Reading Between the Lines: Narrativity in Beethoven's Piano Sonatas

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Abstract

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Music

Beethoven's musical innovations in his piano sonatas have their analogues in the literary works in his library. Among them are the Greek classics, Shakespeare, and the early German novels. A narrative approach to analyzing Beethoven's sonatas will show a compelling connection between music and literature. The first of my two-part analysis of Beethoven's sonatas will show how Beethoven uses musical gestures and motivic unity to create a sense of plot progression, character development, and setting. The second part will focus on the structural elements of Beethoven's sonatas as they relate to plot structure. He recognizes and exploits the narrative potential in the structures of sonata form—exposition, development, recapitulation/conclusion—as well as nesting them into a larger, unified framework within a multi-movement sonata. These analyses will show how Beethoven's changes to the form were not solely for innovation's sake, but as a means to better express his unique ideas that best fit the narrative mold. In doing so, the performer will have an additional perspective upon which to base his interpretive decisions.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

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Chapter 1

"You know that in the German theatre each of us is free to experiment. Today you can be lavish with scenery and all the furnishings. You have sun and moon at your disposal and stars in plenty. Water, fire rocks, beasts, birds – we're not short of any. So on this little stage of ours you can run through the whole of creation and with fair speed make your way from heaven through the world to hell."

-Goethe, from *Faust*

Beethoven's piano sonatas continue to be a pivotal collection of works in the history of music. Much of his musical innovations originate in the piano sonatas. So, it is expected that the sonatas continue to draw the attention of scholars, musicians, and music enthusiasts. This fascination produced an immense body of scholarly literature about many aspects of the sonatas, with some dating within decades after Beethoven's death. The style and focus of these studies have changed over generations. Romantic composers and writers of the period from the 19th to the mid-20th century, heavily colored their observations with affective language. Here is a passage from E.T.A. Hoffman's influential "Beethoven's Instrumental Music":

> "…Beethoven's instrumental music discloses to us the realm of the tragic and the illimitable. Glowing beams pierce the deep night of this realm and we are conscious of gigantic shadows which, alternately increasing and decreasing, close in on us nearer and nearer, destroying us but not destroying the pain of endless longing in which is engulfed and lost every passion aroused by the exulting sounds. And only through this very pain in which love, hope, and joy, consumed but not destroyed, burst forth from our hearts in the deep-voiced harmony of all the passions, do we go on living and become hypnotised seers of visions!"[1]

[1] Arthur Ware Locke and E. T. A. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music: Translated from E. T. A. Hoffmann's 'Kreisleriana' with an Introductory Note." *The Musical Quarterly* 3, No. 1 (Jan., 1917): 128.

The style and approach of the scholarship starts to shift after the turn of the century, increasingly becoming more objective and scientific. These two methods have their own advantages and disadvantages. As research literature trended away from subjectivity to objectivity, the sense of the emotive style as "obsolete" or "outdated" became more prevalent, as scholars increasingly favored the scientific approach. The excesses of this approach produced analytical products that upheld the primacy of motives and note patterns at the expense of extra-musical meaning.[2] Edward T. Cone critiqued Edmund Gurney, who practiced this musical approach, "…yet the example of his healthily hedonistic attention to the musical surface should stand as a constant reminder that there are alternatives to the rapt admiration of bloodless formulas and jejune diagrams…"[3]

Cone is part of a subset of theorists who expounded on the narrative approach of musical analysis. The movement gained steam between 1987 and 1994, but it was gradually dismissed shortly afterwards.[4] That kind of thinking had a resurgence about a decade later, thanks to the works of theorists like Byron Almén, Michael Klein, and Vera Micznik[5]. Their work hinges on the similarities between the mechanisms of literary storytelling and the mechanisms of musical experience. The applications of that theory involved works by Chopin, Mahler, and even Beethoven. However, none has gone deeply into the relationship between the birth of the novel and its effects on the compositional behaviors of musicians.

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[2] Byron Almén, "Narrative Archetypes: A Critique, Theory and Method of Narrative Analysis," *Journal of Music Theory* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 1.
[3] Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968), 98.
[4] Byron Almén, "Narrative Archetypes: A Critique, Theory and Method of Narrative Analysis," *Journal of Music Theory* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 1.
[5] Byron Almén, "Narrative Archetypes: A Critique, Theory, and Method of Narrative Analysis," 47, no. 1 (Spring 2003); Michael Klein, "Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative, " *Music Theory Spectrum* 26, no. 1 (2004); Vera Micznik, "Music and Narrative Revisted: Degrees of Narrativity in Beethoven and Mahler," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 126, no. 2 (2001).

Beethoven, perhaps the most pivotal figure in western music history, casts a long shadow on whole generations of composers from the 19th century to the present. None of his contemporaries' works equal the amount and effectiveness of the innovations found in his music. How was one man able to continuously produce works with such profundity and novelty throughout his life? Genius alone is not able produce that kind of output, but only one that is fed by imagination. Einstein once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution."[6] It behooves the performing musician to continuously exercise the imagination, especially when work of Beethoven's is the object of interpretation. Dry motivic analysis only enlightens the musician of the important structural integrity of a piece, but it is the imagination that endows each part of that structure with meaning. The effectiveness of a piece does not rely solely on the simple act of playing the right succession of notes and motives. It is how well the performer convinces the audience that they are listening to a story, not just a sequence of tones.

We know of Beethoven's passion for the written word. There is an ongoing effort to reconstruct his library of about 200 books. Among them were the works of William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the Greek classics of Cicero and Euripedes, and a substantial set of philosophic literature.[7] Based on this small sample, his imagination was constantly transported into different worlds. His thoughts were frequently reflecting on the metaphysical. It would be extremely foolish to assume that his staff paper escaped the influence

[6] Jeff Nilsson, "Albert Einstein: 'Imagination Is More Important Than Knowledge,'" *The Saturday Evening Post*, March 20, 2010.
[7] Beethoven-Haus, "Reconstruction of Beethoven's Library," The Beethoven-Haus Bonn Association, https://www.beethoven.de/en/library (accessed October 5, 2020).

of his books. I posit that the experimental art form of the early novels informs the experimental quality of Beethoven's works, particular his piano sonatas.

The sonatas best demonstrate this connection because the piano, for Beethoven, was the instrument with which he was most comfortable. He was the leading keyboard virtuoso of his time. The extreme difficulties present in the piano sonatas throughout all three periods of his career has not dulled, even in today's pianistic standards. Given his skill as a pianist, it was natural for him to use the piano sonatas as laboratories wherein he tested his original ideas before showcasing them in the larger symphonic forms, which were considered the more serious form by composers and critics during his lifetime. Brendel describes the sonatas very well,

> "First, they represent the whole development of a genius, from his beginnings to the threshold of the late quartets…Secondly, there is not an inferior work among them…Thirdly, Beethoven does not repeat himself in his sonatas; each work, each movement is a new organism."[8]

In the following discussions, I will demonstrate how the various aspects of form, motive, development, and motivic unity in the piano sonatas relate very neatly with the narrative elements and structures of a novel.

[8] Alfred Brendel, *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 38.

Part I

Narrative Elements

"I sank into deep meditation: my discovery made me both more satisfied, and less so, than before. After a little, it first struck me that I yet comprehended nothing: and here I was right; for the connection of the parts with each other was entirely unknown to me, and every thing depends on that."

- Goethe, from *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*

Chapter 2

Characters

Op. 10 no. 3

Characters naturally arise in the act of storytelling. An action or event always points towards the object or actor. In music, affect coupled with gesture automatically assumes a source of the emotion. The challenge for the composer is to animate that source into a convincing character with the same dynamic behavior as one would find in a narrative. Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 10 No. 3, contains motives that effectively convey a sense of interacting characters through gestures and contrast. Like literary characters, they are subject to development and change. The sum of the developments determines the outcome, but may not necessarily follow the expectations established from the piece's outset. The following discussion will focus on the evolution of the characters in Beethoven's Op. 10 no. 3, and how Beethoven creates—through character development—a musical form of Tragicomedy

The main character of the narrative that is op. 10 no. 3 appears as the half-step motive between D and C-sharp in the first measure of the exposition (Figure 1). Dynamics, tempo, articulation, and harmony together create a jovial atmosphere. The mischievous nature of the character's initial theme, that I will refer to as Theme A, is illustrated by sudden dynamic outbursts and constant ceasing of momentum, minimizing any sense of predictability. Robin Goodfellow, also known as Puck from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream,* comes to mind when listening to this theme's progression throughout the sonata:

Thou speakest aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And "Tailer" cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole choir hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.[9]

He is ever present in various guises throughout all the four movements, forcing unexpected

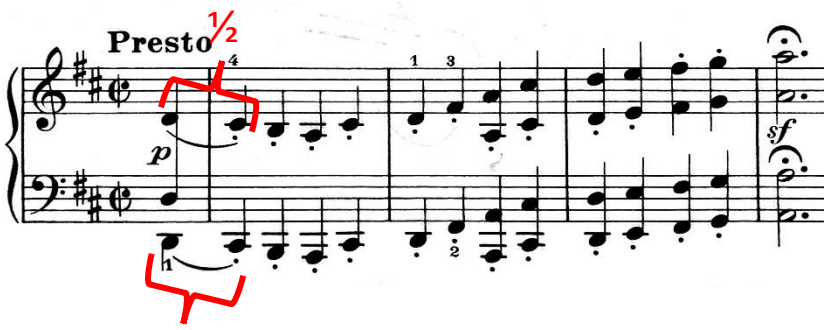


Figure 1 Op. 10 no. 3, Mvmt. I, mm. 1-4

change in the piece's direction. The second movement's angst interrupts the playful atmosphere of the first movement. The brash third-movement trio rudely dispels the previous section's *dolce*

[9] Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* - Act I, Scene 2.

"Menuetto." His mischief comes to the fore in the fourth-movement "Rondo," where his tricks constantly foil the development of the secondary theme.

The second character that I will refer to as Theme B presents itself in stark contrast to Theme A's raucous nature (Figure 2). The tonality shifts to a darker minor mode, b-minor, but still has some of the forward energy as Theme A. It flows more continuously, lacking the obstruction from the fermatas that characterize Theme A. Its texture is mostly homophonic as opposed to the opening theme's evolution from monophony to homorhythmic to polyphonic, then to a varied version of the initial monophony. After measure 30 when Theme B completes its first 8-bar statement, the remainder of the exposition (mm. 31-123) consists of the dramatic interplay between the two opposing characters.

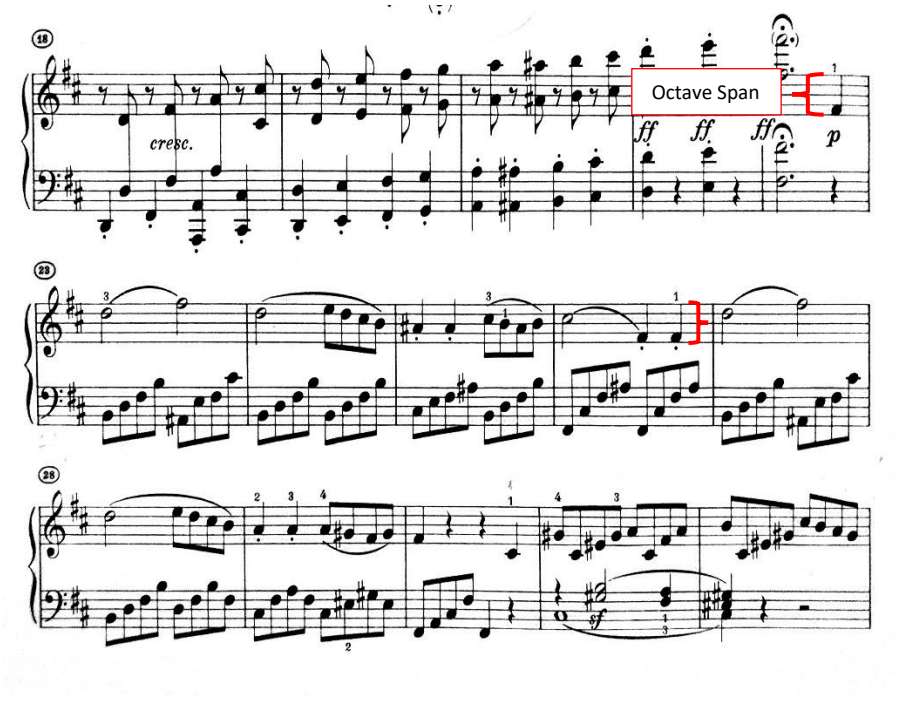


Figure 2 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt 1, mm. 18-32

The two themes never show up in their original form from mm. 31-123. Instead, we hear paraphrases or hints of their original selves where each of their respective qualities elicit changes

within the contexts of their appearances. The first conversation between the two voices occur in measure 31. The right hand keeps Theme B present with a variation of the original left-hand accompanying material. Beethoven offsets it by an eighth-note, moving the characteristic leap down to a weaker part of the measure. Theme A rudely interrupts Theme B with its sforzando entrance of the descending fragment of his theme. Seeing the futility of its interruptions, Theme A tries again with the ascending portion of itself in measure 33. His attempts finally take hold in measure 38 once Theme B transforms from a predominantly broken chord figure to a completely scalar one as if to indulge Theme A. A back-and-forth ensues leaving both parties displeased to the point where Theme A forcibly takes control of the conversation with a significant expansion of his characteristic Mannheim rocket, deepening the lower limit to E^3 in measure 47 and raising the upper limit to E^6 in measure 51.

After attaining the upper hand, Theme A continues in a relatively calmer tone, in measure 53, with its more recognizable but still incomplete version of itself, the diminution of the descending 4th motive from the first measure. The left-hand accompaniment here is actually a contorted version of itself, and will later be the form of the 4th movement main theme (Figure 3).

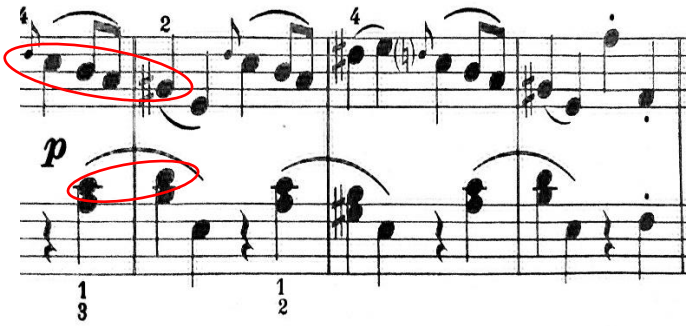


Figure 3 Op. 10 No. 3, 1st Mvmt., mm. 53-56

The C-sharp to D movement is the retrograde of the first two notes of the right hand. In the fourth movement, the left-hand motive will undergo a diminution into eighth-notes (See page 22) Theme B manifests itself as the opposing staccato octaves in measures 56-59. These octaves are based on the interval that the theme inhabited in measures 22-30. This argument moves towards an impasse dramatized by a measured caesura in measures 65-66. The disagreement between the two come back, but the roles reverse with Theme B becoming more insistent with its sforzando (Figure 4).

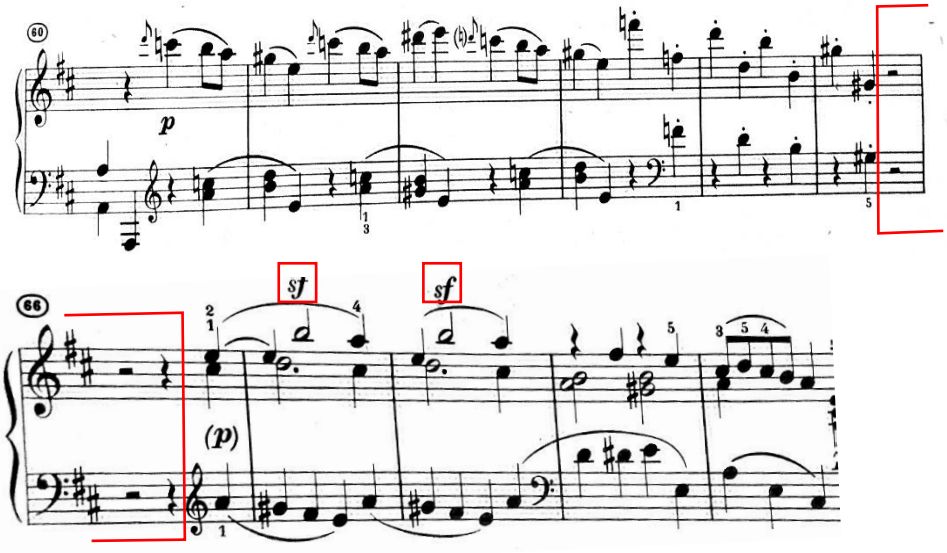


Figure 4 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 1, mm. 60-70.

In contrast to their first meeting in measure 30, frustration now takes hold of Theme B with powerful sforzando chords that constantly shift in direction in the right hand of measures 87 to 93 (Figure 5 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 1, mm. 85-96). These shifts in direction identify the right-hand figure as Theme B. The recognizability of Theme B here is not as obvious by itself but

when juxtaposed with the relative unidirectionality of the left-hand octaves, characteristic of Theme A, the case can be easily made. This apparently

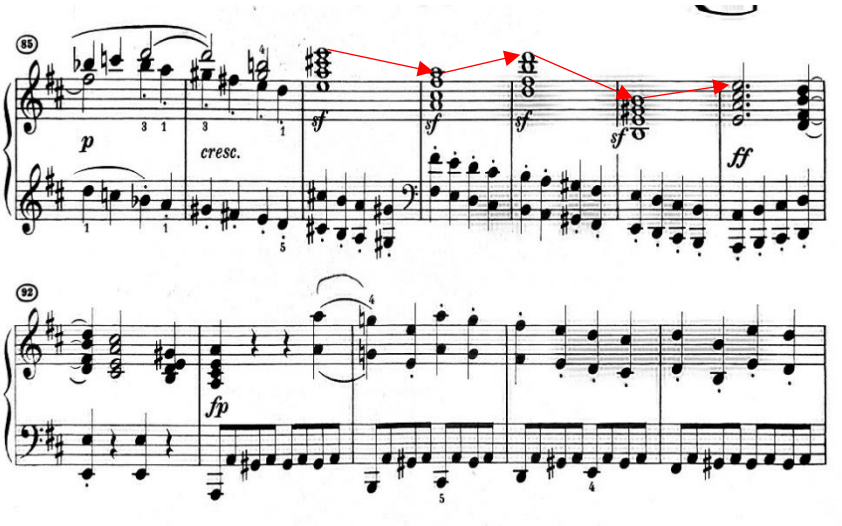


Figure 5 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 1, mm. 85-96

has a significant effect on Theme A as he withdraws to a very confined space of a half-step as the argument simmers down to a piano dynamic. Theme A initially responds patiently but gradually loses control in m. 101 (Figure 6). The chorale-like texture acts as a respite from the

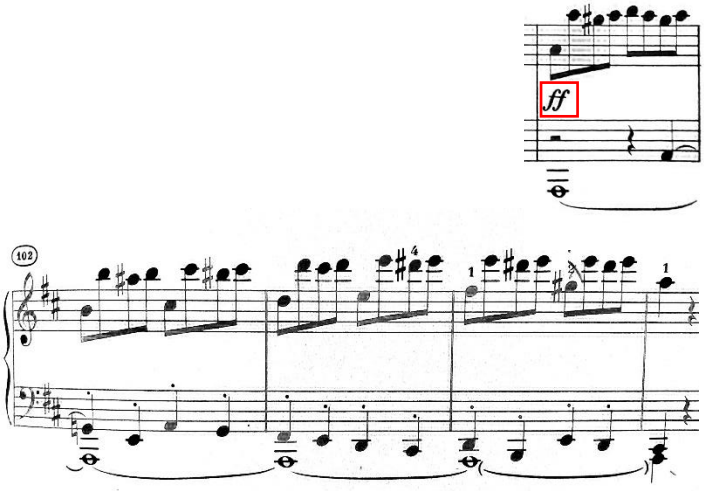


Figure 6 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 1, mm. 101-105

tension but the indelible damage between the two themes continues to exist, a tension that will inevitably flare back up.

Like the beginning of the exposition, Theme A opens a more turbulent development section. Four beats of silence separate the exposition and the development, after which Theme A returns sneakily in a different guise. Concealed under a pianissimo dynamic, it morphs into a conniving parallel minor (Figure 7).

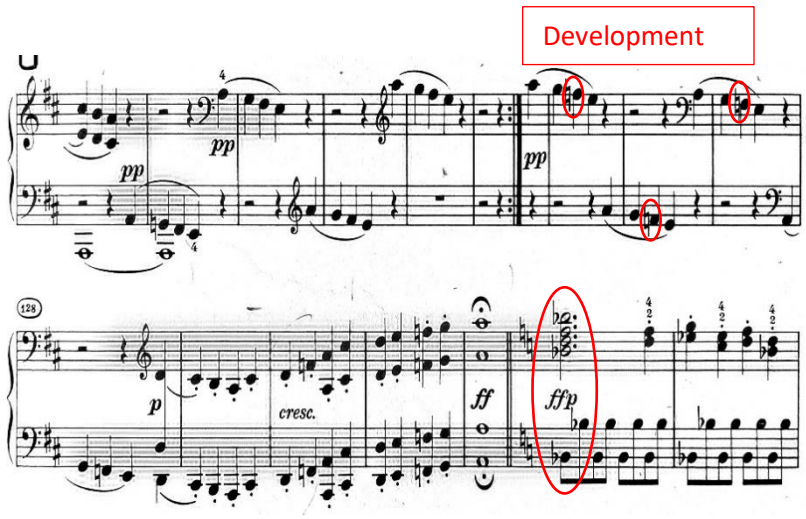


Figure 7 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 1, mm. 119-134.

This foreshadows the daring boldness that immediately follows, the surprising and rowdy modulation to B-flat major. The fortissimo-piano on beat one amplifies the chicanery of this move. The right hand ushers in Theme B, whose form becomes as unpredictable as the key itself. It is the diminution of the thematic variant in measures 87-90. This modulation increases the level of intensity and radical mutation of the characters, particularly Theme B. Theme A has not gone unscathed from the move as it becomes more chromatic. Theme B's identifying characteristics are stretched even further in measures 145-149 (Figure 8). The rising half-step

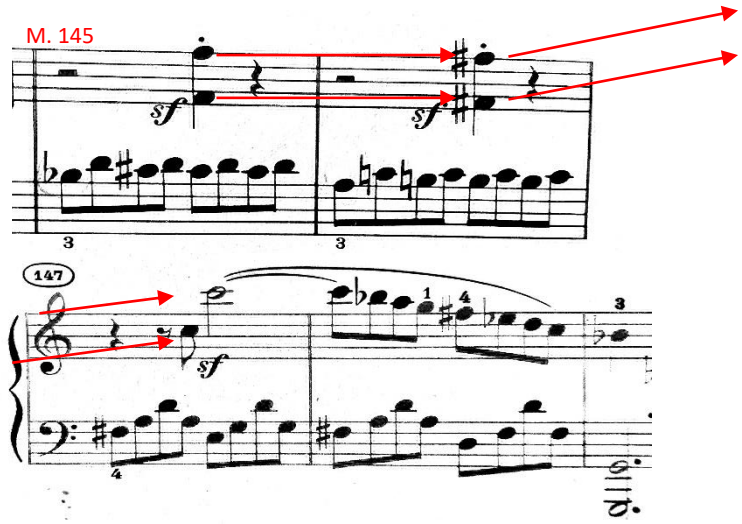


Figure 8 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 1, mm. 145-149.

and the following leap relate to the reverse statement of the notes from measures 25 to 27. The A#, on the downbeat of m. 25, moves to an ornamented B in beat three of the same measure. The downward leap of a fifth in measure 27 correspond to the compound leap up a fifth in measure 147. Further disintegration of Theme B ensues sonically and visually in measures 157-183 when Theme B's characteristic leap stretches beyond multiple octaves between its bass turn figure and the leap to the upper treble clef (Figure 9). The relentless disintegration continues until it is no longer possible at measures 178-183 when Theme B devolves to primal pointillism.

The recapitulation progresses predictably for the most part, but Theme A—grudgingly—diverts the direction away from the harmonic progression that typically occurs in Sonata Form recapitulations. Starting on the upbeat to measure 194, Theme A carries on as if to repeat what it has done in the beginning of the exposition, but the left hand defiantly continues up the chromatic scale towards a half cadence in e-minor. This forces Theme B to bring order back to the fold by modulating back to the home key of D major in measure 233. The stability of the

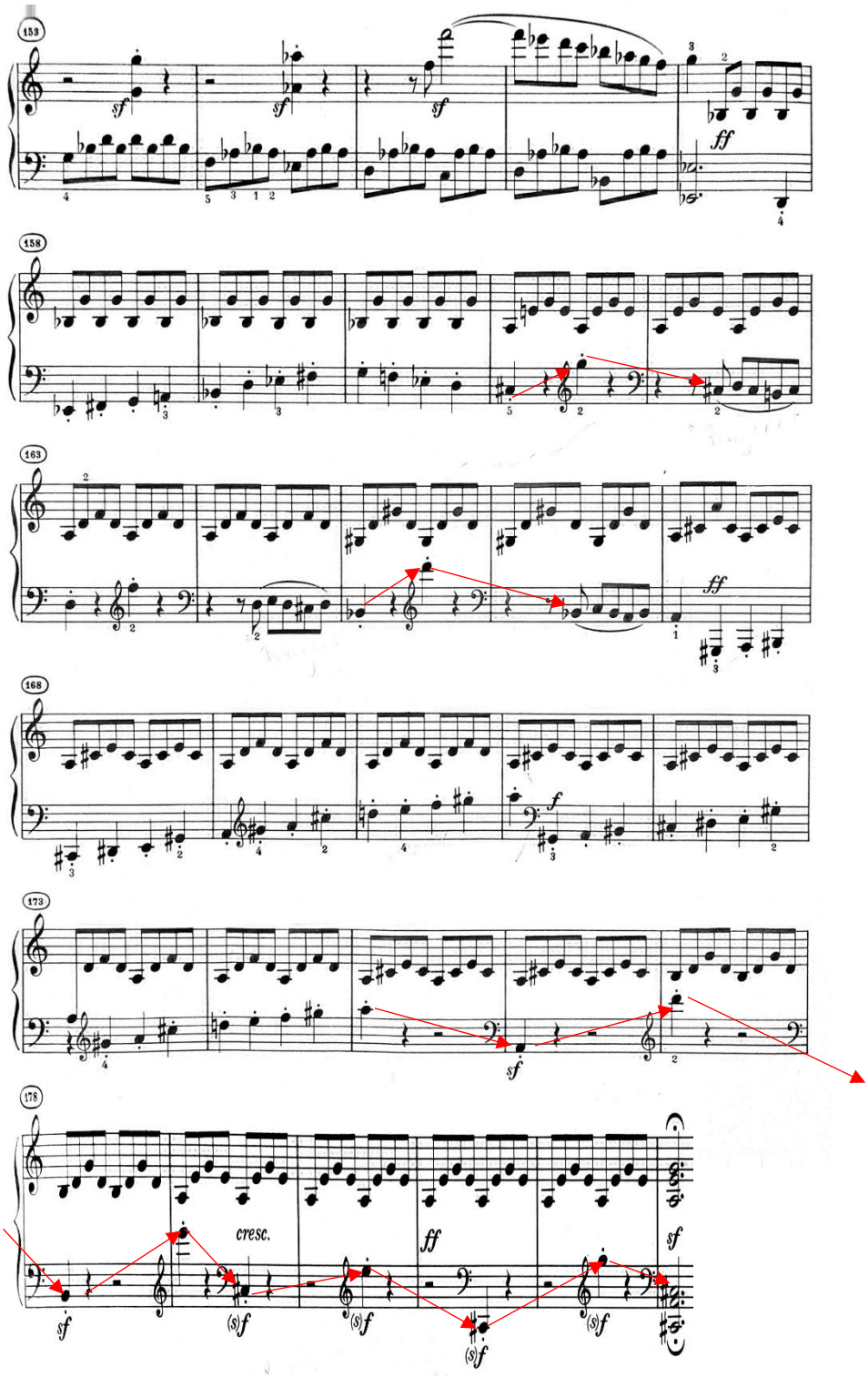


Figure 9 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 1, mm. 153-183

home key starts wavering towards the coda, when the B-flat^7 harmony of measure 316 moves to the final measures ending in two chords that scream for a resolution.

II. Largo e mesto

The second movement's contrast is immediately palpable. It acts as an anchor for the surrounding movements. This is the only movement where the music begins firmly on the downbeat with a strong block chord, placed toward the lower end of the piano. This D-minor, the parallel-minor of D-major, summons a darker and muddier tone with a laborious and plodding motion. The initial theme bears the half- step mark of Theme A from the first movement as well as the interval of the fourth[10]. This new chapter now has Puck in the form of a sorrowful lament motive (Figure 10). The use of registral colors is the predominant method of dialogue between the characters. As opposed to the interacting external voices in the first movement, here is a more internal and reflective interplay within the character's conflicted self. The initial theme in two of the three iterations mostly inhabit the middle register of the piano. It peaks at G^5 on diminished harmonies then subsequently works its way down to its home note in measure 9. Aside from that melodic swell, it mostly stays on a horizontal plane. A more expansive melody responds to the initial statement with an octave leap that is more lyrical but remains in the melancholic tone acting as an empathizing voice to the first's tragic state. In the breadth of its statement from measure 9 to its cadence in measure 17, its major hint to C major slightly lightens the immensity of the despair. The previous voice, as evidenced by the rhythmically figurated descent of the 4^{th} from the C in measure 17 to the G# in measure 18, takes what was said and begins similarly with the octave leap but refuses to be consoled by bringing the dissonance back to the conversation in the D#-dim6 harmony and eventually works its way to

[10] Aurally, one hears a major third but Beethoven spells it as a fourth.

a cadence in the relative minor of C major, correcting the previous conclusion of the previous voice.

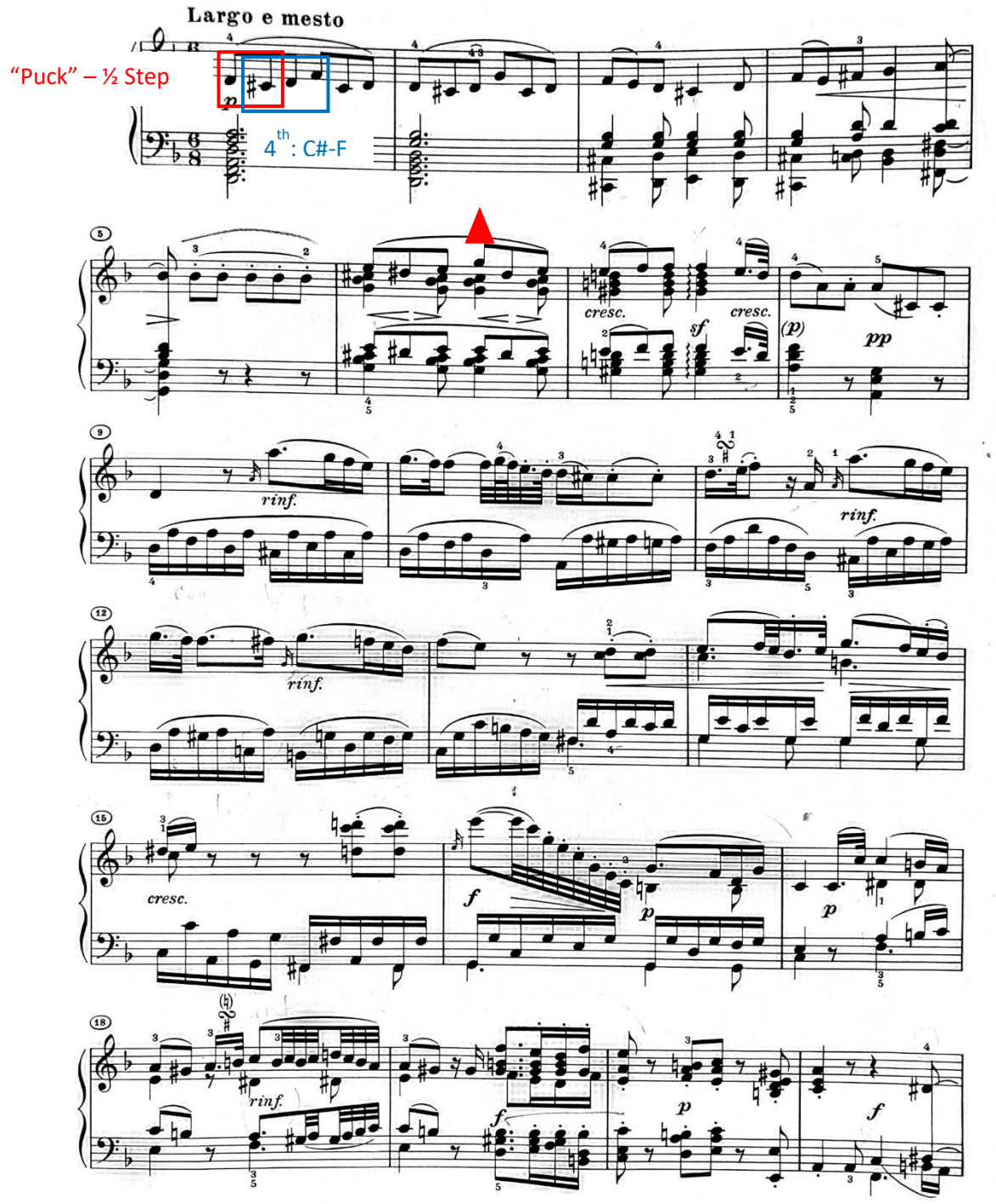


Figure 10 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 2, mm. 1-21.

The passage in measure 30 (Figure 11) has the strongest voice of optimism that attempts to dispel the gloom, but is unable to escape the strong pull of the melancholia. In measure 35, the first theme's inner demon returns more furiously, as if angered by such attempts of

consolation. Measure 36 to 43 is the consequent to this internal conflict. The dotted half note G holds the residual noise from the previous section, pushing the ray of hope to the upper limits of

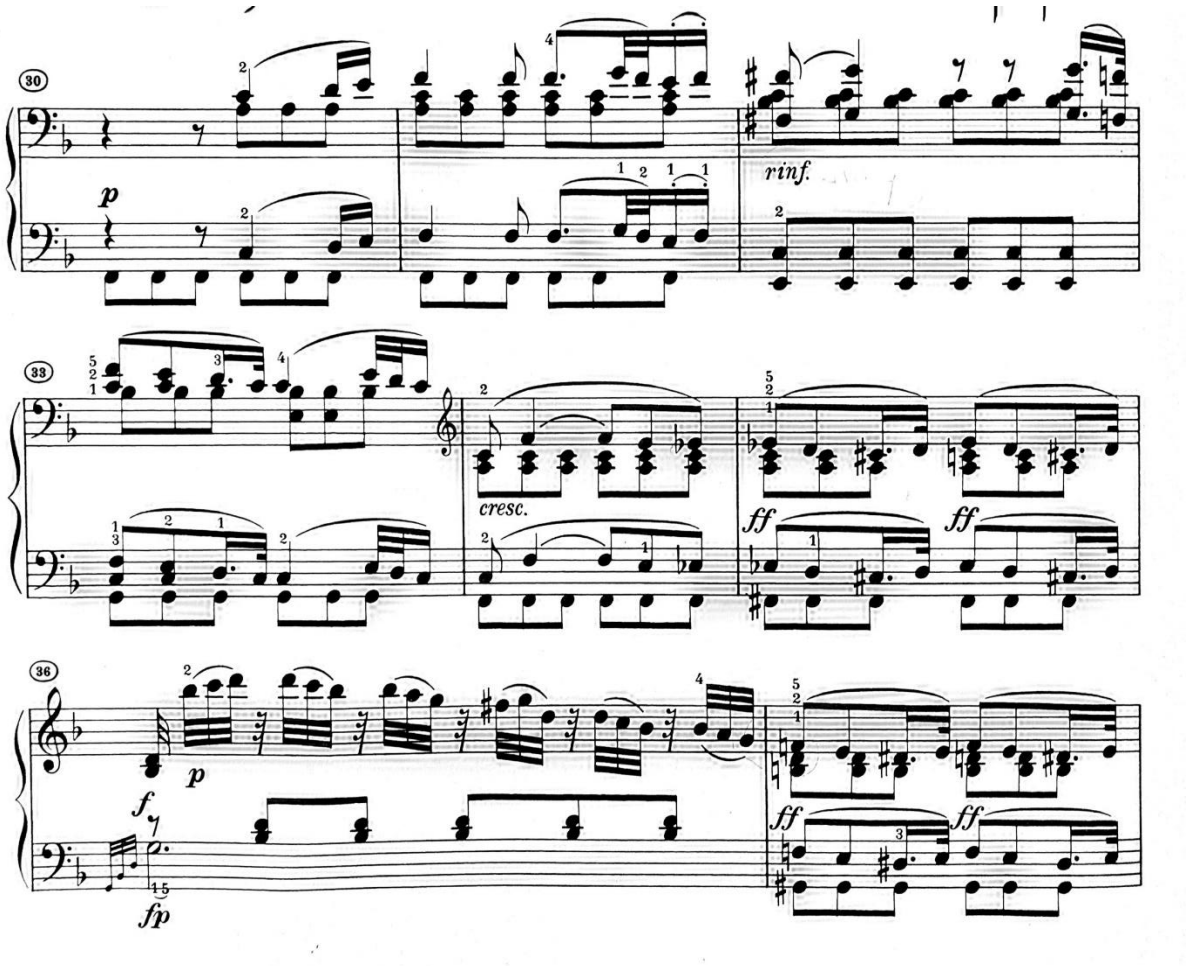


Figure 11 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 2, mm. 30-37

Beethoven's piano. The tension between despair and optimism ends this section in melancholia's favor, as hope's futile efforts to escape its orbit ultimately descends back to the gloom of measure 44. This reprise of the first theme begins like the initial statement but ultimately descends deeper into the abyss, starting in measure 65 (Figure 12), creating the most powerful moment in the whole sonata. The conclusion of this movement recalls Dante's *Inferno* where glimpses of the unreachable paradise torment the damned for eternity.

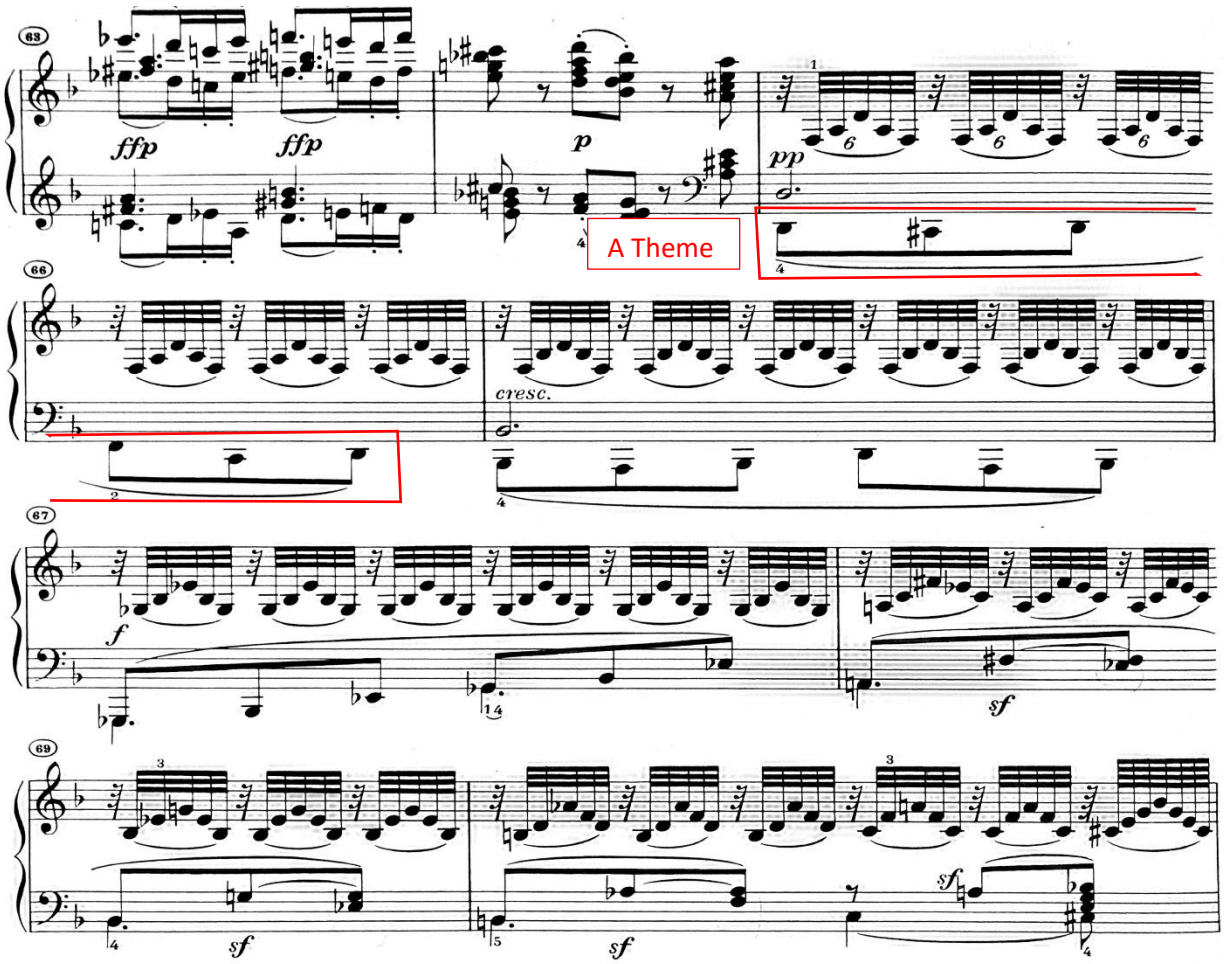


Figure 12 Op 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 2, mm. 63-70.

III & IV Movement

After traversing the tragic depths of emotions, the recovery must act proportionally. That is what the last two movements do. Beethoven does not explicitly direct the pianist to proceed *attacca* into the third movement but the implications, that the last measures of the 2nd movement establish, are so strong that it would be artistically foolish to approach the 3rd movement like a standalone piece. The third movement is a Menuetto and Trio (Figure 13). The tempo marking is Allegro with the "*p dolce*" dynamic. Dolce is the operative tone for the movement. The theme bears a connection to the first movement's A Theme with the D and C# half step in measure 2, and the F#-C# descending fourth in measures 1-2.

