The vast popularity of Beethoven's *Sonate Pathétique*, virtually from the moment of its publication in late 1799, is traceable in part to its title. Not only does the term *pathétique* seem to describe the music perfectly, it also epitomizes a paradoxical trend in musical aesthetics and style: although by century's end instrumental music was highly valued precisely because its meaning was indeterminate, the interpretive guide offered by a title greatly enhanced the enjoyment of performer and listener alike. Indeed, the very presence of the title caused such an overwhelming response in the early nineteenth century that Wilhelm von Lenz grew caustic over the "young hearts enchanted by the permission to be pathetic for a little quarter of an hour."¹ Schindler reported that the work "sells more than any other piece" and claimed that Beethoven said: "The whole world seizes upon a single sonata because it has a name that pianists can exploit."² Everyone can revel in the shared understanding of *pathétique*. But that familiar term conceals as much as it reveals. The adjective *pathetic* and the noun *pathos* actually comprise two different strands of meaning that need to be untangled. Both have claims, as well as a somewhat ambiguous status, in rhetoric and aesthetics. Moreover, they sometimes veer off into the related concepts of the sentimental and the sublime, also of great importance to the later eighteenth century. The title of the

² Schindler-MacArdle, p.162. The title on the first edition, *Grande Sonate pathétique*, is presumed to come from Beethoven himself; the autograph is no longer extant. Beethoven rarely bestowed such titles.
Pathétique thus points to a subject with wide ramifications. This study examines the larger rhetorical and aesthetic contexts of pathos, then explores the ways in which this broadened arena of meaning affects our understanding of Beethoven’s sonata.

**Rhetoric at the End of the Eighteenth Century**

To establish a rhetorical context means first to establish the relevance of rhetoric in this period and to Beethoven himself. Stated simply, rhetoric remained rooted in the education and the mind-set of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and bore fruit in musical writings, in the terminology and metaphors for musical structures and processes, in instructions for performance, in discussions of the sources of inspiration, and even in composers’ letters.\(^3\) Beethoven read not only such rhetorically informed musical treatises as by Johann Mattheson’s *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* but also works from Greek and Roman antiquity, possibly including Quintilian. Indeed, the influence of Quintilian on eighteenth-century writers important to Beethoven, such as Sulzer and Schiller, has been well established.\(^4\) Although the range of his reading in it has not been determined, Beethoven knew and used Sulzer’s encyclopedia, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*.\(^5\) In fact, Beethoven’s highly educated teacher Neefe praised Sulzer in print, explicitly linking instrumental music with eloquence, and thus with the purpose of rhetoric, persuasive and meaningful communication: “Sulzer, one of our greatest philoso-

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5. Richard Kramer has demonstrated that Beethoven studied Schulz’s article on recitative; see “Beethoven and Carl Heinrich Graun,” *BS* 1, pp.18–44. Owen Jander argues for much wider acquaintance; see his “Exploring Sulzer’s *Allgemeine Theorie* as a Source Used by Beethoven,” *Beethoven Newsletter* 2 (1987), 1–7. On Beethoven and Schiller, see n.51.
phers, and perhaps the greatest aesthetician of our time, complains about halfheartedness in the attempt to imbue instrumental music with greater significance, and it would undoubtedly have become more eloquent long ago, if those efforts had been pursued. 6" Neefe, who had taught music "and other subjects" in Leipzig, may also have passed on to Beethoven his own comprehensive assimilation of rhetorical concepts, as revealed, for example, in his article on musical repetition, published in 1776. 7

One ubiquitous rhetorical model in eighteenth-century education was the art of letter-writing, or *ars dictaminis*. Just as Haydn’s and Mozart’s most formal letters—Haydn’s autobiographical letter of 1776 and Mozart’s first pleas to Puchberg—reveal this orientation, so Beethoven’s Heiligenstadt Testament suggests the structure, elevated tone, and figures of a rhetorically conceived letter or speech. Indeed, Maynard Solomon described the “testament’s emotional tone” as “alternating between touching expressions of Beethoven’s feelings of despair at his encroaching deafness and stilted, even literary formulations emphasizing his adherence to virtue. There are passages of real pathos, but these are so intertwined with self-conscious dramatics that one begins to realize that this neatly written document is a carefully revised ‘fair copy’.”

