

THE MUSICAL FRAMEWORKS OF FIVE BLUES SCHEMES

by

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Volume I

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Abstract

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Many American blues schemes have been identified and classified, usually on the basis of either their text, rhythm, harmony, or melody, but little has been written about how all of these elements interact. A major goal of this project is to illustrate the ways in which all of these components interact in five blues schemes that were once very popular and widespread in American folk and popular music: the “John Henry,” “Alabama Bound,” “How Long,” “Trouble In Mind,” and “Sitting On Top Of The World” schemes. They are united as a group by being eight to ten bars long. The primary sources for this study are recordings made between the early 1920s and the early 1940s.

Performers view schemes as a public resource for making music. When realizing a scheme, they take on certain constraints and make choices within those constraints. An analytical study can help bring us closer to understanding the musical framework of a blues scheme and the choices made by performers within that framework. The reductions and comparisons of different realizations of a scheme reveal its most consistent characteristics—the components most fixed upon by performers. These components vary from scheme to scheme, and so this project may be viewed as five case studies of different types of musical framework.

The rhythmic structure tends to be among the most consistent elements, after which either the harmonic or melodic structure may be more consistent, and thus the five frameworks divide into two broad categories. Those in which the rhythmic and harmonic structures are more consistent and the discant displays more variance and substitution are further differentiated by how many discants they support: “Trouble In Mind” supports one, “Alabama Bound” two, and “How Long” several. Schemes in which the rhythmic and melodic structures are more consistent and the harmony displays more variance and substitution differ in the degree to which performers fix upon certain general requirements for the harmonic progression: “Sitting On Top Of The World” has more requirements and “John Henry” fewer. The more consistent component generally informs the choices for substitution in the less consistent component.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS**COPYRIGHT PAGE****APPROVAL PAGE****TABLE OF CONTENTS****LIST OF TABLES****LIST OF MUSIC EXAMPLES****Volume I****Introduction**

<u>History and Literature Review</u>	1
<u>Analytical Issues</u>	11
Text	12
Rhythmic and Melodic Hierarchy	18
Two Techniques of Reduction	24
First and Second Tune Types and Modal Frame	32
Mode, Harmony, and Dissonance Treatment	34
Inconclusive/Conclusive Structures	40
Bass and Inner Parts	41
1. The “John Henry” Blues Scheme	43
Ten-Bar Structure	44
Melodic Structure	47
Harmonic Scheme	49
“K.C. Blues” by Frank Hutchison	51
“John Henry” by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee	53
“Spike Driver Blues” by John Hurt	55
2. The “Alabama Bound” Blues Scheme	59
Eight-Bar Structure	62
Melodic Structure	67
Harmonic Scheme	75
3. The “How Long” Blues Scheme	81

Eight-Bar Structure	88
Melodic Structure	95
Harmonic Scheme	111
“Worried Life Blues”	121
4. The “Trouble In Mind” Blues Scheme	128
Eight-Bar Structure	134
Melodic Structure	140
Harmonic Scheme	149
5. The “Sitting On Top Of The World” Blues Scheme	155
Nine-Bar Structure	158
Melodic Structure	162
Harmonic Scheme	167
An Offshoot of the Scheme	173
Introductions, Instrumental Interludes, and Codas	176
Conclusion	181

Volume II

Tables	191
Examples	203
Bibliography	303
Discography	314

LIST OF TABLES

I.1	List of Twelve-Bar Schemes Cited	191
I.2	Cut-time Passamezzo Moderno	191
1.1	“John Henry,” List Of Songs Cited	192
2.1	“Alabama Bound,” List Of Songs Cited	194
3.1	“How Long,” List Of Songs Cited	196
4.1	“Trouble In Mind,” List Of Songs Cited	198
5.1	“Sitting On Top Of The World,” List Of Songs Cited	200
C.1	Degrees of Variance in the Five Schemes	202

LIST OF EXAMPLES

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| I.1 | “Sitting On Top Of The World.” Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. | 203 |
| I.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Bertha “Chippie Hill’s first strophe in “Trouble In My Mind Blues” (1928); (b) the accents of the first strophe normalized; (c) the second strophe; (d) the accents of the second strophe normalized; (e) the third strophe; (f) the accents of the third strophe normalized; (g) the fourth strophe; (h) the accents of the fourth strophe normalized. | 204 |
| I.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Edwards’s melody in “Worried Life Blues” (1942); (b) the accents of the melody normalized; (c) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads. | 205 |
| I.4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Brownie McGhee’s melody in “How Long?” (1942); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line. | 206 |
| I.5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Big Bill Broonzy’s first strophe in “Mississippi River Blues” (1934). In the motion from scale degree 3 to scale degree 2 at the end of bar one, which coincides with the word “River,” scale degree 2 seems to be anticipating the next downbeat; (b) a normalization of scale degree 2, at the level of the eighth note, contradicts the rhythm of the word “River,” placing the second syllable on the stronger beat; (c) if only the first strophe is considered, then a normalization at the level of the dotted quarter-note shifts the accented first syllable of “River” to the downbeat of bar two and interprets the entire fourth beat of bar one as the displacement of an event that belongs on the first beat of bar two; (d) Broonzy’s second strophe, which has the words “I called” in the analogous place. Here, the normalization in (b) does not contradict the rhythm of the text; (e) this reduction, based on the second strophe, is preferred over the one in (c), which is based on the first strophe, because it is based on a simpler and more common type of displacement. | 207 |
| I.6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Davenport’s first strophe in “How Long, How Long Blues” (1929); (b) fourth strophe; | |

- (c) fifth strophe;
 (d) eighth strophe;
 (e) the accents, which remain constant through the strophes transcribed in (a-d). 208
- I.7 (a) the “Trouble In Mind” discant realized as a first tune type, after Bertha “Chippie” Hill (1926);
 (b) Hill’s modal frame;
 (c) the “Trouble In Mind” discant realized as a second tune type, after Rosetta Tharpe (1941);
 (d) Tharpe’s modal frame. 209
- I.8 (a) the “John Henry” discant realized as a first tune type, after Woody Guthrie (1944);
 (b) Guthrie’s modal frame;
 (c) the “John Henry” discant realized as a second tune type, after Leadbelly (1948);
 (d) Leadbelly’s modal frame. 210
- I.9 Tonic triad with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors. 211
- I.10 Subdominant triad with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors. 211
- I.11 Dominant triad with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors. 211
- I.12 Interaction between tonic mode and subdominant harmony. 212
- I.13 Interaction between tonic mode and dominant harmony. 212
- 1.1 Simple “John Henry” ground. 213
- 1.2 The ten-bar structure is created by the repetition of line four. The repetition of the four-bar refrain can make a fourteen-bar structure. Text after Guthrie and Houston. 214
- 1.3 The “John Henry” text. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. The division between the verse and refrain suggests a grouping of the ten-bar structure into 6 + 4, but bars five through eight constitute the greatest area of rhythmic activity, suggesting a grouping of the ten-bar structure into 4 + 4 + 2. Text after Guthrie and Houston. 215
- 1.4 (a) Basic melody;

- (b) further reduction. The melodic progression in the first four bars is balanced by that in the last four bars, suggesting a grouping of the ten bars into 4 + 2 + 4. 216
- 1.5 The structure of the refrain. Line four, bars seven and eight, contains a weaker cadence: (a) the vocal rhythm continues beyond the downbeat of bar eight; (b) scale degree 3 is on the downbeat of bar eight; (c) the harmony is static. Line five, bars nine and ten, contains a stronger cadence: (a) the vocal rhythm stops on the downbeat of bar ten; (b) scale degree 1 is on the downbeat of bar ten; (c) the change of harmony emphasizes the cadence. 217
- 1.6 Melodic shapes:
 (a) basic melody;
 (b-e) different interpretations of the basic melody;
 (f) shared conception of the basic melody. 218
- 1.7 (a) Modal frame used by Guthrie and Houston, Williamson Brothers and Curry, Evans and McClain;
 (b) modal frame used by Leadbelly, 1948. 219
- 1.8 Harmonic schemes. 220
- 1.9 (a) Basic melody; (b) Hutchison's melody. The lack of a strong question-answer relationship in the refrain allows him to repeat bars seven through eight. 221
- 1.10 (a) Hutchison's bridge resembles the typical "John Henry" refrain;
 (b) Hutchison's improvisatory material resembles the typical "John Henry" refrain. 222
- 1.11 Terry and McGhee, "John Henry." First verse and first three refrains for voice and harmonica. 223
- 1.12 The first verse and refrain of John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues." 224
- 1.13 John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues." There is one relatively long line of verse followed by three lines of refrain. The weak (even-numbered) bars are pickups to the strong (odd-numbered) bars. Each line begins on a weak bar and ends on a strong bar. 225
- 1.14 (a) Basic melody;
 (b) the melody in John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues." 226
- 2.1 Robert Hoffman, "I'm Alabama Bound" (1909), opening strain.

	This strain is isolated from the four-bar introduction.	227
2.2	Scarborough's transcription of "Shine Reel."	228
2.3	Scarborough's transcription of "I Went To The Hop Joint."	228
2.4	Scarborough's transcription of "Tom Cat."	228
2.5	Simple "Alabama Bound" ground.	229
2.6	The "Alabama Bound" text. Bars, vocal structure, and poetic structure. Text after Leadbelly.	230
2.7	The "Alabama Bound" text. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. Text after Leadbelly.	231
2.8	The "Cocaine" text. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. Text after the Memphis Jug Band.	232
2.9	"Goin' To Germany." Rhythmic activity of the vocal line.	233
2.10	(a) Leadbelly's melody in "Alabama Bound" (1946); (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) Leadbelly's melody in "Take A Whiff On Me (1935); (d) Leadbelly's alternate tune for line one; (e) the melody reduced by line; (f) the harmonic scheme.	234
2.11	Rich Brown's "Alabama Bound" (1937). (a) Brown's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line.	235
2.12	Jelly Roll Morton, "Don't You Leave Me Here" (1939), second strophe. (a) Morton's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme.	236
2.13	Cannon's Jug Stompers' "Goin' To Germany" (1929). (a) Noah Lewis's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme.	237
2.14	Charley Patton's "Elder Greene Blues" (1929). (a) Patton's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line;	

- (c) the harmonic scheme. 238
- 2.15 Henry Thomas's melodies in "Don't Ease Me In" (1928) and "Don't Leave Me Here" (1929).
 (a) Thomas's melody for the refrain stanzas;
 (b) the opening of Thomas's melody in the verse stanzas;
 (c) Thomas's tenth strophe (1929);
 (d) alternate tune for line three;
 (e) first alternate ending for line four;
 (f) second alternate ending for line four;
 (g) the harmonic scheme. 239
- 2.16 Jelly Roll Morton's "Alabama Bound" (1938), first strophe. 240
- 2.17 Woody Guthrie's "Take A Whiff On Me" (1944).
 (a) Guthrie's melody;
 (b) The melody reduced by line;
 (c) The harmonic scheme;
 (d) Guthrie's alternate tune in line three. 241
- 2.18 Frenzy's Barn Dance Band's "Croquet Habits" (1930).
 (a) Fronzo Cannon's melody;
 (b) the melody reduced by line;
 (c) the harmonic scheme. The scheme is consistently abbreviated to seven bars. 242
- 2.19 The Memphis Jug Band's "Cocaine Habit Blues" (1930).
 (a) Hattie Hart's melody;
 (b) The harmonica solo in line two;
 (c) The melody reduced by line;
 (d) The harmonic scheme;
 (e) Hart's alternate tune in line three. 243
- 2.20 Jesse Harris's "Take A Whiff On Me" (1937).
 (a) Harris's melody;
 (b) the melody reduced by line. The scheme is consistently abbreviated to seven bars. 244
- 2.21 The Three Stripped Gears' "Alabama Blues" (1931).
 (a) Durden's melody;
 (b) the melody reduced by line;
 (c) the harmonic scheme. 245
- 3.1 W.C. Handy's "East St. Louis" (1926), from "Blues: An Anthology." 246
- 3.2 (a) Bowers and Westcott's "'How Long Blues' ground," originally in F;

- (b) simple “How Long” ground. 247
- 3.3 “How Long,” bars and Vocal structure. Text after Leroy Carr,
“How Long, How Long Blues” (1928). 248
- 3.4 (a) Leroy Carr’s modal frame;
(b) Ida Cox’s modal frame;
(c) Carr’s segmentation of the modal frame by verse and refrain;
(d) Cox’s segmentation of the modal frame by verse and refrain. 249
- 3.5 Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Leroy Carr’s “How Long,
How Long Blues” (1928). 250
- 3.6 Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Thomas “Jaybird” Jones’s
“How Long?” (1941). With the additional accent in bar six
there is an area of heightened rhythmic activity at the end
of the refrain. 251
- 3.7 Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Ida Cox’s “How Long, Daddy,
How Long” (1925). With the additional accents in bars three
and six there are areas of heightened rhythmic activity at the
end of both the verse and refrain. 252
- 3.8 Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Lottie Kimbrough’s “Wayward
Girl Blues” (1926), second stanza. The central area of rhythmic
activity lasts from bar five to the downbeat of bar seven. 253
- 3.9 Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Leadbelly’s “How Long?”
(1943). Leadbelly places additional accents on the third
beats of bars three, four, and six. 254
- 3.10 (a) Leroy Carr’s melody in “How Long, How Long Blues” (1928);
(b) the accents in the melody;
(c) the melody reduced by line;
(d) the harmonic scheme.
(Carr’s melodic structure is followed very closely by
Blind Lemon Jefferson.) 255
- 3.11 (a) Thomas “Jaybird” Jones’s melody in “How Long” (1941);
(b) the accents in the melody;
(c) the melody reduced by line;
(d) the harmonic scheme, with a descending contrapuntal thread
in bars one through five. 256
- 3.12 (a) Brownie McGhee’s melody in “How Long?” (1942);
(b) the accents in the melody;

- (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme. 257
- 3.13 (a) Leadbelly's melody in "How Long?" (1943);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme. 258
- 3.14 (a) Jed Davenport's first strophe in "How Long,
 How Long Blues" (1929);
 (b) the first strophe reduced by line, with accented notes as
 open noteheads;
 (c) accents in the verse of strophes one, two, three, four, five,
 eight, and ten;
 (d) accents in the verse of strophes six and eleven;
 (e) accents in the verse of the seventh strophe;
 (f) accents in the verse of the ninth strophe;
 (g) accents in the refrain of strophes one, four, five, and eight,
 and the coda in strophes two, three, four, seven, eight,
 nine, and ten;
 (h) accents in the refrain of strophes two, three, six, nine, and eleven,
 and the coda in the eleventh strophe;
 (i) accents in the refrain of the tenth strophe;
 (j) accents in the refrain of the seventh strophe;
 (k) harmonic scheme. 259
- 3.15 (a) Skip James's melody in "How Long 'Buck'" (1931);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme (in bar three the melody anticipates the
 entrance of the lowered scale degree 3 in the accompaniment
 in bar four). 260
- 3.16 (a) Ida Cox's melody in "How Long, Daddy, How Long" (1925);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme. 261
- 3.17 (a) Blind Willie McTell's melody in "East St. Louis Blues
 (Fare You Well)" (1933);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme, with a descending contrapuntal thread
 in bars one through seven. 262
- 3.18 (a) Lottie Kimbrough's first discant in "Wayward Girl Blues" (1926),

- used in the first (transcribed here), third, fifth, and seventh strophes;
- (b) the first discant reduced by line. The accented notes in bars two and four are delayed well beyond the downbeat and might be thought of as more extreme displacements of the less displaced accents in the analogous places in Examples (d) and (f);
- (c) Kimbrough's second discant, used in the second (transcribed here) and eighth strophes;
- (d) the second discant reduced by line;
- (e) Kimbrough's third discant, used in the fourth (transcribed here) and sixth strophes;
- (f) the third discant reduced by line;
- (g) the harmonic scheme. 263
- 3.19 (a) William Brown's first strophe in "East St. Louis Blues" (1942);
 (b) the first strophe reduced by line;
 (c) Brown's second (and last) strophe;
 (d) Brown's harmonic scheme. 264
- 3.20 (a) Big Maceo's melody in "Worried Life Blues" (1941);
 (b) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads;
 (c) the harmonic scheme; 265
- 3.21 (a) David Edwards's melody in "Worried Life Blues" (1942);
 (b) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads;
 (c) the harmonic scheme. 266
- 3.22 (a) Minnie Lee Whitehead's first strophe in "Worried Life Blues" (1942);
 (b) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads;
 (c) the harmonic scheme. 267
- 3.23 (a) Whitehead's second strophe;
 (b) the second strophe reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads;
 (c) the harmonic scheme. 268
- 4.1 Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in "Trouble In Mind."
 Text after Georgia White. 269
- 4.2 A comparison of the "Trouble In Mind" and "How Long" schemes.
 (a) typical accents in the "Trouble In Mind" scheme (first tune type) with slurs indicating the three lines of text;

- (b) the harmonic progression for the “Trouble In Mind” scheme;
 (c) typical accents in the “How Long” scheme (first tune type)
 with slurs indicating the four lines of text;
 (d) harmonic progression for the “How Long” scheme. 270
- 4.3 (a) Big Bill Broonzy’s first strophe in “Mississippi River Blues”
 (1934);
 (b) the accents in the first strophe;
 (c) the first strophe reduced by line;
 (d) the second strophe;
 (e) the accents in the second strophe;
 (f) the second strophe reduced by line;
 (g) the harmonic scheme. 271
- 4.4 Bertha “Chippie” Hill’s “Trouble In Mind” (1926).
 (a) first strophe;
 (b) the first strophe reduced by line, with the accents as open noteheads;
 (c) second strophe;
 (d) accents in the second strophe;
 (e) third strophe;
 (f) accents in the third strophe;
 (g) fourth strophe;
 (h) accents in the fourth strophe;
 (i) fifth strophe;
 (j) accents in the fifth strophe;
 (k) harmonic scheme. 272
- 4.5 (a) Richard M. Jones’s melody in “Trouble In Mind” (1936);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) Jones’s melody reduced by line;
 (d) The harmonic scheme. 273
- 4.6 (a) Bertha “Chippie” Hill’s first strophe in “Trouble In My Mind
 Blues” (1928);
 (b) the first strophe reduced by line with the accented notes
 as open noteheads;
 (c) the second strophe;
 (d) the accents in the second strophe;
 (e) the third strophe;
 (f) the accents in the third strophe;
 (g) the fourth strophe;
 (h) the accents in the fourth strophe;
 (i) the harmonic scheme. 274
- 4.7 (a) tonic arpeggiations in the first tune type;
 (b) tonic arpeggiations in the second tune type;

- (c) descending-fifth progressions coincide with tonic arpeggiations;
 (d) stepwise descents in Carlisle’s melodic structure;
 (e) stepwise descents in Hackberry Ramblers’ melodic structure;
 (f) shifts between tonic and dominant coincide with stepwise descents;
 (g) stepwise descents and tonic arpeggiations in Broonzy’s
 melodic structure. 275
- 4.8 (a) Georgia White’s melody in “Trouble In Mind” (1936);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme. 276
- 4.9 (a) Rosetta Tharpe’s melody in “Trouble In Mind” (1941);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme. 277
- 4.10 (a) Cliff Carlisle’s melody in “Trouble Minded Blues” (1937);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme. 278
- 4.11 (a) The Hackberry Ramblers’ melody in “Fais Pas Ça” (1938);
 (b) the accents in the melody;
 (c) the melody reduced by line;
 (d) the harmonic scheme. 279
- 4.12 Modal Frames. The upper slur shows the range of the verse and
 the lower the range of the response.
 (a) Hill 1926 and 1928;
 (b) White;
 (c) Broonzy;
 (d) Jones;
 (e) Carlisle;
 (f) Hackberry Ramblers;
 (g) Tharpe.
 Examples (a-b) use the first tune type, (c-g) the
 second tune type. 280
- 5.1 Simple “Sitting On Top Of The World” ground. 281
- 5.2 “Sitting On Top Of The World,” bars and vocal structure.
 Text after The Carter Family. 282
- 5.3 (a) Modal frame with segmentation by verse and refrain;
 (b) the verse makes a large-scale descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$; the refrain

- makes a large-scale descent from $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$. 283
- 5.4 “Sitting On Top Of The World.” Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. 284
- 5.5 (a) The melody in 4/4, as in “Some Summer Day”
by Charley Patton (1930);
(b) the melody in 12/8, as in “Sitting On Top Of The World”
by The Mississippi Sheiks (1930). 285
- 5.6 Bob Wills, in his “Sitting On Top Of The World” (1935),
plays the verse in compound triple meter and
the refrain in compound duple meter. 285
- 5.7 (a) typical melody, after The Carter Family (ca. 1938-1942);
(b) the nine accented notes in the melodic framework;
(c) large-scale descents in the verse and refrain;
(d) reduction of the melodic framework by line;
(e) line one (bars one and two) contains an incomplete motion that
line two (bars three and four) repeats and then completes by
bringing it to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$; analogously, line three (bars five and six)
contains an incomplete motion that line four (bars seven
and eight) repeats and then finishes. 286
- 5.8 (a) the third in bar two is a temporary goal of motion and is
often higher;
(b) the thirds in bar three resolve directly onto the tonic and are
often lower;
(c) the third in bar five is the starting point for a line and is
often higher;
(d) the third in bar seven resolves onto the tonic and is
often lower. 287
- 5.9 Extensions of the melody beyond the modal frame.
(a) The Mississippi Sheiks (“I’ll Be Gone Long Gone,” 1932)
use scale degree 6 as an upper neighbor to scale degree 5
in bars two and three;
(b) The Carter Family uses scale degree 6 as an upper neighbor to
scale degree 5 in bar two;
(c) Tampa Red (“Things ‘Bout Coming My Way No. 2,” 1932)
uses the high scale degree 1 as part of an arpeggiation
in bar one;
(d) George Noble (“On My Death-Bed,” 1935), in his fourth strophe,
uses lowered scale degree 7, which resolves onto scale
degree 5, in bar one. 288

- 5.10 (a) The nine accents of the typical melodic framework;
 (b) the typical melodic framework reduced by line;
 (c) the nine accents in Bill Broonzy's melodic framework,
 "Worrying You Off My Mind," 1932. In bar six,
 scale degree 3 is accented instead of scale degree 1;
 (d) Broonzy's melodic framework reduced by line;
 (e) Broonzy's melody. 289
- 5.11 (a) The nine accents in the typical melodic framework;
 (b) the typical melodic framework reduced by line;
 (c) the nine accents in Robert Johnson's melodic framework;
 (d) Johnson's melodic framework reduced by line;
 (e) The nine accents in Johnson's alternate melodic framework;
 in bars two, three, and seven, scale degree 5
 is accented instead of scale degree 3;
 (f) Johnson's alternate melodic framework reduced by line. 290
- 5.12 (a) melodic structure, accented notes as open noteheads;
 (b-i) harmonic schemes. 291
- 5.13 The fifth and third are given tonic support in bars one and two.
 The thirds in bar three, which are often noticeably lower,
 become the sevenths of the subdominant, and resolve down
 to scale degree 1, first over the subdominant in bar three,
 and then over the tonic in bar four. 292
- 5.14 Harmonic support for the blue third in bar seven.
 (a) the lowered third becomes the seventh of the subdominant;
 (b) the lowered third becomes the seventh of a diminished seventh
 chord applied to the dominant;
 (c) the lowered third becomes the fifth of bVI . 293
- 5.15 Georgia Cotton Pickers, "She's Coming Back Some Old Cold
 Rainy Day" (1930). Bars and vocal structure. 294
- 5.16 (a) Georgia Cotton Pickers, "She's Coming Back Some Old Cold
 Rainy Day" (first strophe). Rhythmic activity of the
 vocal line. 295
 (b) Tampa Red, "It Hurts Me Too" (1940) (first strophe).
 Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. 296
- 5.17 Georgia Cotton Pickers, "She's Coming Back Some Old Cold
 Rainy Day."
 (a) melody;
 (b) the seven accented notes of the melodic framework;
 (c) harmonic scheme. 297

5.18	Tampa Red, “It Hurts Me Too.” (a) melody; (b) the seven accents of the melodic framework; (c) harmonic scheme.	298
C.1	“Trouble In Mind” ground. (a) the discant as first tune type; (b) the discant as second tune type; (c) the harmonic ground.	299
C.2	“Alabama Bound” ground. (a-b) “Alabama Bound” discant; (c) “Cocaine” discant; (d) melodic substitutions in “Cocaine” discant; (e) harmonic ground.	300
C.3	“How Long” ground. (a) the $\overset{\wedge}{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant (as first tune type); (b) the $\overset{\wedge}{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant (as second tune type); (c) the $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ -up discant; (d) the “Worried Life” discant; (e) the harmonic ground; (f) substitutions in the harmonic ground.	301
C.4	“Sitting On Top Of The World” discant. (a) the discant; (b) harmonic scheme; (c-d) substitutions in the harmonic scheme.	302
C.5	“John Henry” discant. (a) the discant as the first tune type; (b) the discant as the second tune type; (c) harmonic scheme with only the tonic; (d) subdominant substitutions; (e) dominant substitutions.	303

Introduction

History and Literature Review

Many American blues schemes have been identified and classified, usually on the basis of either their text, rhythm, harmony, or melody.¹ Very little, however, has been written about how all of these elements interact. One goal of this project is to illustrate the ways in which all of these components—the rhythmic structure (which is closely related to the text), harmonic scheme, and melodic structure—interact in several blues schemes that were once very popular and widespread in American folk and popular music. These schemes (which are identified by the song titles with which they are most often associated) are the “John Henry” (ten bars), “Alabama Bound” (eight bars), “How Long” (eight bars), “Trouble In Mind” (eight bars), and “Sitting On Top Of The World” (nine bars) blues schemes. They are united as a group by being longer than four bars but shorter than twelve.

The terms “scheme” and “musical framework” are related but not interchangeable. Many songs that display variation and substitution from strophe to strophe have a consistent musical framework—a consistency in the interaction of their rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic structures—that underlies the variation and remains

¹ Barnie, “Formulaic Lines and Stanzas in the Country Blues”; Collier, *The Making of Jazz*, 35-42; Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.*, 123-145; Dauer, “Towards a Typology of the Vocal Blues Idiom”; Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 16-105; Keil, *Urban Blues*, 51-53; Koch, “Structural Aspects of King Oliver’s 1923 Okeh Recordings,” 40-42; Komara, “Blues,” in *Encyclopedia of the Blues*; Kubik, *Africa and the Blues*, 41-43; Muir, “Before ‘Crazy Blues’”; Newberger, “Archetypes and Antecedents of Piano Blues and Boogie Woogie Style,” 89; Smallwood, “Gospel and Blues Improvisation”; Taft, *The Blues Lyric Formula*; Tilton, *Early Downhome Blues*; van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*; Ward, “The Buffons Family of Tune Families”; Bowers and Westcott, “Mama Yancey and the Revival Blues Tradition”; Work, *American Negro Songs*, 27-35.

constant from one strophe to another. But not every song or piece is the realization of a scheme, which is a musical framework that performers and composers view as a public resource for making songs and pieces, and which carries certain predetermined constraints with respect to the interaction of its rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic structures.

When realizing a scheme, performers and composers take on certain constraints and make choices within those constraints. An analytical study can help bring us closer to understanding the musical framework of a blues scheme, which is the interaction of its rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic structures, and the choices made by performers within that framework. The reductions and comparisons of different realizations of a scheme, made throughout this study, reveal its most consistent characteristics—the components most fixed upon by performers. These components vary from scheme to scheme, and so this project might be viewed as five case studies of different types of musical framework.

The primary sources for this study are recordings, and the time frame for the selection of recordings is, roughly, the span between the early 1920s, when these schemes began to be widely recorded, and the early 1940s, which coincides well with the dates at which the two most authoritative and exhaustive discographies on early blues and country music stop their listings; Dixon, Godrich, and Rye's *Blues and Gospel Records, 1890-1943* documents recordings by black musicians, and Tony Russell's *Country Music Records: A Discography, 1921-1942* documents recordings by white musicians.

In making the discography, I have been as exhaustive as feasible within the set time frame. However, my main concern has been to find as many recordings as I need to make a meaningful demonstration of the parameters for variation within the discant/bass-

like structure that is the result of the crucial links between the rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic structures. Many of the recordings are from the “race record” and “hillbilly record” series of the 20s, 30s, and early 40’s—others are non-commercial recordings from the Archive of American Folk Song of the Library of Congress. The earliest recordings, from the early and mid-1920s, are from the period of the so-called “classic blues,” during which most of the singers were women who were professionals used to performing on stage. When sales of these recordings began to slump in the late 1920s, record companies began making more field recordings, in which the singers were more often men, either accompanying themselves or singing with a small instrumental group.

Although a blues scheme results from the interaction of its rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic structures, the rhythmic structure, including the rhythm of the text, tends to be among the most consistent elements, after which either the harmonic or melodic structure may be more consistent. The standard twelve-bar blues scheme, for example, is characterized more by its rhythmic and harmonic structure than by melodic structure, of which one can find many different shapes and contours. Another purpose of this project is to see which, if either—the harmony or melody—is more consistent in the five schemes under discussion.

Schemes that are characterized more by their harmonic structure frequently support many discants (to use the terminology of Gombosi and Ward, discussed below), as does the standard twelve-bar blues scheme. Others characterized by their harmonic structure instead carry one or two distinctive discants. This is the case, for example, with the twelve-bar “Frankie and Johnny” scheme; the rhythmic and harmonic structures are

very consistent, but the scheme carries two distinct melodies.² Schemes characterized more by their melodic structure tend to be supported by a greater number of harmonic progressions. The more consistent component generally informs the choices for substitution in the less consistent component.

A scheme may also generate more than one song. The standard twelve-bar blues scheme is again a good example; it has generated legions of songs (Table I.1 lists the twelve-bar schemes cited, along with some of their salient characteristics). Another is the “Frankie and Johnny” scheme, which, in addition to embracing the songs about Frankie’s shooting of Johnny, also generated the “Boll Weevil Blues,” about the Boll Weevil epidemic of the South in the early twentieth century. Although these two songs are built on the same blues scheme, they are nonetheless two distinct songs, though musically they are obviously very closely related. These two songs illustrate well the consistent connection in the scheme between the rhythm of the text and the harmony; the Boll Weevil” refrain (“He has a home in the cotton field”) is quite similar in its rhythmic structure to the “Frankie” refrain (“He was her man and he done her wrong”), and in both the accented words coincide with the harmonic changes—“man” and “home” with V, and “wrong” and “field” with I. The potential of a blues scheme to generate multiple songs and carry more than one discant is not unlike the potential of many of the old European ground basses—for example the passamezzo moderno—to support different texts and melodies. In both cases, musicians saw them as a sort of public musical property—they took more harmonically based schemes and gave them new discants, took well-known melodic structures and gave them various supporting harmonic progressions, and

² Scarborough, *On The Trail of Negro Folk Songs*, 83-84; van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, 184-189.

introduced new texts to convey new ideas or record new events. Blues schemes, like the old ground basses, were resources that musicians used for making music.

These issues are also pertinent to the five shorter schemes under discussion here; their rhythmic structures tend to be the most stable component, those characterized more by the harmonic progression support many discants or carry one or two distinct melodies, and those characterized more by their melodic structure are supported by a greater number of harmonic progressions. Also, all five of these schemes have produced more than one song, though some have generated more than others; they all support different lyrics and have been recorded under more than one title.

Even where the harmony or melody is more consistent, this study attempts to discover the common characteristics of the less consistent component; where the harmony is more consistent, certain similarities can nevertheless be found among the various discants it supports, and where the melody is more consistent one finds consistencies in the supporting harmonic progressions. In addition, one finds similarities in the musical structures of all five schemes, and this helps to shed some light on the musical structure of American folk and popular music in general.

Another part of this study will be to explore the balance between variation and conformity across many musicians' versions of the songs generated by these five blues schemes. These schemes are flexible, often with wide parameters for variation; and yet most musicians seem to be working from a similar musical framework that maintains certain crucial links between the rhythm, harmony, and melody that allow their version to be recognized as a member of the scheme.

In some cases, one particular musician's recording of a song became very popular and widespread, and became something like the authoritative version of the song, from which other musicians would work. Leroy Carr's "How Long, How Long Blues," for example, took on something of that status, and many named him—and continue to name him—as the song's source, even though a version written by William Jackson and sung by Ida Cox predates it by several years. In such cases, one would of course expect to find a large degree of conformity among the versions that followed. But when such songs became the public property of American music, so to speak, the musicians who subsequently sang and played them took liberties with everything from the rhythmic structure to the harmonic scheme to the melodic structure. Part of this study will be to see which parts of a scheme's structure were open to variation and which parts were not.

Most of these five schemes, and the songs they have generated, form part of what Tony Russell calls the "common stock," that is, a repertoire shared by both black and white musicians. Russell is concerned with the common stock as a repertoire of songs, but I would propose that we redefine it to mean a repertoire of schemes as well as songs. Of the five schemes under discussion, Russell explicitly groups only "John Henry" in the common stock, but I would argue that three others—the "Alabama Bound," "Trouble In Mind," and "Sitting On Top Of The World" schemes—belong there as well, having been recorded widely by both black and white musicians. Even when a song within the black tradition was recorded by white musicians, Russell excludes it from the common stock when those recordings have "a perceptible quality of conscious adaptation," that is, when they sound like "covers." But, in the case of these schemes, examples of individual interpretation and expression are easy to find; white musicians, for example, are not

simply covering a popular song from the black tradition, but making it part of it their own as well. “The great quality of the common stock,” says Russell, “was adaptability; its great power, assimilation.” The same descriptions are certainly attributable to these four blues schemes. Given that a large part of Russell’s definition of the common stock is use by both black and white musicians and some indication of originality (that a version of a song not sound like a cover), it seems at least questionable that he does not include “run of the mill blues” as part of the common stock, given the legions of recordings by white musicians that both employ the twelve-bar blues scheme and display much originality in doing so.³ The “How Long” blues scheme was widely recorded only by black musicians, and hardly at all by white musicians, and thus does not seem to have become a member of the common stock.

As mentioned above, there are certain similarities between blues schemes and the old European ground basses, one of which is putting a melody and text over a preconceived rhythmic and harmonic ground. The tradition in Western music of singing and playing discants over ground basses is, of course, a very long one. Richard Hudson has written extensively about several grounds—such as the passacaglia and chaconne—that originated in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spain, coinciding with the advent of the five-course guitar, and he has traced their progress through Italy and into France throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century.⁴ Always at issue—and indeed very pertinent to the topic of this project—is how fixed the harmonic ground is, in terms of both chord pattern and length, and what are the parameters for substitution and

³ Russell, *Blacks, Whites and Blues*, 26-31.

⁴ Hudson, *Passacaglio and Ciaccona; The Folia, the Saraband, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne*.

alteration. Also at issue is whether the harmonic ground carries with it a specific discant (and, if so, is there only one or are there several), and whether it has certain built-in rhythmic characteristics.

John Ward has written about the long history of grounds and discants that were passed around England from as early as the sixteenth century to as recently as the nineteenth century (some of which were native to the country and some of which came from the Continent).⁵ Among these are ground basses that are closely connected to a specific discant, and others that support several discants (such as Farinel's Ground, or the Folia, the bergamesca, the passamezzo antico and romanesca, and the passamezzo moderno). Some harmonic grounds (such as the passacaglia—which is very similar to the bergamesca—and the chaconne) are not closely associated with any discant in particular. There are also lone melodies that are not associated with a ground bass.

Otto Gombosi has shown how at least one of these old European ground basses—the passamezzo moderno (though Gombosi calls it “Gregory Walker”)—made its way into American music, and figured prominently in the songs of Stephen Foster (Table I.2).⁶ Gombosi shows how Foster used the passamezzo moderno as a sort of preexisting ground that could support a wide range of different melodies. Foster is consistent in his ordering of the harmonies in the pattern, but displays some flexibility with the harmonic rhythm; Gombosi identifies six different ways in which Foster distributes the harmonies over the eight bars of the scheme. Foster maintains the periodic structure of the scheme (4 + 4) in both the melody and the vocal rhythm. Gombosi also notes the prevalence of

⁵ Ward, “The ‘Dolfull Dumps’”; “The Folia”; “Apropos ‘The British Broadside Ballad and Its Music’”; “The Buffons Family of Tune Families.”

⁶ Gombosi, “Stephen Foster and ‘Gregory Walker.’”

the pattern elsewhere in American music, including folk music, and identifies several of its antecedents in England. (The passamezzo moderno has been hugely productive in American music, especially country and gospel.) John Ward has also written about this harmonic scheme, which he calls the Buffons pattern, and how it can support a number of different discants. He categorizes the various tunes on the basis of their initial scale degree and subsequent upward or downward motion.⁷

The idea of a harmonic ground with a discant is also pertinent to the blues. Some authors, such as Ward and Peter van der Merwe, have described the twelve-bar blues as a late offshoot of the passamezzo moderno, with several of the bars omitted—a conclusion with which I disagree, given the seemingly irreconcilable difference of the two-part division of the passamezzo versus the three-part division of the twelve-bar blues.⁸

Even where the relationship of the blues to a discant-bass tradition is acknowledged (tacitly, at least, by relating it to the passamezzo moderno), blues schemes are usually described with reference to only one or two of these elements—such as harmony or melody—to the exclusion of others, and little is said about the interaction of the various components. For example, Peter van der Merwe identifies several blues schemes. He categorizes them either by the number of bars and the harmonic scheme, or by the number of bars and the melody; he does not, however, talk about how all three factors interact, and he says very little about the rhythmic structure of the text. Van der Merwe identifies six types of twelve-bar blues schemes, which are distinguished by their harmonic patterns: the standard blues pattern; a common variant; the one-chord type;

⁷ Ward, “The Buffons Family of Tune Families.”

⁸ Ward, “The Buffons Family of Tune Families,” 322; van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, 203.

the one-chord type except for the cadence; the ‘Frankie’ pattern; and the ‘Railroad Bill’ pattern. In addition to the twelve-bar blues, he identifies several shorter schemes: the “John Henry Blues” (by its ten-bar structure and melodic framework), the “How Long Blues,” and “Trouble in Mind” (both by their eight-bar structure and harmonic scheme).⁹

Alfons M. Dauer has been interested primarily in the eight-bar and twelve-bar blues schemes, and he categorizes them on the basis of their vocal rhythm, harmony, and especially their poetic structure.¹⁰ His chief criteria for classification are the number of lines and bars in each stanza and how the statements relate to the refrains. Although Dauer is concerned with rhythm insofar as how long or short the lines of a song are, he says very little about the specific rhythms of the songs and where the words fall within the bars. Dauer talks about various harmonic progressions that fit with eight-bar and twelve-bar blues, but he does not say much about the use of different harmonic progressions for the same scheme. The only categorization of melody that Dauer gives relates to the melody’s formal structure (for example a a’ b or a b c); he does not talk about melodic structures, identify any specific melodies or provide any transcriptions.

The work that is closest to the present study is William Westcott’s study of the “How Long” blues scheme.¹¹ Westcott is specifically interested in the recordings made by Mama Yancey and Jimmy Yancey. He shows how in all of Jimmy Yancey’s recordings of the song, he is playing variations over a simple eight-bar harmonic ground. Westcott notates the ground, which illustrates the crucial points of interaction between Jimmy Yancey’s harmonic and melodic progressions. Westcott also discusses Mama

⁹ Van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, 194-197, 203-204.

¹⁰ Dauer, “Towards a Typology of the Vocal Blues Idiom.”

¹¹ Bowers and Westcott, “Mama Yancey and the Revival Blues Tradition.”

Yancey's working from a structural core melody that closely parallels Jimmy Yancey's melody at the beginning of each stanza; at the end of a stanza, this core melody tends to become more independent of the accompaniment. Westcott touches upon the issue of vocal rhythm, but does not discuss in detail its interaction with the melodic structure and harmonic scheme.

Analytical Issues

The sections that follow explore many of the analytical issues that arise when discussing American folk and popular music and lay out the methodology used to make the bass-discant grounds given in the conclusion. Simpler grounds are given toward the beginning of each chapter to serve as a reference for the reader; the more complex grounds given in the conclusion reflect a synthesis of the data gathered in the individual chapters, and show more of the possibilities for substitution. The first section addresses blues text and the difficulties involved with divorcing it from performance and parsing the stanzas into lines. The next section concerns the reduction of rhythmic structure to its accents and the reduction of melodic structure to the notes coinciding with those accents, through which a discant begins to emerge; such a reduction helps to reveal the skeleton of the melodic structure, and the framework from which musicians work. The stressed and unstressed syllables of the text are often a strong indicator of the rhythmic hierarchy, and help with normalizing the prevalent rhythmic displacements. Following this comes a more detailed "reduction by line," which is based on, but retains much of the information left out by, the reduction to accents.

The section on “First and Second Tune Types and Modal Frame” describes how the same discant may be realized with either a descending contour or with a plagal range, and how this affects the modal frame, or the collection of notes around which a discant is built.

Following is a section on “Mode, Harmony, and Dissonance Treatment.” This includes a discussion of the structure of mode and the functions of its stable and unstable degrees; dissonance created by the non-tonic harmonies; and dissonance created by the interaction between the mode and the harmony. Particular attention is given to dissonance treatment that functions outside of classical norms.

Finally, there are brief sections concerning the interaction of all three elements—rhythm, melody, and harmony—to frequently create large-scale structures that consist of an inconclusive opening section followed by a conclusive closing section; and the issues of the bass line, inversion, and inner voices.

Text

To the best of current knowledge, blues grew out of field hollers and work songs in the 1890s, and the texts were first disseminated through oral tradition.¹² Based on recordings and transcriptions of blues texts, it seems that exact repetitions of the words of entire songs are rare. Instead, stanzas and individual lines became traditional and formulaic, and “there was a traditional storehouse of lyrical material on which singers drew in constructing their songs.”¹³ As David Evans writes, “The Blues are not...totally

¹² For a detailed discussion of the origins of the blues, see Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 16-105.

¹³ Taft, *The Blues Lyric Formula*, 25.

individualistic, for while in their first person delivery they purport to express the sentiments and feelings of the singer, many of their verses are, in fact, traditional and known to thousands of blues singers and members of their audiences. If these verses were ever original and unique, they did not remain so for long. They entered the oral tradition and spread throughout black communities across the country.”¹⁴

Interpreting the structure of blues texts involves analytical difficulties. One is simply that the texts were never meant to be written down or divorced from the performance of songs. The words are referred to as texts here, but there were no written sources from which the performers worked. The texts are not independent poems, but exist in the context of musical performance.

Other scholars have also grappled with the issue of writing down blues texts, and with the problems involved in divorcing the words from the performance. David Evans, considered by many the leading blues scholar, writes, “For this study [*Big Road Blues*] it has been necessary to print transcriptions of the words and music of a number of blues. When set down in black and white, some of these songs appear dull, trite, ungrammatical, or even absurd. This is because the songs were never meant to be written down or appreciated at such an intellectual distance. They are primarily performances to be heard and appreciated by a live audience. Their impact is meant to be felt by all the senses, not merely by sight. Yet in order that the reader may fully understand this music, I feel that it is necessary to use the medium of print for explaining its processes. I do, however, refer often to pieces that have been issued on phonograph records, and the reader is urged to

¹⁴ Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 48.

listen to these whenever possible.”¹⁵ I agree that the texts should not be considered independently, and I, too, urge the reader to listen, whenever possible, to the many recordings to which I refer.

One danger in considering the texts as independent poems is that of enforcing upon them too rigidly the standards of poetry. Songs with consistent poetic meter can be found—W. C. Handy’s line “I hate to see that evening sun go down,” for instance, is a beautiful example of iambic pentameter—but they are the exception, not the norm. Assumptions of poetic meter can also lead to interpretations of the text that are never realized in any way in performance. Take the traditional line “She’s coming back some old cold rainy day.” (This line is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.) Reading this line as iambic pentameter would put a stress on “old,” and yet in performance “cold,” not “old,” invariably falls in a strong metric position. Because the text is not meant to be—and to my knowledge never is—performed independently of music, I would argue that its musical setting determines which syllables are stressed, and that no sharp distinction need be made between the abstract rhythm of a text and that of its musical setting.

Another analytical difficulty, again stemming from the oral nature of the text, concerns how to parse the stanzas into smaller lines. Because the texts are not written down and are not independent poems, some other means of determining lines is necessary. The consistent musical caesuras in the vocal line provide the best means for determining divisions between lines of text. These are the only caesuras that exist because the words are not notated or performed independently.

¹⁵ Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 14.

Considering text in the context of music naturally leads to equating lines of text with spans of music. There is much precedence for this in blues analysis. David Evans, for example, while describing the structure of the standard twelve-bar blues, writes that the “twelve bars are divided into three sections or ‘lines’ of four bars each.”¹⁶ Four-bar groupings are also the standard for other twelve-bar schemes, such as “Whitehouse Blues,” “Railroad Bill,” and “Frankie and Johnny.”¹⁷ Some describe a subdivision of the four-bar units into two two-bar units, with the text occupying the first two bars, and an instrumental response the last two bars, of each four-bar unit.¹⁸ In the five shorter schemes under discussion here, the musical caesuras in the vocal lines similarly point to lines of text that correspond to two- or four-bar groupings. In the interest of following the precedence of linking lines of text with pairs of bars, I treat musical caesuras within pairs of bars, which are less frequent and consistent, as subsidiary to the much more frequent and consistent caesuras occurring at the ends of pairs.

All five schemes are divided into a verse and refrain—or, where there is no actual repetition or variation of refrain lines in every stanza, into a verse and response. Acknowledging the presence or absence of musical caesuras after pairs of bars has resulted in three divisions in the eight- and nine-bar schemes: two short lines in the verse and two short lines in the refrain (for the “Alabama Bound” text, Ex. 2.7, the “How Long” text, Ex. 3.5, and the “Sitting On Top Of The World” text, Ex. 5.4); two short lines in the verse and one long line in the refrain (for the “Cocaine” text, Ex. 2.8, and the “Trouble In Mind” text, Ex. 4.1); one long line in the verse and one long line in the

¹⁶ Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 22.

¹⁷ Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 45-46.

¹⁸ Kubik, *Africa and the Blues*, 41.

refrain (for some less common realizations of the “Alabama Bound” and “How Long” schemes, discussed in detail in the individual chapters). The ten-bar “John Henry” divides into five short lines (Ex. 1.3).

Another possible indication of lines is a rhyme scheme. Rhyming patterns can be found in all five schemes, but apparently none of them are obligatory, because exceptions can be found in every case. Where rhyme schemes are present, they usually reinforce divisions made by musical caesuras. One exception is the text for “Trouble In Mind,” where if only the rhyme scheme is considered, two long, rhyming lines emerge (Ex. 4.1). But following the concept that the text should not be extracted from its musical setting, I take the musical caesura in bar two as outweighing the rhyme scheme and creating three lines. The lack of a musical caesura at the corresponding place in bar six allows for no division there.¹⁹

Rhyme schemes may also be inconsistent, even within an individual song, and thus they may be an unreliable means of determining lines. In Blind Willy McTell’s “East St. Louis Blues (Fare You Well),” for example, the opening stanza—“I walked all the way/From East St. Louis/I never had but that one, one thin dime”—has no rhyme scheme. Another stanza—“I laid my head/In a barroom door/And I can’t get drunk, drunk no more”—suggests two rhyming lines, ending with “door” and “more,” respectively. By contrast, another stanza—“If you can’t shake like a cannonball/Get out and do that old Georgia Crawl/Fare thee, baby, fare thee well”—suggests two short rhyming lines followed by a non-rhyming line. Although there is no consistent rhyme

¹⁹ The practice of writing out bar numbers and line numbers is somewhat more common in theoretical writing about American folk and popular music than it is elsewhere, and the practice is followed here.

pattern, there is consistency in the placement of the musical caesuras, as reflected by the divisions given above.

The lengths of lines in verses may vary considerably from stanza to stanza. Although it is not within the scope of this project to catalogue exhaustively the variance of line length and number of syllables in the texts of the five schemes, it is within its scope to theorize about the general constraints that the schemes impose on the vocal rhythm and to find some regularity within which the variation can be understood. I propose that it is not the number of syllables, but rather the regular placement of stressed syllables in strong metric positions to create accents, that is the determining factor in the rhythmic structure of blues schemes. The issue of what constitutes an accented syllable is explored in more detail in the following section, but a short example here will help to illustrate how a text with a high degree of variability in line length may nevertheless display regularity with respect to the placement of accented syllables.

If one compares the opening line of Leroy Carr's "How Long, How Long Blues" ("How long, how long") with the opening line of his second stanza ("Now I can hear the whistle blowing, but I cannot see no train"), it can be seen that the length of the first line in these two stanzas varies considerably. But in both cases only two syllables are placed in strong metric positions. In the first example, "long" is placed on the downbeats of bars one and two, and in the second example the first syllable of "whistle" is placed on the downbeat of bar one and "train" is placed on the downbeat of bar two. The placement of stressed syllables in strong metric positions displays regularity not only in Carr's song but also in other realizations of the "How Long" scheme, even while the length of the lines is highly variable.

Blues schemes have constraints but they allow for much composition during performance. The constraints tend to be broader in nature, such as those concerning the placement of accented syllables. Things like the exact number of syllables, or even the exact number of stressed syllables, are treated more freely. These are among the components that are variable within the broader confines of the scheme.

The “John Henry,” “How Long,” and “Trouble In Mind” schemes display the most variability in line length and number of syllables. I believe that the placement of stressed syllables in strong metric positions is also the determining factor for the rhythmic structures of the “Alabama Bound” and “Sitting On Top Of The World” schemes, but by comparison these two display more regularity in line length, and the syllables in the lines often group together to create rhythmic figures. These rhythmic figures will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 5.

Rhythmic and Melodic Hierarchy

All of the schemes under discussion are characterized by the alternation of strong (odd-numbered) and weak (even-numbered) bars. This is partly an expansion of what happens within each bar—in which the first and third beats of a bar of quadruple meter are stronger than the second and fourth, and the first beat is stronger than the third—to the higher metric level of bars.²⁰ The preponderance of lines of text which cover two bars reinforces the sense of pairs of bars as large units, and that the lines begin in the odd-numbered bars (often with pickups) contributes greatly to the sense that these are the

²⁰ The description of alternating strong and weak beats and, on a higher level, strong and weak bars follows the theory of metrical hierarchy posited by Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, 18-21.

strong bars through an “emphasis on beginnings.”²¹ This is illustrated well in the most common opening stanza for the song “Sitting On Top Of The World” (Ex. I.1), in which each line begins (after a pickup) in an odd-numbered bar, reinforcing the sense that it is a strong bar, and ends in a weak bar. One might acknowledge hypermeter at a higher level, and describe pairs of bars as strong and weak, but here the discussion of hypermeter is restricted to the alternation of strong and weak bars.

The overwhelming majority of the songs under discussion are in quadruple meter or, in the case of songs belonging to the “John Henry” scheme and some belonging to the “Alabama Bound” scheme, duple meter (the meter is usually most clearly projected in the accompaniment). Thus, after the downbeat, which represents the strongest metrical position, the third beat is the next strongest. The texts of the songs have stressed and unstressed syllables, and the stressed syllables most often coincide with downbeats, which, together with the downbeat’s inherent strength, causes the downbeat to be accented. The next most common place for a stressed syllable to fall is the third beat, which, together with the third beat’s inherent strength, causes that beat to be accented. Within each scheme, the downbeat is, more often than not, accented; but the third beat is left unaccented often enough that it stands out when it is. Thus, special attention is given to these accented third beats with respect to their implications for the rhythmic structure; when they are accented, this creates an area of heightened or accelerated rhythmic activity. In the stanza from “Sitting On Top Of The World,” the syllables which receive the most stress are “spring,” “day,” “left,” “-way,” “gone,” “wor-,” “sit-,” “top,” and “world.” All of these stressed syllables except for “top” fall on downbeats, and thus the

²¹ Schachter, *Unfoldings*, 82.

downbeats of bars one through eight are accented (Ex. I.1). The third beats of the first six bars are left unaccented, but the stressed syllable “top” falls on the third beat of bar seven, causing that beat to be accented, and producing an acceleration of the rhythmic activity from the downbeat of bar seven to the downbeat of bar eight.