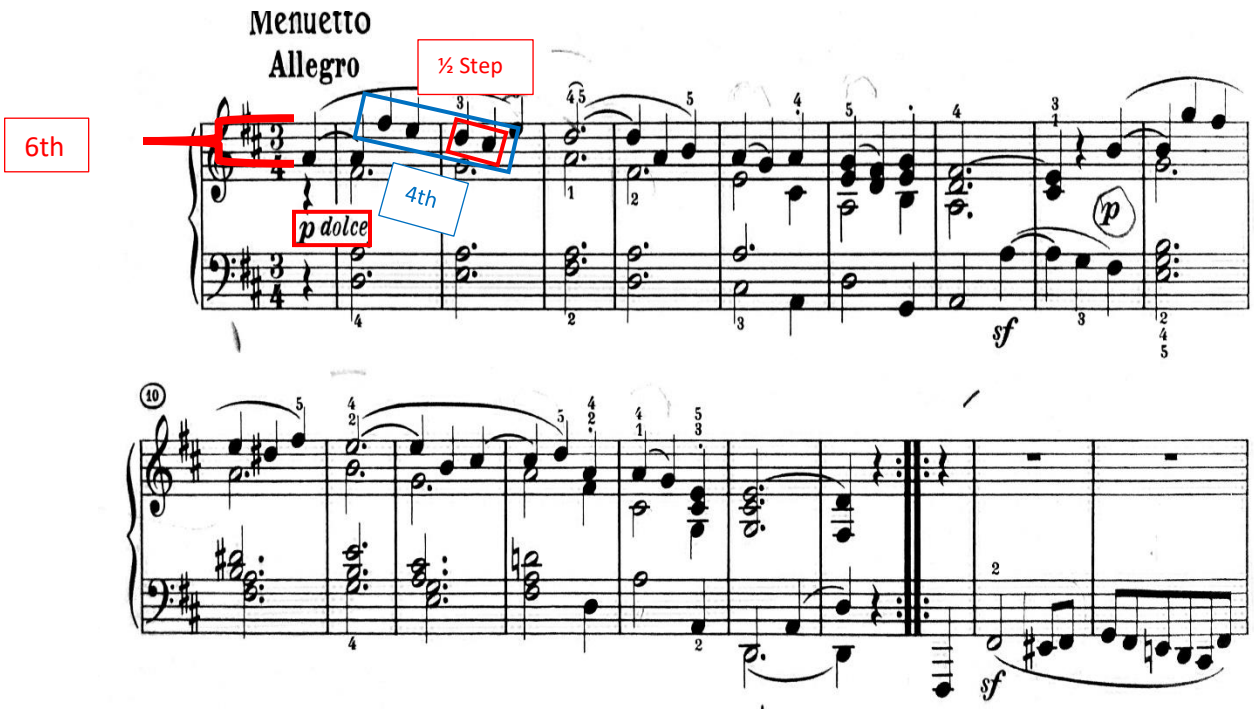


Figure 13 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 3, mm. 1-18

It also resembles the 2nd theme of the first movement with its opening 6th leap and the turn in measures 3-4. This leads us to conclude that the third movement's spotlight is on the character represented by Theme 2 in the first movement. Its shape lies in opposition to the more linear contour of the 2nd movement's opening theme, a contrast introduced in the first movement. This is not to say that Theme 1 is not present, rather, it is a focal shift.

The third movement begins sweetly with a sweet pastoral theme that neatly spans 16 bars. Then the interruption occurs after the double bar in the lower masculine voice, accented with a sharp sforzando. Each phrase ascends in compound 4ths (F^2 in measure 17, B^3 in measure 19, and E^5 in measure 21), according to the unifying 4th motive introduced in the first movement. The secondary theme's character's tolerance for effrontery is much shorter. It takes control of

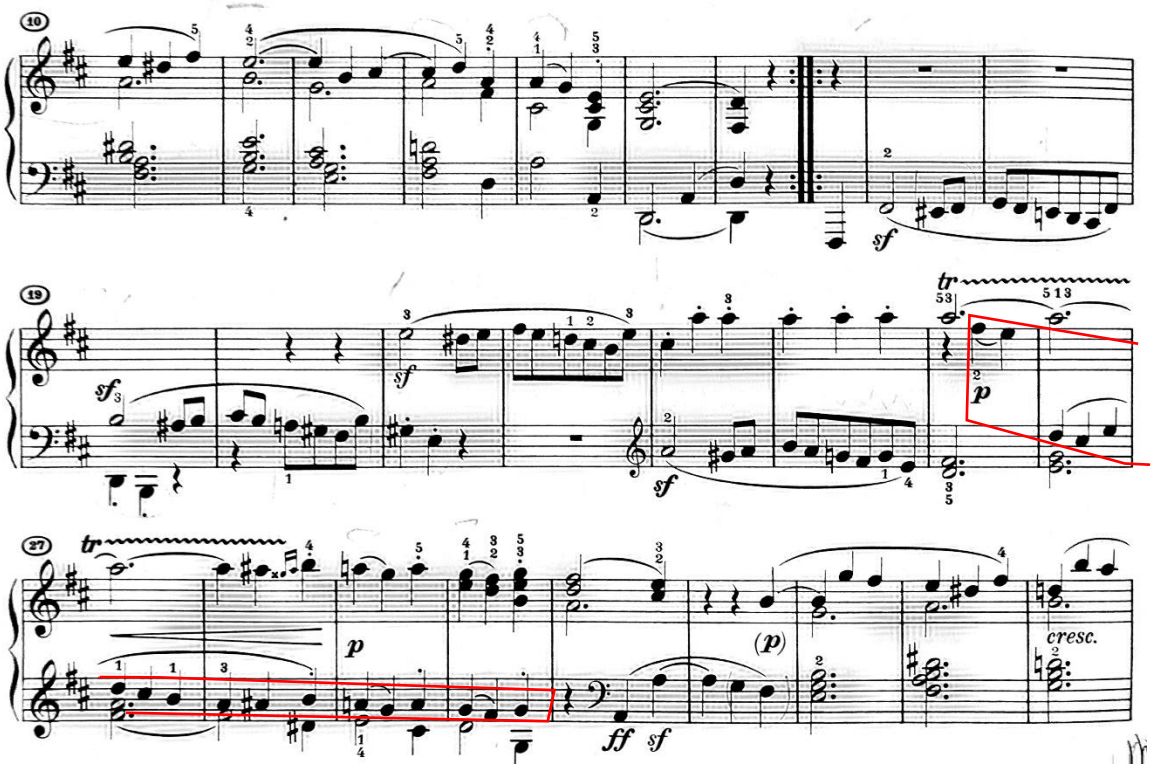


Figure 14 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 3, mm. 10-35.

the soprano melody in measure 25 (Figure 14). The trio, in G major contains the vigor that characterize the first movement A theme (Figure 15). This section's drama centers on the opposition between the open quality of melodic leaps and the closed quality

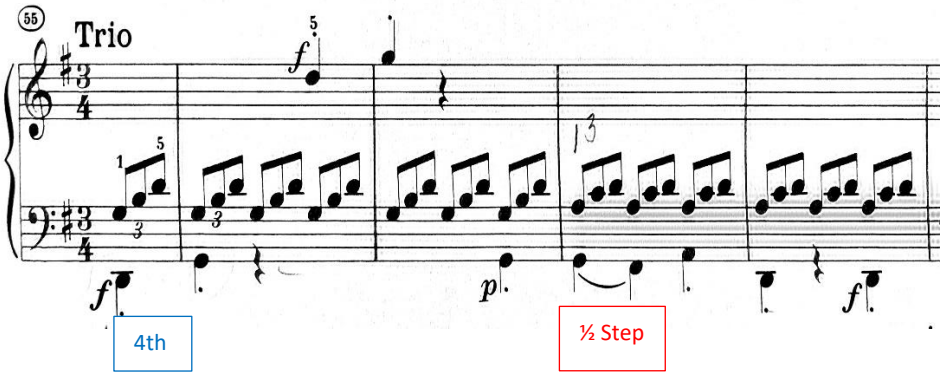


Figure 15 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 3, mm. 55-59.

of stepwise motion. Measures 66-67 remembers the Mannheim rocket that open the first movement, by inverting it towards the opposite direction (Figure 16). This outburst abruptly ends only to reprise the sweeter voice of the Menuetto section that ends the movement

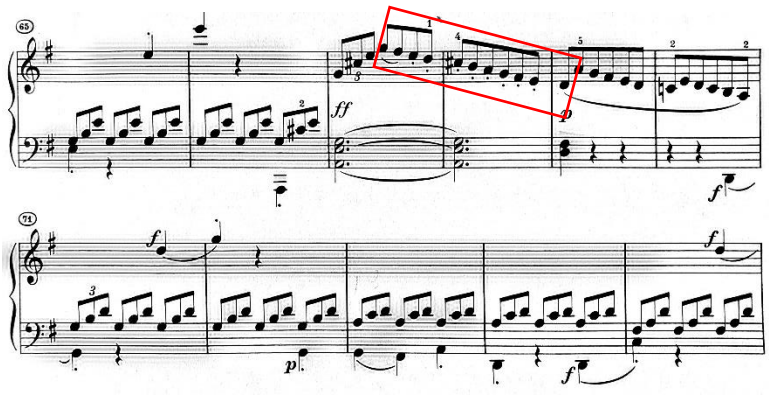


Figure 16 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 3, mm. 65-75.

The interplay between the characters in the finale return to the argumentative dynamic of the first movement. It is between the bold and serene that is in opposition here (Figure 17). The alternation between the two is more frequent and abrupt. Up to measure 3, the conversation

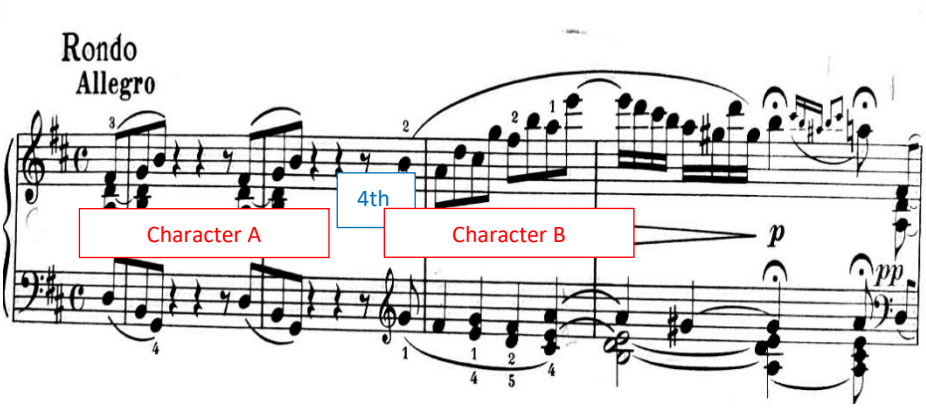


Figure 17 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 4, mm. 1-4.

switches between two characters from the first movement. After the fermata, Theme 1 (Character A) attempts to comply in a meek pianissimo (Figure 18). Its nature wants to break out until a polite reminder from Theme 2, in measure 6, gives it pause. Then Theme 1 briefly

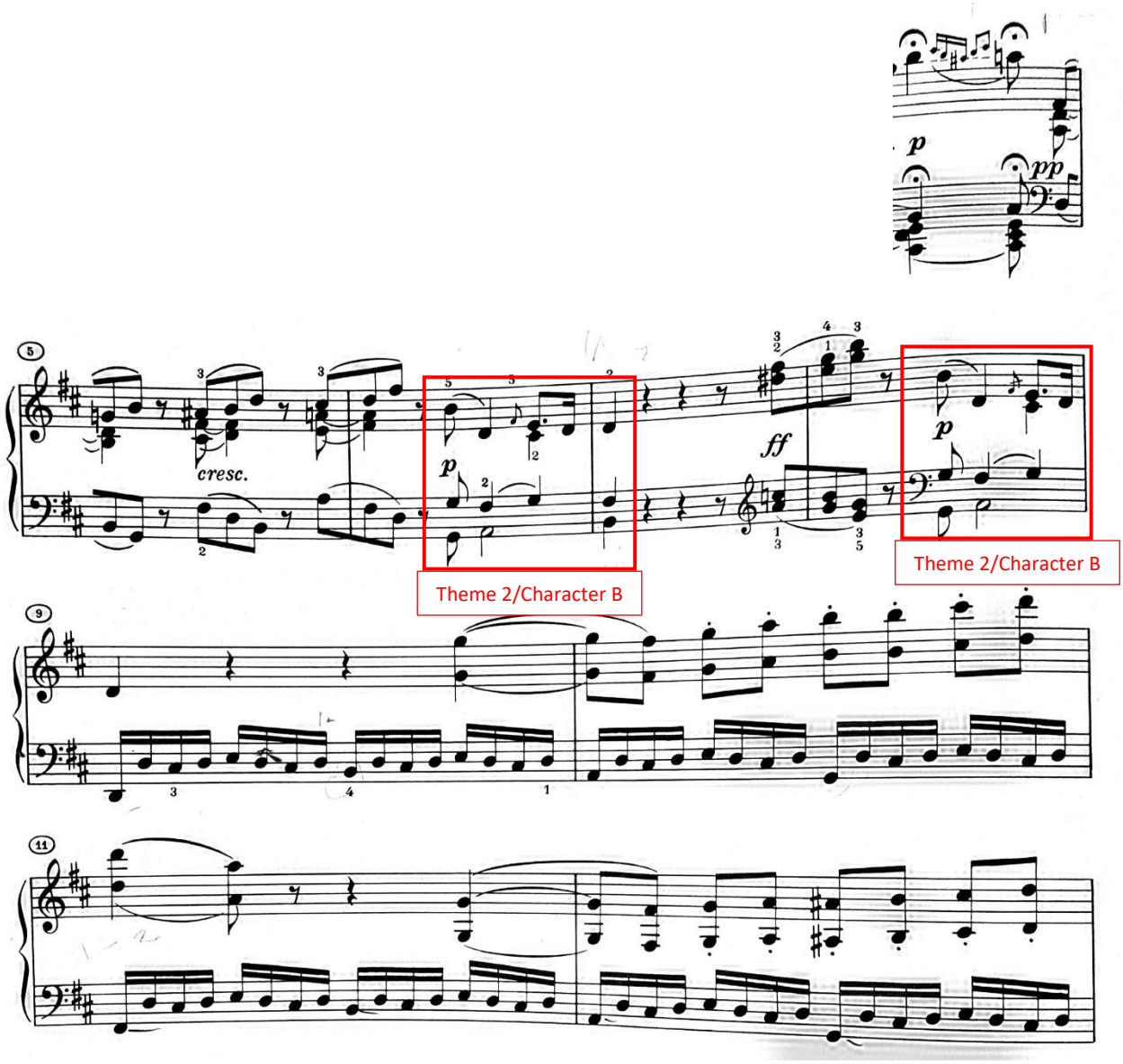


Figure 18 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 4, mm. 4-16.

loses control only to be calmed immediately by Theme 2. This seems to be effective as the following section, starting in measure 9, exhibits a more docile "Puck." The movement continues this kind exchange.

Measure 92 is Theme 2's last desperate conciliatory attempt (Figure 19). Theme 1's three-note motive is now answered by a descending figure that resembles the descending fourth of the first movement's opening. The resemblance is not exact because the figure actually spans a 5th,

instead of a 4th. It's as if this small adjustment was the solution to all of Theme 1's problems. This dream becomes even more comical when it is placed in context with the gravity of the 2nd movement.

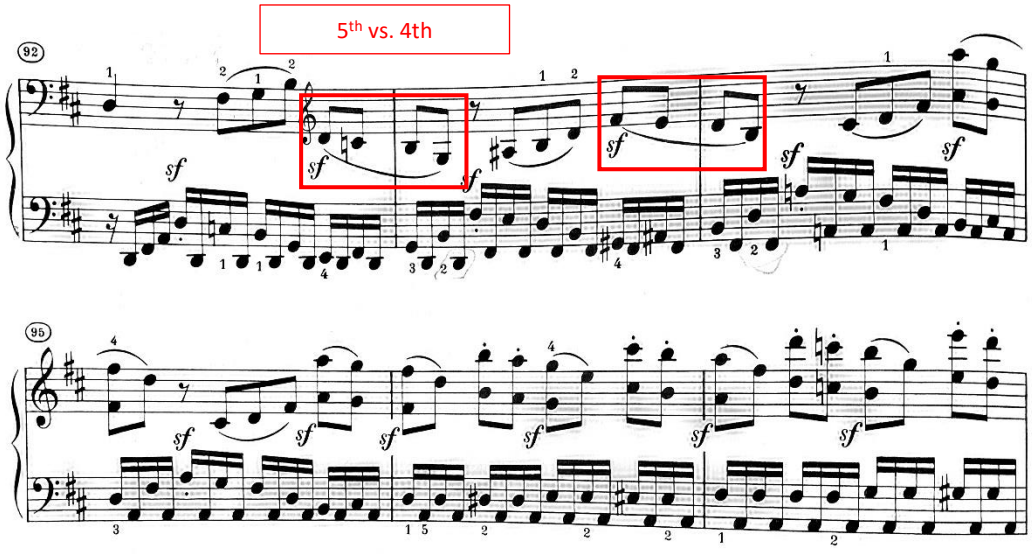


Figure 19 Op. 10 No. 3, Mvmt. 4, mm. 92-97.

This is where the narrative approach helps guide the decisions of the pianist. The established motivic connections between the 2nd, 3rd and 4th movements and the initial theme of the first movement remains. The three-note theme spans a fourth with the characteristic half-step motion of the first two notes. The first theme is fragmented, especially compared to the first movement. It is the most concise version of the original first movement theme. The unifying motives of the half-step and the fourth need, at a minimum, three notes to be present. The consequences of this concision are present in the behavior of the main character. The sudden outbursts become bolder and extreme. The first fortissimo surprise occurs after two and half beats of rest that follow a *piano* dynamic. Beethoven surprises the listener again by the unprepared modulation to B-flat in measures 33[11]. Measures 72 to 80 have two *fp* dynamic

[11] Same modulation as in the first movement development.

markings and four *sf* markings. The heavily chromatic stepwise run, which transform to a brilliant arpeggio, wraps up the movement and the piece as a whole.

Chapter 3

Tragicomedy

The fourth movement's peculiarity in its thematic structure—the way it ends, and its resistance to continuous flow—begs the pianist to search for the extra-musical possibilities of interpretation. The movement and the literary tragicomedy genre share some comparisons. The history of the genre extends back to Plautus of the 2nd-century BC Greece.[12] As the name suggests, it incorporates both tragic and comic elements. The juxtaposition of two seemingly opposite emotions finds its musical analogue in Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, Op. 10 No. 3 and Op. 110. In Op. 10 No. 3, the inclusion of the 2nd and 4th movements into one sonata is an absurd juxtaposition, Beethoven's musical setting of gallows humor. The first movement has a jaunty character while the second follows on a seemingly opposite vein in an extremely desperate mood that only intensifies towards the movement's end. The gravity of the second movement's melancholia weighs on the listening experience of the following two movements. Otherwise, the third and fourth movements would be perceived as jovial and whimsical. Instead, the context of the second movement transforms their respective atmospheres to bittersweet and sardonic. The relationship between grief and happiness in this sonata reminds me of the passage in Hölderlin's *Hyperion* when Diotima tells Hyperion, in the evening before Hyperion leaves for war, "'I feel differently now, too,' [Hyperion] said, 'and I do not know which of the two is a dream—my grief or my happiness.' 'Both are,' Diotima answered, 'and both are good.'"

[12] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Tragicomedy.

Op. 110

Robert Hatten's *expressive genre* best describe Beethoven's Op. 110 sonata's inter-movement behavior as "…changes of state (as in the tragic-to-triumphant genre of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony), or a dramatization of the inability to change state (as in the relentlessly tragic finales to the 'Appassionata' and 'Tempest' piano sonatas)."[13] This relationship between the tragic and comic is characteristic of the Tragicomedy, which can give logic to musical pairings of diametrically opposite themes or moods.

The irony and comic quality of Op. 110's second movement is a jarring contrast to the rest of the surrounding movements. At this point in his compositional development, Beethoven aesthetically matured in bringing out the poetry in humor. The comic literature preceding Beethoven sheds light on his aesthetic justification for including this movement. Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* begins with the title character—also the narrator—sharing the story of his conception, but many tangents constantly interrupt his account's flow. This constant interruption by trivial, and sometimes absurd, tangents is the general source of the comedy. These narrative diversions go on for nearly the first 100 pages! In Op. 110, the second movement is a light diversion from the sonata's overall affective progression. Beethoven builds the theme on two German folk songs, *Unsa kätz hä*d kaz'*In* g'habt[14]— "My cat has had kittens," and *Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich*—"I'm a slob, you're a slob[15]."[16] The philosophic significance of this movement has been analyzed over many

[13] Robert Hatten, "On Narrativity in Music…"
[14] Martin Cooper. *Beethoven, The Last Decade 1817-1827* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).
[15] Jan Swafford. *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2014), 755.
[16] Albert Frantz, "On the Philosophical in Music: 'Unconsummated' Symbolism in Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, opp. 106 and 110," *Kairos* 21 (2003): 283-305.

generations. Kinderman comments that Beethoven assimilates "the lowly, droll, and commonplace into the work, where such material proves complementary to the most elevated of sentiments."[17] The context that surrounds this movement requires the need for such reflections, in order for the listener and performer to understand the piece.

Despite the apparent surface-level difference between the second movement's jocularity and the first movement's amiability, both still share common motives. The opening theme of the 2nd movement spans an interval of a 6th when it descends from C^5 to E^4. The opening soprano melody of the first movement lies within the space of a 6th interval (Figure 20). The lower limit of the 6th is the A-flat after the second beat of the first measure. The top limit is the 8th-note F of the third measure. The 3rd interval, between the first note of the 1st half of the phrase—C^5—and the first note of the 2nd half—E-flat^5—in the third measure, is also incorporated into the 1st phrase of the 2nd movement. The E-natural in measure 4 is a compound 3rd below the first note

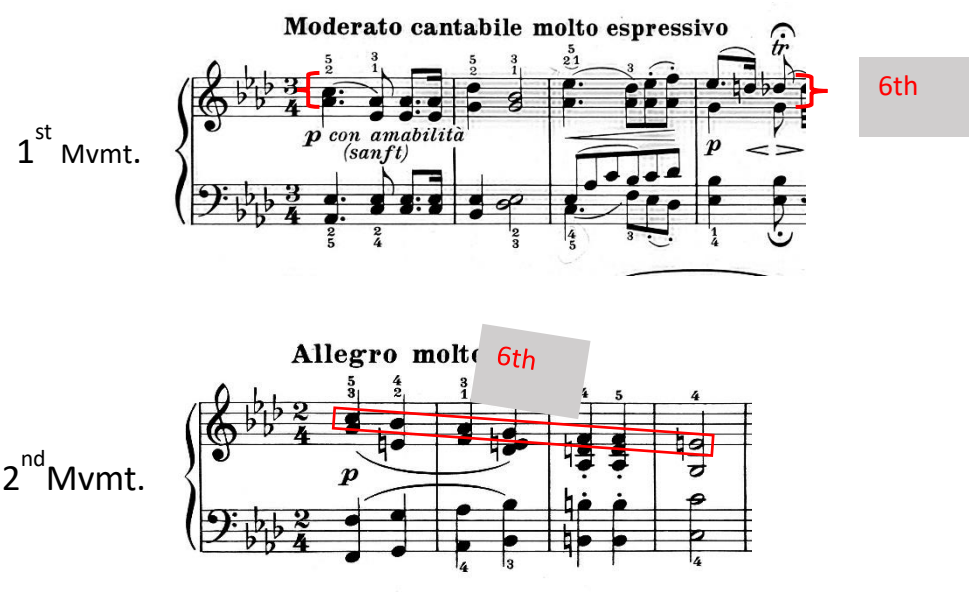


Figure 20 The 6th-Interval Motive in Op. 110

of the next phrase, G^6. The interval between that G and the E-natural in measure 8 is also an

[17] William Kinderman. *Beethoven.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 227.

interval of a 3rd. With the *Ich bin lüderlich* quote in measure 17 of the second movement, each two-bar phrase is a third higher than the one before.

The drama of this movement follows the ironic narrative archetype[18] that Almén defines as an "[e]mphasis on defeat…of order by transgression." There is the tension from the disagreements between thematic descent/ascent, scalar/disjunct motion, and major/minor tonalities. The opening phrase in F minor precedes the answer in C major. The F-minor motion is a stepwise descent while the C major, mixed with skips and steps, ends with a stepwise ascent of a third. Measures 9-16 pits the half-step minor 5-6 motion (G to A-flat) against the whole-step major 5-6 motion (A-flat to B-flat) in measure 12 (Figure 21). Measures 15-16 is a

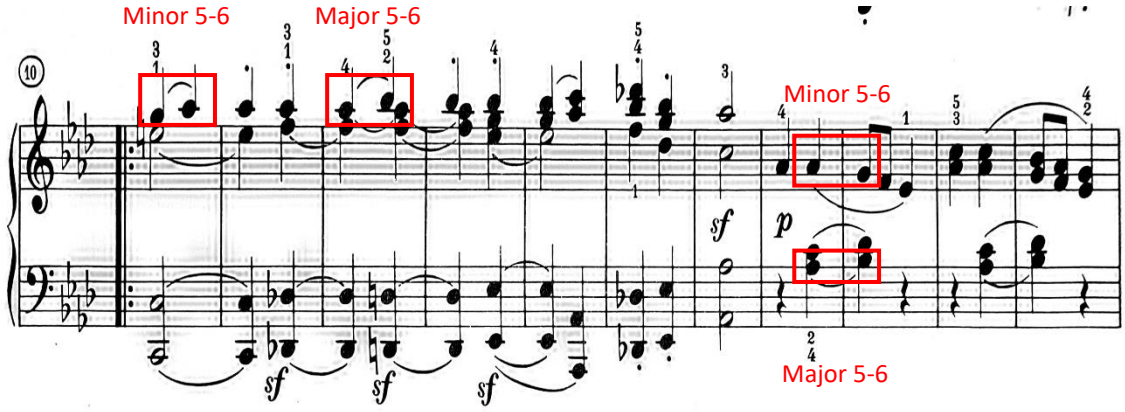


Figure 21 Op. 110, Mvmt. 2, mm. 10-20.

diminution of this motion with major and minor seconds proximally situated with each other, spanning two measures instead of the original three. The trio that starts in measure 41 exaggerates the ascent/descent tension by forcing both hands to cross as it begins on their respective limits of the keyboard and works their way to their opposite extremes (Figure 22).

[18] Almén, 18.

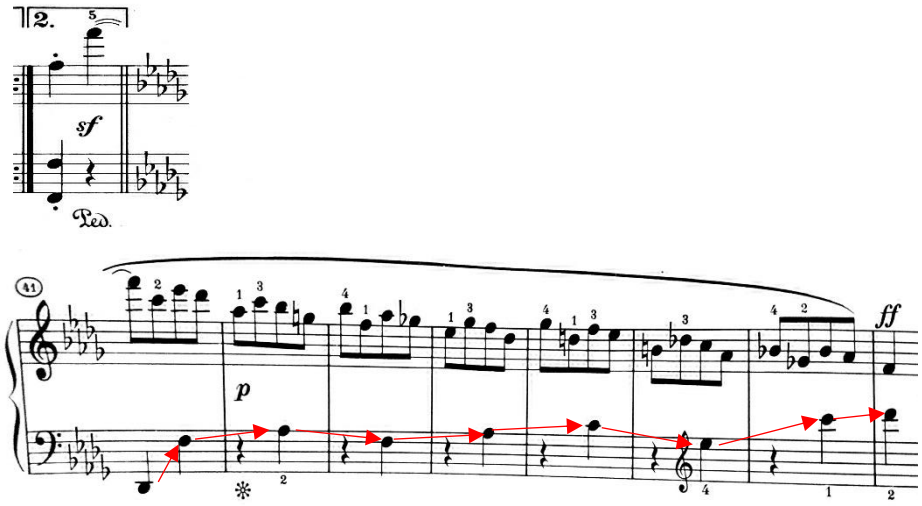


Figure 22 Op. 110, Mvmt. 2 Trio, mm. 40-48.

With the 2nd movement, Op. 110 encompasses the whole spectrum of emotional expression. Lewis Lockwood describes Beethoven as a "universal artist, who could control tragedy, comedy, and an infinite number of expressive modes that fall somewhere between."[19] His striving for artistic versatility was a life-long endeavor. For Beethoven, this urge brought his music closer to the literary imagination and fantasies of his novels. The context surrounding the second movement places it on the intermediary part of the spectrum between tragedy and irony. Almén describes irony as "the suppression or removal of a pre-existent order, resulting in an undesirable condition, whether chaos or a differently-valued order."[20] For Almén, fragmentary music will generally fall into that category. The fourth movement of Op. 10 No. 3 certainly lies in this area of the narrative spectrum. The tragic archetype "depicts the *failure of a desired transgression (or an exercise of freedom) against a restrictive or undesired order."*[21] One of the

[19] Lewis Lockwood. "Beethoven, Florestan, and the Varieties of Heroism," in *Beethoven and His World,* ed. Scott Burnham and Michael P. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 40.
[20] Almén, 30.
[21] Almén, 29.

defining qualities of music of this archetype is the intrusion of the transgressive character that the established order ultimately suppresses.[22] The "tragicomedic" 2nd movement of Op. 110 has elements from both archetypes. Its comedy intrudes upon the affective line of the first movement and does not prepare for the solemnity of the following movement. The development of the two folk-song themes is restricted by their proximity to each other. The comedic reconciliation, later represented by the last movement fugue, moves this movement between irony and comedy. This complex blending of archetypes requires the masterful handling of every level of music. Beethoven used the development-restrictive aspect of the Scherzo-Trio structure to confine the realization of the two folk-song themes. At the thematic level, Beethoven injects irony with his folk-song quotes. At a macrolevel, Beethoven retroactively redefines the 2nd movement with the presence of the placatory fugue.

[22] Almén, 29-30.

Chapter 4

Memory and Nostalgia in op. 13, 101, 106, 110

Beethoven, particularly in the freer forms of the later sonatas, employed compositional techniques that emulate memory recall and nostalgia, a device often used in novels available in Beethoven's time. Holderlin's *Hyperion,* one of the early German novels, centers on the title character telling his life's story to his friend Bellarmin, who symbolizes the reader. Hyperion would occasionally shift the temporal flow from the present to the past, as the hermit character intersperses philosophical reflections of his present circumstances with historical retelling. The ill-fated title character of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* briefly found solace in the bright memories of his time spent at his childhood home, after the debilitating disappointment of his unrequited love for Lotte and his resignation from his courtly post. Both books, that were extremely popular in the decades since their publication, are epistolary novels. The reader gleans the story from a collection of correspondences. The most famous example of the epistolary novel is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Beethoven incorporated the act of recollection, and its transformative effects from these novels, and translated it to the musical medium through musical gestures and formal manipulation.

Beethoven creates a nostalgia effect in the first movement of Sonata Op. 13, particularly in its handling of its introductory section. The two recall events are at the beginning of the development section in measure 133, and at the end of the movement in measure 295 (Figure 23). This is an innovation that stretches formal definitions and boundaries. Among the 32 piano sonatas, two sonatas bear monikers that Beethoven ascribed, Op. 81a "Das Lebewohl" and

Op. 13 “Grande Sonate Pathétique,” hereinafter referred to as “Pathétique.” The opening chord of the latter immediately establishes the tone that the title intimates. The French-Overture style slow introduction precedes the *Allegro* exposition, which drives towards the first reminiscence at the beginning of the development, in G minor, at measure 133. Only the first phrase of the introduction returns to take us to the dominant of E-minor, the key in which the development of the *Allegro* theme begins. Its final return in measure 295 takes a smaller fragment of the original

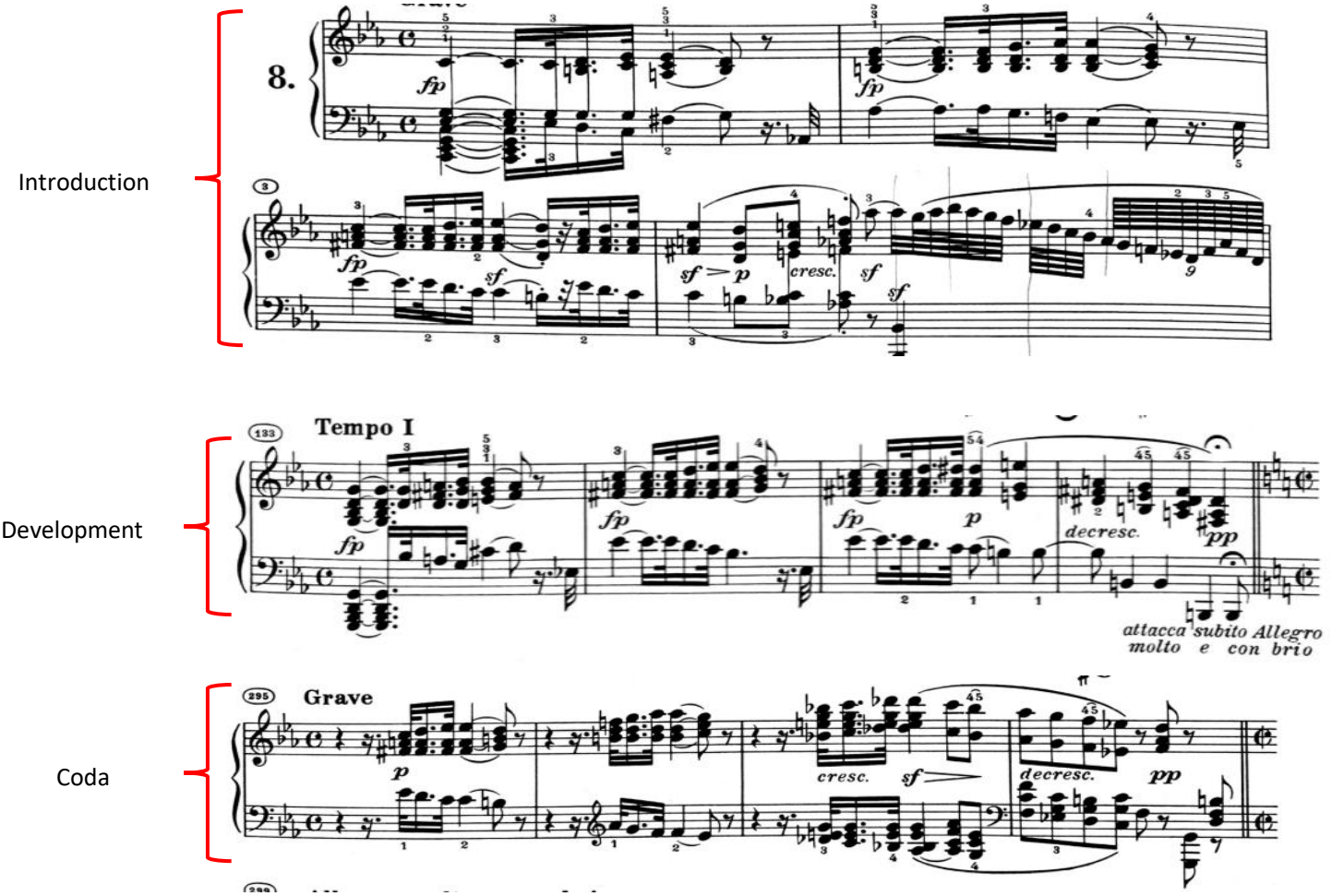


Figure 23 Three Recall Passages

introductory material by eliding the first chord of the theme.

Beethoven uses the predictability of formal conventions to underscore the imprecise nature of memory and the manipulability of recall. The changes in the introductory material in

the development, and, especially the coda, show these qualities. As previously mentioned, the recall in the development is in the transposed key of G-minor, a fifth above the original C-minor chord of measure 1. Then, it moves to the F-sharp diminished-seventh chord. Measure 134 mostly matches the first half of measure 3, except the bass note of measure 134's third beat is a B-flat instead of the C-natural. Beethoven repeats the harmony in the following measure, but the bass now moves like the original statement to C-natural followed by B-natural. Despite the contrast in details, measures 3, 134, and 135 are still in agreement in their general movements. Measure 3 contains two statements of the F-sharp diminished-seventh progression like measures 134-135, but with a longer break between the two phrases. Also, the soprano voice of both sections moves to E-natural. The later version elides the resolution to D-natural. The similar restatement of measure 3, as well as the transposed opening chord to G minor, resulted from the approach of the preceding music and the anticipation of the following section. The F-sharp diminished harmony acts as the focal point of this memory recall. This coloring of memory by future and past contexts has its parallels in narrative, like character elements that evolve during the plot.

By the time the listener arrives in measure 295, only a shadow of the original exists with a fragment of the dotted rhythm and a bewildered version of the original harmonic progression. It lacks the initial blocked chord, and reverses measures 2 and 3. It begins with the progression, F-sharp diminished to G major, then B-diminished to C minor (Figure 24).

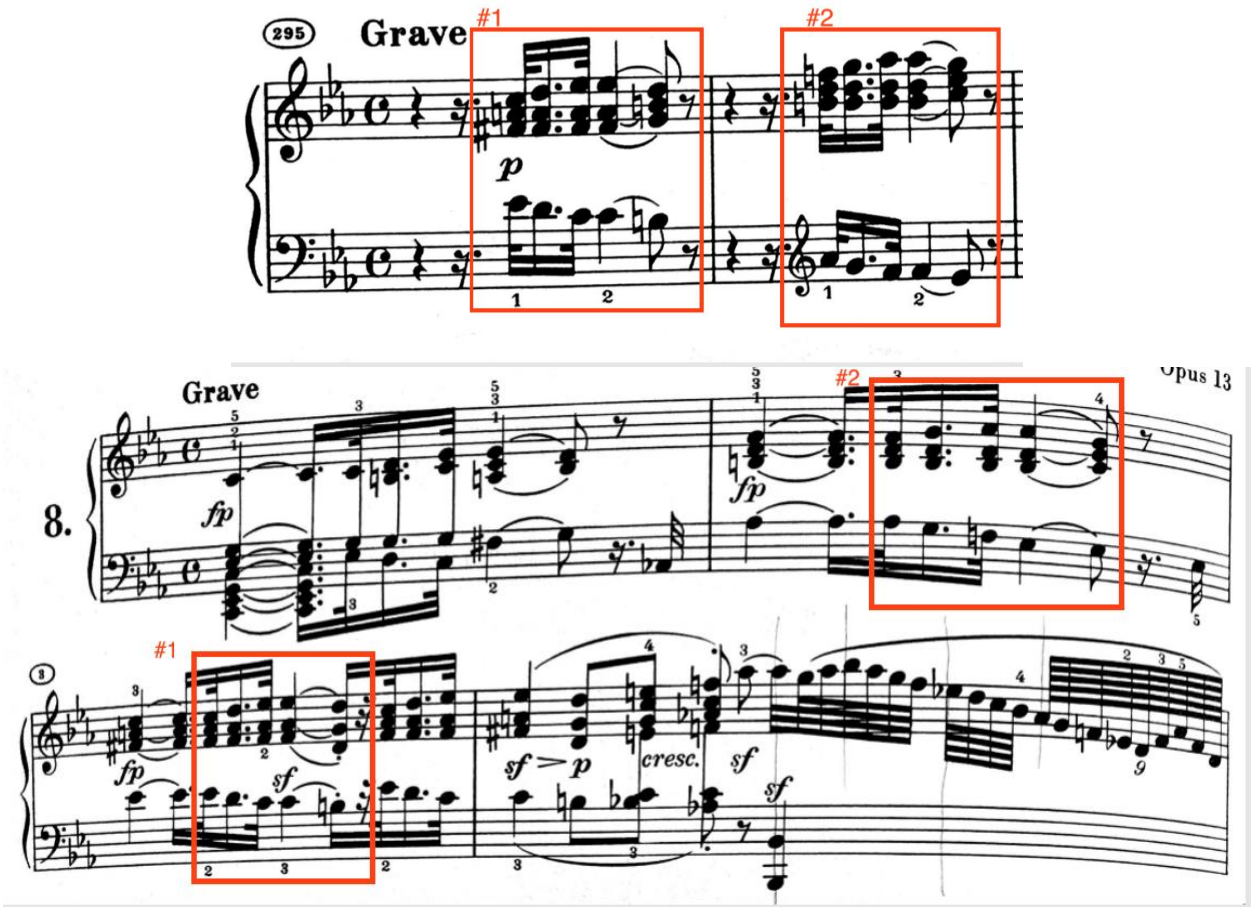


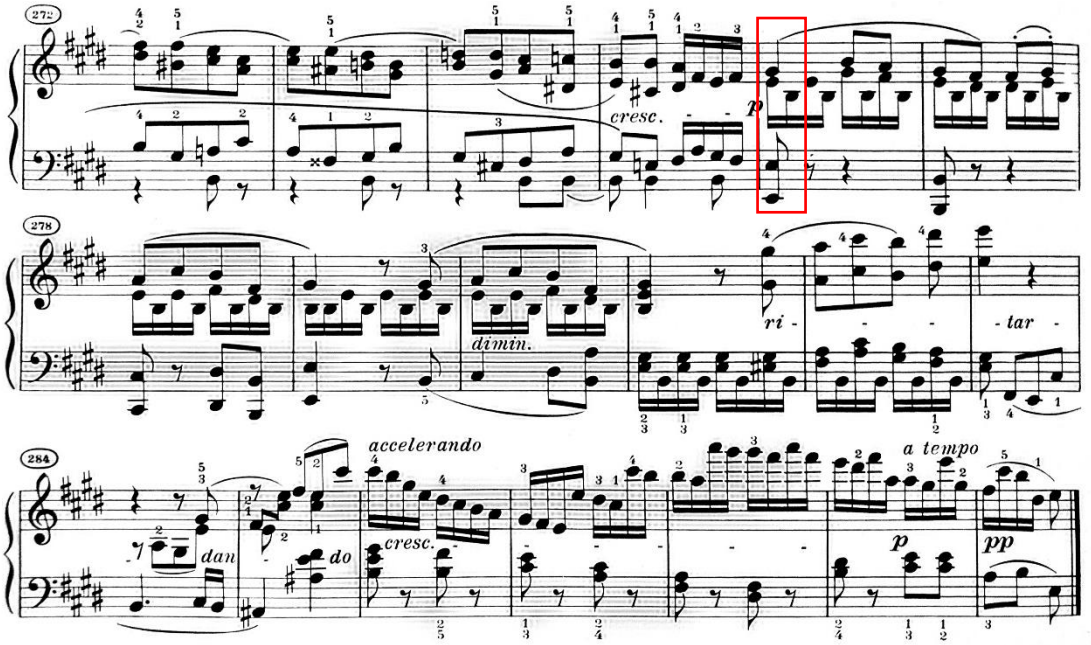
Figure 24 The Retrograde version of the Coda appearance of the introductory material

Op. 101

The display of memory in Beethoven's Op. 13 Sonata was contained in one movement, whereas in Op. 101, the effect spans across movements, and perhaps whole pieces. The latter pertains to Op. 90 (1814) and Op. 101 (1816), two consecutively published sonatas written two years apart. The striking similarity between the opening theme of Op. 101 and the main theme of Op. 90's last movement points towards a connection that is beyond coincidence. The final measures of Op. 90 links effortlessly to the opening of Op. 101. Beethoven simply continues from where he ended a few years earlier (Figure 25). The voicing of the highlighted chords is

exactly the same, and the right-hand textures are essentially the same. The unconventional harmony at the beginning of Op. 101 supports the connection. Op. 101 opens in E major, despite the overall key of A major. Ambiguous beginnings are not unusual for Beethoven, especially regarding his late style, but looking at the melodic shape of the second movement of op. 90—also in E major—as well as the strong ending in the home key makes for a neat pairing between the two. Additionally, A-major is not clearly established in the beginning, neither is there a

Op. 90



Op. 101

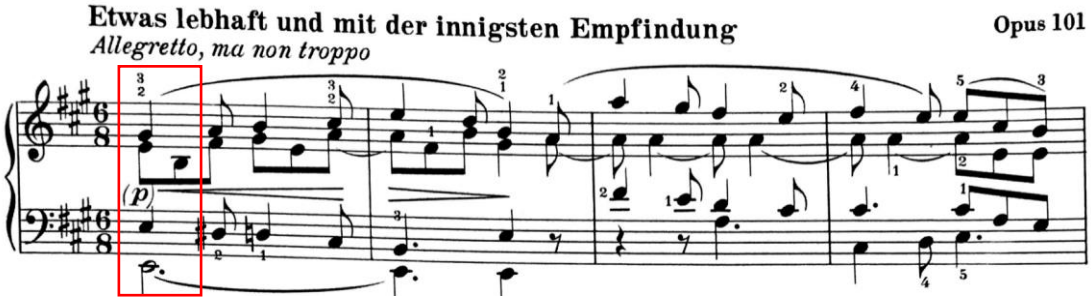


Figure 25 Op. 90, 2nd Mvmt (Top) & Op. 101, 1st Mvmt (Bottom)

traditionally clear V^7-I cadence in A until the last movement. This is not to say that there lacks a V-I gesture. We hear it at the very end of the first movement but it lacks the emotional satisfaction or firm grounding. Its dynamic is soft and lacks a proportional home-key

reinforcement to counteract the harmonic fantasy that occupied most of the movement. The second movement further distances the listener from A major with its key of F major. The slow third movement begins on E major—the dominant of A. The last movement begins in A major after a long cadential trill on the dominant with multiple root position V^7 chords that cover the bottom half of the keyboard.

