Saints, Sinners, and Schemers in Anglophone Popular Music

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In this article, I explore the relationship between two structures recently defined in the scholarship of Anglophone popular music: Nicholas Stoia's "'Sweet Thing' scheme" and my own harmonic "saint schema." My discussion focuses first on each structure in its own right, and then in combination – the "saint-sweetie combo" – which serves as an effective template for hearing and analyzing a large swath of popular song. The saint-sweetie combo not only describes common features of lyrics and music taken together; it can also address the effect lyrical structure can have on our hearing of musical structure, and vice versa. This exploration eventually leads me to name two additional structures: the "twining schema" and the "ain't-a-saint scheme."

In diesem Artikel untersuche ich die Beziehung zwischen zwei Strukturen, die kürzlich in der Forschung anglophoner Popularmusik beschrieben worden sind: Nicholas Stoias »›Sweet Thing‹ scheme« sowie das von mir definierte harmonische »saint schema«. Meine Erörterung konzentriert sich zunächst auf jede Struktur für sich und dann auf ihre Kombination – die »saint-sweetie combo« –, die als wirksames Modell für das Hören und Analysieren einer Vielzahl an *popular songs* gelten kann. Die »saint-sweetie combo« beschreibt nicht nur gemeinsame Merkmale von Text und Musik, sondern kann auch die Auswirkungen der Textstruktur auf unser Hören der musikalischen Struktur und umgekehrt untersuchen. Diese Überlegungen führen schließlich zur Beschreibung zwei weiterer Strukturen: des »twining schema« und des »ain't-a-saint scheme«.

SCHLAGWORTE/KEYWORDS: Form; Harmonik; harmony; musical form; popular music; populäre Musik; song; text-music relationship; topic theory; Toposforschung; Wort-Ton-Beziehungen

Text

Nicholas Stoia defines the Sweet Thing scheme, named for one particular old folk song that fits it,[1] as a "musical form"[2] in American blues, gospel, and folk that is an "intertwining of the discrete musical components of various earlier sources […] resulting in a number of hybrids and textual, rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic variants."[3] Stoia catalogs so many variants, in fact, that the scheme really seems unbounded as regards to rhythm, harmony, and melody. In my view, the Sweet Thing is not really a musical form at all; it is, more precisely, a *stanzaic* form for song lyrics. In order to clearly differentiate my own view from Stoia's, I will refer to the stanzaic form specifically as the "sweetie" scheme, a diminutive version of Stoia's grander conception.

I consider the sweetie scheme to exhibit three defining features:

1. a stanza of four textual lines, which, when delivered, have equally spaced beginnings, i. e., a quatrain
2. textual repetition within and/or between stanzas, i. e., a refrain
3. an internal rhyme in the third line, i. e., a third-line couplet

1 Sheet music for the song "Sweet Thing" appears in Lomax/Lomax 1947, 106–107.

2 Stoia 2021, 22.

3 Ibid., 26.

An example is the first verse of Ray Charles's 1954 R&B single "I've Got a Woman"[4] (modeled on the 1954 gospel recording "It Must Be Jesus" by The Southern Tones,[5] itself a modernized rendition of the African American spiritual "There's a Man Going 'Round Taking Names"). Table 1 displays the lyrics as a quatrain that presents the titular refrain three times ("*I got a woman way over town that's good to me, oh, yeah*") interrupted by a distinct third-line couplet that rhymes "*need*" with "*indeed*."

text accents:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
R or a	*I got a woman* **[Iadd6]**		*way over town* **[V7]**		*that's good to me,* **[Iadd6]**	*oh,* **[IV♭7]**	*yeah,* **[Iadd6]**	*Say I got a* **[I♭7]**
R or a	*woman* **[IV♭7]**		*way over town,*		*good to me,* **[V7]**		*oh, yeah,*	*She give me*
AB or bc	*money* **[I♭7]**		*when I'm in need,*	*yeah, she's a kind of* **[IV♭7]**			*friend indeed*	*I got a*
R or a	*woman* **[Iadd6]**		*way over town* **[V7]**		*that's good to me,* **[Iadd6]**	*oh,* **[IV♭7]**	*yeah* **[Iadd6]**	**[V7]**

Table 1: Ray Charles, "I've Got a Woman," first stanza

Stoia specifies Charles's quatrain as instantiating a word-choice pattern of R/R/AB/R,[6] with the forward slashes separating the four lines, the R indicating a full line of refrain, and the A and B representing the two halves of a rhyming couplet. This is one of the word-choice patterns Stoia identifies as standard in the prewar era; the other two are Ar/Ar/AB/R (the lower-case r indicating a short refrain) and R(A/B)/CD/R(A). Notwithstanding the seeming straightforwardness of these standard labels, Stoia's method for naming patterns is only partially explicit, and the results can become very complex depending on how consistent the stanzas are within a given song. Therefore, for present purposes, I propose a simplified system that deemphasizes inter-stanzaic refrains in favor of conveying intra-stanzaic sameness and difference. To distinguish my labels from Stoia's, I will use lowercase letters, as well as underlining. (Using lowercase letters for lyrics also has the advantage of freeing up capitals for larger patterns of multiple stanzas, such as AABA form.) If a line in a stanza is identical (or nearly) to another, I will label them with the same letter; and if there is an in-line rhyme, I will assign a letter for each half. Refrains will be acknowledged only in prose. So, in "I've Got a Woman," the R/R/AB/R pattern will be rendered here as a/a/bc/a, with an a-refrain.

Moving beyond word-choice patterns, Stoia also has much to say about textual rhythm, specifically the hypermetric positions of textual accents. His procedure involves placing each textual line of the quatrain on a number line with eight evenly spaced positions. In Table 1, these positions are equivalent to bars, but I will refer to them as "ending-accent positions," because Stoia's primary concern is the placement of the last lyrical accent, and these positions are not always equivalent to bars. (In many other songs, they are equivalent to half a bar.) In the first, second and fourth lines, Charles's last accent is on the word "*yeah*," so each of these lines receives a score of 7 based on that word's position each time. (An anacrusis for an ensuing line does not count here.) In the third

4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alQqMveYv0I (17 May 2025)

5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvCbVLZW4EY (17 May 2025)

6 The term "word-choice pattern" is mine, not Stoia's. This example is based on Stoia's Example 7.7 (2021, 244) but rendered here as a 32-bar stanza rather than his 16-bar stanza.

line, the last accent is on the second half of the word "*indeed*," which also receives a score of 7. The overall ending-accent pattern for the stanza, therefore, is 7777.[7] According to Stoia, there are three standard prewar patterns, 5575, 5585, and 7787, each with a contour of short-short-long-short.

Although Stoia identifies three standard word-choice patterns and three standard ending-accent patterns, he also offers numerous variants of each, to the extent that it can be difficult to know exactly where one has gone too far in applying the term "sweetie" to a stanza. Nevertheless, the three defining features I listed above – a quatrain, a refrain, and a third-line couplet – together will serve as my own model of the sweetie scheme. Determining exactly how far one can stray from these three features will be a topic for later discussion.

Harmony

Turning now to harmony, we can hear in Charles's "I've Got a Woman" (see Table 1) that the verse divides in half, with a large V7 at the end of the second line, creating a medial half cadence that is balanced in the fourth line by a whole (authentic)[8] cadence in the form of Iadd6-V7-Iadd6 (elaborated by a plagal IV7-Iadd6, and followed by a turnaround V7 propelling us into the next iteration).[9] Stoia refers to this kind of structure as "periodic," after the classical antecedent/consequent period phrasal form.[10] The bassline of the chords can also be understood as a variant of the "passamezzo moderno," otherwise known as the "Gregory Walker," which normally features $\hat{1}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{1}$-$\hat{5}$ for its first half, and $\hat{1}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{1}$-$\hat{5}$-$\hat{1}$ for its second.[11]

In my book *Hearing Harmony*, I cast the harmonic structure of "I've Got a Woman" as an elaborated example of my "saint" schema, which requires only I-V for its first half: i. e., I-V || I-IV-I-V-I.[12] (I use the word "schema" in a harmonic context, and Stoia uses the word "scheme" in a formal context; I maintain this linguistic distinction in this article.) The saint schema can be understood as a simple prototype underlying the periodic structures for which Stoia says there was a "growing preference"[13] over the course of the twentieth century. As happens in "I've Got a Woman," the typical combination of a sweetie text with a saint chord progression splits the stanza in two: the antecedent's half-cadential V arrives at some point during (usually halfway through) the second line of text, while the consequent's I-IV portion supports the third-line couplet and its I-V-I whole cadence undergirds the fourth lyrical line; see Table 2.

7 Stoia inserts commas between all his numbers, so 7777 is 7,7,7,7. I omit these commas.

8 I prefer *whole* cadence in place of "authentic" cadence (Doll 2017, 90–91).

9 I identify secondary dominants according to the primary tonal center rather than to the secondary center; e. g., "I♭7" rather than "V7/IV" at the word "*money*." This notation allows us to consistently distinguish between the functional identity and numerical identity of chords.