Although the order is not strictly maintained, all the principal parts of the traditional persuasive letter are there: the introduction, which secures the goodwill of the reader, in this case by an exhortation intended to anticipate and then disarm criticism (O you men . . . how greatly do you wrong me); then the narration of facts, the history of the malady and its treatment; the supporting evidence, for example, his inability to hear shepherds piping; the frequent refrain of refuting his enemies’ arguments; and the conclusion, which reveals again his good qualities as well as his despair in a final plea to sway the emotions of the reader. 9


9. These parts are the exordium, with benevolentiae captatio; narratio; corroboratio; confutatio; and peroratio. On the *ars dictaminis*, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: u California P, 1974) pp.194–268.
A rhetorical preoccupation of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, at once more illuminating and more specifically musical, was the attempt to discern the generating ideas or images behind a work of instrumental music. Haydn’s biographers Griesinger, Dies, and Carpani tried to find out if Haydn composed with particular ideas or images in mind, or simply asserted that he had; Griesinger elicited from him the celebrated remark that Haydn portrayed “moral characters” in his symphonies, whereas Carpani claimed that Haydn had a definite “romanza” or “programma” in his works. Similarly, Beethoven’s pupils Ries and Czerny asserted that Beethoven’s sources of compositional inspiration were a “specific object” or “visions and images, drawn either from reading or from his own excited imagination,” respectively. Mainly because the principal writers on this subject are unreliable, doubt has been cast on the whole enterprise: Schindler extensively elaborated on the “poetic idea” in his biography, having already forged whole entries about the ideas behind the Sonatas ops. 13 and 14, and a century later Arnold Schering built an extraordinarily detailed edifice on poems and plays ostensibly underlying some of Beethoven’s major works. Yet, the notion of a “poetic idea” was a ubiquitous one in rhetoric and aesthetics of the period and correlates especially well with sources of rhetorical *inventio*: the *topoi* (topics of ideas and arguments), and especially the *phantasia* (vision or image) that Quintilian found indispensable in generating the appropriate passions: “There are certain experiences which the Greeks call φαντασία and the Romans *visions*, whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes. It is the man who is really sensitive to such impressions who will have the greatest power over the emotions.”

“Pathos,” then, may be considered the “poetic idea,” source of invention, or *topos* of Beethoven’s *Grande sonate pathétique*; we will see in the next section that

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pathos is actually implicated in four of the five parts or stages of composition in rhetoric: invention (inventio), arrangement (dispositio), style or elaboration (elocutio, elaboratio), memory (memoria), and delivery (pronuntiatio, actio). Perhaps the strikingly similar terms with which this sonata has been described over and over again arise from special features universally understood as pathetic: the powerful Grave introduction beginning viscerally with a deep, seven-voice C-minor chord; the return of that introduction twice at sensitive moments in the first movement;\textsuperscript{13} the exceptional rhythmic animation and connections between the first and third movements; the transcendentally lovely melody of the Adagio cantabile—often described as “consoling” or “healing”—set into relief by increasingly agitated episodes. The first reviewer of the piece, in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (1800), was pleased that the mood of the first Allegro returned in the finale.\textsuperscript{14} Descriptive language invoking the “sublime Grave,” “fiery Allegro,” “heroic Affect,” “union of tender feeling and energy” appeared in another early review.\textsuperscript{15} The first reviewer also unwittingly gave rise to floods of subsequent ink when he remarked that the theme of the finale seemed familiar, although he could not place it. The hunt was on for pathetic antecedents, sources of influence, and thematic resemblances. Not only were the obvious interrelationships within the piece explored—the theme of the rondo may have sounded familiar to the reviewer because it is identical to the second theme of the first movement (m.51)—but also pieces as disparate as Bach’s C-Minor Partita, Dussek’s C-Minor Sonata, op.35, no.3 (1796) (with its slow movement marked Adagio patetico ed espressivo), Mozart’s C-Minor Fantasy and Fugue (1785), and Cherubini’s *Medea* were suggested as possible models.\textsuperscript{16} Despite the considerable attention it has received, however, the


\textsuperscript{14} *AmZ* 2 (1800), 373–74.


\textsuperscript{16} Richard Hohenemser (“Zur Beethovens ‘Sonate pathétique’,” *Die Musik* 13 [1923], 655–58) suggests that *Medea*, first performed in Vienna in 1802, was actually available in score in 1797 and was in Beethoven’s Nachlass; Eric Blom (*Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas Discussed* [London: J. M. Dent, 1938], pp.56–62) mentions Dussek; Theodor Frimmel (“Bemerkungen zur Sonate pathétique,” *Beethoven-Forschung* 2 [1913], 33–42) points out one similarity in a sonata in C major by F. W. Rust,
pathos in the *Pathétique* has been discussed in only the most superficial terms. Dahlhaus even wrote that “the overall character indicated by the title of the work really does not need any further comment.”