The moment of reminiscence occurs in the third movement after much harmonic confusion (Figure 26). I will refer to this movement in two parts, the slow third movement and the fast Finale, but it is worth noting that Beethoven intended these two "movements" to be

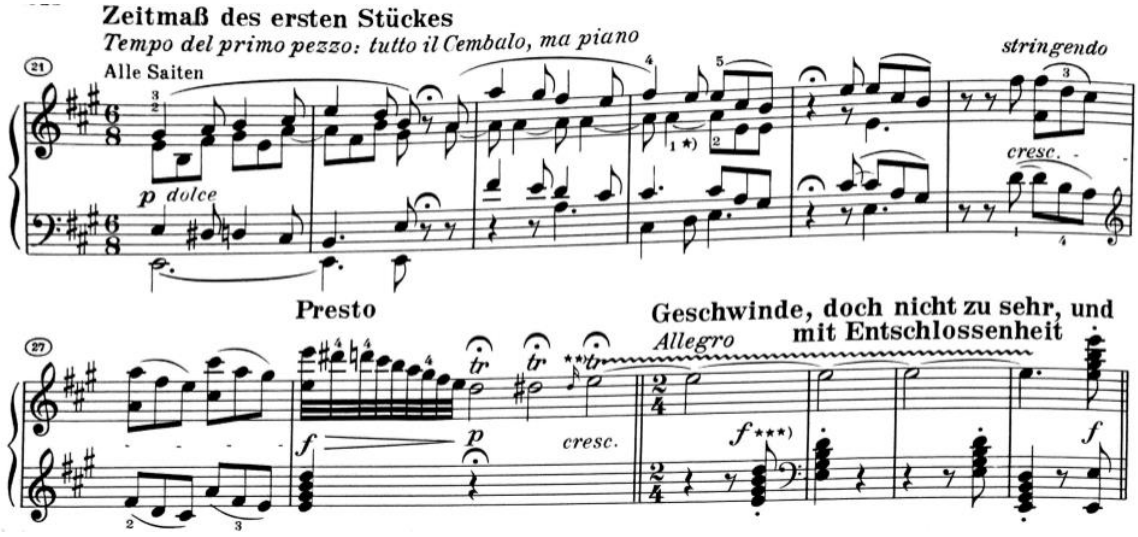


Figure 26 Op. 101, Mvmt. 3, mm. 21-32,

conceived as one thought. This is based on the continuous measure numbering. It is in measure 21 where the initial theme of the first movement returns. This time, fermatas imbue the passage with a feeling of breathless suspension as the onset of motion is quickly interrupted mid-phrase. The full statement finishes in measure 24. The following measures contain fragments based on the tail of the previous phrase that echo and build upon itself. This intensification leads to a *forte*

E^7 chord. It awakens the listener from the trance and rushes us towards the series of trills that lead into the second part of the movement.

The free form of Op. 101 merits a label similar to the one that Beethoven attached to his Op. 27 Sonatas, "Sonata Quasi Una Fantasia." The convincing likeness between Op. 90 and Op. 101 is a sign of Beethoven's inclination towards nostalgia in Op. 90. The free form of Op. 101, its harmonic ambiguity in the first movement, as well as the large-scale key relationships all help support the point of reminiscence in the third movement which—in turn—point to the sonata's apotheosis in the third movement. The drama between the opening of the first movement and measure 33 of the third movement is a story of one getting lost in fantasy. Beethoven actively keeps the music removed from any tonic grounding, and even takes the listener farther away in the second movement with the distant keys of F and B-flat major.

The location of the nostalgia passage is surely the turning point from the harmonically vague probing quality of the previous music. The sonata already begins in an uncertain state with its E-major opening and its avoidance of a perfect authentic cadence in A major. The martial second movement feigns confidence with its direction and drive, but ultimately finds itself in the wrong key of F major. The somberness of the third movement suggests a troubled character who, upon remembering his roots, finds his true purpose. It is after this moment of remembrance, in measure 21, that the music finally settles into its home key. This epiphanic moment brings the character on the right path home, as if the answer was always present from

the beginning. T.S. Eliot once wrote:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.[23]

Like the "Pathétique*"* Sonata, Beethoven did not write the recalled theme in the exact form we first heard at the sonata's beginning. Instead, he uses fermatas to free it from time's binds, like how a nostalgic passage in literature unbinds the narrative from the present. The tonic musically expresses the lucidity which ultimately arrives in measure 33 of the third movement of Op. 101—opposing the preceding reverie.

The dream and memory interpretation of this third movement passage will later be associated with the idea of "home." This home motif is often paired with memory in literature, particularly the trope of the wandering protagonist who leaves his homeland of comfort, domesticity, and innocence for a life of adventure. The return is usually triggered by a longing after the weathering of such experiences. One can hear this narrative progression in the remainder of the third movement, particularly at measure 123 where Beethoven writes a fugue. The fugue, for Beethoven, was the ultimate exercise of musical composition. The late piano sonatas and his *Grosse Fuge, Op. 133* attest to how his passion for the form morphed to the level of obsession. Therefore, it is highly possible that this form may not only be a compositional exercise but an autobiographical reminiscence of an old form that he diligently studied in his youth, and perhaps his statement of when true music occurred.

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[23] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets*.

Op. 106 "Hammerklavier"

It is in the colossal Op. 106 sonata, also known as "Hammerklavier," where Beethoven uses the fugue as the central device to invoke the past. The "past" here is less of an idea based on a composed musical motive to be recalled, but more of a general concept of tradition. So instead of quoting previously presented materials like Op. 13 and Op. 101, Op. 106 invokes the fugue's Baroque past. Previous sonatas incorporated fugal elements, but the "Hammerklavier" is the first of his 32 sonatas where the major portion of a movement's structure is modeled on the Baroque fugue. Beethoven was an avid student of the form during his years of study with Haydn, but Haydn actually let his colleague—Johann Georg Albrechtsberger—teach the bulk of counterpoint lessons to Beethoven. Still, counterpoint would be the form that Beethoven would struggle to master for most of his life. In 1818, short of a decade before his death, he wrote Op. 106 with counterpoint as the focus of the sonata.[24] Naturally, it was necessary for him to look to the works of counterpoint's undisputed master, Johann Sebastian Bach. The sketches for the fourth movement show passages from both books of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, alongside the treatment of his own fugue subjects.[25] Even the *Largo* beginning of the fourth movement parallel the Prelude and Fugue pairing in the two sets, but the peculiar writing of the *Largo* and the scale of the subsequent fugue surely set Beethoven's apart from his musical idol. The odd quality of the *Largo* was not lost to Eric Blom when he said, "The whole strange introduction recalls, if anything, the fantasies Bach prefixed to some of his organ fugues…"[26] In certain

[24] Swafford, 711
[25] Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997), 428.
[26] Eric Blom, *Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas Discussed,* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), 221.

respects, taking on this self-imposed challenge forced Beethoven to reflect on his past's musical form, taking the listener along for the ride.

Before embarking on the fugue, Beethoven takes advantage of the nebulous quality of free improvisation to clear the air of the slow movement's progressive musical and instrumental writing. It begins with a blossoming of sonority with the ringing of all but one F that were available on his Broadwood piano.[27] The following interludes gradually pick up energy with increasing clarity (Figure 27). The first interlude continues from the opening *Largo* tempo. The second is marked *Un poco più vivace* and the third is marked *Allegro*. The writing for each also suggests a manner of pedaling that match the increasing clarity. The first interlude continues the sustained quality of the opening. Its broken chord structure allows for a similar degree of pedaling as the opening. The quickened pace and the scalar motion of the second interlude requires a more cautious handling of the dampers to maintain the clarity of the counterpoint. The third interlude in measure 3 calls for sparse pedaling—if one were to pedal at all—because the slightest amount of pedal amidst the *Allegro* tempo, the prominent half steps, and the sustained textures amidst the counterpoint would create an unbearably muddy texture.

[27] Edwin Good. *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 107.

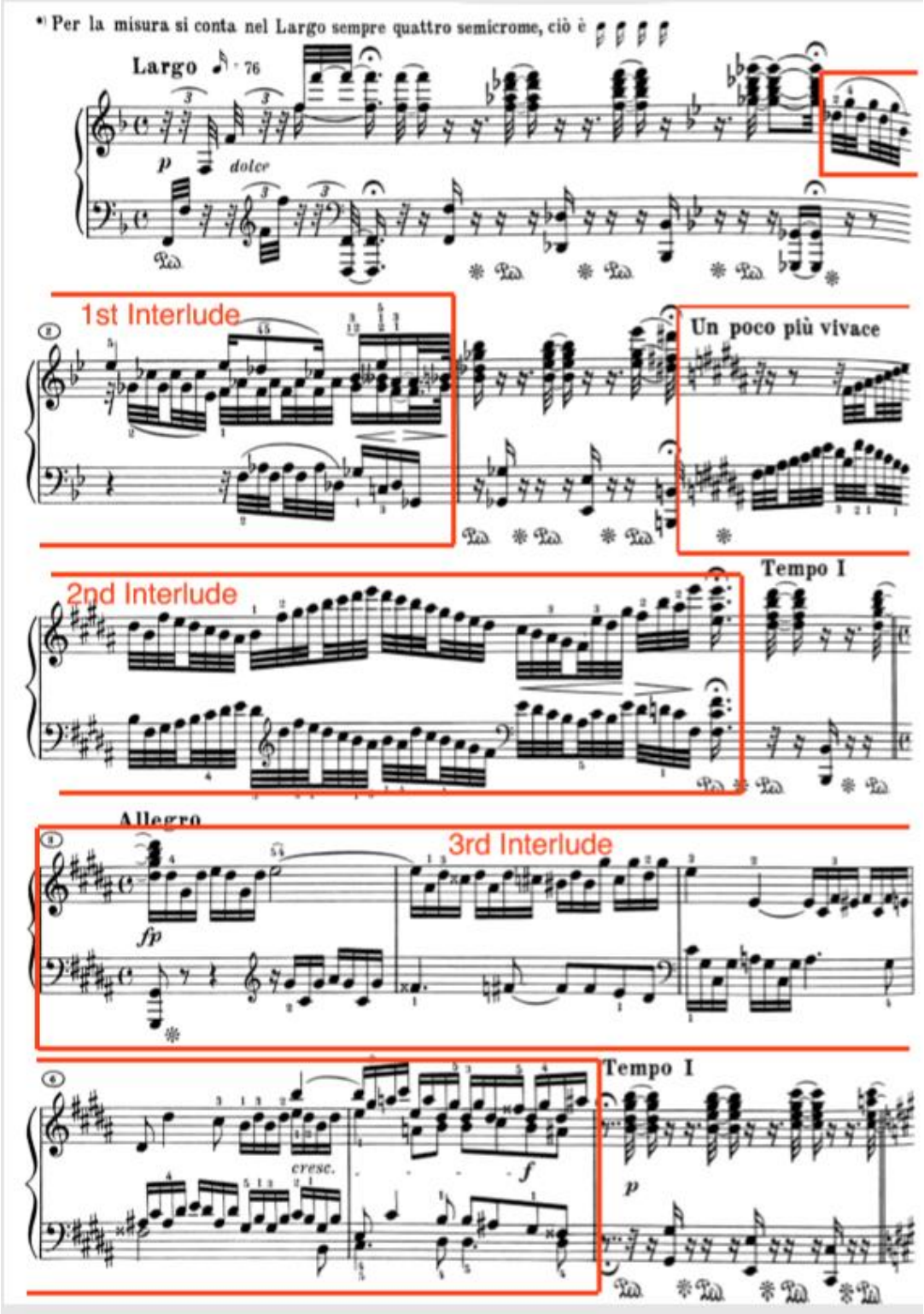

Figure 27 Op. 106, Mvmt. 4, mm. 1-8.

The kind of reminiscence musically depicted in Op. 13 and Op. 101—eventual decay in Op. 13 and the progression towards lucidity in Op. 101—are starkly opposed to what occurs in Op. 106, where the haze of remembrance progressively clears upon further reflection. The opening lacks any grounding in meter or harmony for the pianist's ear despite the time and key signature, and certainly not for the listener who, in his first experience, would be ignorant of what is on the written score. The opening Fs are a half-step lower from the F-sharp ending of the previous movement, only to be immediately harmonized as the third of the D-flat. Its role would later transform to the fifth of B-flat minor. Any sense of a tactus that may have formed with the opening Fs quickly dissipates with all the fermata interruptions. The melodic writing and manipulation of pacing shows Beethoven carefully using tempo and melodic writing together to elucidate the past that the fugue finale represents.

Op. 110

The 31st published sonata, Op. 110, was composed three years after the *Hammerklavier*. It recalls previously presented musical motives like Op. 13 and Op. 101, but the memory is larger in scale and more intrusive in its recollection. Herbert Westerby suggested the titles for the whole sonata, as well as for the individual movements to aid the pianist in interpreting the piece. He suggested "Youthful Recollections" to label the whole piece, "Fond Memories" for the 1st movement, "Youthful Pleasure" for the 2nd movement, and "Sighs for the Past" for the 3rd movement.[28] Others have justly noted the religious connotations in this sonata. It was one of the last three sonatas—Op. 109, Op. 110, Op. 111—that Beethoven wrote concurrently with his *Missa Solemnis*.[29] Op. 110 is a three-movement work. The third movement, like Op. 101 and

[28] Herbert Westerby. *Beethoven and His Piano Works.* (London: W. Reeves, 1931), 94.
[29] Alfred Brendel. *Music Sounded Out: Essays, Lectures, Interviews, Afterthoughts.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), 68.

Op. 106, opens with a slow *Adagio* section that introduces one of the most sorrowful music that Beethoven has ever written, the *"Klagender Gesang"* or "*Arioso dolente*" in measure 9. Many have noted the striking resemblance between its theme and Bach's Aria, "*Es Ist Vollbracht* [It is finished]," [30] from the *St. John Passion* (Figure 28).[31] A fugue quietly emerges from the *Pianissimo* A-flat in measure 26. Its theme diametrically opposes the mournfulness of the *Arioso's* scalar motions and minor tonality with its major quality and open sequence of 4ths. The following music would undermine any attempt to conceive this movement in two, like Op. 101. This moment happens in measure 114—midway in the fugue—where the "Arioso" returns in G minor, a half step down from its original A-flat minor statement.

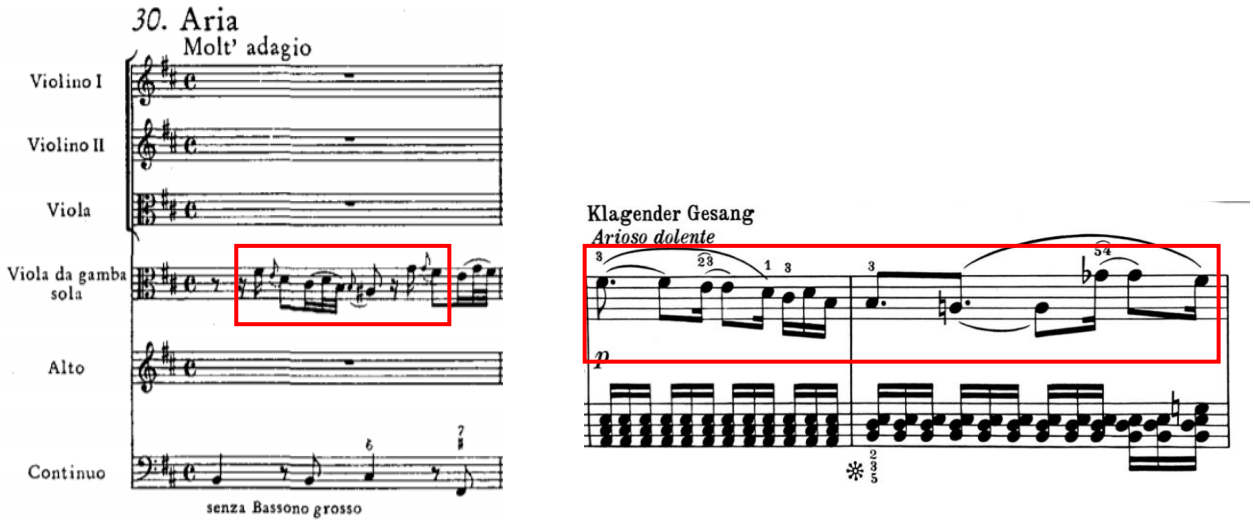

Figure 28 Aria from Bach's St. John's Passion (Left), Beethoven Op. 110, 3rd Mvmt., Measure 9 (Right)

A descending and ascending E-flat seventh arpeggio bridges the dynamic gulf between the Fugue's *Fortissimo* and the Arioso's *Piano*. The Arioso returns more ornamented with additional figurations and rhythmic alterations that magnify the melancholy of the *Arioso* theme

[30] "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." John 19:30
[31] Brendel, *Music Sounded Out,* 70.

(Figure 29). The descending two-note slurs becomes more prevalent. The two-note figures are recognized as the "sigh" motive in the Classical Style, used in lament passages.[32] The placement of the rest on the strong beats adds a labored and ungrounded effect that push the tones to the weaker portions of the measure. This rhythmic displacement removes a measure of vitality and a fleeting character to the tones. One can hear this difference in measures 25 and 132.

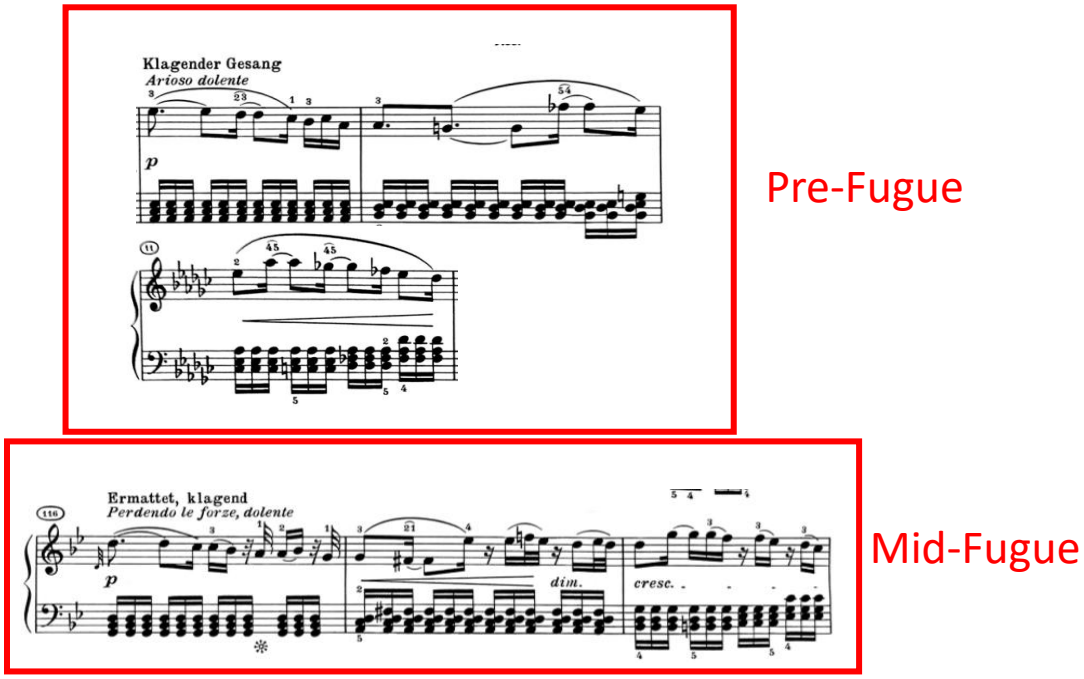

Figure 29 Op. 110, Mvmt. III, Arioso Theme

The Arioso's abrupt return causes a transformation of the fugue theme in measure 137 by literally flipping it upside down. Beethoven took special care to specify his intentions in the traditional Italian and his native German. His tempo markings are now "*L'istesso tempo della Fuga poi a poi di nuovo vivente*", "*Nach und nach wieder auflebend", and "L'inversione della*

[32] Anthony Gritten and Elaine King, "A Theory of Musical Gesture and Its Application to Beethoven and Schubert," in *Music and Gesture*, ed. Anthony Gritten and Elaine King (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 4.

Fuga. Die Umkehrung der Fuge." The marking, "*L'istesso tempo della Fuga poi a poi di nuovo vivente*" aligns very well with the Passion narrative that others have associated with it. "*Nuovo vivente,*" in the context of Bach's aria, "*Es ist Vollbracht,*" colors this section with strong religious undertones of Christ's resurrection. The musical drama depicts this "new life" through a diminution of the rhythm, propelling the music forward with ever-increasing momentum. The smallest rhythmic unit in the first fugue section is the 8th note. In the *nuovo vivente* fugue, the rhythmic unit becomes progressively smaller. The opening begins with dotted-quarter notes, and moves into 8th notes in measure 140. Then 16th notes appear in the left hand after a key signature change in measure 153. The 16th-note groups remain sparse until the *Meno Allegro Etwas langsamer,* in measure 168, where the 16th-note rhythm dominates the texture. 32nd notes add to this section's diminution, but its appearances are intermittent. The diminution finds its completion half-way through measure 174, *tempo primo*, catalyzing two important changes that herald the close of the whole sonata: The key signature change to the original four flats found at the beginning of the Fugue, and the triumphant restoration of the theme—octave doubled in the left hand—in its original form.

Beethoven used his native German to be the prominent language in his late sonatas, except for op. 111 where he exclusively used the traditional Italian. An attention to language in Op. 110 may elucidate extramusical elements that this movement strongly implies. I have discussed the significance of *Nuovo vivente* with the resurrection theme in Op. 110. Beethoven wrote *Klagender Gesang* and *Arioso dolente* with the first presentation of the *Arioso*. He then wrote *Ermattet, klagend* (exasperated/exhausted, sorrowful) and *Perdendo le forze, dolente* (losing strength, sorrowful) with the second *Arioso* in measure 116. The religious connection with *dolente* is as old as the Arthurian legend—the "dolorous stroke" literary trope. The Italian

word *dolente* and the Middle-English *dolorous* stem from the Latin *dolor* which means "pain, grief." Variations of the "dolorous stroke" appear in many versions of the Arthurian legend, and each one depicts it as the act that set the grail-quest story arc in motion.[33] In Sir Thomas Malory's version, it was Balin who smote King Pellam with a spear which resulted in the castle collapsing, and the kingdom becoming a wasteland. The wizard Merlin saved Balin from the castle ruins, and told him that the spear was the same weapon that the Roman centurion, Longius, used to pierce Jesus's side after He perished on the cross. It is impossible to confirm whether Beethoven intended for that story to be associated with Op. 110, but what is clear is the tragic tone of the Arioso. We also have Beethoven's intention expressed more explicitly through his native language. Based on the differing markings, he wanted the return of the Arioso to contrast with the initial appearance in measure 9, at least more than just the natural impact of the key change and added figurations. The Fugue's continuation after the Arioso in measure 137 also included more definite instruction that further differentiated it from the first Fugue section. He felt the need to communicate in both the Italian and German, "L'istesso tempo della Fuga poi a poi di nuovo vivente", "*Nach und nach wider auf lebend", "L'inversione della Fuga. Die Umkehrung der Fuge."*

Why did Beethoven feel the need to use both German and Italian to convey similar meanings at measure 137? It is reasonable to see why he would do that with more abstract concepts, since meanings tend to be partially lost in translation.[34] Beethoven was an avid reader. He recognized the power of words, and how a slight turn of phrase can change the entire

[33] Eugene Vinaver, "The Dolorous Stroke," *Medium Ævum* 25, no. 3 (1956)

[34] Op. 81a is one example where Beethoven was displeased with his publisher when they changed the title of the sonata from Das Lebewohl to Les Adieux. Beethoven argued that the German version had a more personal and intimate connotation.

meaning and sentiment of the original statement. So, it would be plausible to assume that Beethoven communicated in the language he was most comfortable, in order to accurately express the finer details of his own intentions in a sonata whose religious subject matter requires—in Beethoven's mind—the utmost respect.

The drastic effect of the Fugue on the Arioso follows the natural narrative dynamic where the consequences of actions reverberate throughout the story's network of characters. There is an inherent tension in narratives that writers artfully create in their novels. The tension pushes the plot forward and, in turn, urges the reader to continue on. The tension created between protagonist and antagonist produces, in the readers mind, the curiosity of the conflict's resolution. There are different methods in music to create tension. In the case of Op. 110, the destabilization of the rhythm and harmony of the Arioso opposes the listener's established rhythmic alignments and tonic centering. The "memory" of the Arioso melody in measure 116 lacks the rhythmic grounding, compared to its iteration in measure 9. The contexts before each of the Arioso statements have very different rhythmic qualities. These differing contexts cause varying effects on the Arioso. The Recitative and the following Adagio from measure 4 and 5 provide an elusive sense of pulse due to the frequent changes in tempo and rhythm that effectively conceal a specific meter, especially in the "*Bebung*"[35] measure of bar 5.[36] Figure 30 shows the tempo changes in red. Vertical blue lines represent the main beats which illustrate, with their uneven spacing, the lack of a regular sense of meter.

[35] Bebung – A vibrato obtained on the clavichord by alternately increasing and decreasing the pressure of the finger on the key. (Oxford Music Online)

[36] Beethoven never made an equivocal association of this type of writing to the Clavichord technique. William Newman in his book, *Beethoven on Beethoven*, was extremely skeptical about this issue. Instead, he posits that Beethoven wrote the notes as two slurred sixteenth notes instead of one eighth note in order to communicate the accent structure that would normally apply to a normal two-note slur.

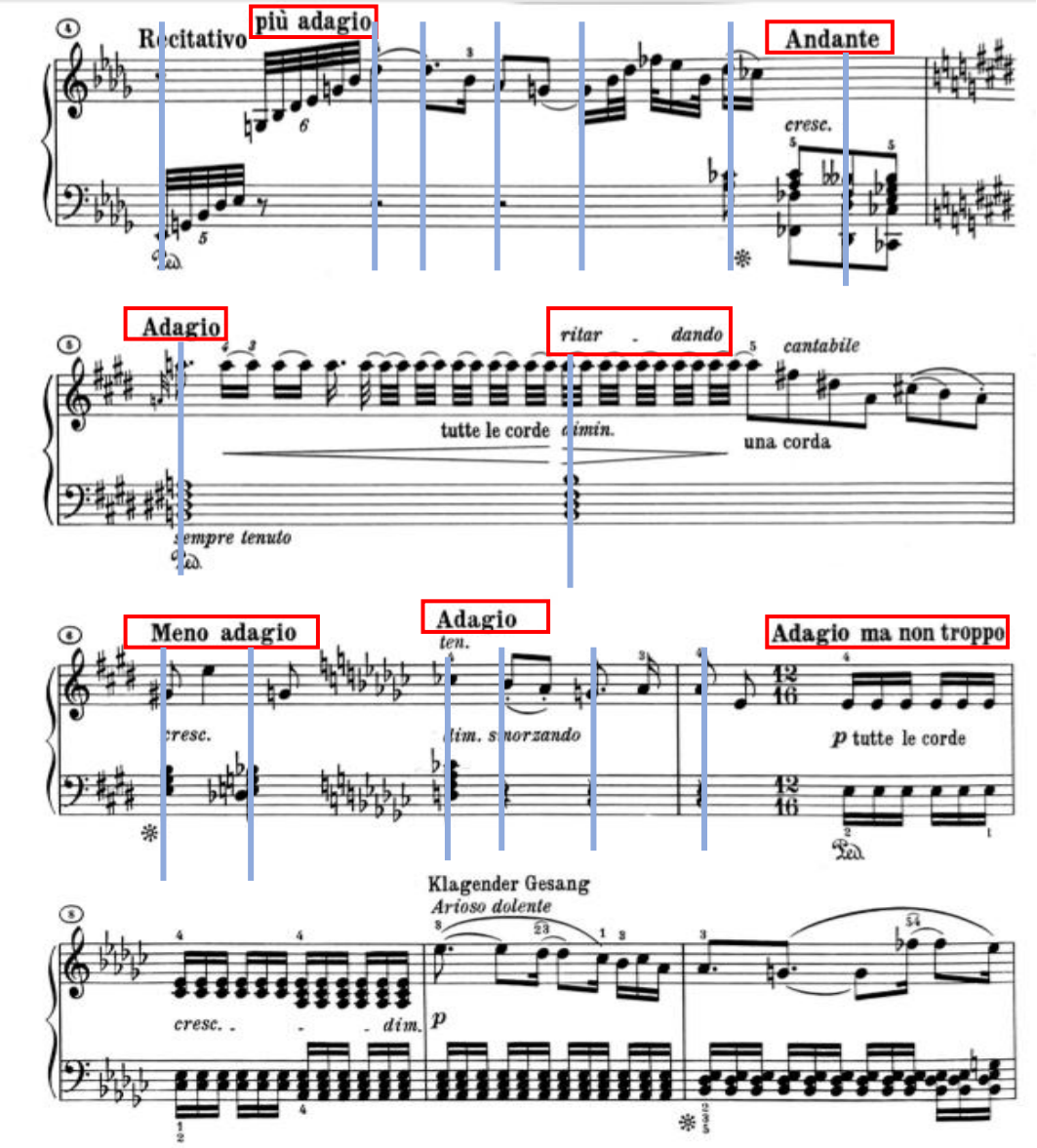

Figure 30 Op. 110, Mvmt. III, mm. 4-10

The rhythm prior to the Arioso recollection in measure 115 sets a different background that alters its rhythmic behavior (Figure 31). The constantly running 8th notes of the fugue's 6/8

meter produce a regularity that was missing from the previous section. So, the Arioso melody must be bolder in its rhythmic contrast to create the sense of interruption and instability. The

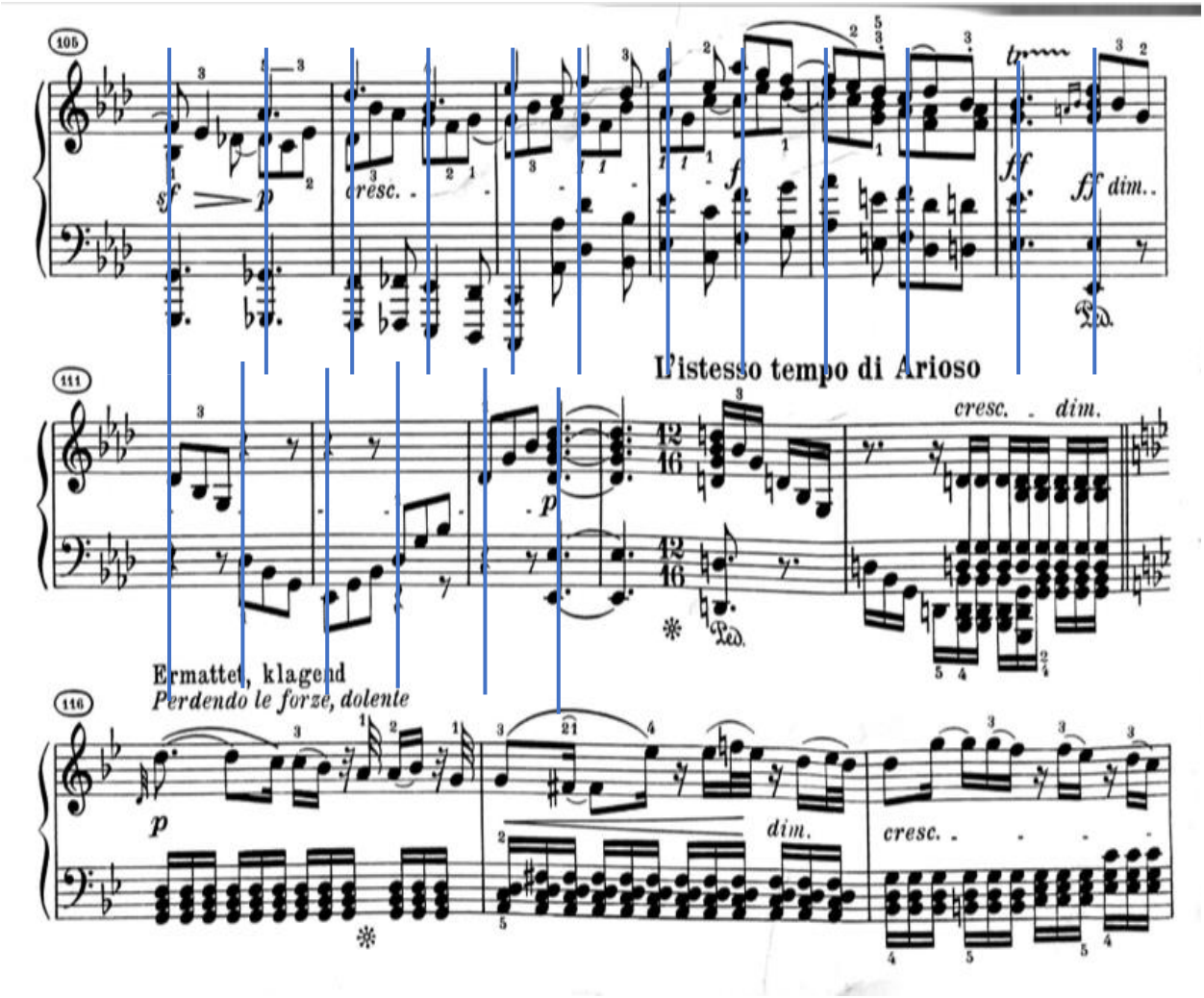

Figure 31 Op. 110, Mvmt. III, mm. 105-118, Context to Arioso Recollection

instability emerges gradually towards the section of rhythmic elusiveness in measures 132-134. The left-hand sixteenth-note accompaniment sustains the beat, against which the right-hand melody contrasts. The chord-changes in the left-hand accompaniment falls squarely on each beat from measures 116-122. Then it begins to waver from that established predictability in measures 123, proving it to be an unreliable anchor (Figure 32).

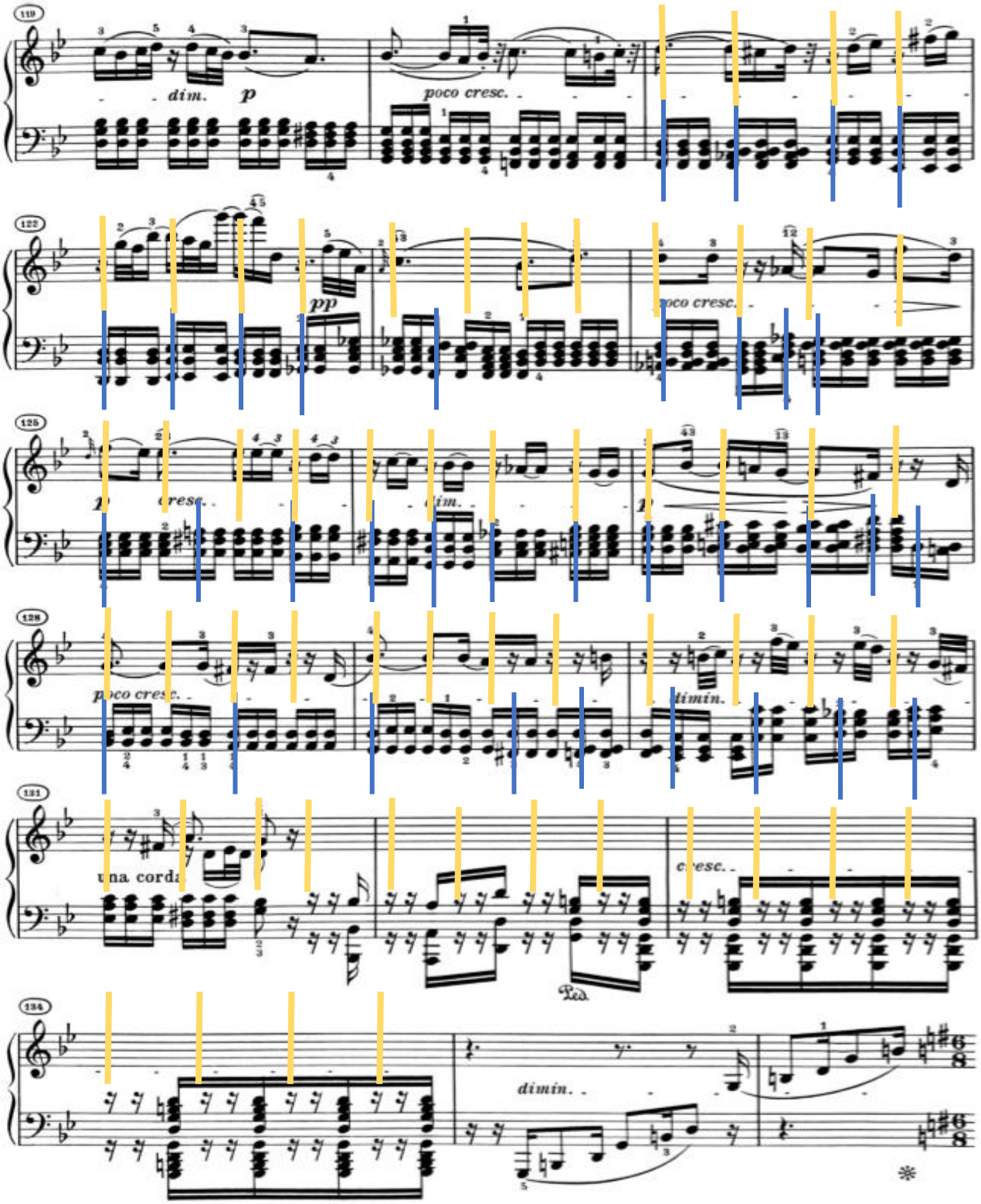

Figure 32 Op. 110, Mvmt. III, Arioso recollection's rhythmic instability

The harmonic contrasts, created by the half-step modulation from the fugue and the shift to the minor quality, increase the abrupt effect of the disturbance in measure 116. Compared to other sonatas, the overall key relationships between movements are more closely related (Table 1). The first movement clearly begins in the home key of A-flat major. Modulations to far regions of the circle of fifths occur expectedly in sections such as the development, where the music ventures to the key of E major at measure 70. No matter how far the harmony wanders, the piece always finds its way back to the home key. The second movement begins in the relative minor. The trio of the second movement is in D-flat. It eventually returns to F minor with a Coda that ends on a Picardy 3rd, F major. The beginning of the third movement intentionally goes through a kaleidoscope of harmonies, but it was just one of the means to prepare for the stability of the Arioso which is in the parallel minor of the home key. The Fugue in measure 27 returns us to A-flat major, leading the listener to believe that the harmonic stability will stay for the remainder of the piece.

Table 1 Op. 110 Key Relationships

	Mvmt I	Mvmt II		Mvmt III				
		Scherzo	Trio	Arioso'	Fugue'	Arioso''	Fugue''	
1-Sharp							G-Major	
0 Flats/0 Sharps								
1-Flat								
2-Flats						G-Minor		G-Minor
3-Flats								
4-flats	A-flat Major	F-Minor			A-flat Major			A-flat Major
5-Flats			D-flat Major					
6-Flats				A-flat Minor				

This feigning of stability makes the interruption of the G-minor Arioso more palpable. In certain ways, the G minor key can be logical and illogical in the sonata's harmonic scheme. We approach the Arioso similarly as we did prior to the Fugue (Figure 33). In measure 6, there is the root movement from E to the D-diminished chord. The D root moves up a half step to E-flat, the

dominant of A-flat minor. Then starting in measure 110, the E-flat seventh sonority takes up four and a half measures. The upward half-step motion that links the two Arioso passages happens in measure 114, where the D-flat member of the E-flat seventh chord changes to D-natural at the time signature change to 12/16. Like the E-flats in measure 7, the D becomes the dominant that smoothly leads us to the G-minor Arioso.

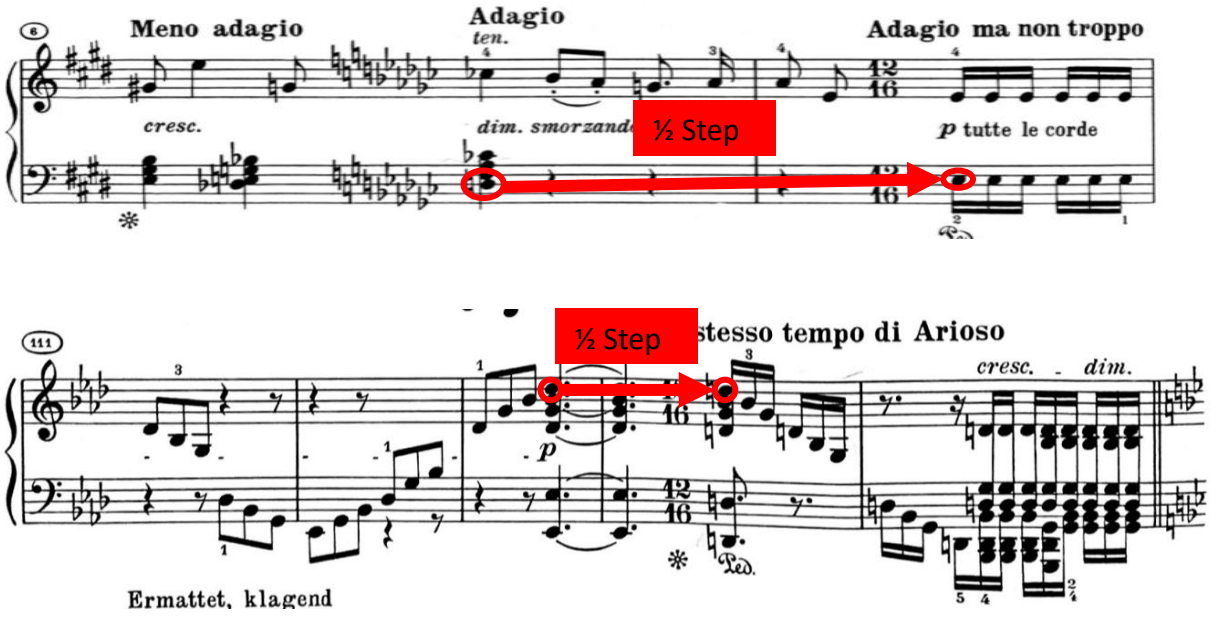

Figure 33 Op. 110, Mvmt. III/mm. 6-7 (Top), III/mm. 111-115 (Bottom)

Beethoven's manipulation of harmony—opposing the remote with related keys—creates a feeling of temporal distance. Like the nostalgic episodes common in the early novels of Beethoven's time, the reader understands a passage to be in the past, only in relation to the present. The reader of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* understands that the story takes place in the past through the writing's format,[37] and the language's tense. Surely, there are more ways to create a sense of nostalgia, but all must explicitly or implicitly establish the present. Music has to fulfill this same prerequisite in order

[37] Both are written in the style of a diary with dated entries.

to create this temporal effect. In Op. 110, the first element of the present from which the past can arise is the tonic key, A-flat major. The scope of deviation from A-flat major, as presented in Table 1, determines the temporal distance. Lastly, he was able to invoke the past through the fugue's association to the Baroque era. Together with harmonic distance, Beethoven was able to manipulate the listener's reference of time to a level of sophistication that allowed all three parts—past, present, and future—to actively influence each other.