10 Stoia 2021, 178–183.

11 Ibid., 2, 178, 180, 183–184. The passamezzo moderno is sometimes referred to as a ground bass or bassline (i. e., a melody), and sometimes as a chord progression; Stoia floats between these two conceptions. See also Gombosi 1944, 145; Ward 1994, 313, and 322–23; Van der Merwe 1989, 198–202; Middleton 1990, 117; Stoia 2013, and von Appen/Frei-Hauenschild 2015, 37–38.

12 Doll 2017, 181.

13 Stoia 2021, 245.

	antecedent
first line	I | I | I | I
second line	I | I | V | V
	consequent
third-line couplet	I | I | IV | IV
fourth line	I | V | I | I

Table 2: Typical saint setting of a sweetie stanza (saint-sweetie combo)

The name "saint" refers to the structure's revered status among musicians, and more specifically to the famous tune "When the Saints Go Marching In," which is an exemplar of the schema. See Table 3, which offers the opening verse of the up-tempo rock-and-roll recording of "When the Saints Go Marching In" by Fats Domino from 1959.[14] (Hereafter, ending-accent patterns will be summarized at the end of each line with a parenthetical number. Readers are encouraged to count to 8 in their heads.) Notice here the textual repetition of the refrain in the first, second, and fourth lines, which we often (though not necessarily) have in sweetie stanzas, and which we saw in "I've Got a Woman" (albeit in 4-bar lines here, totaling 16, instead of Charles's 8-bar lines, totaling 32). However, crucially, Domino's lyrics lack a third-line couplet, so it is not a fully realized instance of the sweetie scheme. (It also has a non-standard ending-accent pattern of 5555, similar to 5575 and 5585 but missing the short-short-long-short contour that occurs in many of Stoia's examples.)

4 bars per line (16 total)
ANTECEDENT
a: *Oh, when the* **[I]** *saints go marching in* (5)
a: *Oh, when the saints go marching* **[V]** *in* (5)
CONSEQUENT
b: *I wants to* **[I]** *be in that* **[IV]** *number* (5)
a: *When the* **[I]** *saints go* **[V]** *marching* **[I]** *in* (5)

Table 3: Fats Domino, "When the Saints Go Marching In," first stanza

Now compare Domino's stanza to the first verse of the Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There"[15] in Table 4, which can be analyzed as a sweetie stanza but with the third-line couplet relocated to the first line. There are multiple features of the Beatles' song that are highly suggestive of a direct connection to "When the Saints Go Marching In."[16] Their fourth-line refrain sounds like mere word-swapping – "*When the saints go marching in*" becomes "*When I saw her standing there*") – as does the end of their third line – "*with that number*" becomes "*with another,*" a near-rhyme in itself, across songs! Their ending-accent pattern is 7575, but their third line is really a 5 (like "When the Saints Go Marching In") with an added falsetto "*oooh!,*" as part of 7555 – a reordered 5575 (standard for the sweetie). Similar textual additions were heard in the form of the "*oh yeah*" exclamations in "I've Got a Woman," and are probably related to the call-and-responses that have

14 https://youtu.be/3TiYzhs8CCQ?si=vBCygw92XZMMu975 (17 May 2025)

15 https://youtu.be/oxwAB3SECtc?si=eVI0ufBjxUv7sn3F&t=6 (17 May 2025)

16 See also Everett 2001, 384n131, and Doll 2007, 123.

peppered performances of "When the Saints Go Marching In" since its earliest known recording in 1923 by the Paramount Jubilee Singers. These responding shouts can likewise be heard in the hit 1938 version by Louis Armstrong (see Table 5),[17] who additionally elongates his delivery of the third line past ending-accent position 5 and holds the note with vibrato, hinting at 6 (or even 7), a stanzaic contour more typical of the sweetie's third line.

4 bars per line (16 total)
ANTECEDENT
ab: *Well, she was* **[I♭7]** *just seventeen, and you* **[IV♭7]** *know what I* **[I♭7]** *mean* (7)
c: *And the way she looked was way beyond com-* **[V7]** *-pare* (5)
CONSEQUENT
d: *So* **[^{1} I♭7]** *how could I* **[$^{\flat7}$ I♭7 / 3]** *dance with a-* **[^{6} IV♭7]** *-nother?* **[$^{\flat6}$ ♭VI]** *Oooh!* (5/7)
e: *When I* **[^{5} I♭7]** *saw her* **[V7]** *standing* **[I♭7]** *there?* (5)

Table 4: The Beatles, "I Saw Her Standing There," first stanza

4 bars per line (16 total)
ANTECEDENT
a: *Oh, when the* **[I]** *saints—when the saints—go marching in—marching in* (5/7)
a: *Now, when the saints go marching* **[V]** *in—marching in* (5/7)
CONSEQUENT
b: *Yes, I* **[I]** *want to be in that* **[IVadd6]** *number* (5/6)
a: *When the* **[I / 5]** *saints go* **[V9]** *marching* **[I]** *in* (5)

Table 5: Louis Armstrong, "When the Saints Go Marching In," first stanza

A tighter connection still between "When the Saints Go Marching In" and the sweetie scheme is realized in the duet performance of the song from the 1959 film *The Five Pennies*, sung by Danny Kaye (portraying jazz musician Red Nichols) and Louis Armstrong (playing himself).[18] See Table 6, which adds several new stanzas talking about which musicians would be most worthy of accompanying the heavenly saints in their march (Rachmaninoff, Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel, Mahler, Fats Waller, and Liszt, among others), new stanzas with lots of new internal rhymes, including a rhyming third-line couplet that is now longer than any of the others, ending at position 8 (or at least close to 8). So, now, we have a version of "When the Saints Go Marching In" wherein the verse is a quatrain with a third-line couplet and a refrain in the last line – what Jay Summach calls a "tail refrain" and what Michael Callahan calls a "reveal" (when it appears *only* in the last line).[19] I believe this rendition – with its underlying 7785 ending-accent pattern, recog-

17 https://youtu.be/USpYJB6rdRs?si=Fum5kMctdPKPr_Xy&t=39 (17 May 2025)

18 https://youtu.be/Fsx6mUoTHUM?si=pCov5Q-ct5o5Ref9&t=58 (17 May 2025)

19 Summach 2011, 20, § 7 and Callahan 2013, § 1.3.

nized by Stoia as a possible variant[20] – is a sweetie example, even though Stoia does not identify anything like its ab/cd/ef/g structure as a word-choice option.

4 bars per line (16 total)

ANTECEDENT

ab: *Do you* **[I]** *dig Rachmaninoff? On and off. Rimsky? Mmm, of course-akov* (7)

cd: *Ravel, and Gustav* **[vi]** *Mahler? Yeah, but* **[V7]** *don't forget Fats Waller (I wouldn't do that)* (7)

CONSEQUENT

ef: **[I]** *Liszt has a twist that you can't resist. Yeah,* **[IV]** *yeah, put Liszt on that* **[ii half-dim7]** *list* (7/8)

g: *When the* **[I]** *saints* **[vi]** *go* **[ii]** *march-* **[V]** *-ing* **[I]** *in* (5)

Table 6: Danny Kaye and Louis Armstrong, "When the Saints Go Marching In," fourth stanza

Text and Harmony Intertwined

A recognition that the sweetie and the saint are commonly combined can potentially help to stabilize any particular interpretative case in which either does not wholly conform to its model (although I will complicate this claim later on). I have already argued that "I Saw Her Standing There" manifests the sweetie scheme despite its couplet arriving in the first line; its saint chord progression reinforces this sweetie interpretation by providing more context, more reason to suspect a sweetie in the first place. Permutations such as this textual relocation represent one type of case that benefits from the recognition of the generic, stylistic normativity of the sweetie and the saint in combination. Another benefiting type is addition, although additions seem even easier to accept on their face, probably because we can still see/hear the intact whole, underneath (as it were). Additional in-line couplets arrived in the Kaye and Armstrong performance (Table 6); the saint-based chords help curb any potential undermining of a sweetie interpretation brought about by these extra rhymes. The same goes for the addition of chords, which were heard in "I've Got a Woman"; there, the first lyrical line presents not a lone tonic I (as in Table 2), but rather Iadd6-V7-Iadd6-IV♭7-Iadd6-I♭7 (see Table 1), a fact kept in check by the presence of the sweetie scheme.

Subtractions are trickier. It is one thing to spot a structure that is rearranged or embellished. It is another to recognize a structure if part of it is outright missing. In Fats Domino's recording (see Table 3), there is no in-line couplet anywhere. Personally, I find the textual quatrain, patterned as a/a/b/a with a-refrain (close to Charles's a/a/bc/a with a-refrain in Table 1) and 5555 (close to 5575 and 5585) to be enough to justify a reading of this stanza as an incomplete sweetie, but only because we additionally get a saint progression. The reverse can happen, too. Both Stoia and I recognize Little Walter's bluesy "My Babe" (1959)[21] as withholding the V in its consequent half.[22] Walter's incomplete

20 Stoia 2021, 159, 161, and 165–166.

21 https://youtu.be/dkbfvLYxgXc?si=iX_5Z2JQKKCFTfra&t=8 (17 May 2025)

22 Stoia 2021, 236–237 and Doll 2017, 181. My previous assertation about Walter's missing V was made without recourse to the lyrics, but the sweetie elements make the claim even stronger.

saint schema of I-V || I-IV-I is offset – crucially – by a sweetie quatrain with refrain and third-line couplet (see Table 7).

