 5.3.07. The “section” and “group” columns here use Stephenson’s labeling scheme, in which the song is conceptualized as containing only verse and chorus material. We thus have an AAA pattern for the large-scale form of the song. From this perspective, the organizational strategy of the song seems fundamentally different than the AABA patterns we viewed above. Certainly, there is no instrumental solo section or vocal bridge that might clearly act as a B group here. Or is there?

Example 5.3.07: “Wrapped Around Your Finger” (The Police, 1983); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group	Alt. Group
0:00	16	intro	A	%
0:30	16	verse		
1:00	16	verse		
1:31	10	chorus		
1:50	8	link		
2:05	16	verse	A	
2:35	10	chorus		
2:54	8	link		
3:09	16	verse	A	B
3:38	12	chorus		A'
4:04	16+	outro		

In Example 5.3.08, a transcription of the third iteration of “verse” material is shown. Note that something very important has happened here in terms of the harmonic structure. Instead of the static i–v vamp in the earlier verse sections, a new bass line imparts a strong sense of harmonic directionality. This bass line groups these measures into 8-bar units (arguably strengthening the antecedent-consequent relationship found in prior versions), as the tonic chord appears only twice during the entire 16-bar segment. Although the melody shares much in common with earlier verse sections, the melody here is not identical to these other versions either. Overall, the sense of closure in earlier verse sections – imparted near the end of each 8-bar unit via a coordinated melodic and harmonic approach to tonic – is now absent. There is consequently a much stronger feeling of instability and forward motion. One should also note that the instrumentation for this third “verse” section is not static either.

About half way through this 16-bar span, the drums switch to the first standard rock beat of the entire song, while the electric guitar plays an eighth-note “A” throughout. These factors contribute as well to the strong drive towards the chorus that follows.

Example 5.3.08: “Wrapped Around Your Finger” (The Police, 1983); verse/bridge

(orig. A)

3:09 i v bVI bVII

De - vil and the deep blue sea be - hind me,

iv v bVI bVII

Van - ish in the air, you'll ne - ver find me.

i v bVI bVII

I will turn your face to al - a - bas - ter,

iv v bVI

When you find your ser - vant is your mas - ter.

For these reasons, it may not be obvious to someone listening to this song that the material in Example 5.3.08 is related to the verse material heard earlier. Instead, a listener might assume that these 16 bars act as the bridge material for the song. As shown in the rightmost column of Example 5.3.07, a bridge-like role for this passage would create a large-scale AABA pattern. The location for these changes to the verse material can thus be seen as a response to the general AABA principle (or the general principles of the bridge role). With this conception, verse and bridge roles are concurrent. This particular type of verse and bridge blend may be referred to as a verse/bridge, since what was verse material is now acting as the large-scale bridge of the song. In this situation, we can say that there are two grouping layers (as shown in right-hand columns of Example 5.3.07), which are active at the same time. Here again, we should beware of the false choice between one role and another (or one grouping and another), as our analyses should reflect the interaction of different roles that combine to create the specific form we find in this piece. The notion of a verse/bridge blend, in fact, helps explain the particular internal and external organization of sections in this song.

The interverse

Recognizing that a bridge role may blend with other section roles means that there are many situations in which bridge quality may be somewhat unclear or weakened. A relevant case study in this regard is the work of Christopher Endrinal. In his dissertation on the music of U2, Endrinal deprecates the term “bridge,” since – as he states – many instances of what theorists would call the bridge of a song lack “a connecting or transitional function” (2008, 74). In other words, many bridge sections in rock do not obviously “bridge” anything. In place of this term, Endrinal introduces the term “interverse.” He uses this term because an interverse occurs between two other sections (“inter-”) and has lyrics (“-verse”). Endrinal goes on to partition this interverse category based on two parameters. This first parameter is tonal closure: if the interverse is tonally open (ends off-tonic), it is “continuous;” if it is tonally closed, then it is “sectional.” The second parameter involves whether or not the interverse borrows material (whatever that may be) from other sections in the song: if the interverse recycles harmonic content from an earlier section, for example, it is “dependent;” conversely, if the interverse presents a new harmonic structure, it is “independent.” These two parameters combine to create four subtypes of interverse: independent continuous, independent sectional, dependent continuous, and dependent sectional.

As we examine the musical examples that Endrinal provides in support of these section labels, we find that these four subtypes of interverse can be alternatively conceptualized as responses to various levels of bridge strengths and role blends. For instance, the category of independent continuous interverse – which is applied to new musical material that lacks tonal closure – can be seen to account for those passages that present a relatively clear sense of bridge quality. One example can be found in “Beautiful Day” (U2, 2004). Starting at around 2:15, the independent continuous interverse of this song (as labeled by Endrinal [2008, 176]) presents a dramatic reduction in the instrumental texture, lies as the “B” material within a large-scale AABA succession pattern, and has an overall harmonic content that traces a supertonic (ii) to dominant (V) motion. These are all factors that strongly align with our notions of a modern bridge section.

In other subtypes of interverse, bridge quality is noticeably weakened. An independent sectional interverse, for instance, provides contrasting material but is tonally closed. Endrinal illustrates this category with the song “Elevation” (U2, 2000). Indeed, the interverse of this song (spanning from 2:11 to 2:35 [2008, 78]) ends with what seems like tonic harmony (E major), and so we may feel that this passage does not stand as a prototypical instance of a bridge. At the same time, the textural contrast that this middle section provides to the surrounding sections is extreme. The entire ensemble basically drops out. Moreover, this interverse occurs – after two blocks of verse-chorus material – in the

prototypical location for a modern bridge within the overall form of the song. It would be hard to say, therefore, that we do not feel a relatively strong sense of a bridge role during this section of the song, despite the fact that the final chord in this passage is a tonic harmony.

The more interesting subtypes are those that are dependent – i.e., based on some previous musical material in the song. (The criteria of continuous and sectional tend to be less informative.) With dependent interverses, we find passages that blend a bridge role with some other section role presented in the song. In “City of Blinding Lights” (U2, 2004), the interverse that Endrinal identifies from 4:10–4:25 (2008, 80) is a short, 8-bar passage that basically recycles the same bass line, harmonic progression, instrumentation, and texture as the chorus (which immediately follows this interverse). Another analyst may have simply viewed this interverse as a frontwards extension of the chorus that follows it. What Endrinal draws our attention to, however, is that this extension occurs in the general location that we associate with a modern bridge. In particular, this extension happens after two groups of main material (verse, prechorus [or transition], and chorus) and prior to a final chorus section. (The interverse thus acts as “B” material within a large-scale AABA pattern.) Undeniably, bridge quality during this passage is very low. We might also say, though, that we have a blend of chorus and bridge roles here, as the variation in the chorus melody and lyrics can be accounted for by the influence of the bridge role. A similar situation can be found in “Original of the Species” (U2, 2004). Once again, the dependent interverse of this song – which spans from 3:07–3:30 (Endrinal 2008, 81) – acts as “B” material within a large-scale AABA pattern. But unlike the previous example, the harmonic content of this interverse is highly similar to that found in the prechorus section (or “transition,” to use Endrinal’s terminology), which is first heard at 0:33. At least in the context of this song, we find what appears to be a blend of bridge and prechorus roles. (Better examples of this type of blend will be presented in a moment.)

Overall, Endrinal’s invention of the word “interverse” can be seen as a response to prototype effects within our perception of section roles. From the perspective of a definition-based approach, the term “bridge” may indeed fail to properly describe these passages. We can thus be sympathetic to the frustration that Endrinal appears to have with that term. But instead of abandoning the bridge label, it seems more useful to consider the extent to which bridge quality is evident in a song. In some cases, bridge quality may be somewhat weakened. In others, the bridge role can be seen to blend with other section roles. It is posited here that the concept of blends is preferable to wholly new terminology and better reflects how we hear such ambiguous passages.

Prechorus as bridge

In the work of some authors, we may find explicit attempts to downplay the aspect of role blends in rock music. For instance, Stephan-Robinson (2009, 73) expresses strong disapproval with the following statement by Davis (1985, 57): “Although the bridge, more often than not, is musically ‘new,’ it doesn’t have to be. You may find that half a verse (either the first half or the last) can be just the transition you need.” Stephan-Robinson proceeds to critique the two examples that Davis provides, one of which is the song “Him” (Rupert Holmes, 1980). Stephan-Robinson goes on to state that Davis “miss[es] similarities or differences between sections due to [Davis’s]... nonexistent attention to music” (76). This is fairly strong criticism. But although Stephan-Robinson is correct to point out some important similarities between sections in this song, she herself – in so doing – deemphasizes some important aspects of the song form.

In order to more closely appreciate these aspects, let us take a closer look at this song. To begin with, Stephan-Robinson’s succession pattern for “Him” is shown in the “Section” column of Example 5.3.10.

Example 5.3.10: “Him” (Rupert Holmes, 1980);
form chart in Stephan-Robinson 2009 (75-6)

Start	Mm.	Section	Alt.	Group		
				1	2	3
0:00	8	intro	intro			
0:19	8	verse (part 1)	verse	A	%	%
0:37	8	verse (part 2)	prechorus			
0:54	11	chorus	chorus			
1:19	8	verse (part 1)	verse	A		
1:36	8	verse (part 2)	prechorus			
1:53	11	chorus	chorus			
2:18	8	instr. verse (part 1)	solo	A	B	B
2:34	8	verse (part 2)	prechorus		A	
2:52	12	chorus	chorus			
3:18	12+	chorus + fade-out	outro			

As is shown, Stephan-Robinson views the form of the song as a succession of verse and chorus sections. Her larger grouping structure is reflected in the “Group 1” column (75). But while the song consists entirely of harmonic material from the verse (parts 1 and 2) and chorus sections, the form of the song is not necessarily so straightforward. There are a number of factors to consider in this regard. For example, the “verse (part 2)” that Stephan-Robinson identifies can also be considered a relatively prototypical instance of a prechorus section. The transcription of the first iteration (Example 5.3.11) shows the close relationship between the harmonic content of this 8-bar prechorus candidate and a classic bridge. (As the

reader will remember, the similarity between prechorus and classic bridge material was explored in Chapter 4 within the context of classic 32-bar AABA conversions.) Moreover, the instrumental solo section – which is played over harmonic content from the verse – occurs (after two A group iterations) at the precise moment we would expect some sort of bridge-like material. From the perspective of texture, therefore, we find a large-scale AABA pattern like those in many of the examples discussed so far.

Example 5.3.11: “Him” (Rupert Holmes, 1980); prechorus candidate

(orig. E)
0:37

She for- gets_ to hide_ them. I know who left those smokes be - hind.

She'll say, "Ah, he's just a friend." And I'll_ say, "Oh, I'm not blind."_

As another factor, note that this instrumental solo section proceeds directly to another iteration of prechorus material. Because this final prechorus segment is basically identical to previous iterations, we could say that the music following the solo section is simply just another prechorus section. Consequently, we might posit the large-scale organization as shown in the “Group 2” column. Yet at the same time, this prechorus appears in the same location that we might expect a vocal bridge (which would thereby create a compound B group in combination with the preceding instrumental solo material). Given the close similarity between prechorus and bridge quality, we could thus say that the final prechorus section in this song is – albeit in a subtle way – fulfilling the role of a modern bridge. (Simply looking at Example 5.3.11 out of context, one would be hard pressed to say whether or not this passage is a prechorus or bridge.) Accordingly, we might posit the alternate grouping pattern shown in the “Group 3” column of Example 5.3.10. With this conceptual scheme, the organization of the song aligns with the general principles of a typical abbreviated AABA pattern, in which the final A group consists only of chorus material. It seems to be this conceptual scheme that Davis is referring to when she says that “although the bridge, more often than not, is musically ‘new,’ it doesn’t have to be” (1985, 57). Certainly, Davis realizes that the music of the returning prechorus material is not new. But this prechorus is able to act in the role of a bridge due to the similarity between the melodic and harmonic structure of prototypical prechorus and bridge sections.

Some readers may balk at this reading of the large-scale form in “Him.” One should note, however, that the distinction between a new bridge section and another prechorus iteration is not always clear. This makes sense, of course, in that both the prechorus and bridge sections of a typical abbreviated AABA pattern lead directly to a chorus. As one example, consider “Walking in the Rain” (The Ronettes, 1964). The bridge of the song (starting at 2:12) has a certain affinity with the prechorus material (starting at 0:38), in part because of a shared harmonic palette. The similarity becomes obvious by the end of each section, as the last measure of the bridge (around 2:27) sounds almost identical to the last measure of the prechorus (around 0:54). A similar situation can be found in “Angel” (Aerosmith, 1987), in which the bridge section (starting at 3:07) seems to turn into a prechorus section (first heard at 0:50) by the end of its eight bars. In “Naturally” (Selena Gomez & the Scene, 2009), the material acting in the bridge role (2:13) is significantly different than earlier prechorus iterations (at 0:33 and 1:32), yet also quite similar in many ways (most notably, harmonic content). The bridge (2:39) and prechorus (0:37) sections to “You Belong with Me” (Taylor Swift, 2008) are also built on almost identical harmonic frameworks, despite having different textures, lyrics, and melodies. In general, therefore, prechorus material that is situated between an instrumental solo section and closing chorus iterations can be seen to also play the part of a vocal bridge. Additional examples include “Livin’ on a Prayer” (Bon Jovi, 1986), prechorus at 1:17 as bridge role at 3:16; “Magic” (The Cars, 1984), prechorus at 1:06 as bridge role at 3:12; “Papa Don’t Preach” (Madonna, 1986), prechorus at 1:03 as bridge role at 2:46. What is especially important to note is that in all of these cases, no separate modern bridge section exists within the form of the song. Instead, recycled prechorus material stands in its place.

One might argue that many of these situations – especially when the bridge role is filled by an almost exact repeat of the prechorus – simply represent abbreviated AABA patterns in which the final A group includes both a prechorus and chorus. Assuredly, this grouping structure is one layer of the song form. But a prototype approach does not try to answer whether or not a bridge role exists within a song. Rather, a prototype approach asks to what extent bridge quality manifests itself within the song, and what parts of the song might act in this capacity. Further examples will highlight the importance of this distinction.

Sonic disruptions

As the reader should know by now, location is an important attribute of bridge quality. In a recent essay (2008), Jocelyn Neal exposes an interesting feature of many Shania Twain songs that is strongly predicated on location. Of particular relevance to the current

discussion, the location of this feature appears to intersect with prototypical notions of bridge quality.

The feature in question is what Neal refers to as a “sonic disruption.” According to Neal, a sonic disruption is “some sort of incongruous sound effect at a time-point approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of the way through the song” (304). Given our knowledge of song form, this abstract location seems to occur within or near the end of bridge material. Yet the description that Neal gives for sonic disruptions is divorced from any particular section role. In fact, she goes on to point out that sonic disruptions occur in a variety of positions with respect to section roles (305). As we have seen in the preceding discussion, though, bridge quality may blend with (or occur on a larger grouping level than) other section roles. On investigating sonic disruptions more closely, in fact, we find that our understanding of one type of sonic disruption is enhanced by a prototype approach to bridge quality.

It should be noted that what exactly constitutes a “sonic disruption” for Neal is not entirely made clear. As mentioned, she states that they can occur within various places in the form of the song. Moreover, sonic disruptions may be many things, as she writes that “the specific nature of these sonic events varies from song to song” (304). Neal does offer four examples of sonic disruptions, though, from which we can glean some useful details. In most of the cases, the sonic disruption seems to involve some sort of insertion or extension into the prevailing hypermetric structure. In “Black Eyes, Blue Tears” (Shania Twain, 1997), for example, the sonic disruption (around 2:51) involves an extension – via a snare drum flurry – of prechorus material acting in a bridge role prior to the final chorus. Likewise, the sonic disruption within “In My Car (I’ll Be the Driver)” (Shania Twain, 2002) – which occurs around 2:27 – involves an extension of the verse-like material via a violin solo (in the country version) prior to the final prechorus-chorus unit. In “Waiter! Bring Me Water!” (Shania Twain, 2002), similarly, the sonic disruption that occurs around 2:23 adds an extra hypermeasure into the prevailing 4x4 hypermetric environment.

A different situation occurs in Neal’s example of “Honey, I’m Home” (Shania Twain, 1997). In this song, the sonic disruption occurs from about 2:48 to about 2:50, i.e., the first two measures of the final chorus section. (Neal is very specific about this location in her Figure 11.6.) But while the music preceding the sonic disruption may be seen as including some sort of phrase extension (the solo section morphs into the end of the prechorus to create a 12-bar span), the sonic disruption itself does not involve any alteration to the regular hypermetric structure. Other than having its first two bars sung *a cappella*, the chorus is otherwise the same square 16-bar length as it was during previous iterations. We should also note that this sonic disruption occurs at the beginning of a section, not at the end of a section

as would a typical phrase extension. Most importantly, this sonic disruption includes the main vocal melody, as opposed to the instrumental-only examples above. The type of sonic disruption found in “Honey, I’m Home,” therefore, seems to be of a different kind than the other cases of sonic disruption that Neal provides. For the sake of clarity, this type will be referred to here a *breakdown* moment. In the case of “Honey, I’m Home,” we can say that the chorus includes a partial breakdown, since the chorus is basically a full-fledged chorus section, except that the texture in the beginning of this chorus is significantly reduced. While breakdown moments themselves may also include phrase extensions, these phrase extensions are not integral to this type of sonic disruption.

Breakdown as bridge

Breakdown moments can be found in a large number of rock songs. Typically, they occur near the end of a song and directly precede fully-orchestrated chorus material. The dramatic contrast between the small texture of the breakdown and the big texture of the full-blown chorus material heightens the impact of the final chorus and further reinforces the central role that the chorus plays within the song. Like other types of sonic disruptions, breakdowns can be found to encompass what appear to be a variety of section roles. At the same time, breakdowns all fulfill a similar role within the overall form of the song.