Chapter 5

The Hero (Op. 53, op. 57, Op. 81a)

A common protagonist in the early German novels is the hero, but the kind differs from the war hero of Greek mythology. Rather, the hero is a philosophically enlightened figure and a champion of metaphysical ideals. E.T.A Hoffman's ragged antagonist, Kappellmeister Kreisler,[38] is a prime example of this archetype which the Romantic generation would revere. The reader's introduction to this character has some striking similarities to Beethoven's personality:

> "With both hands he [Kreisler] then seized the instrument, which he detached from the blue ribbon by which it hung around his shoulders, held it up and began: "Tell me, you stubborn little thing, where is your harmony? Into what corner of your interior has your pure scale crept? Or do you intend to rebel against your master and claim that his ear has been smashed in the smithy of a balanced temperature and that his enharmonics are only a childish trick? You are mocking me, I feel, although my beard is trimmed more neatly than that of Maestro Stefano Pacini, *detto il Venetiano*, who placed the gift of harmony inside you and which remains an insoluble secret to me. And, dear thing, let me warn you that if you will not allow the combination of Gs and As or Cs and Ds, or of all the sounds, I will set nine German masters on you to scold you and to tame you with enharmonic words. You may fling yourself into Pacini's arms; you must have the last word like a shrewish wife. Or are you impertinent and proud enough to believe that all the pretty spirits which live in you only obey the potent magic of the enchanter who has long since been buried, and that in the hands of a fool---"
>
> At these last words the man stopped suddenly, jumped up, and stared into the lake as though lost in thought."[39]

The above scene takes place when Kreisler wanders into his master's forest. He is as uncontrollable to his employer as Beethoven was to his patrons. His ragged appearance showed no prestige from his appointment to Kappellmeister, that when he was discovered wandering in

[38] The life of Johannes Kreisler can be read in E.T.A Hoffman's *The Life and Opinions of Kater Murr.*

[39] E. T. A. Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of Kater Murr* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 46.

the woods, he had much difficulty in convincing the authorities of his occupation and social status. His devotion to music as a high art form is a source of internal conflict as he struggles to reconcile the loneliness of that vocation and his yearning for romantic love. Beethoven's admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte is a well-documented, but the admiration was less directed towards Napoleon's military prowess and more towards his embodiment of enlightenment ideals. When Napoleon crowned himself Emperor, the disillusioned composer furiously retracted the 3rd Symphony's original dedication to the infamous general. Ferdinand Ries related an account of the moment Beethoven learned of the news:

> "In this symphony [Symphony no. 3] Beethoven had Buonaparte in mind, but as he was when he was First Consul. Beethoven esteemed him greatly at the time and likened him to the greatest Roman consuls. I as well as several of his more intimate friends saw a copy of the score lying upon his table with the word "Buonaparte" at the extreme top of the title page, and at the extreme bottom "Luigi van Beethoven," but not another word. Whether and with what the space between was to be filled out, I do not know. I was the first to bring him the intelligence that Buonaparte had proclaimed himself emperor, whereupon he flew into a rage and cried out: "Is he then, too nothing more than an ordinary human being? Now he, too, will trample on all the rights of man and indulge only his ambition. He will exalt himself above all others, become a tyrant!" Beethoven went to the table, took hold of the title page by the top, tore it in two, and threw it on the floor. The first page was rewritten and only then did the symphony receive the title *Sinfonica eroica*."[40]

Wellington's Victory, Op. 91, a piece that gained much popularity with the public and had an overtly militaristic program, was derided in Beethoven's journal, "Nothing but an occasional work…Ah you pitiful scoundrel, my shit is better than anything you've ever thought."[41]

Certainly, Beethoven thought himself to be a philosophical hero similar to Kreisler but the traditional archetype of the war hero was one he recognized as well, perhaps as his equal, as long as they existed in the classics. He had in his library a sizeable collection of fine literature including dramas, poems, prose, textbooks, and complete editions of Cicero, Euripides, and

[40] Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979), 132.
[41] Swafford, 616.

Goethe, Hölty, Homer, Klopstock, La Fontaine, Schiller, Seume, Shakespeare, and Tiedge. Like every other German, Goethe was one of the few contemporaries he worshipped—though the admiration was not exactly reciprocated.[42] Beethoven lived in a time of philosophic and political revolution. He was immersed in the *Aufklarüng* movement, endured wartime instability, and consumed Shakespeare0 and the Greek classics. Despite the broadening definition of the hero at the turn of the 19th-century, the militaristic hero of Odysseus and Henry V would still be in Beethoven's mind.

Heroism marks Beethoven's middle period works. He takes it upon himself to be the herald of a new enlightened form of music in his Heiligenstadt testament. Perhaps, the two sonatas in the following analyses may be a kind of self-portrait. The Op. 53 and Op. 57 Piano Sonatas, respectively known as "Waldstein" and the "Appasionata", give us two kinds of heroes, the triumphant and the tragic. These sonatas will take up the bulk of my discussion in this chapter, but I will lead with a brief examination of Op. 81a, also known as *Das Lebewohl.* If the hero for the *Appassionata* is an inwardly brooding character, then the hero for the Op. 81a sonata—also known as *Das Lebewohl* (Beethoven's), or more popularly known as *Les Adieux*—centers on an external one. The sonata's program is based on the temporary departure of one of Beethoven's patrons, Archduke Rudolph. Each part of this three-movement work has a programmatic title. The first movement is "Das Lebewohl", the second movement "Abwesenheit", and the third movement "Das Wiedershehen". Many have speculated on the program of this sonata. Hans von Bülow footnoted:

> Even a player with the most deeply rooted antipathy to programs cannot help seeing, that in the falling pairs of thirds for the left hand the gesture of beckoning with a

[42] Romain Rolland, *Goethe and Beethoven,* trans. G. A. Pfister and E. S. Kemp (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1968), 4.

> handkerchief—the tone-picture of a sign—is illustrated, a sign apprising the coming one of the waiting one's presence.[43]

Adolf Bernhard Marx, seemingly overlooking the circumstances of Archduke Rudolph's departure, assigned the story of two parting lovers to the sonata:

> That they are moments [Farewell, Absence, The Return] from the life of a pair of lovers is presupposed. The composition itself also furnishes proof of this, for in the first and third movements a duet form rules throughout, namely, two voices going with and against each other…Now the parting word resounds undisguisedly from both sides. 'Farewell!' calls the feminine voice. 'Farewell!' answers the masculine one, which we must imagine coming more and more from a distance, therefore weaker. First the two voices sound naturally simple, then ideal in their harmonic completeness; at last, true to nature, they float into each other like calls of parting ones—'Farewell!' and 'Farewell, then!'[44]

Marx must have not been aware of Beethoven's inscription that reads, "The farewell on the occasion of his Imperial Highness the Archduke Rudolph's departure, the 4th of May, 1809." Beethoven also wrote one for the last movement, "The arrival of his Imperial Highness the Archduke Rudolph, the 30th of June, 1810."[45] Many editors agree on the sentiment of the 2nd movement. Marx wrote that it "Expresses the desolation of loneliness."[46] Czerny remarked, "With the expression of the deepest sorrow."[47] According to Johnstone, the first three notes of the movement were written to the words, "Ist es wahr?"[48]

With Op. 81a, Beethoven showed to the world that he is willing and capable of centering his music around a particular person or program. I posit that his other "untitled" sonatas likely had their own program of characters or character, along with their own evolution akin to what

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[43] William Newman, *Beethoven on Beethoven* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1988), 269.
[44] Adolf Bernhard Marx, *Beethoven Piano Works,* trans. Fannie Louise Gwinner (Chicago: Clayton F. Summy Co., 1895), 136-138.
[45] J. Alfred Johnstone, *Notes on the Interpretation of 24 Famous Piano Sonatas by Beethoven* (London: William Reeves Bookseller Limited, 1927), 196.
[46] Marx, 139.
[47] Czerny, 51.
[48] "Is it true?", Johnstone, 199.

you would read in a novel. It is the responsibility of the pianist, fortunate enough to undertake the fulfilling task of interpreting his sonatas, to search for such signs. The two sonatas that are the subject of the subsequent analysis do not have an explicit program as Op. 81a. Contemporary accounts and his sketches show how Beethoven behaves when he gets hold of an idea, it does not leave him until he completely exhausts its musical potential. These three sonatas (Op. 53, Op. 57, and Op. 81a) demonstrate his obsession with the hero archetype. All were written between 1803 and 1810, the Waldstein being the earliest and *Das Lebewohl* written last. He explores every aspect of the hero from the admiration of an external figure in Op. 81a, to the romantic hero triumphantly overcoming adversity in the Waldstein, to the downfall of one in the *Appassionata*.

Op. 53 - Waldstein

The "Waldstein" Sonata is in the key of C Major, a key associated with triumph, strength, rejoicing, celebration, freedom, and light.[49] The heroism of the sonata not only makes itself present in the brightness of the tonality and in its expansiveness of writing, but also in the compositional boldness that surpassed those of his time. The adventurous modulations and progressions appear early before the development, where such moves would typically occur. One hears the hero traverse numerous key areas in the actual development section with confidence and bravado, a musical depiction of the courageous pioneer trekking through the wide wilderness. The harmonic movements of this lengthy section paint the panorama in which Beethoven sets his hero's adventure. This section lasts from measure 86 to measure 156, the longest of all of his sonatas. Table 2 shows the different harmonic locations that our hero

[49] Paul M. Ellison, *Key to Beethoven: Connecting Tonality and Meaning in His Music (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2014),* 49.

explores. One can hear how far the music moves away from the home key. It is as if Beethoven exults in the growing vastness separating the hero from the home key. As we will hear later, the hero meets this distance—along with all of its trials—with courageous optimism.

Table 2 Op. 53, Mvmt. 1, Development Section, key areas

Measure(s)	**Key**
86	C Major
90	F Major
93	C-Minor
94	G-Minor
100	C-Minor
104	F-Minor
105	C-Flat Major
107	A-flat Major
109	F-Minor
112	C-Major
116	F Major
120	B-Flat Major
124	E-Flat Minor
126	F-Sharp Minor
128	B Minor
130	E Minor
132	C Minor
134	D-flat Major
136-155	G Major (Dominant preparation of C Major)
156	C Major

It begins in C major, only to move to B-flat in measure 5 (See Figure 36 on page 63). A hint of the parallel minor in measure 12 precedes the return to C-major in measure 14. The second theme area is in E major and proceeds to arpeggios in measure 66 with pompous grandeur. One can hear semblances to trumpets heralding the hero's arrival. This hopeful optimism presides over the whole sonata, but one can still hear the presence of the anti-hero. The recapitulation in measure 156 proceeds predictability with our hero in focus until the A-flat surprise that foils his path for six measures. The A-flat in bar 168 acts as the force that hinders this hero. It causes the diversion away from the expected dominant G towards a brief foray into

the E-flat sonority. The rest of the recapitulation continues unconventionally with multiple interruptions as it oscillates between the sharp and flat sides of the circle of fifths. Beethoven roughly follows the paradigm of sonata form. Measure 196 has the false recapitulation of the 2nd theme in A-major only to be corrected in the home key in measure 204.

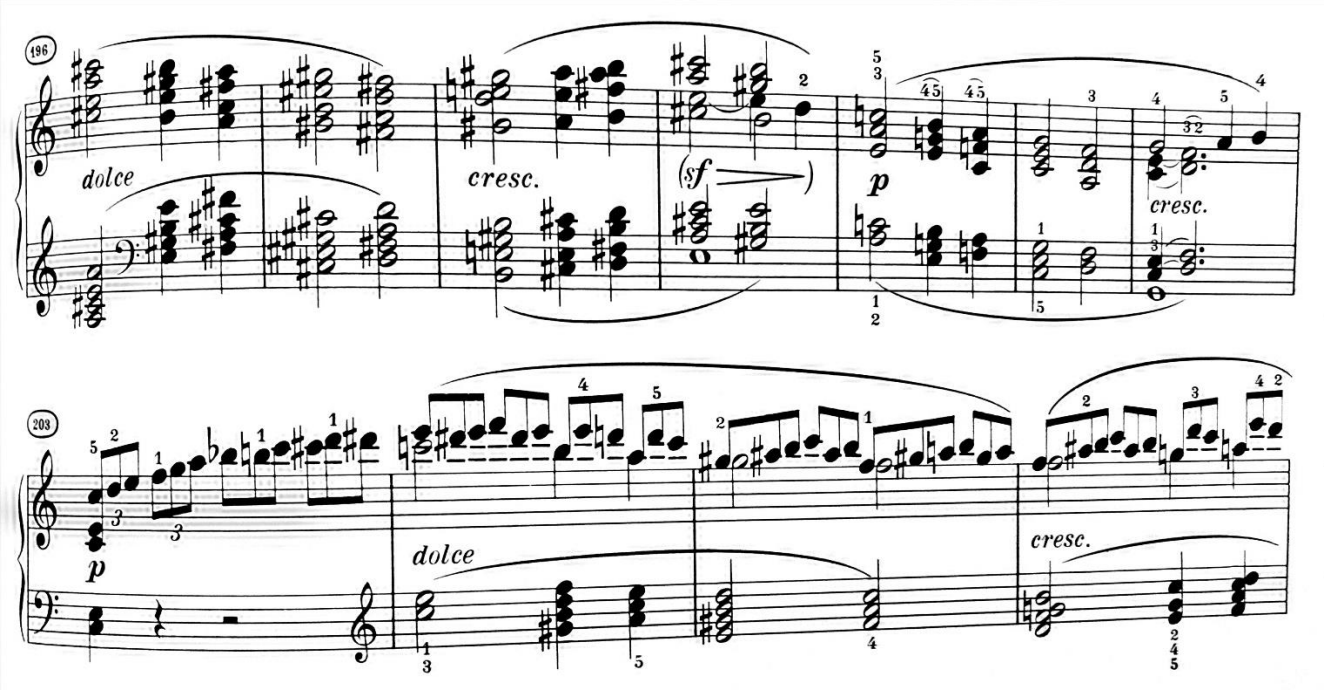

Figure 34 Op. 53, 1st Mvmt., mm. 196-206.

Measure 235 is another diversion away from the C major center. This time it goes towards the flat side of the circle of fifths. The C^7 chord pivots the harmony towards F minor. Now, the struggle to restore stability towards the C major center is stronger, it will not be until the end of the movement when this is achieved. Much of the music before that point takes place in A minor. The final interruption of the movement occurs in measure 292, again with the A-flat interrupting a sequence of cadential six-four motion, as if to say that there is more to resolve.

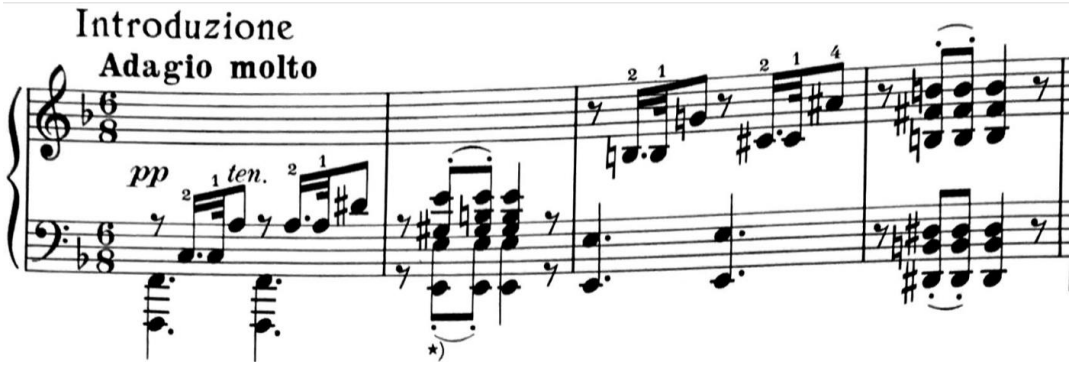

Figure 35 Op. 53, II. Introduzione: Adagio molto, mm. 1-4

The second movement, as it stands, is not what Beethoven originally intended. The *Andante Favori*, WoO 57, was the original, but Beethoven's friend convinced him that it was too long. So, he replaced it with the shorter and calmer second movement that we have today. This "Introduzione" (Figure 35) still carries the principle motives of the first movement as it leads the listener to the finale. It is a continuation of our hero's story that began in the 1st movement. The connection can be heard at the outset of each movement's bass voice. Both has a downward, stepwise motion to the dominant. The first movement begins subtly with a lone C in the bass. It is important to conceive this as the beginning of the whole sonata as this behavior unifies all the movements. It also directs our ears to the bass voice. The C moves to the B in measure 3, the B-flat in measure 5, A in measure 7, A-flat in measure 8, and finally to the G (the dominant) in measure 9.

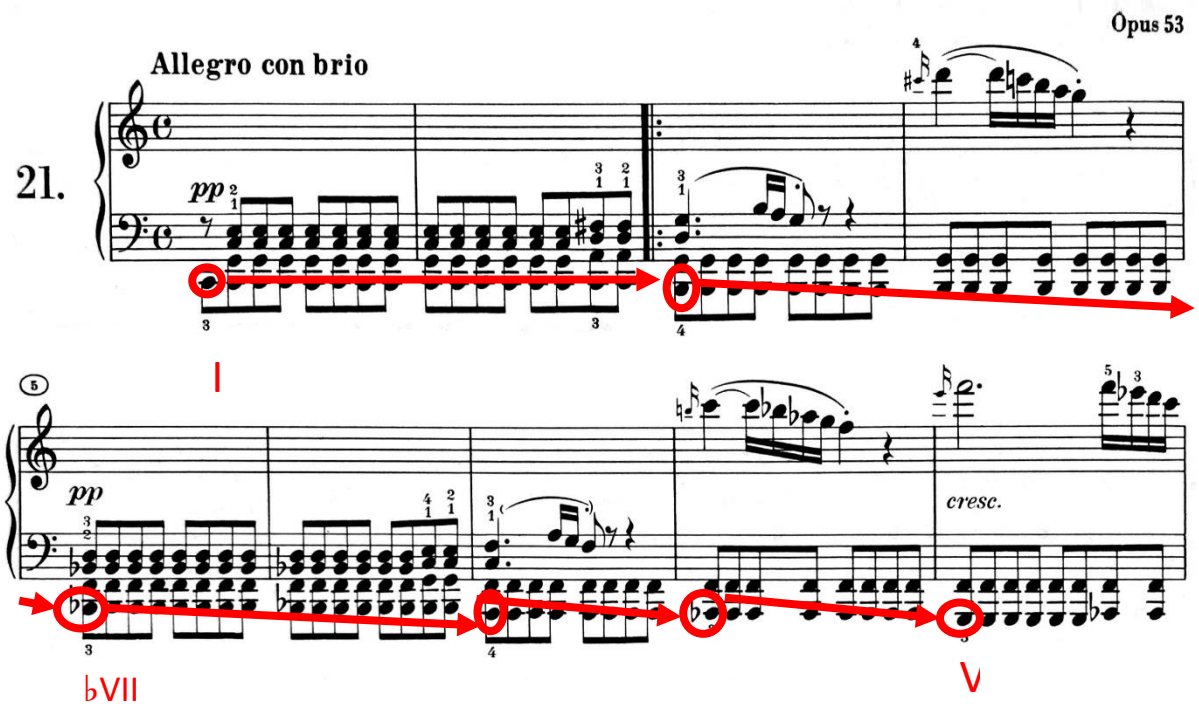

Figure 36 Op. 53/I. Allegro con brio/mm. 1-9

In similar fashion, the bass F octave moves to the E in measure 2, the D-sharp in measure 4, D on the downbeat of measure 5, then to D-flat on the 4th beat of the same measure (Figure 37). The dominant C in measure 6 completes the melodic sequence and begins on a different direction.

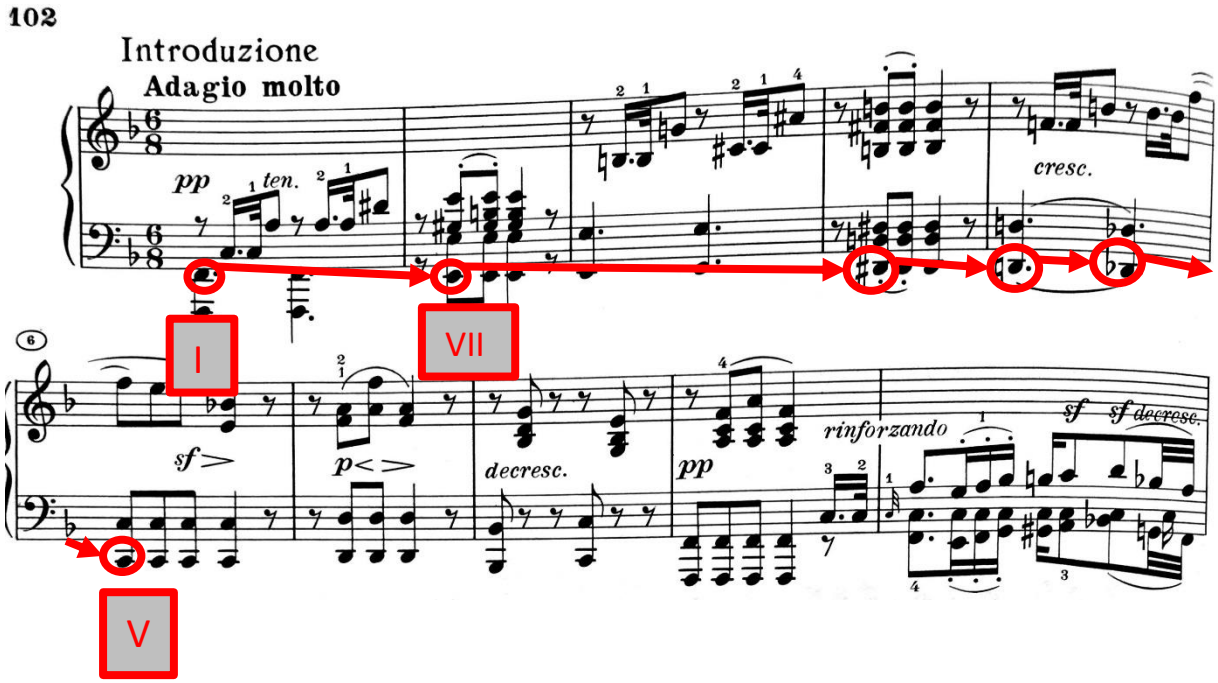

Figure 37 Op. 53, Mvmt. 2, Bass voice leading

The opening measures of the second movement are made up of musical fragments. Measure 10 begins a progression of ever-lengthening phrases that justifies the final movement's long first phrase as a continuation, instead of a new start. The extremely slow tempo and the constant silences of the rests create a sonic environment of fragments that have yet to congeal. The first idea occupies the first measure. A rest separates that idea with the three eighth-note E-major chords. The foreign E-major sound of the second measure adds momentum by necessitating a resolution. Instead, the third and fourth measures moves the listener further away towards the B-major chord in measure 4. This chord logically fits the context as the dominant of E major. Measure 5 orients the movement back towards the home key of F major in measure 9. Measure 10 begins the phrase anew, but now has a song-like lyricism, imbuing the music with a new kind of musical momentum. From measure 10-17, the music has a longer breadth of line that is in stark opposition to the series of short motives of the opening measures (Figure 38). This momentary lucidity gives way to free fantasy that opened the movement, but with more

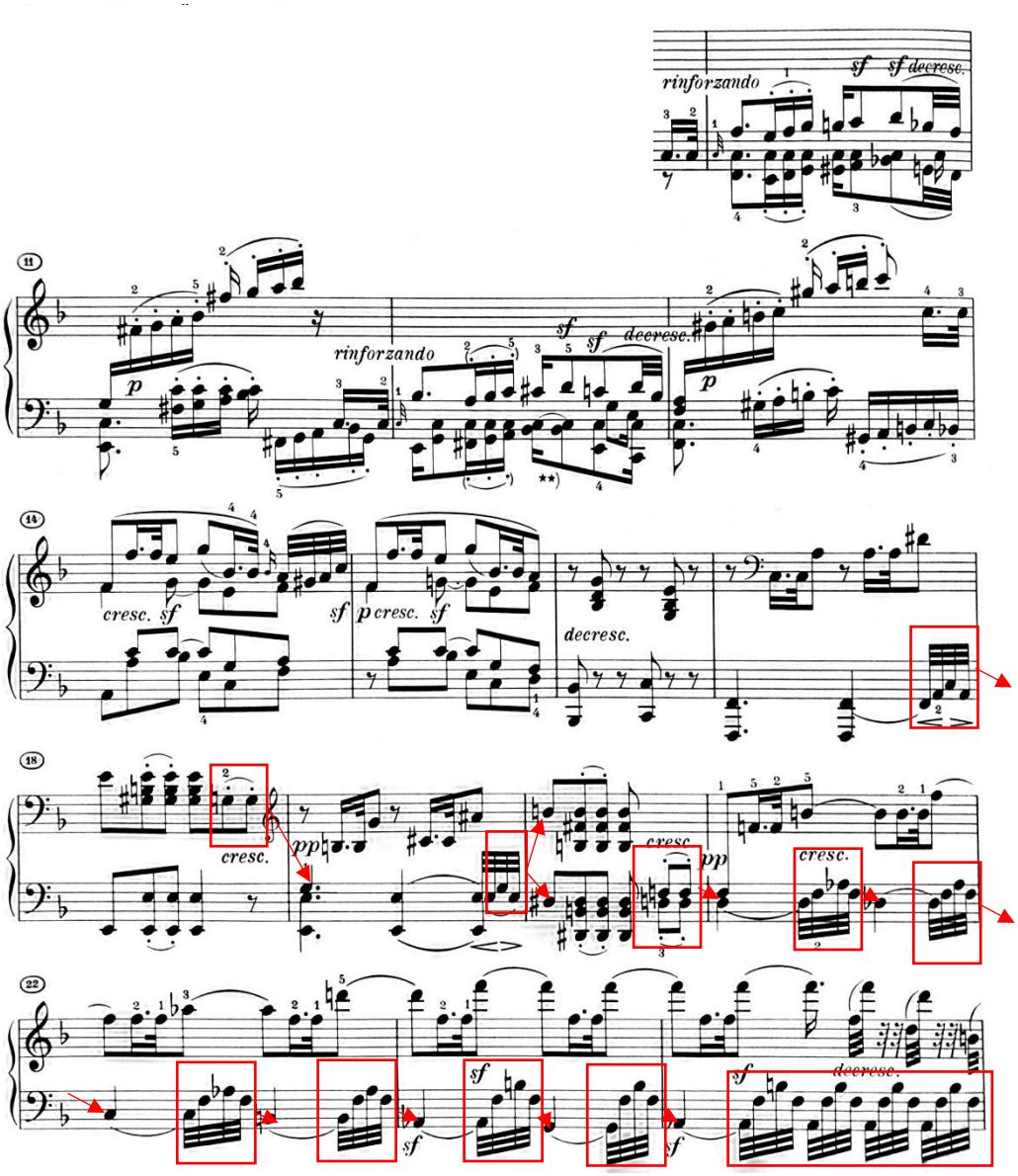

Figure 38 Op. 53, Mvmt. 2, mm. 10-24.

connected ideas. The 32nd notes connecting measure 17-18 and the 8th notes at the end of measure 18, now fill the gaps between the motives that were previously separated with silence or residual sound. This added connection elongates the sense of line and the musical idea.

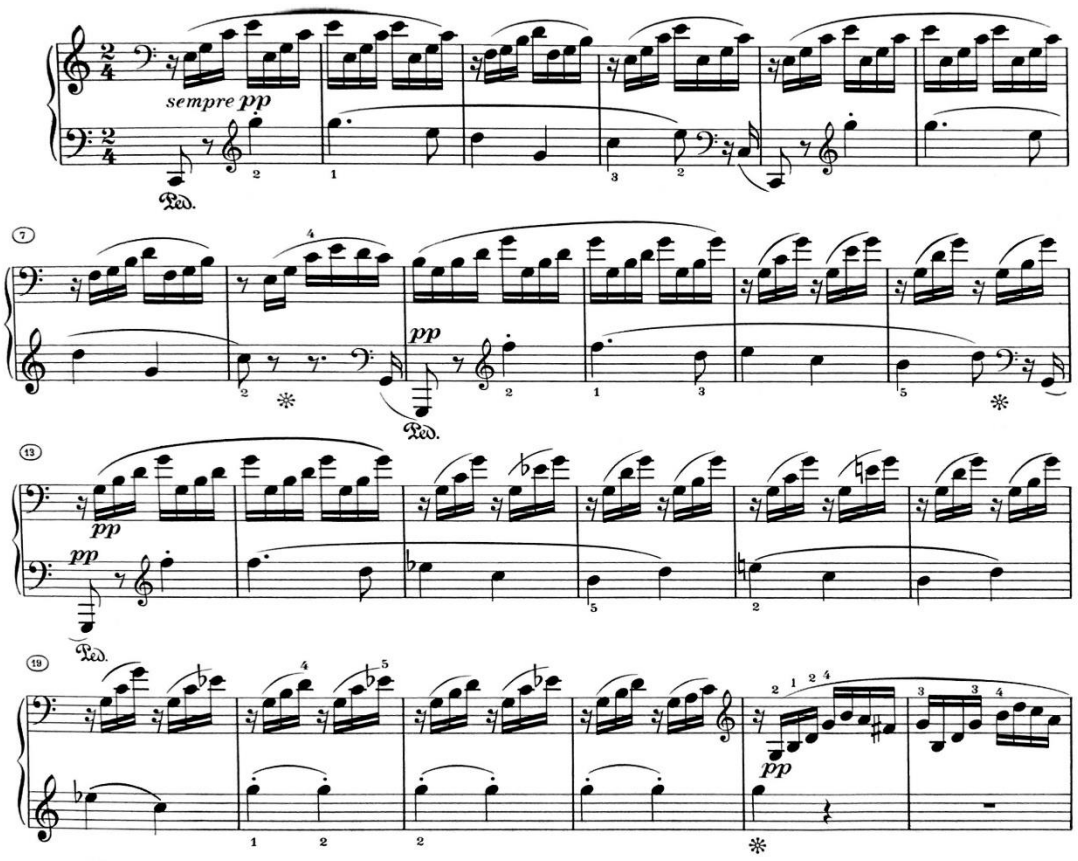

Figure 39 "A" Theme, Mvmt 3, mm. 1-24

As Beethoven uses the intrinsic conflicts inherent in Sonata form to propel the musical narrative forward, he takes advantage of the alternating quality of Rondo form to pit the opposing forces against each other. The expansive scale of the A theme (Figure 39) is due to the opening leap of three and a half octaves from C^2 to G^5. The characteristically long pedal marking and the outlining of the chord amplify the scope of this theme. It begins calmly, but this theme contains a tension that hint at the coming conflict. The piece is completely diatonic until the harmony wavers in measure 15. The alternation between E-flat and E-natural undermines tonic stability of C Major.

The first contrasting section starts in measure 71 in the key of A minor (Figure 40). It challenges the A theme with its harmonic quality, register, accompaniment, contour, and motion. The bass now has the melodic lead. The treble voice shadows the bass and fills the rhythmic space. The accompaniment for the A theme consists of rising arpeggios, in contrast with the B

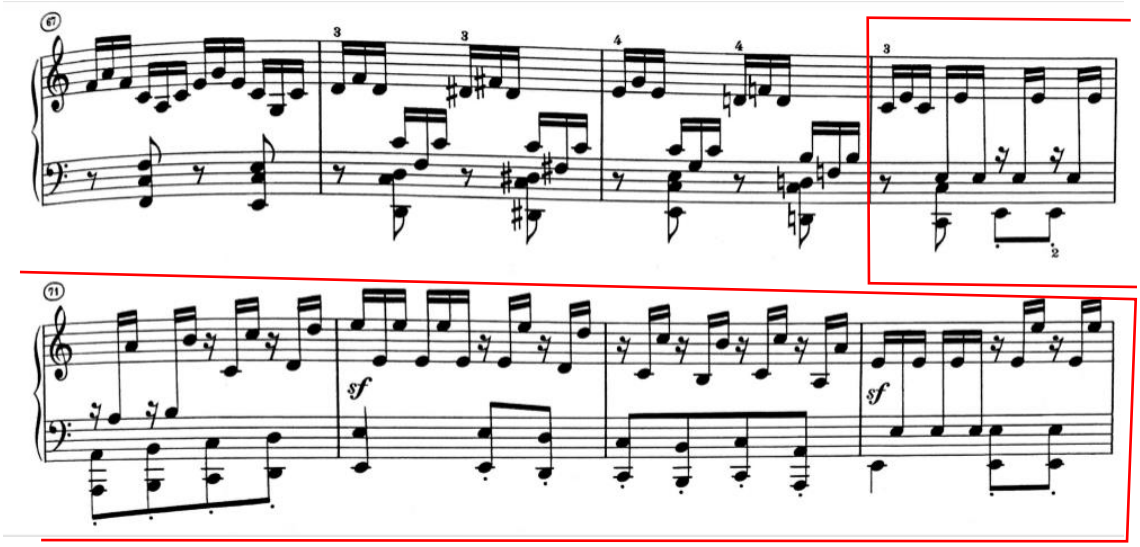

Figure 40 Op. 53, Mvmt. 3, mm. 67-74, Contrasting Theme 1

theme's open octaves. The contour between the two have contrary shapes. The shape of the B section melody follows that of an arc while the A section's theme forms a "U" shape when it descends from the G to its lower octave and then ascends to the E. Lastly, each of the two sections uses one of the two possible kinds of melodic motion, scalar and disjunct. The prevalent form of motion in the A section is disjunct, while the B section is scalar. Since they specialize in one or the other, the distinction between the two becomes starker. The disjunct versus scalar opposition between the two themes is also what makes them complement each other, like the Yin and Yang. The second contrasting theme in C minor proves to be the biggest source of conflict, based on how much more music is needed for a resolution (Figure 41). The A-minor contrasting section lasts approximately 44 measures. The C minor section, measures 176-313, lasts 137 measures. It shares multiple characters with the A-minor theme. The melody resides in the

lower register of the keyboard, and has an accompanying figure that first doubles the melody. It eventually morphs into scalar chromatic triplet-sixteenth notes.

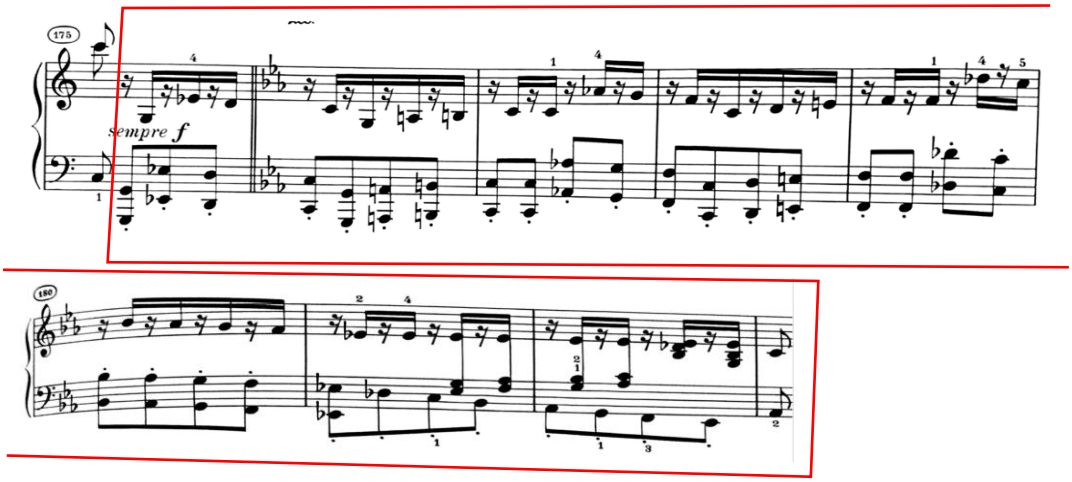

Figure 41 Op. 53, Mvmt. 3, mm. 175-183, Contrasting Theme 2.

What is most interesting is its influence on our "hero" theme. In measure 221, after the completion of the contrasting material, the A theme returns in the distant key of A-flat major. This key prepares the D-flat major harmony in measure 229. The atmosphere lightens with optimism in measure 239 under a pianissimo dynamic. From measure 251, the music continues its lengthy and circuitous route back to the home key of C major in measure 313 (Figure 42). The music attempts to draw the hero back to the darker tone of C-minor before it reaches its destination. The adversarial failure magnifies the triumph over adversity in measure 313. The A-flat will return once again, but in a more reconciliatory setting. Prior to the coda in measure 386, he incorporates the A-flat as part of the Dominant-9th chord of C major. At this point the A-

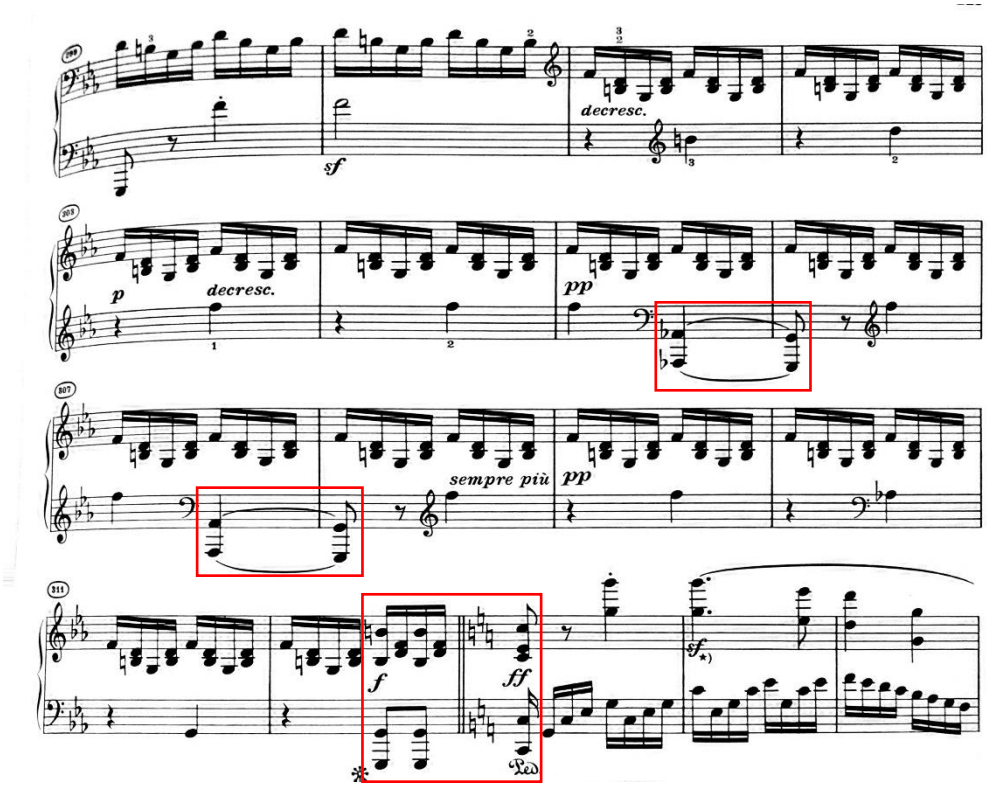

Figure 42 Op. 53, Mvmt. 3, mm. 299-315.

flat stops becoming a competing force against the tonic key but is now part of an ensemble that reinforces the home key's strength (Figure 43). The *Prestissimo* Coda, that starts in measure 403, is a wild celebratory outburst of this outcome. Its length of about 130 measures is a proportional response to the epic journey that preceded it. Everything in this coda works to resolve all the events that occurred in all the movements of the sonata. The resulting feeling of satisfaction is attributed to this masterful act of proportionality.

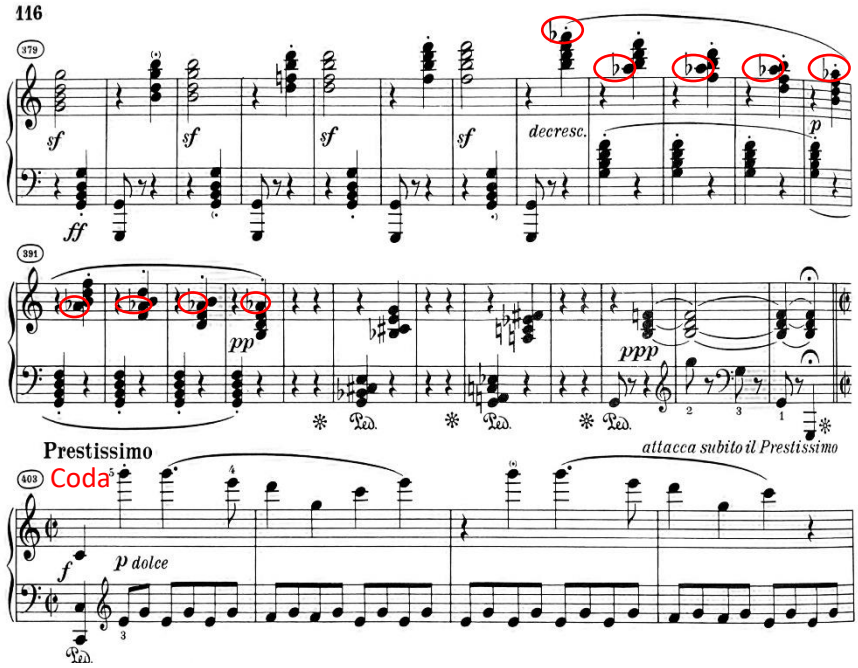

Figure 43 Op. 53, Mvmt. 3, mm. 379-406.

Beethoven writes a detail in the opening measure of each movement that is easily overlooked. It is the single pitch that begins each movement (Figure 44). This is a major thread that holds the three movements together. Each one sounds alone due to the rests above them,

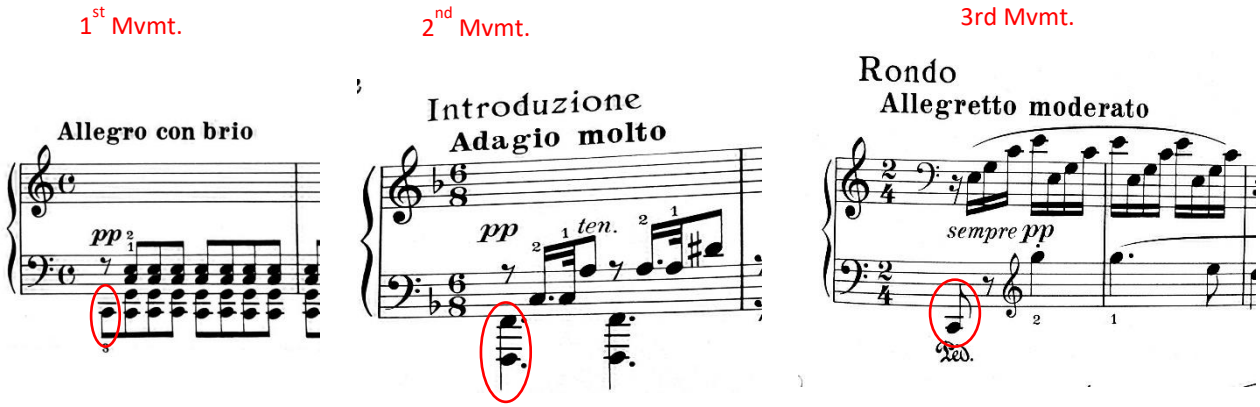

Figure 44 Op. 53, Opening measures of each movement

uniting each movement with a common behavior. They are each a part of a large-scale progression that fuel the motion of the entire sonata. The C of the first movement, the F of the second movement, and the C of the third movement make up an extremely prolonged plagal cadence. They are all under a *pianissimo* dynamic. Beethoven sustains each of them through

different means. In the first movement, the ostinato eighth notes preserve the C in a dry, minimally-pedalled texture. In the second, the F octave repeats much more slowly, but the damper pedal is applied much more than the previous movement. In the third movement, Beethoven writes a long 8-bar pedal marking, explicitly directing the performer to maintain an unbroken emanation of overtones from the instrument. The progression from the dry sound of the first movement to the wetness of the third parallels the hero's elevation from earthly glory to fantastic legend. Each of the opening impulses is the point that dictates the maximum scope of the movements, while being the primordial germ from which the music originates.

We hear in Op. 53, Beethoven's holistic compositional prowess to depict the "triumphant hero." The expression is natural and unforced, due to Beethoven's harnessing of every aspect of musical composition to tell the story, similar to how an artful treatment of an ensemble of characters can vitalize a story out of the cold letters of a book. He leveraged the opportunities for conflict in harmony, form, and melody, then walked the delicate line between incoherent chaos and boring monotony in creating a page turner of a sonata that craftily builds up to the cathartic outcome between the hero and anti-hero. Still, it is one thing to write a satisfactory account of the triumphant hero, but it is another to write about the demise of one.