4 bars per line (16 total)

ANTECEDENT

a: **[I]** *My baby don't stand no cheating, my baby* (5)

a: *Oh yeah, she don't stand no cheating,* **[V]** *my babe* (5)

CONSEQUENT

ab: **[I]** *Oh yeah, she don't stand no cheating,* **[IV]** *she don't stand none of that midnight creeping* (8)

a: **[I]** *My babe, true little baby, my babe* (5)

Table 7: Little Walter, "My Babe," first stanza

Invocation of the normative, abstract combination of the sweetie and the saint is almost obligatory in analyzing more complicated cases like the gospel song "This Train," as recorded in 1939 by Sister Rosetta Tharpe (see Table 8).[23] "This Train" was likely a source of divine inspiration for the sinful "My Babe"; both bookend their opening stanzas (each one a/a/ab/a and 5585) with a two-syllable titular refrain, and both present chords that only approximate the saint schema.[24] But "This Train" goes even further in its harmonic exploration. In this opening stanza, Tharpe sits on a stubborn I♭7 chord for two and a half lines of text, after which she plays IV-iv-I, forming a scale-degree descent of $\hat{6}$-$^{\flat}\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$.[25]

4 bars per line (16 total)

ANTECEDENT

a: **[I]** *This train is a clean train, this train* (5)

a: **[I♭7]** *This train is a clean train, this train* (5)

CONSEQUENT

ab: [$^{1\,/\,\flat7}$ **I♭7**] *This train is a clean train,* [$^{\flat6}$ **IV**] *everybody ride it in* [$^{\flat6}$ **iv**] *Jesus' name* (8)

a: [^{5} **I**] *This train is a clean* **[V]** *train,* **[I]** *this train* (5)

Table 8: Sister Rosetta Tharpe, "This Train," first stanza

I call this descent the "shrinking schema," a type of "harmonic meta-schema" defined by a scale-degree series that is not limited to realizations as chordal roots.[26] (A shrinking progression was previously heard in Kaye and Armstrong's "When the Saints Go Marching In" (see Table 6), where the chord offering scale-degree $^{\flat}\hat{6}$ sounds to me like a ii half-dim7.) The only V arrives late and lasts for just half a bar, at the fourth line's second "*train*," barely creating a semblance of a whole cadence. (Normally, the V would last the

23 https://youtu.be/AoBdCs-_aRc?si=D3QTJ_XIpnjiBYRa&t=8 (17 May 2025)

24 In the sweetie song "Diamonds at Your Feet" by Muddy Waters from 1956 (after "This Train" but before "My Babe"; see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENJVhDDSZe4 [17 May 2025]), the saint's consequent half is similarly missing its V (Doll 2007, 124–125).

25 In the tables, individual scale degrees in lines like $\hat{6}$-$^{\flat}\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$ are given in superscript before the chords.

26 Doll 2017, 137–143.

whole bar.) Yet in a startling move, Tharpe adds V chords in the next two stanzas, eventually resulting in a third stanza that is a full saint progression plus the shrinking descent (see Table 9). These later dominant additions seem to confirm the earlier interpretation of the first stanza as a complete sweetie with an incomplete saint. Stoia appropriately dubs the first stanza a "fragmented" periodic progression.

ANTECEDENT

a: **[I]** *She travels straight to the uppermost, this train* (5)

a: *She travels straight to the uppermost,* **[V]** *this train* (5)

CONSEQUENT

ab: *She* **[$^{1\,/\,\flat7}$ I♭7]** *travels straight to the uppermost,* **[^{6} IV]** *nothing can ride her but the* **[$^{\flat6}$ iv]** *blood-washed host* (8)

c: *Because* **[^{5} I]** *this train is a* **[V]** *clean train,* **[I]** *this train* (5)

Table 9: Sister Rosetta Tharpe, "This Train," third stanza

Yet there is even more to this story, more context for this analysis. Tharpe's shrinking schema, $\hat{6}$-$^{\flat}\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$ within IV-iv-I, is actually a portion of a longer descent that I call the "dropping" harmonic meta-schema, or the "drop": $\hat{1}$-$^{\flat}\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$-$^{\flat}\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$, a chromatic lamento without the leading tone.[27] Although dropping progressions can appear anywhere in a song, one common role they perform is complexifying the consequent half of a saint schema, and supporting the entire third textual line of a sweetie stanza (see Table 10).

	possible chords	drop
third-line couplet	I | I♭7 | IV | iv	$\hat{1}$ | $^{\flat}\hat{7}$ | $\hat{6}$ | $^{\flat}\hat{6}$
fourth line	I | V | I | I	$\hat{5}$

Table 10: Sweetie plus saint-with-drop, consequent phrase

Stoia offers multiple examples of this descent, with the first two notes ($\hat{1}$-$^{\flat}\hat{7}$) and last note ($\hat{5}$) harmonized by a I, and the remaining middle two notes ($\hat{6}$-$^{\flat}\hat{6}$) usually harmonized by IV-iv.[28] In "This Train," the $\hat{1}$ and $^{\flat}\hat{7}$ are heard simultaneously in I$^{\flat}$7;[29] a similar temporal conflation of the first two scale-degrees of the drop was heard in "I Saw Her Standing There" (Table 4), although Paul McCartney changes the bass note from scale-degree $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$ (at "*dance*"), which helps delineate where $^{\flat}\hat{7}$ might hypothetically supplant $\hat{1}$ hypothetically. (The Beatles also deploy $^{\flat}$VI for the shrink's $^{\flat}\hat{6}$ – on "*Oooh!*" – instead of iv.)[30] So, even with the dearth of dominant function at the beginning of "This Train," the normative combination of a sweetie text with – not just a saint schema, but a saint-with-drop schema – invites a seasoned listener to hear Tharpe's progression as partial, a hearing re-

27 Ibid., 159–162. The same descent with the leading tone (the full chromatic lamento) I call the "drooping" schema (ibid., 157–159).

28 Stoia 2021, 187–189.

29 Stoia (2021, 230, Ex. 6.4) transcribes all the I chords in the first stanza as triads, not as I$^{\flat}$7 chords. I have encountered enough examples of scale-degree $^{\flat}\hat{7}$ appearing at the start of the third lyrical line to make me suspicious that this might be considered schematic in its own right, but I am not yet ready to fully argue that case.

30 Stoia (2021, 233 and 235) gives Ma Rainey's 1927 "Blues Oh Blues" as an example with $^{\flat}$VI.

warded by the eventual arrival of the full-fledged V chords. Without this normative context, the added chords might sound *additional*, but not *completional*.

It is not self-evident how to deal with situations wherein a defining component of the stanzaic form or harmonic schema is omitted. Whether such omission precludes any reasonable analytical invocation of the sweetie or saint at all, or instead provides an opportunity to invoke incompleteness as an analytical description, ultimately rests in the hands of the individual analyst. Elsewhere, I have argued against the idea that all V-less popular songs are somehow – on principle – inherently incomplete,[31] but I do leave open the door for incompleteness in specific situations, as when, for instance, a listener hears a "transformational effect" of a particular schematic "norm" undergoing "chord subtraction."[32] It is my contention that "My Babe" and "This Train" qualify as cases in which the norm – the combination of the sweetie plus the saint, or plus the saint-with-drop – is specific enough, or stable enough, to be transformed via subtraction. But I recognize there will always be controversy around the degree to which a given norm can be transformed and still evoke a "schematic effect."[33] It should also be stated (as later examples of the twining schema will demonstrate) that such normativity can actually *destabilize* certain interpretative situations by introducing the *potential* of transformation where an analyst (in the absence of that extra context) might otherwise not have entertained one. Another open question is whether a common structure like the drop is so distinctive sounding that a "saint-sweetie combo" (as I will call it) *without* a drop – or at least without a shrink – might sound like that chromaticism is *missing*, creating some amount of pressure to revisit the definitions of the component scheme and schema themselves.[34]

A Chromatic Conundrum

Stoia characterizes dropping progressions as "chromatic inflections of the subdominant."[35] Although it is possible Stoia here intends "subdominant" to mean a IV chord, it is consistent with the rest of his arguments to read this statement as referring to subdominant harmonic function. Taken as such, I agree with this characterization at the local level; but things change as one goes deeper. The $\hat{6}$-$\flat\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$ shrinking schema usually lands on a I chord for $\hat{5}$ in this context, and in my own harmonic function theory, I define subdominant function as the aural quality of predicting resolution to a tonic chord – i.e., it is a type of "pre-tonic" function – and it is marked primarily by scale-degree $\hat{6}$ (not $\hat{4}$). [36] Importantly, subdominant function, as a pre-tonic function, is distinct from pre-dominant

31 See Doll 2007, 168–169; Doll 2009, 36–37; Doll 2017, 197; and Doll 2022.

32 Doll 2017, 192–193, 207.

33 Ibid., 83.

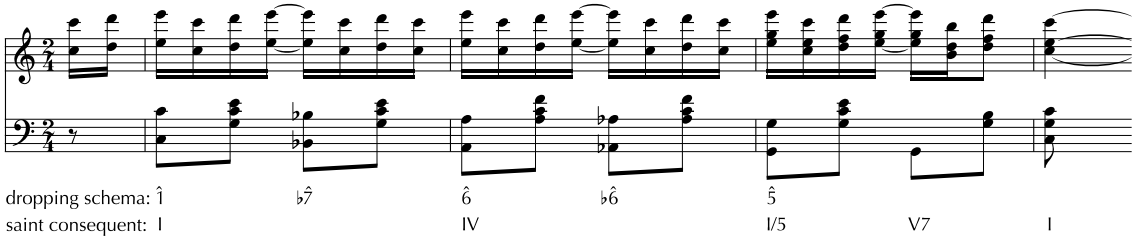
34 In "I've Got a Woman," a drop arrives later in the song, during the sax solo. Whether this affects one's hearing of the drop-less verses is debatable.