In this regard, it is helpful to look at a few song examples to better understand what role (or roles) breakdown sections play within a song. In Example 5.3.12, form charts for three songs by the band Boys Like Girls are shown.

Example 5.3.12: Form in three songs from *Boys Like Girls* (Boys Like Girls, 2006)

“The Great Escape”		“Hero / Heroine”		“Thunder”		Group	
Start	Section	Start	Section	Start	Section	1	2
0:00	intro	0:00	intro				
0:13	verse	0:17	verse	0:00	verse	A	A
0:32	prechorus	0:41	prechorus	0:25	prechorus		
0:38	chorus	0:52	chorus	0:38	chorus		
0:57	link						
1:04	verse	1:04	verse	1:10	verse	A	A
1:23	prechorus	1:27	prechorus	1:36	prechorus		
1:29	chorus	1:39	chorus	1:49	chorus		
1:49	bridge	2:02	bridge	2:21	bridge	B	B
2:01	solo (chorus)						
2:14	chorus (BD)	2:26	prechorus (BD)	2:37	verse (BD)	A'	A'
2:29	chorus	2:40	chorus	2:49	chorus		
2:41	chorus	3:04	chorus	3:15	chorus		
3:01	outro	3:28	outro	3:41	outro		

These three songs – “The Great Escape,” “Hero/Heroine,” and “Thunder” – are all tracks from the band’s 2006 self-titled album. As can be seen, the section succession patterns for these three songs are highly similar. Each song includes a verse-prechorus-chorus block, which is then repeated (with or without intervening link material); after these two VPC blocks, we find bridge material (in one case with an instrumental solo as well); a breakdown section (notated as “BD”) then occurs, and this breakdown is followed by two iterations of chorus material and an outro. From this perspective, it is clear that the same general principle (AABA) guides the large-scale organization of these songs.

The primary difference between the forms of these songs is what material is included within the each breakdown moment. In “The Great Escape,” the breakdown occurs with chorus material; in “Hero/Heroine,” the breakdown comprises prechorus material; in “Thunder,” verse material constitutes the breakdown. Because all of these breakdowns involve material from the original VPC blocks, we could posit the grouping structure shown in the “Group 1” column of Example 5.3.12. Yet this grouping structure preferences the derivation of the breakdown material at the expense of the breakdown moment itself. To a certain extent, it seems more important here that a breakdown occurs rather than what type of material is included within this breakdown. Note that in the case of “Thunder,” for example, the breakdown verse bypasses the prechorus section on its way to the chorus – as if the verse material is being co-opted for a different purpose than its typical role. If it is the breakdown itself that is of primary importance in the form of the song (and not the musical and lyrical content), then our conception of the song form should respond accordingly. Since the breakdown generates dramatic contrast with regard to texture and instrumentation, we can say that there is something bridge-like about its role overall. The “Group 2” column in Example 5.3.12 reflects this conception of that role.

Once again, we are faced with part of a song – in this case, the breakdown itself – that appears to fulfill dual roles within the form. On one hand, the music in these breakdown moments is so clearly derived from previous sections that it would be blatantly wrong not to say that they stand as instances of verse, prechorus, or chorus material. On the other hand, the way this breakdown material creates what is often the greatest level of contrast at a critical point within the large-scale form of the song coincides with our notions of bridge quality. Because breakdown moments in the vast majority of songs directly follow vocal bridge or solo material, it seems as if the breakdown represents an extension of the bridge role into the return of the A group. There is thus an overlap, a fusion, a blend – in which different layers of the song form convey different roles to the listener.

The reader is encouraged to explore the great many examples of breakdown moments in modern rock music. Songs in which the breakdown involves chorus material include

“Don’t Tell Me” (Avril Lavigne, 2004), “Where the Lines Overlap” (Paramore, 2009), “Why Can’t I” (Liz Phair, 2003), “Love Story” (Taylor Swift, 2008), and “Who We Are” (Hope Partlow, 2005). Songs in which the breakdown involves verse material include “Hot n Cold” (Katy Perry, 2008), “You’re Not Sorry” (Taylor Swift, 2008), and “Behind These Hazel Eyes” (Kelly Clarkson, 2004). As should be evident, this breakdown technique is quite common among songs in more recent rock recordings. But elements of this technique can be found throughout the history of rock. In “Help!” (The Beatles, 1965), for example, the beginning of the third iteration of the main musical material (starting around 1:31) is dramatically stripped down in texture as compared to its earlier iterations. This moment in the song is precisely where one would expect some sort of bridge material, yet no “true” bridge appears in the song. Instead, the breakdown verse fulfills the bridge role (from a textural perspective) and the song manifests as a result – albeit more subtly than in other cases – the general principle of AABA organization. In this regard, the notion of a breakdown (and a bridge blend) helps explicate certain aspects within the large-scale organization of this song.

Conclusion

Although a prototypical bridge section involves a number of attributes, we find that “bridgeness” may be conveyed – at least to a certain extent – via only a subset of these attributes. In particular, the location of musical material within the song can affect how we perceive its role overall. Often, this perception derives from an underlying AABA organizational scheme (whether complete or abbreviated).

From a more abstract perspective, though, bridge quality does not necessarily need to involve any particular succession pattern, since a relative location is not tied to a single sequence of sections or groups of sections. As one example, consider the form of so many classic AABA songs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the large-scale form for these classic AABA songs often includes an abbreviated reprise. The result, of course, is the *AABA–break–BA* pattern. Looking at various instantiations of this pattern, we find that the content of the instrumental break varies from song to song. For instance, in “Handy Man” (Jimmy Jones, 1960) and “True Love Ways” (Buddy Holly, 1960), this break involves a single iteration of the A material. In contrast, the instrumental breaks in “Everyday” (Buddy Holly, 1957) and “Great Balls Of Fire” (Jerry Lee Lewis, 1957) involve two iterations of A material. Yet a different scheme is found in “Come Go with Me” (The Del-Vikings, 1957), where the instrumental break consists of both B and A material. Despite these differences, the general *AABA–break–BA* pattern holds true. One might wonder why this particular structure is so common. We could hypothesize that – at least in part – this pattern derives from matters of absolute time, in that a full repeat of a 32-bar AABA pattern would result in a song that is too

long, but that some additional material is needed after the core AABA iteration to prevent the song from being too short. We might also say that the abbreviated reprise avoids putting too many iterations of A-based material in succession, as would occur in the case of a full reprise. The notion of bridge blends offers one additional explanation. If we subdivide the *AABA–break–BA* such that it looks like *AA–BA–break–BA*, we can see that the instrumental break occurs in the same relative location as the B group in an AABA pattern. Consequently, the instrumental break stands in the same general position as would instrumental bridge material in a modern compound AABA form. The *AABA–break–BA* pattern can thus be seen to manifest the AABA principle (or at least the principle of a bridge role) at a higher level than the local AABA pattern itself.

In summary, the bridge role can be seen to organize a far greater group of songs than has been currently recognized. Yet in many songs, this role is not conveyed in an entirely clear manner. Often, the bridge role merges with other section roles, such that no one single “form” or large-scale grouping structure can be said to exist. Nevertheless, a prototype approach to the bridge role offers way to conceptualize these various songs as instances of the same basic overriding principle.

5.4: Chorus Blends

In current systems of form in rock music, a chorus section may or may not exist within a given song. Songs in classic AABA form, for example, might be judged to consist of only verse and bridge material. Other songs, such as those based on the 12-bar blues, are seen to be composed primarily of verse and refrain material. In analyses of music from the 1970s and beyond, however, the chorus label becomes a pervasive section role. (This trend is noted in Covach 2005 [75].) Because “chorus” is the go-to label for identifying focal moments within a song (especially those songs within more recent decades), the chorus label is often used even in situations where we might feel like this label may not be entirely appropriate. As will be shown below, such ambiguous situations often involve a blend between the chorus role and some other section role. Common types of these blends include that found between a refrain and chorus, a link and chorus, and a prechorus and chorus. Each of these situations will be treated in detail below.

Tail refrain as chorus

As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the most well-worn topics with regard to section role ambiguity is that found between the refrain and chorus labels. Prototypical instances of both section roles were presented in that chapter, and we saw a significant difference between

the central members of these categories. A prototypical tail refrain, for example, embodied the single cadential motion at the end of a larger section. In contrast, a prototypical chorus was a standalone section in its own right, harmonically closed, with multiple lines of lyric content. In Chapter 4, furthermore, we saw some instances in which the distinction between a refrain and chorus was not clear (e.g., “I Can See for Miles” or “Jailhouse Rock”).

Nevertheless, this issue deserves its own dedicated discussion, since it confronts theorists time and again. As will be shown below, there is a simple explanation for some of these recurring yet perplexing moments. We will investigate first the case of tail refrain and chorus blends, and then proceed to the case of head refrain and chorus blends.

The song “Sympathy for the Devil” (The Rolling Stones, 1968) provides a useful case study to begin this discussion. Instead of starting with the initial iteration of the main musical material, though, let us first consider the organization of the music beginning around 1:13 (as shown in Example 5.4.01).

Example 5.4.01: “Sympathy for the Devil” (The Rolling Stones, 1968);
second iteration of main unit

(orig. E)
1:13 I

Stuck a- round St. Pe-ters-burg when I saw it was a time for a change.

Killed the Czar and his min-is- ters, An-a- sta - sia screamed in vain.

I rode a tank, held a gen - eral's rank, when the Blitz - krieg raged and the bod - ies stank.

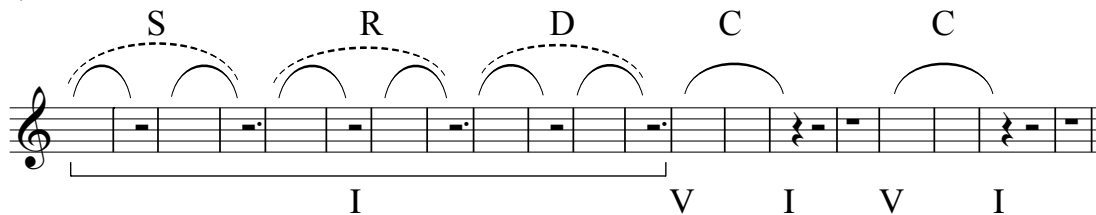
Pleased to meet you, hope_ you guess my_ name. Ah,_what's

puzz- lin' you_ is the nat - ure of_ my_ game.

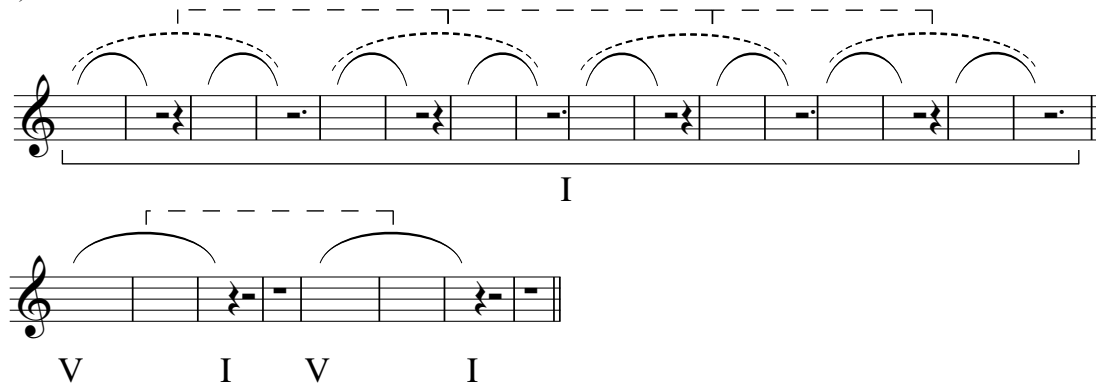
In essence, the music in Example 5.4.01 consists of five gestures: three tonic-prolonging gestures within the first three hypermeasures (four or five bars each), and two cadential gestures within the last two 4-bar hypermeasures. The term “gesture” is used here since – although very faint – we can posit that some sort of underlying SRDC (or rather, SRDCC) construction is evident in this excerpt (as shown in Example 5.4.02a). Certainly, there are clear statement and restatement gestures in the first eight bars, and the last eight bars are clear instances of two cadential gestures. The departure gesture is relatively weak, however, as there is no change in the harmonic content or melodic phrase rhythm at this point; it is only through an upward shift in melodic register that any feeling of departure may be sensed at all. Nevertheless, the SRDCC conception is helpful, for it reveals one way of conceptualizing the derivation of this musical structure as a whole. Like “La-La (Means I Love You)” (back in Example 4.3.14), this 20-bar SRDCC can be seen as arising from a doubling of the closing tail refrain in a 16-bar SRDC model. While these doubled tail refrains are not entirely prototypical instances of tail refrains (for instance, they do not include the title text), their harmonic and melodic organizations convey relatively clear tail refrain quality. (Note, for example, the motion to a coordinated melodic and harmonic cadence on tonic in the third measure.)

Example 5.4.02: “Sympathy for the Devil” (The Rolling Stones, 1968);
phrase rhythm

a) Verse and doubled refrain



b) Verse and chorus



Those readers familiar with this song might recognize that this version of the main musical material is unlike its other iterations. In all other instances (at 0:21, 1:58, and 3:43), the main musical material spans not 20 but rather 24 bars. The increased length comes from the fact that the non-cadential material lasts a full 16 bars. We thus have 16 bars of tonic-prolonging gestures plus 8 bars of cadential gestures, as shown in Example 5.4.02b. As this example also shows, one way that theorists have conceived of these 24 bars is as a 16-bar verse followed by an 8-bar chorus (e.g., Temperley 2010). Indeed, the designation of a verse followed by a chorus is a reasonable choice for these 24 bars. One primary reason is that the 4x4 hypermetric regularity of the 16-bar verse material effectively walls off the following cadential material from sounding as if it belongs to the same structure. While the first cadential phrase in the 20-bar version sounds as if it might be the final phrase in a 16-bar unit, this sort of hearing is not available in the 24-bar version. The two tail refrain gestures have, we might say, popped out of their (hyper-)hypermetric connection to the verse and now stand on their own. As a result, we are encouraged to hear the 16-bar and 8-bar spans as separate sections. Since we do not tend to consider a refrain as a standalone section, the standalone quality of the final 8-bar span consequently makes a refrain label seem somewhat inappropriate. We are thus further apt to view the final eight bars as chorus material.

At the same time, the harmonic and melodic construction of the last eight bars still conveys a strong sense of tail refrain quality. Some theorists may thus be torn between a chorus or refrain label. (Further examples will be discussed below.) In essence, this situation represents a blend of tail refrain and chorus roles. This variety of a “refrain/chorus” is actually a fairly common construction in rock music. As examples, consider the 8-bar “chorus” sections of “Honky Tonk Women” (The Rolling Stones, 1969 [refrain/chorus first at 0:50]), “Sweet Child o’ Mine” (Guns N’ Roses, 1987 [refrain/chorus first at 1:16]), or “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For” (U2, 1987 [refrain/chorus first at 1:06]), especially with regard to the harmonically- and hypermetrically-closed 16-bar verse sections. When we encounter this particular type of chorus and refrain blend, we should be aware of the inherent ambiguity that exists between chorus and refrain roles. Doing so, we can avoid the internal dilemmas (or external disagreements) that might otherwise plague our analyses.

Extensions of tail refrain as chorus

In the preceding examples, we saw how – given the right hypermetric setting and location within the form of a song – the musical and lyrical characteristics of multiple tail refrains may express relatively strong chorus quality. These examples were straightforward illustrations of this situation, even though the situation itself was ambiguous as to whether we

should employ a refrain label, a chorus label, or both. The situation becomes further complicated by the fact that tail refrain quality itself may not always be clear.

For example, consider the main musical material in “We Will Rock You” (Queen, 1977). There is no harmonic content in this song until the guitar solo at 1:34; the entire texture up until this point consists only of foot stomps, hand claps, and a monophonic vocal melody. Prior to the guitar solo, the form of the song basically involves an alternation between an 8-bar verse section (Example 5.4.03) and the eight bars of music shown in Example 5.4.04.

Example 5.4.03: “We Will Rock You” (Queen, 1977); verse

(orig. Eb)

0:12

Bud-dy, you're a boy, make a big noise, play-in' in the street, gon-na be a big man some-day. You got mud on your face, a big dis-grace, kick-in' your can all ov-er the place.

The musical notation for the verse consists of two staves of music in E-flat major. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the verse, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Example 5.4.04: “We Will Rock You” (Queen, 1977); refrain/chorus

(orig. Eb)

0:24

(Sing - in') We will, we will rock you.
We will, we will rock you.

The musical notation for the refrain/chorus consists of two staves of music in E-flat major. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the refrain, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

It is patently obvious that the eight bars of title text in Example 5.4.04 are the focal moment of the song (especially due to the dramatic thickening of the vocal texture at this point). But we are faced again with the question of whether we should consider this music to constitute a refrain or chorus. Without any harmonic context, we have somewhat limited information by which to make this decision. Nonetheless, it should be clear that we have all of the melodic, lyric, and phrase rhythm hallmarks of two tail refrains, including the cadential move to the tonic note on the downbeat of the third measure in each 4-bar hypermeasure. In this regard, we have a straightforward instance of a refrain/chorus blend.

In other situations, neither the melody nor the harmony may show as strong a sense of tail refrain quality. Yet we may still consider these situations to be instances of refrain/chorus blends. In doing so, we reflect the fact that such cases present many of the same attributes as seen above. Take, for instance, the song “1999” (Prince, 1982). To begin with, this song includes clear verse material, as shown in Example 5.4.05. Like other cases in which we find a blend of the tail refrain and chorus roles, this verse material undeniably serves to prolong tonic harmony (as tonic harmony bookends the verse section as a whole). Moreover, this verse material constitutes a 4x4, hypermetrically-regular 16-bar span of music. Following this verse material, we hear the 8-bar passage transcribed in Example 5.4.06.