Op. 57 – Appassionata

The Op. 57 Sonata, also known as the "Appassionata," is one of the towering achievements in the piano repertory. The sonata opens *pianissimo*, outlining the F-minor tonic chord (Figure 45). Its rhythm resembles a slow march. This dotted rhythm is one of the unifying motives. It creates a poignant funeral march in the second movement. We are roused by it in the beginning of the third movement. The subdued march-like character of the second movement can easily depict the shadow of a hero that eventually meets a violent end in the last movement.

Another unifying motive that Beethoven exploits is the knocking four-note motive in measure 12 of the first movement. This would foreshadow[50] the famous opening motive that would begin the 5th Symphony[51]. The German literature and philosophy of Beethoven's time depict "Fate" as the force that subject the human race. In Greek mythology, the "Fates"—Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos—were goddesses who "drew and cut the thread of human life."[52] The hero of the *Appassionata* bears Fate's full impact, a clear contrast to Waldstein's triumphant hero.

This sonata shares a common conflict with the Waldstein, the inherent tension of the half step. The Waldstein Sonata's half-step motion to the A-flat in its last movement serves to transport the listener to the flat side of the circle of fifths. The half-step in the *Appassionata*, on the other hand, behaves more villainously. Beethoven takes the two notes of the half-step relationship and places them next to each other without any preparation, amplifying their natural dissonance. The conflict shows up immediately in the first measures between the tonic F-minor arpeggiation and the Neapolitan, G-flat. The tension pervades every aspect of the unifying motives that follow. The silence that separate the F-minor statement with its Neapolitan opposition pits the two against each other. The argument begins after the presentation of the two forces. First, we hear the C-major character in the brighter whole-step C-D trill, as if to offer peace, but it is immediately resisted with the cryptic half-step D-flat to C "knock" in the lower register of the keyboard. The persistent presence of this half step is what moves the two actors towards the tumultuous drama that follows.

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[50] Beethoven started writing the *Appassionata* in 1804 and finished in 1805. Though he started writing the 5th Symphony in 1804, he finished the bulk of the symphony's writing a few years later in 1807. (Grove Entry)

[51] Beethoven's 5th Symphony, for a while, had the appellation, "Fate". The credibility of the source of this name is suspect because it came from Anton Schindler who was later discovered to have falsified many claims he made about the composer. (Barry Cooper, *Beethoven and the Creative Process*, 42)

[52] William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Vol. II,* ed. David Bevington (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 252.

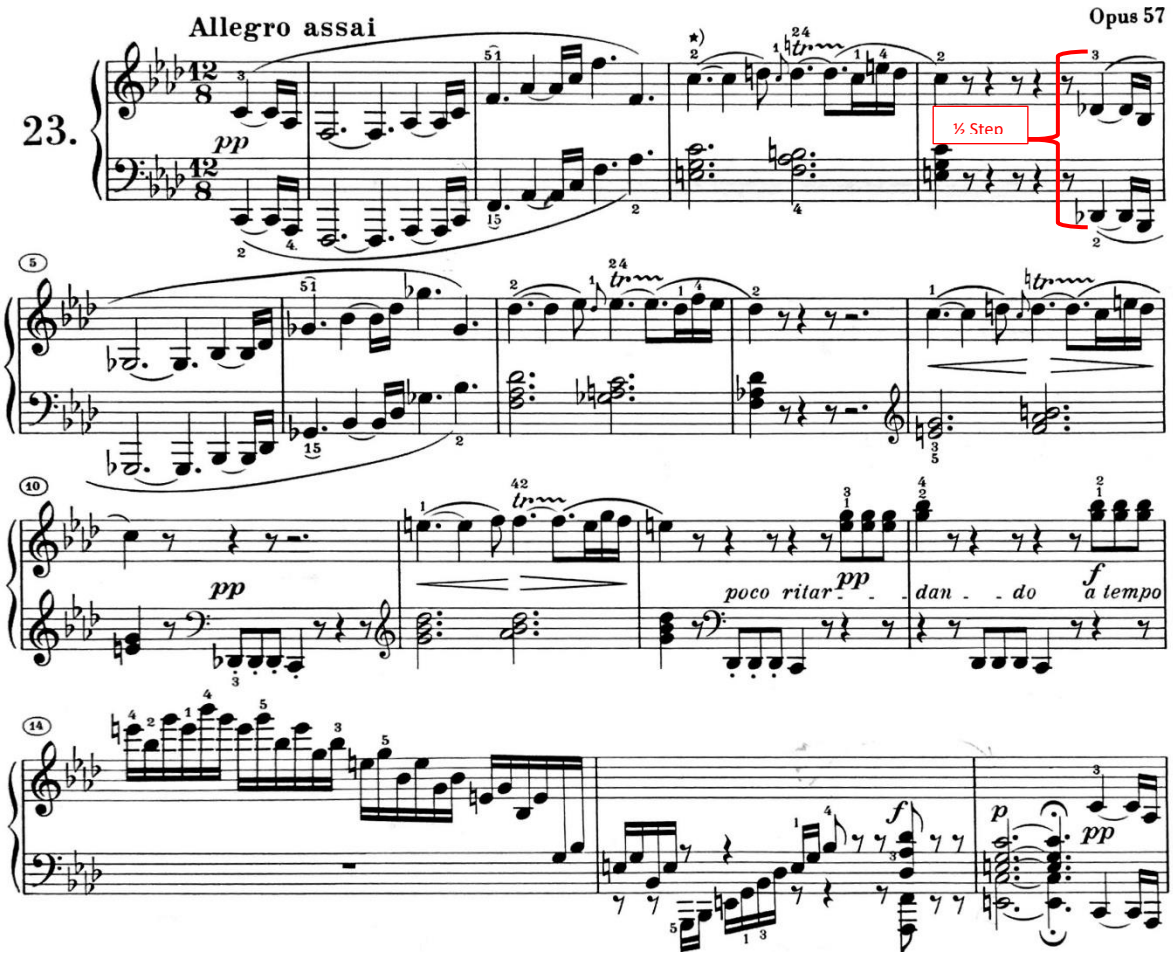

Figure 45 Op. 57, Mvmt. I, mm. 1-16

The natural tendency of the half step is to fall. This occurs in the exposition, but the breaking of that natural law is what marks the start of more extreme conflicts. The descending half step directs us towards chaos while an ascension thrusts us to a luminous transcendence. We hear this behavior quite early in the piece. The darker quality of the F minor chord grates at the brighter quality of the G-flat major harmony. Despite these striking differences, one can hear the kinship between F-minor and G-flat major characters in measures 3 and 7. The transposition from minor to major entails some necessary adjustments to the theme's intervallic content, such as the first downward skip of each. The major third skip of the F-minor theme morphs to a minor third in the G-flat major form. The effectiveness of the two measures in

relating the two characters lies in the fact that the intervallic content between them are the same despite the change from minor to major. Beethoven, in his genius, took something so elementary—the major quality of the dominant in major and minor keys—and used it to connect two contrasting ideas.

If one were to use the textbook definition of sonata form, the secondary theme area would surely be assigned to measures 35 to 50. It is in the relative major which is the standard harmonic movement in a minor key sonata. This is the first time that the listener would encounter anything resembling a song, but the similarities to the theme in the first four measures make us question the formal boundaries. Its rhythm is almost an exact match. The anacrusis of

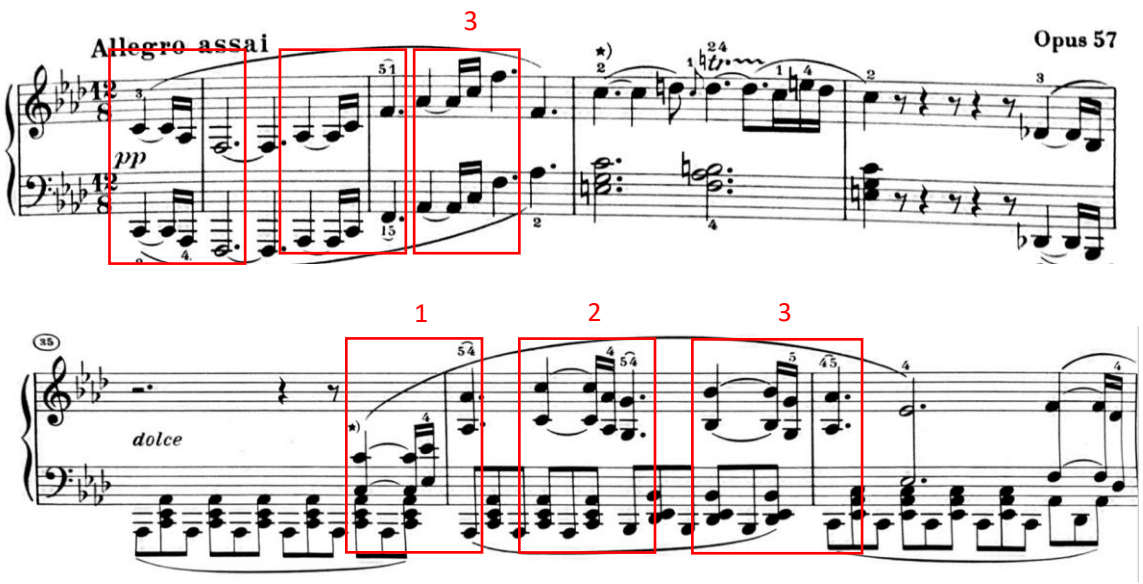

Figure 46 Sonata Op. 57, Mvmt. I, mm. 1-4 & mm. 35-37

the two themes are the same. If one were to organize their rhythm into units—the syncopation with its end—you would find that each phrase consists of the same number of units (Figure 46). Furthermore, a leap of a perfect interval ends the phrase of each theme. The 1st theme phrase leaps down a perfect octave while the 2nd theme phrase has a leap of a perfect 4th.

A more salient difference is how contrary their motions are with each other, very much like the A and B themes in the last movement of the Waldstein Sonata, but this difference actually strengthens the connection between the two theme areas. I am referring specifically to inversions, a common technique in variations and fugues. These two genres have their own forms and compositional traditions, but both develop from one or two themes. The inversion will produce a drastically different result, but the listener will still understand it as a form of the original idea. So, Beethoven not only blurs boundaries within one type of form, but between multiple forms! The second theme material are not exact inversions of first theme, but its common characteristics strongly point to this theme as a variation of the original. This creates continuity of thought in this section, rather than a creation of a new idea. The development is in the distant key of E major. The approach from the tumultuous A-flat minor transition in measure 51 is seamless. The enharmonic shift from A-flat to G-sharp in measure 65 exposes the duality of the harmony, and is the means to which we enter E major. We move a half step up to E in measure 67 from the 5th of the G-sharp chord, a move found in measures 166-167 of the first movement of Op. 53.

The 2nd movement, like the slow movement of the Waldstein, has numerous dotted rhythms, giving it a martial tone (Figure 47). As previously discussed, it persists in the first movement's secondary theme. When comparing the 2nd movement to Op. 26's Funeral March (Figure 48), one can hear the similarities between the two sonatas. Both consist of a series of chords with rhythms that emphasize the tactus. The melodic voices are mostly monotone. The

Op. 26 march theme consists of E-flats. The Appassionata 2nd movement theme, with occasional deviations, drones on a couple of notes, A-flat and D-flat.

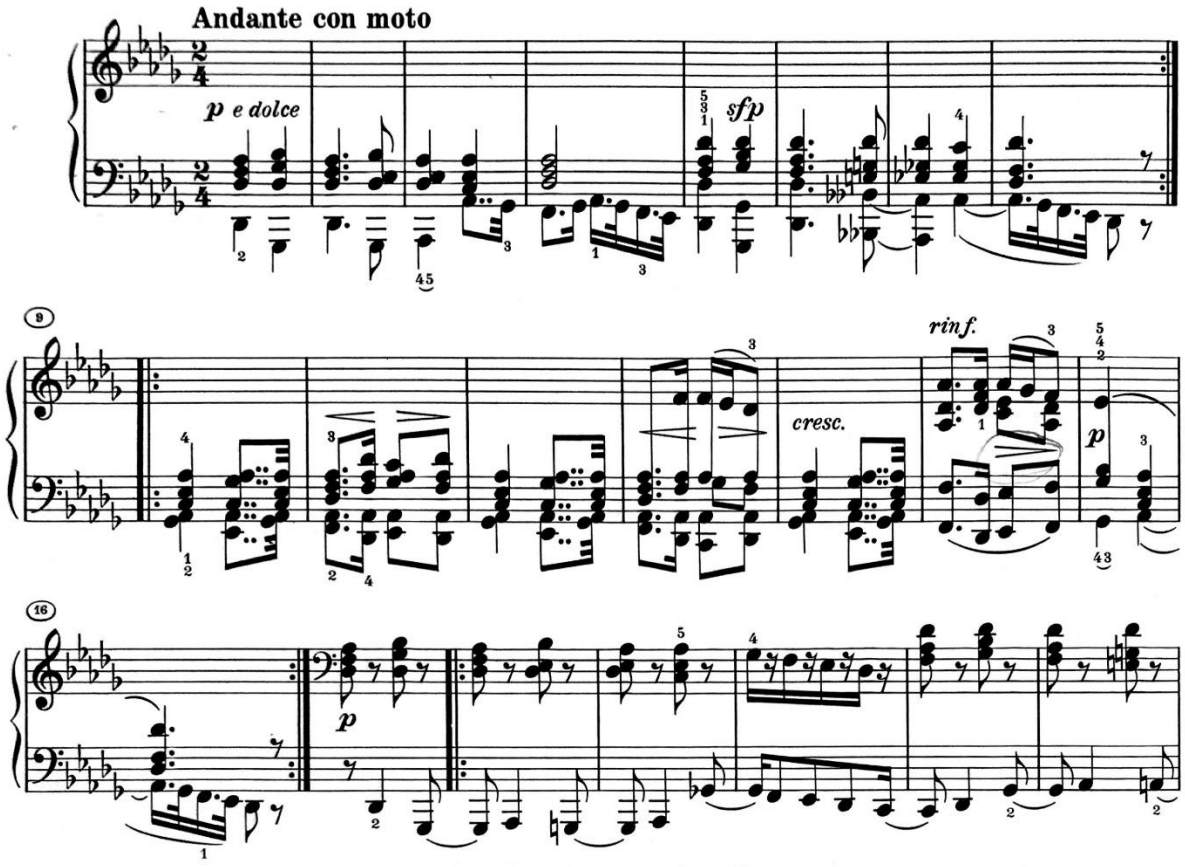

Figure 47 Op. 57, 2nd mvmt, mm. 1-22.

The second half of the theme—measures 9-16—begins to expand from the flat contour of the first half but it seems to always return to the monotony in measures 9, 11, and 13. Another point in common between these movements is that the end of each phrase has a dotted figure that bridge the end of one to the beginning of another.

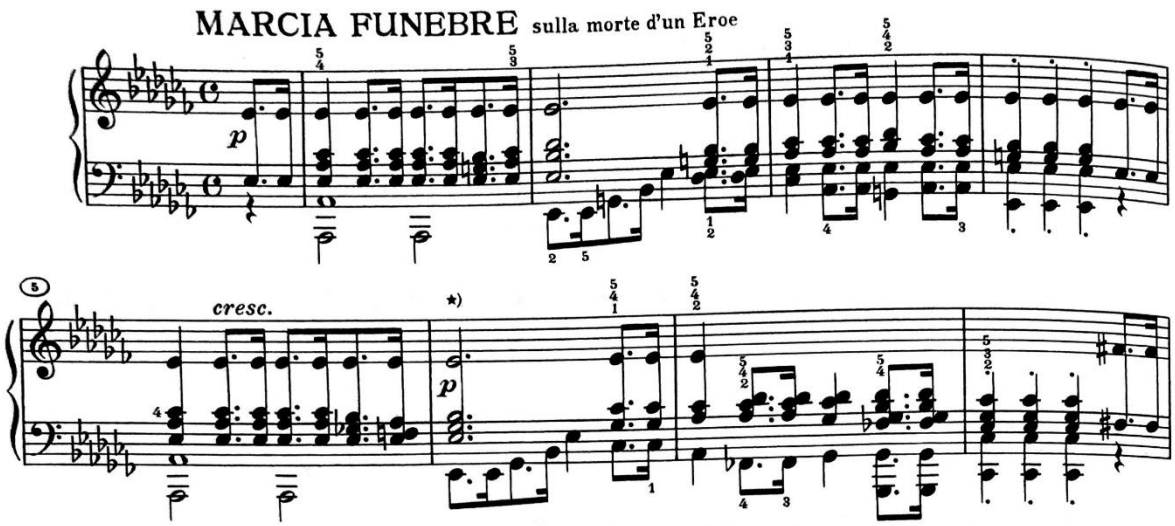

Figure 48 Op. 26, Mvmt. II Marcia Funebre sulla morte d'un Eroe, mm. 1-8

The comparison between the two movements helps reveal a program that may have guided Beethoven's writing. In the third movement of Op. 26, we find Beethoven's own marking, "MARCIA FUNEBRE sulla morte d'un Eroe [Funeral March on the death of a hero]." There are substantial differences between the two, but they are not potent enough to distract us from hearing the common gestures that the two works share. The Op. 26 Funeral March is in A-flat minor while the Appassionata second movement is in D-flat major. I believe that this is Beethoven's commentary on death. The popular portrayal of the funeral is a melancholy and mournful affair where people sob in their all-black garb. This is the kind of funeral fit for Beethoven's Op. 26 Funeral March. The other kind of atmosphere is what you would encounter in the Lutheran tradition, a time that recognizes the sadness of the earthly departure but mostly is a celebration of a life lived to its culminating transition to an eternal life that infinitely surpasses the best quality one can find on earth. There is no question that Beethoven reached this level of understanding with death. Now he is using the 2nd movement to express a similar sentiment, but this momentary calm will yield to tragedy in the following movement. We heard the triumphant ending in the Waldstein. Now we will hear the tragic end in the Appassionata.

The intensity of the final movement's drama can hardly be overstated. Its difficulty works to allow the performer and listener to feel the tumult and anxiety of the movement at multiple levels. Few of Beethoven's sonatas—or any work by composers before him—compare with the amount of near-insurmountable demands to the pianist and the groundbreaking innovations that this single movement contains. The modern listener can only imagine the shock of its debut. It opens with unsettling *fortissimo* E-diminished chords written with the familiar dotted rhythms. Here is where we hear the final battle of this half step conflict. Czerny wrote about this movement:

> If Beethoven, who was so fond of portraying scenes from nature, was perhaps thinking of ocean waves on a stormy night when from the distance a cry for help is heard, then such a picture will give the pianist a guide to the correct playing of this great tonal painting. There is no doubt that in many of his most beautiful works Beethoven was inspired by similar visions or pictures from his reading or from his own lively imagination. It is equally certain that if it were always possible to know the idea behind the composition, we would have the key to the music and its performance…But he [Beethoven] knew that the music would not always be felt so freely by its listeners if a specific object were to predetermine their imaginations.[53]

After an awakening series of dotted E-diminished chords, unrelenting sixteenths begin a battle scene. Compared to the previous two movements, this one is devoid of lyricism. Focusing our attention to the dichotomy of the half steps, the material still relates to the motives presented at the beginning of the piece. In the third movement, the motives are in the primal configuration of scale and arpeggio. The half-step motive manifests itself in the E to F root movement in the first 20 measures (Figure 49).

The natural tendency to descend is still an active force in this movement. The sixteenth notes begin from the upper register of the piano and gradually work their way down to the low F

[53] Newman, 268.

in measure 20, from which the right-hand figure futilely attempts to escape the pull of the low F. Like the first movement, the phrase transposes up a half step to the Neapolitan, G-flat major, in measure 24. Starting in measure 29, the rhythmic pacing changes in the left hand once the preparation for the half-step motion starts in measures 33-34—from D-flat to C—and in measures 38-39, when the A-flat falls to G. The first semblance of a "theme", starting in measure 29 in the left hand, starts a series of motivic descents. It is when the motive reverses its course between measures 63 and 64—when the E-natural ascends to the F—that the writing starts to move in a new direction as it modulates toward C minor.

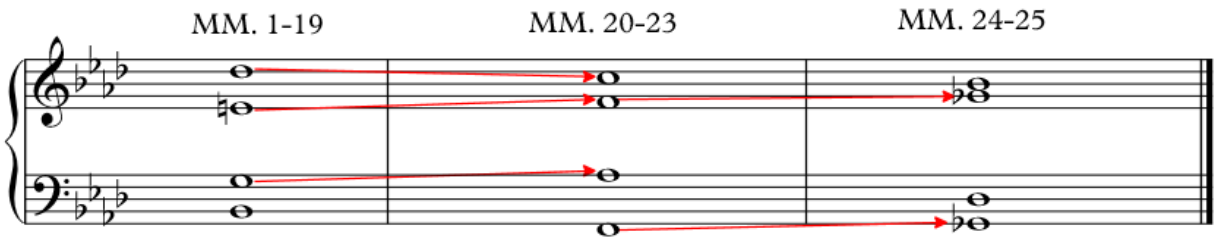

Figure 49 Half-step Chord Progression, Op. 57, 3rd Mvmt./mm. 1-25

The next section, starting in measure 118, continues to develop the half-step motives in an intense duel between register and harmony. Two half-step motions of the right-hand octaves—the G-flat falling to the F and the A-natural rising to B-flat—move the music into B-flat minor in measure 126. Then the Neapolitan motion follows when the music moves from B-flat minor to C-flat major in measure 138. Afterwards, three phrases centering on half-step lower-neighbor motions sound in imitation on the outskirts of the texture. The upper neighbor half-step motion then follows in measure 143. One cannot help but hear this as a contentious exchange for control which eventually leads to the climax of this drama that is both visually and aurally impactful. Starting in measure 168, most of the notes reside on white keys until a harmonic shift to G-flat major in measure 176, which causes the pianist to play

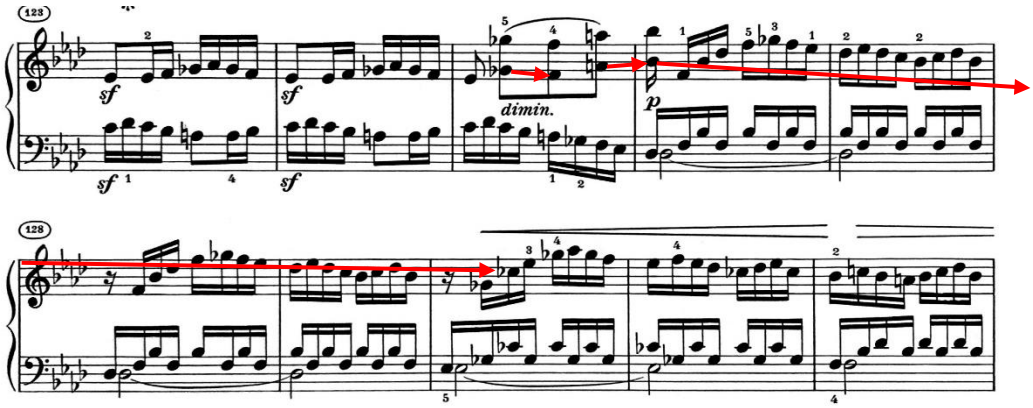

Figure 50 Op. 57, 3rd Mvmt./mm. 123-132

completely on the black keys of the keyboard. The root movement spans the tritone from C to G-flat, but the shift causes many of the chord members to move by half step. In measure 174, all the notes, except for the B-flat, are all on white keys until they all move by half step to the G-flat major chord in measure 176. The C moves up to the D-flat member of the G-flat major chord, then the B-natural to B-flat, and A-natural to G-flat.

The audacity of Beethoven to commit these acts against the sensibilities of his audience reflects the confidence and belief in his "New Path," but he does not resort to mere musical gimmicks here. He jolts the listener to a higher level of alertness when he abruptly turns the harmonic color 180°, but it all relates to the logical behaviors of the musical motives that he established since the first movement. This is evidence of the visionary creativity that allowed him to find the musical potential hidden in a seemingly mundane group of notes. Some inconspicuous examples of this are how he transforms the opening dotted arpeggios of the first movement to the evened-out rhythm of the sixteenth notes in the right hand in measure 20 of the third movement. The four-note motive from measure 10 of the first movement is rhythmically transposed from compound meter to the 2/4 simple meter in measure 290 of the last movement. Upon reaching the peak, the music must works its way down.

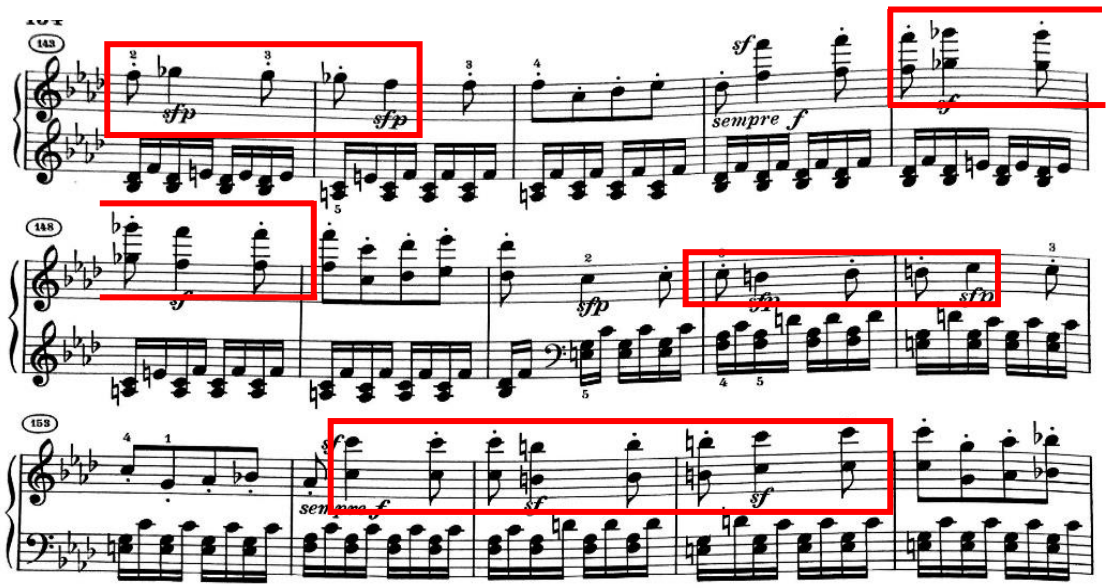

Figure 51 Half-step Neighbor motions, Op. 57/3rd Mvmt./mm. 143-157

Beethoven gradually slows the once unrelenting drive of sixteenth notes with a series of questioning ascending arpeggios in measures 176 to 191. In a grand gesture of reflection, Beethoven explores the whole range of the keyboard with a long ascending and descending 8th-note arpeggio that outlines an E-dim7 chord—the same chord that jumpstarted the movement. Notice the sheer disparity between this moment and the beginning of the movement. Dynamically, they cannot be farther apart from each other, *fortissimo* versus *pianissimo*. One is spatially static and confined while the other flows between each end of the registral extremes. Interesting that this would be the resolution to the previous conflict that spanned from measures 118 to 175, as if to say that the answer was at the beginning—at home—all along. T.S. Eliot best expressed this when he wrote, "We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." Unfortunately, it does not end well for our hero as his search in the past only leads [54]to a frenzied

[54] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets*.

coda diametrically opposed to everything that came before. We can hear the desperate attempt to curtail the descent into madness but ultimately spirals violently down to its fateful demise.

Chapter 6

Tonality as Setting

Tonality is capable of establishing a strong emotional atmosphere. It can set a scene and affect the narrative discourse. Beethoven displays his acute sensitivity to these qualities in how he reserved certain emotions for specific keys, but he was not the first to do this.[55] Musicians before Beethoven heard D major as a "bright, pure key for bright feelings."[56] Steblin wrote about that same key, "[it is] the perfect key for funny pieces and joyful dances…The key of triumph, of Hallelujahs, of war-cries, of victory-rejoicing."[57] Johann Mattheson disagreed with this handling of harmony in 1713 when he wrote of "those people who believe that a piece in flats absolutely must sound soft and tender, while a piece in sharps must be hard, lively, and joyful."[58] Nevertheless, the differences between keys were even more palpable during Beethoven's time, as equal temperament was not yet widespread. Francesco Galeazzi created his own interpretation of keys:

[55] Ellison, 43-46.
[56] Swafford, 219-220
[57] Rita Steblin, *History of Key Characteristics* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1996), 118.
[58] Ellison, 43-44.

Table 3 Galeazzi's Interpretation of Keys[59]

C Major	Grandiose, military key, fit to display grand events, serious, majestic
C Minor	Tragic key…fit to express grand misadventures, deaths of heroes, and grand but mournful, ominous, and lugubrious actions
D Minor	Extremely melancholy and gloomy
B-flat Major	Tender, soft, sweet, effeminate, fit to express transports of love, charm, and grace
E Major	Very piercing, shrill, youthful, narrow, and somewhat harsh
E-flat Major	Heroic key, extremely majestic, grave, and serious: in all these feature it is superior to that of C
A Major	Totally harmonious, expressive, affectionate, playful, laughing, and cheerful

An instrument's construction can also affect the aggregate color of a key. A brief survey of the string literature will show a propensity for certain keys, as each will vary in the number of opportunities for open strings to be played. Brass instruments find flat keys to be more convenient to play, due to practicality and their construction. Likewise, keyboard instruments have their own collections of keys that are more physically convenient to play. What increasingly became less considered was the factor of color in choosing the key for a new composition. A major reason was the widespread adoption of equal temperament as part of the overall trend to create a more homogenous keyboard sound. Prior to this gradual shift, certain functional chords in one key would sound different when played in another tonality. The Preludes and Fugues in Bach's monumental collection, *Das Wolhtemperierte Klavier*[60], use the

[59] Ellison, 49-129.

[60] The Well-Tempered Clavier, two books written with 24 Preludes and Fugues in each. The number corresponds to the number of major and minor keys in the chromatic scale.

color differences of every possible key available on the keyboard, but those differences are not as apparent with our modern tuning standards[61].

Beethoven never created a reference of key interpretation like Galeazzi's, but his choice of keys in some of his works reveals some probable associations. Beethoven wrote a significant number of lieder that would influence the course of that art form, particularly for Schubert. In Beethoven's *An Die Ferne Geliebte,* Op. 98, the text naturally provides a more explicit connection between tonality and sentiment. This song cycle is composed of 6 songs that are intended to be sung continuously. The translation of the first and last songs—both in E-flat—show a hopeful melancholy in the speaker's yearning for his distant beloved:

1. Auf dem Hügel sitz ich spähend[62]

I sit on the hill, gazing
Into the blue expanse of sky,
Searching the far-off mists to see,
Where I can find you, my beloved.

Far from you have I been parted,
Mountain and vale separate us,
Dividing us and our peace,
Our happiness and our pain.

Ah, you cannot see my gaze,
That hastens so passionately to you.
Nor the sighs I squander
On the void that parts us now.

Is there nothing more that can reach you,
Nothing to bear my love's message to you?
I want to sing, to sing songs,
Which remind you of my pain!

[61] Bradley Lehman, "Bach's Extroadinary Temperament: Our Rosetta Stone—1," *Early Music* 33, no. 1 (February 2005): 3.
[62] English Translation by Carla Maria Verdino-Süllwold, Hampson Foundation, https://hampsongfoundation.org/resource/ludwig-van-beethoven/.

Because before love's lament
Every mile and every hour vanishes,
And a loving heart attains
What a loving heart has consecrated.

6. Nimm sie hin denn diese Lieder

Take my songs,
The songs I sang you, my love,
And sing them nightly on the lute
With sweetest tone!

When the twilight wanes
On the still blue lake,
And the last sun's rays sink
Beyond the mountain tops.

And you sing, you sing,
What I have sung from deep within
What has sprung artlessly from me,
Only conscious of longing, only conscious of longing.

Then before these songs fade,
What has divided us so long and far,
And a loving heart attains what a loving heart has consecrated.

Then before these songs reclaim
all that was separated by lonely hours,
And a loving heart attains
what a loving heart has earned.

Then surely does my soul regain
all we lost in lonely times,
And a loving heart attains what a loving heart has earned, ay,
What a loving heart has earned.

Beethoven's Op. 81a Piano Sonata, *Das Lebewohl*, is also in the key of E-flat and shares the same kind of anguish from separation as *An Die Ferne Geliebte.*

The key commonly associated with Beethoven is C Minor, because of the immense popularity of works written in that tonality. Such examples include the widely popular Fifth

Symphony, 3 piano sonatas (Op. 13 "Pathétique", Op. 111, and Op. 10, No. 1), and the 32 Variations on an Original Theme, WoO 80. All begin with forceful intention; the C-minor crash of Op. 10 No. 1, Op. 13, and WoO 80; and the dissonant 7th leap of Op. 111. A brief hearing of the above works will show that they all share similar temperaments. These pieces tend to evoke various feelings of anger, aggression, and assertiveness.

Beethoven seems to pair A-flat and sweet tenderness in the slow movement of his Op. 15 Piano Concerto; the second movement of Op. 13 "Pathétique"; the "Adagio molto" movement of Op. 10 no. 1; the slow movement of the Sonata for Violin and Piano in C minor, Op. 30; the slow movement of Op. 27 no. 1; Op. 110 and Op. 26. It is important to remember that all of these observations on key associations are reflections of how they were commonly used during a particular period of time. Beethoven and other composers have used the key for drastically different feelings. Ellison associates it to "heavenly, often *cantabile*" in one group, and "*Barbaresco*, a key of the grave, shadow key to F minor" in another. The latter group was the praxis for some of Beethoven's songs: "Ah crudel, tu vuoi ch'io mora!"[63] from *Ah! Perfido*, Op. 65; the duet "So ruhe den mit ganzer Schwere[64]" from *Christus am Ölberge*, Op. 85; the aria from *Fidelio* "In des Lebens Frühlingstagen"[65]; and *In questa tomba oscura*[66], WoO 133. In the aforementioned piano works of Beethoven, A-flat is certainly of the "heavenly, often cantabile" praxis. The different settings of A-flat major—tenderness and anguish—show that the emotional

[63] "Ah, cruel one! Do you want me to die?" CD Album notes *Perfido!: A programme of concert arias by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven* with Sophie Bevan (Soprano), The Mozartists, and Ian Page

[64] "On me then falls this heavy burden. Its weight, O
Father, help me bear; On me now falls the weight of anguish. If Thou will mankind's children spare." – (https://theoryofmusic.wordpress.com/2010/11/05/german-and-english-texts-of-beethovens-christus-am-olberge/)

[65] "In the spring days of my life." (https://www.opera-arias.com/beethoven/fidelio/in-des-lebens-fruhlingstagen/)

[66] "In this dark tomb." (https://lyricstranslate.com/en/questa-tomba-oscura-questa-tomba-oscura-dark-tomb.html)

connections that musicians had placed on certain keys are not restricting. Each one contains an infinite range of possibilities that can be revealed in the hands of a composer. Beethoven does not deal simplistically with harmony. One hears the product of obsessive tonal experimentation in his piano sonatas, perhaps more so, since Beethoven was most comfortable around the keyboard—especially its multi-voice capabilities.

Ellison explains that keys have their own praxis as well as their "shadow praxis" which is usually in the relative minor or major, which means that composers can modulate but maintain continuity of affects. One example is the C minor/E-flat major relationship in the Sonata op. 81a, "*Das Lebewohl*". In the first movement, we hear a complexity of emotion that colors the parting of two good friends. The sweet fondness of a close friendship tinges the sadness of the departure. This movement is the only one of the three that feature this hybridity of feelings. The line from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* comes to mind, "Parting is such sweet sorrow…"[67] The second and third movements move towards the opposite emotional poles from the 1st movement. The second movement, *Abwesenheit* or Absence, expresses complete despair—"the sorrow of Absence"[68]— in the darkness of C minor, while the third movement, "Das Wiedersehen", is of complete elation. One can immediately hear the tone of sorrow in the *Adagio* beginning followed by a more spirited *Allegro* in E-flat major, but what Beethoven is able to achieve was the mixing of these two disparate harmonies to create a composite feeling that straddles the line between two starkly different emotions.

Op. 81a

[67] Act II, Scene 2.
[68] Donald Francis Tovey, *A Companion to Beethoven's Fortepianoforte Sonatas* (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 1998), 195.

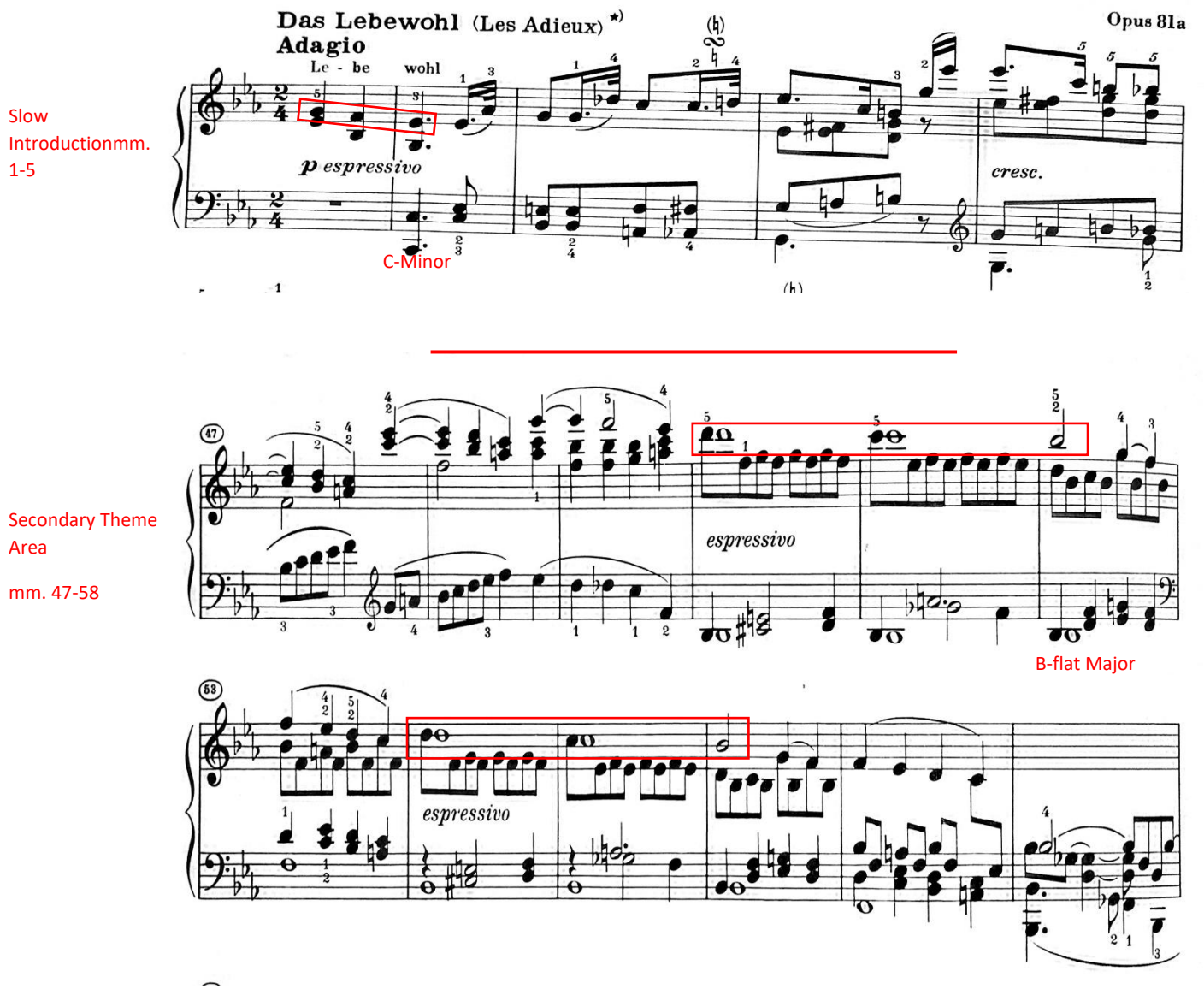

Figure 52 Op. 81a, Mvmt. 1, Introduction & Secondary Theme Area.

In one of Beethoven's breaches to formal rules, the audience hears the subsidiary theme before the first theme (Figure 52)! When it sounds in measure 50 of the exposition, it is in expected key of B-flat major, the dominant of E-flat. Yet, when we hear this B-flat major theme, the listener cannot help but hear the feeling of sorrow, an emotion one would not associate to B-flat major. Beethoven has conditioned how we hear this theme from the very beginning. When we hear the theme in measure 50, we place onto it the shade of C-minor that we heard in measure 2. Beethoven understood the incredible power of harmony in the listening experience. It is an

element that is ubiquitous because it informs every part of the music. That is why the listener can still sense harmony from a single line melody, such as Bach's Cello Suites. The Passacaglia form exists because of this amazing quality of harmony, where a single harmonic progression is capable of stringing disconnected themes and melodies into a complete piece. This is possible because of the immense amount information that harmony contains. It allows the listener to participate in the music by bringing his own emotional associations into the musical experience.

Op. 106 "Hammerklavier"

In the Op. 106 Piano Sonata, we hear an aggressive mixing of contrasting harmonies. Beethoven wrote, "B minor, black key" in his sketchbook for the piece. According to Brendel, the home key of Op. 106, B-flat, is the "key of luminous energy."[69] He also observes that the retrograde of the fugue subject is in B-minor.[70] We first see this relationship in measure 267 of the first movement's recapitulation. A frenzy of contrapuntal activity and harmonic modulating lead up to this special moment when the B-minor tonality immediately dispels the excitement that came before, an intentional setback in the progression towards the end. In the 4th movement, Beethoven translates B-minor's role—as the antithesis to B-flat major—into a fugal device. The key change to B minor in measure 149, catalyzes the fugue subject's retrograde, literally turning the theme upside down (Figure 53).

In these examples, we hear the immense power of tonality to influence the course of the music. Like literary setting, tonality can determine the direction of a piece. It is a decision point with unfolding consequences in the process of musical composition. Joshua Banks Mailman illustrates this dynamic as part of his *diachronic decision tree model.* Through this model,

[69] Brendel, *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts*, 44.
[70] Ibid.