The second and fourth beats may also receive emphasis, but when the third beat is accented as well, this overshadows the emphasis on the weaker beats. When the third beat is unaccented, an emphasized fourth beat sounds like a pickup to the following downbeat (as in bars one through six of Example I.1), whereas an emphasized second beat usually tends to sound like it is connected more to the previous downbeat; in both cases, the conspicuous absence of an accent on the stronger third beat throws into relief the connection of the weaker second and fourth beats to the nearest downbeat.

This is not to say that rhythmic activity in places other than the first and third beats is unimportant. Indeed, the presence or lack of rhythmic activity beyond these strong beats—and the downbeat in particular—has a great impact on the rhythmic structure of the scheme. In the stanza from “Sitting On Top Of The World,” the rhythm comes to a conclusive stop on the downbeats of bars one, two, four, five, and eight, but in bars three, six, and seven, the rhythm continues beyond the downbeat, making those downbeats rhythmically inconclusive. Inconclusive downbeats are often connected to the text, as they are in the example cited above, where they coincide with the words “left me” and “worry.” But continuations beyond the downbeat appear to be ultimately more music driven than text driven. In the Mississippi Sheiks’ 1932 recording of the same scheme, for example, they replace the line “Now she’s gone and I don’t worry” with “I’ll be gone, long gone,” in which “gone” falls in the same position as “worry,” but the singer slurs the

word between two notes so that the rhythm continues beyond the downbeat. The relationships between inconclusive and conclusive downbeats create special issues for the rhythmic structures of each scheme, and will be discussed in detail in the individual chapters.

One issue that is bound to arise in just about any analytical study of American folk and popular music is that of displacement of accented notes through syncopation, anticipation, and, to a lesser extent, delay. As David Temperley points out, in both classical music and rock music, syncopation may involve both the emphasis of weak beats and the displacement of an accent from one beat to another, but that “in the case of rock...the sense of displacement is much more apparent.” In particular, the stressed syllables of the text, when syncopated, are perceived as properly “‘belonging’ on beats other than the ones they fall on.”²² Syncopated stressed syllables are most frequently perceived as being displaced from subsequent, stronger metric positions. The idea that such events are perceived as being displaced from metrically strong positions is maintained here. Although displacements are easiest to unravel when linked to a text with stressed and unstressed syllables, the same methods of displacement may be extended to purely instrumental music.

The most common type of displacement arises through anticipation of a following strong beat. In such a case, the attack-point of a stressed syllable falls just before the strong metric position to which it is perceived to belong. This happens most often on the smallest (or near-smallest) metric level, usually the eighth note. Bertha “Chippie” Hill, for example, in her “Trouble In My Mind Blues” of 1928, consistently anticipates the

²² Temperley, “Syncopation In Rock: A Perceptual Perspective,” 20, 22.

third downbeat in every strophe (Ex. I.2). The high scale degree 5 in all four cases coincides with a stressed syllable in the text, as in her first stanza—“Trouble in mind, Now I’m blue/But I won’t be always/Sun’s gonna shine in my backdoor someday”—where it coincides with the word “won’t” (Ex. I.2a). With some of the other downbeats, she anticipates in some strophes but not in others; the downbeat of bar five, for example, is anticipated in the second and fourth strophes (Ex. I.2c and g) but not in the first and third (Ex. I.2a and e), and the first downbeat is anticipated only in the third strophe (Ex. I.2e). Where there is such an inconsistency, it can be helpful to compare those accents which are displaced to the analogous accents, in other strophes, which are not, to reveal what Temperley calls the “deep structure,” meaning the de-syncopated rhythm on which the syncopated rhythm is based.²³ But even in cases such as the downbeat to bar three, which Hill anticipates in every strophe, the accented syllable of the text is understood to belong to the strong metric position that it anticipates. In subsequent reductions, such as those that show only the accented notes of the melody, such notes are placed in the accented positions to which they belong (Ex. I.2b, d, f, and g).

Such anticipations also happen with reference to the third beat. In bar five, Hill anticipates the third beat in the first and fourth strophes but not in the third strophe (the same part of the second strophe will be discussed below). Again, in subsequent reductions, the accented note is “normalized” to reveal the “psychological reality.”²⁴ In

²³ Temperley, “Syncopation In Rock,” 25-30. Such a de-syncopated rhythm is often only theoretical, and is not actually realized in a song.

²⁴ The term “normalized” is borrowed from Rothstein, “Rhythmic Displacement and Rhythmic Normalization,” and the term “psychological reality” is borrowed from Temperley, “Syncopation In Rock,” 27.

examples that show the rhythmic structure of the text, such as Example I.1, such displacements are also normalized.

As discussed above, the main concern here is with accents that occur on the first and third beats, and not so much with emphasis of the second and fourth beats, but the same process of anticipation is often used with respect to those weaker beats. In Hill's first strophe, for example, which is transcribed in Example I.2a, the words "Sun's gonna shine" fall in bar five, with the syllable "gon-" anticipating the second beat to which it is perceived to belong.

A more extreme, though less common, type of anticipation may occur at the next metric level (the quarter-note or dotted quarter-note). David Edwards, for example, in his "Worried Life Blues" (Ex. I.3), consistently shifts the final stressed syllable of every strophe to the fourth beat of bar six, displacing it from the downbeat of bar seven, the strong metric position to which it is perceived to belong (Ex. I.3a). Again, in subsequent reductions, the anticipation is normalized and the accent is placed on the downbeat (Ex. I.3b). Edwards's first stanza, the words of which fit with Example I.3a, are: "O Lordy, Lord, O Lordy, Lord/Hurts me so bad for us to part/But someday, baby/You ain't gonna worry my life anymore."

A normalized reduction can help to reveal the underlying rhythmic structure of a scheme, and that which may be inferred by the listener. As William Rothstein writes, "if a musical passage can be rhythmically normalized, there arises at least the possibility of hearing the given, displaced version *in terms of* its normalization—or, more precisely, hearing it as a *transformation* of that normalization—even if the latter is not literally

present anywhere in the music. The normalization, in other words, may be inferred from the given passage, which is then understood as a displaced version of it.”²⁵

Two Techniques of Reduction

As discussed above, the text often helps in revealing the structure of a melody, and a preference exists for identifying accented notes with stressed syllables; all of the normalized notes discussed above coincide with stressed syllables. When a stressed syllable is slurred between two notes, the first note receives the stress. This is true even where the second note falls in a stronger position. Edwards, for example, stresses the word “Lord,” which begins with $\overset{\wedge}{\flat}3$ on the last eighth note before bar one, and slurs it between two notes (the same thing happens with bar two and its pickup, again with the word “Lord”). Even though the second note falls on the downbeat, the first note receives the stress because it coincides with the onset of the syllable. This represents a somewhat more complex displacement which involves both anticipation and melisma. In the reduction to accents (Ex. I.3b) the accented note is normalized and placed on the downbeat.

The reduction of the melodic structure to just its accents is helpful for revealing the most stable and consistent part of the melodic structure, and special attention is given to the notes that fall in the strongest metric positions. As Carl Schachter writes, “The metrical accent...always colors the event—tone harmony, occasionally even silence—that falls on the favored point.”²⁶ But a reduction to accents obviously leaves out much information. A more detailed reduction by line, in which the slurs between the accents

²⁵ Rothstein, “Rhythmic Displacement and Rhythmic Normalization,” 88.

²⁶ Schachter, *Unfoldings*, 82.

indicate the lines of text, will often follow the reduction to accents; such reductions show more details of the contour in the melodic structure, but still stress the accents (notated as open noteheads and normalized) as the most stable and consistent element. These reductions, which use black noteheads for certain other notes in the melodic structure, also take into account other pertinent features such as pickups and continuations of the rhythm beyond the downbeat (both of which are also slurred to the accented notes, to indicate that they belong to the same line). In the more detailed reduction of Edwards's melody in Example I.3c, the accented note ($\hat{b}3$), which coincides with the onset of the word "Lord," is normalized and placed on the downbeat of bar one, and the slurred note ($\overset{\wedge}{1}$) is shifted to maintain the order of events; unlike Example I.3a, it shows that scale degree 3 is displaced from the downbeat of bar one, and unlike Example I.3b, it shows that the rhythm continues beyond the accented note. The reduction to accents is given first because it provides the skeleton around which the other notes of the melody may be interpreted.

An issue, similar to that of an accented syllable anticipating a strong position and being slurred between two notes, sometimes arises concerning words with two syllables, the first of which is stressed and the second unstressed. In "How Long?" (Ex. I.4), Brownie McGhee ends every strophe with the line "Baby, how long?" (The entire stanza for the melody in Example I.4a is: "Hear that whistle, can't see no train/Well deep in my heart I feel an achin' pain/How long, how long/Baby, how long?") When just considering the text, the first syllable of "Baby" would be stressed and the second unstressed, but in the melody the first syllable falls in a weaker position and the second in a stronger position (the former on the eighth note before the third beat and the latter on

the third beat of bar six). In this case, the stressed syllable “Ba-” is considered to anticipate the stronger metric position to which it belongs, and the unstressed syllable “-by” falls on the third beat simply because it is the next syllable. In the reduction to accents (Ex. I.4b), scale degree 3, which coincides with the first syllable, is shifted into the accented position to which it is perceived to belong. In the more detailed reduction (Ex. I.4c), both notes that coincide with the word “Baby” are shifted, and it is shown that the rhythm continues beyond that accent.²⁷

Although text, with its stressed and unstressed syllables, is usually a strong indicator of rhythmic and melodic hierarchy, and although stressed syllables and accented notes usually coincide, occasionally singers will choose to place a normally unstressed syllable in an accented position. If one considers just the text of Hill’s fourth stanza (“I’m going to lay, lay my head/On some lonesome railroad line/And let the two-nineteen train satisfy my mind”), the last five stressed syllables would be “two,” “train,” “sat-,” “-fy,” and “mind,” and indeed these are the syllables which some singers (such as Richard M. Jones and Rosetta Tharpe) stress when singing this line. Yet, in Hill’s melody, the syllable “-teen” is clearly in the accented position, displaced to anticipate the third beat of bar five (Ex. I.2g). It occurs in the analogous place as the word “shine” in the first stanza, a syllable that, like “-teen,” anticipates an accented position in the music, but, unlike “-teen,” would also clearly be accented when just considering the text (Ex. I.2a).

²⁷ This situation, in which stressed syllables falls in a weaker positions than unstressed syllables, is quite prevalent in American folk and popular music, suggesting that perhaps Halle and Lerdahl’s preference rules for textsetting do not reflect the preferences of many singers. Some of Halle and Lerdahl’s “unacceptable settings” are actually quite common. Halle and Lerdahl, “A Generative Textsetting Model,” 7-8.

(Hill also accents “-teen” in her 1926 recording of “Trouble In Mind,” as does Georgia White in her 1936 recording.)

A more complex situation arises when the first, stressed syllable of a two-syllable word appears in a relatively strong position on a beat, and the following unstressed syllable appears on a subsequent subdivision of that beat but seems to be a displacement, anticipating a stronger beat than that on which the word began. Big Bill Broonzy’s first stanza in “Mississippi River Blues”—“Mississippi River/ Is so long, deep, and wide/I can see my good girl standin’ on that other side”—illustrates this issue (Ex. I.5). The first, stressed syllable of the word “River” falls on the fourth beat of bar one, and the second unstressed syllable falls on the last eighth note of the bar (Ex. I.5a). The musical setting of the text would then seem to be following the built-in rhythm of the text, except that the second syllable also seems to be involved in the most common type of displacement, anticipating the following first beat, which is stronger than the fourth beat on which the stressed syllable falls (the harmony for the first two bars is I-V, which adds to the sense that $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ belongs to the second bar). If this is the case, a normalization of the melodic structure would put the unstressed syllable on the downbeat of bar two, and the built-in rhythms of the text would be contradicted by the normalized structure (Ex. I.5b).

One solution would be to consider this the more extreme type of anticipation that was found at the end of Edwards’s melody, in which the higher metric level (the dotted quarter-note) was shifted in the normalization (Ex. I.5c). If only the text and melody of Broonzy’s first stanza are considered, this seems to be the best way of understanding the first two bars, and in the normalized reduction the accented $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ becomes a dissonant suspension that resolves down to $\overset{\wedge}{2}$. This would be part of a reduction by line, which,

while normalizing the accented syllables, would also show that the rhythm continues beyond the accented note. Such a reduction by line, as given in Example I.5c, would have the advantage of showing that the accented scale degree 3, sounding over the dominant, resolves down to scale degree 2. In these reductions, the open notehead is given to the accented note, even where such a note is a non-harmonic tone; they do not conform to the more familiar, pitch-oriented hierarchy such as one finds in Schenkerian graphs, where in this case $\hat{3}$ would be “reduced out” and $\hat{2}$ given priority as a harmonic tone. The accented note is given priority, and any resolution is conveyed only in the reduction by line.

When one considers the subsequent strophe, the situation becomes somewhat more complicated. In the second strophe, which opens with the line “I cry and I call,” the stressed syllable “call” appears in the analogous place to the unstressed second syllable of “River” in the first strophe, on the last eighth note of bar one (Ex. I.5d). In this case, a normalized structure that treats “call” as an anticipation of the following strong position does not contradict the built-in rhythm of the text; in other words, although the simple normalization in Example I.5b does not work well with the first strophe, it works well with the second. It would then seem plausible to consider the normalized version of the second strophe (Ex. I.5e)—which involves a simpler and much more common type of displacement—as representing the basic structure, and for the first strophe to contain a contradiction of the built-in rhythm of the text (which, as we have seen, does sometimes occur). Thus, a comparison with the other strophes of a song may be used in uncovering the underlying structure. When this is done, and the result is a choice between a displacement at a smaller metric level and one at a larger metric level, the former will be

preferred, though the latter will not necessarily be disregarded; the issue of how the built-in rhythms of different stanzas may interact differently with the same melodic structure may occasionally be pursued, even if one representative normalized melodic structure is sought.

Hill's four stanzas involve a similar, though less complex, issue. In the opening line of her first strophe—"Trouble in mind, now I'm blue"—the stressed syllable "blue" falls on the first beat of bar two (refer back to Ex. I.2a). The same thing happens in the opening line of her fourth strophe—"I'm going to lay, lay my head"—where "head" falls on the downbeat of bar two (Ex. I.2g). In both cases, Hill places the syllables that would most commonly be stressed in accented positions. But the situation is somewhat different in the second and third strophes. When just considering the text of the second strophe ("I'm all alone, lone at midnight/And the lights are burnin' low/I never had so much trouble in my life before"), one might expect "mid-" to be stressed (as it is in Hill's 1926 recording), but here Hill chooses to stress "-night" (Ex. I.2c). Similarly, in the third strophe ("My good man, now he quit me/And it sure do grieve my mind/Sometimes I feel like livin', sometimes I feel like dyin'") one might expect "quit" to be stressed (as it is in 1926), but Hill instead stresses "me" (Ex. I.2e). It seems unnecessarily complicated here to describe displacements of the syllables "mid-" and "quit"; rather, Hill has simply chosen to stress "-night" and "me," neither of which choice is very eccentric (certainly much less so than Broonzy's stressing the second syllable of "River").

A less common type of displacement is the delay of a stressed syllable beyond an accented position. In the last line of Hill's second strophe—"I never had so much trouble in my life before"—the five stressed syllables are "had," "much," "trou-," "life," and "-

fore,” but “much” is delayed beyond the accented position on the third beat of bar five (Ex. I.2c). Here, too, a comparison with the other stanzas is useful; in the other three stanzas, the analogous syllable either anticipates (Ex. I.2a and g) or falls on (Ex. I.2e) the same accented position. Thus, in the reduction, the note in question is normalized and placed in the accented position to which it belongs. Again, a comparison of stanzas may be useful for determining one representative normalized melodic structure.

The reduction to accents helps to reveal the skeleton of the melodic structure, which in turn is very helpful for understanding a musician’s framework for melody. The creation of music during the course of performance and the modification of musical material are both prevalent in American folk and popular music, and even within the same song one may very well find many significant differences in the melodic details from one strophe to another; the reduction to accents, however, often reveals a consistent framework which allows room for improvisation and variation. Jed Davenport’s “How Long, How Long Blues”—which displays his virtuosity on the harmonica, with the result that there is a lot of variation between the strophes—shows well how the accents of the melodic structure in several strophes remain the same even while the details of the different strophes may change significantly (Ex. I.6). Davenport bases his first, fourth, fifth, and eighth strophes on the same melodic structure, represented by the accents in Example I.6e. In the first two bars, the four strophes are quite different in the details of their rhythmic construction, but they all move from $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ to $\overset{\wedge}{b7}$, both of which fall in metrically accented positions on the first two downbeats. In bars three and four, the first and fifth strophes are similar in that they arpeggiate down to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four (Ex. I.6a and c), whereas the fourth and eighth strophes are similar in that they

simply hold $\hat{1}$ throughout the two bars (Ex. I.6b and d); but all four are similar in that they accent $\hat{1}$ on the downbeats of both bars (Ex. I.6e). All four strophes are identical from the pickup to bar five to the downbeat of bar six, but from there to the downbeat of bar seven, they again diverge. The first and fourth strophes move in stepwise motion from $\hat{3}$ down to $\hat{1}$, whereas the fifth and eighth strophes skip from $\hat{3}$ down to $\hat{1}$, and the first and fifth strophes place $\hat{3}$ on the third beat of bar six, whereas the fifth and eighth delay that accented note until after the accented position to which it belongs. All four however, make a motion from an accented $\hat{3}$ to an accented $\hat{1}$. Thus, even though the details vary, the same melodic structure for the four strophes is maintained. (The other strophes in this recording, which is discussed in greater detail in the “How Long” chapter, contain different accents, and thus different melodic structures.) This process of ornamenting an underlying melodic structure recalls Peter Westergaard’s discussion of how “complex and highly varied structures could be built up from notes occupying...spans [of time] by the processes of segmentation, delay, and anticipation...[T]hese could be understood in terms of simple, highly regular sets of reference points and...a given structure could be used to establish a particular set of such reference points in the mind of the listener.”²⁸

As in the discussion above, the motions within a line or section are often described as occurring between the accents. These are also the motions that are the most consistent from one strophe to another (and from one song to another), even where the details of different strophes (and different songs) change. Thus, in McGhee’s “How

²⁸ Westergaard, *An Introduction to Tonal Theory*, 309.

Long?” a descent from $\hat{1}$ to $\flat\hat{7}$ is described in line one (bars one and two) because that is what happens between the two accented notes of that line, even though the second of these is approached immediately by an upward motion from $\hat{5}$ (Ex. I.4).

The accents will also sometimes be used to describe the beginning and ending points of lines, though this will most often be qualified with reference to the actual transcription of the melody. In McGhee’s melody (Ex. I.4), therefore, the first three lines may be described as lasting from the downbeat of a strong bar to the downbeat of a weak bar, and the fourth line from the third beat of a weak bar to the downbeat of the last strong bar, because this is where the accents are (though, again, any pickups and continuations of the rhythm beyond the downbeat will be acknowledged). The reductions by line use slurs to show the motion and duration between the accents in the lines of text (as in Example I.4c). This is done not only because the accents mark the most stable rhythmic points in a line, but also because the durations between the accented notes are more consistently maintained from one strophe to another, and even from one song to another.

First and Second Tune Types and Modal Frame

As discussed above, schemes in which the harmony is more consistent than the melody may support several or even many discants. A distinction can be made between those discants that have a large-scale descending contour and end on scale degree 1 in the lower register, and those that have a plagal range (sometimes literal, other times approximate) and end on scale degree 1 in the upper register; the former I label the first tune type and the latter the second tune type. The presence of two tune types does not

necessarily indicate the existence of two distinct discants—singers may realize the same discant as either a first or second tune type. Example I.7a shows Bertha “Chippie” Hill’s realization of the “Trouble In Mind” discant as a first tune type; Example I.7c shows Rosetta Tharpe’s realization of the same discant as a second tune type. Performers apparently viewed changing a first tune type into a second tune type, or vice versa, as an available option, and the decision may have often been influenced by issues of comfort or volume in certain vocal registers. Even some schemes in which the melody is more consistent may have two tune types if singers choose to transpose the concluding register.

First and second tune types are related to (but not identical to) the modal frame, which is the collection of notes around which the discant is built, the most important and stable members of which are the notes of the tonic triad, and the most stable of which is scale degree 1.²⁹ When singers transpose the concluding register of a discant, they change the tune type and modal frame, but not the identity of the discant. Example I.7b shows the modal frame for Hill’s melody, and Example I.7d that for Tharpe’s; the two are manifestations of the same discant—the same distinguishing melodic characteristics are present in both—but the closing registral transposition changes not only the tune type but also the modal frame.

Example I.8a shows Woody Guthrie’s realization of the “John Henry” discant as a first tune type, and Example I.8c shows Leadbelly’s realization of it as a second tune type (in this example the transposition to the upper register begins right away). Example I.8b shows Guthrie’s modal frame and Example I.8d shows Leadbelly’s. A comparison of Example I.7a-b with Example I.8a-b demonstrates that tune type is not identical to modal

²⁹ The term “modal frame” is borrowed from Van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, 102-103.

frame; both discants are realized with a large-scale descending contour, but they have different modal frames. Similarly, Examples I.7c and I.8c both use the second tune type but have different modal frames. Tune type concerns the process of registral transposition of parts of a discant, especially with respect to the register of the final scale degree 1, and the large-scale contour of a melodic structure; modal frame concerns the span of a melodic structure and the degrees around which a particular discant is constructed.

The modal frames are presented as descents to reflect performers' preferences for descending melodic contours; even most second tune types make a descent to the final scale degree 1. The degrees that receive emphasis through duration or strong metric placement, or both, are presented as open noteheads; these typically include members of the tonic triad. Others, mainly passing in nature, are presented as black noteheads. Note that the same pitch class may be given a different status in different registers. In Example I.7, for instance, scale degree four is less important to the modal frame in the upper register, where it is passing in nature, and more important in the lower register, where it has stronger metric placement and a longer duration.

Mode, Harmony, and Dissonance Treatment

Another issue bound to arise in any analytical study of American folk and popular music is that of dissonance treatment. Although the conventional use of dissonant passing tones, neighbor tones, and (to a lesser extent) suspensions is found in this repertoire, they are not explored in any detail here; instead, this section examines other forms of dissonance treatment.

Dissonance arises within the mode itself, through the relationship of the mode to the underlying harmony, and through the relationship of the non-tonic harmonies to the tonic. In this repertoire, the three primary harmonies—the tonic, subdominant, and dominant—are the main building blocks for progressions.

In American folk and popular music, as in classical music, the members of the tonic triad are more stable degrees within the mode (although in American music the triad is almost always major), and scale degree 1 itself is the most stable note, followed by scale degree 5. Also, as in classical music, the other, less stable members of the mode tend to gravitate toward the stable notes. These unstable notes may simply be the stepwise neighbors of the notes of the tonic triad, in which case no special explanations are needed (with, perhaps, the exception that more use is made of the subtonic in this repertoire than in classical music). However, the unstable notes may instead be a minor or neutral third (an interval between a major and minor third) above or below the stable notes; these are what Peter van der Merwe calls the dropping and hanging thirds (Ex. I.9a).³⁰ Van der Merwe describes stacks of dropping and hanging thirds that create a “ladder of thirds,”³¹ but I would propose applying his concept specifically to the major tonic triad. The dropping and hanging thirds are most frequently found around scale degree 1, the most stable member of the mode; they are also frequently found around $\hat{5}$, and less often around $\hat{3}$. Example I.9b gives a graphic summary of the tonic triad with its hanging and dropping thirds around scale degrees 1 and 5; Example I.9c shows the tonic triad with stepwise neighbors around $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$.

³⁰ Van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, 118-130.

³¹ Van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, 120-125.

Examples I.9b and c should not be thought of as mutually exclusive—one might very well find both the stepwise neighbor and dropping third above scale degree 5, for example, in close proximity in the same song. Sometimes one does, however, find a preference for certain unstable scale degrees; for example, scale degree 6 may function as both the stepwise neighbor to $\hat{5}$ and the hanging third to $\hat{1}$ (Ex. I.9d), and $\flat\hat{7}$ may function as both the stepwise neighbor to $\hat{1}$ and dropping third to $\hat{5}$ (Ex. I.9e).

Although the members of the tonic triad—and $\hat{1}$ in particular—are ultimately the most stable members of the mode, in American music (as in classical music) a change to a non-tonic harmony can temporarily change which notes are stable and which are not. Sometimes when there is a change of harmony—and this will most frequently be to the subdominant or dominant—this brings a transposition of all or part of the mode, as outlined in Examples I.10 and I.11. Over the subdominant, scale degrees 4, 6, and 1 become the most stable; the root and fifth may in turn have their dropping and hanging thirds (Ex. I.10a) or stepwise neighbors (Ex. I.10b), or there may be a preference for one of the unstable notes, so that $\hat{2}$ may act as both the stepwise neighbor to $\hat{1}$ and hanging third to $\hat{4}$ (Ex. I.10c), or $\flat\hat{3}$ may act as the dropping third to $\hat{1}$ and stepwise neighbor to $\hat{4}$ (Ex. I.10d). There is of course some overlap here with the mode built around the tonic triad; the dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors around the root of the tonic now become those around the fifth of the subdominant.

Over the dominant, scale degrees 5, 7, and 2 become temporarily more stable; around the root and fifth there may be dropping and hanging thirds (Ex. I.11a) or stepwise neighbors (Ex. I.11b), or one of the unstable notes may be preferred, be it $\hat{3}$ (Ex.

I.11c) or $\hat{4}$ (Ex. I.11d). Again, there is some overlap with the mode built around the tonic triad—the unstable notes around the fifth of the tonic become those around the root of the dominant.

At other times when there is a change of harmony the original mode built around the tonic triad remains, but over the non-tonic harmony, some members of the tonic triad become temporarily unstable. Over the subdominant, scale degrees 5 and 3 become unstable, and their tendency now is to resolve to scale degree 1, which remains stable over the subdominant (Ex. I.12). The resolution to $\hat{1}$ may happen over the subdominant (Ex. I.12a), or the harmony may shift back to the tonic to coincide with the resolution (the latter creating a more conclusive resolution) (Ex. I.12b). Here again one finds some overlap with the previously described situation in which the entire mode was transposed—scale degree 1, which is stable over the subdominant, may retain its dropping and hanging thirds, as found in the mode transposed to the subdominant (Ex. I.12c). Indeed, the subdominant often triggers a minor or neutral scale degree 3—even where the original mode built around the tonic remains—thereby heightening its tendency to drop to the stable scale degree 1. Over the subdominant, it is less common to find scale degree 5 retaining its dropping and hanging thirds, because $\hat{5}$ itself is now temporarily unstable and thus makes a less convincing goal of resolution.

Over the dominant, only scale degree 5 remains stable, but scale degrees 1 and 3, which have now become temporarily unstable, do not typically assume a tendency to resolve up to $\hat{5}$; instead, the overall tendency is still to resolve to $\hat{1}$, which must sound over the tonic again in order to sound stable (Ex. I.13a-b). Thus, when the original mode

built around the tonic triad remains over the dominant, a return to the tonic is required for melodic resolution. (One exception to this is when $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{1}$ descend to the lower $\hat{5}$, which may temporarily function as a stable goal over the dominant, though the overall tendency is still to resolve to $\hat{1}$, as shown in Example I.13c.) Scale degree 1 is often delayed until the arrival of the tonic (Ex. I.13a); if it sounds over the dominant it is still unstable, and does not sound stable again until it coincides with the tonic (Ex. I.13b). Again, there is some overlap with the situation in which the entire mode transposes to the dominant—scale degree 5, which is stable, may retain its dropping and hanging thirds (Ex. I.13d). Although when the original mode sounds over the subdominant $\hat{5}$ loses its dropping and hanging thirds because it becomes unstable, when the original mode sounds over the dominant, the temporarily unstable scale degree 1 will often retain its dropping and hanging thirds, because it is still the ultimate stable goal. Like the subdominant, the dominant often triggers a minor or neutral scale degree 3, to heighten its tendency to resolve down to $\hat{1}$.

Just as $\hat{1}$ is the most stable scale degree, the tonic is the most stable harmony, and the two together (with $\hat{1}$ in the melody) form the most stable sonority, and that which is most often preferred for the conclusion of a scheme. The subdominant and dominant—which are by far the most frequent non-tonic harmonies—not only contrast with the tonic and change the status (if only temporarily) of the melodic notes, but also create large-scale harmonic dissonance, and have the tendency to resolve back to the tonic. The IV chord rarely functions as a predominant, but instead usually functions as a true subdominant, and more often than not leads back to the tonic. Sometimes, both the upper

and lower dominants are used to approach the tonic, creating the progression V-IV-I; this progression is sometimes used to give special emphasis to a cadence, as in the last four bars of the most common variant of the twelve-bar blues (V-IV-I-I).

Although dissonance often functions differently in American folk and popular music, the minor seventh sometimes does play a role comparable to that which it plays in classical music—sometimes it is added to an underlying harmony to give it more compulsion to move to the following harmony. This is especially common where the harmony is first presented as a triad, and then its seventh enters to give it more urgency. Minor sevenths are often added to the tonic before it moves to the subdominant, and to the dominant before it moves to the tonic (following classical norms). A seventh is also often added to the subdominant before it moves back to the tonic, reinforcing its status as a true subdominant. (The progression $IV^{b7}-I$ often suggests an enharmonic- $\#2-3$ melodic motion, though this is often only implicit and is not realized literally.) It is also common for the third of the subdominant to be lowered before it resolves back to the tonic, with the tendency of $b\hat{6}$ to resolve to $\hat{5}$ giving IV more urgency to resolve to I. Although the addition of a seventh (or the inflection of a third) does not change the underlying harmony, it does nonetheless constitute a chord change, and may have the effect of speeding up the harmonic rhythm.

Over the tonic and subdominant, in particular, the sixth above the root is sometimes treated more like a member of the harmony than as a dissonant neighbor. This is especially true where, instead of resolving to the fifth, the sixth substitutes for it in an arpeggiation.

Inconclusive/Conclusive Structures

The ends of both verse and refrain represent goals of rhythmic motion; the accents leading up to the end of each section are often immediately followed by more rhythmic activity, making them sound inconclusive, but the final accent of each section typically falls conclusively on a downbeat with no immediately subsequent rhythmic activity. There is also frequently an acceleration of accents at the end of each section that drives the rhythmic structure into one or both of the concluding accents; this is comparable to the acceleration of harmonic rhythm typically found at the end of a classical sentence, and indeed accelerations of harmonic rhythm sometimes accompany these accelerations of accents.

The verse and refrain punctuate most schemes in a way comparable to the manner in which the antecedent and consequent phrases punctuate the period in classical music; within the two-part division, the verse typically ends inconclusively in comparison to the refrain. The relative inconclusiveness of the verse may be achieved through the rhythmic, harmonic, or melodic structure, or some combination of all three. Although both the verse and refrain usually end on a downbeat, often the verse ends on the downbeat of a weak bar, and the refrain ends on the downbeat of a strong bar, creating a more definitive ending. The verse may end on a scale degree other than $\hat{1}$, but the refrain nearly always ends on $\hat{1}$ (the exceptions come in schemes that support many discants, but they are very few). The verse may end on the subdominant—and because the subdominant functions as such, instead of as a predominant, such an ending in the verse may take on more of the feeling of a half-cadence than it would in classical music—but

where the melodic structure of the refrain comes to a close, it is always supported by the tonic.

Thus, if all three elements take part in this inconclusive/conclusive structure, then the verse ends on the subdominant in a weak bar with a scale degree other than $\hat{1}$ in the melody, and the refrain answers by ending on the tonic in a strong bar with scale degree $\hat{1}$ in the melody. Sometimes, only one or two components take part—for example, the verse may end on $\hat{1}$, but its stability may be undermined by subdominant support.

The material after the structure closes on scale degree $\hat{1}$ over the tonic often sounds post-cadential. There may be various alternations of the tonic and dominant, and some strophes end on the dominant in order to prepare the opening tonic of the following strophe. Such tonic-dominant post-cadential alternations are not considered essential to the scheme; they show little consistency, and will usually just be labeled as I when discussing a scheme in general as opposed to a specific song.

Bass and Inner Parts

The concern here is most often just with the root progressions of the harmony; guitar, banjo, and mandolin players are often unconcerned with issues of inversion in this repertoire, and thus the analyses most often represent the melody over just the underlying harmony. Some guitarists, and many pianists, however, are concerned with bass lines and inversions. In this study, inversions will be considered where they are used to make a marked distinction from the root position, and especially where, like the addition of a seventh, they seem to constitute a chord change (if not a change of the underlying harmony) that speeds up the harmonic rhythm.

The same guitarists and pianists are often more concerned with inner parts, and may weave a contrapuntal thread through the harmonic progression in order to give it more forward momentum. The most common of these—the line $\overset{\wedge}{8}-\overset{\wedge}{\flat}7-\overset{\wedge}{6}-\overset{\wedge}{\flat}6-\overset{\wedge}{5}$ over the progression I-I-IV-IV-I—involves both the introduction of a seventh to the tonic to push it toward the subdominant, and the chromatic inflection of the subdominant to push it back toward the tonic. Such contrapuntal threads will be noted where they can be audibly traced through the progression. They represent an option available over certain schemes rather than an essential part of any particular scheme.

These five schemes do not constitute an exhaustive set of all schemes eight to ten bars long. Judith McCulloh has written extensively about the eight-bar “In The Pines” scheme.³² The ten-bar “John Hardy” scheme has many similarities to “John Henry.” Other eight-bar schemes include “Crow Jane,” “Prison Cell Blues,” “Creole Belle,” and what I call the “Spoonful” scheme. They have similarities to those discussed in detail in the following chapters, and occasionally one turns up, as when the Three Stripped Gears use the harmonic progression from the “Spoonful” scheme as a contrasting strain in “Alabama Blues,” the main strain of which uses the “Alabama Bound” scheme.

³² McCulloh, “‘In The Pines’: The Melodic Textual Identity of an American Lyric Folksong Cluster.”

Chapter 1

The “John Henry” Blues Scheme

Folklorists have long been interested in the origins of the story of “John Henry.”¹ Indeed the story, which captures an important time in American history when vast and often threatening changes were brought by the industrial revolution, has helped make “John Henry” one of the most beloved American folk songs ever. But surely much of this durability should be credited to the musical framework, which is so distinctive, and yet, at the same time, flexible enough to be accommodating to the many musicians, both black and white, who have sung it over the years.²

Much of the distinction and appeal of “John Henry” come from the happy union between its ten-bar structure and descending melodic contour. Throughout the years musicians have found ways of varying the scheme while still maintaining the crucial links between the melody, harmony, and rhythm. This chapter first attempts to establish the basic musical framework of the “John Henry” blues scheme—a framework that seems to constitute the conception of the scheme for most musicians, but one that is nonetheless quite flexible and allows for a wide range of variation and interpretation. It explores in detail four recordings of “John Henry,” comparing the similarities and differences of

¹ See, e.g., Louis W. Chappell, *John Henry: A Folk-Lore Study*; Norm Cohen, *Long Steel Rail: The Railroad in American Folksong*; John Harrington Cox, “John Hardy”; Guy B. Johnson, *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend*; G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *Native American Balladry*, 246; MacEdward Leach, “John Henry”; Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk Songs*, 218-222; Brett Williams, *John Henry: A Bio-Bibliography*; Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Steel Drivin’ Man—John Henry—The Untold Story of an American Legend*.

² “John Henry” is well established in the repertoires of both black and white musicians and forms part of the common stock. Dixon, Godrich, and Rye catalogue over forty recordings of the song, and Russell just fewer than twenty.

several musical elements: the peculiar yet attractive ten-bar structure and its relationship to the verse and refrain, the descending melodic shape, and the harmonic scheme. It also catalogs several other recordings that conform to the four explored in detail (Table 1.1 lists all of the recordings considered and catalogues several of the salient musical components). The chapter concludes with analyses of three recordings that diverge markedly from the established musical framework.

Ten-Bar Structure

One of the most conspicuous aspects of the “John Henry” scheme, and one of the most consistent, is its ten-bar structure. A simple “John Henry” ground is given in Example 1.1. The vocal melody abstracted from the accompaniment is best thought of in cut time, with each of the ten bars containing two beats.³ As Example 1.2 shows, the verse consists of five lines, and each line corresponds to two bars of music. The “John Henry” text often creates a rhyme scheme of X-A-X-A-A, as in Example 1.2. Although one could conceivably stop after the fourth line and have a convincing eight-bar structure, the repetition of the fourth line to create the fifth line produces a ten-bar structure, with lines four and five together (bars seven through ten) constituting the refrain. Quite often, the four-bar refrain will be repeated, making a fourteen-bar structure;⁴ the singer may make this an instrumental repetition.⁵

³ This is in large part because of the origin of “John Henry” as a work song, in which each bar coincides with two strikes of a hammer (or some other tool), as in the recording of “John Henry” by “22” and Group, made at a prison work camp in Texas. Arthur Bell, in his “John Henry,” similarly gives two percussive beats per bar.

⁴ E.g., Evans and McClain, “John Henry Blues”; Guthrie and Houston, “John Henry”; Ledbetter, “John Henry,” 1948; Ledbetter and Terry, “John Henry”; Williamson

The division between the verse and refrain suggests a grouping of the ten bars into 6 + 4: six bars of verse followed by four bars of refrain. But other groupings are also present, and one such alternate grouping grows out of the rhythmic framework of the vocal line; the way in which the five lines of text interact with the alternating strong and weak bars affects the overall rhythmic framework of the song. Each line coincides with a pair of bars—one strong and one weak. Rhythmically, the vocal line consistently fills out each of the strong bars, but it shows a greater degree of variation in the weak bars: bars two, four, and ten contain relatively little rhythmic activity, with words on only the first beat; bars six and eight, however, contain considerably more rhythmic activity. Therefore, the four-bar section beginning with bar five and ending with bar eight (lines three and four) contains the greatest degree of rhythmic continuity in the entire ten bars and becomes the central area of rhythmic activity. Just as the less rhythmically active lines one and two (bars one through four) contain a rhythmic parallelism, and seem to unite as a four-bar rhythmic unit, so do the more rhythmically active lines three and four (bars five through eight), suggesting a grouping of the ten bars into 4 + 4 + 2 (Ex. 1.3). This grouping, of course, conflicts with that which comes from the division of the verse and refrain, 6 + 4.

Yet another grouping results from the melodic structure of the song. In the refrain, scale degree 3 is prolonged in bars seven through nine, and it falls to scale degree 1 in bar ten. This balances a melodic event that takes place earlier in the ten-bar structure: in bars one through three, the upper scale degree 1 is prolonged, and falls to

Brothers and Curry, “Gonna Die with my Hammer in my Hand”; Puckett, “A Darkey’s Wail.”

⁵ E.g., Crenshaw, “John Henry”; J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineers, “John Henry Was A Little Boy.”

scale degree 5 in bar four (Ex. 1.4). The first four bars and the last four bars thus contain similar melodic events, though the latter is more final. This similarity of melodic content between the opening four bars and the closing four bars creates a balance between the beginning and ending of the tune, and suggests a grouping of the ten bars into 4 + 2 + 4.

It is perhaps not very productive to favor one of these groupings over the others as the “real” grouping; one may be more prominent if it is emphasized by the musician, or if the listener chooses to focus on it. And perhaps they can all be present at once. Indeed, perhaps one of the most attractive characteristics of the “John Henry” scheme is the tension and ambiguity between these simultaneously perceived groupings of the ten bars.

As mentioned above, the four-bar refrain grows out of the repetition of line four to create line five. In order to make the refrain sound musically convincing, something is always done with the rhythm to make line four (bars seven and eight) sound less conclusive than line five (bars nine and ten) (Ex. 1.5). In bar eight, the vocal rhythm normally continues to beat two, rather than stopping on the downbeat. In the corresponding place in bar ten, however, the vocal rhythm comes to a stop on the downbeat, making bar ten sound more final than bar eight (Ex. 1.5a). (Sometimes, when there is a second singer singing discant, the lead singer stops on the downbeat of bar eight, but the discant singer continues the vocal rhythm through the bar.⁶)

The melodic content of the refrain is also very important to its structure. As shown in Example 1.5b, the melody usually contains scale degree 3 on the downbeat of

⁶ E.g., Evans and McClain, “John Henry Blues”; “22” and Group, “John Henry”; Williamson Brothers and Curry, “Gonna Die with my Hammer in my Hand.”

bar seven (sometimes it is delayed until bar eight⁷) and arrives on scale degree 1 on the downbeat of bar ten. The relationship between line four and line five is comparable to that of an imperfect cadence followed by a perfect cadence, with the result that line five sounds more melodically conclusive than line four.

Finally, the harmony also often comes into play in the refrain. The most common harmonic scheme for the refrain is for the tonic to be held throughout bars seven and eight, followed by a shift from tonic to dominant midway through bar nine and back to tonic in bar ten (Ex 1.5c). As opposed to the static harmony of line four, the harmonic change in line five emphasizes the final cadence in bar ten.

Melodic Structure

The “John Henry” melody shows a great degree of flexibility, and it may change significantly from one recording to another. In most recordings, however, the singers seem to be working from a similar melodic framework that allows for a wide range of variation, and this framework allows each version to be recognizable as a modification of the same tune. A basic skeleton of a very common version of the melody is shown in Example 1.6a. It can be reduced to several smaller components:

1. a quarter-note upbeat (usually coinciding with the word “John”)
2. a rhythm of eighth note followed by (dotted) quarter note (usually coinciding with the word “Henry”) at the beginning of bar one
3. the upper scale degree 1 on the downbeat of bar one, returning on the downbeats of bars three and five

⁷ E.g., Guthrie and Houston, “John Henry”; Bell, “John Henry”; J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineers, “John Henry Was A Little Boy.”

4. in bars one and two, a descending octave from $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{1}$
5. in bars three and four, a descending $\hat{1}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ motion
6. in bars five and six, a descending octave from $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{1}$
7. scale degree 3 on the downbeat of bar seven, returning on the downbeat of bar eight
8. scale degree 3 on the downbeat of bar nine, arriving at scale degree 1 on the downbeat of bar ten

Examples 1.6b-e show four transcriptions of the melody, all of which deviate from the basic melodic skeleton, given in Example 1.6a, in some way. In Woody Guthrie's "John Henry," for instance, the melody begins bars seven and nine not with scale degree 3 but rather with a motion from scale degree 6 to scale degree 5 (Ex. 1.6b). Evans and McClain deviate from the basic melody in bars three and four (Ex. 1.6d); here their melody contains only the motion from scale degree 6 down to scale degree 5, omitting the upper scale degree 1. However, this melody does return to the high scale degree 1 in bar five, like all the others transcribed, suggesting that this may be part of a basic framework of the "John Henry" tune.

Leadbelly's "John Henry" melody (1948) shows the most significant deviations from the basic skeleton (Ex. 1.6e). In bars one and two, and again in bars five and six, rather than descending an octave from the upper $\hat{1}$ to the lower $\hat{1}$, Leadbelly simply maintains the upper $\hat{1}$.⁸ During the refrain (bars seven through ten), Leadbelly does not

⁸ Maintaining the high tonic in bars one and two is in fact quite common; e.g., Crenshaw, "John Henry"; Ledbetter and Terry, "John Henry"; Terry and McGhee, "John Henry";

go down to the lower scale degree 3 but rather extends the register upwards to the higher scale degree 3; thus, he essentially transposes the entire refrain up an octave and ends on the upper scale degree 1, creating a second tune type. This gives his melody a different modal frame than the others—with a plagal range of scale degree 5 up to scale degree 3, as opposed to $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{1}$ —and therefore a much different expressive quality (Ex. 1.7).

In discussing different realizations of the melodic structure of “John Henry” scheme, it seems difficult, and probably unnecessary, to nail down a “standard” version of the melody. However, most singers,⁹ including those represented in Example 1.6, seem to share a conception of the melody that requires the following (Ex. 1.6f):

1. upper scale degree 1 in bar one
2. scale degree 5 in bar four (usually preceded by scale degree 6 in bar three)
3. upper scale degree 1 in bar five
4. scale degree 3 in bar seven (perhaps delayed until bar eight, as Guthrie does)
5. scale degree 1 in bar ten

Harmonic Scheme

The rhythmic structure and melodic structure of the “John Henry” scheme are its most consistent elements and establish its basic musical framework; the harmonic scheme displays less consistency. The melodic structure’s emphasis on the notes of the

“22” and Group, “John Henry”; J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineer’s, “John Henry Was A Little Boy”; Bell, “John Henry.”

⁹ E.g., Crenshaw, “John Henry”; Evans and McClain, “John Henry Blues”; Guthrie and Houston, “John Henry”; Ledbetter, “John Henry,” 1948; Ledbetter and Terry, “John Henry”; Terry and McGhee, “John Henry”; “22” and Group, “John Henry” (sometimes with flat scale degree 7 instead of scale degree 6 in bar three); Williamson Brothers and Curry, “Gonna Die with my Hammer in my Hand”; J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineer’s, “John Henry Was A Little Boy”; Bell, “John Henry”; Puckett, “A Darkey’s Wail.”

tonic triad permits support by tonic harmony only, as in Riley Puckett's "A Darkey's Wail" (Ex. 1.8a).¹⁰ It also, however, allows for several substitutions of the dominant and subdominant.

Woody Guthrie harmonizes most of the melody with the tonic, but shifts to the dominant in bar four, which coincides with the melodic emphasis on scale degree 5 at that point (Ex. 1.8b). He also shifts to the dominant midway through bar nine, which speeds up the harmonic rhythm and emphasizes the cadence. (These two shifts to the dominant also suggest a 4 + 6 grouping of the rhythmic structure and give Guthrie's song something of a periodic structure, at least as far as the harmony is concerned, with the first four bars leading to the dominant and the refrain answering this with a tonic-dominant-tonic progression.)

The presence of the upper scale degree 1 in bars one, three, and five also allows for subdominant substitution, as in the recording by the Williamson Brothers and Curry (Ex. 1.8d). In bars one through six, the harmony oscillates between the subdominant in the strong bars and the tonic in the weak bars; one result of this harmonic scheme is that the melodic motion to scale degree 5 in bar four is accompanied by a harmonic progression to the tonic. By maintaining the upper scale degree 1 in bar six, Leadbelly allows for yet another subdominant substitution there. In the refrain, the harmonic scheme is the same as Guthrie's.

Leadbelly's harmonization begins in a manner similar to that of the Williamson Brothers and Curry, with an oscillation between subdominant and tonic in bars one through three (Ex. 1.8c). But Leadbelly takes a different path beginning in bar four,

¹⁰ Henry Thomas also uses only the tonic in some strophes of his "John Henry"; in others he plays the dominant in bar four.

where he introduces the dominant to support scale degree 5 in the melody. He thus uses the subdominant substitutions in the first two strong bars (like the Williamson Brothers and Curry) and the dominant substitution in bar four (like Guthrie). His refrain is like those of both Guthrie and the Williamson Brothers and Curry.

The harmonic scheme used by Evans and McClain (Ex. 1.8e) displays a faster harmonic rhythm than any of the others, with every strong bar (except for bar one) containing both a subdominant and a dominant chord. This has the most in common with the strong-bar subdominant substitutions used by both Leadbelly and the Williamson Brothers and Curry.

The only truly constant harmonies in these recordings are the tonics in bars two, eight, and ten. More meaningful, though, are the possible places for substitution by the dominant and subdominant, and the influence of the melodic structure on these choices.¹¹

The harmonic scheme chosen by a musician has implications for the perception of the ten-bar structure. During the verse, Leadbelly and the Williamson Brothers and Curry place non-tonic harmonies on the strong bars, which contrasts with their placement of the tonic on strong bars during the refrain. This gives a feeling of harmonic dissonance to the verse and a feeling of harmonic resolution to the refrain.

“K. C. Blues” by Frank Hutchison

Of all of the musical elements that make up “John Henry,” it seems that the ten-bar structure is the most consistent, but even this is not universal.¹² In Frank Hutchison’s

¹¹ One notable departure from these typical substitutions is made by J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineers, who play the subdominant in bar four, probably triggered by their substitution of scale degree 6 for scale degree 5 at that point in the melodic structure.

“K. C. Blues,” the standard ten-bar structure is transformed into a twelve-bar structure (Ex. 1.9). This version is entirely instrumental (except for a moment in the middle of the song, when Hutchison stops playing and announces that he’s ”getting right on good red liquor”), but it nonetheless maintains the verse and refrain structure typically found in “John Henry,” and each phrase of the guitar melody (what would normally be one line of text) still coincides with two bars, one strong and one weak.¹³ The first six bars of “K. C. Blues” contain a more or less standard version of the familiar verse. The most striking departure comes in the refrain: normally the refrain is four bars long (bars seven through ten), but Hutchison repeats bars seven and eight, thereby extending the refrain to six bars.

The repetition of bars seven and eight (and thus the expansion of the song to twelve bars) is possible only because of the changes that Hutchison makes to the harmony and melody in these two bars. In a more typical version of “John Henry” the two lines of the refrain contain something like a question and answer relationship: bars seven and eight are normally made to sound less final and are answered by bars nine and ten, which contain much of the same musical material but sound more final. The inconclusiveness of bars seven and eight is achieved, in large part, by the prolongation of scale degree 3 and the stationary harmony, while the finality of bars nine and ten is achieved by the arrival of scale degree 1 in bar ten and a harmonic shift that emphasizes the cadence. There is no such question and answer relationship in Hutchison’s refrain;

¹² One departure from the ten-bar structure that is not discussed in detail here is Sid Hemphill’s “John Henry” (1942), which uses an eight-bar structure. Hemphill retains the descending contour and triadic framework of the melodic structure, and supports the melody with only the tonic.

¹³ Given Hutchison’s inimitable approach to beat, the bars in the recording are not of uniform length; but the beginnings and endings of the phrases are quite clear. In Examples 1.9 and 1.10, some of the bars have been “straightened out” so that all of them are of uniform length, mostly for the sake of comparison with the other examples.

the harmony in bars seven and eight is not static but contains a shift from the subdominant to the tonic, and, most importantly, bars seven and eight prolong not scale degree 3 but scale degree 1. In the typical refrain, a repetition of bars seven and eight would sound awkward, but since Hutchison's bars seven and eight create no immediate expectation for an answer, he has the option of repeating them. Indeed, "optional" is an accurate way of describing this expansion; in the third repetition of the tune, Hutchison omits the reiteration of bars seven and eight, resulting in a ten bar structure.