Example 5.4.05: “1999” (Prince, 1982); verse material

(orig. F)
0:51

I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I

I was dream-in' when I wrote this, for - give me if it goes a-stray. But when I

I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I



woke up this morn-in', could of sworn it was judg-ment day.


Example 5.4.06: “1999” (Prince, 1982); refrain/chorus

(orig. F)
1:23

IV vi I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I

Say, say, two - thou-sand ze-ro ze-ro par-ty ov-er, oops, out of time. So to -

IV vi I bVII/[^]I I bVII/[^]I I



night I'm gon-na par-ty like it's nine-teen nine - ty nine.____

A number of authors (Covach 2009 [462] and Temperley 2010) refer to these eight bars as the chorus section of the song. We should be aware, however, of the tail refrain quality that inheres to this purported chorus section. At first glance, tail refrain quality may not be immediately apparent. Specifically, there is no traditional cadential motion to tonic in either the harmony or melody. Yet these eight bars seem to capture the abstract essence of

tail refrain quality. While the IV–vi–I progression is undeniably weak in terms of cadential quality, the general motion is from an off-tonic area to an arrival on tonic, and this arrival occurs in its prototypical hypermetric location (the downbeat of the third bar). Similarly, while the melody does not complete a full descent to the tonic, the final arrival on $\hat{3}$ undeniably gives some sense of closure (much like an imperfect authentic cadence). The final pattern of sections that we might posit for this song (as shown in Example 5.4.07) should reflect how the construction of this song – on both local and global levels – relates to those instances of tail refrain and chorus blends seen above. (Like “Wrapped Around Your Finger,” the third verse iteration of “1999” includes a perceptible departure from the standard verse melody. This departure conveys – albeit rather weakly – evidence of latent large-scale AABA thinking, even though a prototypical bridge section is obviously absent.)

Example 5.4.07: “1999” (Prince, 1982); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group	Alt. Group
0:00	16	intro	A	%
0:51	8	verse		
1:07	8			
1:23	8	refrain/chorus		
1:39	8	verse	A	
1:55	8			
2:12	8	refrain/chorus		
2:28	4	link		
2:36	8	verse	A	B
2:52	8			
3:08	8	refrain/chorus		A'
3:25	8	refrain/chorus		
3:41	8	link		
3:57	8	refrain/chorus		
4:13	60	outro		

Head refrain as chorus

In the discussion of prototypical refrains in Chapter 3, it was shown that tail refrain and head refrain quality may sometimes be indistinguishable. This situation arises in cases of metrical overlap, in which the last hypermetric strong beat of a section also acts as the first hypermetric strong beat of a new section. It is worth exploring such cases in further detail, for it will help explain another type of blend: that between link and chorus roles. First, though, we need to understand how a head refrain can engender chorus quality.

To begin this discussion, we will consider a song with a clear tail refrain: “Shop Around” (The Miracles, 1960). From this example, we can see the start of a process by which the post-refrain material becomes more link- and/or chorus-like. The basic form of “Shop

Around” is quite similar to a classic 32-bar AABA with abbreviated reprise. As shown in Example 5.4.08, a brief introduction precedes a standard *AABA-break-BA* pattern as found in many other songs from this era.

Example 5.4.08: “Shop Around” (The Miracles, 1960); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section
0:00	(4)	intro
0:12	14	A
0:37	14	A
1:02	8	B
1:17	8	A
1:31	8	solo
1:46	8	B
2:01	14+	A

The structure of this song is not a prototypical instance of this form type, however, since many of the A sections comprise not 8 but rather 14 bars. That being said, one A section (starting at 1:17) does span eight bars. Looking more closely at this particular A section, in fact, we find that it displays the prototypical construction of a classic 8-bar A section. As transcribed in Example 5.4.09, the first 4-bar hypermeasure of this 8-bar A section has two 2-bar parallel melodic phrases, which are then followed by a prototypical tail refrain in the second hypermeasure. Note also that the B group of this song (not transcribed here) is a classic 8-bar bridge section, in strong part due to the 2+2+2+2 melodic phrase organization and the classic IV–I–IV–V harmonic progression.

Example 5.4.09: “Shop Around” (The Miracles, 1960); 8-bar post-B A material

(orig. G)
1:17 I

Be-fore you take a girl and say I do___ now,___ a-make sure she's in love with-a you,___ now.

My ma-ma told me,___ "You'd bet-ter shop a-round."

Although not prototypical instances of classic 8-bar A sections, the 14-bar A sections in “Shop Around” may be derived from the 8-bar model. Looking at the transcription of the first instance of a 14-bar A section in Example 5.4.10, we can see how this change could take place. Most obviously, the music in the first hypermeasure of the 8-bar version is repeated,

thereby creating an 8-bar span of tonic-prolonging material (instead of 4-bars in a classic 8-bar A section). The title-containing phrase then arrives, although the amount of music after this title phrase is now extended such that there are 4 bars following the cadential arrival (in the eleventh bar). Generally speaking, the layout of measures and systems in the 14-bar version as shown in Example 5.4.10 retains the same hypermetric organization as found in the 8-bar version.

Example 5.4.10: “Shop Around” (The Miracles, 1960); opening A material

(orig. G)
0:12

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Roman numerals (I, IV, V) are placed above the staff to indicate the harmonic structure. The lyrics are written below the staff, with some words underlined to indicate phrasing.

System 1: I IV I IV
And then she said, "Just be cause, you've be come a young man now, there's still some things that you don't un der stand now."

System 2: I IV I IV
Be fore you ask some girl for her hand now, keep your free dom for as long as you can now."

System 3: V/V V I IV
My ma-ma told me, "You'd bet-ter shop a- round, woah yeah, you'd bet-ter shop

System 4: I V
a- round."

Via these extensions of the 8-bar model, though, a similar hypermetric organization is not necessarily how we hear the 14-bar version. As an alternative hypermetric organization, consider the hearing reflected in the revised transcription of the last 6 bars, as shown in Example 5.4.11. With this hearing, the end of what was the tail refrain in the 8-bar version overlaps with the downbeat of the next hypermeasure. In other words, this cadential arrival is metrically reinterpreted to be the first bar of a new hypermeasure. Our sense that a metric reinterpretation occurs here may be somewhat retroactive, in that we do not realize the post-cadential measures last a full 4 bars until significantly after the cadential arrival. Yet there is a full stop in the instrumentation prior to this title line, and this break encourages us to restart (or recalibrate) our sense of hypermeter at this point. As well, the main vocal melody continues after the cadential arrival, and the repetition of the title line quickly causes us to expect a second arrival on the next strong hyperbeat. This second arrival sounds like an

echo and thereby imparts the sense that the first arrival triggered the start of something new. Another factor that contributes to this hearing is that the tonic-prolonging phrases at the beginning of the A section now span eight bars. The V/V–V–I motion thus no longer sits inside an 8-bar unit (as in Example 5.4.09), so we are more prone to hear it as something external to the larger grouping structure.

Example 5.4.11: “Shop Around” (The Miracles, 1960);
alternative metric organization for refrain

(orig. G) 0:26

My ma-ma told me,—"You'd bet-ter shop a-

round, woah yeah,—— you'd bet - ter shop a- round."

We can say, therefore, that the tail refrain in the 8-bar version becomes somewhat more like a head refrain in the 14-bar version, in that the coordinated cadential arrival now occurs on a strong hypermetric downbeat. The revised melodic phrase rhythm of this refrain shown in Example 5.4.11 reflects how the line “You’d better shop around” sounds more as if it begins the following 4-bar unit than ends the material prior. (The refrain in the 14-bar version certainly sounds as if it still ends something, but the strength with which it does so is somewhat different than in the 8-bar version.) This distinction may seem somewhat trivial with regard to section roles. In either the 8-bar or 14-bar A sections, we may reasonably feel that this A material consists solely of verse and refrain. Yet as we will see in further examples, the 14-bar version shows nascent evidence of the post-refrain area starting to separate from the main material. Consequently, Example 5.4.11 shows a double bar before the beginning of the final 4-bar unit. One piece of evidence for this double bar can be found at the end of the song. In the form chart shown back in Example 5.4.08, the final A section is designated as “14+” measures. This measure length was chosen to convey the similarity of this A material to the other 14-bar versions (and its difference to the 8-bar version). But the refrain in this final A material does not lead to just a 4-bar unit. Instead, the refrain overlaps (at 2:19) a span of tonic-prolonging material that has no obvious endpoint. One might say, rather, that a 10-bar A section overlaps the beginning of the outro material, which continues for 12 measures before the final fadeout. But if we hear a 10-bar A section followed by outro material in this case, then we have reason to consider the last 4 bars of the 14-bar A material as a separate

unit. We might say, in fact, that these 4 bars sound somewhat like link material between the end of one A section and the beginning of another. This fledgling link section is an important starting point for the process we will see in further examples below.

It will be helpful to look at another song example to reinforce this notion that the final four bars in these 14-bar A sections of “Shop Around” show evidence of separation. Consider the song “Train in Vain (Stand by Me)” (The Clash, 1979), which has its main passage transcribed in Example 5.4.12.

Example 5.4.12: “Train in Vain (Stand by Me)” (The Clash, 1979); main material

(orig. A)
0:12

You say you stand by your man. Tell me some-thing, I don't un-der stand. You said you

loved me, and that's a fact. And then you left me, said you felt trapped. Well some

things you can't ex-plain a way, but the heartache's in me 'til this day. You didn't stand by

me, no, not at all. You didn't stand by me, no way.

The most relevant question here is whether the last four bars in this excerpt constitute the final four bars of a cohesive 16-bar section, or whether these final four bars constitute a separate section. (This may be a false choice, but it is worth thinking about nonetheless.) In a related manner, we could ask whether the final four bars in this excerpt act as a refrain or chorus. Unfortunately, no published analyses of this song exist for the sake of comparison. But if we can let popular opinion be our guide, it seems that most people judge these final four bars to be the chorus of the song. For example, the wikipedia.org page for this song refers to these final four bars as the chorus section, and this label choice has been left unchanged by users since its appearance on July 26, 2006 (accessed August 22, 2011).

Looking at this “chorus” section in “Train in Vain,” it appears to be constructed similarly to the last four bars in the 14-bar A sections of “Shop Around.” In essence, the melodic phrase containing the title text begins a new 4-bar hypermeasure, and this melodic phrase is repeated such that there is a secondary arrival (an echo of the title phrase) that emphasizes the next strong hyperbeat. If we consider these final four bars to be a separate section, then we can say that this final 4-bar section begins with a head refrain, which is then repeated two bars later. Like “Shop Around,” the entire ensemble comes to a halt prior to the onset of these last four bars, and this textural break further encourages the listener to hear section separation. If these final four bars do convey strong chorus quality, it seems to be related to the melodic and harmonic organization launched by the refrain. This situation is thus different from that in which a chorus role blends with that of a tail refrain. Instead, we might say we have a case in which a chorus role blends with that of a head refrain.

Head refrain over link

Admittedly, to say that we have blend of chorus and head refrain roles is something of odd statement. While the notion that two tail refrains may act as a chorus requires some conceptual flexibility, it was not difficult to see how such instances could arise. Tail refrains typically constitute the entire melodic material within a 4-bar hypermeasure. We can thus mark on a form chart that a 4-bar span stands as the “refrain” (meaning the tail refrain), since we tacitly substitute the term “refrain” for the hypermeasure within which the tail refrain exists. It is thus easy to make the switch from talking about a tail refrain (as only part of a hypermeasure) to talking about a chorus (as complete hypermeasures). The situation is different with a head refrain, however. A prototypical head refrain ends on the initial downbeat of a hypermeasure. While future melodic phrases within this hypermeasure may have a similar melodic phrase structure as the head refrain, the “head refrain” itself is not really a standalone section, a sub-section, or even any quantifiable length in terms of measures. Rather, it is mostly the anacrusis to a single beat.

As shown in “Train in Vain,” though, a head refrain can launch what sounds like a chorus section. But this chorus section is not entirely the same as a prototypical chorus section. There is, in fact, strong evidence that these cases often involve a blend of link and chorus roles. As we saw in Chapter 3 (especially with “My Happy Ending” [Example 3.6.06]), the title line at the end of a chorus may sometimes bleed over into the following link material. As was also noted, the end of the chorus often overlaps with the link section, since link sections typically act as both the end of the chorus as well as “pre-verse” material. But since both prototypical chorus and prototypical link sections prolong a tonic harmony, and since

chorus and link sections are consecutive parts within a full-fledged song form, there is a great potential for role overlap or role ambiguity.

An excellent illustration of this situation can be found within “Take Me to the River” (Al Green, 1974). In this song, it is not entirely clear whether the song does, in fact, contain a chorus. This ambiguity can be seen to derive from the amalgamation of link and chorus roles. As a point of reference, let us use the labels chosen by Temperley in his analysis of this work (2010), as shown in Example 5.4.13. From this chart, the form of the song appears to be relatively straightforward. The song is bookended by intro and outro sections, and the basic succession pattern of the song seems to be an alternation of verse and chorus material. As well, a bridge occurs at the precise location we expect (after two verse-chorus blocks). The only non-standard wrinkle in the form is that the bridge leads not to a final chorus section or a final verse-chorus block (thereby creating a large-scale AABA pattern) but rather to a chorus section followed by another verse-chorus block.

Example 5.4.13: “Take Me to the River” (Al Green, 1974);
form chart in Temperley 2010

Start	Mm.	Section
0:00	14	intro
0:29	13.5	verse
0:57	8	chorus
1:13	13.5	verse
1:40	8	chorus
1:56	8	bridge
2:13	8	chorus
2:29	13.5	verse
2:56	8	chorus
3:12	16+	outro (fade)

It is helpful to add a little more detail to this basic form chart. To begin with, the bulk of these “verse” and “chorus” sections are fairly identical from a harmonic perspective. While most of the verse material includes a small bVII–IV tag at the end of every two measures, both verse and chorus sections are built primarily out of the same tonic-based vamp (or groove) in E minor. Moreover, this tonic-based vamp serves as the material for the intro and outro sections. It should be noted that one could also posit that these verse sections include prechorus material as well. (The prechorus label seems especially appropriate in light of the chorus section that follows.) After 8 bars of the tonic-based vamp, the music moves to the relative major using (in G major) the chords IV–I–V. (The following chord seems to function more clearly as IV back in the main key of E minor.) Note as well that this move to the relative major retains the same lyrics on future iterations of these bars (“I wanna know /

Won't you tell me / Am I in love to stay?"), which accords with our sense that we have moved away from verse quality.

In the chorus that Temperley identifies (at least in its first iteration), we find a similar musical construction as in those cases above, in which a head refrain launches the chorus role. Specifically, the title text is part of a melodic phrase that ends on the downbeat of the beginning of this chorus section. As well, the melodic phrase organization of this head refrain continues through the chorus area, as each vocal phrase anticipates and ends on a strong hyperbeat. But not all of the chorus sections that Temperley identifies include this vocal organization. As Temperley himself notes, the second chorus includes no vocal melody whatsoever, and the third chorus includes "barely any." (This third chorus contains just one iteration of the title text, and it ends in the middle of the first hypermeasure.) Although more melodic content appears in the final chorus section, there is still not the same strength of chorus quality (or any obvious head refrain) as found in the initial chorus iteration.

The complete absence of any vocal melody in the second chorus section and its relatively weak return in following iterations is undeniably a problem for our perception of this material as a chorus. How can a chorus – typically the most focal and memorable part of the song – lack anything much to focus on or memorize? It is posited here that these non-texted "chorus" sections also act as link material within the song. Recall, in particular, that the chorus and intro sections are comprised of basically the same musical content. Since intro sections are typically comprised of link material, it is not unreasonable to perceive that the "chorus" sections sound like link material when the vocal melody is absent. This conception actually offers a solution to the wrinkle in the song form noted earlier. If we see the bridge section as leading to link material prior to the final verse-chorus block, then we have a much more standard succession pattern overall (at least in terms of verse, chorus, and bridge succession patterns).

Overall, the "chorus" sections of "Take Me to the River" seem to be generated by Al Green singing over what could also be considered as the link material of the song. As a result, one must admit that these chorus sections are certainly not clear examples of chorus quality. This ambiguity arises because of how the link and chorus roles seem to fade in and out during various presentations of the same instrumental texture. When the vocal melody opens this instrumental texture with a head refrain and continues the same melodic phrase organization throughout, chorus quality becomes relatively strong. But as this vocal melody disappears into the background, the link role comes more to the fore.

Link/chorus blends

The notion that link material can blend with the role of a chorus helps explain the form of a number of songs in which chorus quality may seem somewhat weak, unclear, or otherwise ill-fitted. Consider, for instance, the case of “Jump” (Van Halen, 1984). The song is famous for its synthesizer riff, and this tonic-based riff serves as the basis for many section roles throughout the song. The 16-bar intro to the song, for example, is a straightforward presentation of the riff itself. Following this intro, the verse material (as shown in Example 5.4.14) is also structured on this riff. Additionally, this riff also supports what most people would view as the chorus material of the song (to be discussed in a moment).

Example 5.4.14: “Jump” (Van Halen, 1984); verse

(orig. C)
0:28 V I IV V

I get up, and noth-in' gets me down. You got it tough, I've seen the tough-est a - round. And I know, Ba-by, just how you feel. You got to roll with the punch-es and get to what's real.