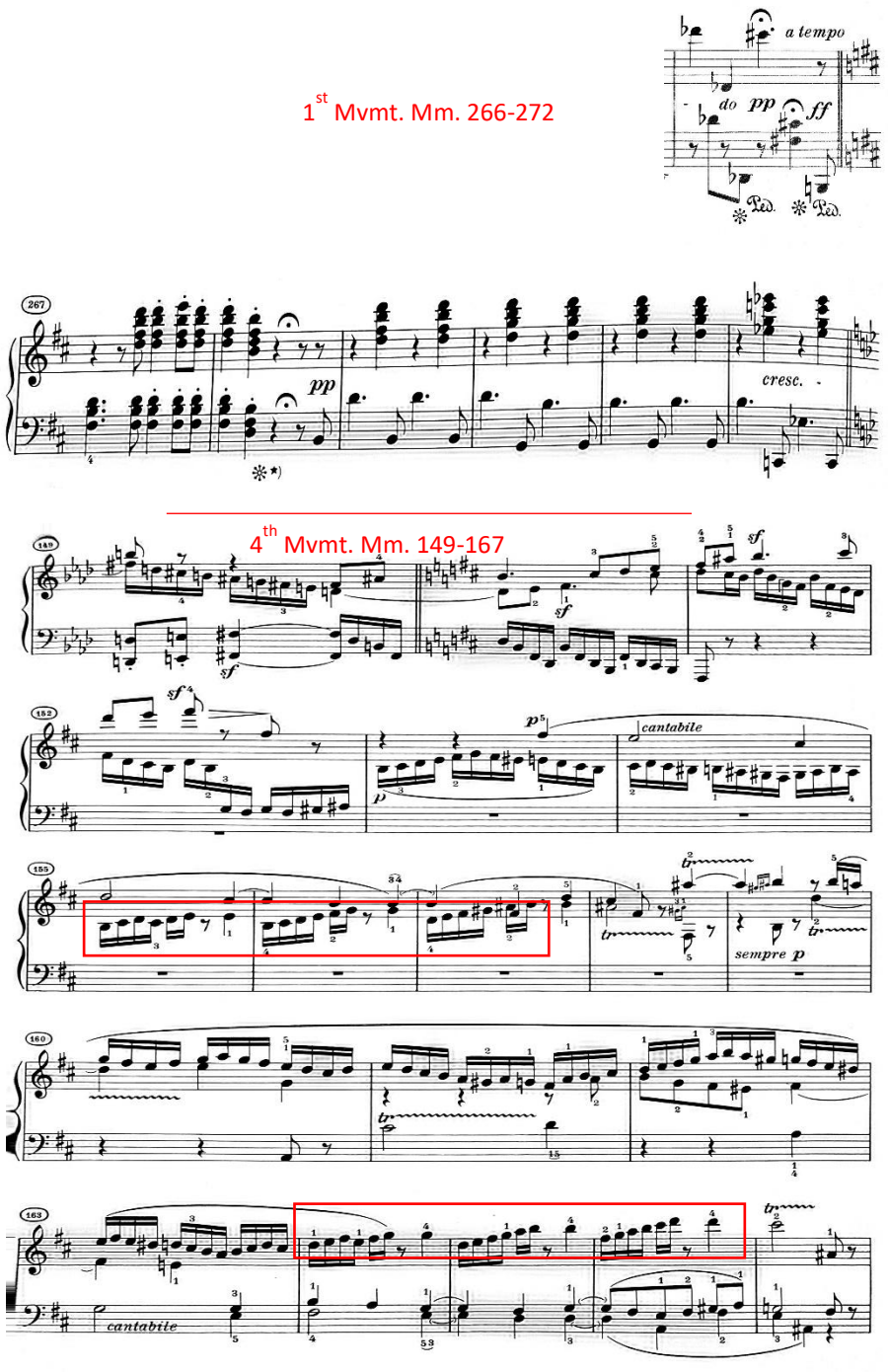

Figure 53 Op. 106, Mvmt. 1 & 2, B-minor Influence.

Mailman demonstrates how pathways are borne out of decisions and events in a musical narrative.[71] An important aspect of this model is that each decision point, not only changes direction towards one pathway, but also eliminates the other branch connected to the decision. A

chronological setting necessarily produces, while eliminates, certain kinds of characters and locales. Otherwise, one runs the risk of anachronism. The same can be said in choosing a physical location for a story. Any decision will naturally limit possibilities. Even the initial exposition of a setting hints at the overall tone of a story. One will not have to read any further than the first paragraph of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* to understand that all will not go well with the title character. As Napoleon said, "Geography is destiny."[72]

Such is the case with music. Certain affects fit certain keys best. Such judgments are not definitive. They can vary from individual to individual, generation to generation, and culture to culture. Beethoven heard tenderness in A-flat major, struggle in C minor, and brilliance in B-flat major. These key associations, by themselves, do not always reflect the individual parts of the piece, as comedies may include a few tragic episodes. The D-major first movement of the Op. 10 No. 3 Piano Sonata is in stark contrast with its D-minor second movement, yet both contain the same motivic material. A deeper study into Beethoven's harmonic practices, particularly in the piano sonatas, will uncover an artist routinely mixing different colors to produce the desired hue. The listener hears this in Beethoven's handling of Op. 81a's second theme. This mixing is what distinguishes Beethoven from the rest of the composers before him, and why he is such a pivotal figure between the Classical and Romantic generations. He not only mixed tonal colors, but he was able to incorporate their accompanying affects to depict almost indescribable emotions. He enlivened harmony with behavior that can actively cause alterations in the music. We heard the drastic influence that B-minor had in the Op. 106 Piano

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[71] Joshua Banks Mailman, "Agency, Determinism, Focal Time Frames, and Processive Minimalist Music," in *Music and narrative Since 1900*, ed. Michael Klein and Nicholas Reyland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 130-133.

[72] Abraham Verghese, "Two Souls Intertwined" (paper presented at The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, February 16, 2012).

Sonata. Brendel described it as "[giving rise] to formal and psychological problems that it takes all of the remaining movements to solve."[73] This is the power of harmony. It is more than just a passive stage upon which musical events take place. In the hands of Beethoven, it has become an active, catalytic member in the musical narrative.

[73]Alfred Brendel, *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts*, 44.

Part II

Structural Elements

"Begin at the beginning,…and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

-Alice in Wonderland

Chapter 7

Introductions

If we strip away descriptors—e.g.,title, program, and lyrics—from a piece of music, we are left with pure meaningless sounds. They are simply vibrations reverberating through air that our brains interpret as sound and noise. The listeners' varied experience and training feed meaning into the sounds. Unlike literary narratives, musical tones do not have strong explicit connections with everyday objects and concepts, at least none that is widely shared by as large of a group. Instead, the composer creates new meanings of every collection of tones that he writes. The next chapter elucidates Beethoven's strategies and techniques for such purposes in the expositions of his sonatas. I will explore in this chapter how he introduces his narrative as a whole.

Novels will often have front-matter that precedes the main story: introduction, preface, prologue, and foreword. The background they provide can be unrelated to the narrative. It may explain why the author wrote the book, or provide factual historical situations in which the fictional plot takes place. The background could be events in the same universe of the main plot, that lead to the beginning of the narrative. It can also be marginally related to the story, or written by a different hand. Composers have the option of starting with a section that precedes the sonata's exposition. It is commonly known as "introduction" but there is not an established formula or structure within that section. The first movement of Haydn's Symphony no. 104, Hob. I:104, begins with a slow introduction lasting about two minutes. Mozart's slow

introduction to his "Linz" Symphony, K. 425, also lasts about two minutes. Introductions were traditionally used in large symphonic forms. None of Haydn's 52 piano sonatas has a slow introduction, nor does Mozart's 18 piano sonatas. Beethoven pioneered the use of the introduction in the piano sonata. This is indicative of Beethoven's attitude towards his sonatas as forms worthy of the same legitimacy afforded to a symphonic work. His sonatas that begin with a slow introduction are Op. 13 "Pathétique", Op. 31 no. 2[74], Op. 78, Op. 81a, and Op. 111. The Op. 13 introduction lasts approximately 2 minutes and 10 seconds; Op. 31 no. 2, 50 seconds; Op. 81a, 1 minute and 30 seconds; and Op. 111, about 1 minute 50 seconds.

All of the above sonatas and symphonies share the characteristic of harmonic obscurity. Haydn's Symphony No. 104 in D major begins ambiguously in the first two measures with *fortissimo* unison Ds and As. They lack the third that defines the chord's quality, so the second measure ends with a harmonic duality, D major or D minor. Haydn decides, in measure 3, to head in the direction of the minor key when f-naturals sound in the Cello and Bass lines. Then, the music wanders until the preparatory dominant of the home key of D-major (Figure 54).

[74] Problematic due to the formal ambiguities of the work

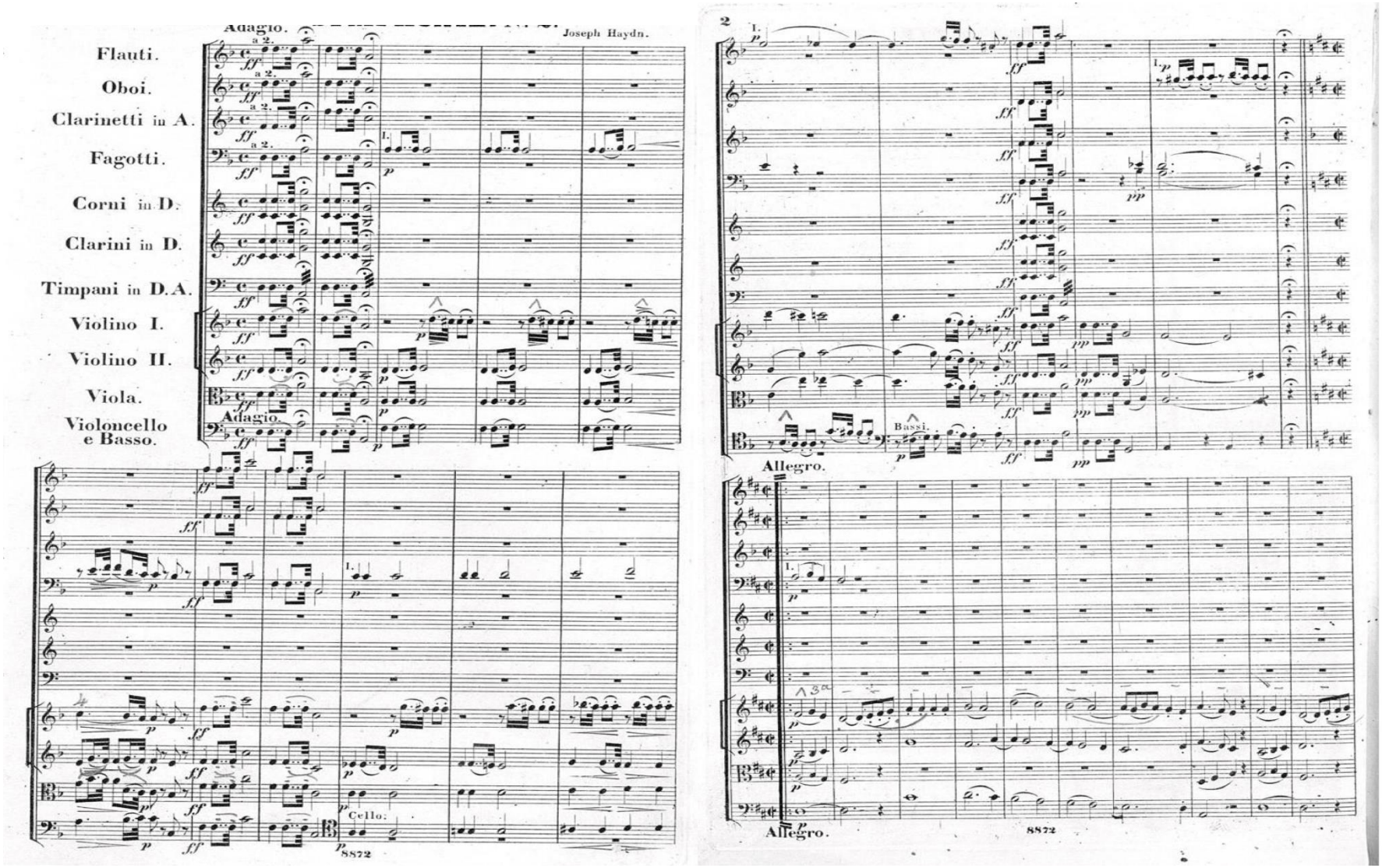

Figure 54 Haydn Symphony no. 104, mm. 1-26

Mozart hints at the tonic key a little more clearly in the introduction to the "Linz" Symphony, K. 425, but there is still enough harmonic obscurity to prevent it from competing with the next section's expository authority (Figure 55). The first measure starts to outline the tonic chord, C major, but it quickly veers towards harmonic vagaries in measure three with the half-step descent to B-flat. The following series of stepwise descending motion continues until the D7 chord on the downbeat of measure 8. The subsequent proliferation of accidentals moves the listener farther away from C major. Measure 16 is the turning point from which the music begins to veer towards the home key, as the different instruments start to coalesce into the *fortissimo* G chord before the fermata.

One may suppose that the two introductions to these major-key symphonies do not align with the spirit of the main part of their respective movements. That observation is certainly correct, but contrast is among the performer's main tools for engaging the listener. Haydn and Mozart pit the darkness of the slow minor harmonies against the fast and bright colors of the rest of the movement. As the introductory front matter of a book serves to provide background material to augment the main story's effectiveness, the contrast of the dark and slow tone of the introductions intensifies the fast and brilliant levity of the following section. At the same time, their harmonic obscurity adds a sense of relief and comfort to the moment of stability at the start of the *Allegro* expositions.

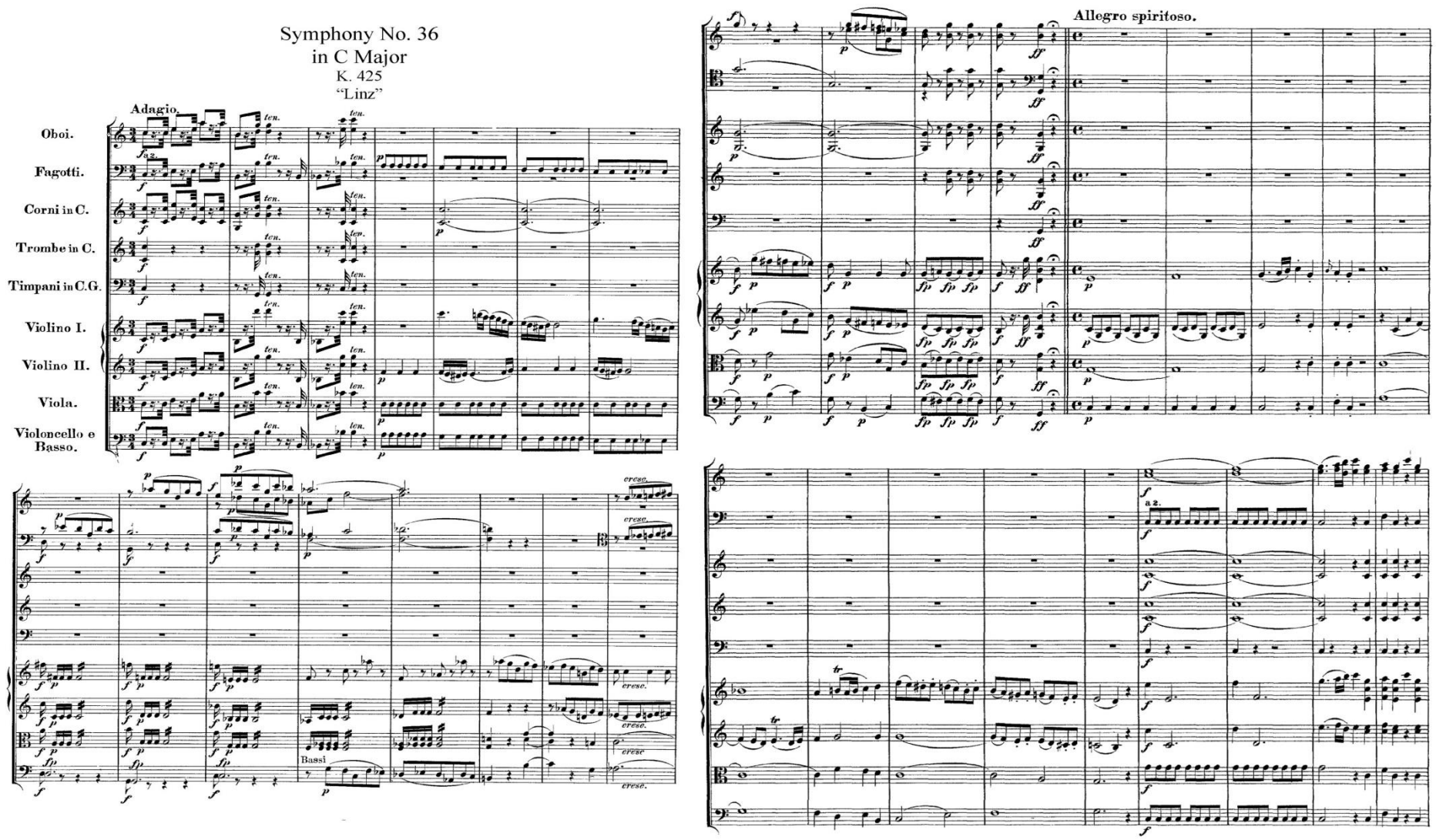

Figure 55 Mozart, Symphony no. 36 K. 425 "Linz", mm. 1-33.

Op. 13

The introductions of Beethoven's piano sonatas, with the exception of Op. 78, are also harmonically vague. Op. 13's first sound is a *fp* C-minor chord, clearly voiced with the bottom and top notes on the tonic. The declarative quality of this *fp* opening is brief. This *fp* is a problematic marking for modern pianists, due to the powerful sustain of the modern instrument. The pianist requires more time for the sound to naturally decay to the specified dynamic. The relatively weak sustain capabilities of Beethoven's fortepianos—mostly because of its wooden construction—makes it easier to accomplish. Perhaps the modern pianist can manually lower the dampers by controlling the release of the keys, but that requires an acute awareness and control of the instrument. Also, there is a strong likelihood of accidentally dampening the chord in the process, making the performer wonder whether it is a risk worth taking.

Nevertheless, it is quite remarkable for Beethoven to leverage a limitation of his instrument in order to realize his musical goals. It is clear that he intended to destabilize the harmony in this introduction. He starts with the sudden dynamic change on the first chord. Then the first four-bar phrase moves away from C-minor, towards E-flat (

Figure 56). The music continues sequentially in the same fashion as the other aforementioned introductions. Beethoven starts pulling the voices apart. The bass voice leads the harmony with its long descending chromatic progression, while the right hand ascends in sequence. The first right-hand sequential unit in measure 5 begins on E-flat, the second on the F, and the third on A-natural. Then the sequential unit shrinks, with B-natural moving to D in measures 7-8. The next unit, D to F, reaches this section's peak. This ascending movement in the upper voice pairs with the contrary movement of the left-hand's descending bass line. Measure 9, like measure 16 of

Mozart's u"Linz" symphony, is the turning point from which the music starts orienting itself towards the C-minor home key.

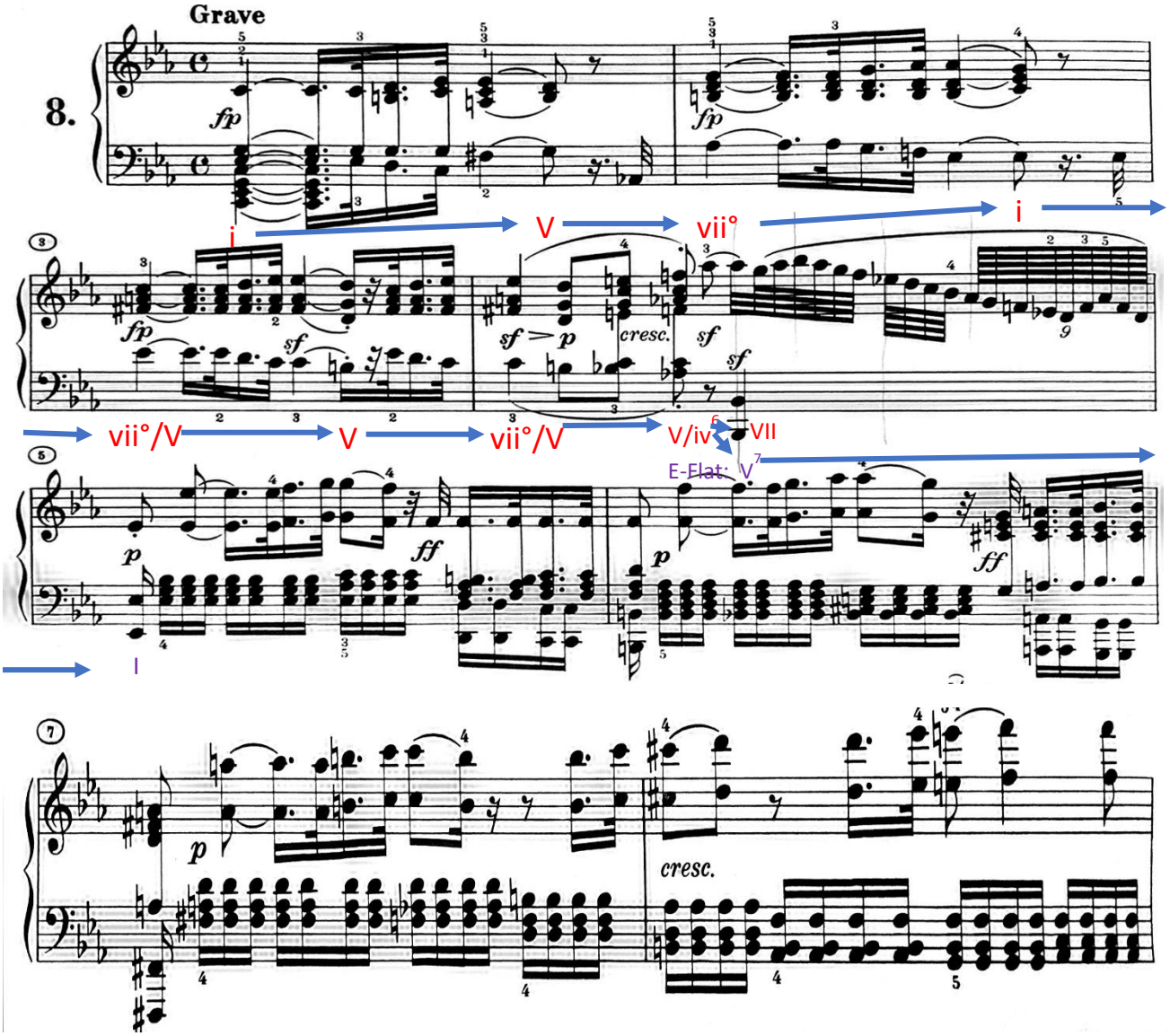

Figure 56 Op. 13, 1st Mvmt., mm. 1-8

Op. 31 no. 2

Beethoven, in his Op. 31 no. 2 Piano Sonata, extends ambiguity from harmony within formal boundaries to the boundaries themselves. Measures 1-21 act as the "introduction" to the exposition, which begins in measure 21 (Figure 57). It has the harmonic obscurity, typical of

musical introductions, that propel the listener to a strong tonic arrival. The first issue is the missing boundary between the two sections, like a double bar. Second, the theme that would normally appear after the introduction, appears in measures 1 and 21. Those measures would be on the formal limits of the slow "introduction" and the *Allegro* exposition, which leads to the next issue of tempo. The music's tempo alternates between *Largo*, *Adagio*, and *Allegro*. The *Allegro* in measure 8 comes 14 bars earlier from the D-minor cadence in measure 21. The strong

D-minor cadence that follows harmonic obscurity is the main reason for the introductory quality of the first 21 measures.

A teleological analysis of this sonata's opening leads to a stronger formal determination,

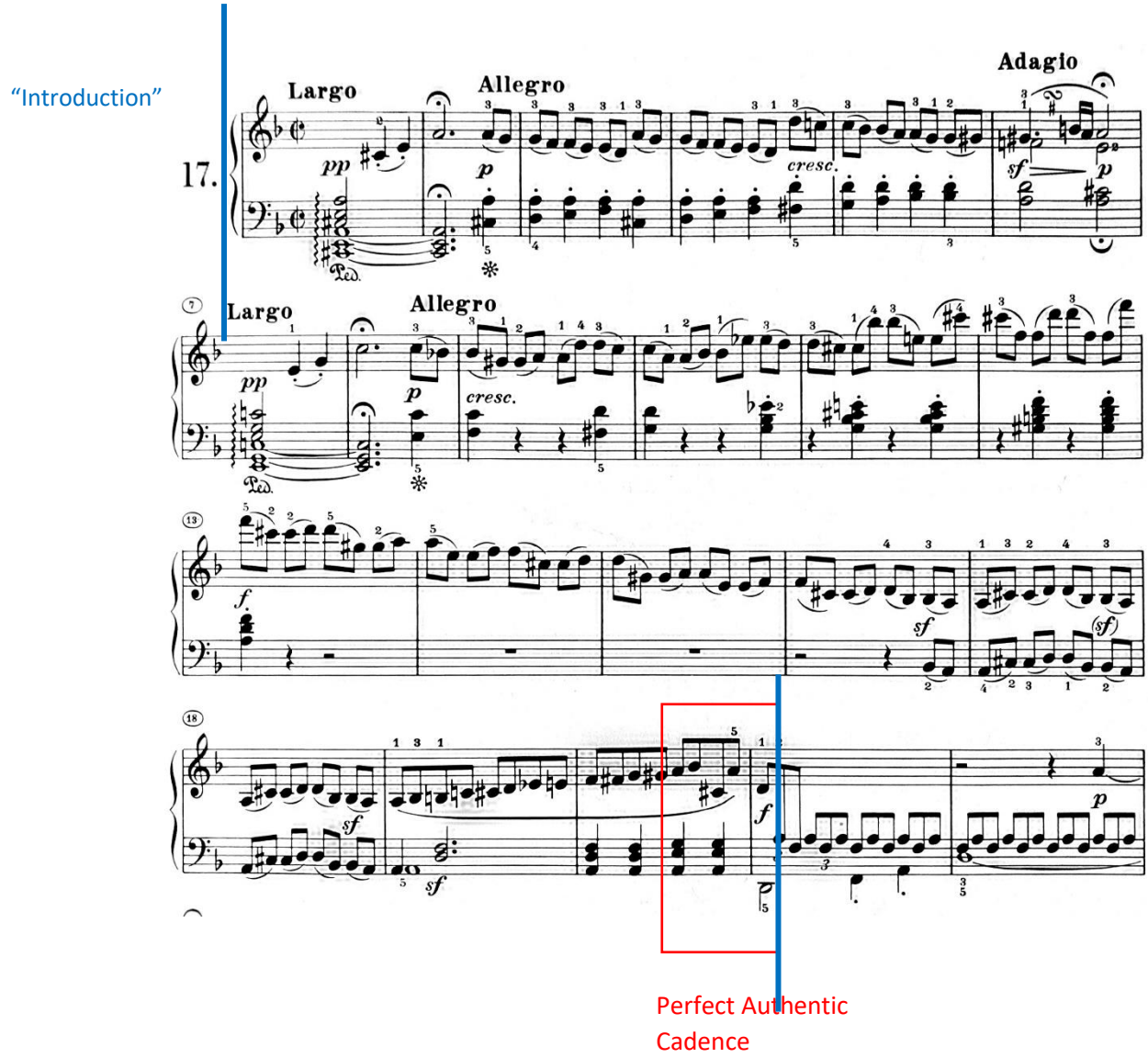

Figure 57 Op. 31 No. 2, Mvmt. 1, mm. 1-22, "Introduction."

despite this introduction's departures from the norm. One of the many purposes of this section is to reinforce the sense of arrival at measure 21. The opening harmony is a first-inversion A-

major chord. This choice is only sensible in retrospect, after measure 21. In measure 7, the first inversion C major triad dashes any hope of harmonic stability. The lowered leading tone undermines the primacy of the D-minor tonality.

Beethoven resists a strong bass presence until measure 21. Even though the two rolled chords in measures 1 and 7 reside in the same octave as the low D in measure 21, they do not have the same rhythmic firmness. The rolled chords conceal the sense of pulse. Because of the ambiguous placement of the downbeat, it is impossible to determine the rhythmic values of the following two notes. The fermata at the end of the *Adagio* measure eliminates whatever sense of pulse that the preceding *Allegro* produced. Measure 7, like measure 1, sounds apart from time due to the shifting tempos and the lack of rhythmic impetus. The pianist should take great care to avoid inconsistencies in the tone of the chord members, lest the audience hears an artificial beat. The listener should wonder whether the rolled chord starts before or after the beat.

The rhythmic placement of the motives and the specific accents in this section contribute to the strength of measure 21's tonic arrival. The first *Allegro* in measure 2 begins on an upbeat, but the visual appearance does not align with the aural reality. Instead, it sounds like the 8^{th}-note figure starts on the downbeat. The *sforzando* downbeat of measure 6 would be the opportunity to align ourselves to the proper pulse, if it were not for the sudden change to *Adagio.* After a similar repetition of the opening, the music leads us to the transitional section in which we hear *sforzando* accents on the weak beats of the measure. Measures 16-18 has *sforzandi* on the fourth beats while measure 19 has a *sforzando* on the second beat. These accents reinforce the sense of the downbeat as it projects our ears forward. This is not unlike the effect in Beethoven's "An

Die Freude" melody. He anticipates the consequent phrase by moving the first note from the strong downbeat, to the weak 4th beat of the previous measure (Figure 58). In Op. 31 no. 2, the *sforzando* accents on the weak beats prepare the listener for measure 20's cadential rhythmic solidity.

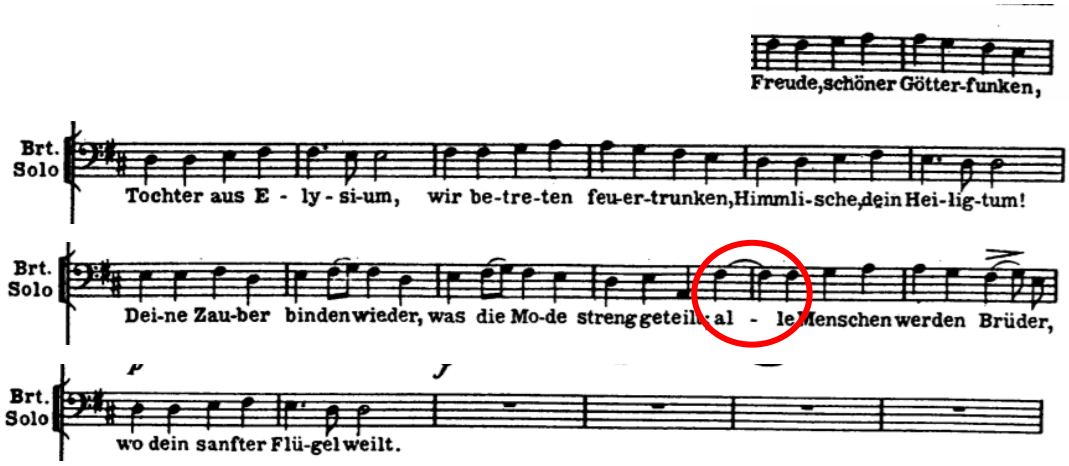

Figure 58 Baritone Solo, Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, 5th Movement

Op. 111

The 19-bar introduction to Beethoven's last published sonata, Opus 111, has all the standard qualities of a musical introduction: harmonic obscurity, slow tempo, and a clear tonic arrival marking the beginning of the *Allegro* exposition. Beethoven wrote the sonata in 1821, about 6 years prior to his death[75]. The sonata-form first movement is in C minor. The second and final movement is a theme and variations in C major. The 1st movement has the same pathos and stormy quality of his other C-minor works.

Beethoven begins with a dissonant descending seventh leap from E-flat to F-sharp (Figure 59). The boldly dissonant opening foreshadows the stormy audacity of the rest of the movement. The F-sharp fully-diminished seventh chord resolves to G major in measure 2. Beethoven states the material again in the second phrase, but a fourth higher. The phrase now

[75] *Grove Music Online*, "Beethoven, Ludwig van."

begins—measure 3—with a B fully-diminished harmony that ends on a C-major chord, a half-cadence in the temporarily tonicized F-minor harmony. Beethoven continues the ascending-4th pattern in the third phrase in measure 5, with the descending leap from D-flat to E natural. The deviation from the previous phrase starts on the second beat of measure 5. The E-natural moves up a half-step to F natural. The point in which the second phrase differs from the first phrase is

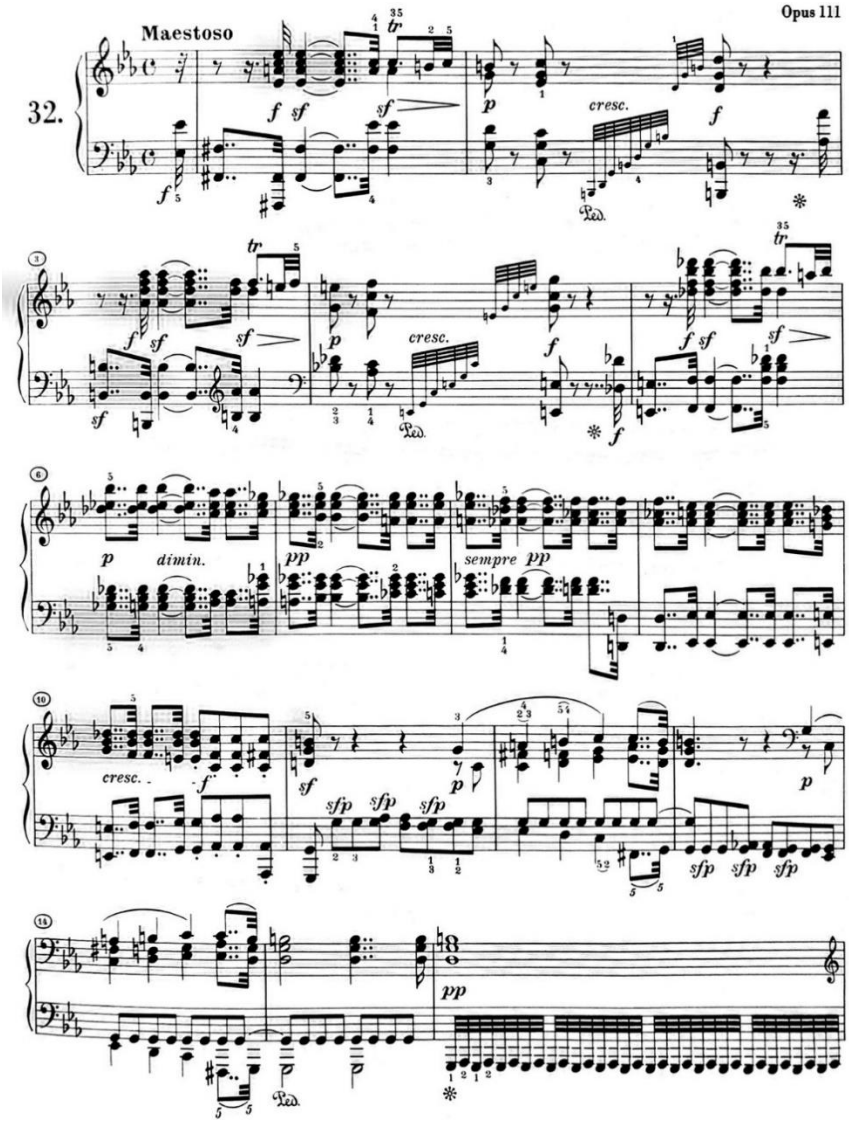

Figure 59 Op. 111 Introduction

in measure 4. Instead of the bass voice stepping up to the V chord, the bass descends a half-step to the 2nd-inversion vii°7 of F-minor. The third phrase deviates immediately after the first

descending leap when it ascends by step to F-natural. This is the start of the ascending chromatic bass progression of measures 5 to 11. The level of harmonic obscurity is at its peak during the course of the chromatic progression. Measure 11 is the junction where the movement begins to gather momentum towards the *Allegro* exposition in measure 19. The bass settles on the dominant pedal. Then it travels towards its final destination three octaves lower, where it will continue to rumble until the final resolution to the tonic C in measure 19.

The general behavior of this sonata's introduction is similar to the previously discussed examples. Beethoven's dissonant opening is ironically the most harmonically stable of the three phrases in measures 1 to 5, because of its place in the home-key progression: vii$^{\circ 7}$-V-I-V. The chords of the progression are all primary triads of C-minor, with the exception of the F-sharp diminished-seventh chord. Even so, it is still a fairly common kind of dominant chord. The next two phrases modulate deeper into the flat keys through smooth circle of fifths progressions. From the C tonal center of the first phrase, the second phrase tonicizes F, then B-flat in the third phrase. Beethoven makes the harmonic shifts more tortuous in measures 5 to 11, after distancing the listener from the home tonic. The following chromatic progression and the preparatory dominant pedal are details that this introduction shares with the other examples. Measures 5-8 of the "Pathétique" Sonata has the descending chromatic bass movement that settles on the extended cadential-6/4 gesture in measures 9-10. The chromaticism in Op. 31 No. 2 is in the ascending bass line of measures 8-13. The ascent stops on A in measure 13, in order to be the dominant bass of the 8-bar long cadential 6/4 gesture. The analogous modulatory passages in

Haydn's and Mozart's symphonies are less chromatic, but still move in a step-wise fashion as they head to their respective dominant preparation.

Like his other sonatas, he does not compartmentalize the music in Op. 111's introduction. The written-out trill, in measures 16-18, reappears towards the end of the second movement. The trill in the introduction is one of an antithetical pair, contrasted by their placement in the piano's register and their location in the sonata. The opposing trill is at the other end of the sonata, in measures 162-171 of the second movement (Figure 60). Its registral placement is at the top of the keyboard. Both trills are on the dominant note, G, located at the extreme ends of Beethoven's Broadwood fortepiano.[76] The placements of these trills correspond with the contrasting emotions of both movements. The infernal G trill of the first movement introduction aligns with the storm of the rest of the movement, while the sparkling G trill of the second movement complements its overall serenity. These oppositions form a symmetry that explains Beethoven's decision to keep the piece a two-movement work. Each movement is a mirror image of the other.

Beethoven expanded the role of the introduction in his piano sonatas. Usually, it prepares the main body of the work through contrast. Its slow tempo and harmonic obscurity bring out the exposition's *Allegro* tempo and harmonic stability, similarly to how frames set a painting apart from its environment. For Beethoven, his obsession with motivic unity influenced his introductions. In the "Pathétique" Sonata, he integrates the introduction into the main body of

[76] Good, 107.

the first movement. His intent to untether the introduction from its usual place will later develop into dissolving the actual boundaries.

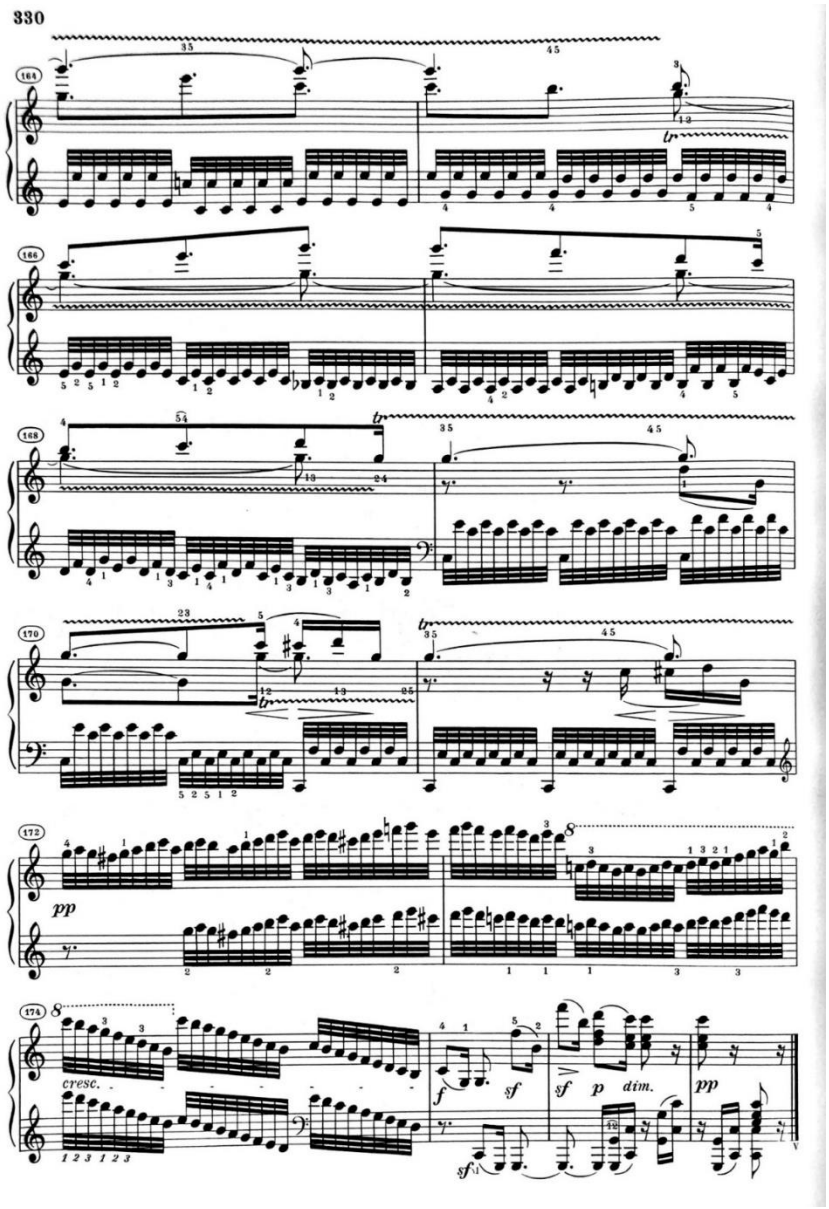

Figure 60 Op. 111, Mvmt. 2, mm. 166-177

It is for this reason that a formal analysis of Op. 31 No. 2 is tricky. The main theme's presence in the introduction and exposition sections lends credence to the no-introduction/introduction interpretation. In Op. 111, the trill becomes an agent of symmetry. It unites two disparate movements. Heraclitus's best justifies this paradox. Edward T. Cone once said, "…most

important scientific discoveries have resulted from taking seriously questions that are usually assumed to be trivial."[77] That is exactly what Beethoven did to a section that is literally marginal to a piece. He expanded its role and incorporated it into the narrative as a sort of musical prologue.

[77] Cone, 11.

Chapter 8

Beginnings

There are striking structural similarities in the beginnings of sonatas and literary forms. Both of their expositions introduce their main elements. The reader of a book meets the central characters that he will follow throughout the plot, while the listener of a Beethoven sonata hears the principal motives that unite the whole piece. It is this tendency towards motivic unity that aligns Beethoven with his literary counterparts. The expositions of Op. 57 and Op. 53 show how Beethoven wields every aspect of music to anticipate the remaining movements. With this awareness, one must expect that he will go beyond using intervallic relationships to unify the sonata.

Appassionata Op. 57

As previously discussed, the *Appassionata,* Op. 57, is the tragic narrative of a hero. The themes in all the movements are derived from the motives in the first measures of the piece. The central conflict manifests itself in the fateful half-step motive, which involves the harmonic movement of the Neapolitan. The last discussion explored how the themes portrayed different aspects of one character and how that character was affected by the recurring semi-tone conflict. This chapter will continue to elaborate on the strategies Beethoven employed to introduce the central characters and their relationships.

Beethoven telegraphs an immense quantity of information about the whole sonata within the first few pages. The initial transformations of the F-minor arpeggio foreshadow the angst, as

well as the momentary sweetness, of the following two movements. The F-minor motive first appears in a brooding and reflective state. An electric tension surrounds this soliloquy, filling the room with anxious anticipation. The first transformation is an explosive relief of this tension that accumulated over 16 measures of quiet suppression. The intensity grows once this threshold is breached. The outbursts become more frequent, and desperation charges the soft F-minor utterances until measure 24, when the narrative flow gains momentum for the first time.

The music from measures 1 to 23 are purely expository. Everything is neatly compartmentalized until the first fermata in measure 16. Beethoven uses silences to chronologically delineate the conflicted character from the source of his torment. Silence distances the theme and its Neapolitan counterpart in measures 4 and 8, for about two tense beats. The question that ends both phrases continues to reverberate through the silence, probing for the answer in the listener's mind. Unsatisfied, the question is posed again. Beethoven now exploits space, instead of time, as the distancing force. The inquisitive gesture in measure 9 receives the tormenting response more than two octaves below. The increase in spatial distance forces the chronological space to shrink. Only one beat, as opposed to the previous two, separates the individual motives. Following this, Beethoven ingeniously activates two chronological and spatial forces to simultaneously pull the music further apart. The result is measures 12-13 when both hands start to drift apart until they are four octaves apart, double the distance in bar 9. This drifting happens with a *poco ritardando* which expands the chronological space between each utterance. Suddenly, in a span of two measures, the listener becomes awash with a violently dissonant E-diminished deluge of sixteenth notes. This completely fills the vacuum created by the drifting motives in measures 12-13, and adds a third repelling force: dynamics. Beethoven's dynamic marking for the first 13 measures is *pianissimo,* with a couple

of minor swells. To reach *forte* from *pianissimo,* the dynamics would surge across four dynamic levels.