**Pathos and Ethos**

The simple meaning of pathos—emotion—was made rhetorically complicated almost from the beginning, as the different “spins” put on it by Aristotle and Quintilian reveal. Aristotle, who defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion,” identified three kinds or modes of persuasion: *ethos*, arising from the speaker’s personal qualities or character, in particular, common sense, virtue, and goodwill; *pathos*, arising from the audience’s emotions (both positive emotions like calm or pity, and negative emotions like anger or fear); and logical proof, depending on argument. Thus, pathos is an inevitable component of all rhetorical persuasion and is considered part of *inventio*, invention, the first of the five parts of rhetoric. Quintilian even argues that “it is in its power over the emotions that the life and soul of oratory is to be found.” But his extensive differentiation of ethos and pathos differs in several respects from Aristotle and brings up a number of not fully reconcilable issues. First, he points out that “the more cautious writers . . . explain pathos as describing the more violent emotions and ethos as designating those which are calm and gentle.” Then he notes that, according to some of these writers, “ethos is continuous, while pathos is momentary,” even though some subjects require a more continuous violent emotion. Yet, Quintilian cannot make up his mind about the relationship between pathos and ethos, arguing first that “pathos and ethos are sometimes of the same nature, differing only in degree,” but that sometimes they are different, and then “ethos is generally employed to calm the storm aroused by pathos,” especially in the perora-


18. As set out by Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 4; see also Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), pp. 19–20, 24. The third of these is the speech itself (*logos*).


tion. Brian Vickers, referring to the discussion of this issue in Cicero, calls this “the strange Roman adaptation [of Aristotle] by which ethos becomes merely a more gentle form of the emotions aroused by pathos.”

Classical writers note that emotional appeals are effective at the beginning, but even more so toward the end of an oration; the body of the speech, involving the statement of facts (narration), supporting evidence (confirmation), and refutation of enemies’ arguments (confutatio), needs to be more straightforwardly argumentative, although Quintilian finds emotional appeal necessary throughout. This connection with the ordering of events makes pathos essential to the second part of rhetoric as well, that is, dispositio or arrangement. Many treatises even identify a “pathetic part” in the peroration. Figure 1 shows Roland Barthes’s model of this conflation of structure and function, replacing his epilogue with peroratio.

Ethos, denoting “moral character,” requires the speaker to be a man of good character and courtesy. The style best suited to display these qualities, according to Quintilian, “should be calm and mild with no trace of pride, elevation, or sublimity. . . . It is enough to speak appropriately, pleasantly, and persuasively, and therefore the intermediate style of oratory is most suitable.” Pathos, on the other hand, “is of a different character, and is almost entirely concerned with anger, dislike, fear, hatred, and pity.” Quintilian thus ultimately sides with those who identify pathos with the stronger emotions, ethos with the milder ones. Sulzer, drawing on Quintilian, makes a similar distinction, going so far as to claim that pathos can be used for a general audience, whereas the subtleties of ethos may be appreciated only by a more discerning audience of connoisseurs.

The foregoing suggests that the dichotomy between speaker/ethos—audience/pathos cannot be maintained. As Quintilian and many later writers noted,

The prime essential for stirring the emotions of other is, in my opinion, first to feel those emotions oneself. . . . If we wish to give our words the appearance of sincerity, we must assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who are genuinely so affected, and our eloquence must spring from the same feeling that we desire to produce. . . . Will he grieve who can find no trace of

22. Ibid., p.78.
24. Quintilian, Institutio oratoria, VI.i.9–12, 18–20.
25. Sulzer, Allgemeine Theorie, III, 417, s.v. “Sittlich”; see also “Leidenschaftlich.”
grief in the words with which I seek to move him to grief? Will he shed tears if the pleader’s eyes are dry?26

In order to engage the audience’s emotions, the speaker must share them, or appear to, thus persuading with more than just the goodness of his character. By enacting the passions he desires to arouse, the speaker must perform pathos, while maintaining his ethos. And the notion of ethos as something continuous and pathos as something transitory actually fostered the distinction between ethos as a milder background and pathos as a stronger foreground emotion, or series of emotions, that requires greater effort from the speaker.