After the opening verse material, we hear the section transcribed in Example 5.4.15. This new music contrasts greatly with the static, tonic-based quality of the main riff. In general, the feeling of this new material is one of instability and forward momentum. This sense of instability is conveyed through the syncopated kick drum and bass guitar parts, as well as the harmonic content. While tonic chords can be found in this section, these tonic chords are neither in root position nor any strong metrical location. For these reasons, we might readily judge that this section acts as the prechorus of the song. As further evidence in this regard, note that the overall harmonic progression of these nine bars traces a general

motion from subdominant to dominant. (The extension of the dominant chord to create a nine-bar span can be seen to heighten our anticipation for the arrival of the tonic chord that eventually follows.) The lyrics to these nine bars also repeat on the second iteration of this passage (at 1:45).

Example 5.4.15: “Jump” (Van Halen, 1984); prechorus (plus overlap)

(orig. C)
0:58 V vi IV I⁶ ii

Ah, can't you see me stand in' here, I got my back a gainst the rec ord ma chine... I ain't the worst that you've seen,

IV I⁶ ii IV I⁶ V I

— Ah, can't you see what I mean? — Ow, might as well jump! —

Example 5.4.16: “Jump” (Van Halen, 1984); link/chorus

(orig. C)
1:15 V I IV V

Ow, might as well jump! — Might as well jump! Go a-head and jump!

I IV V

— Go a-head and jump!

As mentioned above, the music that follows this apparent prechorus section seems to be the best candidate for the role of chorus. Indeed, the next eight bars (as shown above in Example 5.4.16) display many hallmarks of chorus quality. One central factor is the high level of internal repetition involving the title text. Yet there is something about these eight bars that makes it feel as if chorus quality is somewhat compromised here. One aspect is the relative sparseness of the main vocal itself. There is simply not that much melodic content filling this chorus section, and – as seen in “Take Me to the River” – this lack of vocal melody undermines its focal quality. Another aspect of this apparent chorus section is the static nature of its harmonic content. While the static harmonic quality of the synthesizer riff did not contradict our sense that previous sections based on this riff acted in a verse or intro role,

this static quality arguably detracts from the feeling of excitement here. This static feeling is heightened by the strong feeling of motion and momentum found in the prechorus-like material, which makes the music following it sound somewhat flat in comparison. As a related aspect, there is no obvious thickening of texture as we might expect of a chorus section. Instead, the accompaniment simply returns to that found in the intro and verse sections. All in all, there is a strong sense that the music after the prechorus-like passage is something of an afterthought – as if the main thrust of the song has already ended. This afterthought quality to the music in Example 5.4.16 potentially relates to the organization of the vocal melody, which is so strongly end-accented that it conveys perhaps an overly strong sense of closure. We should sense, therefore, that this chorus section sounds somehow less focal in the large-scale form of the song than one might expect of a prototypical chorus section.

The relatively weak sense of chorus quality in this passage can, in fact, be conceptualized as deriving from a blend of chorus and link roles. Like “Take Me to the River,” the chorus section in “Jump” is built on harmonically static musical content that also serves as intro, verse, and link material. Of course, many songs have chorus sections that use the same harmonic content for intro, verse, and link sections without any apparent reduction in chorus quality (e.g., “Smells Like Teen Spirit”). But the chorus section to “Jump” lacks enough additional attributes to strongly shift our perception towards a clear chorus role. In particular, the sparse vocal melody and the lack of any obvious thickening of texture are reminiscent of link sections in other songs (e.g., “My Happy Ending”). Consequently, we could map out the succession pattern for this song as shown in Example 5.4.17.

Example 5.4.17: “Jump” (Van Halen, 1984); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group
0:00	8	link	intro
0:14	8	link	
0:29	8	verse	A
0:44	8		
0:58	9	prechorus	
1:15	8	link/chorus	
1:30	8	verse	A
1:45	9	prechorus	
2:02	8	link/chorus	
2:17	8	solo 1	B
2:31	18	solo 2	
3:05	8	link	
3:20	8	link/chorus	A'
3:35+	fade	outro	

The discussion of section roles in “Jump” is not meant to imply that a chorus label is not warranted in this song. Indeed, the vast majority of people would probably label the music in Example 5.4.16 as the chorus. Yet this label hides a particular type of chorus construction, in which the roles of link and chorus are blended together. To put this another way, this type of chorus section shares aspects of link quality, and these aspects cause us to perceive this type of chorus section in a different manner than other chorus sections. Similar blends of link and chorus roles can be found in many other songs. Take, for instance, the song “Faith” (George Michael, 1987), in which the “chorus” section (first appearing at 1:23) seems to be an afterthought to the main motion in the song. “When I Come Around” (Green Day, 1994) also provides a good example of link and chorus ambiguity. In this song, the title text overlaps what is clearly link material starting at 1:03. An overlap of title text and link occurs again at 2:02. But consider what happens around 2:32, after a third overlap of title text and link. Here, the title text is repeated within the link itself. What seemed to be the final line of the pre-link material now acts as the final chorus-like section (even though its location within the form makes it seem more like an outro). In particular, note how similarly this span of music is constructed to the chorus section of “Jump.” This comparison should clarify how the chorus and link roles may at times be inseparable.

An ambiguous ambiguity

One final example of a link/chorus blend is helpful, if only to further show the relationship between these two section roles. An excellent illustration in this regard is the song “Summer of ’69” (Bryan Adams, 1984). As we will see, this song shows evidence of blends between other section roles as well, and so this song will transition nicely between the discussion of link/chorus blends and other types of role blends.

Because section roles are somewhat complicated in “Summer of ’69,” it is worth trying to approach this song from an objective perspective. (That task is perhaps somewhat difficult, of course, considering how familiar this song is to many readers.) There seem to be at least two main parts of the song. One part undoubtedly acts as the verse material in the song (as shown in Example 5.4.18). In every instance, this clear verse material is followed by a different part, the first iteration of which is transcribed in Example 5.4.19. From a completely objective standpoint, there are three options for how we might label this second part (assuming for the moment that section labels are mutually exclusive.) This second section could be simply more verse material, it could be a prechorus section, or we might label it as a chorus. (Other labels, like “refrain” or “bridge” seem rather inappropriate for this second part.) It is worth trying to explore each of these hearings in turn to investigate their validity.

Example 5.4.18: “Summer of ‘69” (Bryan Adams, 1984); verse

(orig. D)
0:04 I

I got my first real six - string, bought it at the five - and - dime.
Played it 'til my fing - ers__ bled. Was the sum - mer of six - ty nine.

Example 5.4.19: “Summer of ‘69” (Bryan Adams, 1984); second part (part 2)

(orig. D)
0:31 vi

Oh, when I look back now__ the sum - mer seemed to last for - ev - er.
And if I had the choice, yeah, I'd al - ways wan - na be there.
Those were the best days of my life.

Certainly, there are various internal aspects of this second part that affect what role we feel it plays within the song form. Before focusing on these aspects, though, let us consider the relationship of this second part to the song as a whole. In Example 5.4.20, the large-scale succession pattern for the song is shown. In this chart, the verse material is identified, but no final judgment for the role of the second part is made. One should also note that there is a clear bridge section in the song (starting at 1:40). (For the sake of the current discussion, we can simply take the bridge role of this section for granted.) Finally, the reader should notice that certain parts of the song have been labeled as “link” material, while other parts include a question mark after this designation (i.e., “link ?”).

This “link ?” notation reflects those situations in which it appears as if we have a case of a link/chorus blend. Note, for instance, that the first iteration of “part 2” leads into what clearly acts a link material (at 0:49). This link section spans only four bars and, aside from the melodic overlap from the end of part 2, has no vocals whatsoever. But after the second

and third appearances of part 2, the situation changes. Example 5.4.21 transcribes what happens around 1:27. Instead of a clear instance of link material (as happened earlier), the music following part 2 now spans eight bars and includes a significant quantity of lead vocal melody. In particular, the title text makes an appearance, and this title text is metrically positioned such that it is emphasized by the hypermetric downbeat. As a result, there is a distinctive chorus-like quality about the link material now. This chorus-like link, in fact, is highly reminiscent of the chorus section to “Jump,” both in terms of its internal melodic phrase organization as well as its relationship to the surrounding material.

Example 5.4.20: “Summer of ‘69” (Bryan Adams, 1984); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group
0:00	2	intro	
0:04	8	verse	A
0:17	8		
0:31	10		
0:49	4	link	
0:55	8	verse	A
1:09	10	part 2	
1:27	8	link ?	
1:40	8	bridge	B
1:54	8	link	
2:08	8	verse	A
2:22	10	part 2	
2:39	8	link ?	
2:53+		fade	outro

Example 5.4.21: “Summer of ‘69” (Bryan Adams, 1984); link or chorus?

(orig. D) 1:24

Those were the best days of my

life. Oh, yeah! Back in the sum-mer of

six - ty nine. Oh!

Because of these factors, we might consider the music at 1:27 and 2:39 to be the chorus sections of this Bryan Adams song. (We could label these moments as “link/chorus” sections as we did in the case of “Jump.”) The sense that the link material in “Summer of ’69” takes on a chorus role at certain points is further bolstered by the nature of the music that precedes it. As one central factor, the bulk of the lyrics for part 2 do not repeat from its first appearance (at 0:31) to its second (at 1:09). The only text that does repeat is the final line, which – as both the end of part 2 and the beginning of the next section – blends tail and head refrain quality. We might even consider this line (“Those were the best days of my life”) to be the opening head refrain of the link/chorus section. The lack of repetition for the lyrics in part 2 (at least on its first two iterations) causes us to potentially search for chorus quality elsewhere, which is conveyed by the chorus-like link material that follows. As an additional factor, the harmonic content of part 2 is relatively unstable compared to the verse and link/chorus material. Although the tonic chord is included in part 2, it does not appear on a hypermetric downbeat. The chord progression in part 2 generally seems to have a great forward momentum, in part due to the way the melodic phrase rhythm interacts with these harmonies. Overall, part 2 can be seen to present a number of aspects that encourage us to consider it as the prechorus of the song. Of course, these prechorus-like qualities for part 2 encourage us to consider the link/chorus amalgamation that follows to act as the chorus section of the song. This conception thus reflects one hearing of the form for this song: “Summer of ’69” is comprised of verse-prechorus-chorus blocks, the first of which withholds the chorus material in order to increase anticipation for its appearance later on.

There are a number of factors that work against this hearing, however. For one, the first verse-prechorus-chorus block would be missing its chorus section. Of course, this construction is certainly not impossible. (Endrinal [2008, 148] identifies such a situation in “Who’s Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses” [U2, 1991].) Yet it does not feel like anything is noticeably missing from the first A group in “Summer of ’69.” Were the chorus withheld, one would think its absence would be more tangible. The fact that the first A group sounds relatively complete relates to the nature of the apparent link/chorus blend in this song. As in “Jump,” the link/chorus sections sound more like afterthoughts than like focal sections themselves. This secondary status is even more apparent in “Summer of ’69,” since half of the vocal phrases in the texted link material consist of throwaway lines (such as “Oh yeah!”). As a result, the texted link material in this song may never seem like it is able to fully support a chorus hearing.

Without a chorus section following part 2, our label of prechorus for part 2 becomes very problematic. In particular, how can we have a recurring prechorus section without any chorus section? One possibility is that the part 2 is not a prechorus section; rather, it acts as

the chorus of the song. As evidence in this regard, note that the lyrics to the second and third iterations of part 2 are identical. Of course, the repetition of lyrics on future iterations is something we associate with prechorus quality as well, but lacking a separate chorus candidate, the repetition of lyrics in part 2 may be seen as a cue to its chorus role. Note also that the instrumental texture thickens considerably on each appearance of part 2. At 1:09, for example, we hear the entrance of background vocal, electric organ, and distorted electric guitar parts. Chorus quality is thus imparted via these textural cues as well. Furthermore, the coordinated melodic and harmonic cadence at the end of part 2 cause the end of part 2 to sound like the end of the A group as a whole. (This factor is part of what weakens the chorus quality of the following link material.) If the A group is seen to constitute only two parts, our understanding of song form encourages us to consider the first part as the verse and the second part as the chorus. Of course, the unstable harmonic content of part 2 somewhat thwarts our sense that it acts as a standalone section. But then again, this is only one aspect of this passage.

We have thus considered hearings of part 2 that place this passage in either prechorus or chorus roles. One other option is that part 2 simply reflects more verse material. Indeed, it would not be very difficult to analyze “Summer Of ’69” as a large-scale verse-verse-bridge-verse form, in which the verse material is separated by link material that sometimes includes the title text. Some analysts may prefer this conception, as it simplifies the form of this song. (No published analyses of this song currently exist.) But by simplifying the form, important perceptual issues are swept under the rug. Certainly, this song seems to warrant a chorus label at some point in its form. Yet we should understand that there are two separate parts – each somewhat problematic – that vie for consideration as the focal moments of this song. As a final thought, it is important to recognize that our choice of label roles in this song affects how we view the large scale-grouping structure. As shown in the rightmost column of Example 5.4.20, it is not entirely clear where the main material in the song (the “A” group”) should end. We see, therefore, how the “Janus-face” nature of the link material comes into play in creating a succession of sections that often lacks any clear beginning or end.

Prechorus/chorus blends

An important concept that “Summer Of ’69” reveals is that there may be passages for which it is not clear whether a prechorus or chorus label is appropriate. In other words, ambiguity may exist between prechorus and chorus roles. We could also say in such instances that the prechorus and chorus roles appear to merge. The possibility for such an amalgamation derives from many factors. For one, both prechorus and chorus sections commonly repeat their lyrics on future iterations. As well, prechorus and chorus sections are

both section types that we expect to occur after clear verse material. Prechorus and chorus sections also typically include thickened textures with respect to the verse material. When the roles of prechorus and chorus are blended, the most obvious hallmark is that a harmonically unstable passage acts as the focal material for the song as a whole.

Consider, for example, the song “Born to Run” (Bruce Springsteen, 1975). The basic form of the song is a large-scale AABA pattern (and as in other cases mentioned above, we can ignore the B group for the sake of this discussion). The primary question is how we should conceive of the music within the A group. In Example 5.4.22, the beginning of the first A group is shown.

Example 5.4.22: “Born to Run” (Bruce Springsteen, 1975); verse

(orig. E)
0:14

I IV V

In the day we sweat it out on the streets of a run-a-way A-mer-i-can dream... At night

I IV V

___ we ride through man - sions of glo - ry in su - i - cide mach- ines.___

As we might expect, this passage clearly acts as verse material – a designation that is confirmed in Temperley’s analysis of this song (2010). But what should we make of the music that follows (as shown in Example 5.4.23 below)? Temperley refers to this excerpt as the chorus of the song. Indeed, this 14-bar-plus passage is undoubtedly the most focal and memorable music of the song as a whole. Note how the vocal melody shifts to a significantly higher register, for instance. The texture also becomes much more thick here, as bells, saxophones, and keyboards widen the stereo image and boost the intensity level overall. Moreover, the end of this section includes the title text, which thereby stamps the section as an important part of the song.

At this point, the reader should note the similarity between the construction of these two sections and equivalent passages in “Summer Of ’69,” “Jump,” and even “Take Me to the River.” But unlike as found in those songs, the title text at the end of the second section – although it does overlap into the beginning of the link material – never gets repeated within this link material. Only at the very end of the song (around 3:41) do we hear repetitions of this refrain. Even so, this refrain is repeated over harmonies drawn from the end of the

second section itself. Basically, the repetition of the title text at the end of the song arrives too late to be considered the chorus of the song. It sounds instead more like simply an extension of the second section itself.

Example 5.4.23: “Born to Run” (Bruce Springsteen, 1975); second section

(orig. E)
0:27 IV

Sprung from ca - ges out on high - way nine, chrome wheeled fuel in - ject - ted and step - pin' out o - ver the line.

Ho! — Ba -

by this town_rips the bones from your back, it's a death trap, it's a su - i - cide rap._ We got - ta

get out while we're young._ 'cause tramps_ like us, Ba - by we were born_ to run.

Had this second section in “Born to Run” led to some sort of chorus-like material (as in “Jump,” for example), we would have undoubtedly considered the music in Example 5.4.23 to be the prechorus of the song. One strong bit of evidence is the generally unstable harmonic nature of this passage, especially in comparison to the verse material. Other aspects might make us also doubt the applicability of a chorus label. Note, for example, that the lyrics to this second section are entirely different on each iteration of this musical material (at 0:27, 1:16, and 3:18). The one exception is that the title text returns at the end of the third iteration, but this means that the second “chorus” (in Temperley’s scheme) does not even contain the title text. The lack of lyric repetition strongly compromises the memorability of this passage and thereby exposes the prechorus-like derivation of this material. Of course, an analyst could sidestep these issues by simply labeling the entire A group of “Born to Run” as one large 22-bar span of verse material (with or without the 8-bar link material). As discussed above, however, such an analysis overly simplifies the form of this song. In “Born to Run,” we have more than just iterations of verse material, and we have more than just a

straightforward verse-chorus form. Instead, we have verse material followed by some amalgamation of prechorus/chorus quality.

The notion that prechorus and chorus roles can merge helps explain some of the less clear form types in rock music. Often, a blend of prechorus and chorus roles may go unnoticed, as the standard verse-chorus hegemony is easily applied in these situations. Consider the song “Pink Houses” (John Mellencamp, 1983), for example. The music starting at around 0:53 (“Aww, but ain’t that America...”) is clearly the best candidate for a chorus label. But the off-tonic harmonic quality during this chorus (IV–I–IV–I) creates a forward drive that should remind us of prototypical prechorus sections. In a similar way, the apparent chorus section of “Won’t Get Fooled Again” (The Who, 1971), which first appears around 1:13 (“I’ll tip my hat to the new constitution”), never presents a tonic harmony in a hypermetrically strong location until the final overlap with the following link material. In listening to such prechorus-like chorus sections, we may initially expect that a better chorus candidate will eventually arrive. But as we reach the end of the prechorus/chorus blend, we realize that no better chorus candidate exists and that this section is, in fact, our best option for a chorus label. Other instances of prechorus/chorus amalgamations can be found in a variety of songs, including “Jimmy Mack” (Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, 1966), “All Apologies” (Nirvana, 1993), and “She” (Green Day, 1994). Note that a central aspect of these songs is that they contain no distinct prechorus section (aside from the prechorus/chorus blend). This feature falls directly out of the fact that prechorus and chorus roles are combined into a single span of music.