After that rapid compression into the dominant chord at measure 16, Beethoven resumes his tortuous treatment of motives. He removes the neat boundaries separating the ideas and starts the process of fusing them all together. There are no more silences between the dynamically distant ideas. The time in between each iteration gradually shrinks. The *fortissimo* F-minor chord in measure 18 sustains for three beats until the *piano* F-minor appears. The *fortissimo* C-major chords interrupts the motive midway from its completion. This time, the space it takes to alternate between the two motives only spans one beat. The hostile encroachment of thematic territories temporarily gives way for the transformation towards the 2nd theme.

The ostinato E-flats, from measures 24 to 34, provide much-needed relief from the stormy activity of the previous section. For the first time, Beethoven offers something consistent and reliable. Apropos to these qualities is the origin of the ostinato. The ostinato's placement after the upper neighbor motive in measure 23 corresponds with the placement of the fate motive at measure 10. One can hear how Beethoven morphs the original half-step descent. Soon after measure 23, he stretches the descending half step to a major third, which becomes a descending 4th two measures later. This downward motion is the ostinato's vessel towards the lower regions of the keyboard where it will become the accompaniment to the second theme.

There are no explicit rules in sonata form mandating that two theme groups must share a common motive, especially not to the degree that Beethoven achieved in the *Appassionata*. The two themes in Clementi's Piano Sonata, Op. 40 No. 2, for example, do not bear any striking resemblance with each other (Figure 61). The phrase structure of the first theme is more expansive than the 2nd. The 2nd theme's moving rhythm contrast with the first theme's longer

note values. The range of the first expands more than an octave and moves pre-dominantly in skips, while the 2nd moves in a scalar fashion and barely occupies an octave. Clementi, like most of the classical composers, were more occupied with producing variety through contrast between their two themes, and less concerned with motivic unity.

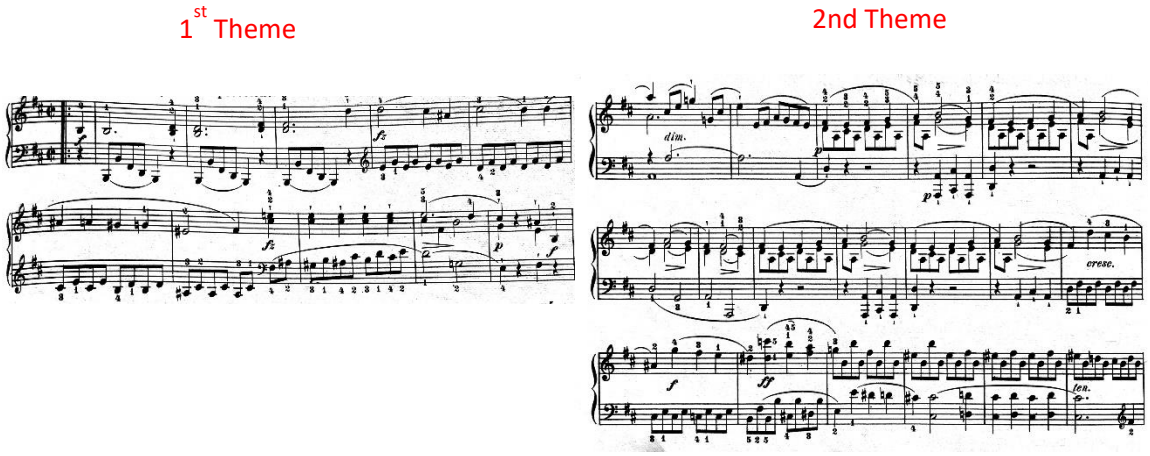

Figure 61 1st and 2nd Themes from Sonata, Op. 40, No. 2, by Muzio Clementi

Variety through contrast does serve aesthetic ends, but Beethoven had different aims. The *Appassionata* exposition does not fit the traditional paradigm that Clementi and most classical composers followed. Beethoven conveyed much more information in the exposition than any other composer before him. He was able to foreshadow the 2nd and 3rd movements well before the development section. The *dolce* marking connects the 2nd movement with the 2nd theme from the 1st movement. It is a significant detail due to how sparingly Beethoven uses it in this sonata. It only appears with the 2nd theme exposition, in the first movement recapitulation, and at the beginning of the 2nd movement. Their sentiment lies on the same half of the emotional spectrum. Harmonically, they are close cousins as their tonal centers are a fifth apart—A-flat and D-flat. Beethoven related the 1st theme with the 3rd movement through motivic means, but to use the same method towards a theme that is closely related would be too derivative for

Beethoven. So, he used affect as the unifying factor that connects the 2nd movement with the 2nd theme.

The sudden violent E-diminished outburst, in measure 14, marks the ending of the 2nd movement and anticipates the opening of the 3rd. The fits and starts of measures 1-23 would later transform to the fragmentary structure of the left-hand material in the last movement. The sharp dynamic leaps inform the jagged changes of the 3rd movement. For the performer, applying this effect onto the 3rd movement is an extremely difficult task that requires the highest level of familiarity and control of the instrument and one's own temperament. Beethoven not only demands a consistency of tone, but to do it *pianissimo* at an *allegro* tempo. Furthermore, the price of violating his directive to maintain a *pianissimo* dynamic is to sever the connection between the 3rd movement and the distant 1st movement, since dynamic distance was established to be one of the pillars that supports the music.

Beethoven's manner of introducing the main subjects of his Op. 57 piano sonata was a big innovation to the form. He was able to apply static spatial concepts like distance and boundaries onto an essentially ephemeral art form. An author has the benefit of the reader's preconceived notions of objects and concepts. The word, "house," will create a mental image upon reading it, but the image will be a generic form of the structure that will vary from reader to reader. As the author includes more detail, more readers will increasingly share a common image. A work such as James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* is infamously incomprehensible because of the ubiquitous use of the author's invented vocabulary, instead of words that are part of the common lexicon.

Music lacks a vocabulary that pairs explicit concepts to audible sounds because of its abstract nature. There are musical gestures that prove to be commonly understood by musically

trained and untrained listeners. A perfect authentic cadence will sound to most as the ending of an idea in music, even if the listener does not know the term. In order for music to elicit a convincing narrative flow, the notes must hold more meaning to the listener. At the beginning of Op. 57, Beethoven must assign meaning to the objects and personalities he creates. He writes a disjunct theme in F minor. Its tempo, rhythm, register, and dynamics collaborate to create a mood in the listener's mind. The theme alone does not begin to unite the listener's narrative conception. It is the subsequent events of action and consequence that begin to characterize the themes with vitality and meaning, as well as create relationships among them. The outbursts on the first page of the sonata illustrate the antagonism that would later be the basis for the third movement. The 2nd theme's presentation in the context of predictability and familiarity—the consistent ostinato flow and its resemblance to the F-minor theme—relates it as a different aspect of the previously introduced character.

Waldstein

When comparing the Op. 57 and Op. 53 expositions, one hears a clear difference in the number of characters who occupy the section. The activity and context surrounding the Waldstein hero is much more vibrant and populated than the Op. 57 exposition. In Op. 53, the writing is much more instrumental. It would be unimaginable to transcribe it as a song or aria. The motives are too short and the range surpasses the natural tessitura of any voice type. We hear the actions of many characters in this sonata's exposition. The harmonies are often filled with all the triadic members. The rapid succession of registral changes and the running sixteenth-notes enliven the atmosphere. The second theme is more lyrical, but Beethoven still maintains the sense of numbers with chorale-like homophonic writing. The transformation from

a heterogenous collection of rhythms to two kinds—half and quarter notes—mimes the congregating of disparate elements into one collective voice.

The small motives that spark across the piano's registers fill the outline of the hero character. The previous discussion of this sonata covered some of the unifying motives in detail. The bass motion anticipates the second movement's harmonic progression (see page 63). The right-hand motives in measures 3 and 4 will later become the theme for the last movement (See Figure 62). Beethoven introduces the theme's fragments in the first movement exposition. He

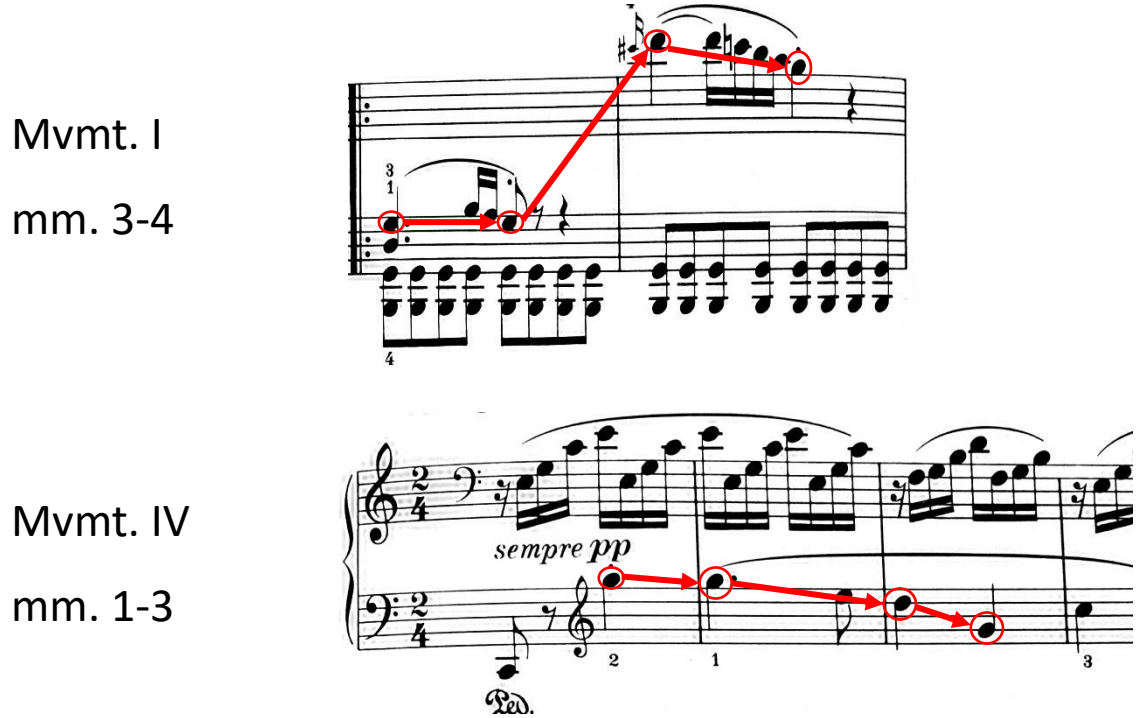

Figure 62 Op. 53, Mvmt. 1 (mm. 3-4) & Mvmt. IV (mm. 1-3)

assembles them into the recurring A theme of the Rondo finale. The fragments first appear as seemingly random flickers of sound. They appear in all voices and registers of the keyboard. One important motive appears in measure 3 at the bass clef's upper range. The next fragment pops up about two octaves higher in the next measure. The remaining motives of the theme appear two bars later, transposed down a step. The upper part of the pair, also transposed down a

step, differ from the original form. The previous major descent in measure 4 becomes a minor. The alternating half-step motion, A-flat to G, follows in the bottom bass voice.

Beethoven takes each of the scattered motives and organizes them into a coherent melodic line in the third movement. The fragments that were two octaves apart are now part of one falling line from G^5 to G^4 in measures 1-3. The following phrase, beginning with the pair of Fs in measures 9-10, come from measure 7 in the first movement. The next part of the third-movement theme is from measures 11-19. It combines the right-hand motive and the half-step bass motion from measures 8-11. The E-natural, in measure 11 of the final movement, initiates the half-step oscillation that we heard in the bass of the first movement, complete with the original harmonic acceleration. The A-flat bass in measure 8 of the first movement lasts for four beats, until it descends to G, where it remains for three beats. The next set of A-flat to G alternations happen more quickly, one beat apart. In the third movement, four measures elapse until the E-natural in measure 11 descends to E-flat. Afterwards, it quickens to 2 measures in between each change.

Beethoven uses the same musical tools as in the *Appassionata* to delimit the relevant motives. He uses registral space to set apart the pair of motives in measures 3-4. Measures 6-7 serve as the chronological boundary that separates measures 3-4 and measures 7-11. The second theme in measure 35 distinguishes itself by its stark texture change and its lack of bass support. Here is another example of how Beethoven carefully crafts his themes to preserve motivic unity. The relationship is not as conspicuous as in the *Appassionata*, but one does not have to analyze too deeply to uncover the connection (Figure 63). The defining contour of the second theme is the stepwise descending fifth of its first half. The notes of the top voice outline the first five

notes of the C-sharp minor scale, while the bottom voice of the 2nd-inversion triad outlines E-major.

Every choice that Beethoven makes in the exposition anticipates the music of the 2nd and 3rd movements. The extremely important subtlety of the opening rhythm begins every movement. The significance it adds to the notes requires the pianist to group it as part of the melodic phrase. Otherwise, the listener would understand the melody of the 2nd movement to strictly being the right-hand figures. They would also hear the third movement's melody as beginning on the 2nd beat instead of the 1st. The fragmentary quality of the 2nd movement's melody has its precedence in the 1st theme of the 1st movement. The literal stacking of the minor and major descents, in the exposition's 2nd theme, is symbolic of the beginning motives' coalescing into the complete final movement theme.

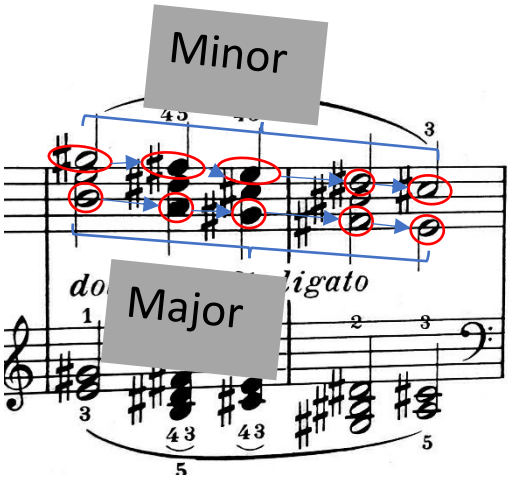

Figure 63 Op. 53, 1st Mvmt.., Second Theme

Op. 53 and Op. 57 demonstrate the far-reaching implications of the materials Beethoven introduced in their beginnings. Beethoven gives us the whole sonata in the exposition of the piece, in that all the building blocks of the later movements are there. The listener begins to hear in this section the relationships that will govern the behavior of the different elements. This is what keeps us listening, despite being provided everything we would later hear. Our curiosity

leads us to hearing the profound evolution of these motives. The potential of the motives and themes does not reach its full realization until the very end, carrying the listener over movement boundaries. It is this quality that distinguishes Beethoven's sonatas apart from his peers and predecessors. The 1st movement alone does not provide enough aesthetic satisfaction. One must stay with it from beginning to end to get the full scope of Beethoven's vision.

Chapter 9

Endings

As in his expositions, Beethoven uses many factors to create satisfying endings for his piano sonatas. Nicholas Marston posits that there are similarities between the musical and literary techniques to conclude a work. Marston makes use of Don Fowler's different distinctions of the word, "closure":

1. The concluding section of a literary work.
2. The process by which the reader of a work comes to see the end as satisfyingly final.
3. The degree to which an ending is satisfyingly final.
4. The degree to which the questions posed in the work are answered, tensions, released, conflicts, resolved.
5. The degree to which the work allows new critical readings.[78]

To relate the five criteria to music, Marston suggests changing "musical" for "literary" in the 1st distinction and "listener" for "reader" in the 2nd distinction.[79] The sonatas in the following discussion (Op. 2 no. 1, Op. 27 no. 2, Op. 14 no. 2, and Op. 31 no. 2) demonstrate Beethoven's strategies and techniques for creating satisfying conclusions to his works.

Op. 2 No. 1

The dramatic direction of Beethoven's first published sonata, Op. 2 No. 1 is toward the last movement. The central conflict is the unanswered question that is posed in the first 8 bars of the piece (Figure 64). It will not be resolved until the last movement. The first phrase ends with

[78] Nicholas Marston, "'The sense of an ending': goal-directedness in Beethoven's music", in *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven,* ed. Glenn Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 85.
[79] Ibid.

a half cadence in measure 8 with the "Lament Motive" in the right hand. The "Lament Motive" will close the first phrase of the slow movement and will transform into a fiery, aggressive

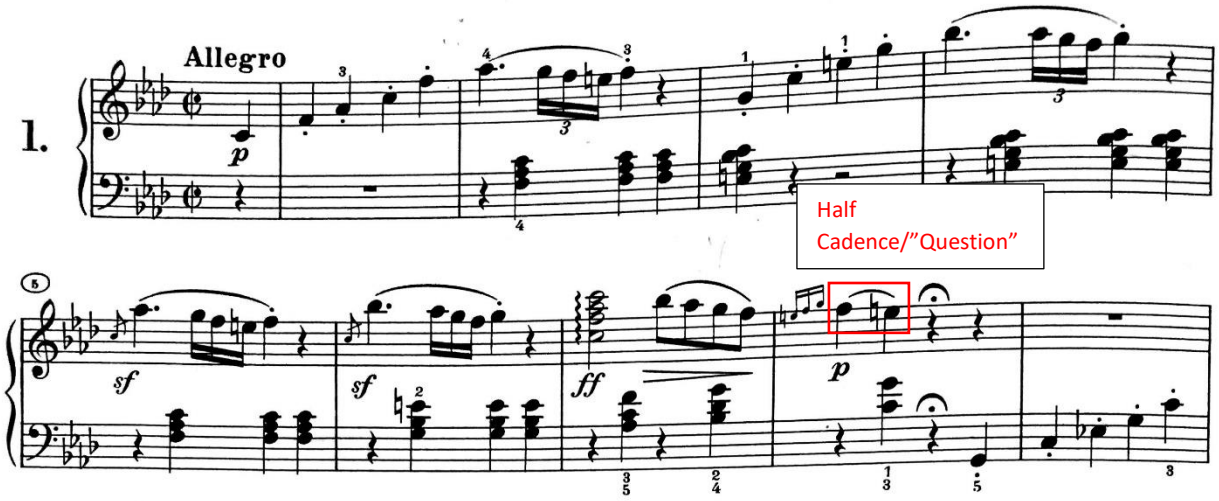

Figure 64 Op.2 no. 1, mm. 1-8

gesture of the finale (Figure 65). The half cadence in measure 8, like a question, automatically requires an answer or response. The standard response would be the tonic chord. Instead, Beethoven responds with the minor dominant, C-minor. This unresolved tension propels the listener towards the final movement. Another unifying element is the 6th interval. Its development will also culminate in the final movement. It takes many different forms throughout the sonata. Beethoven first introduces it as a compound 6th, from the upbeat C to the A-flat above the staff in measure 2. He inverts the sixth motive into the compound third that we hear in measures 3-4. Afterwards, he chronologically closes the space writing a grace note a sixth below the principal note.

The journey towards the last movement is a search for measure 8's resolution. There is a perfect authentic cadence in the last two measures of the first movement, but the single ii°-V-I cadence is not enough to proportionally compensate for all the wandering harmonies after

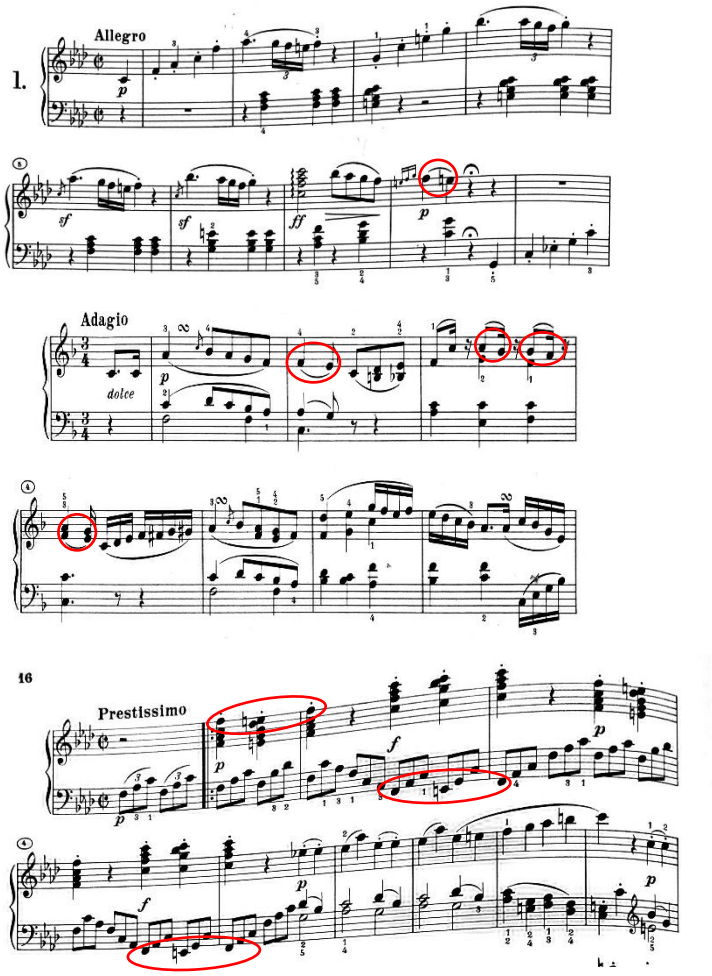

Figure 65 Op. 2 No. 1, Lament Motive

measure 8. The 2nd movement is in the parallel major, which somehow feels very distant. The 3rd movement (Figure 66) opens with F minor but its presence is momentary. Beethoven flattens the F-minor leading tone and proceeds to tonicize A-flat. Then the music moves towards the direction of B-flat minor. The third movement eventually ends with a perfect authentic cadence in the home key but is still too weak to make for a satisfying ending. It is in the final movement where we will find that satisfying end, in addition to the solution to the problem that was introduced in measure 8 of the first movement. The previous three movements were all building toward this moment. This movement continues from the F minor tonality of the previous movement. The ostinato root-position triads in the bass clef outlines the tonic chord. The

listener now hears the conflicting motive as a complete question/answer pair at the upper and lower limits of the texture. Together, they form the first theme as a lower neighbor figure, F-E-F.

The sixth motive also reaches its climactic development in the last movement. The right-hand figure in measure 5 has the same gradual ascent from A-flat to C, that we heard in measures 5-7 of the first movement. The 6th motive allows the phrase to travel from E-flat to C in measures 7-9. The phrase repeats in measures 9-13. Its second half has a near-exact reference of the first movement. The melody in measure 12 corresponds very closely to the beginning movement's 5th bar. The *sforzando* A-flat—with the grace-note C below—and the root position F-minor accompaniment are in the same configuration as the first. Beethoven makes the comparison more conspicuous by stressing the second F minor third with a *sforzando*, in order to replicate the original second beat emphasis. The following descending eighth notes are based on the sixth span in measure 7 of the first movement. All this shows how Beethoven combined two originally separate motives within one measure!

This sonata is the first piece of the form where Beethoven debuted his already matured compositional approach of multi-movement motivic unity and dynamic musical narrative. The remaining 31 sonatas showcase a variety of strategies, not merely stages of development. With the motive of the 6th, he was able to spin an elaborate multi-movement work, whose contrasts conceals their simple origins. Unique to this sonata, he was able to take a purely technical element of musical composition—the half cadence—and animate it with a power that reverberates towards the final movement.

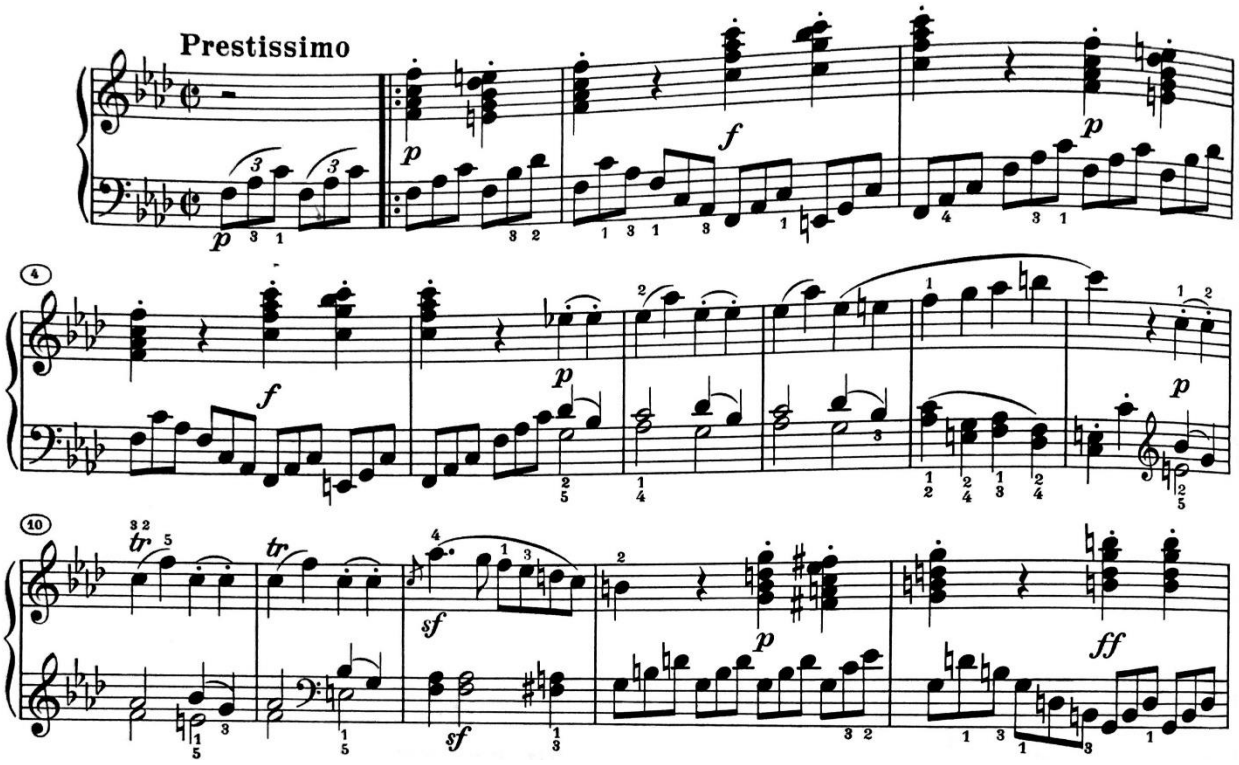

Figure 66 Op. 2 no. 1, Mvmt. 4, mm. 1-14

Op. 14, no. 2

Beethoven's G-major Sonata, Op. 14 No. 2, contrasts with Op. 2 No. 1 in its weight and tone. Like most of Haydn's sonatas, the first movement has more sophisticated musical and emotional development than the emotionally light and mercurial last movement. It lacks the boldness of the F-minor sonata and differs in the way it develops the principal motives. In Op. 14, No. 2, the narrative centers on the gradual progression from angularity to linearity.

The peculiar opening theme is purely instrumental (Figure 67). The melodic contour is too jagged and, the rhythm, too irregular for the voice. The opening octave leap initiates the ornamented outlining of the G-major tonic chord. In measure 2, Beethoven elevates the figure up a step to E. The third form of the motive is in measure 4. The opening interval is now a 10^{th}, instead of the original octave. Beethoven introduces the sonata's purpose by following the first

four measures' angularity with the diatonic step-wise descent from the high C to the lower-octave C.

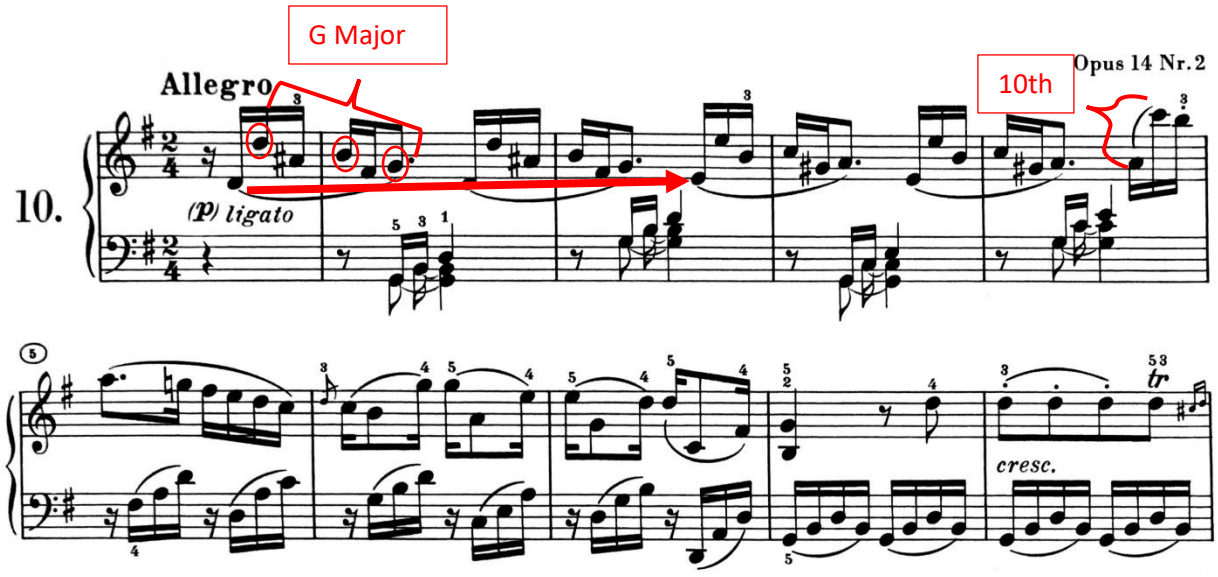

Figure 67 Op 14 no. 2, mvmt. 1, mm. 1-9

The second movement moves the motive towards linearity (Figure 68). It is in the key of C major, a 4th above the key of the first movement. The main subject smooths most of the original melody's ridges. What was originally an opening octave, now shrinks to the smaller interval of a perfect 4th. The line's movement is more oriented towards one direction. The lower neighbor B on the second beat walks straight to the F of the next measure. Vestiges of the first movement's angularity appear in the left-hand figure of measure 2, as well as in the octave jump of the second-section theme in measure 9. The slurring and the contour of the left-hand music in the second measure, amongst the *detaché* articulation of the surrounding notes, overtly relate to the original theme.

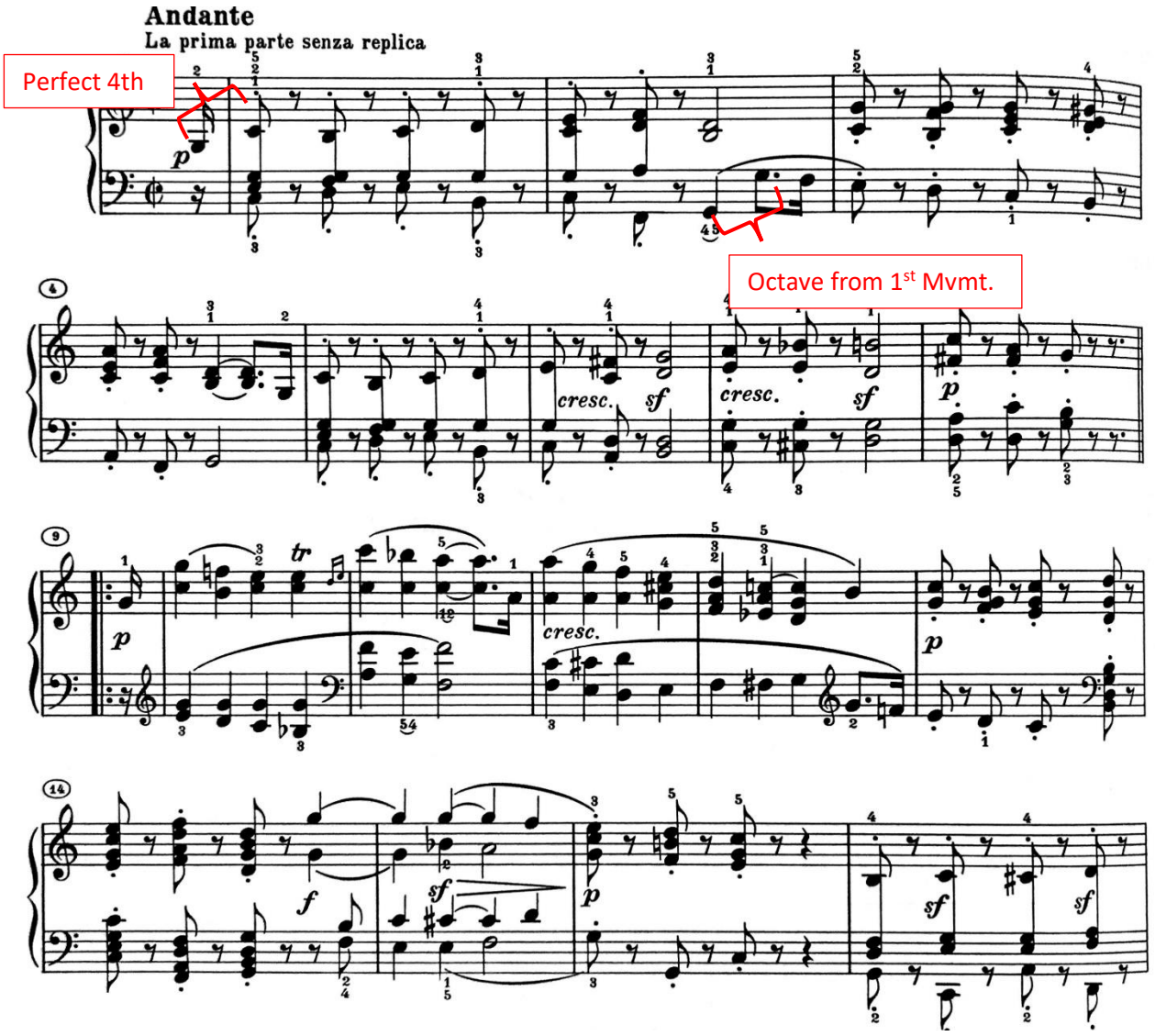

Figure 68 Op. 14 no. 2, mvmt. 2, mm. 1-17

The gradual flattening of the movement finds its end in the third movement *Scherzo* (Figure 69). In measures 1-2, the movement from B^3 to E^5 is completely unidirectional, diatonic, and scalar. Beethoven's big joke in this *Scherzo* is how the unifying motive's original personality has become a nagging presence to its new form. After the pleasant scalar ascent from B^3 to E^5, the original theme's characteristic turn playfully interrupts it in the third measure, connecting this *Scherzo* to the previous the two movements. The third movement's theme rhythmically quickens after being foiled a second time in measure 7. The affront against the new

theme becomes more offensive after measure 8. This time, Beethoven takes the opening octave jump of the original theme and launches it even higher over three octaves. The rest of the narrative consists of the humorous interaction between two seemingly incompatible pairs. One seems to elude the other. They are always apart in time until the last statement of the main third movement theme in measures 237-245 which, for the first time, appears in conjunction with the octave motive in the left hand.

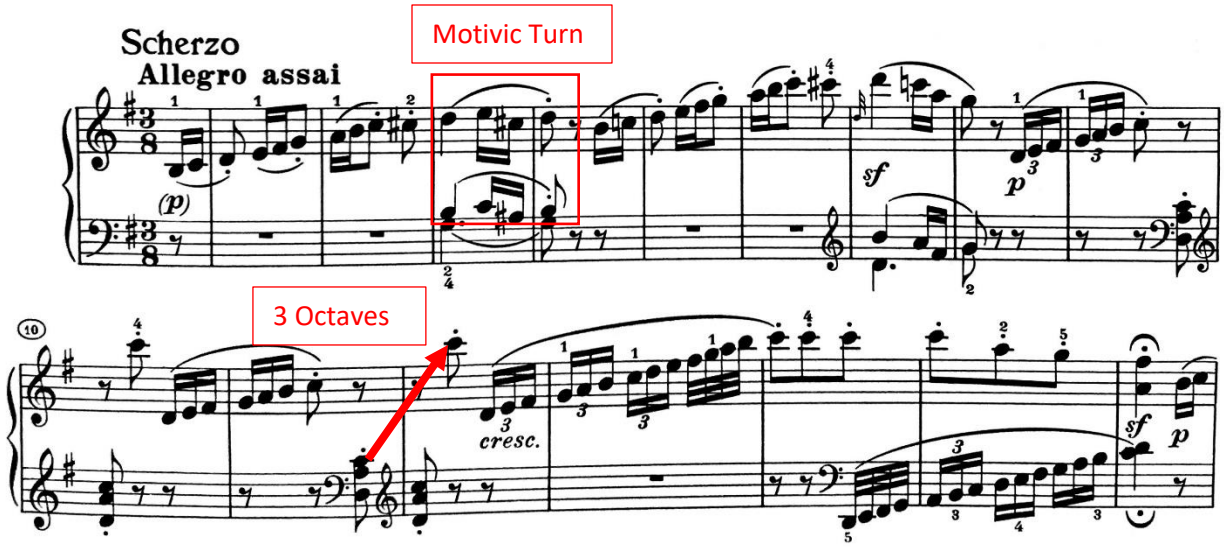

Figure 69 Op. 14 no. 2

Beethoven, once again, uses our spatial conception of music in order to propel the narrative flow. He introduced his intent to smooth the first movement theme into the unidirectional form it takes in the third movement. The unexpected presence of the original theme sets, in relief, the innate differences between the two motives. The ensuing argument plays similarly to two of Jane Austen's characters, Elizabeth and Darcy, from *Pride and Prejudice*. One can hear the stern disagreements in the abrupt bursts of sound in measures 23 to 58, but the gradual point of mutual understanding is achieved in the juxtaposed presence of the two motives in the final statement. This reconciliation after the disintegration of the established

order of the first movement aligns with the "Comic" archetype. In literature, this reconciliation is often depicted as a wedding. The lightweight tone of the whole sonata prevents this toppling of hierarchy from becoming a tragic archetype.[80] The interruptions of the third movement are playful teases, instead of hostile jabs by an opposing character. Beethoven did not intend for this work to be as grand as his other well-known sonatas, but that is not an indication of this work's quality. Different means lead to different ends. Beethoven explores the motivic possibilities that a small-scale piece offers. One does not discount Kipling's *Jungle Book* because it lacks the gravitas of "The Man Who Would Be King." Nevertheless, the same challenge of creating a satisfying ending faces every composer. Beethoven created a minor issue of contour in the first movement. The last movement is his elegant response. This sonata does not end with the cathartic feeling of a rescued world. Beethoven concludes with a light feeling of reconciliation, and leaves the audience with a capricious wink.

Op. 27, no. 2

Beethoven wrote the "Moonlight" sonata, Op. 27 no. 2, in 1801. The moniker is not his own. He inscribes, "Sonata Quasi Una Fantasia," which communicates a departure from the standard sonata forms, and hints at a level of unpredictability. The sonata begins with a slow movement. Each of the three movements gradually intensify from the placid first movement to the fiery finale. The sound is heavily sustained throughout the first movement. The intensification necessitates the ever-growing clarity from the first movement's sustain. The ostinato right-hand figure is certainly one of the most recognizable themes in music. It outlines a 2nd-inversion C-sharp minor chord. The ostinato rhythm persists until the penultimate measure

[80] Almén, 30-31.

of the first movement. Most of the time, it resides in the same general register of the piano. The theme appears in measure 5. This theme contains the ostinato motive in the middle range. There are two instances where it breaks free from its hold. In measure 32, it ventures beyond its confined space after the theme steps out of the scene (Figure 71). In measure 60, the theme still remains, but is now the foundation from which the ostinato motive explores.

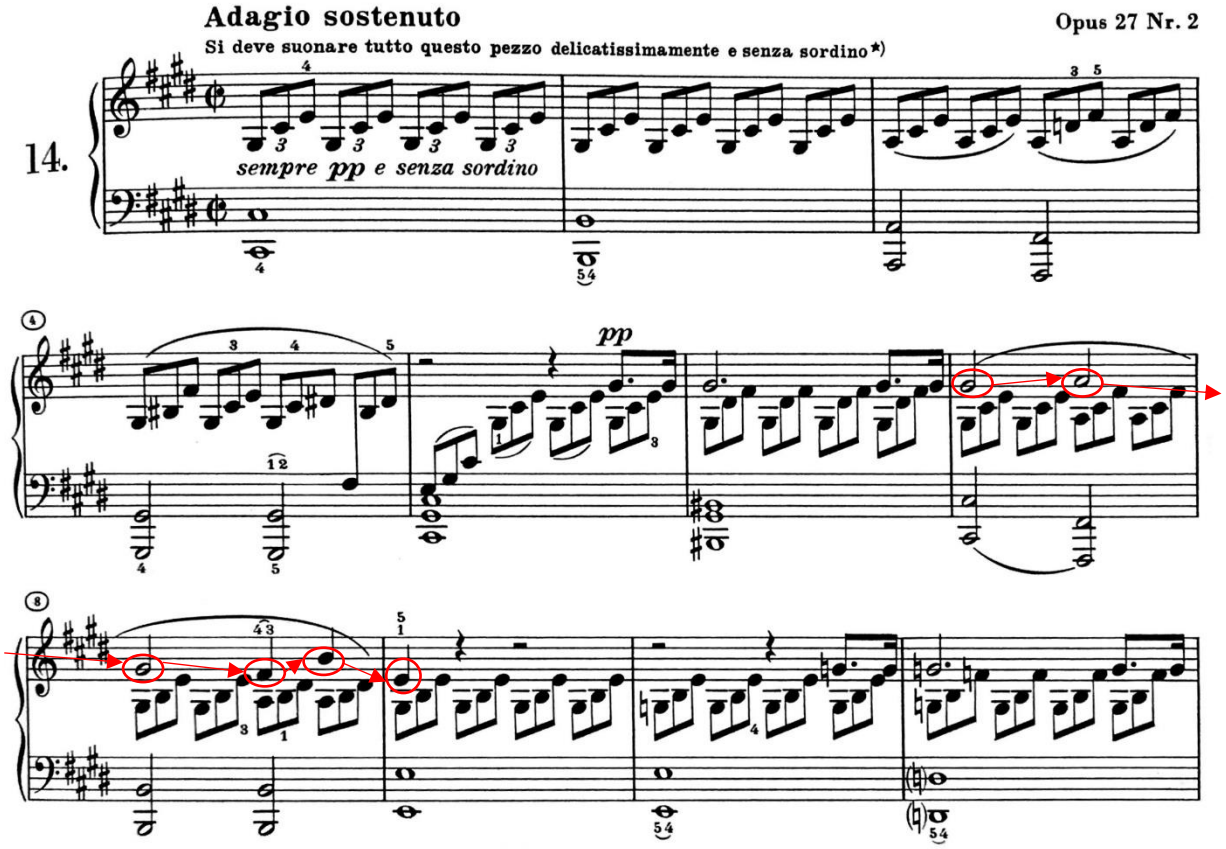

Figure 70 Op. 27 no. 2, 1st mvmt., mm. 1-11

The 2nd movement continues the ostinato's struggle to ascend (Figure 72). The theme is built from the same motive that first appeared in the first movement's 8th and 9th measures. The second movement theme has the characteristic intervallic configuration of a descending whole-step leap up a fourth, and ending on a third below the first principle note (Figure 72).