Interestingly, Hutchison's four-bar bridge between statements of the main tune bears a strong resemblance to the normal "John Henry" refrain (Ex. 1.10a). During this bridge the harmony has no shift to the dominant—it simply prolongs the tonic—but the melody prolongs scale degree 3 for three bars and then moves to scale degree 1 on the downbeat of the fourth bar, very much like the typical refrain.¹⁴ And toward the end of the recording, as Hutchison's version grows increasingly improvisatory, one of the new fragments which becomes more and more prominent is a two-bar statement with a melodic outline consisting of scale degrees 3-2-1, over a tonic-dominant-tonic shift (Ex. 1.10b). It's as though Hutchison's omission of this melodic idea from the refrain is being balanced by its presence in both the bridge and the later improvisatory sections.

¹⁴ It might be possible to interpret this four-bar bridge as part of the refrain; this would make the refrain ten bars long and the entire statement of the tune sixteen bars long. But in his last statement of the tune, before the spoken material and the more improvisatory sections, Hutchison leaves out this four-bar bridge, suggesting that he does not consider it an essential part of the refrain.

“John Henry” by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee

Like Frank Hutchison, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee extend their “John Henry” beyond the typical ten-bar structure by expanding the refrain (Ex. 1.11). In three statements of the tune the voice and harmonica produce a composite melody (the guitar accompaniment is maintained throughout). As usual, each line corresponds to two bars of music, one strong and one weak, and each statement contains a verse and refrain. All three of the verses are, as is typical, six bars long, but here the voice articulates the beginning of each line in the strong bars and the harmonica articulates the end of each line in the weak bars. The stronger metric placement of the voice gives it predominance during the verse (Ex. 1.11a).

The biggest departures—and those that extend the structure beyond ten bars—come during the refrain. Unlike Hutchison, who expands the refrain by eliminating its question-answer structure, Terry and McGhee expand the refrain by exploiting it. In a more typical version of “John Henry,” the question-answer structure of the refrain is the product of the vocal rhythm, melody, and harmony. In Terry and McGhee’s version, however, it is chiefly based on the most conspicuous aspect of their song: the alternation of the voice and harmonica. All three of the refrains are divided into two parts: the first part, the question, opens with the voice; it is answered by the harmonica, which is more prominent in the second part. Although there are many differences between the three refrains, several important similarities exist: the voice always falls on the first downbeat of the question and fills out the first bar; the harmonica articulates every downbeat of the answer; and the harmonica always plays the last two bars of the answer.

The question-answer relationship between the first and second parts is the least explicit in the first refrain (Ex. 1.11b). Here the voice simply opens the first part, falling on the downbeat of the first strong bar and then proceeding to fill it out. The harmonica is more definitively prominent in the second part of the refrain by articulating every downbeat.

The question-answer relationship is more prominent in the second and third refrains (Ex. 1.11c-d). The voice is more prominent in the first part; it falls on the downbeats of both of the strong bars and fills them out. It is answered by the second part, during which the harmonica alone carries the melody.

In the second refrain (Ex. 1.11c) the question-answer relationship between the voice and harmonica works together with that of the melodic progression: the first part prolongs scale degree 3 (and scale degree 5) for four bars; the second part answers with a four-bar prolongation of scale degree 1. In the first and third refrains both the first and second parts contain a melodic progression from scale degree 3 down to scale degree 1 (Ex. 1.11b and d). Thus each part contains, in its melodic progression, its own small-scale question-answer structure, which is subsumed by the large-scale question-answer structure articulated by the voice and harmonica.

Still other larger-scale alternations between the voice and harmonica exist. The verse, in which the voice predominates, is balanced by the refrain, which is concluded by the harmonica. Finally, every extended, composite statement of the tune by the voice and harmonica is preceded and followed by a ten-bar statement that is almost exclusively played by the harmonica, creating an alteration on a still larger scale.

“Spike Driver Blues” by John Hurt

John Hurt’s “Spike Driver Blues” is a full-fledged variation of “John Henry,” greatly deviating from both the normal verse and refrain structure and the basic melodic skeleton.¹⁵ What it has most in common with a more typical version of “John Henry” is the ten-bar structure with the alternation of strong odd-numbered bars and weak even-numbered bars. Example 1.12 shows the first verse and refrain of “Spike Driver Blues.” The five syllables that receive the most emphasis are “ham-[mer]” (bar one), “cap-[tain]” (bar three), “gone” (bar five), “gone” (bar seven), and “gone” (bar nine), all of which fall on the downbeats of odd-numbered bars. The chord changes also come on the downbeats of odd-numbered bars, thus reinforcing the sense of pairs of bars, the first strong, the second weak; although the harmony for the entire song is essentially just the tonic, John Hurt does make changes to the harmony that constitute chord changes. The result is shown in the left-hand column of Example 1.12.

While “Spike Driver Blues” retains the ten-bar structure, the way that the verse and refrain interact with this structure is much different than in the normal “John Henry” scheme. Rather than containing three lines of verse followed by two lines of refrain, John Hurt’s variation has one relatively long line of verse followed by three lines of

¹⁵ “Spike Driver Blues” is also related to the “Nine Pound Hammer” song complex. For an account of the relationship between “John Henry” and “Nine Pound Hammer,” see Norm Cohen, *Long Steel Rail: The Railroad in American Folksong*, 571-582; Archie Green, *Only a Miner*, 329-369.

refrain (Ex. 1.13).¹⁶ The way in which the lines interact with the bars is also quite different: in the normal ten-bar structure of “John Henry,” each line begins on a strong bar and concludes on a weak bar. In “Spike Driver Blues,” however, each line begins on a weak bar and concludes on a strong bar. The result is that the weak bars act as pickups to the strong bars. This is especially audible during the three lines of refrain, where bar four acts as a pickup to bar five, bar six acts as a pickup to bar seven, and bar eight acts as a pickup to bar nine. Bar ten even acts as a pickup to bar one. (Another result is that the weak bars become more rhythmically filled out than the strong bars.) This variation on the verse and refrain structure also works at odds with the harmonic scheme. While each line begins on a weak bar and ends on a strong bar, each harmony does just the opposite, beginning on a strong bar and ending on a weak bar.

A comparison of John Hurt’s melody with the basic skeleton of the “John Henry” melody illustrates how much Hurt’s version differs: it lacks the descending $\hat{1}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ motion in bars three and four, the descending octave in bars five and six, and the motion from scale degree 3 down to scale degree 1 in bars seven through ten (Ex. 1.14). However, some similarities do remain. Most obviously, both melodies have a modal frame spanning an octave. Less obvious is how some of the elements of the basic skeleton have been shifted to different places in the ten-bar structure. A descending octave from tonic down to tonic is present in John Hurt’s melody, but rather than happening in bars one and two, it happens in bars one through three (still corresponding to the first line). The motion from scale degree 3 down to scale degree 1, normally found in the refrain, can be found in bars four and five of “Spike Driver Blues.” Even the

¹⁶ In the typical “John Henry” refrain, both the text and melodic material are repeated, but in “Spike Driver Blues” only the text is repeated.

motion of scale degree 6 going to scale degree 5, usually found in bars three and four, can be found in bars six and seven of Hurt's variation, within the motion $\flat \overset{\wedge}{7} - \overset{\wedge}{6} - \overset{\wedge}{5}$ (a transposition of the immediately preceding $\overset{\wedge}{3} - \overset{\wedge}{1}$ progression). Along with the text, the use of these melodic elements and the retention of the ten-bar structure are what allow this song to be recognized as a variation on "John Henry."

In the "John Henry" scheme, the rhythmic and melodic structures are the most consistent components, although performers may extend the refrain through repetition or expansion and may realize the discant as either a first or second tune type. The emphasis in the melodic structure of the members of the tonic triad allows performers to harmonize it entirely with the tonic, but the subdominant may substitute where scale degree 1 is prolonged, and the dominant where scale degree 5 is emphasized. The harmonic rhythm often accelerates with a shift to the dominant midway through bar nine to emphasize the cadence.

Chapter 2

The “Alabama Bound” Blues Scheme

In 1909, Robert Hoffman published “I’m Alabama Bound,” his most famous piece of ragtime; the opening strain has the eight-bar structure, harmonic scheme (I-I-IV-IV-V-V-I-I), and melodic structure most closely associated with the “Alabama Bound” blues scheme (Ex. 2.1). Most ragtime scholars believe that Hoffman, who lived and worked in New Orleans, was drawing from the traditional music of the region. “Section A was one of the best-known folk songs of the southern Mississippi Valley, recalled in later years by Jelly Roll Morton,” write David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor. Later, Jasen and Gene Jones write “Its main theme is a folk strain or at least an old song. (The melody was included in Blind Boone’s ‘Southern Rag Medley #2,’ which was published that same year. Jelly Roll Morton always claimed that he wrote it, and he recorded a vocal version ‘Don’t You Leave Me Here’ in 1939.)”¹

Dorothy Scarborough notes the use of the line “I’m Alabama boun’!” in “shine reels” sung by bootblacks (shoe shine boys) in Texas; the melody she notates is eight bars long, but otherwise has little resemblance to Hoffman’s (Ex. 2.2). (The words to the melody are: “Where wuz you, Sweet Mama, When de boat went down?” “On de deck, Baby, Hollerin’, ‘Alabama boun’!”) She also records the use of the line “I’m Alabama bound” together with the line “Don’t you leave me here” (the second most common line in the “Alabama Bound” text) in Mississippi, though here she gives no melody.²

¹ Jasen and Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime*, 69; Jasen and Jones, *That American Rag*, 167.

² Scarborough, *On The Trail Of Negro Folk Songs*, 213, 239. Scarborough rarely gives dates for her research; her book was published in 1925.

Although the lines “I’m Alabama bound” and “Don’t you leave me here” crop up elsewhere—for example in Ida Cox’s “Bama Bound Blues,” Robert Wilkins’s “Alabama Blues,” and Tampa Red’s “Don’t Leave Me Here,” all twelve-bar blues—they are found most often in the eight-bar scheme. Charley Patton uses another phrase from the text, “Elder Greene is gone,” as the basis for his “Elder Greene Blues,” in which he also uses the eight-bar scheme. The “Alabama Bound” text has no lines that recur in every stanza, and thus no refrain; for this reason, the two halves of songs using this text will be described as the verse and response, respectively.

The scheme also generated a group of songs about cocaine, which do have a refrain. These songs either have “cocaine” in the title, as in the Memphis Jug Band’s “Cocaine Habit Blues,” or use some disguised reference to cocaine, as in “Croquet Habits” by Freeny’s Barn Dance Band, or else they are named “Take A Whiff On Me,” after the song’s most common refrain. Scarborough notes one song, “I Went To The Hop-Joint,” which, in addition to the drug reference in the title, has certain other characteristics in common with the cocaine songs discussed here (Ex. 2.3). The melody clearly outlines the tonic, subdominant, dominant, and tonic, in that order, and its refrain—“Oh, baby darlin’, why don’t you come home?”—is very much like the refrain “Oh, hey, honey take a whiff on me” (or perhaps even closer to Freeny’s refrain “Oh, hey, honey can’t you come out tonight”). However, “I Went To The Hop-Joint” is twelve bars long and is clearly a member of the “Frankie-Boll Weevil” scheme, closest to the Stagolee variety; in addition to conveying the musical structure of that scheme (including the suggestion of a return to the tonic between the subdominant and dominant), the stanzas given describe a shooting with a forty-one caliber gun. The

transposition of tonic material in line one to the subdominant in line two is a significant connection between the “Alabama Bound” and “Frankie” schemes.

On the next page, Scarborough notates a song called “Tom Cat,” which even more closely resembles the cocaine songs, though it makes no reference to the drug; Scarborough notates the song as four bars long (but it could easily be represented in eight), the arpeggiations in the “Tom Cat” melody are quite like those in the cocaine melody (suggesting I-IV-V-I), and the refrain—“Oho, my baby, take a-one on me”—is even closer to the “Take A Whiff On Me” refrain (Ex. 2.4).³ It seems, then, that the scheme is quite old, and that it has been associated with both the “Alabama Bound” and “Cocaine” texts for quite a long time.

This chapter is based on eighteen recordings, fourteen of which use the “Alabama Bound” scheme (see Table 2.1). Of those fourteen, seven use the “Alabama Bound” text—or a closely associated text such as “Don’t Leave Me Here” or “Elder Green” (Henry Thomas’s “Don’t Ease Me In” is a variation on the “Don’t Leave Me Here” text)—five use the “Cocaine” text, one uses an original text (“Goin’ To Germany” by Cannon’s Jug Stompers), and one is an instrumental (“Alabama Blues” by the Three Stripped Gears). The remaining four use the “Spoonful” scheme, which is also eight bars long and has a text about drugs.

The “Alabama Bound” scheme forms part of the common stock, although one finds it mainly in the repertoires of black musicians; Dixon, Godrich, and Rye list over forty recordings under the titles mentioned above, while Russell lists fewer than ten.⁴ Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of considering it a member of the common stock

³ Scarborough, *On The Trail Of Negro Folk Songs*, 90-91.

⁴ Dixon, Godrich and Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records*; Russell, *Country Music Records*.

is that Robert Hofmann, a white Southerner, felt comfortable enough with the scheme to use it in one of his compositions.

Eight-Bar Structure

The “Alabama Bound” scheme is eight bars long, usually with four beats per bar; Hoffman notated “I’m Alabama Bound” in 2/4, and Jelly Roll Morton, in both of his recordings, also seems to be playing in duple meter. Some other recordings—such as “Alabama Blues” by the Three Stripped Gears—may also be heard in duple meter, but for the sake of simplicity and comparison, four beats will be described here. A simplified ground of the “Alabama Bound” scheme is given in Example 2.5. The two main texts associated with the scheme diverge from one another mostly in their rhythmic structure. The “Alabama Bound” text has four lines, two in the verse and two in the response, usually with an a-a-b-a poetic structure, as in Leadbelly’s opening stanza (Ex. 2.6). Lines one, two, and four, which are usually the same in every stanza, are shorter, having only two accents, and covering only one strong bar (bars one, three, and seven, respectively); the first accent of each line falls on the downbeat and the second on the third beat. Line three is longer; it has four accents and covers both a weak bar and a strong bar, with the accents falling on the downbeats and third beats of bars five and six. The more rhythmically active line three thus unites with line four to create a heightened area of rhythmic activity in the response, contrasting with the sparser rhythmic activity of the verse (Ex. 2.7).⁵ The four lines of the “Alabama Bound” text often rhyme, as they do in

⁵ In its a-a-b-a/short-short-long-short poetic structure, the “Alabama Bound” text is somewhat reminiscent of the sixteen-bar “Sweet Thing.”

Example 2.6. Another common rhyme scheme is A-A-B-A, in which only the shorter lines rhyme.

The “Alabama Bound” text displays more regularity than many other texts in its small-scale rhythmic construction. The most common line, “I’m Alabama bound,” represents a rhythmic figure that recurs in most stanzas. The syllable “-bam-“ falls in the strongest metric positions, on the downbeats of bars one, three, and seven, and “bound” falls in a strong metric position on the third beats of the same bars. The syllable “Al-“ represents a secondary, upbeat stress that consistently falls on the fourth beat of the preceding weak bar. The same rhythmic figure is realized with other common lines such as “Don’t you leave me here,” and “Leave a dime for beer.” The third line, although longer, contains a similar upbeat stress, as with the word “If” in Example 2.7.

Although the rhythmic structure becomes more active in the response, there is typically a conspicuous lack of activity after the downbeat of bar five, which is usually the first downbeat accent not immediately followed by more rhythmic activity (it normally coincides with a one-syllable word, such as “train” in Example 2.7). Thus, within the generally heightened activity of the response, the accent on the downbeat of bar five often represents a brief lull. This is a notable characteristic that the two texts have in common, discussed in more detail below.

As mentioned above, line four usually has the same text as lines one and two, with the same rhythmic structure. As a result, the entire rhythmic structure comes to a close on the third beat of bar seven, thereby giving songs using the “Alabama Bound” text the most inconclusive rhythmic structure of any of the schemes under discussion. Whatever sense of rhythmic conclusiveness there is at the end of line four derives mainly

from the sense that after the heightened rhythmic activity in line three there is a relaxation back to the less active rhythms of lines one and two, though this is belied somewhat by the sense that lines three and four together contribute to the heightened area of rhythmic activity.

Occasionally, line four will be different from lines one and two, but even where this is the case, the new text in line four is short like lines one and two, thus maintaining the a-a-b-a form in the rhythmic structure if not in the poetic structure (Table 2.1). Jelly Roll Morton follows this plan in the opening stanza of “Don’t You Leave Me Here” (“Don’t you leave me here/Don’t you leave me here/If you just must go sweet babe/Leave a dime for beer”).

By contrast, the “Cocaine” text has three lines, two in the verse and one in the refrain, as in “Cocaine Habit Blues” by the Memphis Jug Band (Ex. 2.8). Lines one and two each have four accents and cover both a strong bar and a weak bar, and they usually rhyme. Line three, which is longer, and is the same in every strophe, has five accents, falling on the first and third beats of bars five and six and on the downbeat of bar seven. As a result, there is no central area of rhythmic activity, but rather the maximum amount of rhythmic activity, at least as far as the accents are concerned, all the way from the downbeat of bar one to the downbeat of bar seven.

Because the rhythmic structure contains the maximum number of accents, most of the sense of rhythmic punctuation grows out of the presence or lack of rhythmic continuity beyond these thirteen accents. In the first two lines, the rhythm typically continues beyond the first three accents but comes to a stop on the fourth accent, at the end of the line, on the third beats of bars two and four, respectively (which indeed

contributes to the sense that the verse is even divisible into two lines, as does the rhyme). In line three, no rhythmic activity immediately follows the two accents in bar five, which usually coincide with the words “Hey, hey”; however, rhythmic activity does immediately follow the two accents in bar six, driving the rhythm towards the final accent on the downbeat of bar seven. Thus, even though there are two accents in bar five, it represents, on the whole, a lull in the rhythmic activity, and this is one characteristic common to both the “Alabama Bound” text and the “Cocaine” text, though in the former the lull often lasts for only half of bar five.

Occasionally, there is no pickup to line two, in which case the division of the verse into two lines is quite clear, as in the opening stanza of Woody Guthrie’s “Take A Whiff On Me” (“Take a whiff, take a whiff, take a whiff on me/Everybody take a whiff on me/Hey, hey, baby take a whiff on me”). Often, however, there is a pickup to the second line, as in the first stanza from “Croquet Habits” by Freeny’s Barn Dance Band (“Well the croquet habits is mighty bad/But these old habits I’ve always had/Hey, hey, honey, aren’t you comin’ out tonight”); when this is the case, there is less of a break between lines one and two, and the verse sounds somewhat less divisible into two lines. There is rarely a pickup to line three, and thus there is usually a clear division between the verse and refrain.

Unlike the “Alabama Bound” text, in which both the verse and response end inconclusively on the third beat of a strong bar, in the “Cocaine” text the verse ends inconclusively on the third beat of a weak bar (four), and the refrain answers with a conclusive close on the downbeat of a strong bar (seven).

Hoffman's "I'm Alabama Bound" actually has a rhythmic structure somewhat closer to that of the "Cocaine" text, because, in the verse, he repeats the melodic material of the strong bars in the following weak bars, which gives the rhythmic structure eight accents in the first four bars. Most singers who use the "Alabama Bound" text do not do this, but Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, and Cisco Houston do something similar in their "Alabama Bound." Here, Guthrie and Houston repeat lines one and two in the weak bars of the verse after Leadbelly sings them in the strong bars, with the result that, when all of the vocals are considered, the rhythmic structure is like Hoffman's.

The text of "Goin' To Germany" by Cannon's Jug Stompers is similar to the "Cocaine" text in that it has three lines, with the first two spanning two bars each and ending on the third beat of a weak bar, and the third spanning three bars and coming to a close on the downbeat of bar seven (Ex. 2.9). However, like the "Alabama Bound" text, it has a response instead of a refrain, and the first two lines are the same while the third line is different in each stanza (except in the first stanza, where all three lines are the same). The resulting a-a-b poetic structure is thus somewhat like the a-a-b-a poetic structure of the "Alabama Bound" text, though with the significant difference that the opening line does not return at the end of the stanza. The first two lines, which are textually and rhythmically identical (like the "Alabama Bound" text) both have three accents, the first falling on the downbeat of the strong bar, the second on the downbeat of the weak bar, and the third on the third beat of the weak bar. As in the "Cocaine" text, there is rhythmic activity beyond the downbeat accents but none beyond the final accent of each of the first two lines, on the third beats of the weak bars two and four. Line three has four accents, and there is no immediate rhythmic activity following the first two of

these, which fall on the first and third beats of bar five; thus, as in both the “Alabama Bound” and “Cocaine” texts, bar five is conspicuous as the first strong bar to contain no activity immediately after the downbeat (and in this respect it resembles most closely the “Cocaine” text in that it also has no activity beyond the third beat). The rhythmic activity beyond the penultimate accent, on the third beat of bar six, drives the rhythm into the final accent on the downbeat of bar seven. Like the “Cocaine” text, the verse ends inconclusively on the third beat of bar four, and the response answers with a conclusive ending on the downbeat of bar seven.

Freeny’s Barn Dance Band and Jesse Harris consistently eliminate bar eight, and Cannon’s Jug Stompers consistently shorten it to half a bar; all three bring the rhythmic structure to a close on the downbeat of bar seven, which, despite the abbreviation, still allows enough time between stanzas. One does not find this in songs using the “Alabama Bound” text, presumably because the rhythmic structure lasts too far into bar seven to allow for bar eight to be reduced or cut off entirely without destroying the sense of rhythmic separation between stanzas.

Melodic Structure

The “Alabama Bound” and “Cocaine” (or “Take a Whiff on Me”) tunes diverge from one another to some extent, but not to the degree that their rhythmic structures do; indeed, in some ways the two display remarkable similarities (Table 2.1) (Ex. 2.10a and c). This is especially evident in the verse, where both tunes often clearly outline a tonic arpeggiation in line one and a subdominant arpeggiation in line two; in the “Alabama Bound” tune, however, the subdominant arpeggiation is often a transposition of line one

up a fourth, which brings the melodic structure into the upper register of the modal frame, whereas in the “Cocaine” tune it is a descending arpeggiation into the lower register of the frame. In its refrain, the “Cocaine” tune outlines the dominant in bars five and six (in every recording that I have found), but this is less consistently so in the response section of the “Alabama Bound” tune, which is usually a stepwise descent, sometimes outlining the dominant, sometimes not.

In “I’m Alabama Bound,” Hoffman outlines the tonic triad with an accented upper neighbor to the fifth in bars one and two, and then transposes this material up a fourth in bars three and four. Leadbelly follows this plan closely, although over the tonic he extends the line all the way up to $\hat{b}7$, instead of up to $\hat{6}$, replacing the upper neighbor to $\hat{5}$ with its dropping third (sometimes he seems to go up to a neutral note between $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{b}7$) (Ex. 2.10a-b). Rich Brown also essentially follows this melodic construction in the verse, transposing his melodic material from line one up a fourth in line two, but neither of his arpeggiations contain accented neighbors; he thus maintains the ideas of arpeggiation and transposition but omits that of neighbor motion around the fifth (Ex. 2.11). In “Don’t You Leave Me Here,” Jelly Roll Morton outlines the upper part of the tonic in line one and the upper part of the subdominant in line two, but in line one he replaces $\hat{5}$ entirely with $\hat{6}$, thus making the upper neighbor idea more central to his melodic construction (Ex. 2.12).⁶

⁶ In outlining the upper part of the tonic triad in line one, the upper part of the subdominant in line two, and making a chromatic approach to the leading tone in line three, Morton’s melody is much like Scarborough’s “Hop Joint” melody.

Others diverge somewhat more from Hoffman's tune. In his first line, Noah Lewis, who sings and plays the harmonica in "Goin' To Germany," arpeggiates the tonic and accents scale degree 6, the upper neighbor to the fifth; he does not transpose this material in line two, but still maintains the idea of the accented neighbor to the fifth of the subdominant by constructing his second line around a $\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ contour (Ex. 2.13). Charley Patton also arpeggiates the tonic in his first line, with a $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descending contour; instead of transposing this material in line two, however, he repeats it, and varies it only by subsequently extending line two down to scale degree 4 (Ex. 2.14). He thus maintains the ideas of repetition and variation from line one to line two, but does away with that of transposition. (By descending into the lower register of the modal frame in line two, Patton's melody is somewhat like the "Cocaine" tune.) In both of his songs using the "Alabama Bound" scheme, Henry Thomas begins with a tonic arpeggiation in line one, but in line two he introduces new melodic material and arpeggiates the lower third of the dominant, from $\hat{7}$ down to $\hat{5}$ (to be discussed in more detail below) (Ex. 2.15).

In bars five and six of "I'm Alabama Bound," Hoffman outlines the dominant with a stepwise descending tritone from $\hat{7}$ to $\hat{4}$, and Morton follows this most closely (refer back to Ex. 2.12b). Most others retain idea of stepwise descent in line three, contrasting the arpeggiations of the verse, but distribute the stepwise motion over a different part of the scale. Henry Thomas, like Hoffman and Morton, begins this descent on $\hat{7}$, but brings it only down to $\hat{5}$ (Ex. 2.15a). Like Hoffman and Morton, Leadbelly and Patton both outline a descending fourth, but Leadbelly's is from $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{5}$ (Ex. 2.10a-b), and Patton's is from $\flat\hat{3}$ down to $\flat\hat{7}$ (Ex. 2.14a-b).

Like Leadbelly and Thomas, Brown descends to $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ in line three, and like Leadbelly and Patton, his descent incorporates $\hat{b}7$ (Ex. 2.11). Unlike the others who use the “Alabama Bound” text, however, Brown’s third line is disjunct, and his two descents to $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ are embedded within a larger descent to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$.

Hoffman essentially repeats the arpeggiation of the tonic from the first two bars in the last two bars (though without the pickup), and most musicians who use the “Alabama Bound” text follow this plan, making line four into a repetition of the melody of line one, bringing the melodic structure to a close on $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the third beat of bar seven. Thus, like the text, the melody also has an a-a-b-a structure, with the most contrasting material in line three; it is perhaps better described as a-a’-b-a, a labeling that accounts for the transposition of the melodic material in line two. Patton, Brown, and Leadbelly all follow this a-a’-b-a structure by bringing back their opening melodic material in line four.

Morton’s melodic structure in “Don’t You Leave Me Here” (1939) is perhaps best described as a-a’-b-a’ (Ex. 2.12). As discussed above, he outlines the upper part of the tonic triad in line one, replacing $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ with $\overset{\wedge}{6}$, and transposes this contour upward for the second line. The first line, however, ends on $\overset{\wedge}{3}$, and when Morton brings it back in line four he changes it again so that it ends more conclusively on $\overset{\wedge}{1}$. (Morton’s 1938 recording of “Alabama Bound” displays slightly more variation than his 1939 recording, but he seems to be working from essentially the same melodic framework. His first strophe is transcribed in Example 2.16.)

Although Thomas’s poetic and rhythmic structure may be accurately described as a-a-b-a, his melodic structure is perhaps better described as a-b-b’-a’ (Ex. 2.15). As

mentioned above, in line one Thomas arpeggiates the tonic from $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{3}$, but instead of transposing that material in line two he introduces new material and descends from $\hat{7}$ down to $\hat{5}$ (Ex. 2.15a). This descent of a third anticipates the contour of line three, in which Thomas again descends from $\hat{7}$ to $\hat{5}$, but this time through $\hat{6}$, thus drawing out the descent in conjunction with the longer span of line three. In line four, he brings back the tonic arpeggiation from line one, but this time changes it to make a more conclusive motion to scale degree 1. In some stanzas, Thomas replaces the scale degree 7 that begins the third line with the high scale degree 2, thus introducing a further element of variation between the two lines that outline the dominant (Ex. 2.15d).

In both recordings, Thomas also has a higher level verse and refrain structure on the level of the stanza. Each has a slightly different tune, and the words are different in the verse stanzas but always the same in the refrain stanzas. The main difference between the melodic structures of the two comes in line one, where the refrain stanza (which is described above) arpeggiates the tonic from $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{3}$, and the verse stanza has a descent from $\hat{1}$ through $\hat{6}$ down to $\hat{5}$ (incorporating the upper neighbor idea into the first motion within the tonic, like some of the others discussed) (Ex. 2.15b). This variant maintains the a-b-b'-a' melodic structure; the $\hat{1}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ motion of line one still outlines the tonic, and when line four comes, it sounds like a return to melodic motion within the tonic triad.

The tenth strophe of Thomas's 1929 recording displays the most variation (Ex. 2.15c). The opening tonic arpeggiation is from $\hat{3}$ down to $\hat{1}$, and both of the dominant

arpeggiations are from the upper $\hat{2}$ down to $\hat{5}$. Also, in the same recording, his second stanza ends on $\hat{3}$ (Ex. 2.15e), and his fifth, sixth, and twelfth strophes end with a $\hat{1}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ descent (Ex. 2.15f). Thus, it seems that, taking all of Thomas's variants together, he allows several substitutions within the general framework of a descending tonic arpeggiation in line one, descending motion within the dominant in lines two and three, and a descent from the upper scale degree 1 to another member of the tonic triad in line four.

The "Cocaine" tune also has a tonic arpeggiation in line one and a subdominant arpeggiation in line two, but the latter descends into the lower register of the modal frame rather than ascending into the upper register. The opening tonic arpeggiation appears in a number of different ways. Leadbelly (Ex. 2.10c and e) and Woody Guthrie (Ex. 2.17) both begin with a $\hat{1}-\hat{3}-\hat{5}-\hat{3}$ arpeggiation (those degrees falling in accented positions), which is perhaps the most reminiscent of the "Alabama Bound" tune (or at least of Hoffman's opening material); Leadbelly also has a variant structure for the first line, in which he begins on the upper scale degree $\hat{1}$ and descends through an accented $\hat{6}$ which acts as the upper neighbor to $\hat{5}$ (again recalling the "Alabama Bound" tune) (Ex. 2.10d). Fronzo Cannon, the singer in Freeny's Barn Dance Band, begins a chord step lower than Guthrie and Leadbelly, creating the tonic arpeggiation $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ in line one (Ex. 2.18). Both Hattie Hart, of the Memphis Jug Band (Ex. 2.19), and Jesse Harris (Ex. 2.20) begin with a $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descent.

The subdominant arpeggiation in line two may also appear in a number of different ways. In some cases, there is a pronounced accented upper neighbor to the fifth

of the subdominant (as in some examples of the “Alabama Bound” tune), followed by a descending arpeggiation. Leadbelly often includes this accented neighbor, creating a $\hat{2}-\hat{1}-(\hat{6})-\hat{4}-\hat{2}$ descent, with $\hat{6}$ in an unaccented position (scale degree 2 here acts first as the upper neighbor to $\hat{1}$ and then as the hanging third to $\hat{4}$). Leadbelly also has a variant for the second line, in which he substitutes the upper $\hat{4}$ for $\hat{2}$, eliminating the accented upper neighbor and creating instead a $\hat{4}-(\hat{2})-\hat{1}-(\hat{6})-\hat{4}-\hat{2}$ descent, this time with both $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{6}$ in unaccented positions (Ex. 2.10c and e). Guthrie’s second line is similar to Leadbelly’s, beginning with the accented neighbor, but Guthrie skips $\hat{6}$ in his arpeggiation, creating a $\hat{2}-\hat{1}-\hat{4}-\hat{4}$ descent (Ex. 2.17a-b). Fronzo Cannon begins on $\hat{2}$ but subsequently skips directly to $\hat{6}$, before descending through $\hat{4}$ all the way to the lower scale degree 2 (and here $\hat{2}$, the sixth above the root, replaces $\hat{1}$ in the arpeggiation) (Ex. 2.18a-b). Hart eliminates the idea of downward arpeggiation of the subdominant altogether and simply bases her second line, which moves from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{1}$, on the motion to the fifth of the subdominant from its accented upper neighbor (Ex. 2.19a and c). It is worth noting, however, that Will Shade, who plays the harmonica solos, does play a subdominant descent in line two as shown in Example 2.19b.

Unlike those discussed above, Harris makes a downward arpeggiation of the tonic in line two, before reaching scale degree 2 (like Leadbelly and Fronzo Cannon) in the lower register on the third beat of bar four (Ex. 2.20). Thus, Harris maintains the idea of descending arpeggiation into the lower register in line two, but does away with that of outlining the subdominant.

In “Alabama Blues,” Ralph Durden, the mandolinist for the Three Stripped Gears, transposes the melodic material of line one—a motion within the tonic from the fifth up to the flat seventh—down a fifth to the analogous place over the subdominant in line two (Ex. 2.21). Durden’s melody thus has similarities to both the “Alabama Bound” tune and the “Cocaine” tune; it is like “Alabama Bound” in its transposition of the opening material to the subdominant, but more like “Cocaine” because the transposition is a descent into lower register. (It is also more like the latter in its more active rhythmic structure.)

In the refrain, the “Cocaine” tune begins with an ascent from $\hat{5}$ up to $\hat{7}$ in bar five, coinciding with the words “Hey, hey” which normally begin the refrain. After this ascent, most singers prolong scale degree 5 in some way—Fronzo Cannon with its lower neighbor, Leadbelly and Harris with its hanging third—before finally arriving on $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven.

Durden also begins with the opening $\hat{5}-\hat{7}$ motion, but, unlike the others, he begins on $\hat{5}$ in the lower register; after this he arpeggiates up to the upper $\hat{5}$ before descending to $\hat{1}$. (The opening melodic motion of line three— $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{\#6}$ —briefly recalls the chromatic minor third ascents of lines one and two, though here of course $\hat{\#6}$ continues up to $\hat{7}$.) Durden also plays a short post-cadential melodic extension—a $\hat{6}-\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descent back to the lower $\hat{1}$.

Guthrie and Hart both begin like the others, with a $\hat{5}-\hat{7}$ ascent, but they each have two subsequent melodic structures for the refrain, the first of which remains below scale

degree 1 and the second of which climbs above it. In his first tune, Guthrie fills in the opening $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{7}$ contour with a $\overset{\wedge}{7}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{6}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ passing motion, placing $\overset{\wedge}{6}$ in an accented position (Ex. 2.17a-b). In his alternate tune, after the $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{7}$ ascent, he continues up to $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ and then concludes with a $\overset{\wedge}{6}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{7}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ motion, again placing $\overset{\wedge}{6}$ in an accented position (Ex. 2.17d). In Hart's first tune she returns to $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ in bar six—prolonging it with its upper neighbor—and then ends inconclusively there on the downbeat of bar seven (Ex. 2.19a). In the second tune she continues up to $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ and then descends conclusively to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ (Ex. 2.19e). Unlike Guthrie and Hart (in her second tune), Cannon, Durden, and Harris all close on the lower $\overset{\wedge}{1}$. Leadbelly sometimes ends on the upper $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ and sometimes on the lower $\overset{\wedge}{1}$.

Thus, in some ways the “Cocaine” tune is most differentiated from the “Alabama Bound” tune in its refrain: instead of stepwise descent within the dominant it has arpeggiation of the dominant, and it comes to a close on $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat rather than on the third beat of bar seven. However, the two are still somewhat similar in that the dominant arpeggiation in the “Cocaine” tune begins with an ascent from $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ up to $\overset{\wedge}{7}$, the same third that is sometimes outlined (albeit through a descent) in the third line of the “Alabama Bound” tune.

Noah Lewis's melody in “Goin' To Germany” is most like the “Cocaine” tune in the response (Ex. 2.13a-b). He arpeggiates the dominant in bar five, moving from $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ down to $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ instead of from $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ up to $\overset{\wedge}{7}$, and brings the melody to a close on the lower $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven.

Harmonic Scheme

“Alabama Bound” and “Cocaine” are most similar in their harmonic scheme; the vast majority of musicians use the progression I-I-IV-IV-V-V-I-I (each harmony lasting one bar). Thus, like the other schemes under discussion, the “Alabama Bound” scheme begins with the tonic, but it is the only one in which the tonic does not return again until the end. In the case of the “Cocaine” tune, this works together with the melodic structure to delay any strong sense of closure until the downbeat of bar seven; this is usually the first point at which the tonic coincides with scale degree 1 in an accented position on the downbeat of a strong bar, as in the songs by the Memphis Jug Band (Ex. 2.19c-d), Freeny’s Barn Dance Band (Ex. 2.18b-c), and the Three Stripped Gears (Ex. 2.21b-c).

The Three Stripped Gears place $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar three, but the motion to the subdominant there undermines any sense of closure; Leadbelly (Ex. 2.10e-f) and Guthrie (Ex. 2.17b-c) both begin on $\hat{1}$ over the tonic, but this of course sounds like the initial point of departure, and not at all like an arrival.

With the “Alabama Bound” tune, the return to the tonic in bar seven coincides with the return of the original melodic material from line one, reinforcing the sense that the scheme has returned to its beginning. Together with the motion to the subdominant in line two, this reinforces the a-a’-b-a structure of the melody: the opening idea from line one, which is supported by the tonic, is heard again in line two, but transposed to and sounding over the subdominant; the contrasting material of line three sounds over the dominant; and the return to the opening idea in line four coincides with the return of the tonic.

The harmonic scheme works with Patton's melodic structure to project an a-a'-b-a form in a somewhat different manner (Ex. 2.14b-c). Patton does not transpose the melodic material of his first line, but rather repeats the descending $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ contour in line two. Although the subsequent descent to $\overset{\wedge}{4}$ already introduces an element of variation to the melodic contour, the shift to the subdominant in line two also changes the harmonic meaning of the $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ descent from bottom third of the tonic chord to top third of a subdominant seventh chord. After the contrasting material of line three is heard over the dominant, the $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ descent returns in line four, once again over the tonic.

The most prominent clashes between the harmonic scheme and the melodic structure occur in Patton's "Elder Greene Blues" (Ex. 2.14b-c) and Leadbelly's "Alabama Bound" (Ex. 2.10b and f), where both create a typical blues dissonance by singing $\hat{b}7$ over the major dominant. In Leadbelly's song, $\hat{b}7$ may be heard as a dropping third, resolving down to $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ over the dominant, whereas in Patton's it may be heard as a stepwise lower neighbor, resolving to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ in bar seven with the return of the tonic.

Brown's "Alabama Bound" is unaccompanied, but he clearly outlines the tonic in line one and the subdominant in line two (Ex. 2.11b). His third line is more difficult to interpret harmonically; if his $\hat{b}7-\overset{\wedge}{5}$ motion in line three is to sound over an implied major dominant then he, too, would have the clash between the two forms of scale degree 7, although it may be simpler to think of the $\hat{b}7-\overset{\wedge}{5}$ descent as implying the minor dominant, given the lack of accompaniment. The unusual return to the lower $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ at the end of line

three perhaps suggests a return to the tonic, which would mean that Brown returns to the tonic earlier than the others. In any case, the return to the melodic material of line one in line four clearly projects a return to the tonic, and Brown seems to have in mind the basic I-IV-V-I progression of the “Alabama Bound” scheme.

Thomas and Harris diverge most from the typical harmonic progression through their omission of the subdominant. Thomas’s progression—I-I-V-V-V-V-I-I—reinforces the a-b-b’-a’ structure of melody described above, in that the harmony, too, has a large-scale a-b-b-a construction (Ex. 2.15g). A steady quadruple meter would put the shift to the dominant in the middle of bar three, but the shift of harmony itself seems more convincingly to project a change of bar. If this is the case, there is a change of meter, in which bar two becomes extended by two beats (to 18/8), which are “paid back” when bar four is subsequently shortened to two beats (6/8). This changes the way that the accents interact with the downbeat, making line two sound as though it contains an accented pickup followed by a downbeat accent. (Freeny’s Barn Dance Band also sometimes changes harmony in the middle of a bar, shifting from the subdominant to the dominant in the middle of bar four to support the low scale degree 2, as shown in Example 2.18c, but here it sounds less like a change of bar than simply an early arrival of the dominant.)

The Three Stripped Gears use the “Alabama Bound” scheme for their main strain, but also alternate this with a subsidiary strain using the “Spoonful” scheme. Because of the similarities between the two, the “Spoonful” scheme makes a natural companion to the “Alabama Bound” scheme. Both are eight bars long with a harmonic progression in which each harmony lasts for two bars (and both are found in ragtime, the “Spoonful” scheme probably more so). Like the “Alabama Bound” progression, the “Spoonful”

progression—VI-VI-II-II-V-V-I-I (all major chords)—consists of a descending-fifths progression in both the verse and refrain, although in the former there is one descending fifth (I-IV) in the verse followed by another (V-I) in the refrain, but no descending fifth between the two sections, whereas in the latter the descending fifths span the entire scheme. “Spoonful” is perhaps most directly related to the “Cocaine” group, in that both texts are about drugs. Indeed, the earliest example of the “Spoonful” scheme that I have found (outside of ragtime), by Dick Justice, is simply titled “Cocaine” (May, 1929). This was quickly followed by “A Spoonful Blues” by Charley Patton (June, 1929), “Just A Spoonful” by Charley Jordan (1930), and later with “Just A Spoonful (Shimmy Or Chicken-Scratch)” by David Edwards (1942), the last of which, however, uses only the “Spoonful” text and not the harmonic scheme. In “Alabama Blues,” the Three Stripped Gears make the connection between all three; the title and the transposition of melodic material to the subdominant recall “Alabama Bound,” the more active rhythmic structure and the descent of the melodic structure into the lower part of the modal frame is more like “Cocaine,” the harmonic progression of the main strain is that of both “Alabama Bound” and “Cocaine,” and the subsidiary strain’s descending-fifth progression beginning on VI is the “Spoonful” progression.

In the “Alabama Bound” scheme, the eight-bar structure and harmonic scheme are the most consistent elements, and the melodic structure displays more variance and substitution. The harmonic scheme supports two main discants: the “Alabama Bound” tune and the “Cocaine” tune. The two discants are similar in that both typically outline the underlying harmonies, which also generally inform the choices for melodic

substitution. The two discants differ with respect to their rhythmic profiles: the “Alabama Bound” tune is less rhythmically active, typically containing ten accents, while the “Cocaine” tune is more rhythmically active, typically containing thirteen accents.

Chapter 3

The “How Long” Blues Scheme

The eight-bar harmonic progression for the “How Long” blues scheme has a long history in American music. As Jane Bowers and William Westcott point out, W. C. Handy printed an eight-bar song, “East St. Louis,” with the basic harmonic progression of the “How Long” scheme, in his 1926 anthology, and claimed, in his autobiography, to have first heard it in 1892 in St. Louis (Ex. 3.1). (Handy’s progression, translated into Roman numerals, is I-IV-IV-IV-I-V-I-V; the most common progression for the “How Long” blues scheme is I-I-IV-IV-I-V-I-I.) Abbe Niles, who wrote the critical text to Handy’s anthology, maintained that the song dates from the first decade of the twentieth century, perhaps earlier.¹

The song “East St. Louis Blues” continued to be sung and recorded in the time period covered here, and two recordings are discussed in this chapter (see Table 3.1). In both, and in the song printed by Handy, the text is through-composed, and there is no refrain. Although it is possible that “East St. Louis Blues” predates the songs from the 1920s that use the words “how long” in the title and text, “How Long” is nonetheless used for the title of the scheme which encompasses both; in addition to being more

¹ Bowers and Westcott, “Mama Yancey and the Revival Blues Tradition,” 183-187; Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 142; Handy, *Blues: An Anthology*, 53, 206. Handy’s harmony in bar five might also be heard as the dominant because of the emphasis on scale degree 5 in the bass. The earliest recording with the title documented by Dixon, Godrich and Rye, “East St. Louis Blues” by Luella Miller, from 1927, is a twelve-bar blues; Dixon, Godrich and Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records*, 637.

widely known as a song title, “How Long” has already been attached to the scheme by other scholars.²

The phrase “how long” also has a long history in American music, dating back to at least the early 1920s in recorded music, where it seems to have first been used in songs employing the twelve-bar blues scheme. The earliest example that I have found is “How Long, Sweet Daddy, How Long,” (1921), by Alberta Hunter, which is a twelve-bar blues (though the first stanza is sixteen bars).³ Already here we find the phrase “how long” being used as a refrain, as it would be later in recordings of the eight-bar scheme. Hunter repeats her third stanza (the second twelve-bar stanza)—“I can’t forget the way he used to hold me in his lovin’ arms/And call me ‘Mama, sweet mama’/Daddy, sweet daddy, how long, how long?”—in its entirety as the fifth stanza; the last line of this stanza is then repeated by itself at the very end, after an instrumental realization of the first eight bars of the twelve-bar scheme. Other examples from the ‘20s that use the words “how long” in a twelve-bar blues—such as Alberta Brown’s “How Long?” (1928) and Frank Stokes’s “How Long?” (1928)—are possibly based on Hunter’s recording; besides being

² Alfons M. Dauer describes the scheme as consisting of a statement and response, with a formal melodic structure of a b a’ c and a harmonic ground of I-I⁷-IV-IVm6-I-V⁷-I-V; Dauer, “Towards a Typology of the Vocal Blues Idiom,” 16-18, 82-83. Peter van der Merwe mentions it only briefly, describing its harmonic scheme as an offshoot of the second half of the passamezzo moderno; van der Merwe, *The Origins of the Popular Style*, 203-204. James Lincoln Collier describes it by its harmonic scheme; Collier, *The Making of Jazz*, 121. Jeff Todd Titon raises (and rejects) the argument that “East St. Louis Blues” and “How Long—How Long Blues,” because of their frequent caesuras, may have been precursors to “those twelve-bar stanzas with more than two caesuras per line.” He also transcribes Leroy Carr’s “How Long, How Long Blues” (unfortunately with the downbeat in the wrong place), and mentions the similarity between the “Crow Jane” family and the “How Long” family, noting that “while the tunes are very close melodically and rhythmically, they call for considerably different harmonic support”; Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, 26, 89-92, 169.

³ This is also the earliest recording with “How Long” in the title documented by Dixon, Godrich and Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records*, 412.

twelve-bar blues, they contain many similar lines. (Alberta Brown’s recording, in particular, follows Hunter’s very closely; every one of her five stanzas corresponds closely to one of Hunter’s five stanzas, and, like Hunter, she opens with a sixteen-bar stanza.) Brown uses the phrase “how long” as a refrain in the same way that Hunter does, although, unlike Hunter, she does not isolate the third line for a final repetition at the end of the song. Stokes uses the phrase as a refrain at the end of lines one and two, as in his first stanza—“I never, never, never can forget that day/When you called me baby, how long, how long?/I ain’t had no lovin’, how long, how long?”

The phrase “how long” converged with the harmonic progression from “East St. Louis Blues” at least as early as 1925, in William Jackson’s published song “How Long, Daddy, How Long” (1925), which was sung and recorded by Ida Cox the same year. Given the similarity between the title of Jackson’s song and that of Alberta Hunter’s earlier song, “How Long, Sweet Daddy, How Long” (1921), it seems plausible that Jackson was familiar with Hunter’s song; if so, it would be just one of many instances in which a recording was used as the basis for an entirely new song.⁴ However, it is also plausible that those words were already being used with the eight-bar scheme, and that Jackson was simply the first to combine the two on paper. In any case, Jackson, unlike Hunter, consistently uses the phrase “how long” as a refrain in the second half of every stanza, as in his first stanza: “How long, how long/Has that southbound train been gone?/How long, how long/Baby, how long?” (These three statements of the phrase “how long” in lines three and four may be referred to as the “How Long” refrain.) This

⁴ David Evans discusses this process in detail. With respect to the phrase “How Long” in particular, he describes how Woodrow Adams’s “How Long” (1967) is based on Howlin’ Wolf’s “Baby How Long” (1954); Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 125-127.

opening stanza is also significant because of its five statements of the phrase “how long” (two in the verse and three in the refrain), a plan followed by many subsequent singers in their opening stanzas, and because of its mention of a departed train, which becomes one of the lasting images associated with the scheme.

After Jackson’s “How Long, Daddy, How Long” of 1925, the words “how long” become very closely attached to the eight-bar verse/refrain structure, and very few examples can be found that use the words “how long” without this verse/refrain structure (one exception being Frank Stokes’s “How Long?” of 1928, which, as mentioned above, is a twelve-bar blues). One large-scale division of the songs under discussion is between those that use the verse/refrain structure and those that do not.⁵

Like Jackson’s song of 1925, Leroy Carr’s hit of 1928, “How Long, How Long Blues,” marks an important point in the history of the “How Long” scheme. The rhythmic structure and harmonic scheme are the most consistent elements of the musical framework, and the scheme supports several discants (even with similar discants one finds more substitution than in the harmonic scheme), but in Carr’s recording we find several of the important melodic characteristics which have since been closely associated with the “How Long” scheme. Given the similarity of the eight-bar structure and harmonic progression of Leroy Carr’s “How Long, How Long Blues” to that of Jackson’s earlier song “How Long, Daddy, How Long,” and given the similarity between Carr’s opening stanza (“How long, babe, how long/Has that evenin’ train been gone?/How long,

⁵ Dauer also makes a distinction between those songs which have a refrain and those which do not—he describes the former as having a statement and refrain and the latter as having a statement and response—both for the “How Long” scheme in particular and for eight-bar schemes in general; Dauer, “Towards a Typology of the Vocal Blues Idiom,” 16-20, 82-83.

how, how long/Baby, how long?") and Jackson's, it seems plausible that Carr knew and was influenced by Jackson's song, though, again, it is also plausible that Carr, too, may have been drawing more from musical tradition than from a particular recording.⁶ After Carr's recording of 1928, much of his melodic structure—especially his opening $\hat{1}-\hat{b}\hat{7}$ gesture—became closely attached to the words “how long,” and very few subsequent recordings can be found that use the words “how long” without Carr's opening $\hat{1}-\hat{b}\hat{7}$ motion. Because the union of the opening $\hat{1}-\hat{b}\hat{7}$ motion with the words “how long” is so frequent and widespread subsequent to Carr's recording, it seems that Carr may have been largely responsible for the widespread dissemination of the scheme as an eight-bar harmonic progression with a “How Long” refrain.⁷

Carr also employed a large-scale descending melodic structure that begins on the upper scale degree 1 and descends to and ends on the lower scale degree 1. This structure, which I am calling the first tune type, was subsequently followed by many other musicians. Indeed, many subsequent recordings that use the “How Long” refrain seem like “covers” of Carr's song; in addition to using the eight-bar harmonic scheme and verse/refrain structure (with the three statements in the refrain of the phrase “how long”) and opening with the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}\hat{7}$ melodic gesture, many use the first tune type.⁸

⁶ Titon supports the latter view: “While the song [Carr's “How Long, How Long Blues”] may derive from Ida Cox's 1925 recording “How Long Daddy, How Long,” my guess is that it was already thoroughly traditional”; Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, 92.

⁷ Bowers and Westcott also credit Carr with popularizing “How Long,” describing “a spate of recordings initiated by the famous Leroy Carr/Scrapper Blackwell recording of 1928”; Bowers and Westcott, “Mama Yancey,” 184.

⁸ Blind Lemon Jefferson's recording of “How Long, How Long” (1928), in particular, follows Carr very closely; in his discussion of Jefferson's recording career, David Evans

And yet many subsequent recordings that use the “How Long” refrain do not sound so much like covers of Carr’s song, and this is in large part because they do not follow Carr’s descending melodic contour but use a second tune type, centered around scale degree 1 in the upper register within a plagal range from either the upper $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ or $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ down to the lower $\overset{\wedge}{5}$. In some cases, singers realize a discant quite similar to Carr’s but transpose the concluding register; in others, singers use the second tune type for discants with little resemblance to Carr’s. It should also be noted here that even many of these “covers” of Carr’s “How Long, How Long Blues” display a large degree of independence and personal interpretation, especially in the refrain, during the three statements of the phrase “how long,” and that the use of a descending melodic structure is not, in itself, indicative of a cover; many eight-bar schemes employ such a structure, and many singers would simply have seen it as one of the most useful available options.