Since many of the examples of prechorus/chorus blends above include tonic harmony within the music of the blend itself, the argument that these sections were harmonically unstable was somewhat a matter of degree. In “Pink Houses,” for example, we might consider the IV–I–IV–I motion at the beginning of the prechorus/chorus blend as simply an embellishment of an underlying tonic harmony with a neighboring subdominant. Some readers may, in fact, deny that any strong sense of prechorus quality is evident. It is thus worth considering one final example of a prechorus/chorus blend. In particular, the notion that our chorus label is sometimes applied to sections with strong prechorus-like attributes can be seen in a case where the ostensible chorus section is obviously an unstable harmonic entity.

This situation can be found within the song “Communication Breakdown” (Led Zeppelin, 1969). Most people would undoubtedly consider the form of the song as consisting of two main sections: a verse section (eight bars of which are transcribed in Example 5.4.24) and a chorus section (transcribed in Example 5.4.25). Indeed, this is the analysis offered by Nicole Biamonte (2010, 99–100). The chorus quality of this second section is conveyed

through a number of attributes, including the repetition of its lyrics on future iterations, the increase in texture as compared to the verse material, and the general heightening of the melodic register. Of course, these are all attributes that we associate with prechorus quality as well. The harmonic structure of this chorus section, however, rubs strongly against our notions of prototypical chorus quality. In particular, tonic harmony is entirely absent throughout this 8-bar span. The only harmonic content is a straightforward move from an opening subdominant to a final dominant chord. (It is as if the harmonic content of a prototypical prechorus has been boiled down to its essence.) Not only is tonic harmony lacking within this section, but it is not entirely clear that the end of this section overlaps with the tonic harmony that begins the following link material.

Example 5.4.24: “Communication Breakdown” (Led Zeppelin, 1969); verse

(orig. E)
0:10

I bVII IV bVII I bVII IV bVII

Hey, Girl, stop what you're do - in'.

Hey, Girl, you drive me to ru - in.

Example 5.4.25: “Communication Breakdown” (Led Zeppelin, 1969); chorus

(orig. E)
0:32

IV

Com-mu-ni - ca - tion break - down, it's al-ways the same.

Hav - in' a ner - vous break - down drive me in - sane.

In Example 5.4.25, the vocal phrase is shown as continuing into this link section, for the voice does indeed bleed into the return of the main riff. Yet there is no coordinated melodic-harmonic cadence as we saw at the end of previous prechorus/chorus blends. In other words, the melodic organization does not demand that we see a sectional overlap here.

Consequently, there is a greater sense that this second section ends on the V chord, which thereby creates a harmonically open-ended passage. Of course, a chorus section does not necessarily have to include tonal closure. (Such a requirement would go against a prototype-based approach.) The lack of tonal closure is simply another factor that compromises (at least somewhat) the strength of chorus quality here.

The prechorus-like quality of the ostensible chorus section in “Communication Breakdown” should thus be relatively audible. We can map out a form chart for the song accordingly, as shown in Example 5.4.26. As an aside, one should note the strong chorus-like quality of the material within what has been labeled as the outro section. It is not too difficult, in fact, to reorganize the song into a straightforward succession of verse, prechorus, and chorus sections by placing the first eight bars of the outro material directly after each prechorus/chorus blend. Doing so further clarifies the prechorus-like aspect of the original chorus of the song.

Example 5.4.26: “Communication Breakdown” (Led Zeppelin, 1969); form chart

Start	Mm.	Section	Group
0:00	8	intro	
0:10	8	verse	A
0:21	8		
0:32	8	prechorus/chorus	
0:43	4	link	
0:49	8	verse	A
1:00	8		
1:11	8	prechorus/chorus	
1:22	2	(blank)	
1:25	8	solo (verse)	B
1:35	8		
1:44	8	prechorus/chorus	A'
1:55	4	link	
2:00	16+	outro	

Bridge or chorus?

As we identify blends between prechorus and chorus roles, we should also remember the similarities noted in earlier chapters between prototypical prechorus and bridge sections. An important factor in this regard is the harmonic instability of both section types. In Chapter 4, for instance, we saw with the example of “Handy Man” how a classic bridge section could be converted into a prechorus section via only a few alterations. The similarity between prototypical prechorus and bridge sections has important connotations for the notion that prechorus-like sections may act in a chorus role. In particular, analysts may

sometimes be conflicted as to whether a section should be considered a bridge or chorus. Such situations can be seen to derive from (or relate to) the general concept of prechorus/chorus blends.

For instance, consider the analysis of “Screen Door” (Uncle Tupelo, 1990) that Covach provides in his 2009 textbook (564). In Example 5.4.27, Covach’s form chart for the song has been reproduced. From this form chart alone, we can see that something odd (or at least atypical) is going on in the form of this song. As one exceptional feature, the bridge material is considered to end with a refrain. With a prototypical understanding of refrain quality, this feature is certainly not impossible. But it should spur us to dig more deeply into the song itself. As well, these bridge sections do not appear to be located between two main sections. The first bridge iteration, for example, stands as the last section type within the larger group. In a similar way, the second bridge iteration does not lead to any further iterations of the main musical material. This second bridge, in fact, seems to be the last appearance of the main musical material before the final “ending” section. Undeniably, something strange is afoot.

Example 5.4.27: “Screen Door” (Uncle Tupelo, 1990);
form chart in Covach 2009 (564)

Start	Mm.	Section	Group
0:00	6	introduction	
0:13	12	verse	
0:41	12	verse	
1:07	8	bridge w/refrain	
1:25	4	interlude	
1:34	12	verse	
2:00	12	bridge w/refrain	
2:26	6	ending	

Covach is aware of the non-standard construction that he posits for this song. He sees the form as “similar to the standard AABA,” the main difference being that there is “no return of the verse to round off the AABA” (564). We might also note that the “partial reprise” after the opening AAB fragment does not articulate a typical AABA format either, as the return of AB material is neither a restart of the AABA form nor the more standard reprise of the BA material. Something that is also very important to note here is that Covach does not see the third iteration of verse material (starting at 1:34) as standing as the final A section in an AABA pattern. This organization would actually not have been too difficult for Covach to present. In particular, one should note that the first and second bridges in Covach’s analysis are different lengths (8 and 12 bars, respectively). This difference in length results from

Covach's inclusion of the "interlude" that follows the first bridge as part of the second bridge. (He has reasons to do so; specifically, the refrain is repeated at the end of the second bridge.) But had the interlude material been included in the first bridge, Covach could have proposed an even clearer derivation of this song from an AABA model: the song would have an AABA core, in which each letter represents a 12-bar span, and this core would be followed by a single iteration of B material.

The fact that Covach does not offer this reading is very telling. Specifically, one should note how similar the grouping structure that Covach provides is to the grouping structure in a typical verse-chorus form. In particular, if we consider what Covach labels as bridge material to be chorus material instead, then we actually have a very standard form type: an alternation of verse and chorus sections, with the verse material always preceding the chorus material within the larger grouping structure.

At this point, we would benefit from looking at the actual construction of the various parts in this song. Example 5.4.28 transcribes the first iteration of verse material in "Screen Door," and Example 5.4.29 transcribes the first iteration of Covach's bridge section (which will be referred to as "part 2" below).

Example 5.4.28: "Screen Door" (Uncle Tupelo, 1990); verse

(orig. G)
0:13 I

Down here, where we're at, the weath-er chang-es, that's the way it goes...

Some-times it snows when eve-ry-thing's wrong.

Some-times it snows, but when it does, it does-n't last long.

Example 5.4.29: “Screen Door” (Uncle Tupelo, 1990); part 2

(orig. G)
1:07 V

Down here, where we're at, eve-ry-bo - dy is e-qual-ly poor.

Down here, we don't care, we don't care what hap-pens out-side the screen door.

As should be clear, the verse material in this song is built over an unambiguous 12-bar blues harmonic framework. Consequently, this section is strongly closed, since it both begins and ends on tonic harmonies; this section as a whole is also relatively stable, as it can be seen to generally prolong tonic function. In contrast, the harmonic content of part 2 is highly unstable; the only chords within this passage are IV, V, and vi. Admittedly, the end of part 2 overlaps the beginning of the following interlude (i.e., link section), and thus we may consider part 2 overall to be tonally closed. But this tonal closure does not alter the general sense that these eight bars do not prolong a tonic harmony. It is this unstable harmonic quality that likely encourages Covach to choose a bridge label for this section. His label choice, in fact, provides additional evidence of how we do not think of a prototypical chorus section as something that so explicitly avoids tonic. Other aspects of this passage discourage a chorus hearing as well. Most obvious in this regard is the decrease in instrumental intensity during part 2. The whole passage sounds much more texturally thin as compared to the verse material, if only because of the absence of the violin. It seems problematic, therefore, to consider part 2 as the chorus – i.e., the focal part – of the song. Nevertheless, a chorus label for part 2 is not entirely unwarranted. Note, for example, that the lyrics to the both iterations of this bridge material are identical. With a chorus label, the form of the song would be greatly simplified. Yet Covach avoids this easy solution, and we can understand Covach's avoidance of the easy path to reflect the somewhat complex nature of section roles in this song.

As the reader has probably inferred by now, “Screen Door” can be seen as similar to those situations in which prechorus and chorus roles are blended. Comparing both the local and global structure of “Screen Door” to other examples above, we find the same basic melodic-harmonic organizational scheme: a span of tonic-prolonging material is contrasted with off-tonic material that overlaps a return of tonic-prolonging material, which may contain further iterations of the overlapping melodic phrase. The primary difference between this

example and those above is that the texture in the off-tonic material here is thinned instead of thickened. Our understanding of the off-tonic material in this song needs to encompass aspects of at least two section roles, therefore, if not more.

Conclusion

This discussion of chorus blends has hopefully shown that there are many different types of situations in which we might apply a chorus label. More importantly, these situations often involve ambiguity with another section role (or roles). In the preceding discussion, we have found situations in which refrain, link, prechorus, and even bridge quality seems to merge with our perception of a chorus section. The superficial simplicity of a chorus label can thus be seen to often hide something more nuanced and complicated going on underneath. In the following (and final) portion of this chapter, we will see that some of these types of ambiguity can have significant ramifications for our perception of verse roles as well.

5.5: Verse Blends (part 2)

At the beginning of this chapter, the notion was put forth that a verse label may sometimes mask evidence of non-verse qualities. One particular case was examined – specifically, that in which attributes of prechorus quality could be found within spans of music that might otherwise be conceived of as verse material. We thus came to appreciate the ambiguity between prechorus and verse roles, as well as the potential to blend one with the other. Ambiguity between prechorus and verse roles is perhaps the most common and most simple case of one section role blending with the verse role. A central part of what makes this case so simple is that the verse label is not intersecting with the other main section types of chorus and bridge.

We sometimes do find, though, that ambiguity exists between the roles of bridge and verse or chorus and verse. We saw some evidence of this type of ambiguity in our discussion of bridge blends, where verse material could be seen to act in a bridge role. Although we will also see instances of verse and bridge blends below, these situations can be seen as different from earlier blends between verse and bridge. These types of verse and bridge blends lead to a special type of ambiguity between verse and chorus roles. Overall, the situations described below are inherently more complicated than the ambiguity between prechorus and verse roles, as our conception of the large-scale form of a song can drastically change when ambiguity exists between main section roles.

Implications of prechorus/chorus blends

Although the discussion of prechorus/chorus blends was basically concluded in the preceding portion of this chapter, it is worth revisiting this topic for a moment. In the preceding discussion, the verse material was never questioned. In other words, the role of the music preceding the prechorus/chorus blend was clear (and essentially taken for granted) in every example. Yet this is not always the case.

Consider, for instance, the song “Tears in Heaven” (Eric Clapton, 1992). As a point of reference, the recent analysis by Temperley (2010) will be used, since it reflects a reasonable (although not unproblematic) conception of the song form. In Example 5.5.01, we can see the succession pattern of sections that Temperley posits for this song. Although Temperley does not offer a higher-level grouping structure in his analysis, we can easily imagine a typical grouping of these sections based on the labels that he provides. We could say, for instance, that there are two blocks of verse-chorus material (AA), followed by a bridge (B), after which we hear two more blocks of verse-chorus material (AA). We could thus posit a large-scale organization for this song as an AABAA pattern (in which the higher-level bridge role overlaps – from a textural perspective – the following A group via the guitar solo). All in all, the form of this song appears to be relatively straightforward, except perhaps that an additional A group is found after the main AABA presentation. But as one might expect by now, the form of the song is not as straightforward as this conception might imply.

Example 5.5.01: “Tears in Heaven” (Eric Clapton, 1992);
form chart in Temperley 2010

Start	Mm.	Section	Lyrics
0:00	4	intro (link)	----
0:13	8	verse	“Would you know my name....”
0:38	6	chorus	“I must be strong and carry on....”
0:56	4	link	----
1:09	8	verse	“Would you hold my hand....”
1:34	6	chorus	“I’ll find my way through night and day....”
1:53	4	link	----
2:05	8	bridge	“Time can bring you down....”
2:30	8	solo (verse)	----
2:55	6	chorus	“Beyond the door there’s peace....”
3:14	4	link	----
3:26	8	verse	“Would you know my name....”
3:51	6	chorus	“I must be strong and carry on....”
4:10	4	outro (link)	----

To begin with, let us examine the verse and chorus sections that Temperley identifies. (As in previous examples, the section that Temperley labels as a bridge will be taken for

granted here in order to simplify the discussion.) Examples 5.5.02 and 5.5.03 show the first iterations of these verse and chorus sections, respectively. Right away, the reader should notice the obvious similarity in organization between these two sections and those found in the examples of prechorus/chorus blends discussed previously. Specifically, we see a span of tonic-prolonging material, followed by a section of off-tonic material, which – via a refrain – overlaps into the subsequent link material. The off-tonic quality of Temperley’s chorus section is especially piquant, as the applied chords – including a supertonic of the supertonic – heighten the chromaticism of this passage. We might judge the ambiguity in this song to be explainable simply by the notion of a prechorus and chorus blend. Case closed then, right?

Example 5.5.02: “Tears in Heaven” (Eric Clapton, 1992); Temperley’s verse

(orig. A)
0:13 I

Would you know my name_____ if I saw you in hea - ven?

I V⁶ vi I⁴ IV⁶ I⁴ V

Would it be the same_____ if I saw you in hea - ven?

Example 5.5.03: “Tears in Heaven” (Eric Clapton, 1992); Temperley’s chorus

(orig. A)
0:38 vi

I must be strong_____ and car - ry on_____ 'cause I know

ii V¹¹ I

_____ I don't be- long_____ here in hea - ven.

Unfortunately, there is a bit of a snag for this reading (verse followed by prechorus/chorus). In particular, pay attention to the repetition pattern of the lyrics (some of which are included for reference purposes in the right-hand column of Example 5.5.01). Surprisingly, perhaps, three of the four iterations of “chorus” material present – aside from the final refrain – entirely new lyrics. This aspect unarguably compromises our ability to hear

this section as a chorus, as lyric repetition patterns are a central feature of chorus quality. That being said, the lack of external lyric repetition is not entirely an issue for our analysis, as we could say that the more prechorus-like aspects of this prechorus/chorus blend are being brought to the fore. In fact, this is the exact argument that was used previously in the case of “Born to Run.”

In “Born to Run,” however, the lyrics in what were considered the verse sections did not repeat on future iterations either, nor did the verse material include any internal repetition of lyrics. But that is not the case with “Tears in Heaven.” Temperley’s verse section, in fact, includes a relatively high level of internal text repetition as well as a significant amount of text repetition on future appearances. Note how every line in every iteration of this opening section begins with the word “Would” and ends with the phrase “if I saw you in heaven?” More than half of the lyrics in these purported verse sections are the exact same words. There is thus, arguably, some evidence that Temperley’s verse section displays some chorus-like features.

The chorus-like quality of the first section would not be much of an issue, perhaps, if this section were followed by a section with strong chorus quality. The hypothetical second section would so clearly act as the focal point of the song that any focal quality of the first section would basically be moot. But as we have seen, the second section of “Tears in Heaven” has a somewhat compromised chorus quality. Aside from the closing refrain, the lyrics show very low levels of both internal and external repetition. A primary factor for a verse-chorus reading of these two sections, one might say, is their order within the song. The link material clearly demarcates separate blocks of material, and – given that two sections appear to exist within this block – the standard way to parse two such sections is to label the first as a verse and the second as a chorus. The refrain at the end of the second section is thus a crucial aspect of the form of this song, for it participates in a coordinated melodic-harmonic cadence that creates a strong feeling of closure to the larger block as a whole. This large-scale harmonic closure creates the sense that Temperley’s chorus section is the end of something and thus does, indeed, act as a chorus in relation to the material that precedes it. A verse-chorus reading is reinforced by the harmonic relationship between the two sections as well. Specifically, the verse begins on tonic and moves away (to the dominant), whereas the chorus begins away (on the submediant) and moves back to tonic (via overlap). Our sense of beginning and ending (and thus of verse and chorus) is thereby affected by the large-scale tonal motion itself.