Thus, pathos figures prominently in the delivery, the last part of rhetoric. According to the [Rhetorical] Ad Herennium, there are three “Tones” of voice, a Conversation Tone, a Tone of Debate, and a Tone of Amplification:

The Tone of Conversation is relaxed, and closest to daily speech. The Tone of Debate is energetic, and is suited to both proof and refutation. The Tone of Amplification either rouses the hearer to wrath or moves him to pity. . . . [It] includes the Hortatory and the Pathetic. The Hortatory, by amplifying some fault, incites the hearer to indignation. The Pathetic, by amplifying misfortunes, wins the hearer over to pity. . . . For the Pathetic Tone we shall use a restrained voice, deep tone, frequent intermissions, long pauses, and marked changes.27

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26. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VI.ii.26–27; see also n.9 above.
Sulzer's encyclopedia and Koch's musical dictionary similarly differentiated between two principal classes of accents: the grammatical, on the one hand, which concerns declamation and meter, and on the other hand, the oratorical, with its intensified version, the pathetic, in which the sense of the words requires a particular emphasis and tone of voice. In a treatise on musical expression of 1874, Mathis Lussy described in detail the pathetic or expressive accent (accent pathétique, sometimes called accent poétique) in which the performer lavished energy and enthusiasm on irregular or unexpected notes; he drew many examples from Beethoven's Pathétique. In his later edition of that piece, he interpreted it as a dialogue, a struggle between an unhappy man, “innocent or guilty, one doesn't know,” complaining about his fate, and “destiny, implacable fate,” which shouts to him “unhappy one! whose fault is it if not your own?” Lussy then asked rhetorically whether Beethoven got the idea from Sophocles, Aeschylus, or Euripides.

The association of pathos with strong, even tragic emotions continued into the eighteenth century; Sulzer wrote in the 1770s that in its ordinary sense of “emotion” or “passion” we need not use the “foreign word” pathos, but that it had a specialized meaning for emotions of fear, terror, and a “darker sadness.” He also distinguished between the “greater” passions of pathos and the “merely tender and pleasant passions” of ethos. Schiller's friend Körner took up the ethos-pathos issue in his essay, “On the Representation of Character in Music” (1795), identifying ethos (or character) with the permanent and pathos (or affect) with the transitory emotional states of the soul. By thus reformulating the venerable aesthetic


31. Sulzer, Allgemeine Theorie, s.v. “Pathos; Pathetisch.”

goal of unity in variety, Körner offered an attractive fusion of rhetoric and aesthetics, even though the musical elements he associates with ethos or pathos are sometimes obscure. Schindler suggested that the terms “ethos” and “pathos” were applicable to Beethoven’s music.33 Carl Dahlhaus recently associated Körner’s ideas specifically with the Pathétique: arguing that Körner connected ethos with an underlying metric/rhythmic pattern, Dahlhaus finds that related rhythmic characters of the various themes in the Pathétique’s first movement comprise its ethos, its background of unity.34

The idea that ethos requires a neutral “middle level” of style also suggests a final important rhetorical role for pathos. Choosing a stylistic level was directly connected with the purpose of all or part of the speech because, as Quintilian cogently put it, the plain style was held to instruct, the middle style to charm or conciliate, and the grand or elevated style to move the passions of the audience (see fig.2).35 Thus, pathos required the grand style and the rhetorical figures associated with it. This rhetorical function is part of elocutio, or style, the third of the five parts of rhetoric. By now, pathos has been implicated in all of the parts of rhetoric but memorization.

Figure 2: Relationship of Methods of Persuasion to Stylistic Level in Cicero, De oratore


**Pathetic Style and the Sublime**

When it came to the “pathetic” itself or the so-called pathetic style, eighteenth-century discussions broaden the field—or muddy the waters. Careful to describe

34. Dahlhaus, Beethoven, pp.54–55, 132–42.
35. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, XII.x.59, following Cicero, *De oratore*. 
the relevant expressive qualities and range of emotions connoted by the term, some writers consider it a specifically theatrical style, but others reveal it to be unstable, slipping downward into the sentimental or upward into the sublime. Sebastien de Brossard’s *Dictionnaire de Musique* (1705), for instance, identifies chromaticism, dissonances, and tempo as important dimensions:

**Pathetico**, that is, **pathétique**, touching, expressive, passionate, capable of moving, pity, compassion, anger, and other passions which agitate the heart of man. Thus one says *Stilo pathetico, Canto pathetico, Fuga pathetica*. The Chromatic genus with its semitones major and minor, as much ascending as descending, are appropriate to it, as are also the good management of dissonances, especially the augmented and diminished; the variety of tempos [mouvements], as much lively as languishing, as much slow as fast, etc. also contribute much to it.