35 Stoia 2021, 187–189.

36 Doll 2007, 16–27; Doll 2017, 26–39 and 52–55. The term "subdominant" in my function theory is shorthand for the more technical "hypo pre-tonic" or "hypo beta." I further distinguish between "upper subdominants" (with the major scale-degree 6) and lower subdominants (with the minor scale-degree $\flat\hat{6}$).

function. Stoia also makes this distinction.[37] However, once we descend to deeper harmonic levels, I hear the dropping schema's initiating scale-degree $\hat{1}$ and concluding $\hat{5}$ as the most structural points, and the $\flat\hat{7}$, $\hat{6}$, and $\flat\hat{6}$ as embellishments. At the very deepest level, the $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$ operate as a root-fifth arpeggiation of I, but in between this level and the surface, I hear $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$ as the structural points of a linear progression projecting the roots of I and V, even though the $\hat{5}$ in such progressions is typically harmonized by another I and *not* a V – or more precisely, by another I and *then* a V. The chromatically inflected IV, as it were, still operates at that level, but as a subordinate predictor of V, not of I.

Example 1 notates the saint-with-drop progression in Scott Joplin's 1902 instrumental *The Entertainer*,[38] an unusual example in two respects: 1) the drop occupies only the second half of the consequent phrase, rather than running throughout it from the start;[39] 2) the dropping line appears in the bass. This second idiosyncrasy drives home my point about the harmonic functions: the I chord that arrives with scale-degree $\hat{5}$ is a tonic only in a very local sense; at a deeper level, it functions as a cadential 6/4, or a kind of pre-dominant (or, if one prefers, a dominant with displaced notes). The deeper function of the IV, then, is as a pre-dominant to V, not a subdominant to I.



Example 1: Scott Joplin, *The Entertainer*, Dropping Progression in mm. 33–36

Cadential 6/4 chords do not reliably appear at the ends of dropping schemas because the drop is not restricted to the bass. More typically, the I that harmonizes scale-degree $\hat{5}$ is in root position, which bolsters a bit its function as a local tonic. Yet even in these situations – as in "I Saw Her Standing" and the third stanza of "This Train" – it is possible to hear

37 "In early blues, country, and gospel music, IV functions much less often as a pre-dominant harmony than as a true subdominant, resolving to I and defining the tonic as its lower dominant a fifth below." (Stoia 2021, 176)

38 Lyrics have been added to *The Entertainer*. One such stanza, spoken by Milton Berle and accompanied on piano by Rowlf the Dog during a 1977 episode (season 2, episode 9, or #33; see https://youtu.be/p9gSvM4uR3s?si=zV5azMCvY2HhHR0w&t=50 [17 May 2025]) of the television show *Muppets* (and revived by Miss Piggy later in the same episode; see https://youtu.be/a8SaXp30nSg?si=gnJBiJEqknAZutkq&t=7 [17 May 2025]), conforms to a multi-couplet version of the sweetie scheme. However, the fourth line, where the drop happens, features a shorter internal rhyme that leaves room at the end for a separate refrain:

ab: Now the curtain is going up, the Entertainer is taking a bow (~7)

cd: He does his dance step and sings his song, even gets the audience to sing along (~7)

ef: Yes, he knows just what to do, he knows how to bring down the house when he's through (~7)

ge: Snappy patter and jokes, he knows what pleases the folks, the Entertainer, the star of the show (~7)

39 Although drops often appear (when not part of a saint schema) at the ends of sections, Joplin's ending drop is different, in that it prepares the whole cadence, as it normally does in the saint schema. By contrast, ending-role drops like the classic blues turnaround typically prepare the turnaround V *after* a larger whole cadence.

this chord as a "cadential [root-position] I."[40] Moreover, I would argue that *every* saint progression – even without a drop or a shrink – entails a cadential, non-tonic function for this I chord at a deep level.[41] Consider that in Armstrong's "When the Saints Go Marching In" (see Table 5), which includes neither a drop or shrink, the chord in question is a true cadential 6/4 (I/5). (The bass is faint at this point, but it is clearer in Armstrong's instrumental introduction.) The farther back in time one goes, the more drop-less and shrink-less saint progressions you will find with actual cadential 6/4 chords; over time, the chord's cadential role became less explicit, but it was not erased entirely, in my view.

I know from personal experience not everyone agrees with my interpretation of this deep-level non-tonic I chord, and I assume Stoia is among these challengers, given his passing interpretation of the progressions in Blind Willie McTell's "Come on Around to My House Mama" and "Kind Mama," both from 1929.[42] I have transcribed the latter's first stanza in Table 11.[43]

4 bars per line (20 total)

ANTECEDENT

a: **[V]** *She's a* **[I]** *real* **[Vadd9]** *kind* **[I]** *mama* **[II7]** *looking for ano-* **[V]** *-ther* **[I]** *man* (7)

b: **[I]** *She ain't* **[Vadd9]** *got no-* **[I]** *-body to* **[vi]** *hold her* **[V7]** *hand* (7)

CONSEQUENT

cd: [^{1} **I]** *Way down yonder on* [$^{\flat7}$ **I♭7]** *Cripple Creek,* **[^{6} IV]** *men don't grow but* [$^{\flat6}$ **♭VIadd♯11]** *sixteen feet* [^{5} **V]** (8)

ef: [^{1} **I]** *Would go to bed but it* [$^{\flat7}$ **I♭7]** *ain't no use, they* **[$^{6\,/\,\sharp4}$ IV]** *pile up on the bed like* [$^{6\,/\,\sharp4}$ **♯ivo7 or CTo7 / ♯4]** *chickens on a roost* (8)

a: [^{5} **V]** *She's a* [^{5} **I / 5]** *real* **[Vadd9]** *kind* **[I]** *mama* **[II7]** *looking for ano-* **[V7]** *-ther* **[I]** *man* (7)

Table 11: Blind Willie McTell, "Kind Mama," first stanza

The relevant portion is McTell's second pass at the dropping schema, a fourth lyrical line that is actually an extra third line.[44] The first time (cd), he plays scale-degree ♭$\hat{6}$ with a kind of ♭VIadd♯11 (approximating a French/German augmented-sixth chord: scale-degrees ♭$\hat{6}$, $\hat{1}$, $\hat{2}$, and ♭$\hat{3}$), but in the second pass (ef), on the word "*chickens*," McTell replaces the iv (harmonizing scale-degree ♭$\hat{6}$) with, in Stoia's words, a "common-tone diminished

40 Nobile 2012, §3.1–3.4. See also Cutler 2009, 196–202; Doll 2007, 117–126; Doll 2013, 103; Doll 2017, 259; Everett 2001, 147; Kresky 2007; and Rothstein 2006, 268–277. Special attention has been given to the middle I in the progression I-IV-I-V-for at least a century and a half: e. g., Hauptmann 1991 [1853], 9 and Riemann 2000 [1872]. See also Drabkin 1996, 149–155 and Schachter 1999. Cadential I chords—root position or otherwise—represent a specific version of a "delaying" function (Doll 2017, 74–75), an effect that evaporates once we move to deeper harmonic levels (where the predicted dominant V arrives in the cadential I's position).

41 Walter Everett (2000, 322) makes essentially the same point about the cadential nature of the last line's initial root-position I in Bob Dylan's 1983 "License to Kill," (see https://youtu.be/PBxBReHOFfg?si=1j8ZDDr0LXP4ygb1 [17 May 2025]) a saint-without-drop progression and sweetie text. In Chuck Berry's 1955 "Thirty Days (To Come Back Home)" (see https://youtu.be/yMuYCVZ7KK0?si=9Bot2LwdLwBewd1v [17 May 2025]) another Stoia periodic example (2021, 241–424), we hear a pre-dominant IV move straight to V7 in the fourth lyrical line, suggesting that the normally intervening I does not play a deep-level role.