All in all, the labels that Temperley chooses may be the most appropriate for this song, especially considering all of the complicating factors that go into this decision. Yet one should note how the focal quality in this song seems to exhibit a shift away from the second

section. Perhaps the scale has not yet been tilted such that we perceive the first section to be the more focal passage, but the stage appears to be set for the first section to convert to a chorus. The nascent chorus-like quality of this first section may, in fact, explain the small wrinkle in the succession pattern of the song. As mentioned before, the large-scale grouping structure for “Tears in Heaven” can be seen as an AABAA form. The wrinkle, of course, is that the A group appears not once but twice after the B group. Yet notice that the A group immediately following the B group denies the listener of a true return of the first section (we hear only an instrumental version). If we consider Temperley’s verse material to be vying for (if not fully attaining) status as the focal musical material of the song, then the lack of a true iteration of this section in the first A group after the vocal bridge arguably calls for the return of a complete A group iteration. The fact that the second section returns as well at the end of the song may simply derive from the interconnected nature of the two parts.

A conversion of blends

In “Tears in Heaven,” the refrain at the end of the second section was an important factor in maintaining the sense of verse-chorus organization in the face of some evidence to the contrary. The overlap of this refrain into the link material created a clear sense that the section with the refrain should be considered as coming after its preceding section instead of the other way around. (It is difficult to posit a supersection that would begin with the off-tonic material, include the link, and then end with the more tonic-centered material.) Moreover, the refrain itself acted as a focal feature and thereby imparted the off-tonic section as a whole with a sense that it was the most important or most central passage of the song as a whole. Yet given a very similar melodic-harmonic organization structure, our notion of form may drastically shift if this type of refrain is no longer present.

Consider, for example, the song “That Feel” (Tom Waits, 1992). The song consists of – for all intents and purposes – only two section types. The first section (let us call it the “A” section) is shown in Example 5.5.04, and the second section (let us call it “B”) is shown in Example 5.5.05. The entire succession pattern for the song is simply ABABABA (with a closing fade on further A material); in other words, the two sections simply alternate back and forth without any intermediary material.

Example 5.5.04: “That Feel” (Tom Waits, 1992); first section (A)

(orig. A)
0:11

Well there's one thing you can't lose, it's that feel. Your
pants, your shirt, and your shoes, but not that feel.

Example 5.5.05: “That Feel” (Tom Waits, 1992); second section (B)

(orig. A)
0:31

You throw it out in the rain, you can whip it like a dog, you can chop it down like an old dead tree.
'Can al - ways see it when you're com in' in to town, you can hang it on the wall you can ne ver take it down.

Comparing the construction of these two sections to the two main sections in “Tears in Heaven,” we find remarkable similarities. As in the Eric Clapton song, the first section of “That Feel” clearly prolongs tonic. Note as well that the harmonic structure in the first section of both songs ends on a dominant chord. The off-tonic, unstable quality of the second section of “That Feel” is also strong, despite the two instances of tonic harmony within these eight bars. We find similarities between the lyric organizations of both songs as well. For example, the lyrics to the off-tonic material in “That Feel” show no internal or external pattern of repetition. But even more striking is how closely the lyric organization in the first section of “That Feel” matches the first section of “Tears in Heaven.” Both repeat a title-containing line at the end of each 4-bar hypermeasure, and this parallel structure continues throughout the song. “That Feel” increases the level of repetition even further, though, as the various iterations of this first section always repeat the lyrics in the first 4-bar hypermeasure exactly (and some iterations consist only of repetitions of this first line).

The primary difference between the main material in “That Feel” and “Tears in Heaven” is the lack of a refrain at the end of the off-tonic material. Consider the implications that this difference has on our perception of section roles. In “That Feel,” it seems undeniable

that the first section is the focal material of the song. This sense is further confirmed by the fact that this first section bookends the song as a whole. But because the A sections both begin and end the song, it is somewhat hard to tell whether we should group the song as AB–AB–AB–A or A–BA–BA–BA. In essence, the feeling that one part precedes the other is basically lost. As a result, our notions that verse sections precede chorus sections does not strongly factor into our perception of section roles here.

What then, are the section roles in this song? Considering the obvious focal quality of the first section, one possible conception is that the A section acts as the chorus while the B section acts as the verse. The repetition pattern in the lyrics certainly supports this reading. That being said, it is interesting how the harmonic qualities of the verse and chorus sections have swapped in comparison to those songs in which prechorus and chorus roles were blended. In those cases, the verse material prolonged the tonic, while the chorus material was strongly off-tonic. Now, we have the opposite situation. The chorus material prolongs the tonic, while the verse material is strongly off-tonic. One might take away from these apparently contradictory situations the notion that harmonic factors are not important with regard to verse and chorus roles (i.e., anything can happen). The reader should remember, though, that these cases reflect ambiguous situations. Moreover, these cases stand on a continuum of our perception of section roles. In the case of “That Feel,” we potentially see evidence of where the ambiguous qualities engender a complete flip in our assignment of section roles based on a simple nudge further in one direction.

Reading “That Feel” as a verse-chorus form is not our only option, however. Recall, for example, that Covach notes the focal quality that adheres to the A sections within AABA forms. We might alternatively see the form of “That Feel” as related to the AABA structure. From the perspective of harmony, in fact, there is strong evidence of this relationship. Like a classic AABA form, the A sections of “That Feel” prolong tonic harmony, while the B sections avoid tonic. Indeed, the B sections in “That Feel” seem highly similar a classic 8-bar bridge section. (The II7 chord at the end of the B section can be seen as a substitute for dominant harmony via its support for $\hat{2}$.) Accordingly, we might consider the B sections of “That Feel” to be bridge material. Our conception of the form of this song would thus be an alternation of chorus and bridge material. Note that – using Covach’s approach to section roles in an AABA form – we might also consider the option that the song consists of an alternation of verse and bridge sections. But this reading seems highly inappropriate for this song considering the strength of chorus quality in the A material. The next example will give further evidence against this reading as well.

All in all, we should note that – although the chorus section of the song is clear enough – it is not clear whether to consider the B section of the song as verse or bridge

material. This type of ambiguity can be found in a significant number of rock songs, as the following examples will show. Before proceeding, though, it is worth mentioning that one could also posit that the ambiguity in the B section of “That Feel” involves a blend of verse and prechorus roles. The form of the song would thus be considered an alternation of chorus and prechorus/verse sections rather than an alternation of chorus and bridge/verse sections. It is somewhat difficult to come to a final conclusion as to which one we should prefer here. In the examples that follow, we will see cases in which one reading might be more appropriate than the other.

Bridge/verse blends

Let us first examine a situation in which highly bridge-like material seems to be acting in the role of verse. The song “That’ll Be the Day” (The Crickets, 1957) provides an excellent case study in this regard, and the recent analysis of this song by Covach (2009, 104) will serve as a reference. Indeed, Covach’s analysis reflects one valid and reasonable way that many theorists might parse the form of this song. As Example 5.5.06 shows, we can conceive of this song as an alternation of verse and chorus sections, with an instrumental bridge section that cleaves the song as a whole into two halves. It may seem somewhat non-standard that – after the instrumental introduction – a chorus section begins the song. But this practice is not entirely uncommon in rock music. Nonetheless, there does appear to be a somewhat atypical succession pattern to the parts of this song, especially with respect to the two equally-sized spans of verse and chorus groups before and after the instrumental solo.

Example 5.5.06: “That’ll Be the Day” (The Crickets, 1957);
form chart in Covach 2009 (104)

Start	Mm.	Section	Group
0:00	2	introduction	
0:04	8	chorus	
0:19	8	verse	
0:34	8	chorus	
0:49	12	instrumental bridge (12-bar blues)	
1:12	8	chorus	
1:27	8	verse	
1:42	8	chorus	
1:58	8	ending	

Despite their somewhat odd sequence, the verse and chorus sections that Covach identifies are made clear via their internal and external patterns of text repetition. In every instance of Covach’s chorus material, for example, the lyrics are identical. Moreover, each chorus iteration includes the title text three times, which accounts for almost half of the lyric

content in the chorus. In contrast, Covach's verse sections do not share any lyric content, nor do they internally recycle any text. From the perspective of lyrics, therefore, we can easily understand Covach's label choices.

On closer examination of these sections, however, some mitigating factors can be found. In order to discuss these factors, Examples 5.5.07 and 5.5.08 transcribe the two main musical passages of this song. As can be seen, both 8-bar parts might be considered somewhat harmonically unstable, as each begins with a subdominant chord and shows tonic harmonies in relatively weak metrical positions. Yet Covach's chorus section is undeniably more stable than his verse, as the chorus section is tonally closed via the emphasis on tonic harmony in its last two bars. In contrast, Covach's verse material is tonally open-ended, as the last two bars shift towards the dominant. In fact, the reader might notice how closely similar the harmonic content in Covach's verse passage is to that of a classic bridge section.

Example 5.5.07: “That’ll Be the Day” (The Crickets, 1957); Covach’s chorus

(orig. A) 0:03

Well, that'll be the day when you say good-bye. Yes, that'll be the day when you make me cry. You say you gon-na leave, you know it's a lie 'cause that'll be the day when I die.

Example 5.5.08: “That’ll Be the Day” (The Crickets, 1957); Covach’s verse

(orig. A) 0:18

Well, you give me all your lov in'and your tur-tle dov-in', uh, all your hugs and kiss es and your mon ey, too. Well uh, you know you love me ba-by, still you tell me may-be that some-day, well, I'll be blue.

To show this similarity, Example 5.5.09 offers a prototypical classic 8-bar bridge section from the song “Hey Good Lookin’” (Hank Williams, 1951).

Example 5.5.09: “Hey Good Lookin’” (Hank Williams, 1951); bridge

(orig. C) 0:33

I got a hot-rod Ford and a two-dol-lar bill, and I know a spot right o-ver the hill...

There's so-da pop and the dan-cin's free, so if you want to have fun, come a - long with me...

It should be noted that Covach’s own analysis of “Hey Good Lookin’” casts the song as a straightforward 32-bar AABA form. Comparing this bridge material with the “verse” material from “That’ll Be the Day,” we should notice many shared characteristics. In addition to the identical harmonic structure, both sections have their melodic phrases organized into four 2-bar groups, with a strong parallel between the first and third groups (like a restart of the melody in the fifth measure). Note also that both melodies explore mostly the same tonal area, as $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{6}$ receive the bulk of the melodic emphasis in each excerpt. In fact, the melodies of the final two bars of both 8-bar passages seem almost identical. As a further correspondence between these two passages, one should note that the lyrics to the first iteration of the bridge section in “Hey Good Lookin’” (at 0:34: “I got a hot-rod Ford”) do not repeat on the second iteration of this material (at 2:22: “I’m gonna throw my datebook”).

Consequently, there appears to be significant evidence that what Covach refers to as verse material in “That’ll Be the Day” actually reflects a blend of verse and bridge quality (or a bridge-like section acting in a verse role). This conception potentially helps explain the somewhat non-standard large-scale succession pattern that we find in “That’ll Be the Day.” If we consider Covach’s chorus and verse sections to be A and B sections, respectively, then the two main groups of vocal material in this song create an ABA sequence. This sequence is, of course, quite similar to the AABA pattern. The large-scale form of “Hey Good Lookin’,” in fact, can be represented as *AABA–break–AABA*, which is highly similar to the *ABA–break–ABA* form of “That’ll Be the Day.” There thus appears to be evidence of a blend between verse and bridge roles on the large-scale form of “That’ll Be the Day” as well, since the succession pattern of the song seems to sit somewhere between verse-chorus and AABA organizations.

Like songs in classic AABA form, therefore, songs that include bridge-like material acting as a verse basically combine a focal section that prolongs tonic with a non-focal section that eschews tonic. Consequently, there may be the potential for even further confusion with regard to section roles, since theorists often (if not always) label A sections of AABA forms as

verse material. Consider again the case of “That Feel”: had there been less internal and external repetition of the lyrics in the opening material, we might have been inclined to refer to the song as an alternation of verse sections with intervening bridge material. The permeable boundary between these two drastically different readings of this song (verse followed by bridge as opposed to chorus followed by verse) testifies to the complex perceptual space in which many songs like this reside. The following example will explore just how complex this perceptual space can sometimes be.

A chorus of blends

As a final analysis in this discussion, we will consider another song in which a span of tonic-prolonging material alternates with off-tonic material. The song in question is “Today” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1993). Although the basic strategy in this song seems to be similar to those examples above, we will find that the form of “Today” is much more multifaceted than it may initially appear. To fully appreciate the form of this song, in fact, we will have to rely on various types of blends examined thus far. In that regard, this song serves as a good example to close this chapter (and the dissertation) as a whole.

In order to discuss our perception of section roles in this song, we need a relatively objective way to refer to its various parts. As mentioned, the song can be seen as having two basic parts (at least from the perspective of harmony): one part (A) that begins on a tonic chord and is more tonally stable, and another part (B) that begins on a supertonic chord and is less tonally unstable. To further assist in the discussion, each iteration of these two parts will be identified via a number after this letter label; so, for example, “A2” refers to the second iteration of the more tonally-stable material. Note that the similarity in harmonic content between various parts of this song does not necessarily imply that these iterations play equivalent roles within the song. Overall, the large-scale form of the song consists primarily of an alternation of A and B parts (although not without significant and important variations). After an instrumental intro section (from 0:00 – 0:34), the succession pattern for the song is thus A1–B1–A2–B2–A3–B3–A4, as shown in Example 5.5.10. The form chart in Example 5.5.10 also provides the reader with a quick reference for the pattern of lyrics and dynamics. One should also notice the “Readings” column, which captures various ways of conceptualizing the form of this song. The central task of the following discussion will be to provide evidence for each of these various readings.

Example 5.5.10: “Today” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1993); form chart

Start	Mm.	Part	Lyrics	Dyn.	Readings					
					1	2	3	4	5	6
0:00	12	intro	----	----	intro					
0:34	8	A1	“Today is the greatest....”	soft	Vr	Ch	Ch	Vr	Vr	Vr
0:57	8	B1	“I wanted more....”	loud	Ch	Vr	Br	Ch	Pc	Pc
1:21	8	A2	“Today is the greatest....”	soft	Vr	Ch	Ch	Vr	Vr	Vr
1:44	8	B2	“Pink ribbon scars....”	loud	Ch	Vr	Br	Ch	Pc	Pc
2:07	9	A3	“Today is, Today is....”	loud	Vr	Ch	Ch	Br	Ch	Ch
2:33	7	B3	“I want to turn you on....”	loud	Ch	Vr	Br	Ch	Pc	Br
2:53	8	A4	“Today is the greatest....”	loud	Vr	Ch	Ch	Ou	Ch	Ch

To begin, let us examine the initial iterations of the two basic parts described above. Examples 5.5.11 and 5.5.12 show transcriptions of the A1 and B1 sections, respectively. As should be evident, the tonal stability of the A1 section is relatively pronounced. We find tonic chords on each strong hyperbeat, and these eight bars generally prolong a tonic harmony. In contrast, the B1 section does not include a single instance of tonic harmony. We might say, therefore, that this B1 section is not tonally stable. That being said, the submediant (VI) chord in this B1 sections arguably seems to act as a local tonic – as if the song moves to the relative minor during this passage. Nevertheless, these submediant chords occur in weak positions within the hypermeter. Moreover, the absence of the Ionian tonic is palpable, in large part because of how strongly the Ionian tonic was emphasized in the A1 section. The B1 section thus sounds subsidiary – at least from a harmonic perspective – to the more tonally stable A1 section.

Example 5.5.11: “Today” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1993); initial A material (A1)

(orig. Eb)

0:34 I V IV I V IV

To day is the great - est day I'vee - ver known. Can't live for to - mor - row, to mor row's just too long.

I V IV I V VI⁵

I'll burn my eyes out be - fore I get out.

Example 5.5.12: “Today” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1993); initial of B material (B1)

(orig. Eb)

0:57 II^5 IV VI^5 II^5 IV VI^5

what roles might these be? According to the wikipedia.org page for “Today,” the form of the song consists of an alternation of “quiet verses” and “loud choruses,” and this analysis has stood unchanged since its appearance on April 12, 2007 (accessed August 22, 2011). Indeed, the soft-loud paradigm so common to verse-chorus relationships is clearly evident at the beginning of this song. By this criterion, as well as the fact that the A material appears first in the song, the A material appears to act as the verse, while the B material appears to act as the chorus. Admittedly, later instances of the A material (A3 and A4) do not have the same quiet texture as these earlier instances. Yet our understanding of the role the A material plays is potentially determined by our initial encounter, and so our sense of roles potentially carries through these new settings. This hearing is reflected in the “Readings 1” column.

Of course, there are obvious factors that rub against a straightforward verse-chorus reading for this song. One of these factors is the lyric structure. In particular, no iteration of the B material in the song shares lyrics with any other iteration. Moreover, there is a significant amount of overlap in lyric content between each of the A sections. The return of the title text with each A section, in fact, acts as a strong marker of focal quality. Accordingly, we might consider a reading in which the A sections act as choruses while the B sections act as verses, as shown in the “Readings 2” column. As further support for this reading, note that the song ends with an iteration of A material (as we would expect of a chorus section). The loud dynamics in these later iterations of A material may thus offset the earlier effects of texture, such that we retroactively understand the A material – even when it appears in a quiet setting – to be the focal material of the song as a whole.

Hearing the A sections as the focal material of the song, we find a similarity between the form of this song and those examples of bridge/verse blends discussed above. For example, we could consider the form of the song to be an alternation of chorus sections (A) with sections that blend verse and prechorus roles (B). We might similarly view the form of “Today” as a modified 32-bar AABA organizational scheme, in that we have more stable and more focal A material contrasted with less stable and less focal B material. We could thus view the form of “Today” as an alternation of chorus and bridge material. The “Readings 3” column in Example 5.5.10 reflects this hearing.

