

Notes on Form

John Paul Ito

Distinguishing between Modulation and Tonicization in Cadences

Like many modulating periods, the one in Example 8 modulates to the dominant, and this creates potential confusion. Often composers make half cadences more emphatic by approaching the V chord with its own dominant – the chord that would be the dominant if the V chord were actually a I chord. When this happens, we speak of a **tonicized half cadence**. The question will then arise, are we hearing a full cadence in the key of the dominant or a tonicized half cadence? Do we hear scale degrees in terms of the original tonic, or has a convincing modulation occurred that leads us to change the scale degrees that we assign to the various pitch classes?

You will want to use your ear in figuring this out, listening for the scale-degree functions of pitch classes. In Example 8, E, the leading tone in the old key, is a good pitch-class to pay attention to. In the melody at the ends of mm. 1 and 3, it is clearly heard as the leading tone, and if it is heard as the leading tone at the end of m. 3, we can be sure that the chord on the downbeat of m. 4 will also be heard in the tonic key. In measures 6 and 7, though, it is *not* heard as the leading tone – we don't have the sense in those measures of an unresolved leading tone in the melodic line. This is a clear sign that we have modulated away from tonic harmony.

Though your ear will eventually be a fully reliable guide, your ear may need some help in learning the distinction. There are a few more objective cues that can help.

1) The first cue has to do with how long we have been hearing new scale degrees. It takes some time to really modulate to a new key, and accidentals thrown in at the last moment won't create a sense of modulation.

In Example 8, the half cadence in m. 4 was lightly tonicized; the V chord in F major, a C major triad, is preceded by a chord that includes B-natural, which would be ti if the C major chord were the tonic triad. But the B-natural first occurs only one quarter-note beat before the cadential V chord, and we had heard B-flats just two beats earlier, in the first quarter-note beat of measure 3. This isn't nearly enough time to effect a modulation, so we can be confident that this is a tonicized half cadence.

Approaching the cadence in m. 8, in contrast, we find B-naturals in each of the preceding three measures, with no B-flats since m. 3. This supports hearing a modulation, making the cadence in m. 8 a PAC in the dominant, not a tonicized HC in the tonic.

2) The second cue has to do with the strength of the borrowed V chord, primarily a matter of its inversion. In m. 3 of Example 8, there isn't actually a V chord at all – the chord that precedes the cadential dominant is a diminished triad in first inversion, the

chord that would be $\text{vii}^{\circ}6$ if the C major chord were the tonic chord. This voice-leading chord would never be used as a dominant in a cadence, so we have a second reason to be confident that the cadence in m. 4 is a tonicized half cadence, not a full cadence in the key of the dominant.

When we compare the second cadence, we see a root-position dominant-seventh chord, V7 in the key of the dominant. Again, this supports hearing the second cadence as a PAC in the dominant.

Note: The first cue is more reliable than the second. You *will* sometimes find tonicized half cadences employing the dominant chord's own root position V7. But it is much more unusual to find a tonicized half cadence that has been preceded by several measures in which the scale of the dominant has been used consistently.