42 Stoia 2021, 189n6.

43 https://youtu.be/rU0TBxJuwTU?si=iBheFvrvzd257xT6&t=4 (17 May 2025)

44 Compensating for the additional third line, McTell overlaps the stanzas, using the fourth line of the first stanza as the first line of the second stanza.

chord resolving to I." To my ear, though, McTell's chord is a ♯ivo7 functioning as a secondary leading-tone diminished seventh of the dominant (i. e., as viio7/V). This is true even though, with this ♯ivo7, the drop stalls at scale-degree $\hat{6}$ – we do not get $\flat\hat{6}$ at all before resolving to $\hat{5}$. What we get instead is an *ascent* to $\hat{5}$: $\hat{4}$-$\sharp\hat{4}$-$\hat{5}$, or what I call a "swelling" schema.[45] Of special interest in both passes is the quick turnaround V that McTell strums before beginning the next line, providing $\hat{5}$ prematurely; this might be heard either as (in Stoia's view, presumably) a simplification of the preceding pre-tonic, or as (in my view) a surface-level resolution of the preceding pre-dominant – a resolution even closer to the surface than the tonic-ness of the final line's first root-position I at "*real kind mama*." In truth, McTell's second attempt at the drop – not to mention the II7 near the end – complicates the harmonic levels here, even within my own hearing. But for present purposes, it suffices to say that I still hear the final refrain's initial I as resolving to the quick V7 (via II7) before the arrival of deeper tonic resolution at the very end of the stanza.

A New Harmonic Schema

McTell's interrupted drop motion, with the swelling ascent $\hat{4}$-$\sharp\hat{4}$-$\hat{5}$ in place of the shrinking descent $\hat{6}$-$\flat\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$, is not a unique oddity of "Kind Mama." It appears also, for instance, in McTell's "Come on Around to My House Mama," as well as in Bob Dylan's 1963 "Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance,"[46] a significantly reworked version of Henry Thomas's 1927 recording.[47] See Table 12, where the $\sharp\hat{4}$ is harmonized by II7 (cd, at "*worried man*"). In my earlier published work, I acknowledge $\hat{1}$-$\flat\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$/$\hat{4}$-$\sharp\hat{4}$-$\hat{5}$ as a saint-consequent alternative to the more common dropping descent $\hat{1}$-$\flat\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$-$\flat\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$, but I have not yet recognized it as a harmonic meta-schema in its own right. Considering we now have two different root-harmonizations of this partial-dropping/swelling progression within a saint-sweetie combo, I am motivated to define $\hat{1}$-$\flat\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$/$\hat{4}$-$\sharp\hat{4}$-$\hat{5}$ formally as the *twining schema*, in honor of the "intertwining" of text and pitch that Stoia frequently notes within the Sweet Thing scheme.[48]

4 bars per line (16 total)

ANTECEDENT

a: **[I]** *Honey, just allow me one more chance to* **[IV]** *get along with* **[I]** *you* (7)

b: *Honey, just allow me one more chance, I'll* **[II]** *do anything for* **[V]** *you* (7)

CONSEQUENT

cd: *Well, I'm a-* **[^{1} I]** *walking down the road with my* **[$^{\flat7}$ I♭7]** *head in my hand, I'm* **[$^{6/4}$ IV]** *looking for a woman needs a* **[$^{6/\sharp4}$ II7]** *worried man* (8)

e: *Just a-* **[^{5} I]** *one kind* **[V]** *favor I* **[I]** *ask of* **[IV]** *you, al-* **[I]** *-low me just a* **[V]** *one more* **[I]** *chance* (7)

Table 12: Bob Dylan's "Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance," first stanza

Other songs with sweetie texts set to saint-with-twine progressions include Bobby Darin's 1958 "Splish Splash" (in the verses), Ray Charles's 1958 "Talkin' 'Bout You" (another of

45 Doll 2017, 144–147.

46 https://youtu.be/l9uBYOWD_fo?si=Nlb4mf51UpSQBfzv&t=4 (17 May 2025) See also Stoia's (2021, 237–239) analysis of the song.

47 https://youtu.be/y0Swc5mY3zA?si=vkv1RZ5asm1ch6Dh&t=36 (17 May 2025)

48 Stoia 2021, 2.

Stoia's examples),[49] and an up-tempo, jump-blues-styled re-recording of "This Train" by Sister Rosetta Tharpe and the Sam Price Trio from 1947.[50] Table 13 lists some songs that feature either a dropping-saint or twining-saint progression.

saint-with-drop (1̂–♭7̂–6̂–♭6̂–5̂)
Memphis Jug Band, "Got a Letter from My Darlin'" (1930)
Memphis Minnie, "Ain't No Use Trying to Tell On Me" (1933)
Memphis Minnie, "Selling My Porkchops" (1935)
Lil Johnson, "Honey, You're So Good to Me" (1936)
Robert Johnson, "They're Red Hot" (1937)
Barrel House Annie, "If It Don't Fit (Don't Force It)" (1937)*
Blind Boy Fuller, "What's That Smells Like Fish" (1938)
Sister Rosetta Tharpe, "This Train" (1939)
Dumbo, "When I See a Elephant Fly," (1941)*
Big Bill Broonzy, "Keep Your Hands Off Her" (1949)
The Beatles, "I Saw Her Standing There" (1963)
The Mothers of Invention, "Brown Shoes Don't Make It" (1967)
saint-with-twine (1̂–♭7̂–6̂/4̂–♯4̂–5̂)
Blind Willie McTell, "Come on Around to My House Mama" (1929)
Blind Willie McTell, "Kind Mama" (1929)
Barrel House Annie, "If It Don't Fit (Don't Force It)" (1937)*
Oscar "Buddy" Woods, "Come on Over to My House Baby" (1938)
Dumbo, "When I See a Elephant Fly," (1941)*
Sister Rosetta Tharpe, "This Train" (1947, with Sam Price Trio)
Ray Charles, "Talkin' 'Bout You" (1958)
Bobby Darin, "Splish Splash" (1958)
Bob Dylan, "Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance" (1963)
Arlo Guthrie, "Alice's Restaurant Massacree" (1967)
*Features drop, twine, twirl (5̂–♯5̂–6̂/4̂–♯4̂–5̂), and tease (5̂–♯5̂–6̂–♭6̂–5̂)

Table 13: Sweetie plus saint-with-drop or saint-with-twine (for links to the recordings on YouTube, see the Appendix below)

The silly names of my meta-schemas all contain a mnemonic device: "s" names, such as "shrink" and "swell" are *short* schemas (three notes each); "d" names, such as "drop" *descend* from scale-degree 1̂; "t" names, such as "twine" *travel* up and down. The "twining" schema is very close to the "twirling" schema, 5̂-♯5̂-6̂/4̂-♯4̂-5̂, which, in some manifestations, might differ only in the second chord.[51] In the demo recordings of the Velvet Underground's "I'm Waiting for the Man" (Table 14),[52] the bottleneck-blues style features a third-line twirling progression that differs from the official version's minor-pentatonic ascent in the second and fourth chords, but it differs from the twining schema only in its III7; note the absence of V chords at the saint's defining cadential moments, with the first V repositioned

49 Ibid., 243n6 and 244n7.

50 The Darin and Charles songs exhibit some interesting harmonic idiosyncrasies. After Darin's twine ends on I, the progression hops between tonic and dominant, ending on a dominant turnaround: I-V7-I-V7. With this *two-step* progression, as I have come to call it, it is debatable whether Darin's verse ends with a half or whole cadence. Charles's saint deviates even further from the normal course after its twine, hopping between tonic and subdominant (I♭7-IV♭7-I♭7-IV♭7-I♭7) before finally offering a turnaround V7, a chord that ultimately fulfills the dominant function I hear suggested by the twine's scale-degree 5̂ but in such a delayed way as to suggest an ultimate half cadence. The Animals' 1964 cover of "Talkin' 'Bout You" (the B-side of "The House of the Rising Sun") simply gives I and V7 at the end, with no subdominants.

51 Doll 2017, 144–146.

52 https://youtu.be/GIJPA8Srac8?si=T97g5FLou0w_4-YX&t=21 (17 May 2025)

earlier at the end of the first lyrical line, and the second V saved until the end to form a turnaround, making this a questionable instance of the saint (but an obvious sweetie).[53]

4 bars per line (16 total)
? ANTECEDENT
a: **[I]** *I'm* **[IV]** *waiting for the* **[I]** *man* **[I♭7–♭VII–V]** (5)
b: **[I]** *Twenty-six* **[IV]** *dollars in my* **[I]** *hand* (5)
? CONSEQUENT
cd: [^{5} **I]** *Up to Lexington,* [$^{\sharp 5}$ **III7]** *one-two-five,* [$^{6\,/\,4}$ **IV]** *feel sick and dirty, more* [$^{\sharp 4}$ **♯ivo7]** *dead than alive* (8)
a: [^{5} **I]** *I'm* **[IV]** *waiting for the* **[I]** *man* **[I♭7–♭VII–V]** (5)

Table 14: Velvet Underground, "I'm Waiting for the Man" demo, first stanza

The drop, the twirl, and the twine are all independent of the saint and the sweetie – at least hypothetically. Drops are commonly heard elsewhere in blues turnarounds and as the basis for repeating riffs in rock songs like the Yardbird's 1965 "For Your Love,"[54] the Lovin' Spoonful's 1966 "Summer in the City,"[55] Cream's 1967 "Tales of Brave Ulysses,"[56] and the Nilsson's 1968 "One."[57] Twirls and twines, to my knowledge, are much less widespread than drops in general, and their presence outside the sweetie and the consequent half of the saint may be the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, for an independent twine I can only offer weak examples, because of the normativity of the saint-sweetie combo; this combination, which I earlier argued can potentially stabilize interpretations, now makes matters more complicated when looking for twines *outside* that context, as it pressures us to hear saints and sweeties – if only partially – every time we encounter a twine.