French writers associated the “pathetic” with texted music. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s dictionary of 1768 defined “pathétique” explicitly as a “genre of dramatic and theatrical music, which tends to paint and to arouse the grand passions and more particularly pain and sadness.” Grétry’s pathetic genre of music, outlined in his *Mémoires ou Essais sur la Musique* (1797) and differentiated from the gay and the mixed or demi-caractère, must have energy and, to this end, requires that the orchestra be an actor along with the singers, such that when the actor is prostrated by events, the orchestra laments, consoles, or reproaches him. Grétry also identified the three genres of song as the pathétique, the bravura, and the mezzo carattere. Pathétique is slow and elevated without too many ornaments, whereas the lively bravura air may have pathetic traits in the second sections. Perhaps Rousseau’s most important point is his conclusion. After comparing French expression to Italian and determining that French melodies have an advantage because they can be made pathetic merely by being slowed down, whereas the Italian melodies have an innate character and tempo, Rousseau concludes that if the source of pathétique is not in the tempo, then neither is it in genre, mode, or harmony; rather, “The true pathétique is in the impassioned Accent, which is not determined by rules; but which the genius discovers and the heart feels without Art being able in any manner to dictate its laws.”

Where else had genius won out over rules? In the seminal work and the starting point for all eighteenth-century discussions of grand style and elevated effects: [pseudo-] Longinus's first-century treatise, *On the Sublime*, rediscovered and translated by Boileau in 1674. Longinus defined the sublime as “a certain eminence or perfection of language . . . which not only persuades, but even throws an audience into transport.” 37 In giving the five qualities that make up the Sublime, Longinus showed a central role for the pathetic: “The first and most excellent of these is a boldness and grandeur in the Thoughts . . . . The second is call’d the Pathetic, or the power of raising the passions to a violent and even enthusiastic degree; and these two being genuine constituents of the Sublime, are the gifts of nature, whereas the other sorts depend in some measure upon art.” 38 The other three are the products of rhetorical art, namely: “Figures of sentiment and language, a noble and graceful manner of Expression, and the Structure or composition of all the periods, in all possible dignity and grandeur.” 39 But Longinus goes on to say that the pathetic is not always grand because many passions “are vastly different from grandeur, and are in themselves of a low degree; as lamentation, sorrow, fear”; yet, somewhat paradoxically, “nothing so much raises discourse, as a fine Pathos seasonably applied. It animates a whole performance with uncommon life and spirit, and gives mere words the force (as it were) of inspiration.” 40 Because the pathetic applies to the raising of all emotions, it may only occasionally intersect with the elevated ones. Two sorts of pathetic—softer and bolder—were delineated in this unintentionally hilarious image from Parnell’s poem, *Essay on the Different Stiles of Poetry*:

Here all the Passions, for their greater sway,  

In all the Pow’r of Words themselves array;  

And hence the soft Pathetick gently charms,  

And hence the Bolder fills the Breast with Arms. 41


The softer or lower “Pathetick” resonates with Janet Todd’s description of eighteenth-century sentimental literature: “The arousal of pathos through conventional situations, stock familial characters and rhetorical devices is the mark of sentimental literature. Such literature buttonholes the reader and demands an emotional, even physical response. . . . [Its] emphasis is not on the subtleties of a particular emotional state but on the communication of common feeling from sufferer or watcher to reader or audience.”

Thus, later writers either broadened the pathetic to include both the more powerful and the gentler emotions, or, like Sulzer, gave to pathos the great emotions and relegated the lesser ones to a different category entirely. Where the pathetic left off and the sublime began was often not possible to determine. Indeed, Koch’s Lexikon (1802) laconically directs the reader from pathetic (patetico or pathetisch) to sublime (erhaben); only his shorter dictionary of 1807 gives each a separate entry. Samuel Johnson thought the distinction between the two lay in the source of the emotion: that is, because the sublime comes from terrible nature, the pathetic from human situations, then Shakespeare’s dramas are “pathetick.” Other writers claimed that both pathetic and sublime meant that the audience shared “by sympathy” the emotions of the characters on stage. Some of the great emotions mentioned by Sulzer are precisely those associated by Edmund Burke with the sublime of terror. But, in general, the kind of sublime associated with the pathetic is usually the “sublime style”—an elevated, emotion-laden mode of expression—rather than the overwhelming, awe-inspiring, mind-blocking sublime of such writers as Blair and Kant. That enormous subject cannot be dealt with here.