Even Carr’s song might be said to be merely the most influential within a larger scheme, the large-scale rhythmic, harmonic, and (in many instances) melodic components of which are already present in Handy’s “East St. Louis Blues.” Indeed, even after Carr’s hit of 1928, the scheme continues to be used without the verse/refrain structure and the phrase “how long”; both recordings of “East St. Louis Blues” discussed in this chapter postdate Carr’s recording. Thus, two main strands may be said to coexist: those that use the phrase “how long” and the verse/refrain structure, and those that do not use the phrase “how long” and have no refrain (Table 3.1).

lists this recording “as nontraditional because it is obviously a ‘cover’ of another record”; Evans, *Big Road Blues*, 76. Bowers and Westcott also describe Jefferson’s recording as a “cover”; Bowers and Westcott, “Mama Yancey,” 187. Thomas “Jaybird” Jones, during his interview before he plays, describes “How Long” as an old Count Basie number, but Basie’s “How Long” recordings themselves seem to be based on Carr’s.

Yet a third strand emerged later, in the early 1940s, under the title “Worried Life Blues,” the earliest recording of which is by Big Maceo in 1941. It also uses the eight-bar harmonic progression with the verse/refrain structure, but the refrain is quite different from that with the three statements of “how long”; it instead contains the much more rhythmically active lines “But someday, baby/I ain’t gonna worry my life anymore.” In this refrain the third line is shorter and the fourth line is longer—the opposite of the relationship found in the “How Long” text—with the result that the third and fourth lines cover different rhythmic spans than they do in the other songs. In part because this difference creates difficulties of comparison, and in part because it is apparently a later manifestation of the scheme with a more limited influence within the time period under consideration, “Worried Life Blues” will be discussed briefly by itself at the end of the chapter.

This chapter is based on seventeen recordings, from 1921 to 1943, fourteen of which use the eight-bar scheme; the remaining three use the twelve-bar blues scheme, but are considered here (although not as thoroughly) because they contain the words “how long” and help to shed some light on the long history of the text. Of the fourteen that use the eight-bar scheme, eight use the text “How Long” (Jed Davenport’s recording is an instrumental for harmonica and guitar, but because his title is “How Long, How Long Blues” and he uses the eight-bar scheme, I have included him here); of the remaining six, two use the text “East St. Louis Blues,” three the text “Worried Life Blues,” and one, “Wayward Girl Blues” by Lottie Kimbrough, an individual text (Table 3.1).

Eight of the fourteen recordings that use the eight-bar scheme employ the first tune type, the remaining six the second tune type. Kimbrough, in “Wayward Girl Blues,” sings three different discants over the eight-bar structure, all of which belong to the second tune type. Davenport, who also uses the second tune type, has one prominent melodic structure for his verse, with several less prominent variants; he has two prominent melodic structures for his refrain.

Although the “How Long” blues scheme was very popular, and generated many songs, whether covers or new manifestations of the scheme, it seems to have stayed, at least in the time period under discussion here, mostly within the black musical culture, and not to have become a member of the common stock.⁹

Eight-Bar Structure

The “How Long” blues scheme is eight bars long, with four beats per bar. Bowers and Westcott’s “How Long Blues” ground, in which the treble shows the options available to the discant, is reproduced in Example 3.2a, transposed to C. A simplified ground is given in Example 3.2b. Those songs that have the verse/refrain structure have four relatively short lines; lines one and two, which are different in every stanza, constitute the verse, and lines three and four constitute the refrain, with three repetitions of the phrase “how long” (Ex. 3.3). In the opening stanza, the four lines often rhyme, as they do in Example 3.3. A common rhyme scheme for subsequent stanzas is A-A-B-B, in which both verse and refrain have rhyming pairs of lines. Another factor

⁹ Dixon, Godrich and Rye list some thirty-six recordings with “How Long” in the title, seven with “East St. Louis,” and five with “Worried Life Blues”; Russell lists only one under the title “How Long” and none under the others.

differentiating those songs that use the verse/refrain structure from those that do not is that in the latter it often seems more accurate to describe the text as containing two longer lines, or in some cases two short lines followed by one longer line, based on the musical caesuras. The presence of fewer musical caesuras is connected to the freedom from a refrain, and thus from the repeated statements of the one-syllable word “long,” on a downbeat, which often leads to a much more rhythmically active text which is thus less divisible (compare Ex. 3.5 to Ex. 3.8). A rhyme may also reinforce the sense of two longer lines, as in Example 3.8. For the sake of simplicity and comparison, however, the description of four short lines will usually be used even where it may be more accurate to describe two longer ones, and where there is no refrain the last two lines will be called the response.

Lines one, two, and three each cover two bars, but line four, which is condensed into a smaller rhythmic span, covers only the pickup to and downbeat of bar seven, where the text comes to a close. The division between the verse and refrain helps to create a symmetrical 4 + 4 grouping of the eight bars, a grouping which is reinforced by the division of the modal frame; though the melodic structure of the scheme is quite flexible, and musicians use a variety of different modal frames for the scheme (as will be discussed below), the verse tends to make use of the higher part of the frame while the refrain tends to cover the lower part (Ex. 3.4).

The rhythmic structure is one of the most consistent components of the musical framework of the “How Long” blues scheme; and one rarely finds the eight-bar structure extended or abbreviated. One does, however, find some variance in the number of accents, some of which seem to approach an almost “obligatory” status, while others are

“optional” (Table 3.1). There are a minimum of seven accents in the scheme, and these coincide with (or in many cases anticipate) the first seven downbeats. Thus, there are at least four accents in the verse and at least three in the refrain, and all of these downbeat accents are typically preceded by a pickup. When only these seven downbeat accents are present (as in Leroy Carr’s “How Long, How Long Blues,” 1928), each of the first three lines covers two downbeats and receives two accents, while line four covers only one downbeat and receives only one accent (Ex. 3.5). Most recordings, however, include at least one additional accent.

The most common place to find an additional accent is on the third beat of bar six (as in Thomas “Jaybird” Jones’s “How Long?,” 1941; Ex. 3.6). Although the pickup to the accent on the downbeat of bar seven (“Baby how”) is sometimes treated like the other pickups, and is given no accent, the first syllable of this pickup usually appears instead in an accented position (on the third beat of bar six), thus giving line four two accents (like the preceding three lines, albeit in a shorter span of time) and the entire scheme eight accents. This also has the effect of creating an area of heightened rhythmic activity in bars six and seven of the scheme.

Yet another additional accent may be found on the third beat of bar three, as in Ida Cox’s “How Long, Daddy, How Long,” of 1925 (Ex. 3.7). (I have not found any recordings that have only the additional accent in bar three without the additional accent in bar six.) When this is the case, bars three and four unite more as a line and create an area of heightened rhythmic activity at the end of the verse, which balances that of bars six and seven at the end of the refrain. Thus one may find an acceleration of rhythmic activity at the end of both the verse and the refrain. (Ida Cox’s recording is of the song

copyrighted by William Jackson in 1925. But because Cox deviates somewhat from Jackson's written page, both melodically and rhythmically, and because this study is based primarily on recordings, Cox will be cited instead of Jackson where it seems appropriate.)

Even though the refrain—more often than the verse—contains a bar with two accents (bar six), the verse is, nonetheless, often perceived as being more rhythmically active than the refrain. This is due in large part to the rhythmic activity that takes place immediately after some of the seven downbeat accents. The downbeat accents in the refrain, on the word “long” (the syllable that most often falls in an accented position on the downbeat), are not immediately followed by rhythmic activity beyond the downbeat. Rhythmic activity consistently continues beyond the downbeat of bar three, thus making bar three sound rhythmically inconclusive. The inconclusive rhythmic activity in bar three drives toward, and is resolved by, the rhythmically conclusive accent on the downbeat of bar four, which is not followed by more rhythmic activity. This rhythmic drive toward the downbeat of bar four is intensified even further when bar three—in addition to the inconclusive rhythm after the downbeat—contains a second accent on the third beat.

The first downbeat accent is also often immediately followed by more rhythmic activity (especially in later stanzas which do not open with two statements of the phrase “how long” in line one); the second accent, however, is not. This gives the first two bars a rhythmic structure that is, to a certain extent, analogous to that of bars three and four; the rhythmically inconclusive accent in bar one may be resolved by the rhythmically more conclusive accent on the downbeat of bar two. (Unlike bar three, bar one very

rarely contains two accents.) All of this contributes to the perception of the verse being more rhythmically active than the refrain.

Some singers take the concept of a rhythmically active verse opposed to a rhythmically sparse refrain to an extreme in some stanzas. This is achieved by extending the rhythm in the verse all the way from bar one to the accent on the downbeat of bar four, thus throwing into relief the relatively sparse activity of the refrain. This is the case, for example, in the seventh stanza of Skip James's "How Long 'Buck'" of 1931 ("Ah, someday you'll be sorry you treated me wrong/It'll be too late baby and I'll be gone/So long, so long/Baby, so long"), in which the verse drives toward the accent on the word "gone."

Even if the refrain sounds less rhythmically active than the verse, it undoubtedly sounds more rhythmically final; while both the verse and refrain may contain an acceleration of rhythmic activity toward the end, and both come to a rhythmically conclusive close on a downbeat, the verse drives toward a close on the downbeat of a weak bar (bar four), but the refrain drives toward a close on the downbeat of a strong bar (bar seven). This has the large-scale effect of making the relatively weak close of the verse sound like it is answered by the metrically strong close of the refrain.

When singers use the "How Long" text, with the placement of the one-syllable word "long" on so many downbeats, it ensures a large degree of rhythmic (and textual) similarity. Singers who use other texts, as in "East St. Louis Blues," feel free to continue the rhythm beyond the downbeat in places where singers of "How Long" do not. Indeed, the placement of the word "Louis" often leads to the continuation of the rhythm beyond the downbeat exactly where the "How Long" text would have the word "long" or "gone"

(or some other one-syllable word) and no continuation of the rhythm beyond the downbeat. This is true of McTell's opening stanza, quoted here in three lines divided by musical caesuras ("I walked all the way/From East St. Louis/I never had but that one, one thin dime"), which has "Louis" on the downbeat of bar four, and of William Brown's opening stanza ("I walked all way to East St. Louis/St. Louis to here/Got nobody, got no one to feel my [tears]"), which has "Louis" on the downbeat of bar two.

In some less common realizations of the scheme, yet another accent is added to the rhythmic structure, on the third beat of bar five, bringing the total number of accents to ten: the seven downbeat accents plus the three on the third beats of bars three, five, and six. When this is the case, as in "Wayward Girl Blues" by Lottie Kimbrough, of 1926 (Ex. 3.8), it seems more accurate to describe the text as composed of three lines—two in the verse and a longer one in the response, from the downbeat of bar five to the downbeat of bar seven. In this song, the response is no longer characterized simply by downbeat accents with their pickups; not only is there an additional accent in bar five, but the rhythm now extends beyond both of the downbeat accents in bars five and six, making the response into one longer, less divisible line. The response thus loses its feeling of rhythmic sparsity in comparison to the verse, and the acceleration of the rhythmic activity which begins in bar five and lasts through the downbeat of bar seven now makes the response sound like the central area of rhythmic activity for the entire scheme. This type of increased rhythmic activity in the second half of the scheme—and especially the additional accent on the third beat of bar five—brings the rhythmic structure closer to that of the "Trouble In Mind" scheme, an issue treated in more detail at the end of the section on the "Harmonic Scheme" in this chapter, in connection with William Brown's "East St.

Louis Blues” (1942), and at the beginning of the “Trouble In Mind” chapter. (Another notable difference in the rhythmic structure of “Wayward Girl Blues” is that the accents on the downbeats of bars three and five lack pickups.)

Leadbelly, in his “How Long?” (1943), is seemingly alone in extending the pickup to bar five backward all the way to the third beat in bar four (Ex. 3.9), creating a second accent in that bar, and ten in the entire rhythmic structure (though placed differently than in Kimbrough’s). The area of heightened rhythmic activity at the end of the verse lasts to the beginning of the refrain.

The inclusion or exclusion of the “optional” accents of the scheme (those not falling on downbeats) has a great effect on the songs it generates. When bar six has a second accent, the rhythmic acceleration drives toward the final strong downbeat accent in bar seven. When, in addition to this, bar three has a second accent, the rhythmic acceleration in the verse drives toward the weak downbeat accent in bar four, balancing the acceleration in the refrain. When neither of the extra accents is used, as in Carr’s “How Long, How Long Blues,” there is no longer the same sense of rhythmic acceleration anywhere in the scheme—and if the verse sounds more rhythmically active it is only by virtue of its continued rhythmic activity beyond the downbeat accents in the strong bars one and three. Indeed, Carr intentionally omits the extra accents in order to avoid any sense of rhythmic acceleration and textural change in his song, which contributes greatly to the relaxed aesthetic he is after.

Melodic Structure

As mentioned above, the rhythmic structure and harmonic scheme (I-I-IV-IV-I-V-I-I being the most common progression) are the most consistent elements of the musical framework in the “How Long” blues scheme. Over this rhythmic-harmonic ground, one finds several discants (Table 3.1). Bowers and Westcott, in their notated ground, suggest two possible discants beginning a third apart, one on scale degree 1 and another on scale degree 3, both of which subsequently descend.¹⁰ I will call the first of these the $\overset{\wedge}{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant, after the first two accented notes, which fall on the downbeats of bars one and two, respectively; this is by far the most common discant. The second I will call the $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}$ discant, though it should be noted that I have only found one recording of such a discant, the first strophe of Blind Lemon Jefferson’s “How Long, How Long”; all of his subsequent strophes use the $\overset{\wedge}{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant. (Handy’s printed melody, however, also most closely resembles the $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}$ discant). I will also suggest a third basic discant that begins on scale degree 3 and subsequently ascends, and will call it the $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ -up discant, borrowing John Ward’s terminology.¹¹ The $\overset{\wedge}{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant may be realized as either a first or second tune type; the two recordings of the $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ -up discant that I have found—by Ida Cox and Blind Willie McTell—are both second tune types.¹²

¹⁰ Bowers and Westcott, “Mama Yancey,” 189. The diagram can also be read as indicating possible substitutions—a singer may move from one melodic thread to another.

¹¹ John Ward, “The Buffons Family of Tune Families.”

¹² Handy’s notated melody shares features of both types. In the verse, it ends on the upper scale degree 1, which is like the second tune type, but in the refrain, it ends on the lower scale degree 1, like the first tune type. And while in detail it bears perhaps only a

In all three discants, both the verse and refrain are typically divided into two motions (corresponding to the lines of text) with an inconclusive/conclusive relationship, and while both may end on $\hat{1}$, the verse arrives there in a weak bar and the refrain in a strong bar. The melodic structure in the verse spans four bars while in the refrain it is condensed into three, and the fourth line is condensed into, at the most, three beats in order to accommodate the arrival of $\hat{1}$ in bar seven. All three discants often extend down to the lowest part of the modal frame—the lower scale degree 5—in bar six, and the verse typically covers the upper part of the modal frame while the refrain covers the lower part. Also, in all three discants the melodic structure is intimately linked to the accents of the rhythmic structure.

As is the case with most schemes in which the harmony is more consistent, the melodic structure tends to display more variance, and thus, even though the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant is by far the most common, one nonetheless finds substitution within the basic framework of the melodic structure, and the choices for substitution are highly influenced by the harmony. The melodic substitutions occur not only from recording to recording, but sometimes within the same recording, as for example in Jed Davenport's "How Long, How Long Blues" and Lottie Kimbrough's "Wayward Girl Blues."

In the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant, singers take advantage of the option of adding the minor seventh to the underlying tonic, giving it more compulsion to move to the subdominant. When this discant is realized as a first tune type, this opening inconclusive motion in line

little resemblance to the melodies under discussion, it nonetheless contains a verse which comes to a close on 1 in a weak bar (four) and a refrain which comes to a close on 1 in a strong bar (seven), like most of the tunes under discussion; Handy, *Blues: An Anthology*, 53.

one is typically answered by a more conclusive descent in line two to the lower $\hat{1}$, the melodic goal of the verse. Carr’s melody illustrates well how this usually plays out (Ex. 3.10). On the downbeat of bar three, Carr again accents the upper $\hat{1}$, but then quickly descends an octave to the lower $\hat{1}$, reaching it in a metrically weak position, to accommodate the continuation of the rhythm beyond the downbeat, with the word “evenin’” (Ex. 3.10c). Carr reaches the lower $\hat{1}$ in a strong position—though still in a weak bar—on the downbeat of bar four. This is preceded by a pickup consisting of a downward arpeggiation ($\hat{5}-\hat{3}$), which, in addition to propelling the rhythm into the downbeat of bar four, helps to fill in the modal frame, which was considerably expanded by the preceding octave skip. Thus, Carr divides the large-scale descent of the verse into two smaller descents, which correspond to lines one and two. The first descent, in line one, ends on $\flat\hat{7}$ and is inconclusive; it is answered by the conclusive descent in line two, which ends on the lower $\hat{1}$ (Ex. 3.10c). Although the lower $\hat{1}$ is first reached in bar three, its placement in a metrically weak position after the downbeat makes it sound inconclusive; the sense of melodic and rhythmic closure in the verse comes only with the metrically stronger arrival of the lower $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four.

Carr’s melodic structure in the verse is followed very closely by Blind Lemon Jefferson, Thomas Jaybird Jones (Ex. 3.11), and Brownie McGhee (Ex. 3.12) (although, as mentioned above, in his first strophe Jefferson begins with a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent; in all the

subsequent strophes he begins with $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$).¹³ Leadbelly retains the basic melodic framework of an octave descent in the verse (and he begins with the $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ descent) but he substitutes the lower $\hat{4}$ for the upper $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar three, a choice probably influenced by the shift to the subdominant (Ex. 3.13). His rhythmic structure contains two accents in bar three; sometimes these accents are marked by $\hat{4}$ and $\hat{5}$, and other times both are marked by $\hat{5}$. In both cases, the $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ descent retains the idea of tonic arpeggiation from bar three to bar four.

Thus, unlike Carr and most other musicians who use the first tune type, Leadbelly does not divide the large-scale octave descent in the verse into two smaller descents that both begin from an accented upper scale degree 1. In bar three, rather than returning to the upper $\hat{1}$ in an accented position and then descending to the lower $\hat{1}$, he continues downward to accent scale degrees 4 and 5. Therefore, Leadbelly's melodic structure for the verse is one large descending arc, which delays the arrival of lower $\hat{1}$ until the downbeat of bar four. Leadbelly does return to the upper $\hat{1}$ for the pickup to bar three, and thus his second line, including the pickup, does comprise an octave descent, but the $\hat{1}$ as a pickup does not receive nearly the same emphasis as it would in an accented

¹³ Although Jefferson's song sounds the most like a cover of Carr's, his use of an opening $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ motion—the typical opening melodic gesture in the “Trouble In Mind” scheme—demonstrates best the possibility for substitution between the melodic structures of the “How Long” and “Trouble In Mind” schemes posited by Bowers and Westcott in their diagram of the “How Long” ground, a subject to be treated in more detail in the “Trouble In Mind” chapter; “Mama Yancey,” 189.

position, and thus his melodic structure differs rather significantly from the others.

Example 3.13b shows the accents, and 3.13c shows that line two begins on the upper $\hat{1}$.

In the refrain, more substitutions are found, as singers find different ways of accommodating the I-V-I-I progression. Carr accents the lower $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar five, the lower $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar six, and the lower $\hat{1}$ again on the downbeat of bar seven, and thus his discant follows the harmonic progression very closely. Carr uses two of the melodic ideas from the verse in the refrain: the octave skip (in bar three) and the downward arpeggiation (from bar three to bar four), but he distributes them into different metric positions (Ex. 3.10c). He uses the closing idea of the verse, a downward arpeggiation of the tonic triad, which led into bar four, a weak bar, as the opening idea of the refrain, which brings the melody to an accented $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar five, a strong bar. Carr then extends the modal frame still further downward by accenting the lower $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar six. This accented lower $\hat{5}$ is preceded by a pickup from the upper $\hat{5}$, which balances the descending octave skip from the upper $\hat{1}$ to the lower $\hat{1}$ in the verse; the octave skip in the verse involves an accent in a strong bar, but the one in the refrain involves an accent in a weak bar. After using scale degrees 1 and 3 for the pickup to the final accent, Carr brings the melodic structure to a close by arriving on the final scale degree 1, this time on the downbeat of bar seven, a strong bar. Thus, Carr divides the refrain into two motions, which correspond to lines three and four, much the same way he divided the verse into two motions, which corresponded to lines one and two; line three contains an inconclusive descent from the accented $\hat{1}$ to the lower $\hat{5}$, which is answered by the conclusive motion in line four to the lower $\hat{1}$ in bar seven.

Jones, McGhee, and Leadbelly all have two accents in line four, both the obligatory one on the downbeat of bar seven and the additional one on the third beat of bar six. Both Jones (Ex. 3.11) and McGhee (Ex. 3.12) substitute an accented scale degree 5 over the tonic at the beginning of the refrain (Jones with a pickup from $\hat{3}$, McGhee with a pickup from $\hat{4}$), with the result that the structure of the refrain becomes another large-scale descent to $\hat{1}$, balancing the descent in the verse. The descent in the verse, which covers four bars and arrives on the lower $\hat{1}$ in a weak bar, is answered by the descent in the refrain, which is condensed into three bars and arrives on the lower $\hat{1}$ in a strong bar. In line three, both make an inconclusive descent from $\hat{5}$. McGhee descends to the lower scale degree 5 (retaining Carr's idea of extending the modal frame downward to $\hat{5}$ in line three; Ex. 3.12c), but Jones substitutes scale degree 2 (Ex. 3.11c). Both then use the additional accent in bar six as the starting point for another descent, this time a conclusive descent to $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven; Jones begins his descent again from $\hat{5}$, but McGhee begins his from $\flat\hat{3}$, thus giving the final $\hat{1}$ its dropping third in an accented position. As a result, the large-scale descent in the refrain, like that in the verse, is divided into two smaller descents, which correspond to lines three and four, and which have an inconclusive/conclusive relationship, though the descent in line four is compressed into a smaller rhythmic span to accommodate the arrival of $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven. The condensing of this last descent coincides with the

acceleration of rhythmic activity at the end of the refrain, and thus the rhythmic and melodic structures work together to drive toward the final accented scale degree 1.¹⁴

Leadbelly, like Carr, accents scale degree 1 over the tonic on the downbeat of bar five, and therefore his refrain does not form a large-scale descent to the final scale degree 1 (Ex. 3.13). Also like Carr, Leadbelly approaches $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ from above with a pickup; however, unlike Carr (and indeed unlike any of the other musicians under discussion), Leadbelly begins the pickup to bar five in an accented position on the third beat of the previous bar, which makes the pickup and the descent into the accented $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat of bar five much more pronounced (Ex. 3.13c). (The pickup begins on scale degree 4 and moves up through $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ before descending to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$, recalling, in a condensed span, the accents of line two, from the downbeat of bar three to the downbeat of bar four. Example 3.13b shows just the accents, but 3.13c includes the $\overset{\wedge}{4}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ contour of the pickup to bar five.) Also unlike Carr, Leadbelly has two accents in bar six, and he does not extend the modal frame down to the lower scale degree 5. Instead, he substitutes an accented upper $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ on the downbeat of bar six, thus creating a rising $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ motion between the downbeat accents in line three; this is answered by line four, in which Leadbelly, like the others, arrives on the final lower scale degree 1 on the downbeat of bar seven. Unlike

¹⁴ McGhee's recording, from 1942, is with Leadbelly and Sonny Terry, but it is apparently always listed as being by Brownie McGhee, and the discussion above is only of McGhee's treatment of the rhythm and melody. Leadbelly sings the typical first stanza. McGhee's first stanza, which comes next—and the words of which fit with Example 3.12a—is as follows: “Hear that whistle, can't see no train/Well deep in my heart I feel an achin' pain/How long, how long/Baby, how long?” “Bab-” is the displaced stressed syllable beginning line four, with b3, and is normalized in Example 3.12b and c. Leadbelly's treatment of the scheme is discussed only by way of his 1943 recording, which actually does not differ much from what he does on McGhee's recording.

Jones and McGhee, who also have two accents in bar six, Leadbelly does not descend to the final $\hat{1}$ in line four from the second-to-last accent, but rather anticipates it on the third beat of bar six. His last accent and its pickup are much like Carr's, but the pickup is extended backward far enough that it begins in an accented position, thus creating an accented anticipation of the final $\hat{1}$.

Thus, in the refrain, the harmonic progression strongly influences the choices for substitution made by all four singers who realize the $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ discant as a first tune type.

Jed Davenport and Skip James realize the $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ discant as a second tune type.

Davenport usually begins with the opening $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ descent in the melody (Ex. 3.14).

(Davenport's recording, for harmonica and guitar accompaniment, shows off his virtuosic harmonica playing, and thus displays plenty of variation from one strophe to another;

but, of his eleven strophes, eight begin with the $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ gesture, as shown in Example 3.14c

and e.)¹⁵ Like most of those who use the first tune type, Davenport (usually) returns to the upper scale degree 1 for the accent on the downbeat of bar three, but instead of

subsequently leaping down to the lower scale degree 1, he substitutes the upper $\hat{1}$ while

continuing the rhythm beyond the downbeat in bar three. He again plays an upper $\hat{1}$ on

the downbeat of bar four, so that he remains in the upper register, which is the defining

characteristic of the second tune type (Ex. 3.14c). (In the first and fifth strophes,

¹⁵ That Davenport's song is an instrumental for harmonica with guitar accompaniment, and thus has no words, may throw into doubt somewhat the description of a verse and refrain. However, it is quite easy to match the three statements of the phrase "how long" with the rhythm of the last four bars; Davenport seems to be thinking of the lines "How long, how long/Baby, how long?" or something quite close to that.

Davenport transposes Carr's descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation up an octave, landing on $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four, as shown in Example 3.14b.)

Davenport also uses some less prominent alternative melodic structures in the verse. In the sixth and eleventh strophes, he simply substitutes the upper $\hat{1}$ for $\flat\hat{7}$ on the downbeat of bar two, eliminating the opening $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ motion (Ex. 3.14d). In the seventh strophe, he begins with the typical $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ gesture in line one, but then substitutes the upper $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar three before descending to $\hat{1}$ again on the downbeat of bar four, giving more emphasis to the descending tonic arpeggiation that forms part of the melodic framework of line two; another result is that he divides the verse into two descents, the first one an inconclusive descent from $\hat{1}$ to $\flat\hat{7}$, the second a conclusive one from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ (Ex. 3.14e). Davenport makes his biggest departures in the ninth strophe, where he substitutes the accented upper $\hat{5}$ on the downbeats of bars one and two, and the upper $\hat{6}$ on the downbeat of bar three, before descending to an accented $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four, thus creating one large descent over the four bars of the verse (Ex. 3.14f).

With only one exception (the seventh strophe), Davenport begins line three with an accented upper scale degree $\hat{3}$ on the downbeat of bar five (after a pickup, as from $\sharp\hat{2}$ in Example 3.14b) over the tonic and descends inconclusively to the lower scale degree $\hat{5}$, the lowest note of the modal frame, on the downbeat of bar six over the dominant (Ex. 3.14g, h, and i). He answers this in line four, which (in the first, fourth, fifth, and eighth strophes) begins on $\hat{3}$ on the third beat of bar six and descends conclusively to $\hat{1}$ on the

downbeat of bar seven (Ex 3.14g). Thus, Davenport (like Jones and McGhee) divides the refrain into two descents.

Davenport also has a prominent alternative melodic structure for the fourth line (which he uses in the second, third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh strophes), in which, instead of regaining the upper $\hat{3}$ on the third beat of bar six, he instead substitutes the lower $\hat{5}$ and then climbs up to the final $\hat{1}$, thus dividing the refrain into a descent followed by an ascent (Ex. 3.14h). In his tenth strophe, Davenport substitutes the upper $\hat{5}$ on the third beat of bar six (Ex. 3.14i). His only refrain that does not begin with an accented $\hat{3}$ comes in his seventh strophe, in which he substitutes an accented upper $\hat{5}$ in bar five (Ex. 3.14j).

In eight of his eleven strophes, Davenport also plays a closing melodic gesture after the downbeat of bar seven; it is built around a descending $\hat{8}-\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation of the tonic triad, with the final upper $\hat{1}$ falling on the downbeat of bar eight (Ex. 3.14g, bars seven and eight). This gesture functions much like a coda, in that it takes place after the cadence. The eleventh and final strophe gets its own coda: a descending $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ motion within bar eight (Ex. 3.14h, bar eight).

Skip James also realizes the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant as a second tune type, but, unlike Davenport, he substitutes $\hat{b}3$ for $\hat{1}$ on the downbeats of bars three and four, and thus eliminates the typical conclusive melodic ending on $\hat{1}$ at the end of the verse (Ex. 3.15). The $\hat{b}3$ in bars three and four functions as a prolonged dropping third to $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar five. (James's first stanza, which fits with Example 3.15a, follows:

“How long, how long/Can my Crow Jane treat me wrong?/So long, so long/Baby, so long.”)

In the refrain, James’s discant (like Carr’s) begins on $\hat{1}$ over the tonic in bar five and drops to $\hat{5}$ (again the lowest note of the modal frame) in bar six over the dominant. Like Davenport, James ends on the upper $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven, but he substitutes raised- $\hat{7}$ on the third beat of bar six (where Davenport had $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$). (It is worth noting that both the verse and refrain begin on $\hat{1}$ and then descend to $\flat\hat{7}$; in the verse, $\flat\hat{7}$ is the goal of line one, but in the refrain, James treats it as the dropping third to $\hat{5}$, which is the goal of line three. It is also worth noting that $\hat{7}$ is lowered when moving down to $\hat{5}$, as in line three, and raised when moving up to $\hat{1}$, as in line four, as shown in Example 3.15c.)

James’s melodic structure therefore differs significantly from those discussed previously. Typically in the “How Long” scheme, lines one and three are melodically inconclusive; they are answered by lines two and four, respectively, which are melodically conclusive. In James’s melodic structure, however, the entire verse, which ends on $\flat\hat{3}$, is melodically inconclusive and is answered by the refrain, which ends on $\hat{1}$. As discussed above, rhythmically, the refrain typically sounds more final anyway, because the final accent is on the downbeat of a strong bar (and this is reinforced by the harmonic motion to IV, which will be discussed in more detail below), but James makes the verse inconclusive in all three respects—not only rhythmically and harmonically, but also melodically.

Ida Cox and Blind Willie McTell use what I call the $\hat{3}$ -up discant, which I have only found realized as a second tune type. In this discant, the main substitution in the melodic framework occurs in line one, where the upper $\hat{3}$ substitutes for the upper $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar one and the motion in line one is an ascent. In line one of “How Long, Daddy, How Long,” for example, Cox moves up from scale degree 3 to scale degree 5, the accent on the downbeat of bar two (Ex. 3.16); in line one of “East St. Louis Blues (Fare You Well),” McTell ascends from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{4}$ (Ex. 3.17).¹⁶ The subsequent motion in line two has correlations with the second tune type realizations of the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant discussed above; Cox creates an inconclusive/conclusive relationship within the verse by descending back through $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ (which coincide with the two accents in bar three) and landing on $\hat{1}$ for the first time on the downbeat of bar four (Ex. 3.16c), which is somewhat like Davenport’s seventh strophe (Ex. 3.14e). McTell, like Skip James, makes the entire verse inconclusive by substituting $\hat{b}3$ on the downbeat of bar four (Ex. 3.17c).

Cox’s refrain—in which line three has an inconclusive $\hat{3}-\hat{5}$ descent and line four answers with a conclusive $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descent—is again very similar to one of Davenport’s refrains (Ex. 3.14b). McTell begins with a similar $\hat{3}-\hat{5}$ descent in line three—and thus both Cox and McTell retain the idea of expanding the modal frame down to $\hat{5}$ in bar

¹⁶ It may be more accurate to describe McTell’s text as containing two long lines in each strophe; here is his first stanza presented as two lines: “I walked all the way from East St. Louis/I never had but that one, one thin dime.” For the sake of simplicity and comparison, however, the description of four lines is maintained during the discussion of the melodic structure.

six—but, again like James, substitutes $\overset{\wedge}{7}$ on the third beat of bar six. (Unlike James, McTell resolves $\overset{\flat}{3}$ back up to raised $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ on the downbeat of bar five, and so the entire melodic structure up to that point circles $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ with its upper and lower neighbors, the latter chromatic.)

In “Wayward Girl Blues,” Lottie Kimbrough sings three discants (which are similar, the second and third particularly so) over the eight-bar structure. All three are of the second tune type, but only the third corresponds to any of the discants categorized above (Ex. 3.18). (There are eight strophes using the “How Long” scheme; another, the cut-time passamezzo moderno—which is not included here as a “strophe”—occurs between the sixth and seventh eight-bar strophes and again at the very end.) In the first discant, which is sung in the first, third, fifth, and seventh strophes, line one begins on an accented scale degree 3 on the downbeat of bar one and descends, through $\overset{\wedge}{1}$, to the lower scale degree $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ in bar two (Ex. 3.18a-b). Line two begins again with $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ on the downbeat of bar three but descends this time, again through $\overset{\wedge}{1}$, to the lower scale degree 6 in bar four. Thus, the verse is melodically inconclusive; even though $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ is the accented note in bar four, the subsequent drop to $\overset{\wedge}{6}$ undermines any conclusive sense of arrival. The response, however, does not answer the verse with a conclusive melodic motion; it too descends inconclusively, from $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ on the downbeat of bar five to the lower $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ in bar seven.¹⁷

¹⁷ The response, which has five accents, is not very convincingly divisible, and is probably best described as comprising one longer line. Here is Kimbrough’s first stanza

The second and third discants also end inconclusively on the lower $\hat{5}$. They are similar to one another in that, unlike the first discant, they both use $\flat\hat{7}$; they differ mostly in when $\flat\hat{7}$ enters. The second discant is sung in the second and eighth strophes. In the second strophe (the text of which is given in Example 3.8), line one descends from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$, and line two descends from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{6}$, and thus the verse differs from that of the first discant only in the substitution of $\hat{1}$ for the upper scale degree 3 (Ex. 3.18c-d). (In the eighth strophe, there is no slur down to $\hat{6}$ in bar four, which makes for a more conclusive ending in the verse.) In the response, however, a more significant difference occurs when $\flat\hat{7}$ substitutes for $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar six, functioning as the dropping third to $\hat{5}$, to which it resolves in bar seven. (The response of the second strophe begins on $\hat{3}$; that of the eighth begins on $\hat{1}$.)

The third discant, used in the fourth and sixth strophes, has a response very similar to that of the second discant, but $\flat\hat{7}$ enters earlier, in the verse, when line one moves from an accented $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar one to $\flat\hat{7}$ on the downbeat of bar two; Kimbrough's third discant, then, is an example of the $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ discant realized as a second tune type, but with the significant difference from those discussed above that it does not

presented in three lines, the words of which fit with Example 3.18a: "I've got the blues/[For] my mother's [needs]/And I know she's got the blues for me."

end on the upper $\hat{1}$ (Ex. 3.18e-f). The third discant never has a slur to $\hat{6}$ in bar four, which makes it sound more rhythmically conclusive.¹⁸

In addition to the inconclusive nature of the melody, Kimbrough's tendency to delay the accented syllables beyond the downbeats contributes to the lack of closure (this is especially true of the first strophe, where one might think of the accents—especially those in bars two and four—as more extreme displacements of the accents in Examples 3.18d and f). On a larger scale, the inconclusiveness of the entire eight-bar melodic structure is finally resolved at the end of the song, which closes with an entirely different scheme, the sixteen-bar cut-time passamezzo, the last melodic note of which is scale degree 1, sung by Kimbrough's accompanist, Winston Holmes, in a more decisive metric position on the downbeat. The new scheme, which is heard twice in the course of the song, first appears after Lottie describes her dying mother's request for her to sing the hymn "Nearer My God To Thee," which does indeed use the passamezzo moderno scheme. The first four phrases of the actual hymn also have a plagal range, like Kimbrough's three discants, from the upper $\hat{3}$ to the lower $\hat{5}$.

If one labels the three discants A, B, and C, respectively, the entire form of the song would be A-B-A-C-A-C-(Hymn)-A-B-(Hymn), with the A-discant alternating in a rondo-like fashion with the other two discants (which are quite similar to one another) and the longer, more conclusive strain closing the song.

Another way in which Kimbrough deviates from the more typical melodic structure is that she does not use the upper part of the modal frame in the verse and the

¹⁸ Kimbrough's fourth stanza is: "And I grabbed a train/I went home up nine/She wasn't dead but she was slowly dying"; the last word is notated as one syllable.

lower part in the response; rather, she uses the entire span of the frame, from the upper $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{1}$ down to the lower $\hat{5}$, in both halves of the song. (In the second strophe, the verse has a narrower range—upper $\hat{1}$ to lower $\hat{5}$ —than the response—upper $\hat{3}$ to lower $\hat{5}$.)

As is often the case in American folk and popular music, scale degree 3 may be major, minor, or anything in between. However, in the “How Long” scheme, as in much other American music, the third scale degree is often higher when it functions as a relatively stable starting point, and noticeably flatter when it resolves directly down to scale degree 1. This is well illustrated in Cox’s “How Long, Daddy, How Long” (Ex. 3.16). Both the verse and refrain begin with a major scale degree 3 in an accented position; both close with a $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descent in which the third scale degree is noticeably flatter. (This is not always the case, however; Davenport’s refrain, which is often very much like Cox’s, does not use a noticeably flatter third in the final $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descent, as shown in Example 3.14b.) Another possibility is that $\flat\hat{3}$ may not resolve down to $\hat{1}$ but rather up to natural $\hat{3}$, as in McTell’s “East St. Louis Blues (Fare You Well)” (Ex. 3.17). (In such a case $\flat\hat{3}$ is functioning melodically as $\#\hat{2}$, but sometimes may be spelled as $\flat\hat{3}$ to represent the minor seventh above the subdominant.) In this case the $\flat\hat{3}$ is still, nonetheless, functioning as an unstable note that needs to resolve, and the natural $\hat{3}$ as a stable note, this time both as the goal of resolution and as the starting point for the next line. (Cox’s melody actually illustrates both functions; the $\flat\hat{3}$ in bar three resolves down to $\hat{1}$ in bar four, but the $\#\hat{2}$ that acts as a pickup to bar five resolves up to natural $\hat{3}$.)

James's "How Long 'Buck'" illustrates the same type of process with respect to scale degree 7, which may be flat when part of a downward motion and raised when part of an upward motion (Ex. 3.15). In bar five James descends through $\hat{b}7$ on the way down to $\hat{5}$; in bar six he ascends through raised $\hat{7}$ on the way up to $\hat{1}$. Both the first and second tune types may use $\hat{b}7$, which is usually the goal of line one, but the second tune type is much more likely to use raised $\hat{7}$, in order to get back to the final $\hat{1}$ in the upper register. The $\hat{b}7$ in bar two is used in the first tune type to initiate the large-scale descent in the verse. When $\hat{b}7$ is used in bar two of the second tune type, it marks the end of the descent, which is cut off at that point in order to maintain the higher register.

Harmonic Scheme

Along with the rhythmic structure, the harmonic scheme is the most consistent element of the "How Long" blues scheme, and one finds less variance in it than in the melodic structure. The verse is characterized by a tonic-subdominant shift, the refrain by a tonic-dominant-tonic progression.

The $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ motion that typically opens the first two bars of the melodic structure is, with very few exceptions, supported by the tonic; when the $\hat{b}7$ enters, in the vocal line, the harmony may be considered a I^{b7} . Most musicians—such as Carr (Ex. 3.10d), Jefferson, James (Ex. 3.15d), Jones (Ex. 3.11d), McGhee (Ex. 3.12d), and McTell (Ex. 3.17d)—make this shift more explicit by adding a flat seventh to the harmony in the

accompaniment as well in bar two. McTell also doubles the $\hat{4}$ of the voice in the accompaniment, and his harmony in bar two thus consists of $\hat{1}$, $\hat{5}$, $\hat{b7}$, and $\hat{4}$, with $\hat{4}$ as a neighbor tone and $\hat{b7}$ as a passing tone.

The shift to the subdominant in bar three provides the expected resolution of the I^{b7} , and the third of the subdominant in the accompaniment provides an indirect resolution of the $\hat{b7}$ which was left unresolved in bar two in the melody. The subdominant lasts through bar four before resolving back to the tonic in bar five. Thus, the most common progression for the verse is $I-I^{b7}-IV-IV$.

The subdominant also substantially undermines any sense of conclusion when the melodic structure arrives on scale degree 1 on the downbeat of bar four. Thus, the harmonic structure of the verse, which itself ends inconclusively on the subdominant, reinforces the inconclusive rhythmic structure of the verse, which comes to a close on the downbeat of a weak bar.

Some musicians—such as Kimbrough (Ex. 3.18d), Carr, and McGhee—simply leave the subdominant a major triad through bars three and four, but others—such as James, McTell, and sometimes Jefferson—introduce a minor seventh into the subdominant in bar four (James anticipates the seventh in the melody in bar three). When this is done the progression for the verse becomes $I-I^{b7}-IV-IV^{b7}$. Bars three and four then echo bars one and two; the underlying harmonies introduced in the strong bars are intensified by the addition of their sevenths in the weak bars, and these dissonances give the harmonies a greater urgency to resolve in the following strong bars. The addition of the sevenths in the weak bars also results in a chord change (though not a change to the

underlying harmony) on every downbeat, coinciding with the minimal four downbeat accents in the verse. (Cox introduces the seventh earlier, in bar three, creating the progression I-I-IV^{b7}-IV^{b7} in the verse, as shown in Example 3.16d.)

The use of I^{b7} in bar two is of course related to the prominent entrance of $\hat{b}7$ in the melody at that point, but the use of IV^{b7} may also be related to the melodic structure; line two (bars three and four) is the most common place to find $\hat{b}3$, which forms the minor seventh of IV^{b7}. The lowered third either resolves down to $\hat{1}$ over the subdominant (Cox) or up to natural $\hat{3}$ when the subdominant resolves to the tonic in bar five (McTell).

Thomas “Jaybird” Jones also changes chord in every bar of the verse, but instead of introducing a seventh into the subdominant in bar four, he lowers its third, creating the progression I-I^{b7}-IV-IV^b for the verse (Ex. 3.11d). This also gives more urgency to the subdominant in bar four, creating the strong expectation for $\hat{b}6$ to resolve down to $\hat{5}$, which it does over the tonic in bar five. Also, the lowering of $\hat{6}$ in bar three to $\hat{b}6$ in bar four continues the contrapuntal thread begun by the $\hat{8}-\hat{b}7-\hat{6}$ motion by bringing it through the $\hat{b}6$ in bar four and finally down to $\hat{5}$ in bar five.

Blind Willie McTell actually incorporates both $\hat{b}3$ and $\hat{b}6$ into the subdominant in bar four, combining the (in this case) upward tendency of $\hat{b}3$ with the downward tendency of $\hat{b}6$, and creating what might best be described as the progression I-I^{b7}-IV-

$IV^{b7/b3}$ for the verse (Ex. 3.17d). When the tonic is reached in bar five, $\hat{b}3$ is heard to resolve up to the major $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{b}6$ down to $\hat{5}$.

Such a combination of $\hat{b}3$ and $\hat{b}6$ helps, to a certain extent, to explain the rather unusual harmonic substitutions provided by Davenport's accompanist (probably Joe Williams); his progression for the verse is $I-bVII-IV-bVI$ (Ex. 3.14k). The guitarist is clearly outlining the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7-\hat{6}-\hat{b}6-\hat{5}$ contrapuntal line that is sometimes threaded through the first five bars, and it strongly influences his conception of the harmonic progression. In the opening two bars, the harmony copies the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ motion of the melody, making both notes into roots. The subdominant arrives as usual in bar three, but in bar four he again makes one of the conspicuous chromatic notes of the contrapuntal line, this time $\hat{b}6$, into the root of the chord. This $\hat{b}6$ combines with $\hat{b}3$, which is also often found in bar four, to create bVI . Thus, the two strong bars retain their characteristic harmonies while the weak bars contain quite uncharacteristic harmonies built on the chromatic notes of the contrapuntal line. When Davenport does not move from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{b}7$ in the melody, but rather simply holds $\hat{1}$, as he does in his sixth and eleventh strophes (Ex. 3.14d), or $\hat{5}$, as he does in his ninth strophe (Ex. 3.14f), through the first two bars, it is actually the accompaniment rather than the melody which contains the characteristic $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ motion in the first two bars.

The refrain begins with the tonic in bar five, and nearly all musicians shift to the dominant on the downbeat of bar six. This coincides with the frequent emphasis on $\hat{5}$ that many musicians give to the melody at this point by dropping down to the lower $\hat{5}$. The shift to the dominant in bar six also accelerates the harmonic rhythm; in the verse, both the tonic and the subdominant, despite the frequent addition of a seventh in the weak bars, lasted two bars, but here in the refrain the underlying harmony begins to change in every bar. This acceleration of harmonic activity also happens at the point where there is most frequently an acceleration of the accents, and where the fourth line is condensed into, at the most, three beats, so that the rhythm, melody, and harmony accelerate together in the refrain to drive toward the cadence.

The harmonic progression resolves to the tonic in bar seven, after which there may be various alternations of tonic and dominant. Thus, the harmonic progression for the refrain is typically I-V-I-I, allowing for the aforementioned alternations in bars seven and eight; the inconclusive harmonic progression in the verse is answered by the conclusive harmonic progression in the refrain, matching the inconclusive/conclusive structures of the rhythm and melody. Some songs—such as those by Jefferson and Jones—that alternate between tonic and dominant in bars seven and eight end on the dominant, which prepares the return of the tonic in the following strophe.

Occasionally, the dominant is delayed until the third beat of bar six by another harmony on the downbeat. When this is the case, each of the two accents in bar six receives its own harmony. Davenport's accompanist uses the upper neighbor to the dominant, which, although it may not warrant a Roman numeral because it is not a full chord, is placed prominently in the bass and delays the arrival of the dominant until the

third beat (Ex. 3.14k). He also uses this upper neighbor to achieve another purpose: Davenport's accompanist, more than anyone else, gives the effect of a change of harmony in every bar in the verse, beyond the addition of a seventh to an existing harmony; therefore, two harmonies are needed in bar six to achieve a relative acceleration of the harmonic rhythm to coincide with the acceleration of the accents and to drive toward the cadence. (Davenport's melody typically has eight accents, with only one "extra" one, on the third beat of bar six.)

Blind Willie McTell plays V of V on the downbeat of bar six (with $\hat{6}$ in the bass, like Davenport's accompanist). By doing so, McTell not only delays the arrival of the dominant and speeds up the harmonic rhythm, but also continues the contrapuntal thread begun in bar one, bringing it all the way to the downbeat of bar seven. That thread now descends $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}-\hat{6}-\flat\hat{6}-\hat{5}-\sharp\hat{4}/\hat{4}-\hat{3}$, and is woven through the entire harmonic progression (Ex. 3.17d). The V of V on the downbeat of bar six in the accompaniment creates an exceptional dissonance with the melodic structure, which has scale degree 5 there. It seems best to think of the accompaniment as creating the dissonance against the more stable and common $\hat{5}$ of the melodic structure. (If one does not consider McTell's chromatic inflections to constitute true changes to the underlying harmony, then in McTell's entire progression, which is $I-I^{\flat 7}-IV-IV^{\flat 7/\flat 3}-I-V\text{of}V/V-I-I$, the harmonic rhythm steadily speeds up from the beginning until the downbeat of bar seven, from two bars to one bar to half a bar per harmony. Without the chromatic inflections the progression would read $I-I-IV-IV-I-V\text{of}V/V-I-I$.)

The presence of the subdominant in bars three and four temporarily turns scale degrees 5 and 3—which often form part of the melodic structure at that point, as in Leroy Carr’s melodic structure (Ex. 3.10)—into dissonances, and gives them the tendency to resolve down to $\hat{1}$, now the fifth of the subdominant. In the first of these descending arpeggiations, $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ resolve to $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four, over the subdominant; in the second, they resolve to $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar five, over the tonic.

As mentioned above, $\flat\hat{3}$ is most often found in line two (bars three and four), where it is supported by the subdominant. But $\flat\hat{3}$ may also occur on the third beat of bar six as the pickup to the final $\hat{1}$. In this case, $\flat\hat{3}$ is supported by the dominant and functions as the dropping third to the stable $\hat{1}$, to which it resolves when the dominant shifts back to the tonic. Cox’s “How Long, Daddy, How Long” illustrates, in bar six, the combination of $\flat\hat{3}$ with the dominant; here, the tendency of the melodically unstable $\flat\hat{3}$ to resolve down to $\hat{1}$ works together with the tendency of the harmonically unstable dominant to resolve to the tonic (Ex. 3.16c-d). McGhee’s “How Long?” also has $\flat\hat{3}$ with the dominant in bar six (Ex. 3.12c-d). Davenport, in his first, fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth strophes, ends with a $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ motion similar to Cox’s, and although his scale degree 3 is not as noticeably flat, the dominant still nonetheless turns it temporarily into a dissonance and gives it a tendency to resolve down to $\hat{1}$ (Ex. 3.14g and i).

Kimbrough’s three discants create various dissonances over the harmonic structure (her accompanist, Winston Holmes, plays a straightforward I-I-IV-IV-I-V-I/V-I

progression, as shown in Example 3.18g). In her first discant, her accented scale degree 3 on the downbeat of bar three becomes dissonant over the subdominant, and it drops to scale degree 1 in the same bar, over the same harmony (Ex. 3.18b). In her third discant, the entrance of $\flat \overset{\wedge}{7}$ in bar two turns the underlying tonic into $I^{\flat 7}$ (Ex. 3.18f). Most notably, in bar six of both her second and third discants, the $\flat \overset{\wedge}{7}$ of the melodic structure sounds simultaneously over the raised $\overset{\wedge}{7}$ of the dominant in the accompaniment, creating a characteristic blues dissonance; the $\flat \overset{\wedge}{7}$ in the melody functions as a dropping third to $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ but the raised $\overset{\wedge}{7}$ in the accompaniment resolves up to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ (Ex. 3.18d and f).

Most of the musicians discussed above alter the harmonic scheme in such a way that the underlying progression is nonetheless maintained (the most radical departures being those of Davenport's accompanist). Leadbelly, however, alters it such that the emerging progression is, at least in part, reminiscent of one of the other blues schemes under discussion (Ex. 3.13d). Leadbelly begins with the typical $I-I^{\flat 7}$ in bars one and two. In the next two bars, however, he uses the progression $IV-I$, resolving the subdominant to the tonic earlier than usual. The entire progression, then, is $I-I^{\flat 7}-IV-I-I-V-I-I$, which is more closely associated with the "Sitting On Top Of The World" scheme (but a bar shorter, of course). With this progression, the arrival of $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ at the end of the melodic structure of the verse, on the downbeat of bar four, coincides with the return of the tonic, thus creating a stronger resolution within the verse itself, though still in a weak bar.

The basic harmonic scheme for the "How Long" blues scheme, then, is $I-I-IV-IV-I-V-I-I$, which is, like the rhythm and melody, inconclusive in the verse and conclusive in

the refrain. In the verse, the tonic and subdominant last for two bars each, and the subdominant undermines the sense of resolution when the melodic structure arrives on scale degree 1 on the downbeat of bar four, a weak bar. In the refrain, the harmonic rhythm accelerates, coinciding with the heightened rhythmic activity in bar six and the condensing of line four into, at most, three beats, so that all three elements—the rhythm, harmony and melody—drive toward the cadence on the downbeat of bar seven.