Ray Charles's 1956 "Hallelujah I Love Her So,"[58] another of Charles's perfect blends of the sacred and the sinfully suggestive, presents a twining progression partway through its verses (beginning at "*She kisses me*", see Table 15). The chords near the end might sound like a delayed, embellished version of the saint's whole cadence (II♭9-V11-I), but there is not a strong half cadence right before the consequent twine, just a very quick V at "*around*" (repeating a progression we just heard). Lyrically, there is an opening rhyming couplet a/b, followed by a second rhyming couplet cd during the twine, capped by a titular refrain ef (that is itself a rhyming couplet); yet the second couplet is equal to the length of the first couplet, rather than twice as fast, as it normally would be to reside entirely within the third lyrical line of a sweetie stanza. If this *is* the sweetie scheme, the spacing is irregular: two measures apiece for the first and seconds lines, but four meas-

53 See also Stoia's (2021, 5–15 and 239–240) discussion of the official release of "I'm Waiting for the Man" (see https://youtu.be/99og_g7rXnA?si=n6_6_h-hR0_X5kpG&t=15 [17 May 2025]), which also lacks both cadential V chords of the saint.

54 https://youtu.be/yKI7c9x2lbM?si=aBx_ozzYmC1ftRLr (17 May 2025)

55 https://youtu.be/5YgevxRGXIU?si=0_cMbyGqYiyuxEEo&t=6 (17 May 2025)

56 https://youtu.be/WRSbjpXZYEA?si=IhpkobLi8-YhaxZC (17 May 2025)

57 https://youtu.be/DYzY7-V5vxY?si=QzUpUxpMMrCyLHrI&t=6 (17 May 2025). See Doll 2021, 28–29; Doll 2017, 159–162; and Everett 1999, 348–349n180.

58 https://youtu.be/rMwKIqsfV8k?si=hG2YN-FkNtFTs_wn&t=65 (17 May 2025). See Doll 2017, 146.

ures apiece for the third and the fourth (assuming a steady tempo), resulting in a 7787 pattern where the 7s do not all match. This is hardly a straightforward instance of the saint-sweetie combo, but there are enough elements of it here to weaken this song's evidentiary value in establishing the twine's independent identity.

2 or 4 bars per line (12 total)

? ANTECEDENT (2 bars per line)

a: **[Iadd6]** *In the* **[I♭7 / 3]** *evening when the* **[IV]** *sun go* **[II7 / ♯4]** *down* **[V9]** (7?)

b: **[Iadd6]** *When there* **[I♭7 / 3]** *is nobody* **[IV]** *else a-* **[II7 / ♯4]** *-round* **[V9]** (7?)

? CONSEQUENT (4 bars per line)

cd: [^{1} **I♭7**] *She kisses me and she* [$^{\flat7}$ **I♭ (♯5)7 / 3**] *hold me tight,* [$^{6\,/\,4}$ **IV**] *and tells me "Daddy, every-* [$^{\sharp4}$ **♯ivo7**] *-thing's all right"* (8?)

ef: *That's why I* [^{5} **I**] *know* **[III7 / 7]** *yes,* **[vi]** *I know,* **[IV7]** *halle-* **[II ♭9]** *-lujah, I just* **[V11]** *love her* **[I]** *so* (7?)

Table 15: Ray Charles, "Hallelujah I Love Her So," third verse

More proof of the twine's independence can be mined in the Animals' 1964 rendition of the "House of the Rising Sun" (see Table 16).[59] The text is even less obviously a variant of the sweetie, with its lack of third-line couplet, lack of refrain,[60] and with just a single rhyme per stanza between the second and fourth lines – despite bearing a sweetie 5575 pattern and a clear saint-with-drop schema (with a minor-pentatonic bIII providing scale-degree ♭7). In an unusual move, the Animals' twining line is placed at the start of the antecedent rather than the consequent, with the scale-degree ♯$\hat{4}$ (enharmonically ♭$\hat{5}$) as the chordal seventh of ♭VI ♭7 (a common-tone German augmented-sixth chord resolving to i), and this initial twining progression is simultaneously an additional dropping progression (separate from the drop in the consequent).[61] All this said, despite its relocation and lack of sweetie text, the twine here is still in proximity to a saint-with-drop, so its identity, while distinct, would seem to be inextricably linked to the larger saint-sweetie combo.

2 bars per line (8 total)

ANTECEDENT

a: *My* [^{1} **i**] *mother* [$^{\flat7}$ **♭III**] *was a* [$^{6\,/\,4}$ **IV♭7**] *tailor* [$^{\flat6\,/\,\sharp4}$ **♭VI ♭7**] (5)

b: [^{5} **i**] *Sewed my* [**♭III**] *new blue* **[V7]** *jeans* (5)

CONSEQUENT

c: *My* [^{1} **i**] *father* [$^{\flat7}$ **♭III**] *was a* [^{6} **IV**] *gambling* [$^{\flat6}$ **♭VI**] *man* (7)

d: [^{5} **i**] *Down in* **[V7]** *New Or-* **[i]** *-leans* (5)

Table 16: The Animals, "House of the Rising Sun," second stanza

59 https://youtu.be/4-43lLKaqBQ?si=g-pcu9MSldiXPKNT&t=40 (17 May 2025)

60 The entire first stanza returns at the end, which may or may not qualify as a large refrain.

61 I discuss the saint progressions in "House of the Rising Sun" and Arlo Guthrie's 1967 "Alice's Restaurant Massacree" in Doll 2017, 182–185, but I mislabel their $\hat{1}$-$\hat{\flat7}$-$\hat{6}$ motions as "sliding" schemas and misstate that the drop is "a combination of the slide and the shrink" (ibid., 159). The sliding schema is actually $\hat{1}$-$\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$ (ibid., 153–155), with the leading tone rather than the subtonic. For a discussion of Bob Dylan's 1962 recording of "House of the Rising Sun" (see https://youtu.be/RP_caKDfoyU?si=bpPZPF5fo5uCR_if [17 May 2025]), as well as other Dylan songs with dropping or near-dropping progressions, see Rings 2013, §26–30.

A New Formal Scheme

A combination of the twine and the drop similar to the one in "House of the Rising Sun" can be found in Oscar "Buddy" Woods's "Come on Over to My House Baby" from 1938 (Table 17),[62] a song Stoia discusses multiple times.[63] Here, though, these schemas arrive at their expected position, the third line of a sweetie text commencing the consequent half of a saint progression. (Also different is Woods' fusion of scale-degrees $\flat\hat{6}$ and $\sharp\hat{4}$, which results from what sounds to me like the guitar strumming iv7 (with a dropping $\flat\hat{6}$) and the piano playing $\sharp$ivo7 (with a twining $\sharp\hat{4}$) at the words "*shifting my gears*.")[64]

ANTECEDENT: I–V
a: **[I]** *Come right over to* **[VI9]** *my house, baby,* **[II9]** *ain't nobody* **[V7]** *home but* **[I]** *me* (7)

b: *Now, won't you* **[I]** *come on right over to* **[VI9]** *my house, baby, I'm* **[II9]** *lonesome as lonesome can* **[V7]** *be* (7)

CONSEQUENT: I–IV–I–V–I
cd: *Now I* **[^{1} I]** *may look old, I may look* **[$^{\flat7}$ I$\flat$7]** *numbered in years, but* **[$^{6\,/\,4}$ IV]** *I can pull you here without* **[$^{\flat6\,/\,\sharp4}$ iv7/$\sharp$ivo7]** *shifting my gears* (8)

a: **[I]** *Come right on over to* **[VI9]** *my house, baby,* **[II9]** *ain't nobody* **[V7]** *home but* **[I]** *me* (7)

a: *That I* **[VI9]** *say,* **[II9]** *ain't nobody* **[V7]** *home but* **[I]** *me*

Table 17: Oscar "Buddy" Woods, "Come on Over to My House Baby," first stanza

But what I want to highlight is not the twine/drop but rather the harmony in the other lines, the quick chromatic circle-of-fifths progression VI9-II9-V7-I, which is stated four times (including during an extra, partial fifth lyrical line, which is a repetition of a bit of the tail refrain, something that occurs occasionally in sweetie stanzas.) Although we already encountered a similar progression in the fourth lines of "Hallelujah I Love Her So," Woods's progression saturates every lyrical line except the third. All the chordal thirds in this progression are major (often combined with minor sevenths or further extensions), forming a chain of secondary dominants that I call the "ragtime" version of the "steady" schema (the steady schema being the rotatable root series 6-2-5-1).[65] Songs like "Come on Over to My House Baby" are sometimes labeled with the stylistic term "ragtime blues."