Schiller’s essay “On the Pathetic,” appearing in 1793, was actually a preview of his larger essay on the sublime, connecting tragedy with the highest moral struggles of human beings. He began, “Representing the passions, as mere passions, is never the goal of art.” Rather, the representation of suffering nature must be followed

by representation of moral resistance to suffering so that human beings may win their freedom from the world. Hence, languishing, touching affects belong to the realm of the pleasing and have nothing to do with high art. “These merely open the tear ducts,” Schiller noted drily. Artists and poets misunderstand their art if they think that Pathos may be attained by simple sensuous affective power and the most vital depiction of suffering: “The pathetic is only aesthetic insofar as it is sublime.”

Thus, not the suffering itself but the resistance to it is pathetic and worthy of representation; and the faculty that perceives this is reason. In his later essay on the sublime, Schiller asserts that our rational faculty, experienced through the sublime, helps us to maintain our freedom, instead of allowing ourselves to be seduced into powerlessness by the sensuous pleasures of beauty: the sublime “opens to us a road to overstep the limits of the world of sense, in which the feeling of the beautiful would forever imprison us.”

Beethoven’s intense interest in Schiller makes it plausible, if unprovable, that he knew this essay.

The most detailed and wide-ranging discussion that I have found of the pathetic style and its relatives appeared in Johann Christoph Adelung’s book Über den Deutschen Styl, which appeared in four editions between 1785 and 1800. Adelung points out that styles are differentiated from one another by the strength of the emotional responses they produce; he divides style in order of increasing intensity and elevation into the familiar, the moving, the pathetic, and the sublime. The

47. Ibid., p.86.
48. Ibid., p.87.
49. Ibid., p.88.
52. Johann Christoph Adelung, Über den Deutschen Styl (4th edn. Berlin: Vossische Buchhandlung, 1800). Adelung was also the compiler of an important dictionary. Other discussions of this style, from the eighteenth century and earlier, are cited in Blankenburg’s bibliography to Sulzer’s article “Pathos; pathetisch” in the Allgemeine Theorie.
53. Adelung, Über den Deutschen Styl, p.94.
54. The treatise by Demetrius also found four styles, differently divided: the “plain,” the “elevated,” the “elegant,” and the “forcible.” But for the two “opposites”—plain and elevated are on different levels—any may be combined with any other. See Demetrius, On Style, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, Loeb Classical Library (rev. edn. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1932), II, 36, p.323.
familiar is part of the plain (or low) style, the pathetic and sublime are part of grand style, and the “moving style” is a category inserted by Adelung between middle and high because it has gentler, less violent emotions than the pathetic. The middle style, which addresses reason, seems the most practical and neutral and includes the styles of writing history, the language of business and civic interactions, and didactic style.

“Pathetic style,” according to Adelung, “is the speech of all strong and great emotions and passions, and if it attains an unusual strength and size that awakens wonder and astonishment, then it begins to constitute the sublime.”55 The pathetic style is characterized by vehemence, by a “fired-up fantasy, rich in powerful images” that may use rhetorical figures but may never betray affectation or artifice.56 Most significant for Beethoven’s Pathétique are the qualities Adelung enumerates after giving examples from several tragedies in the pathetic style: “We note in these and similar examples the crowding-together of ideas, their impetuous course, the tumult of several often very different passions, the high-[style] figures of the highest level of inflamed imagination, the quick succession of short sentences without connections, the striking ellipses, the repetition of the same idea in different forms, and so forth.”57 Adelung concludes by listing several prescriptions for pathetic style:

1. Strong affects are always of short duration; the briefer the stronger. They tire and exhaust the soul very soon, and must not be continued too long. When they have reached the highest appropriate level, they either gradually grow weaker, or the soul is subjected to the highest strain. Powerlessness (Ohnmacht) is the usual means by which this defeat is expressed.

2. Even the strongest affect must have its degree of moderation, it must be appropriate to the importance of the objects . . . and must never become raving.

3. The vehement affect has a rich vocabulary, it dissects one idea into several, represents it from many sides; but it is not garrulous, [so that] even the smallest idea has strength, emphasis, and pathos.

4. Nowhere is frigidity (Frost) of style more repulsive and intolerable than in the pathetic . . . If the writer doesn’t have enough knowledge of the human heart, he will leave the reader with only cold observations.58

56. Ibid., p. 139.
57. Ibid., pp. 142–43.
58. Ibid., pp. 143–44.
In his outline of the parts of an oration, Adelung points out that every oration has a “pathetic section,” just before the peroration, which in turn should close with pathos if the speech is intended to be moving or pathetic.  