In his “East St. Louis Blues” of 1942 (Ex. 3.19), William Brown begins on the tonic but shifts to the dominant in bar two, inserting it between the more typical positions of the tonic and subdominant, creating the unusual progression I-V-IV-IV in the verse (this is the only example of the scheme with a dominant in the verse that I have found). The move to the subdominant in bar three is in keeping with the “How Long” scheme, but the shift from the tonic to the dominant in the opening two bars is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme (Ex. 3.19e). Brown’s “East St. Louis Blues” might even be considered something of a hybrid between the two schemes. Like the harmonic progression, both the rhythmic and melodic structure incorporate elements associated with both schemes. The two schemes are compared at the beginning of Chapter 4, and in Example 4.2.

In his first stanza, presented here in four lines (“I walked all way from East St. Louis/St. Louis to here/Got nobody/Got no one to feel my [tears]”), he places the syllables “all,” “Lou-,” “to,” “-bod-,” “one,” and “tears” in accented positions. In his second and last stanza (“Well I had a sweet woman/Call her in July/Well every time I look, baby/She’d be on my mind”), he places the syllables “had,” “-an,” “in,” “-ly,”

“time,” “bab-,” “on,” and “mind” in accented positions. (Brown accents the unstressed second syllable of the word “woman,” which coincides with scale degree 2, and the onset of the stressed word “mind” coincides with scale degree 5; thus $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{5}$ are shown to be displaced accents in the reduction in Example 3.19d, and are placed in the accented positions to which they belong, on the downbeats of bars two and seven, respectively.) Despite his inconsistent rhythmic structure—he accents six syllables in the first stanza and eight in the second—Brown nonetheless consistently accents the third beat of bar five (with “-bod-“ in the first stanza and “bab-“ in the second), which is more of a distinguishing characteristic of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme, and not very typical of the “How Long” scheme (although Kimbrough also accents the third beat of bar five).

In the first line of his first strophe, Brown begins with a motion from $\hat{1}$ to natural- $\hat{7}$, somewhat like the opening gesture of the “How Long” scheme, though the $\hat{7}$ is natural and sounds over the dominant (Ex. 3.19a-b). In his second strophe, the melody contains a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ motion from the end of bar one to the beginning of bar two, which is like the melodic structure of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme (Ex. 3.19c-d). In both strophes the melodic structure contains one precipitous drop in line two. In the first strophe the drop ends on scale degree 1, which is reminiscent of the octave descent to $\hat{1}$ in the second line of a first tune type realization of the “How Long” scheme, although here the drop ends on $\hat{1}$ in the upper register; in the second strophe, the drop ends on the lower scale degree 4, which is one of the hallmarks of the second line of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme. (The drop from natural- $\hat{7}$ to lower $\hat{1}$ in bars six and seven of both strophes is actually very much like the last line of “Worried Life Blues,” to be discussed below.)

Brown's melodic structure also contains features of both the first and second tune types; in the verse, it stays in the upper register, like the second type, but its large-scale structure involves a descent to the lower scale degree 1, like the first type. (Another song that uses the same harmonic progression, "Mississippi River Blues," by Big Bill Broonzy, will be discussed in the "Trouble In Mind" chapter.)

"Worried Life Blues"

Another song generated by the "How Long" scheme, "Worried Life Blues," evidently first emerged in the early 1940s (see Table 3.1). It is most recognizable as the "How Long" scheme through its use of the eight-bar harmonic progression I-I-IV-IV-I-V-I-I, and through its rhythmic structure; accents are placed on the downbeats of the first seven bars (although Big Maceo consistently omits the accent which, in the other recordings, falls on the downbeat of bar six), and the only third-beat accent is in bar six—the most common place to find an "additional" accent in the songs discussed above—which creates a rhythmic acceleration at the end of the scheme. Indeed, in "Worried Life Blues," the accent on the third beat of bar six is seemingly unavoidable because of the greater rhythmic activity of the text in the refrain.

The earliest recording of "Worried Life Blues" is by Big Maceo (1941) (Ex. 3.20), and the other two recordings discussed here—by David Edwards (Ex. 3.21) and Minnie Lee Whitehead (Ex. 3.22 and 3.23)—seem to be based on it; not only is their musical structure similar, but they also use many of the same stanzas. Edwards, like Maceo, sings five stanzas; his first three follow Maceo quite closely, his fourth is based on Maceo's fifth, and his last is a repetition of Maceo's (and his own) third. Whitehead's

two stanzas follow Maceo's last two. Maceo's "Worried Life Blues" is not a cover of Carr's "How Long, How Long Blues," but it does resemble Carr's recording in that it has both a refrain and a descending melodic contour (in addition to the eight-bar harmonic scheme), and so it seems possible that Maceo used that strand of the scheme as a point of departure for the generation of another song.¹⁹

"Worried Life Blues" is discussed separately from the others not only because it is apparently a later manifestation of the scheme with a relatively limited influence (at least in the time period under discussion), but also because of the way its four lines of text are laid over the eight-bar structure, which differentiates it significantly enough from the other songs to justify a separate discussion. Like songs using the eight-bar scheme and the phrase "how long," "Worried Life Blues" has four lines of text, and the last two, which are the same in every stanza, constitute the refrain. The first line of the first stanza is also similar; instead of opening with the line "How long, how long," "Worried Life Blues" usually opens with the line "O Lordy, Lord, O Lordy, Lord" which places the one-syllable word "Lordy" on the downbeats of bars one and two (just as "long" is placed in the same positions), as in Big Maceo's first stanza, the words of which fit with Example

¹⁹ It seems that "Worried Life Blues" may also have been tied to two particular regions in the early 1940s. Five recordings under the title of "Worried Life Blues" are listed by Dixon, Godrich and Rye. The two earliest, the first by Maceo, in June, 1941, and the second by Bill Gaither (Leroy's Buddy), in November, 1941, were recorded just over five months apart in Chicago. The last two, recorded, respectively, by David Edwards and Minnie Lee Whitehead, on July 20 and 26, 1942, were both performed in Clarksdale Mississippi. (Whitehead is accompanied by Thomas "Jaybird" Jones, linking at least one performer to both "How Long" and "Worried Life"; Tampa Red, who accompanies Maceo, recorded two songs with the title "How Long, How Long Blues," in November, 1928, and January, 1929, both in Chicago, but I have been unable to find either.) The remaining recording of "Worried Life Blues," by Sonny Boy Williams, was recorded in New York City in March, 1942. Dixon, Godrich and Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records*, 69, 241, 285, 496, 881, 882, 1025, 1043, 1314.

3.20a: “O Lordy, Lord, O Lordy, Lord/It hurts me so bad for us to part/But someday, baby/I ain’t gonna worry my life anymore.” (This opening stanza is followed by David Edwards; Minnie Lee Whitehead’s opening stanza—which follows Maceo’s fourth stanza—the words of which fit with Example 3.22a, is “He’s on my mind every place I go/How much I love him nobody knows/But someday, baby/Ain’t gonna worry my life anymore,” which places the one-syllable words “mind” and “go” on the downbeats of bars one and two.) Also like songs with the verse/refrain structure and the phrase “how long,” the first two lines each cover two bars and two downbeat accents, from the downbeat of a strong bar (with its pickup) to the downbeat of the following weak bar.

The main difference lies in the refrain. Whereas songs using the verse/refrain structure and the phrase “how long” have a third line which covers two downbeat accents, in bars five and six, and a shorter fourth line which consists of just one downbeat accent, in bar seven, and its pickup, “Worried Life Blues” has just the opposite: a shorter third line consisting of just one downbeat accent, in bar five, and its pickup, and a longer fourth line, which covers two downbeat accents, in bars six and seven (Ex. 3.21b, 3.22b, and 3.23b). Maceo, however, consistently avoids an accent on the downbeat of bar six (Ex. 3.20b). Thus, whereas in songs using the “How Long” text the accent on the third beat of bar six marks the beginning of the fourth line, in “Worried Life Blues,” the accent on the third beat of bar six is in the middle of the fourth line, which begins earlier (usually with the pickup to bar six) and lasts to the downbeat of bar seven.²⁰

²⁰ The rhythmic structure of the text—and in turn the melodic structure—of “Worried Life Blues” is thus difficult to discuss along with the other songs because the third and fourth lines do not correspond to the same rhythmic spans. Even in songs like “East St. Louis Blues,” where it often feels more accurate to describe the second half as one long line, it is nonetheless possible to divide this longer line, even if somewhat artificially, into

“Worried Life Blues” also contains more rhythmic activity beyond the downbeat than songs that use the “How Long” text. Carr’s first stanza, for example, comes to rhythmically conclusive stops on the downbeats of bars one, two, and four in the verse, with the words “long,” “long,” and “gone,” respectively, and on the downbeats of bars five, six, and seven in the refrain, all with the word “long.” The verse of Maceo’s first stanza also has one-syllable words in the corresponding places on the downbeats of bars one, two, and four—the words “Lord,” “Lord,” and “part,” respectively—but the first two of these (which are anticipated and normalized in the reductions) are slurred between two notes, thus becoming more rhythmically inconclusive (Ex 3.20a-b). In the refrain, the two-syllable word “baby” falls on the downbeat of bar five; and the syllable “-more” that falls on the downbeat of bar seven is, like the earlier “Lord,” slurred between two notes, making the end of the refrain less rhythmically conclusive. Thus, the only downbeat that is rhythmically conclusive is in bar four, at the end of the verse. This pattern is followed not only by Maceo in his subsequent stanzas but also by Edwards and Whitehead (Ex. 3.21a-b, 3.22a-b, and 3.23a-b).

However, in her second strophe, Whitehead continues the rhythm beyond the downbeat in bar four as well (Ex. 3.23a-b). In another rhythmic peculiarity, she places “additional” accents on the third beat of bar three in her first strophe (Ex 3.22b) and on the third beat of bar two of her second strophe (Ex. 3.23b), though it does not really create the sense of a rhythmic acceleration because in both cases the bar is expanded to a

two spans, the first from the pickup to bar five to the downbeat of bar six, and the second from the middle of bar six to the downbeat of bar seven, if only for the sake of comparison. But this does not work so well with “Worried Life Blues”; the rhythmic caesura in bar five allows for a division of the refrain there, while the rhythmic continuity in bar six makes a division there unconvincing.

compound triple meter—transcribed as 18/8 in the examples—and the extra accent thus sounds more like an extension from the previous downbeat than a push into the following downbeat. Edwards’s main rhythmic peculiarity is to expand bars three and four by an extra beat, creating a compound quintuple meter—transcribed as 15/8 in the example—in those two bars; unlike Whitehead, however, he does not introduce another accent into either of those two bars (Ex. 3.21b).

The “Worried Life Blues” discant most closely resembles those songs discussed above that realize the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant as a first tune type (though with some significant differences); it makes a large-scale descent from the upper register to the lower scale degree 1, and the verse ends on the lower scale degree 1 in bar four after which the refrain ends on the lower $\hat{1}$ in bar seven (Ex. 3.20b). But the descent begins from an accented upper scale degree 3 (with a pickup from $\hat{1}$), which substitutes for the upper $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{b}7$ in the accented positions on the downbeats of the first two bars. Like the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant, the “Worried Life” discant subsequently makes two descents to the lower $\hat{1}$ in line two, but both of these descents outline an octave (Carr, Jefferson, Jones, and McGhee outline the octave only in the first descent in line two), and in the first of these the lower $\hat{3}$ substitutes for the lower $\hat{1}$ in the accented position on the downbeat of bar three.

In the refrain, line three makes yet another octave descent from $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{1}$, which is comparable to Carr’s repetition of the descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation at the beginning of his refrain, but Maceo and Edwards substitute $\hat{3}$ (and Whitehead $\hat{5}$) for $\hat{1}$ in

the accented position on the downbeat of bar five. Line four descends from an accented natural-[^]7 down to the lower [^]1, but [^]3 once again substitutes for one in the accented position on the downbeat of bar seven (Maceo places [^]3 on the downbeat, Whitehead anticipates it by an eighth-note, and Edwards anticipates it by a dotted quarter-note; the latter two are normalized in the reductions). The accented natural-[^]7, left unresolved in the upper register, is one of the most conspicuous melodic characteristics of “Worried Life Blues,” and one that further distinguishes it from the other examples of the first tune type discussed above.²¹

Maceo and Whitehead both use the progression I-I-IV-IV in the verse (Whitehead adds the seventh to the tonic in bar two), and both end the refrain on the dominant, preparing the opening tonic of the following verse—Maceo’s progression in the last four bars is I-V-I/V-I/V (Ex. 3.18c), and Whitehead’s is I-V-I-I/V (Ex. 3.22c)—and thus both follow the typical “How Long” harmonic progression. David Edwards, however, like Leadbelly, substitutes the tonic for the subdominant in bar four—recalling the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme—and he substitutes the dominant for the tonic in bar five, creating the progression I-I-IV-I-V-V-I-I (Ex. 3.21c).

In the “How Long” scheme, the rhythmic structure and harmonic scheme are the most consistent elements, and the melodic structure displays more variance and substitution. The scheme has three main discants: the [^]1-[^]b[^]7 discant, which performers

²¹ In some strophes, Maceo hints at a glide up to the upper 1 after the third beat of bar six, but these represent less definitive articulations of scale degree 1 than elsewhere in the melody, and so I have simply notated scale degree 7 in the transcription and reduction.

may realize as either a first or second tune type; the $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ -up discant; and the “Worried Life” discant. In all three, the harmony generally informs the choices for melodic substitution. The rhythmic structure has seven “obligatory” downbeat accents. There may be additional accents midway through bars three and six, to drive the rhythm toward the end of both verse and refrain.

Chapter 4

The “Trouble In Mind” Blues Scheme

Bowers and Westcott describe the early recordings of “How Long” as “close cousins to Richard M. Jones’s ‘Trouble In Mind’ as sung on the famous 1926 recording by Bertha ‘Chippie’ Hill with the composer and Louis Armstrong.” The possibilities for interchangeability and substitution between the two are demonstrated best in their notated ground (Ex. 3.2), where it can be seen, for example, that over the first two bars of the melody may either make a $\overset{\wedge}{1}-\hat{b}7$ descent (which is usually found in “How Long”) or a $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}$ descent (which is usually found in “Trouble In Mind”).¹ However, while there are indeed notable similarities between the two, the differences are significant enough to warrant classifying them as two distinct schemes.

Both are eight-bar schemes with a 4 + 4 grouping, and in both, the vocal rhythm of the first four bars ends in a weak bar (bar four) and that of the second four ends in a strong bar (bar seven). But the “How Long” scheme often has a refrain, whereas the “Trouble In Mind” scheme does not have one in the strictest sense, in that there are no repeated lines from one stanza to another; it has instead a verse and a response, often with a poetic structure in which the verse describes a problem and the response describes

¹ Bowers and Westcott, “Mama Yancey and the Revival Blues Tradition,” 184, 189. For Dauer, the scheme consists of a four-bar statement and a four-bar response, has a formal melodic pattern of a b a’ c, and a harmonic scheme of I-V-I-IV-I-V-I-V, though he confounds it somewhat with the “How Long” scheme when he writes that the “sequence I-V-I-IV-I-V-I-I represents a type of standard we call the ‘How Long Type,’ taken from the especially popular title by Leroy Carr”; Dauer, “Towards a Typology of the Vocal Blues Idiom,” 16, 84-85. Peter van der Merwe mentions the “Trouble In Mind” scheme only briefly, speculating that it derives its harmonic pattern from the last half of “Becky Dean,” a nineteenth-century reel; van der Merwe, *The Origins of the Popular Style*, 204.

a solution. Both “How Long” and “Trouble In Mind” have two short lines in the verse, but “How Long” has two short lines in the refrain, whereas “Trouble In Mind” has one longer, less divisible line in the response.

The rhythmic structures of the two schemes also have other features in common, especially in the first four bars. In the most common opening stanza for the “How Long” scheme (“How long, how long/Has that evenin’ train been gone?/How long, how long/Baby, how long?”) the rhythm comes to a stop on the first two downbeats with the word “long.” It then continues beyond the downbeat of the third bar with the word “evenin,,” often containing another accented syllable on the third beat of bar three with the word “train,,” and comes to a stop on the fourth downbeat with the word “gone.” Similarly, in the most common opening stanza for the “Trouble In Mind” scheme (“Trouble in mind, I’m blue/But I won’t be blue always/The sun’s gonna shine in my back door some day”) the rhythm comes to a stop on the first two downbeats with the words “mind” and “blue,,” respectively, contains two accents in bar three on the words “won’t” and “be” (or “blue”), and comes to a stop on the fourth downbeat with the syllable “-ways” (Ex. 4.1).

In the last four bars, however, the respective rhythms of the two schemes are often quite different. The sparse rhythm of the “How Long” scheme (when it has the refrain with the three statements of the phrase “how long”) comes to a stop on the downbeats of bars five, six, and seven, all on the word “long.” But the more active rhythm of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme has five accents in the corresponding span, on the syllables "sun's," "shine," "my," "-door," and "-day." Indeed, it is largely because of this more active rhythm in the second half of the scheme that the text there is best regarded as

comprising one longer line rather than two shorter lines (giving the “Trouble In Mind” scheme three lines per stanza). And yet some songs which belong to the “How Long” family (for example Lottie Kimbrough’s “Wayward Girl Blues”) also have accents in those same five positions, and a less divisible text in the second half. One might say that the more accents that a member of the “How Long” scheme has (beyond the minimal seven downbeat accents), the more it begins to approach the rhythmic structure of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme.

As discussed in the “How Long” chapter, the rhythmic structure of that scheme has a minimum of seven downbeat accents, with the possibility of additional ones on the third beats of bars three and six, which, when both are used, brings the total to nine. The “Trouble In Mind” scheme typically uses all of these nine accents plus another, on the third beat of bar five, bringing the total to ten. As far as rhythmic structure is concerned, then, one might think of the “How Long” and “Trouble In Mind” schemes as occupying opposite ends of the same rhythmic spectrum—“How Long” on the least active side and “Trouble In Mind” on the most active—with members of each group occasionally being found closer to the other end than the bulk of their family. (If only rhythm were considered, Kimbrough’s “Wayward Girl Blues” would be best classified as belonging to the “Trouble In Mind” family, but its harmonic progression, in particular, binds it strongly to the “How Long” family.) It is with regard to their rhythmic structures, then, that the “How Long” and “Trouble In Mind” schemes are most accurately thought of as cousins.

The melodic structure of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme also has certain similarities to that of the “How Long” scheme, especially where the latter has the $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$

discant realized as a first tune type (Ex. 4.2). In particular, the opening stepwise descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$ in the first line of the “Trouble In Mind” discant, which is followed by the precipitous drop of a ninth, from the upper $\hat{5}$ to the lower $\hat{4}$ in the second line, is somewhat reminiscent of the opening stepwise descent from $\hat{1}$ to $\flat\hat{7}$ in the first line of the “How Long” discant, which is followed by the octave descent in the second line (Ex 4.2a and c). But the similar contours of the two are nonetheless distinguished by their being tied to different scale degrees.

Whatever similarities may exist between the rhythmic and melodic structures of the two schemes, they are outweighed to a great extent by the differences between the two harmonic progressions (Ex. 4.2b and d). The harmonic progression for the first four bars of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme (I-V-I-IV) is significantly different from that of the “How Long” scheme (I-I-IV-IV). And while both may, on the large scale, move from the tonic to the subdominant in the first four bars, and while the two may share the same progression for the last four bars (I-V-I-I), the shift to the dominant in bar two of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme clearly distinguishes it from the “How Long” scheme, just as the arrival on the subdominant in bar three distinguishes “How Long” from “Trouble In Mind.”

Indeed, it is those songs that use both of these distinguishing harmonic shifts—resulting in the progression I-V-IV-IV in the first four bars—that are the most difficult to classify, and which seem to achieve a sort of hybrid status. Such songs often use rhythmic and melodic characteristics from both schemes as well, further complicating their classification, and these songs seem to demonstrate most of all the “close cousin” relationship between the two schemes. William Brown’s “East St. Louis Blues,”

discussed in the “How Long” chapter, is such a song. As discussed there, in addition to using the progression I-V-IV-IV in the first four bars, Brown, in the first line of his first strophe, sings a $\hat{1}-\hat{7}$ descent (as in the “How Long” scheme) and a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent in the first line of his second strophe (as in the “Trouble In Mind” scheme). In his first strophe, his descent in line two ends on scale degree 1 (like “How Long”) but in his second and last strophe the corresponding descent ends on scale degree 4 (like “Trouble In Mind”). He also accents the third beat of bar five, which is more characteristic of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme. Indeed, Brown’s song is one of the best examples of the equivalence posited by Bowers and Westcott’s ground, and what tipped the balance toward my putting the song with the “How Long” scheme was in no small part the title.

Another such song is Big Bill Broonzy’s “Mississippi River Blues” (1934) (Ex. 4.3). Broonzy also uses the progression I-V-IV-IV in the first four bars (Ex. 4.3g). He gives no accent to the third beat of bar three (which is common in the “How Long” scheme but atypical of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme), but he does accent the third beat of bar five (which is typical of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme but not typical of the “How Long” scheme) (Ex. 4.3b and e). The melodic structure of his first four bars consistently follows that of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme—the first line of every strophe contains a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent, the second a drop of a ninth from the upper $\hat{5}$ to the lower $\hat{4}$ (Ex. 4.3c and f)—and thus it seems best to place Broonzy’s song in this chapter, despite its similarities to Brown’s “East St. Louis Blues.”

This chapter examines eight recordings, the earliest of which is the famous “Trouble In Mind” from 1926, mentioned by Bowers and Westcott, with Bertha “Chippie” Hill singing and the composer Richard M. Jones at the piano (see Table 4.1).

Five of the other recordings that are also called “Trouble In Mind” (or something close to this) also use the eight-bar scheme and could be described as covers, which can be traced back to Hill’s recording. Indeed, the “Trouble In Mind” scheme seems to have generated the fewest number of songs among the schemes under discussion, and one rarely finds the scheme with a different text. Two examples are discussed here: “Fais Pas Ça,” by the Hackberry Ramblers, and the above-mentioned “Mississippi River Blues,” by Big Bill Broonzy. Cliff Carlisle’s “Troubled Minded Blues” might be said to fall somewhere in between; the title obviously suggests awareness of the typical text, but all of his stanzas are original.

One does occasionally find the text—or fragments of it—without the scheme. This is the case, for example, in Fields Ward’s “Ain’t That Trouble In Mind,” or The Carter Family’s “The Sun’s Gonna Shine In My Back Door Some Day”—the latter using the last line of the most common opening stanza—neither of which uses the eight-bar scheme. It seems that, although the scheme rarely became detached from the original text, parts of the text did at least occasionally become detached from the scheme.

Although the “Trouble In Mind” scheme produced fewer songs with different texts than the “How Long” scheme, it is undoubtedly a more established member of the common stock, showing up in the repertoires of both black and white musicians.²

² Dixon, Godrich, and Rye document some nineteen songs with titles like “Trouble In Mind” and “Sun Gonna Shine In My Door,” and Russell documents fourteen, including “Fais Pas Ça” by the Hackberry Ramblers; Dixon, Godrich, and Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records*; Russell, *Country Music Records*. Tony Russell writes that “Black music was always quite well received along the bayous, and blues standards like *Trouble In Mind*, sung in either English or French, or both, established themselves in everyone’s repertoire”; Oliver, *Yonder Come the Blues*, 205.

And even those recordings which are most accurately described as covers sometimes diverge significantly from Hill's 1926 recording. As with the "How Long" scheme's $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ discant, the "Trouble In Mind" discant may be realized as either a first or second tune type. Hill's 1926 recording uses the first tune type, but most of the recordings under discussion use the second, which makes them sound somewhat less like covers of Hill's recording. As mentioned above, the composer of the song, Richard M. Jones, accompanies Hill in what might be considered the "definitive" recording of 1926 (which uses the first tune type); but in his recording of 1936, in which he sings the melody, Jones uses the second tune type (and creates what is arguably the most divergent melodic structure of all). The "Trouble In Mind" scheme thus illustrates well the fluidity and changeability of American folk and popular music even where covers are concerned, and demonstrates well that even recordings with the composer present do not necessarily indicate a "definitive" version, even in the mind of the composer himself.³

Eight-Bar Structure

The "Trouble In Mind" blues scheme is eight bars long, with four beats per bar, and it has three lines of text (Ex. 4.1). The reduction given in Example 4.2a-b represents a simplified ground for the scheme. Lines one and two each cover two bars; line one begins with the pickup to the downbeat of bar one and extends to the downbeat of bar two, and line two begins with the pickup to the downbeat of bar three and extends to the downbeat of bar four. Line three, which is longer, covers three bars; it begins with the pickup to bar five and continues to the downbeat of bar seven.

³ Jones is also the piano accompanist on Georgia White's "Trouble In Mind" of 1936, which more closely resembles Hill's 1926 recording in that it uses the first tune type.

The rhyme scheme that is usually present in the “Trouble In Mind” text suggests two long lines, and contradicts the division into three lines created by the musical caesuras. But following the idea that a blues text should not be divorced from its musical setting, and taking the musical caesura as the main indicator of line divisions, I divide the text into three lines.

Bertha “Chippie” Hill’s “Trouble In Mind” (1926) displays the typical rhythmic structure of the scheme (Ex. 4.4). (Because Hill sometimes delays stressed syllables beyond the accented positions to which they belong, all five of her strophes are transcribed so that her overall conception of the rhythmic structure emerges; in bar six of her first strophe, for example, the stressed syllable “door” is delayed beyond the third beat, as it is in the fourth and fifth strophes, as shown in Example 4.4a-b and g-j. But in the second and third strophes, the analogous stressed syllables fall on the third beat of bar six, as shown in Example 4.4c-f.) Hill gives line one only two accents, on the downbeats of bars one and two. In line two Hill places accents not only on the analogous downbeats (of bars three and four), but she also places another on the third beat of bar three, which gives line two a total of three accents (although in her second strophe she actually omits the accent on the downbeat of bar three, as shown in Example 4.4c-d). As a result, there is an acceleration of rhythmic activity within the verse itself; the placement of an accent on the third beat of bar three drives the rhythm into the last accent of the verse, on the downbeat of bar four.

Hill gives five accents to line three (the response), which is longer; they come on the downbeats and third beats of bars five and six, and on the downbeat of bar seven (though she often displaces the fourth stressed syllable of the line beyond the accented

position on the third beat of bar six, as mentioned above, and in her second strophe she delays the stressed syllable beyond the third beat of bar five, as shown in Example 4.4c-d). Thus there is a steady increase in the number of accents per line. Line one has only two accents, line two has three accents, and the longer line three has five accents.

Both verse and response have five accents, but the unequal way in which they are distributed creates an acceleration in rhythmic activity that lasts from the beginning of the verse all the way to the last accent of the response, on the downbeat of bar seven; in the verse they are spread out over four bars, but in the response they are compressed into three bars. (Indeed, it is largely because of this compression that the third line is less divisible into two smaller lines.) The compression of the five accents in the response creates another acceleration of rhythmic activity, continuing that which began in the verse and driving the rhythm into the last accent of the response, on the downbeat of bar seven. This steady acceleration is one of the hallmarks of the rhythmic structure of the “Trouble In Mind” scheme.

As mentioned above, the “Trouble In Mind” blues scheme does not have a refrain in the strictest sense, but the pattern of presenting a problem in the first two lines and a solution in the last line helps to project a symmetrical 4 + 4 division of the scheme. The articulation of five accents in each section reinforces this symmetry to some extent, but the unequal distribution of those accents contradicts it, as does the unequal distribution of the lines—two short lines in the verse balanced by one longer line in the response.

Typically, there is no rhythmic activity immediately following the downbeat accents that conclude the verse and response (on the downbeats of bars four and seven), helping to make these accents sound like rhythmically conclusive goals. However, the

downbeat accents preceding these goals often are immediately followed by more rhythmic activity, which helps to make them sound inconclusive and to delay the sense of closure. The accent on the downbeat of bar three is often followed by more rhythmic activity; this makes bar three sound inconclusive, and, together with the accent on the third beat of the bar, helps to drive the rhythm into the downbeat of bar four. The same is true of the accents on the downbeats of bars five and six: they, too, are often immediately followed by more rhythmic activity, which makes them sound rhythmically inconclusive; this activity combines with the accents midway through bars five and six to drive the rhythm into the conclusive accent on the downbeat of bar seven. In another very common stanza (“I’m gonna lay my head/On some lonesome railroad line/And let the two-nineteen train satisfy my mind”), the syllables “lone-,” “two-,” and “sat-,” fall on the downbeats of bars three, five, and six, respectively, and the subsequent syllables in each case continue the rhythm beyond the downbeat. (Hill uses this as her fourth stanza, shown in Example 4.4g, but in bars three and six she delays the syllables “-some” and “-is-“ long enough that they do not convey much sense of an immediate continuation of the rhythm beyond the downbeat, sounding rather as though they are connected to the following stressed syllable. Rosetta Tharpe, especially, conveys the sense of an inconclusive downbeat in all three cases, when she uses this stanza in her second strophe.)

Like the accents on the downbeats of bars four and seven, there is typically no rhythmic activity immediately following the accent on the downbeat of bar two, which marks the end of line one. Occasionally, however, there is. Hill, for example, in the second stanza of her 1926 recording (“I’m all alone at midnight/And the lights are

burnin' low/Never had so much trouble in my life before”), places the first syllable of the word “midnight” on the downbeat of bar two, with “-night” sounding after the downbeat (Ex. 4.4c). In such a case, the rhythmically inconclusive close of line one is answered by the conclusive close of line two. Other examples include Hill’s third stanza (Ex. 4.4e) from the same recording (“Trouble in mind don’t quit me/And it sure do grieve my mind/Sometimes I feel like livin’, sometimes I feel like dyin’”), the fourth stanza of Georgia White’s “Trouble In Mind” of 1936 (“My good man he done quit me/And it sure does grieve my mind/When you see me laughin’, laughin’ to keep from cryin’”), and the fourth stanza of Sister Rosetta Tharpe’s “Trouble In Mind” of 1941 (“My good man has quit me/And it sure does grieve my mind/When you see me laughin’ I’m laughin’ just to keep from cryin’”), all with “quit me” falling on the downbeat of bar two.

The first accent, on the downbeat of bar one, also typically is not followed by rhythmic activity beyond the downbeat—it very often coincides with the word “mind” in the opening phrase “Trouble in mind.” One exception occurs in the opening stanza of “Troubled Minded Blues” (1937) by Cliff Carlisle (“Trouble, trouble, I’m blue/Somebody comfort me/I’m leaving here as lonely as can be”), with the second “trouble” beginning on the downbeat of bar one.

Both verse and response come to a close on a conclusive downbeat accent, and both contain an acceleration of rhythmic activity that drives toward their respective closes. But whereas the verse comes to a close on the downbeat of a weak bar, the response comes to a close on the downbeat of a strong bar, the five accents of the response being compressed into a smaller rhythmic span in order to do so. As a result,

the relatively weak close of the verse is answered by the metrically stronger ending in the response.

Richard M. Jones, in his “Trouble In Mind” of 1936 (Ex. 4.5), consistently omits the accent that most other singers place on the downbeat of bar six, shifting the stressed syllable that normally falls there to the second beat of the bar. The resulting longer span between the accent on the third beat of bar five and the following accent on the third beat of bar six makes line three sound more divisible into two smaller lines. Bill Broonzy, in his “Mississippi River Blues” (1934), also omits the accent on the downbeat of bar six, with the result that the refrain sounds more divisible (Ex. 4.3b-c and e-f). Hill, in her 1928 recording of “Trouble In My Mind Blues,” consistently omits the accent on the third beat of bar three (Ex. 4.6). In her first and fourth strophes she shifts stressed syllables to the fourth beat of bar six (Ex. 4.6a-b and g-h), but in her second and third strophes she places an accented syllable on the third beat of bar six (Ex. 4.6c-f). (Hill’s four strophes are transcribed here not only because of the differences in rhythmic structure but also because of those in the melodic structure, to be discussed below.)

All three lines are typically preceded by a short pickup, normally beginning on the fourth beat of the previous bar. Only line one, however, consistently has an additional, internal pickup; because line one has no accent on the third beat of bar one, the activity on the fourth beat acts as a pickup to the accent on the downbeat of bar two (the second accent of line one). In lines two and three, the rhythmic activity typically fills out the span from the first accent of the line to the last, and this usually eliminates any sense of an additional, internal pickup.

Melodic Structure

The “Trouble In Mind” blues scheme has one prominent discant, which is closely linked to the ten accents of the rhythmic structure, and may be realized as either a first or second tune type. Bertha “Chippie” Hill’s recording of 1926 demonstrates well how the discant may be realized as a first tune type (Ex. 4.4). Over the four bars of the verse, Hill makes a large-scale descent from the upper scale degree 3, in an accented position on the downbeat of bar one, to the lower scale degree 4, on the downbeat of bar four (Ex. 4.4b). She in turn divides this large descent into two smaller descents, which correspond to the first two lines. In line one (bars one and two), Hill descends from $\overset{\wedge}{3}$, the accent on the downbeat of bar one, to $\overset{\wedge}{2}$, on the downbeat of bar two. In line two (bars three and four), she descends from the upper scale degree 5 (on the downbeat of bar three) through the upper $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ (on the third beat of bar three), and finally lands on the lower scale degree 4 (on the downbeat of bar four). Both the conjunct descent from $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ to $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ in line one, and the precipitous drop of a ninth—from the upper $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ to the lower $\overset{\wedge}{4}$, over just five beats—in line two, are hallmarks of the melodic structure of the “Trouble In Mind” discant. The contrast in size between these two descents also works closely with the contrast in the rhythmic structure of lines one and two; the stepwise descent in line one coincides with the relatively sparse rhythmic activity in bars one and two, whereas the more dramatic descent of a ninth coincides with the acceleration of the rhythmic activity in bars three and four. (In all of the recordings under discussion, the first accent is preceded by a short pickup, usually from the lower $\overset{\wedge}{5}$, in which case the descent to the lower $\overset{\wedge}{4}$ in bar four

brings the melodic structure back into the range in which it began, and the $\hat{4}$ does not seem so isolated in the lower register.)

In the response, Hill makes one large-scale descent, which corresponds to the longer line three, from the lower $\hat{5}$ down to the lower $\hat{1}$. She begins the refrain on $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar five (sometimes with a short pickup from $\hat{5}$) and sustains it through the next three accents (on the third beat of bar five, the downbeat of bar six, and the third beat of bar six, the last of which may be delayed), before finally landing on the lower $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven. The sustaining of scale degree $\hat{5}$ in the response also involves an arpeggiation up to scale degree 1, most often on the second beat of bar five.

In Hill's fourth strophe, she substitutes the upper $\hat{1}$ for $\hat{5}$ in both of the accented positions in bar five, as shown in Example 4.4h; she maintains the $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ motion with a pickup from $\hat{5}$ at the end of bar four and a return to it on the fourth beat of bar five, as shown in Example 4.4g.

Thus, unlike some of the other schemes under discussion, the "Trouble In Mind" scheme has no conclusive motion to scale degree 1 in the verse; both of the descents—the first one from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$, the second one from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{4}$ —are inconclusive. The inconclusive melodic structure of the verse—which is reinforced by its ending in a weak bar—is answered by the conclusive motion, from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$, in the response—which is reinforced by its ending in a strong bar. Indeed, scale degree 1 arrives on a downbeat for the first time only at the end of the melodic structure (one exception being Hill's 1928 recording, transcribed in Example 4.6, in which the upper $\hat{1}$ falls with the first accent;

but in this case, that opening scale degree 1 acts as a point of departure, not as point of arrival). This long-term delay of the arrival of scale degree 1 on a downbeat works with the acceleration of the rhythmic activity as it approaches the final accent; the delay of $\hat{1}$ builds melodic tension as the rate of accents accelerates, driving toward the simultaneous resolution of both melodic tension and rhythmic activity on the downbeat of bar seven.

As discussed above, the melodic structure of line two contains a descent of a ninth, from the upper $\hat{5}$ through the upper $\hat{3}$ to the lower $\hat{4}$. In addition to this, between the upper $\hat{3}$ and the lower $\hat{4}$, the upper $\hat{1}$ is invariably touched upon, usually on or after the fourth beat of bar three. As a result, bar three contains a descending arpeggiation of the tonic triad, which leads down to the lower scale degree 4 (Ex. 4.7a). This gesture is recalled later in the scheme; the lower $\hat{5}$ which is sustained in the response typically passes through the lower $\hat{3}$ before coming to a close on the lower $\hat{1}$. Thus the response also ends with a descending arpeggiation of the tonic triad. But although the later arpeggiation echoes the earlier one, it is adjusted so that it ends on scale degree 1 in a strong bar rather than leading into scale degree 4 in a weak bar.

Most singers (whether using the first or second tune type) follow Hill's melodic structure in the verse. Indeed, the most significant deviations come from Hill herself, in her 1928 recording (Ex. 4.6). Here, as mentioned above, $\hat{1}$, instead of $\hat{3}$, is accented on the downbeat of bar one; however, the $\hat{2}$ on the downbeat of bar two is preceded by $\hat{3}$ as a pickup, so the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent is retained in this way (Ex. 4.6b). Also, in her first and fourth strophes (Ex. 4.6a-b and g-h), she delays the stressed syllable which typically falls on the third beat of bar six—as it does in the second and third strophes—to the fourth

beat. In her third strophe (Ex. 4.6e-f) she substitutes scale degree $\hat{6}$ for $\hat{4}$ on the downbeat of bar four, and in her second strophe she substitutes $\hat{4}$ for $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar six (Ex. 4.6c-d).

Georgia White, who also uses the first tune type in her “Trouble In Mind” (1936), follows Hill closely in the verse but deviates from her somewhat in the response (Ex. 4.8). She substitutes $\hat{3}$ for $\hat{5}$ on the third beat of bar five and gives emphasis to $\hat{4}$ in bar six, filling in the space between the $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ of the descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation that ends the melodic structure. (In both occurrences of $\hat{4}$ in bar six, it is the second note of a short melisma; in both cases, $\hat{5}$ is the note that coincides with the onset of the stressed syllable, and thus is shown to be a displaced accent in the reductions in Example 4.8b-c.)

Most singers who realize the discant as a second tune type follow the structure of the verse as described above. The significant differences—and those that turn the discant into the second type—come in the response. Some sing a response very close to Hill’s in melodic structure except that bars six and seven are transposed up an octave. Rosetta Tharpe, like Hill, arrives on the lower $\hat{5}$ at the beginning of the response and sustains it through the two accents in bar five (with the typical arpeggiation up to $\hat{1}$ on the second beat) (Ex. 4.9). But in bar six she leaps up an octave to the upper $\hat{5}$, sustaining it through the downbeat and third beat of bar six, before descending to the final $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven. Thus, Tharpe essentially transposes Hill’s last three accents up an octave, so as to finish in the upper register. She also maintains the descending arpeggiation of

the tonic triad at the end of the refrain, though here a return to the upper $\hat{5}$ intervenes between the $\hat{3}$ and the final $\hat{1}$.

Richard M. Jones, in “Trouble In Mind” (1936), also maintains the idea of a descending arpeggiation of the tonic triad at the end of the response (his has a passing $\hat{4}$ between the $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$), transposing it up an octave like Tharpe (Ex. 4.5). But as a whole his response differs more from Hill’s than does Tharpe’s. His melody is extremely disjunct; after beginning with the typical $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent in line one and the $\hat{5}-\hat{4}$ descent of a ninth in line two, Jones makes an even more dramatic jump of an octave and a seventh up to $\hat{3}$ (sounding a tenth above the upper scale degree 1) substituting it for the upper $\hat{5}$ to begin the response. He then arpeggiates down to $\hat{5}$, on the third beat of bar five, and prolongs it through bar six, before finally descending to the upper $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven. Jones thus divides the melodic structure into two descents, the first from the upper $\hat{3}$ to the lower $\hat{4}$, in the verse, and the second from $\hat{3}$ a tenth above the upper $\hat{1}$ down to the upper $\hat{1}$, in the response. Despite the peculiarity of Jones’s melody in bar five, it nonetheless maintains the idea of an arpeggiation of the tonic triad at that point, though not the usual $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ gesture. He also recalls the descending arpeggiation of the tonic at the end of the verse with another at the end of the response, but the latter is now transposed up an octave (in comparison to Hill’s) to sound in the same register as the former (Ex. 4.7b). (Jones, like White, sings $\hat{4}$ on the third beat of bar six, as the second note of a short melisma, passing between the $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ of the typical

arpeggiation; also like White, he sings $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ with the onset of the stressed syllable on the preceding eighth-note, and thus $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ is shown to be a displaced accent in the reductions in Example 4.5b-c.)

Although the concluding descending $\overset{\wedge}{5}-\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ arpeggiation may, in the second tune type, simply be transposed up an octave, as in the two examples cited above, sometimes a concluding $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ descent substitutes for it (Table 4.1). Cliff Carlisle begins with the typical melodic structure in the verse, and, like Tharpe, he arrives on the lower $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ on the downbeat of bar five; however, his approach to the final $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ in the upper register differs significantly from those of both Jones and Tharpe (Ex. 4.10). Carlisle, instead of maintaining $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ for the first three accents of the response, jumps up to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the third beat of bar five (giving more emphasis to the upper $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ at this point than is usually the case) before returning to $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ on the downbeat of bar six. More significantly, he then leaps up to $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ on the third beat of bar six before finally descending, through $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ (on beat four) to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat of bar seven. Carlisle thus replaces the arpeggiated descent to the final $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ with a stepwise descent (Ex. 4.10c).

In “Fais Pas Ça” (1938), Luderin Darbone, the singer for The Hackberry Ramblers, also begins with the typical structure in the verse, and then begins the response on the accented lower scale degree $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ (Ex. 4.11). He maintains the lower $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ for the two accents in bar five, much like Hill, with the typical arpeggiation up to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the second beat. In bar six, however, he leaps up to $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ (on the downbeat), and climbs still higher to

$\hat{b}3$ (on beat three), before descending back through $\hat{2}$ (on beat four) and finally down to $\hat{1}$ (on the downbeat of bar seven). Thus, like Carlisle, he replaces the final arpeggiation with a stepwise descent (Ex. 4.11c).

Whereas the responses that end with a descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation of the tonic triad have a parallelism with the end of the verse, recalling the same gesture in bar three but adjusting it so that it ends on $\hat{1}$ in a strong bar, those that end with a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ stepwise descent have a parallelism with the beginning of the verse, recalling the opening $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ gesture but condensing it into a smaller rhythmic span and finishing what the earlier descent left incomplete by bringing it all the way to $\hat{1}$ (Ex. 4.7d-e). Carlisle leaps to scale degree 3 in bar six (Ex. 4.7d), but the Hackberry Ramblers treat it as an upper neighbor to scale degree 2 (Ex. 4.7e).

All of the above-mentioned singers who use the second tune type, except for Jones, begin the response on the lower $\hat{5}$, leap up above the upper $\hat{1}$, in order to attain a higher position from which to descend, and finally end on the upper $\hat{1}$. This up-down contour could be said to be the basic melodic shape of the type two response, but within that general contour there is room for substitution. It is also this up-down motion in the response that most differentiates the contour of the second tune type from the large-scale descending contour of the first (Table 4.1).

Yet, whether singers realize the discant as a first or second tune type, its basic musical framework remains intact. All of the above-mentioned singers who use the second tune type, including Jones, maintain the idea of an inconclusive verse answered by a conclusive response, just as in the first tune type; the verse still ends on scale degree

4 in a weak bar, after which the response ends on scale degree 1 in a strong bar. And all of those who use the second tune type still create melodic tension by delaying the arrival of $\hat{1}$ on a downbeat until the downbeat of bar seven, just as in the first tune type.

In addition to being differentiated by their contours, the two tune types are also differentiated by their modal frames, and by which parts of those frames the verse and response respectively occupy (Ex. 4.12). The first tune type has a modal frame spanning a twelfth, from the upper scale degree 5 to the lower scale degree 1 (Ex. 4.12a-b). Within this frame, the verse occupies the upper part—from the upper $\hat{5}$ down to the lower $\hat{4}$ —and the response occupies the lower part—from the upper $\hat{1}$ down to the lower $\hat{1}$. This type of division of the frame, where the verse occupies the upper region and the response the lower, is common for a descending melodic contour, and it helps to reinforce the symmetrical 4 + 4 division of the scheme.

The second tune type typically has a comparatively smaller modal frame of a ninth (the exception being that of Jones, which spans an octave and a sixth). The distribution of the frame in the second tune type may be just the opposite of what is found in the first tune type; in Jones's "Trouble In Mind" it is the verse that occupies the lower part of the frame and the response the upper (Ex. 4.12d). Similarly, in Tharpe's song (and in Broonzy's), the range of the verse reaches lower than that of the response (the former extending down to the lower $\hat{4}$, the latter only down to the lower $\hat{5}$), but here the range of the response does not reach above that of the verse; both extend up to the upper $\hat{5}$ (Ex. 4.12c and g). In the case of both Carlisle and The Hackberry Ramblers, the range of the verse exceeds that of the response in both the upper and lower registers (Ex. 4.12e-

f). In all of the various modal frames used with the second tune type, however, the range of the verse reaches lower than that of the response by one note—the lower scale degree 4, which concludes the verse; for it is after the descent to $\hat{4}$ that the second tune type begins its ascent back up to the upper $\hat{1}$. (One exception to this may be Rosetta Tharpe’s song, in which she sometimes hints at the lower $\hat{3}$ on the third beat of bar five.)

In “Mississippi River Blues,” Bill Broonzy uses the second tune type, but his melodic structure diverges from those described above because he makes two descents in his response (Ex. 4.3). It begins like the others, with a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent in line one and a $\hat{5}-\hat{4}$ descent of a ninth in line two (the latter perhaps best represented in the second strophe, where $\hat{5}$ is heard in an accented position on the downbeat of bar three, as shown in Example 4.3d-f). He divides the response into two descents (the omission of the accent on the downbeat of bar six makes his response more divisible), both from an accented $\hat{3}$ down to an accented $\hat{1}$ (Ex. 4.3c and f). In the first of these descents (in bar five) $\hat{3}$ falls on the first beat and $\hat{1}$ on the third beat. In the next and last descent, $\hat{3}$ falls on the third beat (of bar six) and $\hat{1}$ in a stronger position on the downbeat (of bar seven), and thus the two descents within the response itself have an inconclusive/conclusive relationship. The final $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descent also answers the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent of line one, and its $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ contour recalls the $\hat{5}-(\hat{4})-\hat{b}\hat{3}-\hat{1}-(\hat{4})$ descent of line two, this time closing on $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of a strong bar (Ex. 4.7g). The continuation of the rhythm beyond the second accent in bar five also contributes to the sense of inconclusiveness; in both strophes, the accented syllable coincides with scale degree 1 on the eighth note preceding

the third beat of bar five, and is thus represented as a displaced accent which is normalized in the reductions of Example 4.3b-c and e-f. In the first strophe—“Mississippi River/Is so long, deep and wide/I can see my good girl standin’ on that other side”—the note in question coincides with the word “good,” and in the second strophe—“I cry and I call/I could not make my baby hear/Lord I’m gonna get me a boat mama, paddle on away from here”—with the word “boat.”

Harmonic Scheme

Along with the rhythmic structure, the harmonic scheme—which displays less variance than the melodic structure—is the most consistent element of the “Trouble In Mind” blues scheme. The verse—in contrast to the other schemes under discussion—contains all three of the primary harmonies; it is characterized by a tonic-dominant-tonic-subdominant progression. The response is characterized by a tonic-dominant-tonic progression. Thus, the harmonic scheme, in which the verse ends inconclusively on the subdominant and the response ends conclusively on the tonic, matches the inconclusive/conclusive structures of the melody and rhythm, and the problem/solution structure of the text.

A tonic-dominant shift supports the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent of the melodic structure in the first two bars (Ex. 4.2a-b). The dominant resolves to the tonic in bar three, where the melody attains the upper scale degree 5. Line two contains a tonic-subdominant shift, which corresponds to the drop of a ninth from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{4}$ in the melodic structure. The tonic supports the descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation in the melody, and just as this arpeggiation leads into the lower scale degree 4, the tonic gives way to the subdominant in bar four.

Thus, just as there is a large-scale descent in the melodic structure over the first four bars, with $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ as the (accented) starting point and $\overset{\wedge}{4}$ as the goal, there is a corresponding large-scale harmonic motion from the tonic to the subdominant. And, also like the melodic structure, this large-scale harmonic motion is divided into two smaller motions corresponding to the first two lines, from tonic to dominant and from tonic to subdominant. In having a large-scale motion from the tonic to the subdominant in the verse, the “Trouble In Mind” blues scheme is like most of the others under discussion, but it is very much distinguished by the motion to the dominant in bar two.

Whereas lines one and two are each two bars long and contain two harmonies—the tonic and a motion away from the tonic—line three is three bars long and contains three harmonies—the tonic in bar five, a motion away from the tonic to the dominant in bar six, and a return to the tonic in bar seven. The harmony shifts from the tonic to the dominant in bars five and six while the melodic structure prolongs scale degree 5, the common tone, through the accented positions of those two bars. Those examples of the second tune type that do not have $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ in all of the accented positions in bars five and six will be discussed below. The return to the tonic in bar seven coincides with the arrival of $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat, after which there may be various alternations of the tonic and dominant. The basic progression for the “Trouble In Mind” blues scheme, then, is I-V-I-IV-I-V-I-I (allowing for the above-mentioned alternations of the tonic and dominant in bars seven and eight), with each harmony lasting one bar. This is the progression used by Hill (Ex. 4.4k and 4.6i), White (Ex. 4.8d), Jones (Ex. 4.5d), Carlisle (Ex. 4.10d), and The Hackberry Ramblers (Ex. 4.11d).

Thus, the tonic occupies every strong bar, but in the first three of these strong bars (bars one, three, and five) it supports only scale degrees $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat; it is not until the final strong bar (bar seven) that the tonic supports scale degree 1 on the downbeat (the exception again being Hill's recording of 1928, in which $\hat{1}$ falls on the first beat of bar one). This delay of the simultaneity of $\hat{1}$ with the tonic in a strong metric position helps to postpone any strong sense of arrival, and to make the downbeat of bar seven sound like the definitive goal of the rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic activity.

The drive toward the downbeat of bar seven is also intensified by the interaction between the dominant and the melodic structure in bar six (Ex. 4.7). As discussed above, there is typically a $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ arpeggiation of the tonic in bar five, and the final $\hat{1}$ is often the last note of a descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation of the tonic triad, which begins in bar six and ends on the downbeat of bar seven. The $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ arpeggiation is consonant over the tonic in bar five, but when the first two notes of the descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation sound over the dominant, the $\hat{3}$ becomes temporarily unstable, functioning as the dropping third to the final $\hat{1}$ to which it resolves (Ex. 4.7c). In some examples of the second tune type, the melodic structure ends with a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent rather than with an arpeggiation, in which case scale degree 3 comes in an accented position (on the third beat of bar six), and its instability becomes more pronounced, heightening still more the expectation of the final scale degree 1 (Ex. 4.7d-f).