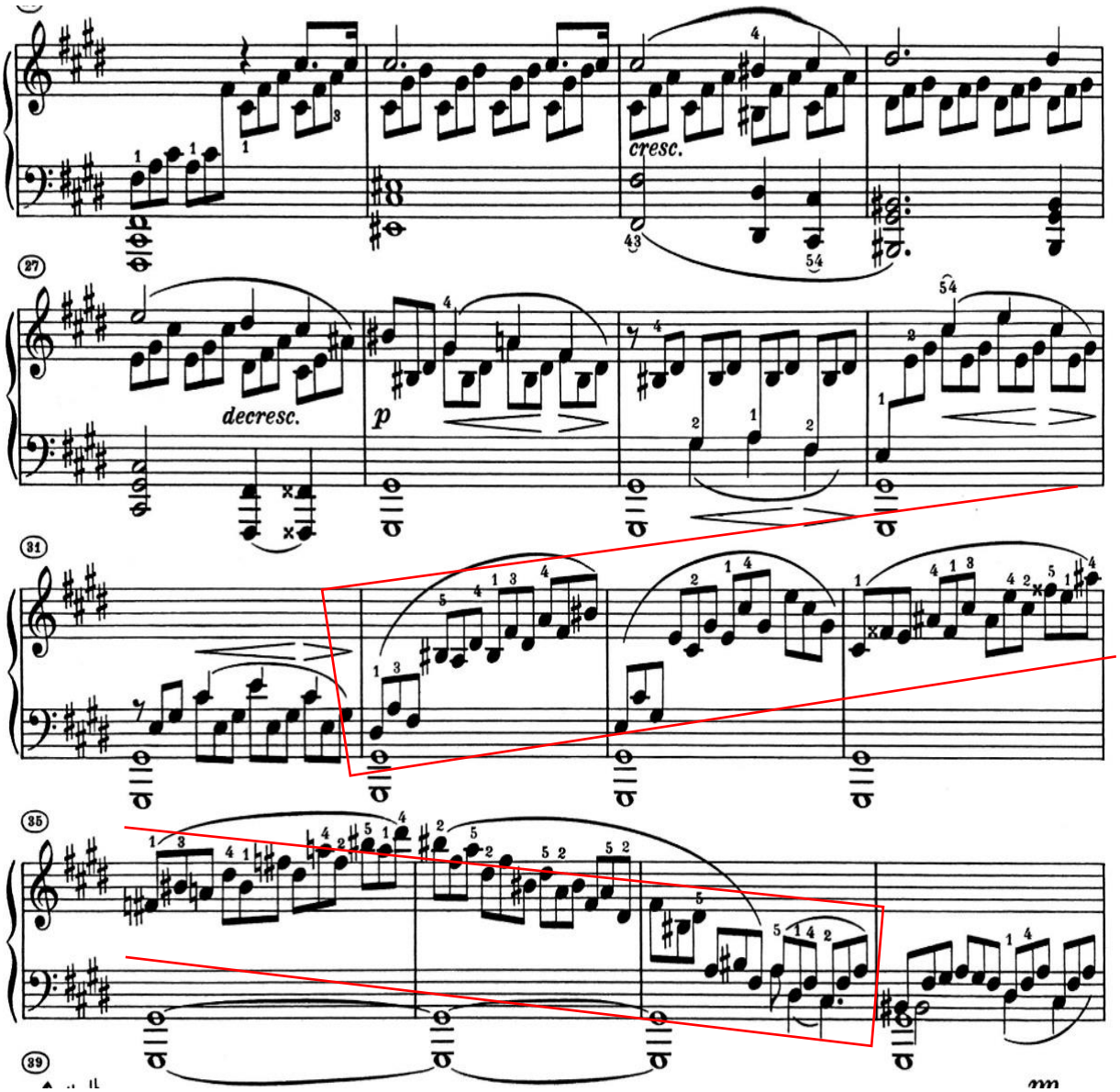

Figure 71 Op. 27 no. 2, Mvmt. I, mm. 23-38

The general movement of the phrases is upward. The first slurred figure starts on D-flat and ends on E-flat. Its next statement in measure 4 begins on G-flat and ends on A-flat. The sound of struggle in each phrase is heard in its descending motions. The motive first overcomes the pull downwards after the movement to E-flat, but it is quickly brought down. The drive to ascend is more audacious in the Trio section. The music jumps from G-flat to E-flat in measures

38-39, but is still susceptible to the downward pull. It briefly reaches a higher point, F^5, in measure 41 but finds itself back to the starting F^4 position.

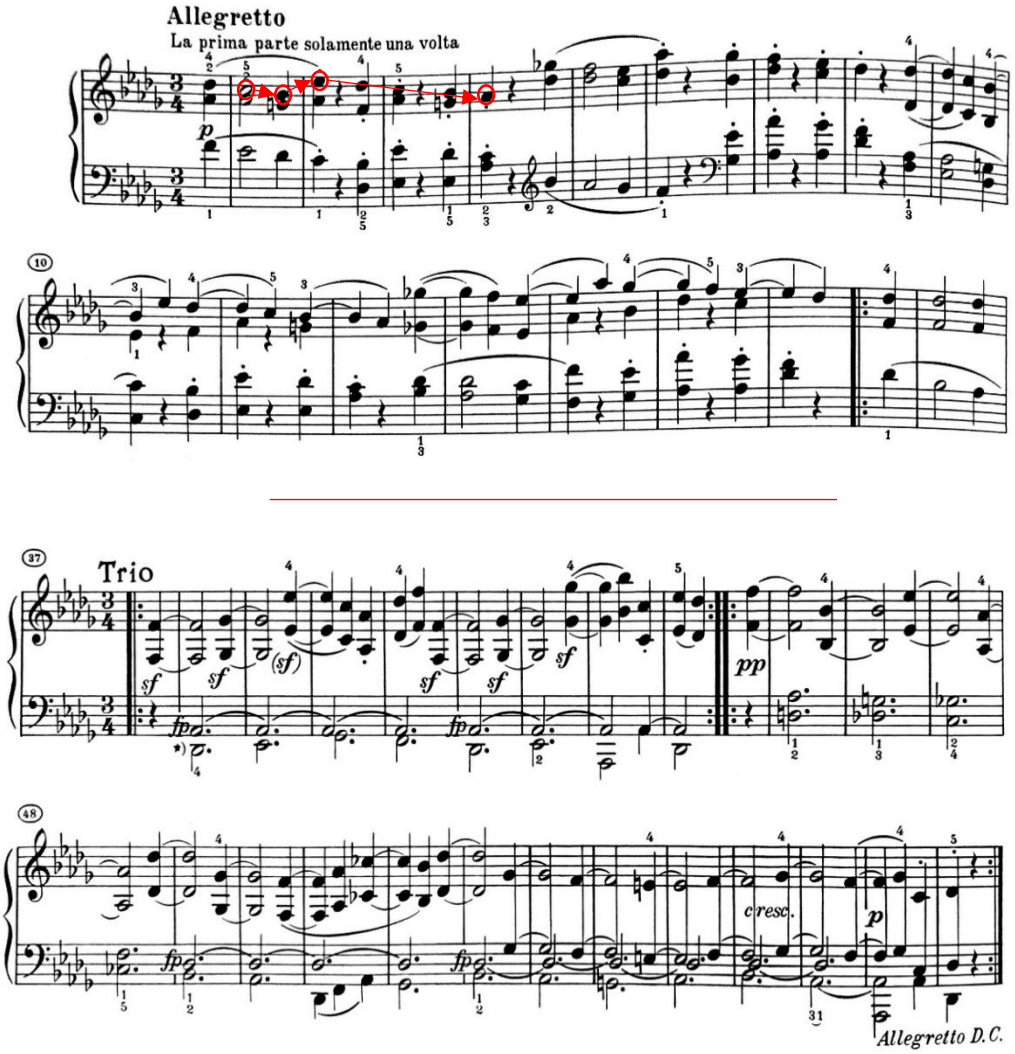

Figure 72 II. Mvmt, mm. 1-18 & mm. 37-60

In the third movement, the tortured ostinato motive finally breaks free in its fiery upward surges (Figure 73). This movement draws closer to the first movement in its return to C-sharp minor and the shared inversion between the opening right-hand figures of both movements. It traverses a span of three octaves, a distance last seen in measures 32-35 of the first movement. The first three sixteenth notes are configured in the same tonic inversion as the triplets at the

beginning of the piece. The third movement ascent is less impeded compared to the first movement. The smaller range of Beethoven's piano would have increased the suspense. He most likely used a Walter piano at the time that he wrote the sonata. Its range was F^{1}-G^{6}.[81] This smaller range adds a dimension of excitement in the beginning passage. One would be able to see a more complete utilization of the instrument's range. This also adds an element of suspense from the possibility of completely exhausting all possible keys, since the upper limit of the keyboard is lower than the modern grand piano.

The outcome for the character is tragic. We will later hear the ostinato character breaking out of its prison, but its final descent to the murky depths of the piano spell its calamitous demise. The opening section foreshadows this conclusion. In measure 14, the forces wrest the tortured character after reaching the upper register of the instrument. Towards the end of the piece in measure 162, the character attempts to break through the C-sharp ceiling. The figure attempts to breach it three times in measures 160, 162, and 164. In measure 183, he was able to breach the C-sharp limit. Exhausted, its momentum slows towards the *Adagio* before its last defiant stand in the Coda. The oppressive G-sharp that once contained the character in the first movement, attempts to suppress it for the final time in measures 194-195. The protagonist, in its last gasp, defies the G-sharp with the most intense form of the ostinato motive. It breaks through the G-sharp and C-sharp ceilings, then plummets to the low C-sharp. The struggle thus ends in a blaze of triumph, but at a dear price.

[81] Good, 92.

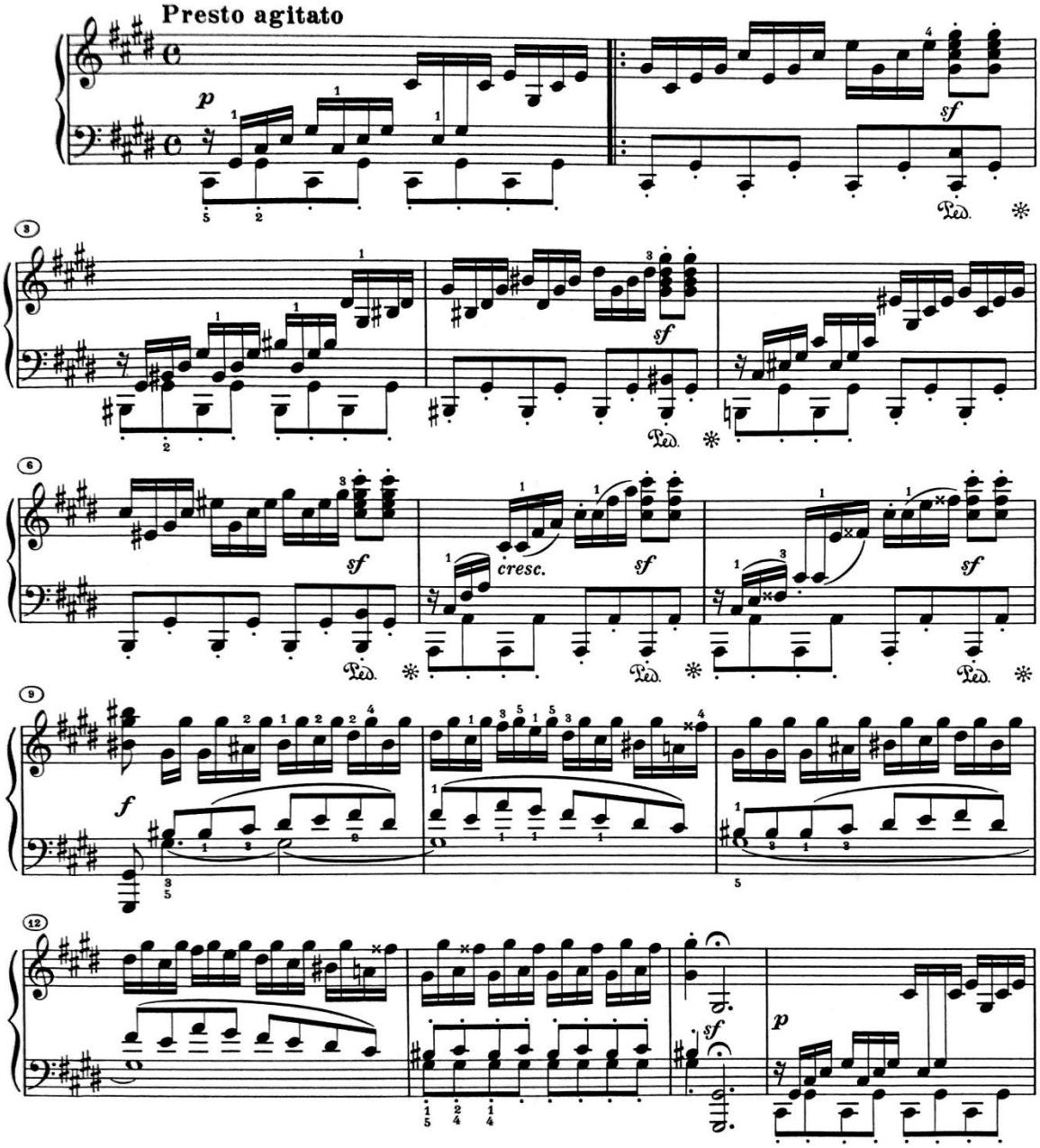

Figure 73 Op. 27 no. 2, Mvmt. III, mm. 1-15

Op. 31 no. 2

The revolutionary nature of Beethoven's Op. 31 no. 2 can never be overstated. Beethoven speaks of his "New Path" to his pupil, Czerny. Czerny assumed it was the String

Quintet, Op. 29, but was most likely the Piano Sonata Op. 31 no. 2. Dahlhaus described how this sonata treats "ambiguity as aesthetic" and cautions the analyst, "If one is confused about the form, one shouldn't try to impose an unambiguous solution to it."[82] This is Beethoven's first sonata where he prioritized his aesthetic for motivic unity over formal traditions. Prior to this, his revolutionary aesthetic was contained within the limits of sonata form. The blurring of formal boundaries in this sonata show Beethoven's willingness to boldly innovate the form to reach a higher level of unity. Czerny, who studied this sonata with the composer, wrote:

> This sonata is consummate [vollkommen]. The unity of the musical idea and the tragic character, the form that is uninterrupted by any episode, the romantic picturesque of the complete tone picture never fail to make the greatest effect, if the fantasy of the player stands on the same high level with his dexterity.[83]

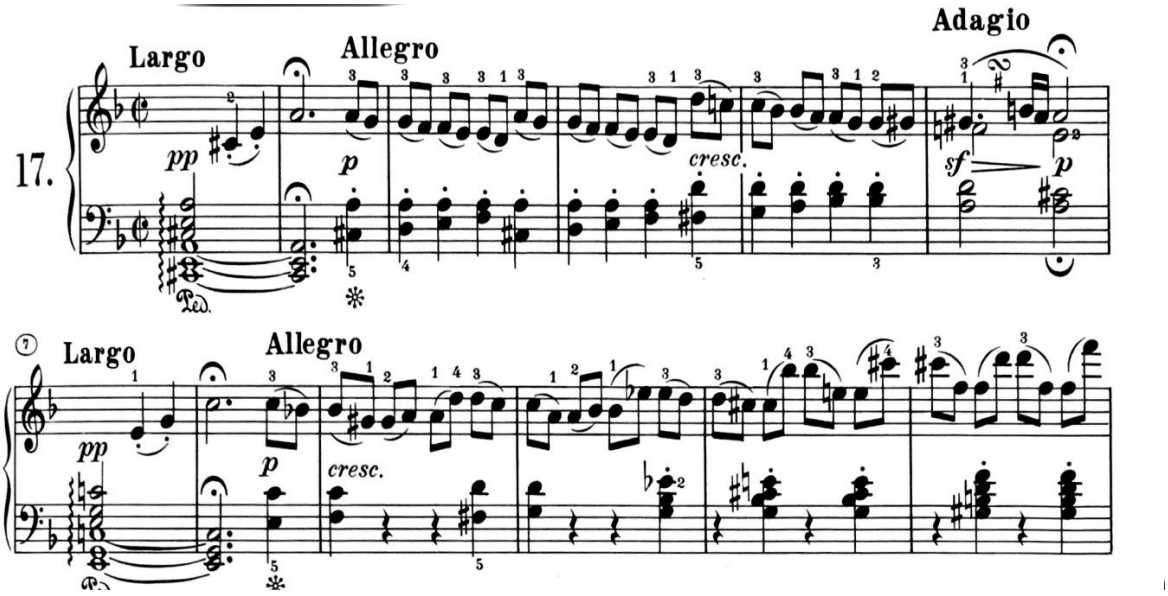

Figure 74 Op. 31 no. 2, 1st mvmt., mm. 1-12

[82] Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig Van Beethoven: Approaches to His Music* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1997), 167-170.

[83] Kenneth Drake, *The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Process* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 169.

I will pursue this idea of how Beethoven takes advantage of the trajectory from ambiguity to clarifying resolution, in preparation for its satisfying closure.

Beethoven begins the sonata from a point of obscurity (Figure 74). The sonata is supposed to be in D minor, but the first harmony is a first-inversion A-major triad. Even more unusual is how the second phrase, in measure 7, begins with a first inversion C-major chord. The behavior of the two phrases foreshadow Beethoven's active avoidance of a firm tonic resolution until the piece's very end.

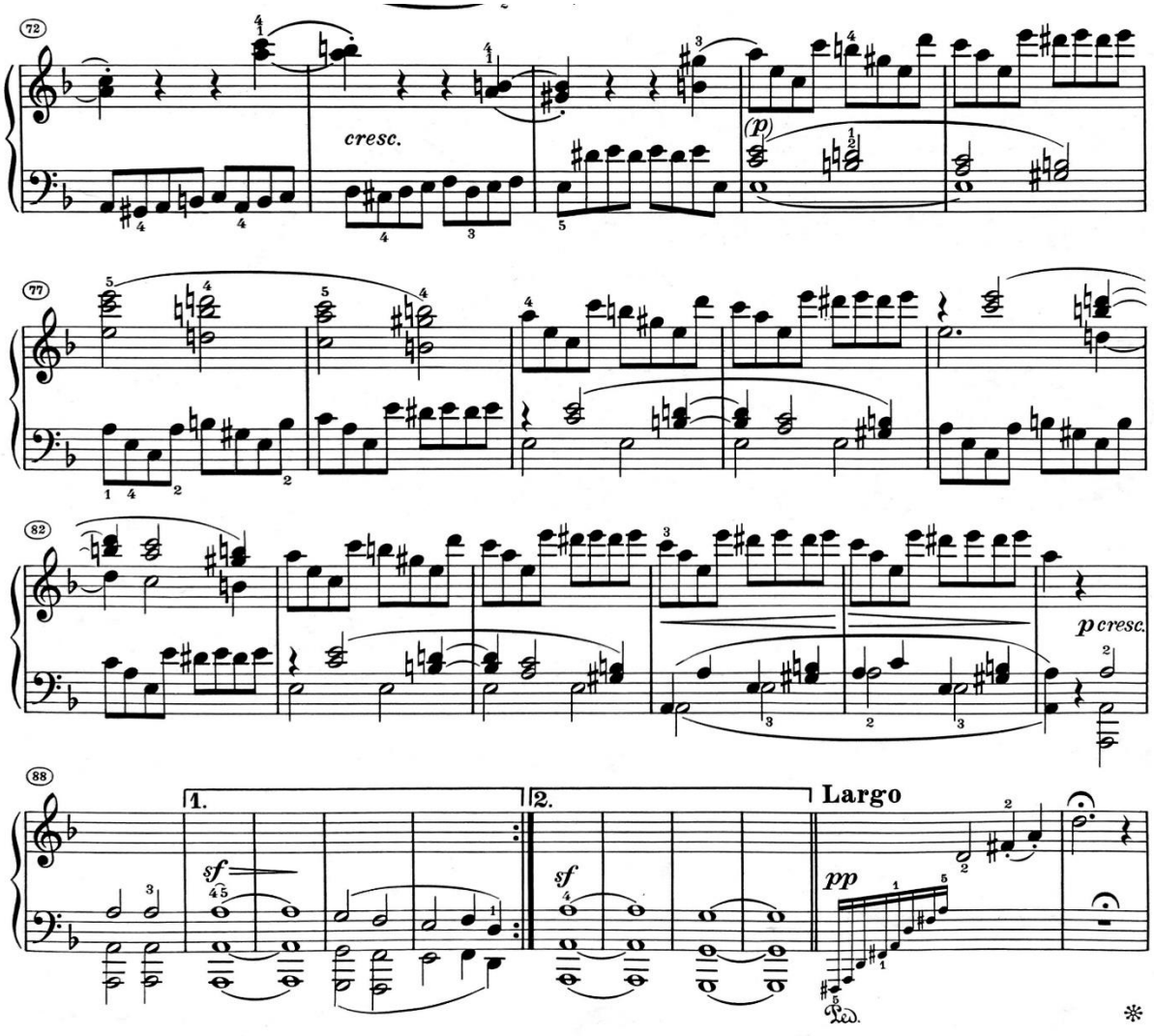

Figure 75 Op. 31 no. 2, 1st Mvmt., mm. 72-94

Measures 75 and 205 show a prolongation of their respective dominant chords (Figure 75). The dominant E pedal tone in measure 75 resolves to the downbeat A, but the invertible counterpoint shifts our focus to the right-hand half-note chords. The resolution to A is only transient, as it flows downwards to either the dominant chord in the first measure or the first inversion D major harmony in measure 93. Beethoven will later deprive the listener of the strong tonic statement at a point where one would normally expect it. Measure 219 has more supporting chord members but Beethoven's pedal marking indicates that the low F should be sustained but not accented. The approach to the last two D minor tonic chords lacks a firm dominant seventh to tonic gesture. The last dominant to tonic movement occurred in measure 217, but the immediate rest snuffs out its potential effectiveness.

The slow Adagio movement is in B-flat major, a major-third below D minor. Beethoven roots the listener farther away from the tonic, magnifying the listener's desire for the stable harmonic resolution that is missing thus far. It opens with a downbeat rolled chord like the first

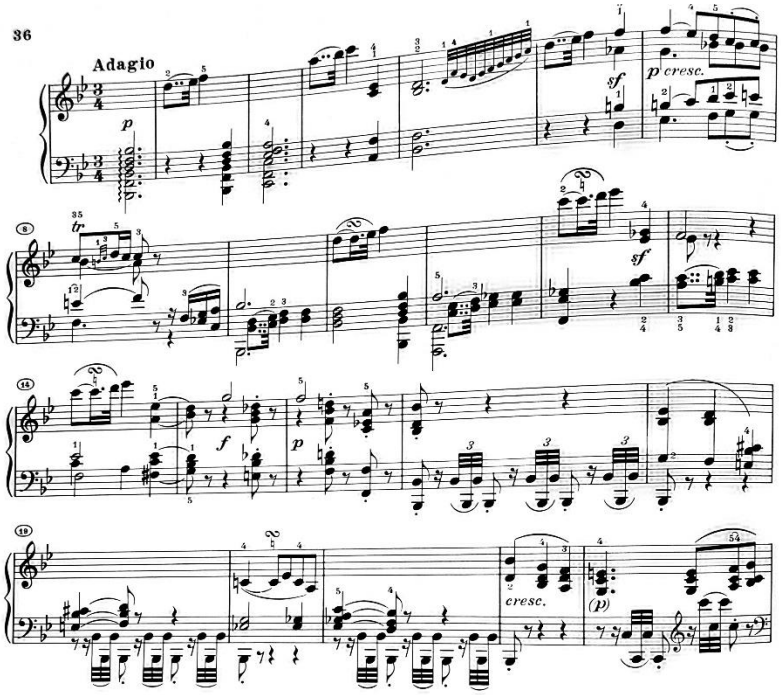

Figure 76 Op. 31 No. 2, Mvmt. 2, mm. 1-23.

movement, but the 2nd movement differs in its more stable tonic grounding. This is due to the amount of strong B-flat cadences. In measures 16-17, multiple textures approach the tonic. The half-note F in the soprano texture falls to B-flat in the following measure. The alto moves from leading tone to tonic while the bass Fs move contrarily to B-flat[2]. The next strong tonic cadence is in measure 43. The preceding measure emphasizes the dominant seventh harmony. Beethoven writes *sforzando* on E-flat, above the broken F-major triad in the left hand. The improvisatory feel of the subsequent solo right-hand ruminates towards the full tonic chord in measure 43. Measures 59, 89, and 98 all have standard perfect authentic cadences that effectively ground the listener on B-flat. The cadences serve to relieve the listener from the ambiguity of the first movement, but is unable to satisfy the listener's inclination towards D minor.

The first movement suspends our harmonic expectations by limiting the number of grounding authentic cadences in the home key. The second movement plants us into the unrelated key of B-flat. The third movement helps the listener find the home key. Visually, it seems that Beethoven finally asserts D-minor as the home key. The first three bars clearly arpeggiates the D-minor chord. The progression for measures 1-8 is simply tonic-dominant-tonic, but Beethoven's meticulous writing shows how he continues to withhold the strong resolution from the listener. The downbeat tonic D is a sixteenth-note, while the next A—the dominant—is a dotted-8th tied to another 8th-note. Beethoven is taking the keyboardist's finger-pedalling technique and turns it on its head. The rhythmic structure of the first 8 bars puts 5/6 of the measure in the dominant instead of the tonic, thus begins a

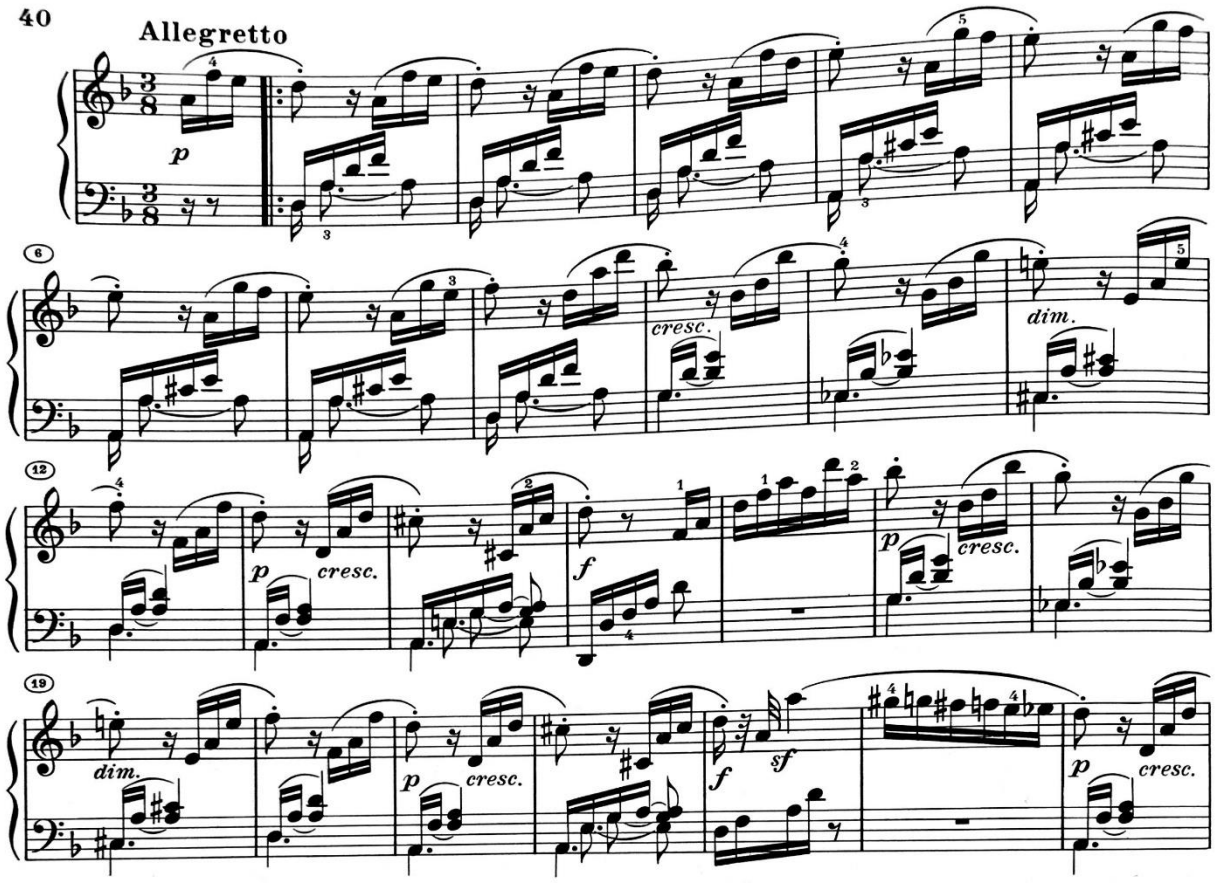

Figure 77 Op. 31 no. 2., Mvmt. 3, mm. 1-25

power struggle between the tonic D and the dominant A. These measures still provide a great deal more tonic activity than the first movement. The texture changes in measure 9-14. Beethoven shifts the rhythmic emphasis on the non-tonic downbeat notes. Once the phrase cadences to D in measure 23, he returns the emphasis back to the A on the second beat. He makes certain that the D's harmonic pull remains weak by the sudden registral jump to the *sforzando* A.

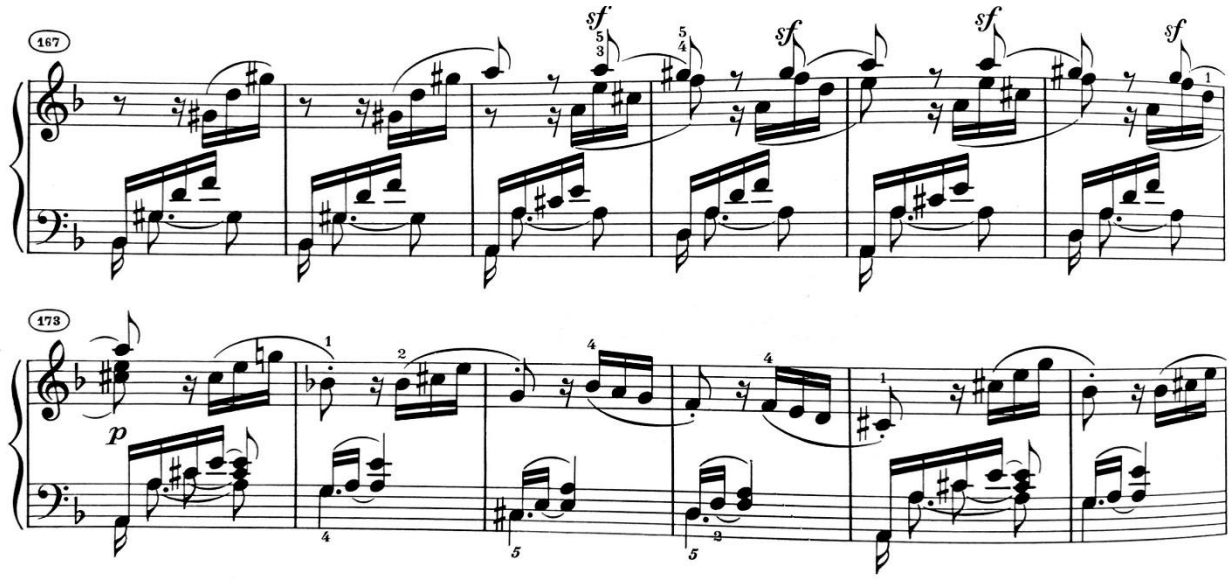

Figure 78 Op. 31 no. 2., Mvmt. 3, mm. 167-178

In measure 151, B-flat returns in the minor as a false recap of the main theme. The second movement, in measures 91-92, predicts this moment when the B-flat unexpectedly moves down a half-step to A. The same event occurs in measures 168-169 of the third movement when the B-flat bass steps down to A, after 11 measures as a separated pedal point. Once again, Beethoven is shining the spotlight on A with the bass motion, but also with the top voice's oscillation between G-sharp and A. The A later receives a similar treatment in measure 270 with an embellishment from its upper neighbor, B-flat. The final ringing of the A appears in measure 350. The final statement of the main theme occurs here, but is now *fortissimo* with incessant *sforzando* As shrieking in the topmost voice.

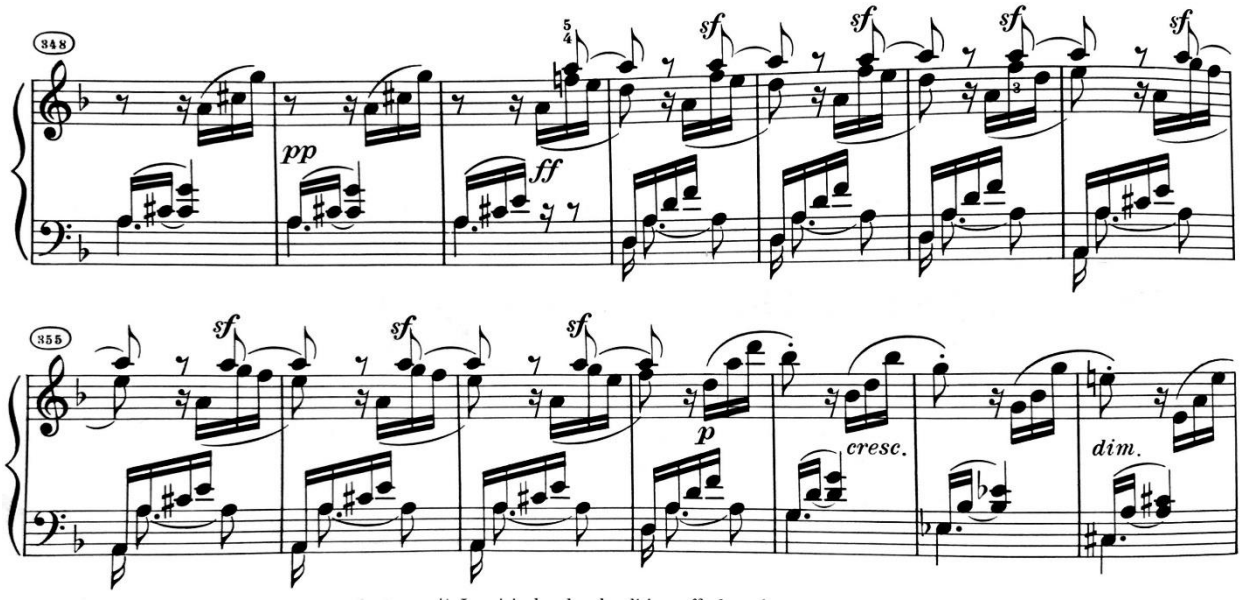

Figure 79 Op. 31 no. 2., 3rd Mvmt., mm. 348-361

Beethoven finally offers harmonic relief in the last 15 measures. Despite the continuing de-emphasis of the downbeat tonic, he was able to resolve the large-scale tension, accumulated over two movements. The downbeats now alternate between D and A after each measure. This emphasizes D minor as the quickened harmonic I-V progression naturally draws our attention to the tonic. The downbeat note stabilizes back on D from measures 393-397 in order to return our focus to the dominant A. This sets up the penultimate motion to D in measure 397 which is an 8th note, double the usual duration. The ending gesture is the cascading arpeggio towards the final and longest-lasting D in the whole movement.

When one listens to this piece in its entirety, the last measures are curiously satisfying. It is quite astonishing, considering all the vagaries of the previous movements. Beethoven did not rely on cheap tricks. He intimately understood all aspects of music. He leveraged each one to begin and end his musical narratives. He could have easily written flashy bombast to force D-minor into prominence in this movement, but that would be too one dimensional for a composer

of his caliber. Instead, he writes an ending that is able to resolve a protracted tension—lasting more than two movements—with profound subtlety. Perhaps, a lesser composer with limited capabilities would have resorted to crowd-pleasing fireworks at the very end. Beethoven was a consummate artist who was able to wield rhythm, harmony, proportion, dynamics, articulation, and phrasing. Elegance was his aim and it is what ends this magnificent piece, and a certain amount of ambiguity.

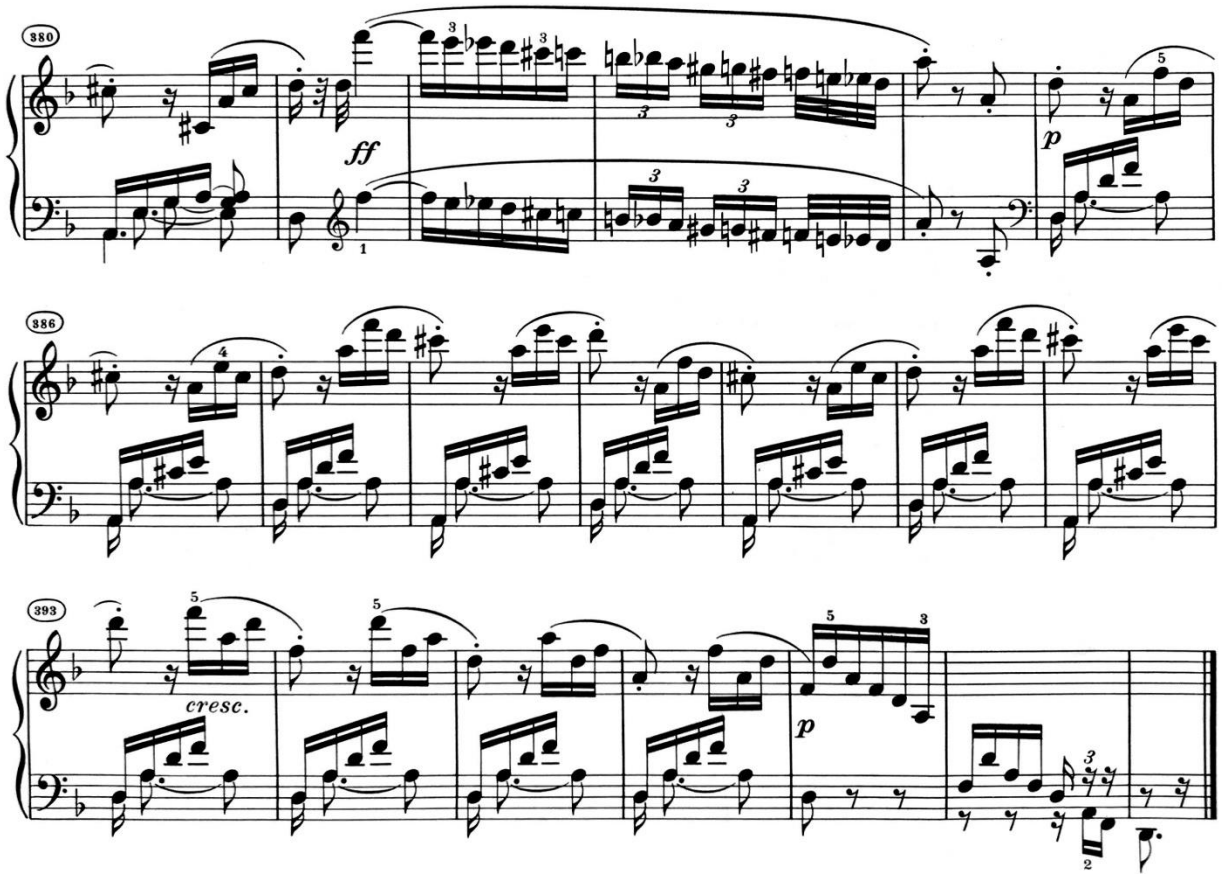

Figure 80 Op. 31 no. 2., mvmt. 2., mm. 380-399

Chapter 10

Conclusion

The similarities between the fundamental elements and structures of literature and Beethoven's piano sonatas are now easily understood as more than mere coincidence. His integration of motivic unity in all of his sonatas prove that it is a defining element of his aesthetic. The sonatas span all three periods of his compositional output. So, for a composer who was always in search for originality, motivic unity was the method. It was not an optional device to be used according to his whims. For him, musical motives and literary characters were the same. The motives can be subject to the same kind of development and evolution. They can influence and be influenced. The motives can emote a spectrum of feelings and moods. He employed every tool in his creative arsenal to instill life in his collection of notes. These themes became an integral part of his musical story, and for him to abandon them would equate to an author writing a story without characters.

Beethoven recognized how sonata form closely resembled the basic plot structure of a novel. His expositions introduce the characters and tone that the listener will follow through the course of the sonata. It is because of this that Beethoven's sonatas have an added layer of complexity. The immense amount of information in just the opening section has to be sufficient to support the rest of the multi-movement piece. In a few of the sonatas, he even felt the need to add an introductory passage that is more akin to a prologue. The importance he placed on the beginnings reflect on the importance the final movement has in providing closure to everything

that came before. The endings provide the apotheosis and conclusion of the piece's narrative development, whether it is the final answer to the question or the missing resolution.

The elemental and structural similarities to novels are striking, but even more so are the commonalities that Beethoven's piano sonatas have to the form and style of the early novels with which he was ~~he was~~ familiar. ~~with.~~ One should immediately wonder about the random twist that is the second movement to Op. 110. Its comic tone is a drastic departure from the overall mood of the rest of the movements. E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Life and Opinions of Kater Murr* give close aesthetic precedence to Beethoven's movement. It is a book that is based on the absurd form of two narratives that are constantly interrupting each other. The first of the quodlibet in Op. 110 and the *Kater Murr* involve. Also, the book was published in 1819, shortly before Beethoven wrote Op. 110.[84]

Another close similarity is the prevalence of nostalgia and memory. Many of the stories of the early novels were framed in the form of recollection. Hölderlin's *Hy*perion and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* are written in the form of letters. The story of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* are all accounts of the narrator's past experiences. The styles of these influential works influenced Beethoven to incorporate the fugue in his late sonatas, again in a reflective manner, to continue the spirit of Op. 90 into his Op. 101 sonata, and to integrate Op. 13's introduction throughout the first movement.

The common traits between Beethoven's piano sonatas and the early novels should expand the imaginative possibilities each one has to offer. The narrative approach to the sonatas gives vital meaning and symbolism to the notes required to effectively convey the story to the

[84] Christopher R. Clason, "The Vignettes in E. T. A. Hoffmann's 'Kater Murr': Portraits of Artists and Lovers," *German Studies Review* 15, no. 3 (October 1992): 493.

listener. An awareness of the relationship between the sonatas and the early novels provide another facet of Beethoven's compositional approach. Beethoven did not just write tunes because they sounded pleasing, nor did he spin a mundane motive into a whole sonata because it was mathematically sound. He had a story that he could only express through music. In order for the performer to effectively communicate Beethoven's story to the listener, he must understand the source of Beethoven's imagination.

Afterword

"Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning."

- Maya Angelou

Throughout my decade of musical studies in academia, my admiration for Beethoven's music blossomed to an obsession. Perhaps it is due to the sheer exposure to his music and life in every part of my education. Western music history textbooks canonize him. Most music theory courses will eventually come across the path of his works. In a pianist's world, the importance of Beethoven's piano sonatas is on par with the Bible. I would venture to guess that his works are the most widely studied pieces of music in the western world, just like the Bible's reputation for being the most quoted and read. The amount of scholarly literature surrounding Beethoven and his works reflects his broad influence. Certainly, this dissertation is just another drop added to that sea of literature, but my hope is to expand the interpretive imagination towards Beethoven's piano sonatas—works that have long been scrutinized by the more formulaic eye of theoretical analysis.

I am not advocating for the total dismissal of the fine analytical products or methods towards this eternal body of work. It is incumbent on the teacher, student, and performer to know about the maestro's life, as well as the inner workings of his music. The teacher must make all the complexities within his sonatas meaningful to the young student. The mathematics behind the sonatas' unity may be enough to captivate the analytically-minded student, but in my experience, the teacher has to go beyond mere lifeless technicalities to make a lasting impression on the young mind. Such is the case with a singer who must not be content with perfect diction,

but must deeply understand the words' meanings in order to bring out the spirit within a song. This is especially true with Beethoven. The romantic generation was an extension of Beethoven's aesthetic. You can hear the imagination in Beethoven's correspondences, and the budding romanticism in his piano sonatas. So, to dispense of such imagination for the sake of scientific objectivity, would be to abandon the creative spirit of this influential composer.

Finally, as a performer and interpreter of Beethoven's works, I cannot overstate the importance of finding the narrative relationships between the fundamental elements of his music. Such insight helps guide the performer's interpretive decisions towards a more cohesive whole, and uplifts the the experience of his pieces from a mere physical exercise of showmanship to the sublime. That is what propels the performer to continue exploring Beethoven's legacy. That is what prevents his music from becoming stale in one's mind. Most importantly, that is what will make the piece come alive for the listener. The art of the concert pianist is not so different than that of the reciting poet. We take what are essentially lifeless symbols and animate them into woven dreams. This wonderfully complex task requires deep study and imagination in order for the aggregate parts of the music to coalesce into the narrative tapestry. The rewards of this task are not only a better understanding of Beethoven's music, but also a glimpse into the world as seen by the mind of one of the world's greatest bards.

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