Stoia explicitly ties this chromatic VI-II-V-I progression (the "ragtime-steady" schema) to the Sweet Thing scheme, and in particular to: the ending-accent pattern 7787, the word-choice pattern R(A/B)/CD/R(A) (or a/b/cd/a), the periodic progression with chromatically inflected subdominant (the saint-with-drop or saint-with-twine), and a melodic design that he dubs the "Pirate," which is an aa'ba(') form wherein the b ascends to a high-point before descending into a lower register.[66] This combination identified by Stoia, to which I have only really added the possibility of a twining schema instead of a drop, is something I myself can recognize as a proper *song scheme* – a "scheme [that] has gener-

62 https://youtu.be/bbm8ex8e9Dc?si=saf34Lphsh9CfXhr&t=6 (17 May 2025)

63 See Stoia 2021, 147–148, 171–172, 187–188, 224, and 226. The text in my Table 17 is taken from Stoia; as with many old blues lyrics, it is difficult to make them out. Stoia's guess is as good as mine.

64 Stoia (2021, 188 and 226) transcribes this moment as "iv."

65 Doll 2017, 111–113. When minor sevenths are present in the ragtime steady progression, they often yield prominent descents of $\hat{5}$-$\sharp\hat{4}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{3}$ and $\sharp\hat{1}$-$\hat{1}$-$\hat{7}$. I do not recognize $\sharp\hat{1}$-$\hat{1}$-$\hat{7}$ as a schema, but I dub $\hat{5}$-$\sharp\hat{4}$-$\hat{4}$ the "slouch" (ibid., 146–149).

66 Stoia 2021, 224–227. Stoia calls the Pirate a "small aba form," with the first "a" covering the first two lyrical lines, each with similar melodic starts.

ated a large group of songs."[67] Stoia considers the Sweet Thing scheme itself to be a song scheme, but I find it too nebulous as theorized. By contrast, this more specific combination of textual and musical elements (although still subject to significant variation) is more commensurate with song schemes like the 12-bar blues and others Stoia himself describes elsewhere (such as the "Trouble in Mind," or the "Key to the Highway").[68] This more specific combination still cannot quite generate an entire song, merely a stanza's worth of material; but set strophically, or as a section within an AABA or verse/chorus form, it is no different from something like the 12-bar blues, which likewise does not prescribe the form of a whole song. The saint-sweetie combo itself might already warrant formal acknowledgement as a song scheme, but this more specific combination of elements definitely does, and so I will call it the *ain't-a-saint* scheme, in honor of the salacious imagery typical of its lyrics. Table 18 provides a brief inventory of examples, largely culled from Stoia's monograph. By definition, a song that features the ain't-a-saint will simultaneously involve the saint, a nominal paradox I find appropriate given the sacred and profane lineages that Stoia argues funneled into the Sweet Thing.

Blind Willie McTell, "Come on Around to My House Mama" (1929)*
Memphis Jug Band, "Got a Letter from My Darlin'" (1930)**
Memphis Minnie, "Ain't No Use Trying to Tell On Me" (1933)
Memphis Minnie, "Selling My Porkchops" (1935)
Lil Johnson, "Honey, You're So Good to Me" (1936)
Robert Johnson, "They're Red Hot" (1937)
Barrel House Annie, "If It Don't Fit (Don't Force It)" (1937)***
Oscar "Buddy" Woods, "Come on Over to My House Baby" (1938)
Blind Boy Fuller, "What's That Smells Like Fish" (1938)
Dumbo, "When I See a Elephant Fly," (1941)****
Big Bill Broonzy, "Keep Your Hands Off Her" (1949)
The Mothers of Invention, "Brown Shoes Don't Make It" (1967)
Arlo Guthrie, "Alice's Restaurant Massacree" (1967)
"Weird Al" Yankovic, "Mr. Frump in the Iron Lung" (1983)*****
NOFX, "Buggley Eyes" (1992)*****

*Doesn't consistently play the VI ♭7
**Some of the chords are hard to hear
***Sometimes plays ii instead of II
****Only one ragtime-steady
*****Multiple divergences

Table 18: Ain't-a-saint examples (for links to the recordings on YouTube, see the Appendix below)

Even within these ain't-a-saint examples, we see variation, as would be expected of any song scheme. The most common are melodic. Indeed, the Pirate design is itself rather vague (and thus I have mostly ignored it in this article), and songs do not always comport with the b's (third line) ascending-then-descending plan.[69] Other variations are harmonic. Woods' song, as mentioned, offers both the drop and the twine at the same time. In Barrel House Annie's 1937 "If It Don't Fit (Don't Force It)"[70] (not a Stoia example), the chords display variations across stanzas, although they do consistently offer two – or nearly two –

67 Ibid., 2.

68 Stoia 2013.

69 Stoia (2021, 223n10, 225–226, and 238) briefly mentions the possibility of a "break" in the accompaniment, where chords are articulated mostly on the downbeats, as a kind of substitute for the Pirate's ascent-then-descent in the third lyrical line. He does not elaborate much on this point. Such breaks appeared in my Tables 7, 11, 15, 17, and 19.

70 https://youtu.be/omisgWq0rWY?si=c3o4xvRx-T_f2GZe&t=5 (17 May 2025)

iterations of the ragtime-steady schema for every relevant lyrical line, each time rotating the schema to start on an extended II or ii (although with the diatonic minor ii, the progression is technically no longer the "ragtime" version of the schema; see Table 19). More significantly, Annie's third lyrical line employs a dropping $\hat{1}$-$\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$-$^{\flat}\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$ combined not only with a twining $\hat{1}$-$^{\flat}\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$/$\hat{4}$-$^{\sharp}\hat{4}$-$\hat{5}$ but also with a twirling $\hat{5}$-$^{\sharp}\hat{5}$-$\hat{6}$/$\hat{4}$-$^{\sharp}\hat{4}$-$\hat{5}$ as well as a "teasing" $\hat{5}$-$^{\sharp}\hat{6}$-$\hat{6}$-$^{\flat}\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$ (yet another meta-schema), which is occasionally used to color the consequent half of the saint.[71] All these scale-degree motions arrive early at their shared destination, $\hat{5}$, at the end of the third lyrical line, with a quick turnaround V11. When long meta-schemas are combined like this, their audibility often diminishes (as does the probability that any one transcription will be entirely accurate – mine included). But regardless of how well we can hear any given one, it should be clear that the chromaticism in this space is susceptible to variation.

4 bars per line (16 total)

ANTECEDENT

a: **[II9]** *If it don't* **[V11]** *fit don't* **[I(i)]** *force* **[VI ♭7]** *it* **[ii7]** *'cause you'll make* **[V7]** *your mama* **[I]** *mad* **[VIadd6 / 5]** (7)

b: **[ii7]** *If it don't* **[V11]** *fit don't* **[I / 3]** *force* **[VI(♭9)]** *it* **[V / 2]** *'cause you'll only* **[II9]** *get in* **[V(♭9)♭11]** *bad*

CONSEQUENT

cd: **[$^{1\,/\,5}$ I]** *Changed the lock 'cause you* [$^{\sharp7\,/\,\sharp5}$ **III(♭5)7]** *stayed out till four, your* [$^{6\,/\,4}$ **IV♭7]** *key didn't fit you tried to* [$^{\flat6\,/\,\sharp4}$ **♭VI(♭7)♭9]** *break down the door* [^{5} **V11]** (8)

a: **[II9]** *If it don't* **[V(♭9)♭11]** *fit don't* **[Iadd6 / 3]** *force* **[VI(7)add6]** *it* **[ii7]** *'cause you'll make* **[V7]** *your mama* **[I]** *mad* (7)

Table 19: Barrel House Annie, "If It Don't Fit (Don't Force It)," first stanza

Unlike the saint, the ain't-a-saint seems not to have lasted much beyond the 1930s, with later sightings tending to be nostalgic or otherwise steeped in retro-referential irony. This is to say, at some point in history, the ain't-a-saint became a cliché, and moved into the realm of the topos, something distinct and recognizable and available to be evoked for expressive purposes in other contexts.[72] This explains its appearance in the minstrel number "When I See a Elephant Fly [*sic*]" from the crows' scene in Disney's *Dumbo* (1941),[73] in Arlo Guthrie's absurdist protest anthem "Alice's Restaurant Massacree [*sic*]" (1967), in the satirical "Brown Shoes Don't Make It" (also 1967) by the Mothers of Invention (during the "*smother my daughter in chocolate syrup*" portion),[74] in the NOFX's prosaically sexist "Buggley Eyes" (1992),[75] and in "Weird Al" Yankovic's darkly comedic "Mr. Frump in the

71 Doll 2017, 143–145 and 183. For a simple saint-with-tease example (without the complication of the drop, twine, and twirl), see the third lyrical line of the Dave Clark Five's 1964 "Because" (see https://youtu.be/nuKdJmOZLN4?si=JGMBC9BiKqluiWO5&t=6 [17 May 2025]) "*It's* [^{5} I] *right, it's* [$^{\sharp5}$ Iaug] *right, to* [^{6} IV] *feel the way I* [$^{\flat6}$ iv] *do, be-* [^{5} I] *-cause…*" This is not a sweetie text, however.