As discussed above, the descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation with which the melodic structure often concludes recalls the earlier descending $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ arpeggiation in bar three,

but it is rhythmically readjusted so as to end conclusively. In addition to this rhythmic readjustment, the different harmonic progressions over which the two arpeggiations sound also help to make the first sound inconclusive and the second sound conclusive (Ex. 4.7a-c). The first $\overset{\wedge}{5}-\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ arpeggiation is consonant over the tonic, and as the melodic structure leads away from the tonic arpeggiation into lower scale degree 4, the harmonic progression leads away from the tonic to the subdominant. During the second $\overset{\wedge}{5}-\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ arpeggiation, the $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ is dissonant over the dominant, and as the melodic structure leads into the final $\overset{\wedge}{1}$, the harmonic progression leads from the dominant back to the tonic. Both of these progressions—I-IV in bars three and four, and V-I in bars six and seven—are descending-fifth progressions, so the harmony echoes its earlier progression just as the melody echoes its earlier gesture; but the first progression is away from the tonic to a non-tonic harmony, which falls in a weak bar, and the second is away from a non-tonic harmony back to the tonic, which falls in a strong bar.

The harmony plays a similar role in those examples of the second tune type in which a stepwise $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ descent substitutes for the descending arpeggiation at the end (Ex. 4.7f). As discussed above, the $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ descent recalls the opening $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}$ gesture in the melodic structure, but completes what the earlier motion left incomplete by bringing the $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ all the way to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$. During the opening $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}$ gesture, the harmony moves away from the tonic to the dominant, but during the closing $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ motion, the harmony leads from the dominant back to the tonic. Thus, the I-V progression at the beginning is answered by the V-I progression at the end, just as the $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}$ motion is answered by the $\overset{\wedge}{3}-\overset{\wedge}{2}-\overset{\wedge}{1}$ motion at the end; but the first progression is away from the tonic to the dominant, which

falls in a weak bar, and the second is from the dominant back to the tonic, which falls in a strong bar (Ex. 4.7d-f). (In the case of *The Hackberry Ramblers*, it may be better to think of the $\hat{2}$, which falls on the downbeat of bar six, as picking up from the $\hat{2}$ in bar two, so that the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ motion in bars one and two is answered by the $\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ motion in bars six and seven.)

Lucky Millinder and his Orchestra, accompanying Rosetta Tharpe, use the “How Long” progression (I-I-IV-IV-I-V-I-I) to support Tharpe’s melodic structure in “Trouble In Mind,” which makes the song another good example of interchangeability between the two schemes (Ex. 4.9d). The opening $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ descent is supported by only the tonic, with $\hat{2}$ now sounding like a passing ninth. The accompaniment also contains a $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ descent over the first two bars (much like the melodic structure of the “How Long” scheme), and thus the harmony in bar two might be more specifically described as $I^9/b7$, which creates an expectation for resolution to the subdominant in bar three. In the accompaniment, $\hat{2}$ resolves down to $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{b}7$ down to $\hat{6}$ in bar three over the subdominant, but Tharpe, following the typical melodic structure of the verse, moves up to $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar three, creating another ninth, this time over the subdominant; this falls to $\hat{4}$ before moving to $\hat{2}$, the upper neighbor to the fifth of the subdominant, in the accented position on the third beat of the bar. She continues to follow the typical “Trouble In Mind” melodic structure by moving through $\hat{1}$ on the way down to the lower $\hat{4}$, which she reaches on the downbeat of bar four. (The relationship of Tharpe’s second line to the harmony is thus very much like the relationship of Broonzy’s second line to his harmony

in bars three and four, where he, too, uses only the subdominant, as shown in Example 4.3c, f and g). Thus, although she uses the typical melodic structure for the verse, it now has a different relationship with the supporting harmonic progression; in particular, $\hat{2}$ on the downbeat of bar two, and $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar three, are no longer supported by the dominant and tonic, respectively, and $\hat{2}$ on the third beat of bar three falls where $\hat{3}$ normally would. In the accompaniment, the opening $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}-\hat{6}$ descent continues through $\flat\hat{6}$ —which inflects the subdominant in bar four—and $\hat{5}$ —to which it resolves, over the tonic, in bar five—giving the accompaniment the type of contrapuntal thread often encountered in the “How Long” scheme.

In the “Trouble In Mind” scheme, the rhythmic structure and harmonic scheme are the most consistent elements. The scheme has one main discant that displays variance mostly in whether performers realize it as a first or second tune type. The rhythmic structure is characterized by a steady acceleration of accents that drives toward the final accent on the downbeat of bar seven. The harmonic and melodic structures delay the simultaneity of scale degree 1 with the tonic in a strong metric position until the downbeat of bar seven, thus making the final accent sound like the collective goal of the rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic activity.

Chapter 5

The “Sitting On Top Of The World” Blues Scheme

The Mississippi Sheiks recorded “Sitting On Top Of the World” on February 17, 1930, and although this is not the first recording under that title—Al Jolson recorded a song under the title “I’m Sitting On Top Of The World” in 1925—it is apparently the first to employ the nine-bar blues scheme that now bears that name. Although the titles of the two songs are almost identical, musically they are quite different; Jolson’s song is in the AABA form typical of the popular tin-pan alley songs of the 1920s, while that of The Mississippi Sheiks is a strophic nine-bar blues. The Mississippi Sheiks may have simply taken the phrase from Jolson’s recording and used it in their new song, as the second line of the refrain, or it may have been a phrase already established in the regional tradition.¹

Many more recordings followed using the nine-bar scheme, some of which may be considered covers. This is most true of songs that use the phrase “Sitting On Top Of The World” in the title and text (three of these, by Bob Wills, The Hackberry Ramblers, and The Carter Family, are discussed here), although even these songs (and especially that of Wills) display individuality and reinterpretation.

The “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme, however, generated more new songs, with different titles and texts, than any of the other schemes under discussion. Some of these songs (such as Charley Patton’s “Some Summer Day,” Big Bill Broonzy’s “Worrying You Off My Mind,” Blind Blake’s “Depression’s Gone From Me Blues,” and

¹ Tony Russell writes, “It is possible that the Sheiks intended the song to be a comment, of a sort, upon the earlier popular number, *I’m Sitting On Top Of The World (Just Rolling Along)*, which emerged in 1925 and moved with an altogether more lively gait”; Oliver, *Yonder Come the Blues*, 187.

Robert Johnson's "Come On In My Kitchen," all of which are discussed here) are apparently unique in their text. Even The Mississippi Sheiks later used the scheme with a new text in "I'll Be Gone, Long Gone." At least one new text—"Things 'Bout Coming My Way"—seems to have generated its own covers. Three songs under this title, all by Tampa Red, are discussed in this chapter; another, "On My Death-Bed" by George Noble, which uses the phrase in the refrain, and which also belongs to this group, is also discussed here.² The poetic structures of the various texts themselves are also similar in that they always employ the verse and refrain structure. In addition to this, the various texts usually contain similar topics and themes, typically one of defiant happiness in the face of hardship.

Within just ten months of The Mississippi Sheiks' original 1930 recording of "Sitting On Top Of The World," an abbreviated, eight-bar offshoot of the scheme was recorded; it first appears in "She's Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day" by The Georgia Cotton Pickers (whose singer was Robert Hicks, or Barbecue Bob). The phrase "You're coming back some cold rainy day" is apparently older than either the nine-bar scheme or its eight-bar offshoot—Bertha "Chippie" Hill, for example, recorded "Some Cold Rainy Day" in 1928, which uses the line as the refrain in an eight-bar scheme beginning on the subdominant—and it seems that the Georgia Cotton Pickers took this established phrase

² The earliest song under this title documented by Dixon, Godrich, and Rye is by Walter Vinson (listed as Walter Vincson on some record labels), recorded on January 19, 1931. Vinson was a member of the Mississippi Sheiks, and sang the vocals on the original 1930 recording of "Sitting On Top Of The World." I have been unable to find this recording, but it seems quite possible that The Mississippi Sheiks were thus responsible for the "Things 'Bout Coming My Way" text as well. The next recording under that title listed by Dixon, Godrich and Rye is by Tampa Red, recorded on February 10, 1931. Dixon, Godrich and Rye list eight recordings under that title; Dixon, Godrich, and Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records*. Russell lists none under that title; Russell, *Country Music Records*.

and used it as the refrain in the eight-bar offshoot; indeed, it is largely because this refrain is shorter than that of the “Sitting On Top Of The World” text—“But now she’s gone and I don’t worry/I’m sitting on top of the world”—that the scheme was abbreviated to eight bars by The Georgia Cotton Pickers. Bo Chatman also uses the offshoot in “Ants In My Pants,” as does Tampa Red in “It Hurts Me Too,” both of which have original texts.

This chapter is based on sixteen recordings (see Table 5.1). Four of these use the “Sitting On Top Of The World” text, and four use the “Thing’s ‘Bout Coming My Way” text (this includes three by Tampa Red alone—one of which, from 1934, is an instrumental under that title—and George Noble’s “On My Death-Bed,” which uses that phrase in the refrain). Of the remaining eight, five use the nine-bar scheme with an original text, and three use the eight-bar offshoot; in the case of the latter, one (“She’s Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day,” by The Georgia Cotton Pickers) uses an older, established blues text, and the other two use original texts.

Although the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme was recorded more often by black musicians, and although black musicians apparently generated all of the new texts, it is well represented in the repertoire of both black and white musicians, and may be considered a member of the common stock.³

³ Dixon, Godrich, and Rye document some twenty-four recordings under the various titles mentioned; Dixon, Godrich, and Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records*. Russell lists eight recordings, all under the title “Sitting On Top Of The World” or some close approximation to that; Russell, *Country Music Records*. “Sitting On Top Of The World” also survived into the rock era, with notable recordings by The Grateful Dead and Cream, both from 1967.

Nine-Bar Structure

The “Sitting On Top Of The World” blues scheme has a nine-bar structure, with four beats per bar. A simplified ground is given in Example 5.1. There are four lines of text, each sung to two bars of music. Lines one and two, which are different in every strophe, constitute the verse, and lines three and four constitute the refrain (Ex. 5.2). The two lines of the verse typically rhyme, but those of the refrain do not. The division between verse and refrain suggests a symmetrical 4 + 4 (+1) grouping of the nine-bar structure. (The issue of whether the ninth bar is merely an “extra” bar will be discussed below.) This 4 + 4 (+1) grouping is reinforced by the respective registers of the verse and refrain, which are built around different parts of the modal frame. The modal frame for the scheme is a four-note arpeggiation of the tonic triad from the upper scale degree 5 down to the lower scale degree 5 (with various passing notes in different realizations of the scheme); in the verse the melody is built around the three highest notes of this frame, while in the refrain the melody is built around the three lowest (Ex. 5.3a). The symmetry is further reinforced by the melodic contours of the verse and refrain, each of which makes one large descending arc. The verse descends from scale degree 5 in bar one down to scale degree 1 in bar four; the refrain descends from scale degree 3 in bar five down to scale degree 1 in bar eight (Ex. 5.3b).

The symmetry of the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme, which is projected by the text and melodic contour, is contradicted to some extent by its rhythmic structure (Ex. 5.4). There are nine accents in the four lines of text. Lines one, two, and three (bars one through six) are similar in their rhythmic construction; all three have two accents, which fall on the first six downbeats, and usually these downbeat accents are preceded by

a pickup of two or three syllables. Unlike the three preceding lines, line four (bars seven and eight) has three accents, falling on beats one and three of bar seven and on the downbeat of bar eight, and the text of line four fills out the length of bar seven all the way to the downbeat of bar eight. This concentration of three accents in two bars makes line four the central area of rhythmic activity in the scheme, and suggests a grouping of the bars into $6 + 2 (+1)$. This grouping is further reinforced by the lack of a pickup to line four comparable in length to the pickups to lines one, two, and three, which helps to separate line four rhythmically from the preceding part of the strophe; line four usually has a pickup of only one syllable or no pickup at all, as in the second most common refrain, “Things ‘bout coming my way.”

The grouping $4 + 4 (+1)$ emphasizes the division between verse and refrain—created by the text and the segmentation of the modal frame—but not the rhythmic similarity of lines one and two to line three. The grouping $6 + 2 (+1)$ emphasizes the rhythmic structure—especially the increased rhythmic activity in the last two bars—but not the text or segmentation of the modal frame. A compromise between the two might be $4 + (2+2) (+1)$, which acknowledges that lines three and four are to a certain extent different, and yet still groups them together in the refrain. (The rhythmic structure of the four lines may also be described as a-a-a-b.)

The sense of rhythmic symmetry is also contradicted to some extent by the presence of a ninth bar. Bar nine sometimes has the feel of an extra bar attached to what is basically an eight-bar structure: even though bar nine is odd-numbered, it has more the sense of a weak bar and unites with bar eight to create the sensation of two successive weak bars. But bar nine also serves to separate the end of one stanza from the relatively

large pickup (three syllables) at the beginning of the next; without bar nine, there might be a feeling of too much activity in bar eight (both the end of one stanza and the beginning of the next would be in the same bar) and thus not enough rhythmic separation between the stanzas. The other eight-bar schemes under discussion all have a vocal rhythm that ends in bar seven, and thus do not require a ninth bar for the sake of satisfactory separation of the stanzas. Indeed, the function of bar nine as simply a separator between strophes seems to be confirmed by the variation in its length from one recording to another; Charley Patton (“Some Summer Day,” 1930) and The Carter Family (“I’m Sitting On Top of the World,” c. 1938-42) use only half a bar for bar nine, giving the scheme an eight-and-a-half-bar structure, and Robert Johnson (“Come On In My Kitchen,” 1936) extends the scheme beyond eight bars by anything from one to three (or two and $\frac{2}{3}$) bars, producing a nine- to eleven-bar structure. The exact length of bar nine is perhaps not so important; what is important is that the time between the downbeat of bar eight and the downbeat of bar one of the following stanza be long enough to separate adjacent strophes.

Another characteristic of the rhythmic structure is that both the verse and refrain contain an acceleration of rhythmic activity as they reach their respective ends. This is due to the rhythmic activity in bars three and six, the only two bars containing rhythmic activity beyond the downbeat (Ex 5.4). In bar three, this slight but significant increase in rhythmic activity helps to propel the rhythm into the last accent of the verse, on the downbeat of bar four. In the refrain, the continuation of the rhythm beyond the downbeat of bar six begins a steady increase in rhythmic activity that lasts through bar seven—the central area of rhythmic activity—all the way to the downbeat of bar eight.

The texts sung to the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme, like the “Alabama Bound” text, display more regularity in their small-scale rhythmic construction than many other texts. The same rhythmic figure occurs twice in each of the first three lines. In the first line of Example 5.4, for instance, the words “spring” and “day” fall in strong metric positions on the downbeats of bars one and two, respectively. Both are preceded by upbeat stressed syllables on the preceding fourth beat. Thus the half-line “Once in the spring” represents a rhythmic figure that recurs in the next half-line “one sunny day.” These paired rhythmic figures are realized again in lines two and three, but with afterbeat activity following the downbeats of bars three (with the word “me”) and six (with the syllable “-ry”).

Like many American blues schemes with four beats per bar, the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme may be played in either 4/4 or 12/8, though there seems to be a preference for the latter (Ex. 5.5). When 4/4 is used (as it is by Charley Patton and The Carter Family) the two-part division of the beat remains more constant throughout. When 12/8 is used (as it is by the Mississippi Sheiks, Tampa Red, Big Bill Broonzy, Blind Blake, George Noble, Bob Wills, The Hackberry Ramblers, and Robert Johnson) there is often the occasional division of the beat into two, though the three-part division is the basic one.

Bob Wills (“Sitting On Top Of The World,” 1935), however, begins the scheme with a six-part division of the bar, with the six beats grouped into three pairs (Ex. 5.6). This creates a large triple meter, much like 3/2, but because each of the six beats is in turn given a three-part division, the meter is best described as 18/8. The triple meter lasts for three bars; in bar four, Wills shifts to the more typical 12/8. The shift from triple to

duple meter in bar four has the effect of further highlighting the division between the verse and refrain, this time through the meter. (Presumably, he switches meter in bar four instead of bar five—which is the first full bar of the refrain—so that the change of meter coincides with the pickup to the refrain. For the first three beats of bar four there is no indication that the meter has shifted; this realization comes only with the pickup to the refrain at the end of bar four.)

Melodic Structure

Although one finds a considerable degree of variance in the melodic structure of the “Sitting On Top Of The World” blues scheme, most musicians seem to be working from a similar melodic framework; the rhythmic and melodic structures together represent the most consistent elements of the scheme (Ex. 5.7a shows a melody with the typical contours and accents, based on that used by the Carter Family). The melodic framework is intimately linked to the nine accents discussed above (Ex. 5.7b). The verse has four accents, which fall on the first four downbeats, and these accents usually coincide with scale degrees 5, 3, 3, and 1, respectively. The refrain has five accents; the two accents in line three (bars five and six) normally coincide with scale degrees 3 and 1. Line four (bars seven and eight) also contains a $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ descent, but this motion is now intensified by being initially condensed into one bar (seven); the $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on beat three of bar seven then functions like a pickup to or anticipation of the final accented $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat of bar eight. As mentioned above, the melodic structure may be further reduced to two large motions, one in the first half of the scheme and another in the

second; the descent from $\hat{5}$ down to $\hat{1}$ in the verse constitutes the first large melodic arc, which is balanced by another, the descent from $\hat{3}$ down to $\hat{1}$ in the refrain (Ex. 5.7c).

These two larger motions are in turn subdivided into four smaller motions, which coincide with the four lines of text (Ex. 5.7d). Lines one and two work together as a pair.

After a pickup which makes an initial climb from $\hat{1}$ up to $\hat{5}$, line one begins the descent from $\hat{5}$, but stops at $\hat{3}$, which makes it sound melodically inconclusive (Ex. 5.7d, bars one and two); this is answered by line two, which begins the descent from $\hat{5}$ again, but this time finishes it, bringing it all the way down to $\hat{1}$ (Ex. 5.7d, bars three and four).

Line two itself is further subdivided into two downward arpeggiations of $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$. In the first of these, $\hat{5}$ acts as a pickup to $\hat{3}$, which falls on the downbeat of bar three and is followed by $\hat{1}$ on the second half of the first beat, which makes bar three sound melodically and rhythmically inconclusive; in the next arpeggiation, $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ act together as a pickup to $\hat{1}$, which falls on the downbeat of bar four, making bar four sound, both melodically and rhythmically, much more like a point of arrival.

Analogously, lines three and four work together as a pair. After a pickup which climbs up to $\hat{3}$ (balancing the pickup in line one), line three contains a $\hat{3}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ descent (Ex. 5.7d, bars five and six); within this descent, $\hat{1}$ falls on the downbeat of bar six, but the subsequent fall down to $\hat{5}$ has the effect of making line three sound rhythmically and melodically inconclusive. Line four initially covers the same scale degrees and contour as line three (a $\hat{3}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ descent), but in just one bar (seven); it then closes what line three

left open with a conclusive ending on $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar eight (Ex. 5.7d, bars seven and eight). Although the lower scale degree 5 is not accented, it nonetheless forms part of the modal frame, and the descent to it in bars six and seven is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the melodic contour of the scheme.

The descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$ in bar three and the descent from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ in bar six accommodate the two places in the scheme where the rhythm continues beyond the downbeat. In bar three, the slight increase in rhythmic activity drives toward the last accent of the verse and the arrival of scale degree 1 on the downbeat of bar four. In bar six the slight increase works with the descent to $\hat{5}$ to make line three sound inconclusive; it also marks the beginning of the rhythmic acceleration in the refrain that continues until the downbeat of bar eight. It is also worth noting that, within each line, the accent on the downbeat of the strong bar initiates a descent which is concluded by the accent on the downbeat of the following weak bar.

Thus, line one contains a $\hat{5}-\hat{3}$ descent which is concluded by the $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ descent in line two. Analogously, line three contains a $\hat{3}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ descent which is concluded by the $\hat{3}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ motion in line four. Within each pair of lines, then, the first contains an incomplete motion and the second repeats and then completes that motion by bringing it to $\hat{1}$ (Ex 5.7e).

It is worth noting here that, as is often the case with American folk and popular music, the third scale degree in the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme may be major, minor, or anything between. However, there seems to be a tendency among musicians to favor a sharper third at some points in the scheme and a flatter third at

others (Ex. 5.8). When the third is a temporary goal of motion, as it is in bar two, or the starting point for a line, as it is in bar five, musicians seem to favor a higher third (Ex. 5.8a and c). When $\hat{3}$ is resolving directly to $\hat{1}$ (functioning as the latter's dropping third), as it is in bars three and seven, a flatter third seems to be more desirable (Ex. 5.8b and d). This also has implications for the harmonic scheme, which will be discussed below.

Some singers extend the melody beyond the octave of the modal frame. This typically happens in the upper register of the frame, during the verse (which is built around the highest part of the frame), and involves some sort of figuration around scale degree 5. Both The Mississippi Sheiks ("I'll Be Gone, Long Gone," 1932) and The Carter Family decorate $\hat{5}$ with its upper neighbor during the pickup to bar three (Ex. 5.9a-b). Both Tampa Red (in many strophes of his recording of "Things 'Bout Coming My Way No. 2," 1932) and George Noble (in only the fourth strophe of his "On My Death-Bed," 1935) extend the melody during the pickup to bar two. Tampa Red extends the melody up to the high $\hat{1}$, as part of an arpeggiation of the tonic triad (Ex. 5.9c); Noble goes up to the $\flat\hat{7}$, which he treats as the dropping third to $\hat{5}$ (Ex. 5.9d). These singers are not using a different, larger modal frame than the others; they are simply elaborating on the upper note of the existing modal frame.

Some musicians, of course, make more significant deviations from the typical melodic framework, the most significant of which involve the accented notes. Big Bill Broonzy ("Worrying You Off My Mind," 1932), for example, substitutes $\hat{3}$ for $\hat{1}$ in the accented position on the downbeat of bar six, before continuing the descent through $\hat{1}$ down to $\hat{5}$ (Ex. 5.10).

Robert Johnson deviates more than most in his treatment of the melodic framework, especially by substituting $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ for $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ in accented positions (Ex. 5.11). In the verse, Johnson consistently substitutes $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ for $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ on the downbeat of bar three. This is still consistent with the more typical melodic structure in dividing the verse into two two-bar descents, but now both begin with an accented $\overset{\wedge}{5}$, descending to $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ on the downbeat of bar two and to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four, maintaining the inconclusive/conclusive relationship between lines one and two (Ex. 5.11c-d). By descending a fifth rather than a third between the accented notes in line two, Johnson makes that drop larger and therefore somewhat more dramatic.

More often, Johnson substitutes $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ for $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ not only on the downbeat of bar three but also on the downbeat of bar two. This has the effect of sustaining $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ through the first three bars, without ever accenting $\overset{\wedge}{3}$, and turning the melodic structure of the verse into one large descending arc that is no longer divided into two smaller two-bar descents (Ex. 5.11e-f). By sustaining $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ through the first three bars, and delaying the descent to an accented note until bar four, Johnson adds more tension to his verse. This emphasis on $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ at the expense of $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ nonetheless maintains—and indeed underscores—the characteristic large-scale descending contour of the verse from $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ down to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$. (George Noble also consistently substitutes $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ for $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ in bar three and uses the melodic structure of Example 5.11c, as shown in Example 5.9d, bar three; he does not, however, substitute $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ for $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ in bar two.)

In the refrain, Johnson often follows the typical melodic framework, which employs the three lowest notes of the frame (Ex. 5.11c-d, bars five through eight). Sometimes, however, he substitutes the upper $\hat{5}$ for $\hat{3}$ on the downbeat of bar seven, and the refrain itself thus covers the entire modal frame (Ex. 5.11e-f, bars five through eight). By making the drop in the fourth line larger, Johnson makes it—as he did in the second line—more dramatic. (George Noble also often substitutes $\hat{5}$ for $\hat{3}$ in bar seven.) Johnson, however, almost never (with the exception of only one strophe, the fourth of Take 2) replaces $\hat{3}$ with $\hat{5}$ on the downbeat of bar five. This helps to signal the beginning of the refrain as a new starting point for a second descent, this time from $\hat{3}$ rather than $\hat{5}$, and it maintains the basic descending contour of the refrain from $\hat{3}$ down to $\hat{1}$. (In Johnson’s recordings, the verse of Example 5.11c is sometimes used with the refrain of Example 5.11e, and the verse of Example 5.11e is sometimes used with the refrain of Example 5.11c.)

Harmonic Scheme

The “Sitting On Top Of The World” blues scheme is characterized mostly by its rhythmic structure and melodic framework, and the harmonic scheme displays more variance and substitution. Typically, however, there is a tonic-subdominant-tonic progression in the verse and a tonic-dominant-tonic progression in the refrain.

The harmonic scheme exhibits the most regularity in the verse, where by far the most common progression is I-I-IV-I, with each harmony coinciding with one bar. This is the progression used by Charley Patton (Ex. 5.12c), The Mississippi Sheiks (1932) (Ex.

5.12g), George Noble (Ex. 5.12h), Bob Wills (Ex. 5.12i), and The Carter Family (Ex. 5.12k). In the 1930 recording by the Mississippi Sheiks, the subdominant is reached slightly earlier, halfway through bar two (Ex. 5.12b). Sometimes, I^{b7} is used in bar two to intensify the motion to IV in bar three (as in the recordings by Tampa Red, Ex. 5.12d, and The Carter Family, Ex. 5.12k) (Table 5.1). The Hackberry Ramblers (“On Top Of The World,” 1936) avoid the subdominant and simply hold the tonic, one might say somewhat monotonously, throughout the verse (Ex. 5.12j).

Some musicians substitute the subdominant for the tonic in bar four, creating the progression I-I-IV-IV in the verse, which, while different, still maintains the basic idea of a tonic-subdominant motion, with an arrival on the subdominant in bar three (Table 5.1). (The resolution of the subdominant to the tonic is still present, but delayed until bar five.) This is the progression used by Big Bill Broonzy (Ex. 5.12e) and Blind Blake (“Depression’s Gone From Me Blues,” 1932, Ex. 5.12f). Tampa Red uses the progression $I-I^{b7}-IV-IV^b$, in which $^b\hat{7}$ in bar two helps to intensify the motion to IV in bar three and $^b\hat{6}$ in bar four helps to intensify the motion back to the fifth of the tonic in bar five (Ex. 5.12d).

Using the tonic in the first two bars of course supplies consonant harmonic support for the first two accents, $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ (Ex. 5.13, bars one and two). The use of the subdominant in bar three, however, temporarily turns scale degrees $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ into dissonances, and gives them the tendency to resolve down to $\hat{1}$, which remains stable over the subdominant. As mentioned above, scale degree 3 in bar three functions as the dropping third to $\hat{1}$, and is often noticeably flatter (thus also suggesting the minor seventh

of the subdominant). Scale degree 3 on the downbeat of bar three resolves down to $\hat{1}$ over the same harmony, the subdominant, and the note of resolution is in a metrically weak position; scale degree 3 at the end of bar three resolves over a different harmony, the tonic in bar four, and the note of resolution falls in a metrically stronger position, on the downbeat of bar four (Ex. 5.13, bars three and four). One may also hear a resolution on a larger scale, from $\hat{3}$ on the downbeat of bar three, sounding over the subdominant, to $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four, sounding over the tonic. All of this—the metrically weak resolution to $\hat{1}$ over the subdominant in bar three, and the metrically strong resolution to $\hat{1}$ over the tonic in bar four—helps make the $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four sound like a more stable point of arrival.

When the progression I-I-IV-IV is used in the verse, scale degree 3 twice resolves to $\hat{1}$ over the subdominant, and the $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar four sounds less like a stable point of arrival, because it does not coincide with a return of the tonic in the accompaniment (Ex. 5.12d-f). Indeed, when this progression is used, it delays the convergence of an accented $\hat{1}$ with tonic harmony until the downbeat of bar eight. This causes more tension to build through the course of the scheme; the delay creates a greater sense of expectation for the arrival of $\hat{1}$ with the tonic, and more of a sense of resolution when they finally do converge.

The harmonic scheme exhibits more variance in the refrain but is usually built around the basic idea of a tonic-dominant-tonic progression. Also, most musicians maintain a crucial link between rhythmic structure and harmonic scheme in bar seven. As discussed above, this is the only bar that contains two accents; it is also the only bar

that contains two harmonies (except for bar two of The Mississippi Sheiks' 1930 recording, and bar nine of Tampa Red's 1931 and 1932 recordings), and the shift in harmony within bar seven coincides with the bar's second accent. The acceleration of the harmonic rhythm helps to articulate the accents and to make more pronounced the central area of rhythmic activity in bar seven. This harmonic shift is present in the vast majority of recordings (the only exceptions I have found being those by Patton, Blake, and The Hackberry Ramblers), though the actual harmonies vary (Table 5.1).

One of the simplest progressions for the refrain is I-I-I/V-I, which has the shift to the dominant in the second half of bar seven (used by George Noble and The Carter Family, Ex. 5.12h and k). More often the dominant arrives in bar six. When this happens, a third harmony (one other than the tonic or dominant) is often introduced in bar seven that either prolongs the dominant or intervenes between the dominant and the final tonic. For example, The Mississippi Sheiks, in their 1930 recording, use the progression I-V-IV/IV²-I in the refrain, inserting an intervening subdominant in bar seven between the dominant and the tonic (Ex. 5.12b). (This progression is perhaps better considered to be I-V-IV⁷/IV²-I, given that the vocal line contains a blue third, the seventh of the subdominant, on the downbeat of bar seven; but the shift from IV to IV²—or from IV⁷ to IV²—should nonetheless be considered a chord change that marks the second accent in bar seven, made all the more conspicuous because the seventh enters—or is transferred—so prominently into the bass, creating a 4/2 chord.) Tampa Red uses the progression I-V-vii^{o7}/V/V-I in the refrain, thereby prolonging the dominant in bar seven by means of its own vii (Ex. 5.12d). Bob Wills prolongs the dominant by means of a chromatic upper neighbor chord, using the progression I-V-^bVI/V-I (Ex. 5.12i). These last three

progressions (Ex. 5.12b, d and i) are similar in that they introduce their most conspicuous chromatic harmony in bar seven, thus further highlighting its rhythmic importance.

Bill Broonzy strongly alludes to a change of chord in bar seven by prominently introducing the upper neighbor to the dominant in the bass (Ex. 5.12e). While perhaps not worthy of its own Roman numeral, because he does not play a full chord but only a bass note, it is nonetheless enough of a change to warrant description as a chordal shift that speeds up the harmonic rhythm.

These various harmonic schemes in the refrain represent different interpretations of the melodic structure, which, along with the rhythmic structure, is the driving force behind the scheme. The progression I-I/V-I treats the tonic arpeggiation in bars five and six as just that, saving the dominant for emphasis of the second accent in bar seven (Ex. 5.12h and k). The $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ on the downbeat of bar seven is given consonant tonic support. When the dominant arrives in the second half of bar seven, the $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ with which it coincides becomes a dissonant anticipation of the following $\overset{\wedge}{1}$, which is given consonant tonic support on the downbeat of bar eight.

Charley Patton uses the unusual progression V-V-V-I for the refrain, which, while certainly different, still maintains the idea of dominant-tonic motion in the refrain (Ex. 5.12c). This progression turns the first four accents of the refrain ($\overset{\wedge}{3}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{1}$) into dissonances, and thus emphasizes the large scale melodic arc of the refrain, the descent from $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ in bar five to $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ in bar eight; by substituting the dominant for the tonic in bar five, Patton turns the opening $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ of the refrain into a dissonance, which does not fully resolve

until $\hat{1}$ coincides with the tonic on the downbeat of bar eight. Later in the same recording Patton uses the progression I-I-V-I in the refrain.

When the dominant first arrives in bar six, as is the usual case, it emphasizes the expansion of the modal frame down to the lower $\hat{5}$ in that bar. After that the harmonic scheme may take a number of different turns. As mentioned above, the progressions I-V-IV/IV²-I (Mississippi Sheiks, 1930), I-V-vii^{o7}ofV/V-I (Tampa Red), and I-V- \flat VI/V-I (Bob Wills)—all of which begin the refrain with I-V—are similar in that they introduce the most conspicuous chromatic chord in bar seven. The chords IV, vii^{o7}ofV, and \flat VI themselves are similar in that they all provide satisfactory support for a blue third when it is used on the downbeat of bar seven (Ex. 5.14). Like the $\hat{3}$ in bar three, the $\hat{3}$ in bar seven is often noticeably lowered, and is heard to resolve to $\hat{1}$ on the downbeat of bar eight. When The Mississippi Sheiks use IV in bar seven, the blue third becomes the seventh of the subdominant (Ex. 5.14a). Tampa Red supports the blue third with vii^{o7}ofV, in which $\hat{3}$ becomes the seventh of a diminished seventh chord applied to the dominant (Ex. 5.14b). In the \flat VI used by Bob Wills, the blue third is the fifth of the chord (Ex. 5.14c). In the other harmonic progressions cited (with the exception of Bill Broonzy's upper neighbor tone), $\hat{3}$ on the downbeat of bar seven (whether minor, or major, or somewhere in between) is supported by either the tonic (where the major third is consonant and the flat third creates a typical blues dissonance) or the dominant (in which case any type of third is dissonant). It seems that when a third harmony (one other than the tonic or dominant) is inserted into the refrain—this always being on the downbeat of bar seven, to highlight the rhythmic importance of that bar with an

outstanding harmony—the lowered third informs musicians’ choices of that harmony, and they choose one with which the lowered third will form a meaningful simultaneity.

Normally, bar nine, which functions primarily as a rhythmic separation between adjacent stanzas, simply holds the tonic. Occasionally, however, the dominant is played in bar nine, preparing the tonic at the beginning of the next stanza. Tampa Red and George Noble both finish the scheme on the dominant (Ex. 5.12d and h), but both are also careful to end their entire song on the tonic. Tampa Red rewrites bar nine in the final strophe so that it ends on the tonic. George Noble follows his last strophe, which ends on the dominant, with a four-bar coda that ends on the tonic.

Robert Johnson’s interpretation of the scheme emphasizes how it is mostly rhythmically and melodically driven, and not as dependent on a harmonic scheme as some others; his accompaniment is very sparse, often following the voice heterophonically. Johnson provides the tonic as a bass note, but all that Johnson does for changes of harmony (when there are any) is to occasionally hint at the dominant in the bass during the refrain. There is no suggestion of a shift to the subdominant during the verse, unless one counts the unusual melodic emphasis on scale degree 4 that occurs only once, in the third bar of the fifth strophe of Take 2. Even if one does, it is clear that Johnson does not consider harmonic progressions in the accompaniment to be crucial to the scheme.

An Offshoot of the Scheme

There is one variant of the scheme that differs significantly enough in its rhythmic and melodic structure to be considered an offshoot, rather than simply another

interpretation, of the “Sitting On Top Of The World” blues scheme. It is an eight-bar scheme, with four beats per bar, and it has three lines of text (Ex. 5.15). Like the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme, it is divided into a verse and refrain. The most significant deviations from the nine-bar scheme lie in the refrain. I have found only three examples of this offshoot, the earliest of which is “She’s Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day” by the Georgia Cotton Pickers (which consisted of Curley Weaver, Barbecue Bob, and Buddy Moss). It was recorded in December of 1930, the same year that The Mississippi Sheiks made their original recording of “Sitting On Top Of The World.” The other two are “Ants In My Pants” by Bo Chatman, a member of the Mississippi Sheiks (1931), and “It Hurts Me Too” by Tampa Red (1940).⁴

The verse is still four bars long and has two lines, each covering two bars. The refrain, however, has only one line, which covers three bars, from the pickup to bar five to the downbeat of bar seven. Bar eight has no words other than the pickup to the next stanza, and now that the vocal rhythm ends on the downbeat of bar seven there is no need for a ninth bar.

There are seven accents, which fall on the first seven downbeats, and, like the first seven accents in the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme, each accent receives a pickup (Ex. 5.16a-b). One of the most significant differences, though, is that in this offshoot all accents fall on downbeats; no bar contains two accents, creating a central area of rhythmic activity, as in bar seven of the original scheme. Upon reaching the downbeat of bar seven, the vocal rhythm simply comes to an end. This offshoot nonetheless maintains the idea of having three accents in the last line, which is now the

⁴ Chatman’s recording is sometimes listed as being by Bo Carter.

third line, and its three accents are now spread across the downbeats of three bars rather than concentrated in two bars as in the original. In tracing the rhythmic framework of this offshoot back to the original scheme, it seems just as plausible to think of the third line of the original being eliminated and the fourth line being stretched out as it does to think of the third line being extended to the downbeat of bar seven and the fourth line eliminated.

Another difference that may affect the rhythmic structure is that the sixth accent, on the downbeat of bar six, now receives only a one-syllable word; Tampa Red, in “It Hurts Me Too,” sings the word “you” syllabically. The Georgia Cotton Pickers and Bo Chatman, however, retain the idea of continuing the rhythm beyond the downbeat of bar six by slurring their one-syllable words between two notes.

The verse resembles the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme both rhythmically and melodically. The biggest difference in the melodic framework of the first four bars is that scale degree 3 substitutes for scale degree 5 in the first accented position (Ex. 5.17a-b). In “She’s Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day,” Robert Hicks (Barbecue Bob) of the Georgia Cotton Pickers maintains the idea of restricting the verse to the upper part of the modal frame and broadening the frame down to the lower scale degree 5 in the refrain (in bar six). Chatman’s melodic structure follows Hicks’s closely, except that in bar six he sings a $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ - $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ descent, with $\overset{\wedge}{1}$ in an accented position. Tampa Red uses only the upper register of the frame throughout the song, and in bar six he substitutes an accented $\overset{\wedge}{2}$ for the expansion of the modal frame down to $\overset{\wedge}{5}$ (Ex. 5.18).

Harmonically, this offshoot is very much like the original in that it has a tonic-subdominant shift in the verse and a tonic-dominant-tonic progression in the refrain. The

verse uses the second most typical progression of the original, I-I-IV-IV (Ex. 5.17c). Tampa Red, as in his recordings of “Things ‘Bout Coming My Way,” uses I-I^{b7}-IV-IV^b (Ex. 5.18c). The refrain uses the progression I-V-I-I/V (Ex. 5.17c and 5.18c), which, like most realizations of the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme, has the arrival on the dominant in bar six. Unlike the original, however, there is no bar with two harmonies (excluding the last bar), probably because there is no longer a bar with two accents, and therefore no need to highlight accelerated rhythmic activity with an acceleration of the harmonic rhythm. The offshoot does, nevertheless, retain the idea of acceleration of the harmonic rhythm in the refrain; in the verse, each harmony lasts for two bars, but in the refrain the harmonies change every bar.

Introductions, Instrumental Interludes, and Codas

Most of the musicians under discussion have instrumental introductions, interludes, and codas in their songs (Table 5.1). (The only ones who do not are The Carter Family and Tampa Red, the latter in his instrumental recording of 1934. George Noble has only a short four-bar introduction.) Some simply use the scheme for these instrumental sections; The Georgia Cotton Pickers have an introduction, one interlude, and a coda, all of which use the eight-bar scheme of the offshoot. Tampa Red, in his recordings of 1931 and 1932, has an introduction and one interlude, both using the eight-bar scheme. In “It Hurts Me Too,” Tampa Red plays one interlude and a coda, both of which use the eight-bar scheme; he sings the refrain in the coda, but the verse is a kazoo solo.

Others take advantage of the freedom from the words of the stanza, with its four lines and built in-rhythms, to use an altered form of the scheme for instrumental sections. Patton plays two interludes, both of which contain an abbreviated form of the scheme; both are six-and-a-half bars long, with bars three and four cut out of the typical progression, an abbreviation that is possible because of the freedom from the text. The resulting progression is I-I-V-V-V-I-I (the last bar is still only two beats long, as it is in Patton's sung verses). Broonzy plays an eight-bar instrumental introduction—he needs no ninth bar to separate the introduction from the first stanza—and one eleven-bar interlude which is an expanded form of the scheme, with the progression I-I-I-IV-IV-I-I-V-V-I-I, with each harmony lasting one bar; he expands the initial tonic from two bars to three, and the returning tonic, at the beginning of the refrain, from one bar to two.

Blake begins with an instrumental introduction (I-I-IV-IV-I-I-V-V-I-I) and plays three instrumental interludes (I-IV-I-I-IV-IV-I-I-V-V-I-I for the first and I-I-IV-IV-I-V-I-I for the second and third). The introduction and the first interlude are expansions of his typical progression; the former expands the tonic at the beginning of the refrain from one bar to two, and the latter does the same but also changes the first two bars, usually I-I, into four bars, now I-IV-I-I. The second and third interludes abbreviate the scheme to eight bars, eliminating the bar seven and the second bar of the dominant; this is possible because of the freedom from the text, which would require delaying the final tonic for another bar, so that it would arrive with the last syllable of the fourth line. Blake also abbreviates his sung strophes to eight bars when they precede an instrumental interlude, because the ninth bar is not needed there as a separator between sung stanzas.

Others, in addition to using simply the scheme or an altered form of it, introduce new progressions during the instrumental sections. The Mississippi Sheiks (1930) begin with a nine-bar instrumental introduction which uses the scheme, but later play an eight-bar instrumental interlude using a new progression: IV-IV-I-I-V-IV-I-I; the last four bars of this new progression are identical to the refrain of the scheme (even the melody, played by the violin, is the same), but here the dominant enters in the strong bar. Again, it is the freedom from the text which allows for this; in their refrain (“But now she’s gone, I don’t worry/I’m sitting on top of the world”) the word “worry” falls on the downbeat of the weak bar six, and would not be able to fall on the downbeat of the strong bar five, but here, in the instrumental interlude, it is possible to shift only the melodic and harmonic material that usually coincide with “worry” to the downbeat of the strong bar. In their 1932 recording, the Mississippi Sheiks play the twelve-bar blues scheme as an instrumental interlude, and they play a coda using the nine-bar scheme.

As discussed above, Bob Wills’s song contains compound triple meter in the verse; the extra beats of these bars are used to support short instrumental responses to Wills’s sung words. His first three stanzas are followed by instrumental interludes; the first two use the nine-bar scheme, but here only duple meter is used (except for the last bar, which switches back to triple meter to prepare for the next stanza), probably because both interludes feature a soloist (the first the trombone, the second the guitar) who is given no instrumental response that needs to be supported by extra beats. The third interlude also uses only duple meter (except for the last bar, which is again triple), but it is twelve bars long. The construction is similar to that of the Mississippi Sheiks’ interlude on their 1930 recording, but here it is longer: the subdominant lasts four bars,

the tonic another four, and the refrain from Wills's typical strophe is played over the last four (the refrain typically lasts five bars, but here Wills eliminates the fifth bar, although he does, as mentioned above, expand the last bar to triple meter).

The Hackberry Ramblers begin with an introduction that consists of two statements of the nine-bar scheme; their first interlude also has two statements of the scheme, but their second has only one. Their coda, however, introduces a new, eleven-bar progression: I-I-IV-IV-IV-I-I-V-V-I-I. This is like an expansion of the typical harmonic scheme, but The Hackberry Ramblers, it will be remembered, do not use the subdominant in their progression. (Bars two, seven, and nine of this coda are expanded by two beats, and the bars with changes of harmony sound like strong bars.)

Johnson, in each of his two takes, plays a sort of hybrid interlude-refrain. During the first part of these sections, in which Johnson imitates the wind howling on his guitar, the rhythm is very elastic, and it is difficult to determine the exact number of beats. Both of these brief instrumental sections (over which Johnson speaks) are followed by the refrain.

In the "Sitting On Top Of The World" scheme, the rhythmic and melodic structures are the most consistent elements. The harmonic progression displays more variance and substitution, but most performers have in mind a tonic-subdominant progression in the verse and a tonic-dominant-tonic progression in the refrain. Within this general framework performers make harmonic substitutions, for example the extension of the subdominant through bar four. The placement of an accent midway through bar seven creates an acceleration of the rhythmic activity that drives toward the

final accent on the downbeat of bar eight. An acceleration of harmonic rhythm typically accompanies this, creating an important link between the rhythmic and harmonic structures.

Conclusion

When realizing a blues scheme, performers take on certain constraints and make choices within those constraints. An analytical study can help bring us closer to understanding the musical framework of a blues scheme and the choices made by performers within that framework. The reductions and comparisons of different realizations of a scheme reveal the most consistent musical elements of the scheme—the components that were most fixed upon by performers. These components vary from scheme to scheme, and so this project may be viewed as five case studies of different types of musical framework. Table C.1 catalogues the degree of variance within the musical frameworks of the five schemes, not in comparison to each other, but within each scheme itself.

These frameworks divide into two broad categories: those in which the rhythmic and harmonic structures are more consistent and the discant displays more variance and substitution; and those in which the rhythmic and melodic structures are more consistent and the harmony displays more variance and substitution. The “Trouble In Mind,” “Alabama Bound,” and “How Long” schemes fall into the former category; the “Sitting On Top Of The World” and “John Henry” schemes fall into the latter. In both cases, the structure of the more consistent element generally informs the choices for substitution in the less consistent component. The discants given in Examples C.1-5 are composed of scale degrees that coincide with accents. They bear some resemblance to Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s “time span reductions” in that they “omit (‘reduce out’) the events designated as subordinate” so that “a single event remains as the head of each time

span.”¹ The notes in parentheses represent less frequent substitutions, and the accidentals in parentheses show possible inflections.

Another distinction may be made on the basis of the relationship of the modal frame to the harmonic progression. The mode built around the tonic triad may transpose along with shifts to the subdominant and dominant, or the original mode may remain over changes of harmony.

The schemes in which the harmony is more consistent may be further differentiated on the basis of how many discants they support. The “Trouble In Mind” scheme supports one main discant that displays variance mostly in whether performers realize it as a first tune type, with a large-scale descending melodic structure that ends on the lower scale degree 1, or a second tune type, in which the melodic structure has a plagal range and ends on the upper scale degree 1; in this scheme, the harmonic ground is closely tied to a specific discant (Ex. C.1).

The “Alabama Bound” scheme supports two main discants: the “Alabama Bound” tune and the “Cocaine” tune (Ex. C.2). Both discants in turn display variance and substitution. In the “Alabama Bound” tune, performers make descents in bars one, three, and seven between members of the underlying harmony, including not only the members of the triad but also the sixth and seventh above the root; in bars five and six performers outline a stepwise descent spanning a fourth along various parts of the mode (Ex. C.2a-b). In the “Cocaine” tune the arpeggiations of the underlying harmonies in bars one through four may be a chord step apart in different realizations of the scheme (Ex. C.2c).

¹ Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, 130.

The “How Long” scheme supports several discants, all of which display variance and substitution (Ex. C.3). The harmonic ground supports the $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{7}$ discant, which performers may realize as a first or second tune type (Ex. C.3a-b), the $\hat{3}$ -up discant (Ex. C.3c), and the “Worried Life” discant (Ex. C.3d). In all of these the underlying harmony informs most of the choices for melodic substitution: in bars three and four $\flat\hat{3}$ may substitute for $\hat{1}$ over the subdominant; in bar five any member of the underlying tonic may substitute; and on the downbeat of bar six any member of the underlying dominant may substitute. Performers approach the final $\hat{1}$ of the discant from the root and third of the dominant triad, but also from its own dropping third or through anticipation.

The discants of “Sitting On Top Of The World” and “John Henry” differ in the degree of consistency in the harmonic structure, or in how much or how little performers fix upon certain general requirements for the harmonic progression. In the “Sitting On Top Of The World” scheme (Ex. C.4), the harmonic progression displays considerable variance and substitution, but performers have in mind a tonic-subdominant progression in the verse and a tonic-dominant-tonic progression in the refrain (Ex. C.4b); within this general harmonic framework they make substitutions, notably the extension of the subdominant through bar four and the use of two harmonies in bar seven to accelerate the harmonic rhythm, and to coincide with the two accents in the rhythmic structure (Ex. C.4c-d).

Performers realize the “John Henry” scheme as either a first or second tune type (Ex. C.5a-b). They do not seem to fix upon many general requirements for the harmonic scheme, but instead seem to take their cues from the melodic structure. They may

harmonize the discant entirely with the tonic (Ex. C.5c), or may substitute the subdominant where scale degree 1 is prolonged (Ex. C.5d) or the dominant where scale degree 5 is emphasized (Ex. C.5e); often there is a shift to the dominant midway through bar nine to accelerate the harmonic rhythm and emphasize the cadence.

Among the five schemes, “Alabama Bound” most clearly demonstrates the relationship between harmony and modal frame in which the mode built around the tonic triad transposes with each shift in harmony. In Example 2.10, for instance, the melody typically outlines the underlying harmonies. The sense of dissonance—and in turn the expectation for resolution—thus derives mostly from the harmony, rather than from the interaction between the harmony and the modal frame; the subdominant and dominant create large-scale harmonic dissonance against the tonic, and the sense of resolution is achieved when the tonic returns, bringing the original mode back with it. The “Alabama Bound” scheme shares this property with some longer blues schemes, such as “Frankie and Johnny” and “Whitehouse Blues” (see Table I.1).

The other four schemes fall more convincingly into the other category, in which the mode built around the tonic triad remains in place during changes of harmony. This type of interaction between mode and harmony is especially clear in the “Sitting On Top Of The World” (Ex. 5.12) and “John Henry” schemes (Ex. 1.6), in which notes of the tonic triad often fall in accented positions even when sounding over non-tonic harmonies. In the “John Henry” scheme, these accents occur most often halfway through bar nine during the shift to the dominant. The “How Long” scheme also has frequent tonic arpeggiations over non-tonic harmonies (Ex. 3.10), although the accented notes are often common to both the tonic and the underlying non-tonic harmony. The “Trouble In

Mind” scheme is perhaps harder to classify (Ex. 4.4); the prominent metric placement of scale degree 2 over the dominant in bar two and of 4 over the subdominant in bar four suggests a transposing mode, but the tonic arpeggiations over the dominant in bar six suggest that the tonic mode remains in place. With these four schemes, in addition to the large-scale harmonic dissonance created by shifts to the subdominant and dominant, further dissonance derives from the interaction between the modal frame and the non-tonic harmonies. The subdominant and dominant make certain members of the mode temporarily unstable, and the return to the tonic resolves not only the large-scale harmonic dissonance but also that created by the interaction between the tonic mode and the non-tonic harmonies. Realizations of the standard twelve-bar blues also often have this attribute.

These five schemes display some common traits, and, although it is not within the scope of this project to pursue these similarities beyond these five schemes, they may point to some common traits in composition and performance within a wider sample of American folk and popular music.

The most common places to find accelerations of accents are at the end of the verse or the refrain or both, driving the rhythm into the final accent of the section and of the strophe. An acceleration of harmonic rhythm often accompanies this, creating an important link between the rhythm and the harmony. The harmony accelerates at the end of some longer (and in some cases more widely used) schemes too, as in the “Whitehouse Blues” scheme, the “Railroad Bill” scheme, the cut-time passamezzo moderno, and the most common variant of the standard twelve-bar blues.

In their realizations of the five schemes discussed in detail here, performers display a preference for ending on the tonic with scale degree 1 in the melody, suggesting that a perfect authentic cadence (to use the classical term) represents the most conclusive type of ending; this includes the approach to the final tonic from the dominant, found in the vast majority of realizations. The prevalence of the V-I ending suggests that the upper dominant may still outrank the lower dominant (as it does in classical music) as the definitive cadential chord, that which is needed to create a conclusive ending (even though the subdominant maintains its status as the lower dominant, and is not reduced to the function of predominant), and that IV and V are not simply interchangeable. This may be because scale degree 1 remains stable over the subdominant but becomes temporarily unstable over the dominant, which thus forces a shift back to the tonic for final resolution. Thus, especially when the original mode built around the tonic triad remains over changes of harmony, the dominant may create more urgency for resolution. This may help to explain why so many schemes open with a motion from the tonic to the subdominant and close with a motion from the dominant to the tonic, instead of the other way around; the motion to the dominant creates more urgency to resolve, and thus the more intense progression is the closing one.