These approaches to the form of this song may seem oversimplified, in that they assume that every iteration of A and B material in the song fulfills the same role. It is thus worth considering whether we might hear certain iterations in a different way. One such approach is shown in the “Readings 4” column. This hearing takes the verse and chorus roles in “Reading 1” as a starting point. Since texture and position were the primary factors driving “Reading 1,” the thick texture and location of the A3 section might cause us to reconsider its role. In particular, note that the A3 section occurs in the exact location at which we expect a

modern bridge section. That the A3 section moves to another iteration of what is ostensibly chorus material further aligns with our expectations of a large-scale bridge. A tidy explanation of the final A4 section sees it simply as outro material. The overall form of the song shown in the “Readings 4” column thus makes the succession pattern for “Today” seem wholly standard and unproblematic.

There is something unsatisfying, though, about presenting the form of this song in such a straightforward way. One central reason is the nature of the A3 material itself, which is transcribed in Example 5.5.14. In particular, this A3 section imparts a strong sense that it is the climax of the song. As one factor, note that the texture in this A3 section – via the addition of a long electric guitar note – is even thicker than the preceding B2 section. Moreover, this A3 section now imparts the strongest emphasis on tonic harmony in the song, as we find tonic chords on the downbeats of each of the first five bars. The title text also sees a high level of internal repetition within this section. It is as if the chorus-like potential of the A material is now fully realized. Note, for example, how the melodic register of each A iteration is always higher than that in the B material. Although this factor may not have been enough to cause earlier A material to sound chorus-like in comparison to the loud B sections, the higher register of the A material now contributes to the overall sense that the A3 section is the focal part of the song. This chorus-like quality can be seen to adhere to the A4 section as well for similar reasons. With this hearing, the roles played by other material in the song warrant reconsideration. As the “Readings 5” column shows, it makes sense – given that the A3 and A4 sections sound like chorus material – to see the B material as fulfilling a prechorus role. In fact, the unstable harmonic quality and lack of lyric repetition in the preceding B sections aligns with our understanding of prototypical prechorus sections.

Example 5.5.14: “Today” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1993); third A material (A3)

(orig. Eb)

2:07 I V I IV I V I IV

To- day__ is... To- day__ is... To- day__ is... the grea - test...

I V VI⁵ IV I V VI⁵

day,____ ooh.____ Ooh, ooh, yeah,____ ooh.

One final hearing is shown in the “Readings 6” column. This view of the form attempts to reconcile the previous hearing with a more standard large-scale AABA pattern. Consequently, the B3 material is viewed as fulfilling a bridge role. There are good reasons, in fact, to consider this B3 material differently than other iterations of B material. As shown in Example 5.5.15, the characteristic harmonies of the B material can be seen to exist within an entirely new hypermetric context. Instead of the II–IV motion appearing in hypermetrically-strong locations, these motions are now heard more like hyper-upbeats to the VI chords, which occur on the hypermetrically-strong downbeats. Of course, the B3 section could have been represented in a similar manner as previous B sections (with only its final bar missing). But the extension of the previous A section (which spans 9 bars) gives us reason to prefer the hypermetric context shown in this transcription. The reader should also note how greatly the lyric and melodic organization of this B3 section differs from earlier iterations of B material. This final B section thus sounds like the greatest departure yet.

Example 5.5.15: “Today” (The Smashing Pumpkins, 1993); third B material (B3)

The example shows two staves of music in treble clef. The first staff begins with a tempo marking of 2:33 and a key signature change to E-flat (orig. Eb). Above the staff, harmonic labels are placed: II⁵ above the first measure, IV above the second, VI⁵ above the third, II⁵ above the fourth, and IV above the fifth. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Below the staff, the lyrics "I want to turn_ you on.____" are written under the first three measures, and "I want to turn_ you on." under the last two. The second staff continues the melody with harmonic labels VI⁵, II⁵, IV, VI⁵, II⁵, and IV above the measures. The lyrics "I want to turn_ you on.____" are under the first three measures, and "I want to turn_ you...." under the last two. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Overall, our perception of the form in “Today” is not restricted to any one of these readings. Rather, the song interacts with and challenges our notions of section roles in various ways. This facet is certainly one of the central reasons that listeners find this song interesting. Nonetheless, the basic organizational scheme of the song is similar to those found above: a span of tonic-prolonging material with title-containing lyrics alternates with a span of off-tonic material that presents new lyrics on each iteration. So although “Today” contains a number of different blends and ambiguities within its form, it can be seen to embody the same basic structure as found in many examples discussed thus far.

Conclusion

In the song examples above, we found situations in which – from a standpoint of lyric repetition patterns – verse-like sections of unstable harmonic material alternate with more

chorus-like sections of stable harmonic material. These situations can be seen to reflect bridge-like material acting in the role of a verse. Or, as in the case of “Today,” the situation becomes highly complex, as there are a number of ways of parsing the song form.

Other songs present similar organizational schemes in which bridge-like material seems to take on a verse-like role. Consider, for example, the song “Rehab” (Amy Winehouse, 2007). The main SRDC section of the song (first at 0:00) clearly stands as the chorus of the song. In alternation with this SRDC material is a highly bridge-like passage (first at 0:27) that serves as the sole transmission device for new lyric content. In “You’re One” (Imperial Teen, 1996), similarly, the quiet tonic-initiated sections with repeating title-text lyrics (first at 0:29) alternate with loud off-tonic sections (first at 0:48) with new lyrics on each iteration. “I Wanna Be Sedated” (Ramones, 1978), “I Don’t Wanna Grow Up” (Tom Waits, 1992), and “I Feel the Earth Move” (Carole King, 1971) provide further instances in which our understanding of section roles in the song potentially involves a blend of verse and bridge qualities.

5.6: Summary

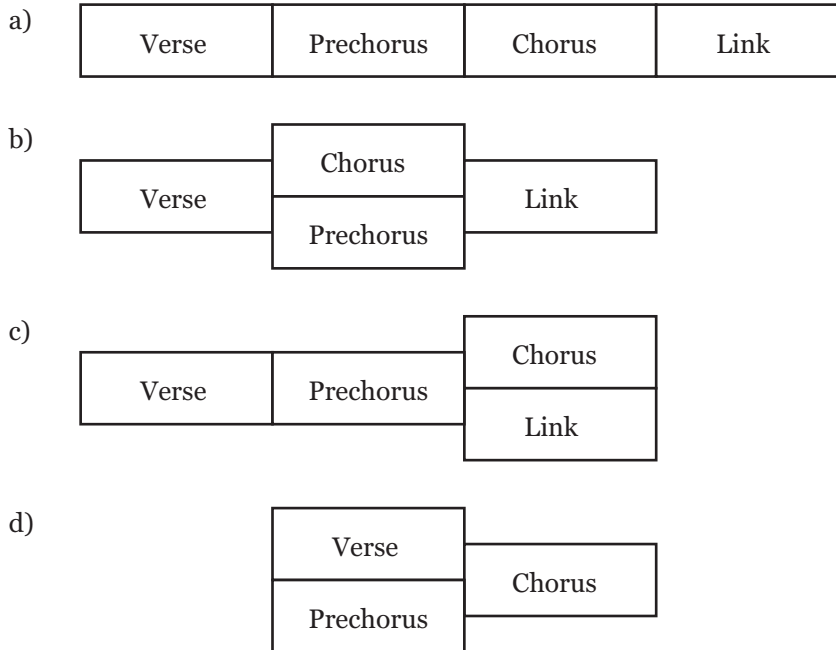
A central task of this chapter has been to show that section roles are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There are many situations, in fact, where choosing a single section role to describe a musical passage cannot fully capture the complex way this passage interacts with our perception of section roles. Having to choose a single section role thus represents a type of logical fallacy – the fallacy of false choice. Our understanding and perception of many situations in rock songs can be adequately explained only by invoking multiple section roles. This aspect of form derives from the fact that the mental processes we use to categorize various section roles are always active. When we hear something that sounds very chorus-like, for example, we do not turn off our ability to perceive prechorus-like qualities.

That being said, current theoretical systems of categorization for rock music encourage us to seek out three primary roles: verse, chorus, and bridge. As a result, we may often use these main role labels in cases where something more complex and nuanced is going on. In particular, there are many instances where a musical passage evinces a blend of two or more section roles. A number of different blends were discussed in this chapter, and these blends were organized around the primary section roles of verse, chorus, and bridge since at least one of these main section roles is involved in every blend.

In a general way, blends inherently involve ambiguity between section roles. Ambiguity between section roles was, in fact, a central aspect of the previous chapter on conversions. The discussion of conversions examined how one organizational scheme (such

as a classic 16-bar SRDC) could expand (both literally and metaphorically) beyond a single role to encompass multiple section roles. The discussion of blends could be considered as something like the reverse of this process. In particular, many blends could be conceptualized as a telescoping of song form. Take as a starting point Example 5.6.01a, for example, in which a prototypical succession pattern for a few section roles is shown. In Example 5.6.01b, this succession pattern has collapsed, such that the chorus and prechorus roles have merged (e.g., “Communication Breakdown”). In a similar way, Example 5.6.01c shows how the telescoping effect would cause the chorus and link roles to merge (e.g., “Jump”). We could also consider the case of “That’ll Be the Day” to be represented by Example 5.6.01d, in which the verse and prechorus roles slip together. As can be seen, these blends retain a standard sequence of section roles; it is simply that two neighboring sections roles have been merged into one.

Example 5.6.01: Common blends involving neighboring section roles



Other types of blends involve our ability to perceive section roles on different levels of grouping. This aspect was a central feature of blends that involved the bridge role. In such situations, local evidence for a section role (e.g., verse, chorus, or prechorus) interacts with global evidence for a bridge role. A robust understanding of the song structure thus requires an ability to see multiple layers of form. The existence of multiple layers of section roles could

be extended to verse blends as well, since the prechorus role may or may not be something that acts within a larger verse context.

Chapter 6: Epilogue

Those readers that have successfully made their way through the preceding pages and spent time carefully considering each and every example deserve a hearty congratulations. Discussing such a large topic as form in rock music is not a simple endeavor, and it cannot rely on only a few select examples. At this point, it is worth taking a step back in order to have a broad look at what has been discussed herein. It would be impossible to adequately recap every insight, as each topic has involved a number of details and factors. We can, however, make some general observations and extend our findings to possibilities for future work. It is also worth considering a few potential criticisms that may have cropped up in the process.

To restate what should be patently clear by now, this dissertation has employed a prototype-based approach to talk about form in rock music. Evidence of prototype effects (i.e. asymmetries in category membership) can be found in the discussions of form in the work of prior authors (as discussed in the first chapter). But this dissertation confronts these effects more directly than has ever been done before. In particular, this dissertation takes as its first principle the notion that the form labels we use represent conceptual categories. From this starting point, we realize that definitions very poorly account for the way we understand and apply these labels. Of course, exactly how we represent these conceptual categories is something that is complex, messy, and most likely unknowable. At minimum, no single approach currently accounts for all of the phenomena found in categorization studies. But a prototype-based approach – i.e., one that captures the attributes of those members that are judged to be more central to the category – offers one of the most successful methods to date.

As a result, Chapter 3 embarked on what may be seen as the first large-scale study of prototypical instances of section roles in rock music. One important realization that emerges from this discussion is that section roles are not as highly differentiated as they might initially appear. One theory of conceptual categories holds that we tend to create and organize categories such that they are maximally discriminable from each other (Rosch and Mervis 1975, 575-6). Indeed, the section role labels we use may represent our best attempts to partition the types of situations we encounter in rock music into categories that contrast with one another in the greatest possible way. Nevertheless, we find that the prototypical instances of these categories share a great deal in common. For example, prototypical prechorus and bridge sections both involve unstable harmonic content that lacks tonal closure. Similarly, we find lyric repetition on future iterations to be a central attribute of both the prechorus and chorus categories. Because a great deal of shared attributes can be found

among prototypical section roles, there is a high potential for ambiguity with regard to the role a particular passage plays within a song.

This high potential for ambiguity can also be found to derive from the fact that most songs do not contain clear instances of every single type of section role. There thus exists a continuum, not only in terms of where a particular passage lies with regard to its level of evoking one section role or another, but also in terms of where a particular song lies with regard to how well it evinces a set of section roles. This continuum between different song forms was the focus of Chapter 4. As points of reference, this chapter used three common organizational schemes: the 12-bar blues, the 16-bar SRDC, and the 32-bar AABA. From clear instances of these schemes (in essence, prototypes), we could trace potential paths between simple (or simpler) form types to more complex form types. The term “conversion” was introduced in order to discuss how our perception of section roles was shifted in these situations. On a higher level, though, we can think of conversion as a useful concept to describe shifts in our perception of large-scale form types. We saw, for example, multiple ways that a classic AABA form could be converted into a verse/chorus form.

One should note that the organizational schemes in Chapter 4 provide excellent models for a class in popular music composition or songwriting, in that these schemes strike a good balance between abstract and concrete melodic-harmonic elements. In this regard, it would be nice to develop additional organizational schemes. One could imagine a host of different organizational schemes, which taken together would represent some of the most common ways of structuring the content of a rock song. We saw evidence of other potential schemes in Chapter 5, in fact. The doubled tail refrain, for example, could be considered a scheme (or at least a partial scheme) since it offers a similar mix of abstract and concrete elements in the melodic and harmonic domains. Other blends discussed in Chapter 5, such as the link/chorus, could also be thought of in terms of an organizational scheme.

Overall, the take-home message from Chapter 5 was that it is often counterproductive to think of section roles as mutually exclusive labels. Indeed, the most appropriate way to represent many recurring moments in rock music often seems to be via a blend of section roles. A useful analytical method in this regard is the “multivalent” approach described by James Webster (most recently in Bergé 2009). Yet it is uncommon, if not extremely rare, for a music analyst to provide multiple form charts of a single rock song. Understandably, we want to represent the form of a song in the simplest and most straightforward manner possible. This is certainly a valuable desire in its own right. Doing so, however, we can downplay what are often the most interesting and fascinating aspects of the song. One should recognize that – given the standard set of section roles – songwriters are working within a highly limited palette of form and section types. A central way to generate something unique

or compelling, therefore, is to blend aspects of these form and section types. It is doubtful that songwriters employ these blends in a conscious way, since these techniques have received little attention in either scholarly or non-scholarly writing. At the same time, though, it is doubtful that songwriters are not trying (at least sometimes) to present something new and different to the listener. In this regard, blends provide a way to work within the formal system while not falling into the trap of sounding overly derivative. A few common types of blends were discussed in Chapter 5, but many more scenarios likely exist within rock music.

Similarly, it is important to remind the reader that, although many prototypical situations were described over the course of this dissertation, these situations are not necessarily the only ones that account for our perception of a particular category. In the case of the category “refrain,” for example, two related yet distinct subtypes were proposed: the tail refrain and the head refrain. These subtypes were described in a number of domains, including melodic phrase rhythm, harmony, lyrics, and placement within a larger grouping structure. While it was posited that these are clear examples of the category “refrain,” there may be other prototypical configurations that also trigger our sense of refrain quality in similarly strong ways. Again, we should be careful not to lapse into thinking that any and all refrain-like situations are equal. Recall, for instance, that the tail refrain was presented as a more central member of the refrain category than the head refrain. So while other common instantiations of categories may be found, we should weigh how they relate to other members of that category.

In general, there is an underlying issue as to how we might more solidly know which members and attributes are more central to our perception of any given category. Since this dissertation did not involve an experimental component, many (if not all) of the attributes and prototypical instances presented herein derive from communal if not personal conjecture. It would be nice to test the insights from this dissertation within a controlled setting, if only to confirm that they generally hold true. In this regard, the field of music cognition holds great potential to reveal, validate, or disprove how particular features affect our perception of categories in rock music. Given a verse-like passage in a minor mode, for example, we might ask: to what extent does a move to an Ionian tonic engender chorus quality? This is a complicated question, of course, as it involves a number of aspects. These aspects include the frequency of the Ionian tonic, its placement within the hypermetric context, and the total length of time spent on the Ionian tonic. The stimuli in such research would necessarily require real music (as opposed to something like a probe tone), and so controlling for a variety of confounding factors would be quite challenging. As one changes the harmony in a single bar, for example, one affects a number of other parameters, such as

the harmonic setting of the melody and the function of the surrounding chords within the phrase as a whole. Nevertheless, there is a severe dearth of research in music cognition that directly tackles perceptual issues within rock. It is thus worth embarking on this body of work, if only because the field lays so wide open and so much remains to be discovered.

One advantage of conducting music cognition research on rock music is that the general public has a relatively high exposure to and familiarity with rock (at least as opposed to music of the common-practice era). As a result, studies would not need to be limited to the relatively small subject pool of trained musicians often used in music cognition experiments. In fact, the results from a cognitive study on rock music might be suspect if the study did not utilize untrained musicians, since the majority of people who listen to (and possibly create) rock music have little to no formal musical education. This advantage comes with its own set of problems, though. An untrained musician, for example, does not necessarily have the same ability to explicitly describe his or her response to music as does a trained musician, who has access to a large technical vocabulary. Yet the technical vocabulary of rock music is not something with which even a trained musician has extensive experience, since rock music is only briefly discussed (if at all) within a standard music education. The ideal subject for a study of form in rock music might thus be the practicing rock musician. It is somewhat difficult to measure what constitutes a practicing rock musician, however (as opposed to simply measuring years of formal music education), and so even this solution carries its own set of issues.