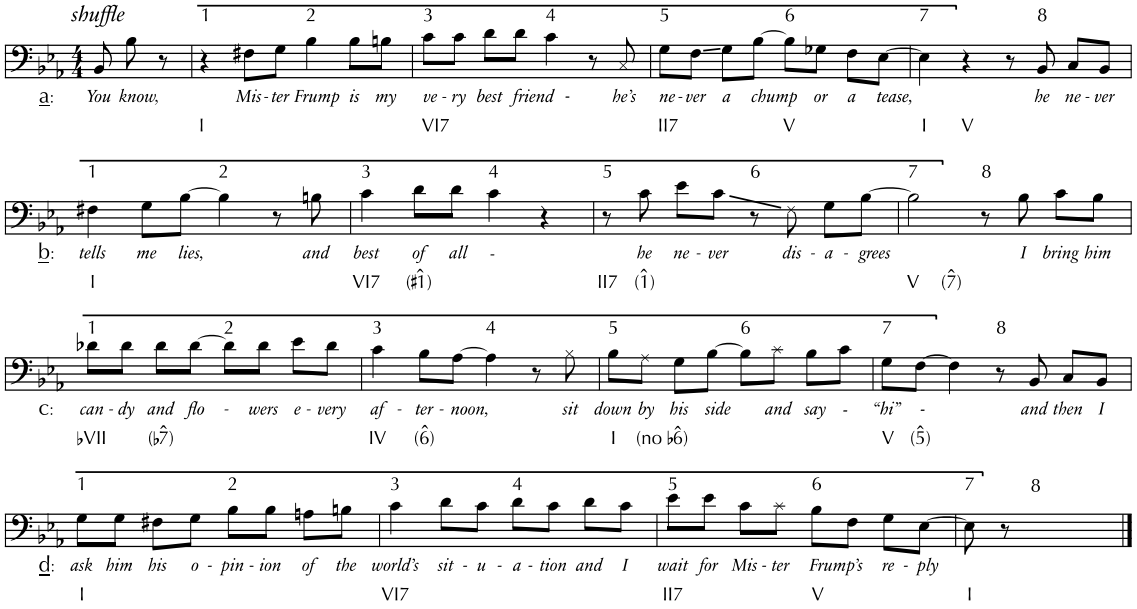
72 On topoi, see Mirka 2014. Although Stoia does not say it explicitly, my sense is that he interprets the Sweet Thing's patterns ("musical currency," Stoia 2021, 227) as accruing associations over time, and that these associations might be subconsciously played upon by musicians and recognized by audiences.

73 White performer Cliff Edwards—most famous as the voice of Jiminy Cricket in 1940's Pinocchio—sings the lead vocal line in "When I See a Elephant Fly," accompanied by Black singers Hall Johnson, James Baskett, Nick Stewart, and Jim Carmichael.

74 Frank Zappa (1989, 166), leader of the Mothers of Invention, is explicit about his use of "stock modules" comprising "Archetypal American Musical Icons" that should directly affect one's interpretation of proximate lyrics. See also Doll 2011 and Smith 1995.

75 Thanks to John Warren for this example.

Iron Lung" (1983). Yankovic's idiosyncratic second verse is shown in Example 2,[76] with its normative saint, its three ragtime-steady progressions, and its Pirate melodic design (the first two lines start the same, the third line descends from a high point E♭, and the fourth returns to a version of the opening). These are juxtaposed with an unexpected 7777 ending-accent pattern, a meandering a/b/c/d word-choice pattern whose third-line couplet does not rhyme ("*afternoon*" and "*hi*") and which is harmonized in falling fourths (♭VII-IV-I-V), and only a hint of a consequent dropping schema ♭7 (D♭, "*candy*") to 6̂ (C, "*afternoon*") that is actually part of a larger fully chromatic harmonic descent initiated in the second line's VI7 and ending on IV (♯1̂-1̂-7̂-♭7̂-6̂). Moreover, Yankovic's other stanzas are half the size of this second stanza, and do not come close to offering a fully realized saint or sweetie; it is as though there are large quotation marks around this '80s ain't-a-saint stanza.



Example 2: "Weird Al" Yankovic, "Mr. Frump in the Iron Lung," second stanza

Outro

Given the close connection between the sweetie scheme and saint schema, and especially their fusion in the saint-and-sweetie combo and the ain't-a-saint scheme, it is worth reiterating that they are distinct structures. Neither one *necessarily* entails the other; in some cases, one version of a song might use just one structure while another version uses both. This modular relationship might seem strange to readers more familiar with vocal music in the Western classical tradition, where there is so much emphasis placed on text-music correspondence. With that mindset, we might consider the swapping out of one of these components to be borderline blasphemy, even if that attitude is not wholly compatible with the classical repertory given prominent counterexamples like Handel's religious English substitutions for originally secular Italian texts. At any rate, in the popular sphere, text-music correspondence cannot be taken for granted, or at the very least, often operates at a more generic level.

76 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2C-Hwr3ozk&t=32s (17 May 2025)

Song schemes like the ain't-a-saint, which closely consider music and text in tandem, are powerful analytical templates through which to view the popular repertory. Defining and applying normative structures requires care, of course, but it is a challenge that I believe we as analysts are collectively up for. The theorization of more such song schemes will only enhance our understanding of all the types of music we value, whether they are – in Stoia's words – "devout Protestant songs" or, at the other extreme, "songs about fornicating 'rascals.'"[77] Our musical culture is replete with saints and sinners; the profession of music theory would do well with more schemers.

Appendix

Blind Willie McTell, "Come on Around to My House Mama" (1929). https://youtu.be/R8xGFoTCFBU?si=MfOVEUOcw8xhVHH0&t=7 (17 May 2025)

Blind Willie McTell, "Kind Mama" (1929). https://youtu.be/rU0TBxJuwTU?si=iBheFvrvzd257xT6&t=4 (17 May 2025)

Memphis Jug Band, "Got a Letter from My Darlin'" (1930). https://youtu.be/kWyOAA5lxPE?si=2QbpmSVTYfJUZXc0&t=21 (17 May 2025)

Memphis Minnie, "Ain't No Use Trying to Tell On Me" (1933). https://youtu.be/4yJjb7eNBxk?si=1WC2jXjEggHIW55j&t=10 (17 May 2025)

Memphis Minnie, "Selling My Porkchops" (1935). https://youtu.be/EqynI1s-WoM?si=10bFLF3TuacLiWI6&t=7 (17 May 2025)

Lil Johnson, "Honey, You're So Good to Me" (1936). https://youtu.be/86lmN7jsrv8?si=RrzzZvq1gcfIr_Qb&t=5 (17 May 2025)

Barrel House Annie, "If It Don't Fit (Don't Force It)" (1937). https://youtu.be/omisgWq0rWY?si=c3o4xvRx-T_f2GZe&t=5 (17 May 2025)

Robert Johnson, "They're Red Hot" (1937). https://youtu.be/G-83fZi-JB8?si=EXgS4Heu4h0vp13O&t=4 (17 May 2025)

Blind Boy Fuller, "What's That Smells Like Fish" (1938). https://youtu.be/WY7PSvJ1430?si=xPp2DLbv6iRzAQ5g&t=23 (17 May 2025)

Oscar "Buddy" Woods, "Come on Over to My House Baby" (1938). https://youtu.be/bbm8ex8e9Dc?si=saf34Lphsh9CfXhr&t=6 (17 May 2025)

Sister Rosetta Tharpe, "This Train" (1939). https://youtu.be/AoBdCs-_aRc?si=D3QTJ_XIpnjiBYRa&t=8 (17 May 2025)

Dumbo, "When I See a Elephant Fly" (1941). https://youtu.be/_v2exWrsGOc?si=xHhBMP6c6EkA7k7W&t=17 (17 May 2025)

Sister Rosetta Tharpe, "This Train" (1947, with Sam Price Trio). https://youtu.be/FDpuKZwM83Y?si=7BXkB1pIdDKvsDQ2&t=5 (17 May 2025)

Big Bill Broonzy, "Keep Your Hands Off Her" (1949). https://youtu.be/wkJhF3LieXU?si=xGpJjepcgCkp7AEW&t=8 (17 May 2025)

Bobby Darin, "Splish Splash" (1958). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4R53SaiFW9c (17 May 2025)

77 Stoia 2021, 209.

Ray Charles, "Talkin' 'Bout You" (1958). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqsgCNnbs2k (17 May 2025)

The Beatles, "I Saw Her Standing There" (1963). https://youtu.be/oxwAB3SECtc?si=eVI0ufBjxUv7sn3F&t=6 (17 May 2025)

Bob Dylan, "Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance" (1963). https://youtu.be/l9uBYOWD_fo?si=Nlb4mf51UpSQBfzv&t=4 (17 May 2025)

Arlo Guthrie, "Alice's Restaurant Massacree" (1967). https://youtu.be/WaKIX6oaSLs?si=FPKH7kAIijnDHzVj&t=973 (17 May 2025)

The Mothers of Invention, "Brown Shoes Don't Make It" (1967). https://youtu.be/oNULHGsy3SE?si=btOmF83faYpjPttE&t=332 (17 May 2025)

"Weird Al" Yankovic, "Mr. Frump in the Iron Lung" (1983). https://youtu.be/l2C-Hwr3ozk?si=Y1g15K0TF1Ct86bQ&t=32 (17 May 2025)

NOFX, "Buggley Eyes" (1992). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWt5Al-Xphg (17 May 2025)

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