This general harmonic framework also occurs in many larger schemes, such as the standard twelve-bar blues, the “Frankie and Johnny” scheme, the “Railroad Bill” scheme, and the “Whitehouse Blues” scheme, all of which open with tonic-subdominant motion and close with dominant-tonic motion. One notable exception to the V-I cadential formula is the insertion of the subdominant between the dominant and the final tonic to intensify the cadence by accelerating the harmonic rhythm and approaching the final

tonic from both its upper and lower dominants (as in the most common variant of the twelve-bar blues and the Mississippi Sheiks' 1930 recording of "Sitting On Top Of The World"), but even in these examples, the dominant is introduced later than the subdominant, and its tension is not resolved until it reaches the tonic. (In the "Trouble In Mind" scheme the dominant enters in bar two, before the subdominant, but the large-scale motion of the verse is still from the tonic to the subdominant.)

In some schemes, performers reach the final cadence in a strong bar following a verse closing in a weak bar (as in the "How Long" and "Trouble In Mind" schemes), adding to the relative strength of the final cadence. Some larger schemes, such as the "Frankie and Johnny" scheme, the "Railroad Bill" scheme, and the "Whitehouse Blues" scheme also have this general rhythmic framework, although in these twelve-bar structures the final cadence in a strong bar (eleven) follows two closes in weak bars (four and eight).

Performers demonstrate a preference for large-scale descending melodic structures; even when realizing a discant as a second tune type, musicians usually make a descent to the final scale degree 1. This is perhaps indicative of a more widespread preference for descending melodic contours for making conclusive endings.

Performers treat blues schemes as a sort of musical public property, as resources for making music. That the components fixed upon by performers vary from scheme to scheme is perhaps most evident when musicians use a scheme to generate a new song. When singers use a melodically-driven scheme like "Sitting On Top Of The World" to create a new song, the rhythmic and melodic structures stay intact and the harmony displays more variance. When Tampa Red uses this scheme for "Things 'Bout Coming

My Way,” for example, he adheres closely to the rhythmic and melodic structures but substitutes the subdominant for the tonic in bar four. The same is true of Bill Broonzy’s “Worrying You Off My Mind” and Blind Blake’s “Depression’s Gone From Me Blues.” When singers use a harmonically-driven scheme like “How Long” to create a new song, the rhythmic and harmonic components stay intact and the discant displays more variance and substitution. When Big Maceo uses this ground for “Worried Life Blues,” for example, he adheres to the harmonic scheme but creates a new discant. The same is true when Blind Willie McTell uses the ground for “East St. Louis Blues (Fare You Well),” and when Lottie Kimbrough uses it for “Wayward Girl Blues.”

Performers may also treat the discrete components of the schemes as resources. The harmonic progressions, for example, are (like blues texts) to some extent formulaic. When thinking of the general musical framework of an eight- or nine-bar scheme with a tonic-subdominant progression in the verse and a tonic-dominant-tonic progression in the refrain, the “How Long,” “Trouble In Mind,” and “Sitting On Top Of The World” schemes may all occur to the performer, who may feel free to mix the available elements, with the result that any of the three harmonic progressions may potentially substitute for any other. This may help to explain why the progression from one scheme occasionally crops up in another, as when Leadbelly uses the “Sitting On Top Of The World” progression for “How Long,” and David Edwards uses it for “Worried Life Blues,” or when Tampa Red, Bill Broonzy, and Blind Blake use the “How Long” progression for “Sitting On Top Of The World” (with new text, and with the dominant lasting one bar longer) and Rosetta Tharpe uses it for “Trouble In Mind.”

A formulaic approach also helps to account for the hybrid schemes. When Bill Broonzy sings “Mississippi River Blues” and William Brown sings “East St. Louis Blues,” perhaps they have in mind the general framework of an eight-bar structure with a tonic-subdominant progression in the verse and a tonic-dominant-tonic progression in the refrain, which is common to both the “How Long” and “Trouble In Mind” schemes—they draw from both and create a less common progression (I-V-IV-IV-I-V-I-I), while incorporating melodic characteristics of both schemes. The same type of thought process may help to explain the Three Stripped Gears’ choice of the “Spoonful” scheme for their subsidiary strain in “Alabama Blues,” which has the “Alabama Bound” scheme as its main strain; they may have in mind the general framework of an eight-bar scheme with descending-fifth progressions in both verse and refrain, with each harmony lasting two bars, a framework common to both schemes.

Using the analytical techniques employed in this study, one might discover more detailed types of musical framework for some of the larger schemes that have generated so many songs in American folk and popular music. The various twelve-bar schemes have been grouped according to their harmonic progressions, but even with regard to the standard twelve-bar blues, for example, which has generated so many songs, one could make further distinctions based on vocal rhythm and melodic structure. One large-scale division might be between realizations in which the tonic mode transposes with changes of harmony and others in which the mode stays in place. Further distinctions could be made concerning the number of accents and their placement within the twelve-bar structure. Such an undertaking, I believe, would lead to the identification of different types of musical frameworks that share the same harmonic structure, and thus to a more

revealing categorization than one that simply groups together, without much distinction, such a wide body of music only on the basis of harmonic progression and large-scale rhythm.

THE MUSICAL FRAMEWORKS OF FIVE BLUES SCHEMES

by

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Table I.1. List of Twelve-Bar Schemes Cited

Scheme	Harmonic Progression	Tonic Mode Transposes Over IV and V	Tonic Mode Remains Over IV and V	Two Phrases Close in Weak Bars 4 and 7 Last Phrase Closes in Strong Bar 11
Standard Twelve-Bar Blues	I - I - I - I IV - IV - I - I V - V - I - I	*	*	
Common Variant of Standard Twelve-Bar Blues	I - IV - I - I IV - IV - I - I V - IV - I - I	*	*	
Frankie and Johnny/ Boll Weevil Blues	I - I - I - I IV - IV - IV - I V - V - I - I	*		*
Railroad Bill	I - I - I - I I - I - IV - IV I - V - I - I		*	*
Whitehouse Blues	I - I - I - I IV - IV - IV - IV I - V - I - I	*		*

Table I.2. Cut-time Passamezzo Moderno

I - IV - I - V
I - IV - I/V - I

Table 1.1. “John Henry,” List of Songs Cited

	First Tune Type	Second Tune Type
Riley Puckett “A Darkey’s Wail” (April 2, 1927)	*	
Williamson Brothers and Curry “Gonna Die With My Hammer In My Hand” (April 26, 1927)	*	
Henry Thomas “John Henry” (June 30, 1927)	*	
Mississippi John Hurt “Spike Driver Blues” (December 28, 1928)		
Frank Hutchison “K. C. Blues” (July 9, 1929)	*	
Joe Evans and Arthur McClain “John Henry Blues” (May 20, 1931)	*	
Reese Crenshaw “John Henry” (December 15, 1934)	*	
J. E. Mainer’s Mountaineers “John Henry Was A Little Boy” (June 15, 1936)	*	
Arthur Bell “John Henry” (May 20, 1939)	*	
Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee “John Henry” (May, 1942)	*	
Sid Hemphill “John Henry” (August 15, 1942)		
Woody Guthrie and Cisco Houston “John Henry” (April, 1944)	*	
“22” and Group “John Henry” (1947-48)	*	
Huddie Ledbetter “John Henry” (October 15, 1948)		*
Huddie Ledbetter and Sonny Terry “John Henry” (date unknown)		*

(Table 1.1 continued)

Refrain Repeated
(14-bar structure)
(ins. = instrumental)

Subdominant
Substitutions

Dominant
Substitutions

	Refrain Repeated (14-bar structure) (ins. = instrumental)	Subdominant Substitutions	Dominant Substitutions
Riley Puckett	ins.		
Williamson Brothers and Curry	ins.	*	*
Henry Thomas			*
Mississippi John Hurt			
Frank Hutchison		*	*
Joe Evans and Arthur McClain	*	*	*
Reese Crenshaw	ins.		
J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers	ins.	*	
Arthur Bell			
Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee			*
Sid Hemphill			
Woody Guthrie and Cisco Houston	*		*
"22" and Group			
Huddie Ledbetter	*	*	*
Huddie Ledbetter and Sonny Terry	*	*	*

Table 2.1. “Alabama Bound,” List of Songs Cited

“Alabama Bound” Tune/Text “Cocaine” Tune/Text

Henry Thomas (Ragtime Texas) “Don’t Ease Me In” (June 13, 1928)	*	
Cannon’s Jug Stompers “Goin’ To Germany” (October 21, 1929)		
Charley Patton “Elder Greene Blues” (c. October, 1929)	*	
Henry Thomas (Ragtime Texas) “Don’t Leave Me Here” (October 7, 1929)	*	
Memphis Jug Band “Cocaine Habit Blues” (May 17, 1930)		*
Freeny’s Barn Dance Band “Croquet Habits” (December 16, 1930)		*
Three Stripped Gears “Alabama Blues” (October 30, 1931)	*	*
Huddie Ledbetter “Take A Whiff On Me” (February 1, 1935)		*
Uncle Rich Brown “Alabama Bound” (July 25, 1937)	*	
Blind Jesse Harris “Take A Whiff On Me” (July 25, 1937)		*
Jelly Roll Morton “Alabama Bound” (May 23, 1938)	*	
Jelly Roll Morton “Don’t You Leave Me Here” (December 16, 1939)	*	
Woody Guthrie “Take A Whiff On Me” (April 19, 1944)		*
Huddie Ledbetter “Alabama Bound” (October, 1946)	*	

Songs Using the “Spoonful” Scheme

Dick Justice “Cocaine” (May 20, 1929)

Charley Patton “A Spoonful Blues” (June 14, 1929)

Charley Jordan “Just A Spoonful” (c. mid-June, 1930)

David Edwards “Just A Spoonful (Shimmy Or Chicken-Scratch)” (July 20, 1942)

(Table 2.1 continued)

	a-a-b-a structure (p=poetic) (r=rhythmic) (m=melodic)	Tonic Arpeggiation in Line One	Subdominant Arpeggiation in Line Two (t=transposition of line one) (d=descent)	Dominant Arpeggiation in Line Three	Stepwise Descent in Line Three
Henry Thomas (1928)	p/r	*			*
Cannon's Jug Stompers		*		*	
Charley Patton (October, 1929)	p/r/m	*	d		*
Henry Thomas (1929)	p/r	*			*
Memphis Jug Band		*		*	
Freney's Barn Dance Band		*	d	*	
Three Stripped Gears		*	t/d	*	
Huddie Ledbetter (1935)		*	d	*	
Uncle Rich Brown	p/r/m	*	t	*	
Blind Jesse Harris		*		*	
Jelly Roll Morton (1938)	r/m	*	t		*
Jelly Roll Morton (1939)	r/m	*	t		*
Woody Guthrie		*	d	*	
Huddie Ledbetter (1946)	p/r/m	*	t		*

Table 3.1. “How Long,” List of Songs Cited

	“How Long” Text	Refrain
Ida Cox “How Long, Daddy, How Long” (September, 1925)	*	*
Lottie Kimbrough “Wayward Girl Blues” (1926)		
Leroy Carr “How Long, How Long Blues” (June 19, 1928)	*	*
Blind Lemon Jefferson “How Long, How Long” (c. July, 1928)	*	*
Jed Davenport “How Long, How Long Blues” (c. September 23, 1929)		
Skip James “How Long ‘Buck’” (c. February, 1931)	*	*
Blind Willie McTell “East St. Louis Blues (Fare You Well)” (September 21, 1933)		
Big Maceo “Worried Life Blues” (June 24, 1941)		*
Thomas “Jaybird” Jones “How Long?” (c. September-October, 1941)	*	*
Brownie McGhee “How Long?” (May, 1942)	*	*
William Brown “East St. Louis Blues” (July 16, 1942)		
David Edwards “Worried Life Blues” (July 20, 1942)		*
Minnie Lee Whitehead “Worried Life Blues” (July 26, 1942)		*
Huddie Ledbetter “How Long?” (Summer, 1943)	*	*

(Table 3.1 continued) Number of Accents $\overset{\wedge}{1}\text{-}\hat{b}\overset{\wedge}{7}$ Discant $\overset{\wedge}{3}$ -up Discant First Tune Type Second Tune Type

Ida Cox	9		*		*
Lottie Kimbrough	10				*
Leroy Carr	7	*		*	
Blind Lemon Jefferson	7	*		*	
Jed Davenport	8	*			*
Skip James	8	*			*
Blind Willie McTell	8		*		*
Big Maceo	7			*	
Thomas "Jaybird" Jones	8	*		*	
Brownie McGhee	8	*		*	
William Brown	8			*	
David Edwards	8			*	
Minnie Lee Whitehead	9			*	
Huddie Ledbetter	10	*		*	

Table 4.1. “Trouble In Mind,” List of Songs Cited

	“Trouble In Mind” Text	First Tune Type	Second Tune Type
Bertha “Chippie” Hill “Trouble In Mind” (February 23, 1926)	*	*	
Bertha “Chippie” Hill “Trouble In My Mind Blues” (November 1, 1928)	*	*	
Bill Broonzy “Mississippi River Blues” (March 23, 1934)			*
Georgia White “Trouble In Mind” (May 12, 1936)	*	*	
Richard M. Jones “Trouble In Mind” (August 5, 1936)	*		*
Cliff Carlisle “Troubled Minded Blues” (August 4, 1937)			*
Hackberry Ramblers “Fais Pas Ça” (April 1, 1938)			*
Rosetta Tharpe “Trouble In Mind” (June 27, 1941)	*		*

(Table 4.1 continued)

	Descent in Response	Up-Down Contour in Response	Concluding [^] 5- [^] 3- [^] 1 Descent	Concluding [^] 3- [^] 2- [^] 1 Descent
Bertha "Chippie" Hill (1926)	*		*	
Bertha "Chippie" Hill (1928)	*		*	
Bill Broonzy	*		*	
Georgia White	*		*	
Richard M. Jones	*		*	
Cliff Carlisle		*		*
Hackberry Ramblers		*		*
Rosetta Tharpe		*	*	

Table 5.1. “Sitting On Top Of The World,” List Of Songs Cited

	“Sitting On Top Of The World” Text	“Things ‘Bout Coming My Way” Text
Mississippi Sheiks “Sitting On Top Of The World” (February 17, 1930)	*	
Charley Patton “Some Summer Day” (May 28, 1930)		
Tampa Red “Things ‘Bout Coming My Way” (February 10, 1931)		*
Tampa Red “Things ‘Bout Coming My Way No. 2” (February 4, 1932)		*
Big Bill Broonzy “Worrying You Off My Mind” (March 29, 1932)		
Blind Blake “Depression’s Gone From Me Blues” (c. June, 1932)		
Mississippi Sheiks “I’ll Be Gone, Long Gone” (c. July, 1932)		
Tampa Red “Things ‘Bout Coming My Way” (March 23, 1934)		*
George Noble “On My Death-Bed” (February 11, 1935)		*
Bob Wills “Sitting On Top Of The World” (September 24, 1935)	*	
Hackberry Ramblers “On Top Of The World” (February 19, 1936)	*	
Robert Johnson “Come On In My Kitchen” (November 23, 1936)		
The Carter Family “I’m Sitting On Top Of The World” (c. 1938-42)	*	

Songs Using the Eight-Bar Offshoot

Georgia Cotton Pickers “She’s Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day” (December 8, 1930)

Bo Chatman (Bo Carter) “Ants In My Pants” (June 5, 1931)

Tampa Red “It Hurts Me Too” (May 10, 1940)

(Table 5.1 continued)

	Original Text	I ^{b7} in Bar Two	IV in Bar Four	Dominant Arrives Bar:	Two Harmonies in Bar Seven	Intro (I) Interludes (L) Coda (C)
Mississippi Sheiks (1930)				6	IV ⁽⁷⁾ /IV ²	I/L
Charley Patton	*			5		L
Tampa Red (1931)		*	*	6	vii ^{o7} of V/V	I/L
Tampa Red (1932)		*	*	6	vii ^{o7} of V/V	I/L
Big Bill Broonzy	*		*	6	(N)/V	I/L
Blind Blake	*		*	6		I/L
Mississippi Sheiks (1932)	*			6	I/V	L/C
Tampa Red (1934)				6		
George Noble				7	I/V	
Bob Wills				6	^b VI/V	L
Hackberry Ramblers				6		I/L/C
Robert Johnson	*					L
The Carter Family		*		7	I/V	

**Songs Using the
Eight-Bar Offshoot**

Georgia Cotton Pickers			*	6		I/L/C
Bo Chatman	*		*	6		
Tampa Red (1940)	*	*	*	6		L/C

Table C.1. Degrees of Variance in the Five Schemes

Scheme	Length in Bars	Vocal Rhythm	Discant	Harmonic Structure	Text
“John Henry”	somewhat variable	somewhat variable	somewhat variable	most variable	least variable
“Alabama Bound”	least variable	most variable	most variable	least variable	somewhat variable
“How Long”	least variable	somewhat variable	most variable	least variable	somewhat variable
“Trouble In Mind”	least variable	least variable	somewhat variable	least variable	somewhat variable
“Sitting On Top Of The World”	somewhat variable	somewhat variable	least variable	most variable	most variable

Example I.1. "Sitting On Top Of The World." Rhythmic activity of the vocal line.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1. Once in the	spring		one sunny		day		My baby	
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	left me		she went a-		way		Now she's	
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	gone		and I don't		worry		I'm	
	bar 7				bar 8			
4.	sitting	on	top of the		world			
	(bar 9)							

*Central area
of rhythmic
activity* ←

Example I.2. (a) Bertha "Chippie" Hill's first strophe in "Trouble In My Mind Blues" (1928); (b) the accents of the first strophe normalized; (c) the second strophe; (d) the accents of the second strophe normalized; (e) the third strophe; (f) the accents of the third strophe normalized; (g) the fourth strophe; (h) the accents of the fourth strophe normalized.

The image displays eight staves of music, labeled (a) through (h), in 12/8 time. Staves (a), (c), (e), and (g) show the original melodic lines for the first, second, third, and fourth strophes, respectively. Staves (b), (d), (f), and (h) show the normalized accents for each corresponding strophe, represented by whole notes on a five-line staff. The original strophes are marked with numbers 1 through 8 above the notes, indicating the position of each note within the strophe. The normalized accents are placed on the notes that correspond to the original strophes.

Example I.3. (a) Edwards's melody in "Worried Life Blues" (1942); (b) the accents of the melody normalized; (c) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads.

The image displays a musical score for "Worried Life Blues" in 12/8 time, divided into two systems. Each system consists of three staves: (a) the original melody, (b) normalized accents, and (c) the melody reduced by line with accented notes as open noteheads.

System 1:

- (a) Original Melody:** Measures 1-4. Measure 1 has an accent '1' over the first note. Measure 2 has an accent '2' over the first note. Measure 3 has an accent '3' over the first note. Measure 4 has an accent '4' over the first note.
- (b) Normalized Accents:** Shows the accent marks as open noteheads on the first note of each measure.
- (c) Reduced Melody:** Shows the melody with a single line connecting the notes. Accented notes are represented by open noteheads.

System 2:

- (a) Original Melody:** Measures 5-8. Measure 5 has an accent '5' over the first note. Measure 6 has an accent '6' over the first note. Measure 7 has an accent '7' over the first note. Measure 8 has an accent '8' over the first note.
- (b) Normalized Accents:** Shows the accent marks as open noteheads on the first note of each measure.
- (c) Reduced Melody:** Shows the melody with a single line connecting the notes. Accented notes are represented by open noteheads.

Example I.4. (a) Brownie McGhee's melody in "How Long?" (1942); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line.

(a) *1* *2* *3* *4* *5* *6* *7* *8*

(b)

(c)

The image displays three staves of musical notation in 12/8 time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).
Staff (a) shows the original melody with eight measures. Above the staff, the numbers 1 through 8 are placed above the first note of each measure. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, some with beams and accents.
Staff (b) shows the accents from the melody, represented by whole notes on the same pitch as the original melody.
Staff (c) shows the melody reduced by line, where the notes are connected by a single line that follows the contour of the melody, with some notes marked with dots.

Example I.6. (a) Davenport's first strophe in "How Long, How Long Blues" (1929); (b) fourth strophe; (c) fifth strophe; (d) eighth strophe; (e) the accents, which remain constant through the strophes transcribed in (a-d).

The musical score consists of five strophes, each on a separate line of music in 4/4 time. The key signature is one flat (Bb). The strophes are labeled (a) through (e). Strophe (a) is the first strophe, (b) is the fourth, (c) is the fifth, (d) is the eighth, and (e) shows the accents for the first eight measures, which remain constant through the strophes transcribed in (a-d).

Strophe (a) is marked with numbers 1 through 8 above the measures. Strophe (b) has a '3' below the first three measures of the second line, indicating a triplet. Strophe (c) has a '3' below the first three measures of the second line, indicating a triplet. Strophe (d) has a '3' below the first three measures of the second line, indicating a triplet. Strophe (e) has a '3' below the first three measures of the second line, indicating a triplet.

Example I.7. (a) the "Trouble In Mind" discant realized as a first tune type, after Bertha "Chippie" Hill (1926); (b) Hill's modal frame; (c) the "Trouble In Mind" discant realized as a second tune type, after Rosetta Tharpe (1941); (d) Tharpe's modal frame.

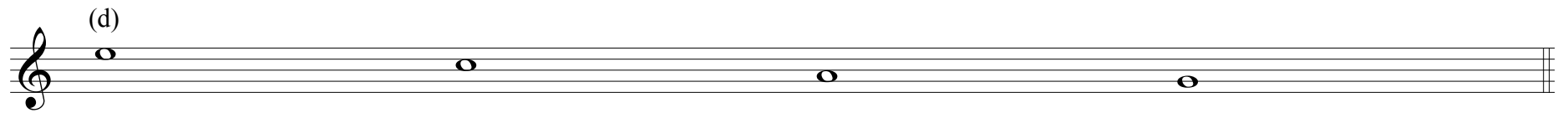
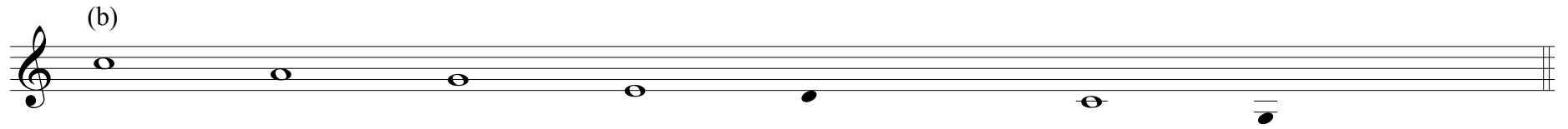
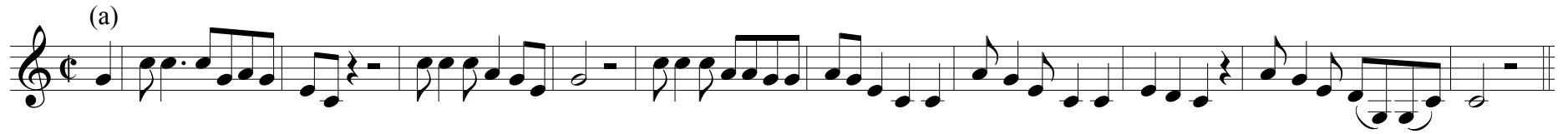
(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

Example I.8. (a) the "John Henry" discant realized as a first tune type, after Woody Guthrie (1944); (b) Guthrie's modal frame; (c) the "John Henry" discant realized as a second tune type, after Leadbelly (1948); (d) Leadbelly's modal frame.



Example I.9. Tonic triad with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors.

Example I.9 consists of five variations (a-e) of the tonic triad (C-E-G) with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors. The variations are shown on a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

- (a) Dropping third: C4, E4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.
- (b) Hanging third: C4, E4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.
- (c) Dropping third: C4, E4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.
- (d) Hanging third: C4, E4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.
- (e) Dropping third: C4, E4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

Example I.10. Subdominant triad with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors.

Example I.10 consists of four variations (a-d) of the subdominant triad (F-A-C) with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors. The variations are shown on a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

- (a) Dropping third: F4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4.
- (b) Hanging third: F4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4.
- (c) Dropping third: F4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4.
- (d) Hanging third: F4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4.

Example I.11. Dominant triad with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors.

Example I.11 consists of four variations (a-d) of the dominant triad (G-B-D) with its dropping and hanging thirds and stepwise neighbors. The variations are shown on a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

- (a) Dropping third: G4, B4, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4.
- (b) Hanging third: G4, B4, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4.
- (c) Dropping third: G4, B4, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4.
- (d) Hanging third: G4, B4, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4.

Example I.12. Interaction between tonic mode and subdominant harmony.

Example I.12 consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with three measures. The bass staff contains whole notes: IV, IV, IV, I, IV, IV. The treble staff contains notes with slurs and accidentals: (a) G4, A4, B4; (b) G4, A4, B4; (c) G4, A4, B4, A4, G4. The notes are marked with (a), (b), and (c) above them.

Example I.13. Interaction between tonic mode and dominant harmony.

Example I.13 consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with three measures. The bass staff contains whole notes: V, I, V, I, V. The treble staff contains notes with slurs and accidentals: (a) G4, A4, B4; (b) G4, A4, B4, A4, G4; (c) G4, A4, B4. The notes are marked with (a), (b), and (c) above them.

Example I.13 (continued) consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with one measure. The bass staff contains whole notes: V, I. The treble staff contains notes with slurs and accidentals: (d) G4, A4, B4, A4, G4. The notes are marked with (d) above them.

Example 1.1. Simple "John Henry" ground.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "John Henry" ground. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains ten measures of music, with notes and rests. The notes in the treble staff are: Measure 1: quarter notes G4, A4; Measure 2: quarter note B4; Measure 3: quarter notes G4, A4; Measure 4: quarter note B4; Measure 5: quarter notes G4, A4; Measure 6: quarter notes F4, G4; Measure 7: quarter notes E4, F4; Measure 8: quarter notes D4, E4; Measure 9: quarter notes C4, D4; Measure 10: quarter note B3. The bass staff contains ten measures, each with a single quarter note: Measure 1: G3; Measure 2: G3; Measure 3: G3; Measure 4: G3; Measure 5: G3; Measure 6: G3; Measure 7: G3; Measure 8: G3; Measure 9: G3; Measure 10: G3. Above the treble staff, the measures are numbered 1 through 10. Below the bass staff, the letter '1' is written under each measure, indicating the fingering for the notes. A double bar line is placed between measures 6 and 7.

Example 1.2. The ten-bar structure is created by the repetition of line four. The repetition of the four-bar refrain can make a fourteen-bar structure. Text after Guthrie and Houston.

<u>Lines</u>		<u>Bars</u>	
1.	John Henry, when he was a	1	
	baby	2	
2.	Sittin' on his mama's	3	
	knee,	4	
3.	Picked up a hammer in his	5	
	little right hand	6	
4.	Said "Hammer'll be the death of	7	} Refrain
	me, me, me	8	
5.	Hammer'll be the death of	9	
	me."	10	} Repetition of Refrain
(4.)	Hammer'll be the death of	11	} Repetition of Refrain
	me, me, me	12	
(5.)	Hammer'll be the death of	13	} Repetition of Refrain
	me."	14	

Example 1.3. The “John Henry” text. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. The division between the verse and refrain suggests a grouping of the ten-bar structure into 6 + 4, but bars five through eight constitute the greatest area of rhythmic activity, suggesting a grouping of the ten-bar structure into 4 + 4 + 2. Text after Guthrie and Houston.

		<u>Strong Bar</u>		<u>Weak Bar</u>	
		Beats: 1	2	1	2
<u>Lines</u>		bar 1		bar 2	
1.	John	Henry	when he was a	baby	
		bar 3		bar 4	
2.		Sittin’ on his	mama’s	knee	
		bar 5		bar 6	
3.		Picked up a	hammer in his	little right	hand; Said:
		bar 7		bar 8	
4.		“Hammer’ll be the	death of	me, me, me	
		bar 9		bar 10	
5.		Hammer’ll be the	death of	me.”	

Example 1.4. (a) Basic melody; (b) further reduction. The melodic progression in the first four bars is balanced by that in the last four bars, suggesting a grouping of the ten bars into 4 + 2 + 4.

(a) Basic melody: A ten-bar melodic line in treble clef, common time. The notes are: Bar 1: G4; Bar 2: A4; Bar 3: B4; Bar 4: C5; Bar 5: B4; Bar 6: A4; Bar 7: G4; Bar 8: F4; Bar 9: E4; Bar 10: D4. Bar 3 contains a quarter rest, and bar 4 contains a half rest.

(b) Further reduction: A ten-bar melodic line in treble clef, common time. The notes are: Bar 1: G4; Bar 2: A4; Bar 3: B4; Bar 4: C5; Bar 5: B4; Bar 6: A4; Bar 7: G4; Bar 8: F4; Bar 9: E4; Bar 10: D4. Bar 3 contains a quarter rest, and bar 4 contains a half rest. Above the notes are accents (^) and numbers: 1, 1, 5, 3, 3, 3, 1. Arcs connect the notes in the first four bars and the last four bars.

Example 1.5. The structure of the refrain. Line four, bars seven and eight, contains a weaker cadence: (a) the vocal rhythm continues beyond the downbeat of bar eight; (b) scale degree 3 is on the downbeat of bar eight; (c) the harmony is static. Line five, bars nine and ten, contains a stronger cadence: (a) the vocal rhythm stops on the downbeat of bar ten; (b) scale degree 1 is on the downbeat of bar ten; (c) the change of harmony emphasizes the cadence.

	Line 4.		Line 5.		
	Bar 7.	Bar 8.	Bar 9.	Bar 10.	
(a) Vocal Rhythm:	Hammer'll be the death of	me, me, me	Hammer'll be the	death of	me
(b) Melody:	^ 3	^ 3	^ 3	^ 1	
(c) Harmony:	I	I	I	V	I

Example 1.6. Melodic shapes: (a) basic melody; (b-e) different interpretations of the basic melody; (f) shared conception of the basic melody.

(a) Basic melody: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (labeled 1), A4, B4, C5 (labeled 2), B4, A4, G4 (labeled 3), F4 (labeled 6), E4 (labeled 5). A bracket underlines the first four notes with the text "descending octave". Lyrics: "John Hen-ry...".

(b) Guthrie and Houston: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. Chords: I, I, I, V.

(c) Williamson Brothers and Curry: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. Chords: IV, I, IV, I.

(d) Evans and McClain: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. Chords: I, I, IV, V, I.

(e) Leadbelly: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. Chords: IV, I, IV, V.

(f) Shared conception of the basic melody: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Shows the basic melody notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4 with a bracket underneath.

(a) Basic melody: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (labeled 5), A4, B4, C5 (labeled 6), B4, A4, G4 (labeled 7), F4 (labeled 8), E4 (labeled 9), D4 (labeled 10). A bracket underlines the first four notes with the text "descending octave". The word "Refrain" is written above the staff between measures 7 and 8.

(b) Guthrie and Houston: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Chords: I, I, I, I, I, V, I.

(c) Williamson Brothers and Curry: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Chords: IV, I, I, I, I, V, I.

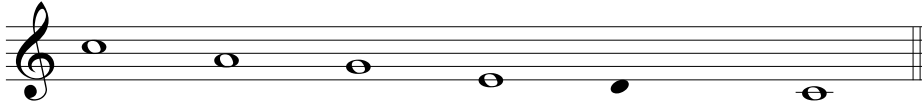
(d) Evans and McClain: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Chords: IV, V, I, IV, V, I, IV, V, I.

(e) Leadbelly: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Chords: I, IV, I, I, I, V, I. The text "Refrain transposed up an octave" is written above the staff between measures 7 and 8.

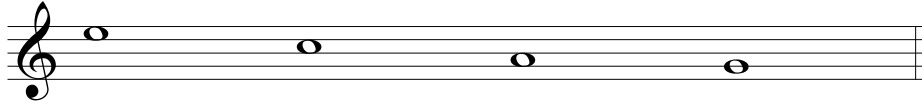
(f) Shared conception of the basic melody: Treble clef, C major, 4/4 time. Shows the basic melody notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4 with a bracket underneath.

Example 1.7. (a) Modal frame used by Guthrie and Houston, Williamson Brothers and Curry, Evans and McClain; (b) modal frame used by Leadbelly, 1948.

(a)



(b)



Example 1.8. Harmonic Schemes.

							Refrain-----			
Bars:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(a) Puckett	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
(b) Guthrie and Houston	I	I	I	V	I	I	I	I	I	V I
(c) Leadbelly	IV	I	IV	V	I	IV	I	I	I	V I
(d) Williamson Brothers and Curry	IV	I	IV	I	IV	I	I	I	I	(V)*I
(e) Evans and McClain	I	I	IV	V I	IV	V I	IV	V I	IV	V I

*In some verses the Williamson Brothers and Curry hint at the dominant in the second half of bar 9, primarily in the bass.

Example 1.9. (a) Basic melody; (b) Hutchison's melody. The lack of a strong question-answer relationship in the refrain allows him to repeat bars seven through eight.

Refrain

question

answer

no question-answer

Example 1.10. (a) Hutchison's bridge resembles the typical "John Henry" refrain;
 (b) Hutchison's improvisatory material resembles the typical "John Henry" refrain.

(a)

Diagram illustrating Hutchison's bridge. The notation shows a treble clef, a common time signature (C), and a single staff. Above the staff, there are four triplet markings: $\hat{3}$ over the first measure, $\hat{3}$ over the second measure, $\hat{3}$ over the third measure, and $\hat{1}$ over the fourth measure. The melody consists of a half note in the first measure, followed by eighth notes in the second and third measures, and a quarter note in the fourth measure. Below the staff, a horizontal line labeled 'I' spans the entire duration of the four measures.

(b)

Diagram illustrating Hutchison's improvisatory material. The notation shows a treble clef, a common time signature (C), and a single staff. Above the staff, there are three markings: $\hat{3}$ over the first measure, $\hat{2}$ over the second measure, and $\hat{1}$ over the third measure. The melody consists of a quarter note in the first measure, a dotted quarter note in the second measure, eighth notes in the third measure, and a quarter note in the fourth measure. Below the staff, a horizontal line labeled 'I' spans the first measure, a line labeled 'V' spans the second measure, and a line labeled 'I' spans the third and fourth measures.

Example 1.11. Terry and McGhee, "John Henry." First verse and first three refrains for voice and harmonica.

(a) First Verse

Musical notation for the first verse, showing alternating parts for voice and harmonica. The notation is on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The sequence of parts is: voice, harmonica, voice, harmonica, voice, harmonica, voice. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

(b) First refrain; first part

Musical notation for the first part of the first refrain. It consists of two staves. The first staff is labeled 'voice' and contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and an accent (^) above the first note. The second staff is labeled 'harmonica' and contains a rhythmic accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Musical notation for the second part of the first refrain, continuing on a single staff. The sequence of parts is: hm. vc. (harmonica and voice), hm. vc., harmonica, vc., hm. vc., hm. vc., harmonica, vc., harmonica. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

(c) Second refrain; first part

Musical notation for the first part of the second refrain, showing alternating parts for voice and harmonica. The notation is on a single staff in treble clef. The sequence of parts is: voice, harmonica, voice, harmonica, voice. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Musical notation for the second part of the second refrain, consisting of a single staff labeled 'harmonica'. It features a continuous, fast-paced rhythmic accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

(d) Third refrain; first part

Musical notation for the first part of the third refrain, showing alternating parts for voice and harmonica. The notation is on a single staff in treble clef. The sequence of parts is: voice, harmonica, voice, harmonica, voice. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Musical notation for the second part of the third refrain, consisting of a single staff labeled 'harmonica'. It features a continuous, fast-paced rhythmic accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Example 1.12. The first verse and refrain of John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues."

	<u>Strong Bar</u>			<u>Weak Bar</u>		
	Beats: 1	2		1	2	
<u>Harmony</u>	Bar 1			Bar 2		
I	Take this hammer		and	carry't		to the
	Bar 3			Bar 4		
I ⁺⁶	captain					Tell him I'm
	Bar 5			Bar 6		
I	gone					Tell him I'm
	Bar 7			Bar 8		
I ^{+b7}	gone					Tell him I'm
	Bar 9			Bar 10		
I	gone					(Take this...)

Refrain

Example 1.13. John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues." There is one relatively long line of verse followed by three lines of refrain. The weak (even-numbered) bars are pickups to the strong (odd-numbered) bars. Each line begins on a weak bar and ends on a strong bar.

	<u>Lines</u>		<u>Bars</u>	
		(pickup)		
	1.	Take this hammer and	1	} I
		carry't to the	2	
		captain	3	} I ⁺⁶
	2.	Tell him I'm	4	
		gone	5	} I
	3.	Tell him I'm	6	
		gone	7	} I ^{+b7}
	4.	Tell him I'm	8	
		gone	9	} I
		(Take this...)	10	

Refrain {

Example 1.14. (a) Basic melody; (b) the melody in John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues."

The image displays two musical staves, (a) and (b), each with a treble clef and a common time signature. Staff (a) shows a basic melody with five notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4. Above the notes are fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. A bracket labeled "descending octave" spans from the first note to the second. Above the second note is an accent (^) and the number 1. Above the third note is an accent (^) and the number 6. Above the fourth note is an accent (^) and the number 5. Staff (b) shows the melody in John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues". It features a descending octave from G4 to G3, indicated by a bracket labeled "descending octave". The notes are G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, G3, A3, B3, A3, G3. Above the first note is an accent (^) and the number 7. Above the second note is an accent (^) and the number 6. Above the third note is an accent (^) and the number 5. Above the fourth note is an accent (^) and the number 3. Above the fifth note is an accent (^) and the number 1. Above the sixth note is an accent (^) and the number 3. Above the seventh note is an accent (^) and the number 1. Staff (a) continues with notes G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4. Above the first note is the number 6. Above the second note is the number 7. Above the third note is the number 8. Above the fourth note is the number 9. Above the fifth note is an accent (^) and the number 3. Above the sixth note is an accent (^) and the number 1. Staff (b) continues with notes G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, G3, A3, B3, A3, G3. Above the first note is an accent (^) and the number 7. Above the second note is an accent (^) and the number 6. Above the third note is an accent (^) and the number 5. Above the fourth note is an accent (^) and the number 3. Above the fifth note is an accent (^) and the number 1.

Example 2.1. Robert Hoffman, "I'm Alabama Bound" (1909), opening strain. This strain is isolated from the four-bar introduction.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 8. The music is in 2/4 time and the key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The dynamic marking is *mf*. The melody is primarily in the right hand, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. Measure 1 starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and Bb4. The left hand plays a bass line of quarter notes G2, F2, and E2. Measure 2 continues the melody with quarter notes C5, Bb4, and A4. The left hand plays quarter notes D2, C2, and B1. Measure 3 features a melodic phrase with a slur over the first two notes (G4, A4) and a quarter note Bb4. The left hand plays quarter notes A1, G1, and F1. Measure 4 continues the melodic phrase with quarter notes G4, F4, and E4. The left hand plays quarter notes E1, D1, and C1. Measure 5 begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The melody starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and Bb4. The left hand plays a bass line of quarter notes G2, F2, and E2. Measure 6 continues the melody with quarter notes C5, Bb4, and A4. The left hand plays quarter notes D2, C2, and B1. Measure 7 features a melodic phrase with a slur over the first two notes (G4, A4) and a quarter note Bb4. The left hand plays quarter notes A1, G1, and F1. Measure 8 continues the melodic phrase with quarter notes G4, F4, and E4. The left hand plays quarter notes E1, D1, and C1.

Example 2.2. Scarborough's transcription of "Shine Reel."



Example 2.3. Scarborough's transcription of "I Went To The Hop Joint."



Example 2.4. Scarborough's transcription of "Tom Cat."



Example 2.5. Simple "Alabama Bound" ground.

"Alabama Bound" tune

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

"Cocaine" tune

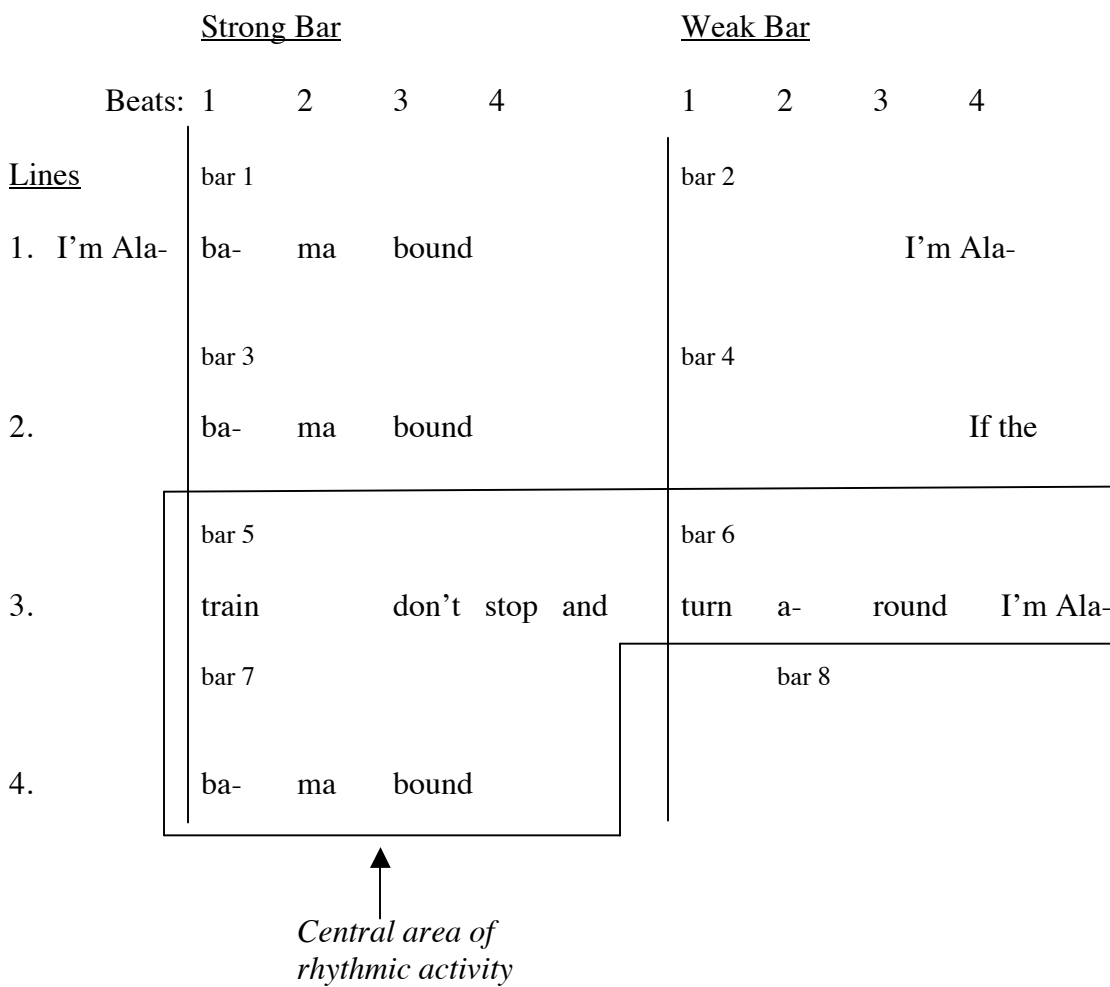
I I IV IV V V I I

Detailed description: The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is in treble clef and contains the melody for the "Alabama Bound" tune, consisting of eight measures of music with notes and rests. Above the first four measures are the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, and above the last four measures are 5, 6, 7, and 8. The middle staff is also in treble clef and contains the melody for the "Cocaine" tune, also consisting of eight measures. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a simple harmonic accompaniment consisting of eight measures, each with a single note. Below this staff are the Roman numerals *I I IV IV V V I I*, which correspond to the notes in the bass staff.

Example 2.6. The “Alabama Bound” text. Bars, vocal structure, and poetic structure.
Text after Leadbelly.

<u>Lines</u>	<u>Bars</u>	<u>Poetic Structure</u>	
1. I'm Ala-			}
bama bound	1	a	
	2		
2. I'm Ala-			
bama bound	3	a	} verse
	4		
3. If the			}
train don't stop and	5	b	
turn around	6		
4. I'm Ala-			
bama bound	7	a	} response
	8		

Example 2.7. The “Alabama Bound” text. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. Text after Leadbelly.



Example 2.8. The “Cocaine” text. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line. Text after the Memphis Jug Band.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1.	Cocaine		habit's		mighty		bad	It's the
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	worst	old	habit	that	I	ever	had	
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	Hey,		hey,		honey, take a whiff on			
	bar 7				bar 8			
	me							

Example 2.9. "Goin' To Germany." Rhythmic activity of the vocal line.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1. I'm goin' to	Germa'		I'll	be back	some	old	day	I'm goin' to
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	Germa'		I'll	be back	some	old	day	I'm goin' to
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	Ger-		ma'		I'll	be back	some	old
	bar 7				bar 8			
	day							

Example 2.10. (a) Leadbelly's melody in "Alabama Bound" (1946); (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) Leadbelly's melody in "Take A Whiff On Me" (1935); (d) Leadbelly's alternate tune for line one; (e) the melody reduced by line; (f) the harmonic scheme.

(a) *1* *2* *3*

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

I *I* *IV*

4(a cont.) *5* *6* *7* *8*

(b cont.)

(c cont.)

(e cont.)

(f cont.)

IV *V* *V* *I* *I*

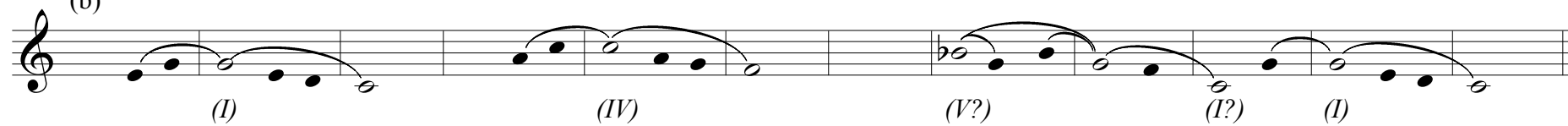
Example 2.11. Rich Brown's "Alabama Bound" (1937). (a) Brown's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line.

(a)



Musical notation for (a) showing the original melody of "Alabama Bound" in 2/4 time. The melody consists of several phrases: a four-measure phrase in 2/4, a four-measure phrase in 2/4 with a fermata over the first measure, a four-measure phrase in 2/4, a four-measure phrase in 3/8, and a final four-measure phrase in 2/4. The key signature changes from C major to one flat (F major or D minor) in the 3/8 section.

(b)



Musical notation for (b) showing the melody reduced by line. The notation consists of five measures, each containing a single note with a slur above it. Roman numerals are placed below the notes: (I), (IV), (V?), (I?), and (I). The key signature changes from C major to one flat (F major or D minor) in the third measure.

Example 2.12. Jelly Roll Morton, "Don't You Leave Me Here" (1939), second strophe. (a) Morton's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for the second strophe of "Don't You Leave Me Here" by Jelly Roll Morton. The score is organized into two systems, each containing three staves. The first system covers measures 1 through 4, and the second system covers measures 5 through 8. The time signature is 12/8.

(a) Morton's melody: The first staff of each system shows the original melody. Measure numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are placed above the first four measures of the first system. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are placed above the first four measures of the second system.

(b) The melody reduced by line: The second staff of each system shows the melody with lines connecting notes that are on the same pitch level, illustrating the melodic contour.

(c) The harmonic scheme: The third staff of each system shows the harmonic scheme using Roman numerals. The first system has chords labeled *I*, *I*, *IV*, *IV*, and *7* #. The second system has chords labeled *V*, *V*, *I*, *7* #, and *V*.

Example 2.13. Cannon's Jug Stompers' "Goin' To Germany" (1929). (a) Noah Lewis's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme.

(a)

(b)

(c)

I *I* *IV*

4

5 6 7 8

IV *V* *V* *I* *I*

Example 2.14. Charley Patton's "Elder Greene Blues" (1929). (a) Patton's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme.

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with three staves. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4.

System 1:

- Staff (a):** Patton's melody. It consists of four measures. Measure 1: B-flat4, A4, G4, F4. Measure 2: E4, D4, C4, B-flat3. Measure 3: B-flat4, A4, G4, F4. Measure 4: E4, D4, C4, B-flat3. Measure numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are written above the staff.
- Staff (b):** The melody reduced by line. It shows the same notes as staff (a) but with horizontal lines connecting notes of the same pitch across measures, illustrating the melodic contour.
- Staff (c):** The harmonic scheme in bass clef. It shows four measures with Roman numerals: I, I, IV, IV.

System 2:

- Staff (a):** Patton's melody. It consists of four measures. Measure 5: B-flat4, A4, G4, F4. Measure 6: E4, D4, C4, B-flat3. Measure 7: B-flat4, A4, G4, F4. Measure 8: E4, D4, C4, B-flat3. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are written above the staff.
- Staff (b):** The melody reduced by line. It shows the same notes as staff (a) but with horizontal lines connecting notes of the same pitch across measures, illustrating the melodic contour.
- Staff (c):** The harmonic scheme in bass clef. It shows four measures with Roman numerals: V, V, I, I.

Example 2.15. Henry Thomas's melodies in "Don't Ease Me In" (1928) and "Don't Leave Me Here" (1929). (a) Thomas's melody for the refrain stanzas; (b) the opening of Thomas's melody in the verse stanzas; (c) Thomas's tenth strophe (1929); (d) alternate tune for line three; (e) first alternate ending for line four; (f) second alternate ending for line four; (g) the harmonic scheme.

The musical score is organized into two systems. The first system contains staves (a) through (g). Staves (a), (b), and (c) are in treble clef with a 12/8 time signature. Staff (g) is in bass clef with a 12/8 time signature. The second system contains staves (a cont.) through (g cont.). Staves (a cont.), (d), (e), (f), and (g cont.) are in treble clef with a 6/8 time signature. Staff (g cont.) is in bass clef with a 6/8 time signature. Roman numerals (I and V) are placed below the staves to indicate the harmonic scheme.

(a) 1 2 3

(b)

(c)

(g)

4 (a cont.) 5 6 7 8

(e)

(d)

(f)

(c cont.)

(g cont.)

V V V I I

Example 2.16. Jelly Roll Morton's "Alabama Bound" (1938), first strophe.

The musical score is written in 12/8 time and consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, and the second staff contains measures 5 through 8. Measure numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated above their respective measures. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some measures containing rests. A triplet of eighth notes is present in measure 3, and a slur covers the final two notes of measure 7.

Example 2.17. Woody Guthrie's "Take A Whiff On Me" (1944). (a) Guthrie's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme; (d) Guthrie's alternate tune in line three.

(a)

(b)

(c)

I *I* *IV* *IV*

5 (a cont.)

(d)

(b cont.)

(c cont.)

V *V* *I* *I*

Example 2.18. Freeny's Barn Dance Band's "Croquet Habits" (1930). (a) Fronzo Cannon's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme. The scheme is consistently abbreviated to seven bars.