Matters of subject pool aside, music cognition holds the potential to answer a number of questions left unresolved in this dissertation. One central topic was how much music should be considered to constitute a single measure. To some readers, this issue may seem somewhat trivial. But one should recall how useful melodic phrase rhythms proved to be in Chapter 4 with regard to tracking conversions of various organizational schemes. These organizational schemes were characterized in strong part by the particular way that the vocal melody was grouped within the prevailing hypermetric structure. Measure length calculations thus impact our ability to reference a given song back to a particular organizational scheme. Recent work on phrase rhythm in jazz music (Love 2011) further highlights the importance of the relationship between melodic grouping structures and the hypermetric framework in popular music. Some enhanced guidelines for the music analyst would be useful in this regard, since the current system of assigning measure lengths (via the snare drum pattern or backbeat) is not always reliable (as discussed in Chapter 3). Previous research on the perception of absolute time (as summarized in London 2004, 27ff) offers some initial data in relation to measure lengths. In particular, studies as to where listeners feel “the beat” relate to questions of measure lengths. Nonetheless, measures do not

necessarily contain an equivalent number of beats, and so it is not clear how to directly apply data on pulse salience, for example, to measure lengths. Our sense of a measure inherently involves more factors than simply the beat alone, and these factors probably include the harmonic rhythm, the level of rhythmic subdivision in the melody, the melodic phrase lengths, and the overall tonal framework. There is a good chance, moreover, that these factors interact in ways that make it somewhat difficult to isolate one from the other. At the end of the day, it is doubtful that we can come up with a system in which ambiguous cases will cease to exist. Yet further study on this issue is certainly warranted, since the success of future work on melodic phrase rhythm in rock music is heavily reliant on a consistent metric for measure lengths.

Research involving melodic phrase rhythm in rock music includes its own set of problems as well. One fundamental concern is where melodic phrase groupings begin and end. As opposed to purely instrumental music, the vast majority of rock music has the advantage of lyrics to help in the identification of melodic phrase beginnings and endings. Yet we cannot assume that groupings in the lyrics and melody are always aligned. Breaks (or rests) in the melody seem to be the most obvious way of parsing the grouping structure, yet we have seen many cases that thwart any simple mechanism based on this parameter alone. Sometimes, a new melodic phrase begins immediately after the end of the prior vocal phrase. In other instances, it is useful to posit a single overarching vocal phrase despite a number of internal pauses and interruptions. Of course, the way in which a melodic phrase is grouped with regard to the underlying hypermeter is, fundamentally speaking, a matter of analytical preference. In fact, one aspect of this dissertation with which readers might take issue concerns the particular melodic groupings that have been presented herein.

Some readers may raise objections with other aspects of this work as well. For example, one might feel that an undue emphasis has been placed on the importance and value of the section labels themselves. In the analyses within this dissertation, much effort was exerted to appreciate what label (or labels) might be most appropriate for a particular span of music. To some, this effort may seem somewhat tangential to the higher-level act of music analysis itself. For example, Stephenson writes, “It must be remembered that the point of formal analysis... is not to identify passages with the proper labels, for the labels serve merely as points of perspective around which to organize our thoughts” (2002, 133). Stephenson goes on to say that it does not matter whether we call some particular passage, for instance, a short chorus or a long refrain. What matters is that we have drawn the reader’s attention to a specific feature of a specific moment in the music, and that this feature serves as a starting point for further discussion.

Indeed, it would be hard to argue that labeling the various parts of a song is an endpoint in the analytical process (any more than a full-fledged Schenkerian graph is the endpoint in the analysis of a Beethoven sonata). Yet a single section label undoubtedly conveys a significant amount of meaning, and this meaning undeniably influences (at least to a certain extent) our view of the song. For instance, a central principle that drives many analyses is the explanation of interesting or unique moments within a piece of music. It is difficult to apprehend what is interesting and unique, though, without a solid understanding of what is prototypical and commonplace. Stephenson is certainly correct that the distinction, for instance, between whether a particular passage is a short chorus or a long refrain can often seem trivial. But this is exactly what is interesting about these types of situations. Calling the passage one or the other draws our attention away from the fact that such situations represent an inextricable blend of chorus and refrain roles. To be fair, Stephenson is not necessarily arguing against a “both/and” reading; he seems merely to be saying that labels have only limited analytical value. Undoubtedly, this is true. At the same time, however, we should not undervalue the labels we do have, for they contain powerful associations and implications.

In a related manner, some readers may feel that this dissertation does not reflect the personal, subjective, and contextual interpretations of section labels. Since each person inherently interacts with and listens to a different body of music during their lifetime, one could argue that we have each developed highly personalized notions of what constitutes good and bad examples. Consequently, no single shared understanding of prototypical situations can be said to exist. Even when two people are familiar with the same song, we cannot assume that they have had the same experience with that song or are influenced by that song in the same way. Someone who is an avid Beatles fan, for example, may have an entirely different understanding of what constitutes a prototypical verse as compared to someone who listens primarily to heavy metal. This dissertation, it could be argued, represents only the personal, subjective, and contextual interpretations of its author. One might say, in other words, that the work herein does not model how *we* hear, but rather how just a single person hears.

In this regard, it is worth reminding the reader that, while two individuals may disagree as to the exact boundaries of a category, it is widely confirmed that people overwhelmingly agree on judgments of those more central members (see Ch. 2; Rosch 1978). The judgments of prototypes made in Ch. 3 should thus be considered to reasonably reflect the judgments of listeners in general. Nevertheless, this potential criticism raises a valid point. Different eras and styles of rock music undoubtedly utilize different strategies for organizing musical material. Chorus sections in 1950s blues music are certainly of a different

type than those typically found in the music of Nirvana. Perhaps it is not fair to judge one style in the same context as the other. In using the term “chorus” to describe both passages, however, we show evidence that we *do* hear one in the context of the other – that these musical passages are related in some way. This is not to say that what triggers our sense of chorus quality is necessarily the same in both songs. Rather, our understanding of a section role in one style overlaps and influences our understanding of that role in another. For this reason, style analysis has been and will continue to be a valuable and worthwhile endeavor. Some efforts have been made in this dissertation along these lines (such as the distinction between a classic bridge and a modern bridge), and useful insights were gained as a result (such as the similarity between a classic bridge and a prechorus with regard to the conversion of AABA forms).

In conclusion, this dissertation is not meant to stand as the final word on prototypical configurations in rock music. This dissertation hopes instead to refocus the discourse on form in rock music via a prototype-based approach. As stated in the opening paragraph of this study, “form” has been one of the most persistently complex topics facing theorists of classic music. Form in rock music, one should agree, is no different.

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Songs Cited

1951	"Hey Good Lookin'"	Hank Williams
1951	"Violent Love"	The Big Three
1952	"Honky Tonk Blues"	Hank Williams
1953	"Your Cheatin' Heart"	Hank Williams
1953	"Money Honey"	The Drifters
1954	"Shake, Rattle and Roll"	Big Joe Turner
1954	"Evil"	Howlin' Wolf
1954	"When the Lights Go Out"	Jimmy Witherspoon
1954	"Earth Angel"	The Penguins
1955	"Maybellene"	Chuck Berry
1955	"Tutti Frutti"	Little Richard
1955	"Do Me Right"	Lowell Fulson
1955	"Young Fashioned Ways"	Muddy Waters
1955	"Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)"	The Crew Cuts
1955	"The Great Pretender"	The Platters
1955	"Crazy for My Baby"	Willie Dixon
1955	"Pain in My Heart"	Willie Dixon
1956	"Roll Over Beethoven"	Chuck Berry
1956	"Hound Dog"	Elvis Presley
1956	"Love Me"	Elvis Presley
1956	"Blue Suede Shoes"	Elvis Presley
1956	"Tryin' to Get to You"	Elvis Presley
1956	"Long Tall Sally"	Little Richard
1956	"Ooby Dooby"	Roy Orbison
1956	"Turtle Dovin'"	The Coasters
1956	"In the Still of the Night"	The Five Satins
1956	"One in a Million"	The Platters
1957	"Butterfly"	Andy Williams
1957	"Everyday"	Buddy Holly
1957	"Peggy Sue"	Buddy Holly
1957	"Jailhouse Rock"	Elvis Presley
1957	"I'm Walkin'"	Fats Domino
1957	"Great Balls of Fire"	Jerry Lee Lewis
1957	"You Don't Owe Me a Thing"	Johnnie Ray
1957	"You Send Me"	Sam Cooke
1957	"Young Blood"	The Coasters
1957	"That'll Be the Day"	The Crickets
1957	"Come Go with Me"	The Del-Vikings
1958	"Rockin' Robin"	Bobby Day
1958	"Johnny B. Goode"	Chuck Berry
1958	"Donna"	Ritche Valens
1958	"All I Have to Do Is Dream"	The Everly Brothers
1958	"Born Too Late"	The Poni-Tails
1959	"Dream Lover"	Bobby Darin
1959	"What'd I Say"	Ray Charles
1959	"Charlie Brown"	The Coasters
1959	"That Is Rock and Roll"	The Coasters
1960	"Devil or Angel"	Bobby Vee
1960	"True Love Ways"	Buddy Holly
1960	"Stuck on You"	Elvis Presley

1960	"Handy Man"	Jimmy Jones
1960	"Shop Around"	The Miracles
1960	"Boys"	The Shirelles
1960	"Will You Love Me Tomorrow"	The Shirelles
1961	"Stand by Me"	Ben E. King
1961	"Tossin' and Turnin'"	Bobby Lewis
1961	"Crazy"	Patsy Cline
1961	"Blue Moon"	The Marcells
1961	"Mama Said"	The Shirelles
1963	"Dead Presidents"	Little Walter
1963	"Little Deuce Coupe"	The Beach Boys
1963	"Surfer Girl"	The Beach Boys
1963	"Surfin' USA"	The Beach Boys
1963	"From Me to You"	The Beatles
1963	"I Want to Hold Your Hand"	The Beatles
1963	"She Loves You"	The Beatles
1963	"Chains"	The Beatles
1963	"I Saw Her Standing There"	The Beatles
1963	"Love Me Do"	The Beatles
1963	"P. S. I Love You"	The Beatles
1963	"Please Please Me"	The Beatles
1964	"A Change is Gonna Come"	Sam Cooke
1964	"I Feel Fine"	The Beatles
1964	"A Hard Day's Night"	The Beatles
1964	"And I Love Her"	The Beatles
1964	"Can't Buy Me Love"	The Beatles
1964	"I'll Cry Instead"	The Beatles
1964	"You Can't Do That"	The Beatles
1964	"Eight Days a Week"	The Beatles
1964	"Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby"	The Beatles
1964	"I'll Follow the Sun"	The Beatles
1964	"You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'"	The Righteous Brothers
1964	"(The Best Part of) Breakin' Up"	The Ronettes
1964	"Walking in the Rain"	The Ronettes
1964	"Where Did Our Love Go"	The Supremes
1965	"I've Got a Tiger by the Tail"	Buck Owens
1965	"California Girls"	The Beach Boys
1965	"Help!"	The Beatles
1965	"Ticket to Ride"	The Beatles
1965	"Yesterday"	The Beatles
1965	"Drive My Car"	The Beatles
1965	"As Tears Go By"	The Rolling Stones
1965	"(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"	The Rolling Stones
1966	"Jimmy Mack"	Martha Reeves and the Vandellas
1966	"When a Man Loves a Woman"	Percy Sledge
1966	"Good Vibrations"	The Beach Boys
1966	"Taxman"	The Beatles
1966	"I'm a Believer"	The Monkees
1967	"Strange Brew"	Cream
1967	"Sunshine of Your Love"	Cream
1967	"Penny Lane"	The Beatles
1967	"A Day in the Life"	The Beatles
1967	"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"	The Beatles

1967	"So You Want to Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star"	The Byrds
1967	"Light My Fire"	The Doors
1967	"I Can See for Miles"	The Who
1968	"Crossroads"	Cream
1968	"I Heard It Through the Grapevine"	Marvin Gaye
1968	"At the Zoo"	Simon and Garfunkel
1968	"Hey Jude"	The Beatles
1968	"La-La (Means I Love You)"	The Delfonics
1968	"Jumpin' Jack Flash"	The Rolling Stones
1968	"Sympathy for the Devil"	The Rolling Stones
1969	"Suspicious Minds"	Elvis Presley
1969	"Communication Breakdown"	Led Zeppelin
1969	"Whole Lotta Love"	Led Zeppelin
1969	"Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)"	Sly and The Family Stone
1969	"Sin City"	The Flying Burrito Brothers
1969	"Honky Tonk Women"	The Rolling Stones
1970	"You've Got a Friend"	Carole King
1970	"Travelin' Band"	Creedence Clearwater Revival
1970	"Layla"	Derek and the Dominos
1970	"Get Up (I Feel Like Being a) Sex Machine"	James Brown
1970	"Tangerine"	Led Zeppelin
1971	"I Feel the Earth Move"	Carole King
1971	"Stairway to Heaven"	Led Zeppelin
1971	"What's Going On"	Marvin Gaye
1971	"Won't Get Fooled Again"	The Who
1972	"Smoke on the Water"	Deep Purple
1972	"Take It Easy"	Eagles
1973	"Bad, Bad Leroy Brown"	Jim Croce
1974	"Take Me to the River"	Al Green
1974	"September Gurls"	Big Star
1974	"Haven't Got Time for the Pain"	Carly Simon
1974	"Let It Grow"	Eric Clapton
1975	"Walk This Way"	Aerosmith
1975	"Born to Run"	Bruce Springsteen
1976	"More Than a Feeling"	Boston
1976	"Hotel California"	Eagles
1976	"Blitzkrieg Bop"	Ramones
1977	"Feels Like the First Time"	Foreigner
1977	"Handy Man"	James Taylor
1977	"We Will Rock You"	Queen
1977	"God Save the Queen"	The Sex Pistols
1978	"Old Time Rock and Roll"	Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band
1978	"I Wanna Be Sedated"	Ramones
1978	"Just What I Needed"	The Cars
1979	"Highway to Hell"	AC/DC
1979	"Gotta Serve Somebody"	Bob Dylan
1979	"Hot Stuff"	Donna Summer
1979	"Train in Vain"	The Clash
1980	"Him"	Rupert Holmes
1980	"Don't Stand So Close to Me"	The Police
1981	"Hard to Say"	Dan Fogelberg
1981	"Don't Stop Believin'"	Journey
1982	"Hungry Like the Wolf"	Duran Duran

1982	"Rio"	Duran Duran
1982	"1999"	Prince
1982	"Little Red Corvette"	Prince
1982	"Should I Stay or Should I Go?"	The Clash
1983	"Pink Houses"	John Cougar Mellencamp
1983	"Billie Jean"	Michael Jackson
1983	"Every Breath You Take"	The Police
1983	"Wrapped Around Your Finger"	The Police
1984	"Cover Me"	Bruce Springsteen
1984	"Run to You"	Bryan Adams
1984	"Summer of '69"	Bryan Adams
1984	"Material Girl"	Madonna
1984	"Cool It Now"	New Edition
1984	"Magic"	The Cars
1984	"You Might Think"	The Cars
1984	"Jump"	Van Halen
1985	"Sara"	Starship
1986	"Livin' on a Prayer"	Bon Jovi
1986	"You Give Love a Bad Name"	Bon Jovi
1986	"Papa Don't Preach"	Madonna
1987	"Angel"	Aerosmith
1987	"Faith"	George Michael
1987	"Sweet Child o' Mine"	Guns N' Roses
1987	"Smooth Criminal"	Michael Jackson
1987	"I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For"	U2
1988	"One"	Metallica
1988	"Nothin' But a Good Time"	Poison
1989	"Rockin' in the Free World"	Neil Young
1990	"Screen Door"	Uncle Tupelo
1991	"In Bloom"	Nirvana
1991	"Smells Like Teen Spirit"	Nirvana
1991	"The Walk"	Sawyer Brown
1991	"Who's Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses"	U2
1992	"End of the Road"	Boyz II Men
1992	"Nuthin' But a 'G' Thang"	Dr. Dre
1992	"Tears in Heaven"	Eric Clapton
1992	"I Don't Wanna Grow Up"	Tom Waits
1992	"That Feel"	Tom Waits
1992	"Crucify"	Tori Amos
1993	"Mystery Dance"	Elvis Costello
1993	"All Apologies"	Nirvana
1993	"Today"	The Smashing Pumpkins
1994	"She"	Green Day
1994	"When I Come Around"	Green Day
1994	"Elsewhere"	Sarah McLachlan
1994	"All I Wanna Do"	Sheryl Crow
1994	"Don't Take the Girl"	Tim McGraw
1994	"Buddy Holly"	Weezer
1995	"1979"	The Smashing Pumpkins
1996	"You're One"	Imperial Teen
1997	"Horses"	Palace Music
1997	"Building a Mystery"	Sarah McLachlan
1997	"Black Eyes, Blue Tears"	Shania Twain

1997	"Honey, I'm Home"	Shania Twain
2000	"Beautiful Day"	U2
2000	"Elevation"	U2
2002	"In My Car (I'll Be the Driver)"	Shania Twain
2002	"Waiter! Bring Me Water!"	Shania Twain
2003	"Why Can't I"	Liz Phair
2004	"Don't Tell Me"	Avril Lavigne
2004	"My Happy Ending"	Avril Lavigne
2004	"Horses"	Bonnie "Prince" Billy
2004	"Behind These Hazel Eyes"	Kelly Clarkson
2004	"City of Blinding Lights"	U2
2004	"Original of the Species"	U2
2005	"Who We Are"	Hope Partlow
2006	"Hero/Heroine"	Boys Like Girls
2006	"The Great Escape"	Boys Like Girls
2006	"Thunder"	Boys Like Girls
2007	"Rehab"	Amy Winehouse
2008	"Hot n Cold"	Katy Perry
2008	"Love Story"	Taylor Swift
2008	"You're Not Sorry"	Taylor Swift
2009	"Bad Romance"	Lady Gaga
2009	"Where the Lines Overlap"	Paramore
2009	"Naturally"	Selena Gomez & the Scene
2009	"You Belong with Me"	Taylor Swift
2010	"Just the Way You Are"	Bruno Mars