Figures of Pathos

Writers who identified which figures were most appropriate for the high style, or to the pathetic or the sublime, usually qualified their lists by saying that almost all would work; only the manner of their employment must maintain the proper gravitas, or grandeur, and sufficient energy.  

Figures, after all, would in any case intensify the emotional response of the listener. According to Quintilian, “There is no more effective method of exciting the emotions than an apt use of figures.”  

Adelung notes that “if the storm-ridden soul finds unbidden a simile, or an antithesis, or an aphorism, then it will grasp hold of it and sweep it along in its vortex.”  

The list of figures associated with the pathetic style, Table 1, is drawn from various writers and is necessarily incomplete as a wide variety of figures would serve. The figures Adelung mentions either by name, by definition, or by example include ellipsis (omissions); asyndeton (omission of conjunctions); repetition of an idea in different forms, which could refer to copia, amplification, or synonymy; abruptio (aposiopesis, breaking off); and exclamation (exclamatio).  

George Campbell, in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, claimed that the principal figures specifically associated with the pathetic style are correction (correctio, replacing an ordinary word with a more striking expression, while calling attention to the change), climax (gradatio—rising by intensification to a climax), vision (phantasia—the vivid image of an absent scene), exclamation (exclamatio—of admiration or grief), apostrophe (expressing grief or indignation by diversion into direct address), and interrogation (interrogatio, the asking of rhetorical questions).  

59. Ibid., p.325. The six parts of an oration are: Eingang; Hauptsatz and Eintheilung; Erklärung; Beweise; Pathetischer Theil; and Beschlüff (pp.320–25).


61. Quintilian, Institutio oratoria, IX.i.21.


63. His examples come from Weisse’s tragedies Die Flucht and Richard III, and from a speech by a child-killer to his judge, in a work of Sturtz. Both copiousness and amplification themselves can include many figures; see my Haydn and the Classical Variation, pp.27–30.

Table 1: Figures Associated with the Pathetic Style

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<th>Verbal figures</th>
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<td>abruptio (aposiopesis; breaking off)</td>
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<td>amplification (may include other figures)</td>
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<td>antithesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>apostrophe (direct address; exclamation)</td>
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<td>asyndeton (omission of conjunctions)</td>
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<td>climax (gradatio)</td>
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<td>correction</td>
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<tr>
<td>dialogue (sermocinatio)</td>
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<tr>
<td>exclamation</td>
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<td>hyperbole</td>
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<td>interrogation</td>
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<td>personification (prosopopoeia)</td>
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<td>vision (phantasia)</td>
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<th>Musical figures without verbal equivalents</th>
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<tr>
<td>pathopoeia (chromatic minor seconds)</td>
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<td>passus duriusculus (chromatic passing tones)</td>
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<td>saltus duriusculus (dissonant leaps)</td>
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vision “tend greatly to enliven the ideas, by the implicit but animated comparison and opposition conveyed in them,” and exclamation and apostrophe “operate chiefly by sympathy, as they are the most ardent expressions of perturbation in the speaker.” Asking rhetorical questions strengthens the argument and arouses sympathy as well. Also important were dialogue (sermocinatio), often in conjunction with personification (prosopopoeia), to bring an issue to life, as it were, and hyperbole, which may be used only sparingly lest it lead to frigidity or comedy.65 Far from being ornamental, these figures get at the heart of pathos.

Some of these rhetorical figures had been given musical equivalents by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theorists like Burmeister, Bernhard, and Walther.66 Musical figures, according to Forkel, were meant to resonate with human

65. Demetrius (On Style, II.124–27, pp.381–82) refers to the faults of hyperbole.
emotions and lie deep in human nature. Exclamation was deemed, rather arbitrarily, to be the ascending leap of a minor sixth. The chromatic figures named by these theorists, on the other hand, are purely musical with no verbal corollaries yet similarly intersect with descriptions of the pathetic. These include the appropriately named pathopoeia, or chromatic half steps; the passus duriusculus, descending half-step motion, often in the form of “sighing” motives; and the salto duriusculus, a dissonant leap sometimes related to exclamatio. As we have seen, Brossard identified chromatic tones, as well as augmented and diminished dissonances, as part of pathetico. In a posthumously published essay on Gluck’s Aleeste, Rousseau outlined three kinds of harmony: diatonic, the simplest and most natural; chromatic, consisting of continual changes of key through successions of fifths in the bass; and finally, “The type I call pathétique, which consists of interweaving augmented and diminished chords, causing one to wander through keys that have little in common with each other; they affect the ear with heart-rending intervals and the soul with rapid and fiery ideas capable of disturbing [it].” The striking appearance of diminished-seventh chords at telling moments of a piece is not coincidental. Moreover, their increased usage in minor mode may reflect the already increased chromatic possibilities within that mode. Falling half-step appoggiaturas (sometimes called “sigh motives”) are another case in point.