The image displays three staves of music for the piece "Croquet Habits" in 4/4 time. Staff (a) shows the original melody in treble clef, consisting of seven bars. Staff (b) shows the melody reduced by line, with notes connected by a continuous line across the seven bars. Staff (c) shows the harmonic scheme in bass clef, with Roman numerals indicating the chords for each bar: I, I, IV, IV (V), V, V, I.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(b)

(c)

I I IV IV (V) V V I

Example 2.19. The Memphis Jug Band's "Cocaine Habit Blues" (1930). (a) Hattie Hart's melody; (b) the harmonica solo in line two; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme; (e) Hart's alternate tune in line three.

(a)

(b) harmonica

(c)

(d)

I *I* *IV* *IV*

5

(e)

V *V* *I* *V*

Example 2.20. Jesse Harris's "Take A Whiff On Me" (1937). (a) Harris's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line. The scheme is consistently abbreviated to seven bars.

The image displays two musical staves in 4/4 time, labeled (a) and (b). Staff (a) shows the original melody of "Take A Whiff On Me" by Jesse Harris, consisting of seven bars of music. The melody is written in treble clef and 4/4 time. The notes are: Bar 1: G4, A4, B4, A4; Bar 2: G4, F4, E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3, A3, G3; Bar 4: F3, E3, D3, C3; Bar 5: B2, A2, G2, F2; Bar 6: E2, D2, C2, B1; Bar 7: A1, G1, F1, E1. Staff (b) shows the melody reduced by line, where the notes are connected by a single line that follows the contour of the original melody. The notes are: Bar 1: G4, A4, B4, A4; Bar 2: G4, F4, E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3, A3, G3; Bar 4: F3, E3, D3, C3; Bar 5: B2, A2, G2, F2; Bar 6: E2, D2, C2, B1; Bar 7: A1, G1, F1, E1.

Example 2.21. The Three Stripped Gears' "Alabama Blues" (1931). (a) Durden's melody; (b) the melody reduced by line; (c) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for "Alabama Blues" in 4/4 time, divided into two systems. Each system consists of three staves: (a) the original melody, (b) the melody reduced by line (using half notes), and (c) the harmonic scheme (using whole notes in the bass clef).

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- (a) Melody:** Measure 1: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 2: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Measure 3: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. Measure 4: C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2.
- (b) Reduced Melody:** Measure 1: G4. Measure 2: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Measure 3: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. Measure 4: C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2.
- (c) Harmonic Scheme:** Measure 1: I. Measure 2: I. Measure 3: IV. Measure 4: IV.

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- (a) Melody:** Measure 5: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Measure 6: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Measure 7: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. Measure 8: C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2.
- (b) Reduced Melody:** Measure 5: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Measure 6: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Measure 7: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. Measure 8: C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2.
- (c) Harmonic Scheme:** Measure 5: V. Measure 6: V. Measure 7: I. Measure 8: I.

Example 3.1. W.C. Handy's "East St. Louis" (1926), from "Blues: An Anthology."

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piano accompaniment of "East St. Louis" by W.C. Handy. The music is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first system consists of four measures. The right hand (treble clef) features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the left hand (bass clef) provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system also consists of four measures, continuing the melodic and harmonic development. A large slur is present in the bass line of the second system, spanning across the second and third measures. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, and repeat signs.

Example 3.2. (a) Bowers and Westcott's "'How Long Blues' ground," originally in F;
 (b) simple "How Long" ground.

Musical notation for Example 3.2(a) showing a piano accompaniment in common time. The treble clef staff contains chords and melodic fragments, while the bass clef staff contains a simple bass line. The notation includes various chord symbols and melodic lines.


Musical notation for Example 3.2(b) showing a piano accompaniment in common time. The treble clef staff contains a melodic line with slurs, and the bass clef staff contains a simple bass line. Below the bass staff are Roman numeral chord symbols: I, I, IV, IV, I, V, I, I.

Example 3.3. “How Long,” bars and vocal structure. Text after Leroy Carr, “How Long, How Long Blues” (1928).

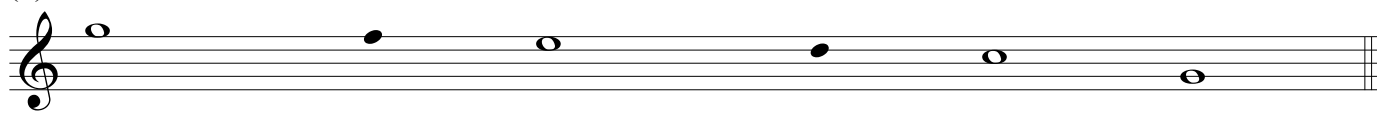
<u>Lines</u>	<u>Bars</u>	
1. How		
long, babe, how	1	
long	2	
2. Has that		
evenin' train been	3	
gone?	4	
3. How		} Refrain
long, how, how	5	
long,	6	
4. Baby, how		
long?	7	
	8	

Example 3.4. (a) Leroy Carr's modal frame; (b) Ida Cox's modal frame;
(c) Carr's segmentation of the modal frame by verse and refrain;
(d) Cox's segmentation of the modal frame by verse and refrain.

(a)

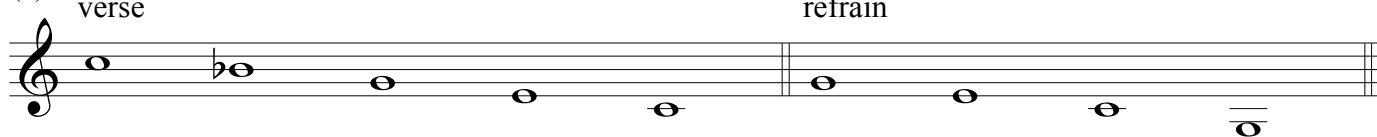


(b)



(c)


verse



refrain

(d)

verse



refrain

Example 3.5. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Leroy Carr's "How Long, How Long Blues" (1928).

		<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
		Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>		bar 1				bar 2			
1.	How	long			babe, how	long			has that
		bar 3				bar 4			
2.		evenin'			train been	gone?			How
		bar 5				bar 6			
3.		long			how, how	long			Baby, how
		bar 7				bar 8			
4.		long?							

Example 3.6. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Thomas “Jaybird” Jones’s “How Long?” (1941). With the additional accent in bar six there is an area of heightened rhythmic activity at the end of the refrain.

		<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
		Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>		bar 1				bar 2			
1.	How	long			babe, how	long			has that
		bar 3				bar 4			
2.		evenin’			train been	gone?			How
		bar 5				bar 6			
3.		long			how	long		Baby	how
		bar 7				bar 8			
4.		long?							

Example 3.7. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Ida Cox's "How Long, Daddy, How Long" (1925). With the additional accents in bars three and six there are areas of heightened rhythmic activity at the end of both the verse and refrain.

		<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
		Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>		bar 1				bar 2			
1.	How	long		how		long		has	that
		bar 3				bar 4			
2.		southbound	train	been		gone?		How	
		bar 5				bar 6			
3.		long		how		long	Baby	how	
		bar 7				bar 8			
4.		long?							

Example 3.8. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Lottie Kimbrough's "Wayward Girl Blues" (1926), second stanza. The central area of rhythmic activity lasts from bar five to the downbeat of bar seven.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1. I've been	thinking	all			day			
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	Thinking	of		the	past			
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	And	I'm	think - ing		of my	moth - er		
	bar 7				bar 8			
(4.)	last							

Example 3.9. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in Leadbelly's "How Long?" (1943). Leadbelly places additional accents on the third beats of bars three, four, and six.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1. Baby, how	long			baby, how	long			has that
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	evenin'		train	been	gone?		Baby, how	
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	long			how	long		Baby, how	
	bar 7				bar 8			
4.	long?							

Example 3.10. (a) Leroy Carr's melody in "How Long, How Long Blues" (1928); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme. (Carr's melodic structure is followed very closely by Blind Lemon Jefferson).

The image displays a musical score for "How Long, How Long Blues" in 12/8 time, consisting of four staves:

- (a) Original Melody:** A treble clef staff with a 12/8 time signature. The melody is marked with numbers 1 through 8 above the notes, indicating phrasing or measure divisions.
- (b) Accents:** A treble clef staff showing the original melody with hollow circles placed below the notes to indicate accents.
- (c) Reduced Melody:** A treble clef staff showing the melody reduced to a single line. The notes are connected by curved lines (arcs) that span across measure boundaries, highlighting the melodic contour.
- (d) Harmonic Scheme:** A bass clef staff showing the harmonic progression. The notes are placed below the staff, and Roman numerals are written below each measure to identify the chords: I, I \flat 7, IV, IV, I, V, I, V, I.

Example 3.11. (a) Thomas "Jaybird" Jones's melody in "How Long?" (1941); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme, with a descending contrapuntal thread in bars one through five.

The image displays a musical score for the melody of "How Long?" by Thomas "Jaybird" Jones. The score is presented in four staves, labeled (a) through (d), and is set in 12/8 time.

(a) The original melody is shown in the first staff, with measures numbered 1 through 8. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a final measure containing a whole rest.

(b) The second staff shows the accents in the melody, represented by half notes on the same pitch as the original melody.

(c) The third staff shows the melody reduced by line, with notes connected by curved lines to indicate phrasing.

(d) The fourth staff shows the harmonic scheme, with chords indicated by Roman numerals: *I*, *I*^{b7}, *IV*, *IV*^b, *I*, *V*, *I*, *V*, *I*, *V*. A descending contrapuntal thread is shown in the first five bars, with notes on a lower line.

Example 3.13. (a) Leadbelly's melody in "How Long?" (1943); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

(d)

I I IV I I V I I

Example 3.14. (a) Jed Davenport's first strophe in "How Long, How Long Blues" (1929); (b) first strophe reduced by line with accented notes as open noteheads; (c) accents in the verse of strophes one, two, three, four, five, eight, and ten; (d) accents in the verse of strophes six and eleven; (e) accents in the verse of the seventh strophe; (f) accents in the verse of the ninth strophe; (g) accents in the refrain of strophes one, four, five, and eight, and the coda in strophes two, three, four, seven, eight, nine, and ten; (h) accents in the refrain of strophes two, three, six, nine, and eleven, and the coda in the eleventh strophe; (i) accents in the refrain of the tenth strophe; (j) accents in the refrain of the seventh strophe; (k) harmonic scheme.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c) (strophes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10)

(d) (strophes 6, 11)

(e) (strophe 7)

(f) (strophe 9)

(g) (strophes 1, 4, 5, 8) (coda: strophes 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10)

(h) (strophes 2, 3, 6, 9, 11) (coda: strophe 11)

(i) (strophe 10)

(j) (strophe 7)

(k)

I *bVII* *IV* *bVI* *I* *N V* *I N V I*

Example 3.15. (a) Skip James's melody in "How Long 'Buck'" (1931); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme (in bar three the melody anticipates the entrance of the lowered scale degree 3 in the accompaniment in bar four).

The image displays a musical analysis of Skip James's melody in "How Long 'Buck'" (1931), presented in four staves. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 12/8.

(a) The original melody in treble clef, 12/8 time. It consists of eight measures. Above the first measure is the number 1, above the second 2, above the third 3, above the fourth 4, above the fifth 5, above the sixth 6, above the seventh 7, and above the eighth 8. The melody features a mix of eighth and quarter notes with various rests.

(b) The melody with accents indicated by a small 'v' symbol above the notes. The accents are placed on the first note of each measure.

(c) The melody reduced by line, showing the contour of the melody with curved lines connecting the notes. The notes are represented by dots on the staff.

(d) The harmonic scheme in bass clef, 12/8 time. It consists of eight measures, each containing a single chord. The chords are labeled as follows: I, I^b7, IV^b7, IV^b7, I, V, I, V.

Example 3.16. (a) Ida Cox's melody in "How Long, Daddy, How Long" (1925); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for the melody of "How Long, Daddy, How Long" in 12/8 time. It consists of four staves:

- (a) Ida Cox's melody:** A treble clef staff with a 12/8 time signature. The melody is marked with numbers 1 through 8 above it, indicating specific phrases or measures.
- (b) Accents:** A treble clef staff showing the original melody with accents (circles) placed over the notes in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.
- (c) Melody reduced by line:** A treble clef staff showing the melody with lines connecting notes across measures, illustrating the melodic contour.
- (d) Harmonic scheme:** A bass clef staff showing the harmonic progression. The notes are: I, I, IV^b7, IV^b7, I, V, I, V, I, V, I.

Example 3.17. (a) Blind Willie McTell's melody in "East St. Louis Blues (Fare You Well)" (1933); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme, with a descending contrapuntal thread in bars one through seven.

(a) *1* *2* *3* *4* *5* *6* *7* *8*

(b)

(c)

(d)

I *I*^{b7} *IV*^{b7} *IV*^{b7}_{b3} *I* *#6* *V*⁷ *I* *I*

Example 3.18. (a) Lottie Kimbrough's first discant in "Wayward Girl Blues" (1926), used in the first (transcribed here), third, fifth, and seventh strophes; (b) the first discant reduced by line. The accented notes in bars two and four are delayed well beyond the downbeat and might be thought of as more extreme displacements of the less displaced accents in the analogous places in Examples (d) and (f); (c) Kimbrough's second discant, used in the second (transcribed here) and eighth strophes; (d) the second discant reduced by line; (e) Kimbrough's third discant, used in the fourth (transcribed here) and sixth strophes; (f) the third discant reduced by line; (g) the harmonic scheme.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

(d) (slur to $\hat{6}$ in second but not in eighth strophe) ($\hat{3}$ in second $\hat{1}$ in eighth strophe)

(e)

(f)

(g)

I I IV IV I V I V I

Example 3.19. (a) William Brown's first strophe in "East St. Louis Blues" (1942); (b) the first strophe reduced by line; (c) Brown's second (and last) strophe; (d) the second strophe reduced by line; (e) Brown's harmonic scheme.

The image displays five staves of musical notation for the blues song "East St. Louis Blues".

- Staff (a):** Original notation for the first strophe, marked with measures 1 through 8. It features a complex melodic line with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Staff (b):** The first strophe reduced by line, showing a simplified melodic contour with fewer notes and longer intervals.
- Staff (c):** Original notation for the second (and last) strophe, continuing the melodic development.
- Staff (d):** The second strophe reduced by line, showing its simplified melodic structure.
- Staff (e):** The harmonic scheme, written in bass clef with a 12/8 time signature. It consists of a sequence of chords: I, V, IV, IV, I, V, I, V, I, V.

Example 3.20. (a) Big Maceo's melody in "Worried Life Blues" (1941); (b) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads; (c) the harmonic scheme.

(a)

(b)

(c)

I *I* *IV* *IV*

5

6

7

I *V* *I* *V*

8

Example 3.21. (a) David Edwards's melody in "Worried Life Blues" (1942); (b) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads; (c) the harmonic scheme.

(a)

(b)

(c)

5

6

7

8

Example 3.22. (a) Minnie Lee Whitehead's first strophe in "The Worried Life Blues" (1942); (b) the melody reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads; (c) the harmonic scheme.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(a)

(b)

(c)

Example 3.23. (a) Whitehead's second strophe; (b) the second strophe reduced by line, with the accented notes as open noteheads; (c) the harmonic scheme.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(a)

(b)

(c)

Example 4.1. Rhythmic activity of the vocal line in “Trouble In Mind.” Text after Georgia White.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1. Trouble in	mind			I'm	blue			But I
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	won't be		blue	al-	ways			For the
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	sun's gonna		shine	in	my	back door		some
	bar 7				bar 8			
	day							

↓
*Increase in
rhythmic
activity*

Example 4.2. A comparison of the "Trouble In Mind" and "How Long" schemes.

(a) typical accents in the "Trouble In Mind" scheme (first tune type) with slurs indicating the three lines of text;

(b) the harmonic progression for the "Trouble In Mind" scheme;

(c) typical accents in the "How Long" scheme (first tune type) with slurs indicating the four lines of text;

(d) the harmonic progression for the "How Long" scheme.

The image displays four musical staves, labeled (a) through (d), illustrating the rhythmic and harmonic structures of two different schemes. The notation is presented in two systems, each with a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom.

System 1 (a and b):

- (a) Melody:** A treble clef staff showing a sequence of eight notes. Slurs group the notes into three lines of text: the first two notes (labeled 2), the next two notes (labeled 3), and the final four notes (labeled 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).
- (b) Harmony:** A bass clef staff showing a sequence of eight chords, each represented by a single note. The chords are labeled with Roman numerals: *I*, *V*, *I*, *IV*, *I*, *V*, *I*, *I*.

System 2 (c and d):

- (c) Melody:** A treble clef staff showing a sequence of eight notes. Slurs group the notes into four lines of text: the first two notes, the next two notes, the next two notes, and the final two notes.
- (d) Harmony:** A bass clef staff showing a sequence of eight chords, each represented by a single note. The chords are labeled with Roman numerals: *I*, *I*, *IV*, *IV*, *I*, *V*, *I*, *I*.

Example 4.3. (a) Big Bill Broonzy's first strophe in "Mississippi River Blues" (1934); (b) the accents in the first strophe; (c) the first strophe reduced by line; (d) the second strophe; (e) the accents in the second strophe; (f) the second strophe reduced by line; (g) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for "Mississippi River Blues" by Big Bill Broonzy, consisting of seven staves labeled (a) through (g). The music is in 12/8 time and features a blues-influenced melody with various rhythmic patterns and phrasing.

- (a)** First strophe: A melodic line in treble clef with 12/8 time signature. It consists of eight measures, with measures 1-4 and 5-8 grouped by brackets and numbered 1 through 8. The melody includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a key signature change to one flat.
- (b)** Accents in the first strophe: A treble clef staff showing the pitch contour of the first strophe as whole notes, with a dot above each note indicating an accent.
- (c)** First strophe reduced by line: A treble clef staff showing the first strophe with slurs connecting notes across measures, representing a reduction by line.
- (d)** Second strophe: A melodic line in treble clef with 12/8 time signature, consisting of eight measures. It follows a similar rhythmic and melodic structure to the first strophe.
- (e)** Accents in the second strophe: A treble clef staff showing the pitch contour of the second strophe as whole notes, with a dot above each note indicating an accent.
- (f)** Second strophe reduced by line: A treble clef staff showing the second strophe with slurs connecting notes across measures, representing a reduction by line.
- (g)** Harmonic scheme: A bass clef staff showing the harmonic progression for the first strophe. It consists of eight measures with chords labeled I, V, IV, IV, I, V, I, V, I.

Example 4.4. Bertha "Chippie" Hill's "Trouble In Mind" (1926). (a) first strophe; (b) the first strophe reduced by line, with the accents as open note heads; (c) second strophe; (d) accents in the second strophe; (e) third strophe; (f) accents in the third strophe; (g) fourth strophe; (h) accents in the fourth strophe; (i) fifth strophe; (j) accents in the fifth strophe; (k) harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for the song "Trouble In Mind" by Bertha "Chippie" Hill. The score is organized into 11 staves, each representing a different analytical component of the music. The first staff, labeled (a), shows the first strophe of the melody in 12/8 time, with measures numbered 1 through 8. The subsequent staves (b through j) show the same melody for the first through fifth strophes, respectively, with accents indicated by open note heads. The final staff, labeled (k), shows the harmonic scheme for the first strophe in bass clef, with Roman numerals I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, V, I indicating the chord progression.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

(g)

(h)

(i)

(j)

(k)

I V I IV I V I V I

Example 4.5. (a) Richard M. Jones's melody in "Trouble In Mind" (1936); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) Jones's melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for the melody of "Trouble In Mind" in 12/8 time, consisting of four staves:

- (a) Original Melody:** A treble clef staff with a 12/8 time signature. The melody is marked with numbers 1 through 8 above the notes, indicating specific rhythmic or melodic features.
- (b) Accents:** A treble clef staff showing the original melody with accents (circles with a vertical line) placed over the notes in measures 5, 6, and 7.
- (c) Reduced Melody:** A treble clef staff showing the melody reduced to a single line (half notes). The notes are connected by curved lines (arcs) that span across measures, indicating phrasing or melodic continuity.
- (d) Harmonic Scheme:** A bass clef staff showing the harmonic progression. The notes are labeled with Roman numerals: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, V, I.

Example 4.6. (a) Bertha "Chippie" Hill's first strophe in "Trouble In My Mind Blues" (1928); (b) the first strophe reduced by line with the accents as open noteheads; (c) the second strophe; (d) the accents in the second strophe; (e) the third strophe; (f) the accents in the third strophe; (g) the fourth strophe; (h) the accents in the fourth strophe; (i) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for "Trouble In My Mind Blues" by Bertha "Chippie" Hill. It consists of nine staves, labeled (a) through (i), all in 12/8 time. Staves (a), (c), (e), and (g) show the original notation for the first, second, third, and fourth strophes, respectively. Staves (b), (d), (f), and (h) show the same strophes reduced to a single line with accents represented by open noteheads. Staff (i) shows the harmonic scheme in bass clef, with Roman numerals I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, V, I placed below the notes.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

(g)

(h)

(i)

I V I IV I V I V I

Example 4.7. (a) tonic arpeggiations in first tune type; (b) tonic arpeggiations in second tune type; (c) descending-fifth progressions coincide with tonic arpeggiations; (d) stepwise descents in Carlisle's melodic structure; (e) stepwise descents in Hackberry Ramblers' melodic structure; (f) shifts between tonic and dominant coincide with stepwise descents; (g) stepwise descents and tonic arpeggiations in Broonzy's melodic structure.

The musical score consists of seven systems, each with a single staff. Examples (a), (b), (d), (e), and (g) are in treble clef, while (c) and (f) are in bass clef. Examples (a) and (b) include measure numbers 2 through 8 above the staff. Below each staff, Roman numerals indicate the chord progression.

(a) Treble clef. Measures 2-8. Chord progression: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I.

(b) Treble clef. Measures 2-8. Chord progression: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I.

(c) Bass clef. Measures 2-8. Chord progression: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I.

(d) Treble clef. Measures 2-8. Chord progression: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I.

(e) Treble clef. Measures 2-8. Chord progression: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I.

(f) Bass clef. Measures 2-8. Chord progression: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I.

(g) Treble clef. Measures 2-8. Chord progression: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I.

Example 4.8. (a) Georgia White's melody in "Trouble In Mind" (1936); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for the melody of "Trouble In Mind" in 12/8 time. It consists of four staves:

- (a) Original Melody:** A treble clef staff with a 12/8 time signature. The melody is marked with numbers 1 through 8 above the notes, indicating specific points of interest.
- (b) Accents:** A treble clef staff showing the original melody with open circles placed above the notes to indicate accents.
- (c) Melody Reduced by Line:** A treble clef staff where the melody is simplified into a series of connected arcs and dots, representing the overall contour of the melody.
- (d) Harmonic Scheme:** A bass clef staff showing the harmonic progression using Roman numerals: I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I, V.

Example 4.10. (a) Cliff Carlisle's melody in "Trouble Minded Blues" (1937); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for "Trouble Minded Blues" in 12/8 time, consisting of four staves. The first staff (a) shows the original melody with measures numbered 1 through 8. The second staff (b) shows the melody with accents (circles) placed above the notes. The third staff (c) shows the melody reduced by line, with notes connected by curved lines. The fourth staff (d) shows the harmonic scheme in bass clef, with Roman numerals I, V, I, IV, I, V, I, I placed below the notes.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

(d)

I V I IV I V I I

Example 4.11. (a) The Hackberry Ramblers' melody in "Fais Pas Ça" (1938); (b) the accents in the melody; (c) the melody reduced by line; (d) the harmonic scheme.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

(d)

I V I IV I V I I

Example 4.12. Modal Frames. The upper slur shows the range of the verse and the lower slur the range of the response. (a) Hill 1926 and 1928; (b) White; (c) Broonzy; (d) Jones; (e) Carlisle; (f) Hackberry Ramblers; (g) Tharpe. Examples (a-b) use the first tune type, (c-g) the second tune type.

The image displays seven musical staves, labeled (a) through (g), each illustrating a modal frame. Each staff begins with a treble clef. The notes are represented by circles, with some filled (black) and some hollow (white). Slurs are used to indicate the range of the verse (upper slur) and the range of the response (lower slur).
- Staff (a): Verse range from G4 to G5, response range from G4 to G4.
- Staff (b): Verse range from G4 to G5, response range from G4 to G4.
- Staff (c): Verse range from G4 to G5, response range from G4 to G4.
- Staff (d): Verse range from G4 to G5, response range from G4 to G4.
- Staff (e): Verse range from G4 to G5, response range from G4 to G4.
- Staff (f): Verse range from G4 to G5, response range from G4 to G4.
- Staff (g): Verse range from G4 to G5, response range from G4 to G4.
The notes in each staff are: (a) G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; (b) G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; (c) G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; (d) G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; (e) G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; (f) G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; (g) G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5.

Example 5.1. Simple "Sitting On Top Of The World" ground.

The image shows a musical score for a simple ground bass. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and contains nine measures of music, each starting with a quarter note. The notes in the treble staff are: G4 (measure 1), A4 (measure 2), B4 (measure 3), C5 (measure 4), B4 (measure 5), A4 (measure 6), G4 (measure 7), F4 (measure 8), and E4 (measure 9). The bass staff begins with a bass clef and contains nine measures of music, each starting with a quarter note. The notes in the bass staff are: G2 (measure 1), F2 (measure 2), E2 (measure 3), D2 (measure 4), C2 (measure 5), B1 (measure 6), A1 (measure 7), G1 (measure 8), and F1 (measure 9). Roman numerals are placed below the bass staff: I (measure 1), I (measure 2), IV (measure 3), I (measure 4), I (measure 5), V (measure 6), V (measure 7), I (measure 8), and I (measure 9). Above the treble staff, the numbers 1 through 9 are placed above each measure. The music is in a 2/4 time signature, indicated by the two stems on the first staff.

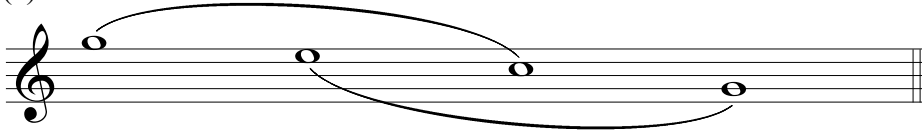
Example 5.2. "Sitting On Top Of The World," bars and vocal structure. Text after The Carter Family.

<u>Lines</u>	<u>Bars</u>	
1. Once in the		
spring, one sunny	1	
day	2	
2. My baby		
left me, she went a-	3	
way	4	
3. Now she's		} Refrain
gone, and I don't	5	
worry	6	
4. I'm		
sitting on top of the	7	
world	8	
	(9)	

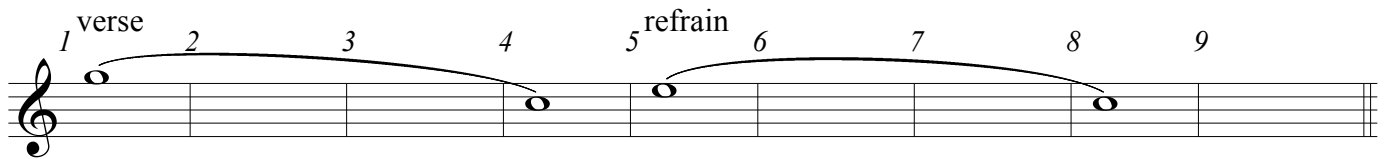
Example 5.3. (a) Modal frame with segmentation by verse and refrain;

(b) the verse makes a large-scale descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$; the refrain makes a large-scale descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$.

(a)



(b)



Example 5.4. "Sitting On Top Of The World." Rhythmic activity of the vocal line.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1. Once in the	spring		one sunny		day		My baby	
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	left me		she went a-		way		Now she's	
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	gone		and I don't		worry		I'm	
	bar 7				bar 8			
4.	sitting	on	top of the		world			
	(bar 9)							

← Central area of rhythmic activity

Example 5.5. (a) The melody in 4/4, as in "Some Summer Day" by Charley Patton (1930);
 (b) the melody in 12/8, as in "Sitting On Top Of The World" by The Mississippi Sheiks (1930).



Example 5.8. (a) the third in bar two is a temporary goal of motion and is often higher;
(b) the thirds in bar three resolve directly onto the tonic and are often lower;
(c) the third in bar five is the starting point for a line and is often higher;
(d) the third in bar seven resolves onto the tonic and is often lower.

The image displays four staves of musical notation, each labeled (a) through (d). Each staff begins with a treble clef and a single sharp (F#) in the key signature. The notes are as follows:

- (a)** Staff 1: Bar 1 contains two quarter notes, G4 and A4. Bar 2 contains a half note, C5, with a slur above it extending to the end of the staff. Bar 3 contains a half note, B4, with a slur above it extending from the end of bar 2.
- (b)** Staff 2: Bar 1 contains two quarter notes, G4 and A4. Bar 2 contains a half note, C5, with a slur above it extending to the end of the staff. Bar 3 contains a half note, B4, with a slur above it extending from the end of bar 2. Bar 4 contains a half note, A4, with a slur above it extending to the end of the staff.
- (c)** Staff 3: Bar 1 contains two quarter notes, G4 and A4. Bar 2 contains a half note, C5, with a slur above it extending to the end of the staff. Bar 3 contains a half note, B4, with a slur above it extending from the end of bar 2. Bar 4 contains a half note, A4, with a slur above it extending to the end of the staff.
- (d)** Staff 4: Bar 1 contains two quarter notes, G4 and A4. Bar 2 contains a half note, C5, with a slur above it extending to the end of the staff. Bar 3 contains a half note, B4, with a slur above it extending from the end of bar 2. Bar 4 contains a half note, A4, with a slur above it extending to the end of the staff.

Example 5.9. Extensions of the melody beyond the modal frame.

(a) The Mississippi Sheiks ("I'll Be Gone, Long Gone," 1932) use scale degree 6 as an upper neighbor to scale degree 5 in bars two and three; (b) The Carter Family uses scale degree 6 as an upper neighbor to scale degree 5 in bar two; (c) Tampa Red ("Things 'Bout Coming My Way No. 2," 1932) uses the high scale degree 1 as part of an arpeggiation in bar one; (d) George Noble ("On My Death-Bed," 1935), in his fourth strophe, uses lowered scale degree 7, which resolves onto scale degree 5, in bar one.

(a) Mississippi Sheiks (1932)

(b) The Carter Family (ca. 1938-1942)

(c) Tampa Red (1932)

(d) George Noble (1935)

Example 5.10. (a) The nine accents of the typical melodic framework; (b) the typical melodic framework reduced by line; (c) the nine accents in Bill Broonzy's melodic framework, "Worrying You Off My Mind," 1932. In bar six, scale degree 3 is accented instead of scale degree 1; (d) Broonzy's melodic framework reduced by line; (e) Broonzy's melody.

The image displays five staves of musical notation in 12/8 time, illustrating different melodic frameworks and their reductions. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 12/8 time signature.

- (a) Typical melodic framework:** Shows nine accents (scale degrees 1 through 8) marked above the notes. The notes are: G4 (1), A4 (2), B4 (3), C5 (4), D5 (5), E5 (6), F5 (7), G5 (8), and A5 (9).
- (b) Typical framework reduced by line:** Shows the same notes as (a), but with curved lines (arcs) connecting notes that are on the same staff line (e.g., G4-A4, B4-C5, D5-E5, F5-G5).
- (c) Broonzy's framework:** Shows the same notes as (a), but with accents placed on scale degrees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The note for scale degree 3 (B4) is accented, while scale degree 1 (G4) is not.
- (d) Broonzy's framework reduced by line:** Shows the same notes as (c), with arcs connecting notes on the same staff line (e.g., G4-A4, B4-C5, D5-E5, F5-G5).
- (e) Broonzy's melody:** Shows the actual melody for "Worrying You Off My Mind," which is more complex than the frameworks, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes and rests.

Example 5.11. (a) The nine accents of the typical melodic framework; (b) the typical melodic framework reduced by line;
 (c) the nine accents in Robert Johnson's melodic framework; in bar three, scale degree 5 is accented instead of scale degree 3;
 (d) Johnson's melodic framework reduced by line;
 (e) the nine accents in Johnson's alternate melodic framework; in bars two, three, and seven, scale degree 5 is accented instead of scale degree 3;
 (f) Johnson's alternate melodic framework reduced by line.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

Example 5.12. (a) melodic structure, accented notes as open note heads; (b-i) harmonic schemes.

(a)

(b) Mississippi Sheiks, 1930

I I IV IV I I V IV(7) $\frac{4}{2}$ I I

(c) Charley Patton, 1930

I I IV I V V V I I

(d) Tampa Red 1931, 1932

I I^{b7} IV IV^b I V VII^{b7} of V V I I V

(e) Big Bill Broonzy, 1932

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

(f) Blind Blake, 1932

I I IV IV I V V I I

(g) Mississippi Sheiks, 1932

I I IV I I V I V I I

(h) George Noble, 1935

I I IV I I I I V I V

(i) Bob Wills, 1935

I I IV I I V ^bVI V I I

(j) Hackberry Ramblers, 1936

I I I I I V V I I

(k) Carter Family, c. 1938-42

I I^{b7} IV I I I I V I I

Example 5.13. The fifth and third are given tonic support in bars one and two. The thirds in bar three, which are often noticeably lower, become the sevenths of the subdominant, and resolve down to scale degree 1, first over the subdominant in bar three, and then over the tonic in bar four.

The musical notation consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains four measures of music. The first measure has two quarter notes, with the first note labeled '1'. The second measure has two quarter notes, with the first note labeled '2' and a flat symbol (b) above it. The third measure has two quarter notes, with the first note labeled '3' and a flat symbol (b) above it. The fourth measure has two quarter notes, with the first note labeled '4' and a flat symbol (b) above it. The bass staff contains four measures of music, each with a single half note. The first two measures are labeled 'I' below them. The third measure is labeled 'IV(b7)' below it. The fourth measure is labeled 'I' below it. A slur connects the first two notes in the treble staff, and another slur connects the last two notes in the treble staff.

Example 5.14. Harmonic support for the blue third in bar seven.

(a) the lowered third becomes the seventh of the subdominant;

(b) the lowered third becomes the seventh of a diminished seventh chord applied to the dominant;

(c) the lowered third becomes the fifth of $\flat VI$.

(a) Mississippi Sheiks (1930)

Musical notation for Mississippi Sheiks (1930). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff shows a melodic line with notes in measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Measure 5 has a note with a slur and a circled 'b' above it. Measure 6 has a note with a slur above it. Measure 7 has a note with a slur and a circled 'b' above it. Measure 8 has a note with a slur above it. The bass staff shows a bass line with notes in measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Measure 7 has a chord symbol $IV\flat 7$ below it.

(b) Tampa Red (1931, 1932)

Musical notation for Tampa Red (1931, 1932). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff shows a melodic line with notes in measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Measure 5 has a note with a slur and a circled 'b' above it. Measure 6 has a note with a slur above it. Measure 7 has a note with a slur and a circled 'b' above it. Measure 8 has a note with a slur above it. The bass staff shows a bass line with notes in measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Measure 7 has a chord symbol $VII\flat 7$ of V below it.

(c) Bob Wills (1935)

Musical notation for Bob Wills (1935). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff shows a melodic line with notes in measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Measure 5 has a note with a slur and a circled 'b' above it. Measure 6 has a note with a slur above it. Measure 7 has a note with a slur and a circled 'b' above it. Measure 8 has a note with a slur above it. The bass staff shows a bass line with notes in measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Measure 7 has a chord symbol $\flat VI$ below it.

Example 5.15. Georgia Cotton Pickers, “She’s Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day” (1930). Bars and vocal structure.

<u>Lines</u>	<u>Bars</u>	
1. Took you last		
winter, out the rain and	1	
snow	2	
2. Now you’re leavin’ me		
mama, but you can	3	
go	4	
3. You’re comin’		} Refrain
back some old	5	
cold rainy	6	
day	7	
	8	

Example 5.16a. Georgia Cotton Pickers, “She’s Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day” (first strophe). Rhythmic activity of the vocal line.

	<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
	Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>	bar 1				bar 2			
1.	Took you last	winter	out the rain	and	snow	Now you’re leavin’	me	
	bar 3				bar 4			
2.	mama		but you can		go	you’re comin’		
	bar 5				bar 6			
3.	back		some old		cold		rainy	
	bar 7				bar 8			
	day							

Example 5.16b. Tampa Red, "It Hurts Me Too" (1940) (first strophe). Rhythmic activity of the vocal line.

		<u>Strong Bar</u>				<u>Weak Bar</u>			
		Beats: 1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<u>Lines</u>		bar 1				bar 2			
1.	I can't be	happy mama		while being so	blue		when you keep on		
		bar 3				bar 4			
2.		worryin'		the way you	do		when things go		
		bar 5				bar 6			
3.		wrong		so wrong with	you		it hurts me		
		bar 7				bar 8			
		too							

Example 5.18. Tampa Red, "It Hurts Me Too."

(a) melody; (b) the seven accents of the melodic framework;
 (c) harmonic scheme.

The image displays a musical score for the song "It Hurts Me Too" by Tampa Red. It consists of three staves, all in 12/8 time. Staff (a) shows the melody with seven accents numbered 1 through 7. Staff (b) shows the seven accents of the melodic framework as whole notes. Staff (c) shows the harmonic scheme as whole notes in the bass clef, with Roman numerals indicating the chords: I, I^b7, IV, IV^b, I, V, I, I, V.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

I *I^b7* *IV* *IV^b* *I* *V* *I* *I* *V*

Example C.1. "Trouble In Mind" ground. (a) the discant as first tune type; (b) the discant as second tune type; (c) the harmonic ground.

The musical score consists of three staves, each representing a different variation of the "Trouble In Mind" ground. The staves are labeled (a), (b), and (c). Above the first staff, measures 1 through 8 are numbered. The notes are as follows:

- Staff (a): Treble clef. Measure 1: G4 (labeled I); Measure 2: A4 (labeled 2); Measure 3: B4, A4 (labeled 3); Measure 4: G4, F4 (labeled 4); Measure 5: E4, D4 (labeled 5); Measure 6: C4, B3 (labeled 6); Measure 7: A3, G3 (labeled 7); Measure 8: F3, E3 (labeled 8).
- Staff (b): Treble clef. Measure 1: G4 (labeled I); Measure 2: A4 (labeled 2); Measure 3: B4, A4 (labeled 3); Measure 4: G4, F4 (labeled 4); Measure 5: E4, D4 (labeled 5); Measure 6: C4, B3, A3 (labeled 6); Measure 7: A3, G3, F3 (labeled 7); Measure 8: F3, E3 (labeled 8).
- Staff (c): Bass clef. Measure 1: G3 (labeled I); Measure 2: A3 (labeled V); Measure 3: B3, A3 (labeled I); Measure 4: G3, F3 (labeled IV); Measure 5: E3, D3 (labeled I); Measure 6: C3, B2 (labeled V); Measure 7: A2, G2 (labeled I); Measure 8: F2, E2 (labeled I).

Example C.2. "Alabama Bound" ground. (a-b) "Alabama Bound" discant; (c) "Cocaine" discant; (d) melodic substitutions in "Cocaine" discant; (e) harmonic ground.

1 (a) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

I *I* *IV* *IV* *V* *V* *I* *I*

Example C.3. "How Long" ground. (a) the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant (as first tune type);

(b) the $\hat{1}-\hat{b}7$ discant (as second tune type); (c) the $\hat{3}$ -up discant; (d) the "Worried Life" discant;
 (e) the harmonic ground; (f) substitutions in the harmonic ground.

The musical score consists of five systems of treble clef staves and one system of bass clef staves. The systems are labeled (a) through (e) and (f). The first system (a) is labeled with measure numbers 1 through 8 above the staff. The notes in the treble clef staves are as follows:

- (a) Measure 1: C4; Measure 2: B3; Measure 3: C4; Measure 4: G3; Measure 5: G3; Measure 6: F3; Measure 7: E3; Measure 8: C4.
- (b) Measure 1: C4; Measure 2: B3; Measure 3: B3; Measure 4: B3; Measure 5: B3; Measure 6: A3; Measure 7: G3; Measure 8: C4.
- (c) Measure 1: C4; Measure 2: C4; Measure 3: B3; Measure 4: B3; Measure 5: B3; Measure 6: A3; Measure 7: G3; Measure 8: C4.
- (d) Measure 1: B3; Measure 2: B3; Measure 3: C4; Measure 4: G3; Measure 5: B3; Measure 6: A3; Measure 7: B3; Measure 8: C4.
- (e) Measure 1: C4; Measure 2: C4; Measure 3: C4; Measure 4: C4; Measure 5: C4; Measure 6: C4; Measure 7: C4; Measure 8: C4.

The bass clef system (f) shows harmonic substitutions for measures 1 through 8:

- Measure 1: I
- Measure 2: I(b7)
- Measure 3: IV
- Measure 4: IV(b7)
- Measure 5: I
- Measure 6: V
- Measure 7: I
- Measure 8: I

Measure 6 also features a bass clef staff with a slur over two notes, G3 and F3, with a 'V' label below.

Example C.4. "Sitting On Top Of The World" discant. (a) the discant; (b) harmonic scheme; (c-d) substitutions in the harmonic scheme.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

(b) *I I(b7) IV I I V V I I*

(c) *IV I I V*

(d) *^bVI or VII^bof V V or IV⁴₂*

Example C.5. "John Henry" discant. (a) the discant as first tune type; (b) the discant as second tune type; (c) harmonic scheme with only the tonic; (d) subdominant substitutions; (e) dominant substitutions.

(a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(b)

(c) *I I I I I I I I I I*

(d) *IV I IV I IV I*

(e) *V I V I*

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Hemphill, Sid (vocals and violin), Lucius Smith (banjo), Will Head (bass drum) and Alec Askew (guitar)

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Hurt, "Mississippi" John

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Ledbetter, Huddie "Leadbelly" and Sonny Terry

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"John Henry," October, 1948. *Lead Belly Legacy. Volume 3. Shout On*, Smithsonian Folkways SF CD 40105.

J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers (J.E. Mainer, fiddle and vocals; Junior Misenheimer, banjo; Harold Christy, guitar; Beacham Blackweller, guitar; Wade Mainer, vocals; Zeke Moriss, vocals)

"John Henry Was A Little Boy," June 15, 1936. *Anthology of American Folk Music, Volume 4*, Revenant 211. Matrix 102601.

Puckett, Riley

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Terry, Sonny and Brownie McGhee

"John Henry," May, 1942. *Deep River of Song. Virginia and the Piedmont. Minstrelsy, Work Songs, and Blues*, Rounder 11661-1828-2. Matrix 6503-A-1.

Thomas, Henry

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"22" and Group

"John Henry," 1947-48. *Prison Songs. Historical Recordings from Parchman Farm, 1947-48. Volume 2. Don'tcha Hear Poor Mother Calling?*, Rounder CD 1715.

Williamson Brothers and Curry (Arnold Williamson, fiddle; Ervin Williamson, guitar; Arnold Curry, ukulele; vocals unidentified)

“Gonna Die with my Hammer in my Hand,” April 26, 1927. *Anthology of American Folk Music. Volume 1*, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings 40090 / A 28746. Matrix 80757-B.

Mississippi River Blues

Broonzy, Big Bill

“Mississippi River Blues,” March 23, 1934. *The Young Bill Broonzy 1928-1935*, Yazoo 1011. Matrix C-724-B.

Cox, Ida

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Rodgers, Jimmie with Billy Burkes

“Mississippi River Blues,” November 25, 1929. *Country Music Hall Of Fame—Jimmie Rodgers*, RCA Victor LPM 2531. Matrix 56594-3.

Sitting On Top Of The World

Blind Blake

“Depression’s Gone From Me Blues,” c. June 1932. *The Best Of Blind Blake*, Yazoo 2058. Matrix L-1476-2.

Broonzy, Big Bill

“Worrying You Off My Mind No. 1,” March 29, 1932. *Big Bill Broonzy: Good Time Tonight*, CK 46219. Matrix 11606-2,-3.

Carter, Bo (Bo Chatman)

“Ants In My Pants,” June 5, 1931. *Them Dirty Blues*, Jass Records J-CD-12. Matrix 404938-B.

The Carter Family

“I’m Sitting On Top of the World,” 1939. *On Border Radio, 1939, Vol. 3*, CD 413 Arhoolie Productions.

Cream

“Sitting On Top Of The World,” July – September, 1967. *Cream/Wheels Of Fire*, DCC Compact Classics GZS (2) 1020.

Georgia Cotton Pickers (Curley Weaver, Robert Hicks (Barbecue Bob), Buddy Moss)
 “She’s Coming Back Some Cold Rainy Day,” December 8, 1930. *The Voice Of The Blues: Bottleneck Guitar Masterpieces*, Yazoo 1046. Matrix 151 106-2.

Grateful Dead

“Sittin’ On Top Of The World,” January, 1967. *The Grateful Dead*, RHINO R2 74392.

Hackberry Ramblers

“On Top Of The World,” February 19, 1936. *Luderin Darbone’s Hackberry Ramblers: Early Recordings, 1935-1950*, Arhoolie CD 7050. Matrix 99212-1.

Johnson, Robert

“Come On In My Kitchen,” (takes 1 and 2), November 23, 1936. *Robert Johnson. The Complete Recordings*, Columbia C2K 64916. Matrix **m** SA-2585-1,-2.

Jolson, Al with Carl Fenton and his Orchestra

“I’m Sitting On Top Of The World,” December 21, 1925. *The Roaring ‘Twenties*, PAST CD 7845.

Mississippi Sheiks

“Sittin’ On Top of the World,” February 17, 1930. *Back To The Crossroads: The Roots Of Robert Johnson*, Yazoo 2070. Matrix 403805-B.

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Noble, George

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Patton, Charley

“Some Summer Day,” May 28, 1930. *King of the Delta Blues. The Music of Charlie Patton*, Yazoo 2001. Matrix L-431-1.

Tampa Red

“Things ‘Bout Coming My Way,” (guitar solo), March 23, 1934. *Tampa Red: The Guitar Wizard*, CK 53235. Matrix CP-1046-1.

Tampa Red and Thomas A. Dorsey

“Things ‘Bout Coming My Way,” February 10, 1931. *Back To The Crossroads: The Roots Of Robert Johnson*, Yazoo 2070. Matrix VO-120-A.

“Things ‘Bout Coming My Way No. 2,” February 4, 1932. *Tampa Red: The Guitar Wizard*, CK 53235. Matrix 11227-A.

Tampa Red (guitar) and Blind John Davis (piano)

“It Hurts Me Too,” May 10, 1940. *Tampa Red: The Guitar Wizard, 1935-1953*, Blues Classics 25-A. Matrix 044980-.

Wills, Bob and His Texas Playboys

“Sittin’ On Top Of The World,” September 24, 1935. *The Bob Wills Anthology*, CBS Special Products A 32416. Matrix DAL-143-2.

Spoonful

Edwards, David “Honeyboy”

“Just A Spoonful (Shimmy Or Chicken-Scratch),” July 20, 1942. *Delta Bluesman; Honeyboy Edwards*, EARWIG 4922CD. Matrix 6610-B-5.

Jordon, Charley

“Just A Spoonful,” c. mid-June, 1930. *Before the Blues. The Early American Black Music Scene as Captured on Classic Recordings from the 1920’s and 30’s. Volume 2*, Yazoo 2016. Matrix C-5838-.

Justice, Dick

“Cocaine,” May 20, 1929. *My Rough and Rowdy Ways, Vol. 2*, Yazoo 2040. Matrix C-3516-.

Patton, Charley

“A Spoonful Blues,” June 14, 1929. *King of the Delta Blues. The Music of Charlie Patton*, Yazoo 2001. Matrix 15223--.

Take A Whiff On Me

Freeny’s Barn Dance Band (Leslie and Hendrix Freeny, fiddles; Cleveland Freeny, mandolin; S. Carlton Freeny, tenor banjo; Fronzo Cannon, vocals)

“Croquet Habits,” December 16, 1930. *The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of*, Yazoo 2202-1. Matrix 404739-B.

Guthrie, Woody

“Take Whiff On Me,” April 19, 1944. *Woody Guthrie. Muleskinner Blues. The Asch Recordings, Vol. 2*, Smithsonian Folkways SF CD 40101. Matrix MA 69.

Harris, Blind Jesse

“Honey, Take A Whiff On Me,” July 25, 1937. *Deep River Of Song. Alabama. From Lullabies to Blues. The Alan Lomax Collection*, Rounder 11661-1829-2. Matrix 1332-A-1.

Ledbetter, Huddie “Ledbelly”

“Take A Whiff On Me,” February 1, 1935. *Lead Belly: Midnight Special*, ROUNDER CD 1044. Matrix 45-A.

Memphis Jug Band (Ben Ramey and Hattie Hart, vocals; Will Shade, harmonica;

Charlie Burse, guitar; Hambone Lewis, jug)

“Cocaine Habit Blues,” May 17, 1930. *Memphis Jug Band. Complete Recorded Works In Chronological Order. Volume 3 (1930)*, Document DOCD-5023. Matrix 59933-2.

Trouble In Mind

The Carter Family

“The Sun’s Gonna Shine In My Back Door Someday,” 1939. *On Border Radio, 1939, Vol. 1*. CD 411 Arhoolie Productions.

Hackberry Ramblers

“Fais Pas Ca,” April 1, 1938. *Luderin Darbone’s Hackberry Ramblers: Early Recordings, 1935-1950*, Arhoolie CD 7050. Matrix 122127-1.

Hill, Bertha “Chippie” with Louis Armstrong and Richard M. Jones

“Trouble In Mind,” February 23, 1926. *I Can’t Be Satisfied. Early American Women Blues Singers – Town & Country. Classic Recordings of the 1920’s. Volume 2 – Town,* Yazoo 2027. Matrix 9510-B.

Hill, Bertha “Chippie” with (possibly) Shirley Clay and (probably) Artie Starks

“Trouble In My Mind Blues,” November 1, 1928. *Trumpet Blues 1925-29*, HLP 27 (as “Trouble In Mind”). Matrix C-2509-.

Jones, Richard M. and Lee Collins

“Trouble In Mind,” August 5, 1936. *When The Sun Goes Down. That’s Chicago’s South Side. Volume 3. The Secret History Of Rock & Roll*, Bluebird 09026-63988-2. Matrix 100681-1.

Tharpe, Sister Rosetta with Lucky Millinder And His Orchestra

“Trouble In Mind,” June 27, 1941. *Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Complete Recorded Works 1938-1944 in Chronological Order. Volume 1. 1938-1941*, DODCD-5334. Matrix 69437-A.

Ward, Fields and The Grayson County Railsplitters

“Ain’t That Trouble In Mind,” March 5, 1929. *Down In The Basement. Joe Bussard’s Treasure Trove of Vintage 78s. 1926-1937*, Old Hat CD-1004. Matrix 14862-A.

White, Georgia with Richard M. Jones, Les Paul, and John Lindsay

“Trouble In Mind,” May 12, 1936. *Georgia White Sings and Plays*, RR1307. Matrix 90723-A.

Worried Life Blues

Edwards, David “Honeyboy”

“Worried Life Blues,” July 20, 1942. *Negro Blues And Hollers*, ROUNDER CD 1501. Matrix 6612-A-1.

Big Maceo (Major or Maceo Merriweather) with Tampa Red and Ransom Knowling

“Worried Life Blues,” June 24, 1941. *The Blues. A Smithsonian Collection Of Classic Blues Singers. Volume 3*, Smithsonian Collection Of Recordings RD 101-3 A 23984/A 23989.) Matrix 064190-1.

Whitehead, Minnie Lee with Tommy “Jaybird” Jones

“The Worried Life Blues,” July 26, 1942. *Field Recordings. Volume 3. Mississippi*, Document DOCD-5577. Matrix 6645-B-2.