In The Sufferings of the Queen of France, Jan Ladislav Dussek’s programmatic piano piece in pathetic style published in England and Scotland in 1793, we find a plausible synthesis of the pathetic genre in harmony and the impassioned accent, Rousseau’s earlier idea. Example 1 shows the opening C-minor Largo depicting Marie Antoinette’s imprisonment. Not only are the ascending diminished sev-

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70. J. L. Dussek, “The Sufferings of the Queen of France, A Musical Composition Expressing the feelings of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, During her Imprisonment, Trial, &c.” (London, 1793; facs. edn. in The London Pianoforte School 1766–1866, vol.VI, ed. Nicholas Temperley [New York: Garland, 1985]). Subsequent movements are entitled: “She reflects on her former greatness” [Maestosoante]; “They separate her from her children” [Agitato assai, ending with “The farewell of her children”], “They pronounce the sentence of death” [Allegro con furia], “Her resignation to her
enthral exclamations of the *saltus durissimus* variety, but the dialogue of registers creates a dramatic reenactment of the Queen’s suffering with a pathos-arousing “narrator” in a bass “voice” answered by a lamenting “soprano,” to the accompaniment of throbbing middle-range chords. For each *exclamatio* in the bass, the soprano has a comparably intense accented fall or sigh that reveals, even if not literally, the mark of *pathopoeia*. The choice of C minor was probably not accidental, as it was often identified in writings of the period as a “pathetic” key, and usually as a feminine key as well. Not every minor key was called pathetic (although G minor and F minor sometimes were); D minor, for example, was never pathetic, but was often associated with melancholy. Schindler reported that Beethoven was acutely sensitive to the differences among keys.

**Beethoven’s *Pathétique***

The Grave introduction to the *Pathétique* (ex.2) discloses an extraordinarily concentrated dose of pathos: the grand style of rhetoric emerges forcefully in the older, elevated French-overture topic, made pathetic by a virtual compendium of the

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fate” [Adagio innocente], “The situation and reflections the night before her execution” [Andante agitato, ending with “The guards come to conduct her to the place of execution”], “March” [Lento], “The savage tumult of the rabble” [Presto furioso], “The Queen’s invocation to the Almighty just before her death” [Molto Adagio and Devotamente, ending with “The guillotine drops”], and finally “The apotheosis” [Allegro maestoso].


Example 2: Beethoven, op.13, movt.1, Grave.
rhetorical and musical figures discussed above. We notice first the pathetic accent—a diminished-seventh chord highlighting a falling half step—given a rising series of *interrogations*, intensified not only by repetition but also by the increasing number of accented diminished-seventh chords. In m.1 the affective chord appears in the second half of the measure and motive, then is upgraded to the downbeat in m.2, then stressed in both places in m.3 as the motives are elided. These insistent questions are then subject to *correctio* in m.4 as the dotted rhythms and appoggiaturas are entirely revised in texture, topic, and key.

What follows is a lengthy *gradatio* (or climax, mm.5–9), an attempt to rationalize the texture to dotted melody and throbbing-chord accompaniment, but with the whole broken up by the fortissimo *apostrophes*—impasioned moments of direct address—in the original register. Perhaps the original “question” is seeking a different answer. With the upward resolutions of the sighs in m.8 now turning into the *hyperbole* of fragmented, increasingly frantic questions, there is no solution but *aposiopesis*, a breaking off after the deceptive cadence in recitative style. These simple repeated notes suggest that recitative is a *personification* and lead, after the chromatic storm, to a vivid *exclamatio* on a diminished seventh that manages also to encapsulate a sigh.

After the emotional appeals of the Grave, the vehement, energetic Allegro reminds us of Adelung’s “crowding—together of ideas—their impetuous course, the quick succession of short sentences, the repetition of the same idea in different forms.” Pathos has different facets and need not be continuous. The often-raised question must be asked again: Is the Allegro pathetic at all? Does it differ from the agitated minor-key sonata-allegros like op.10, no.1 (thought by Schindler, no doubt erroneously, to be the piece originally destined for the *Pathétique* title)? I would argue that the depiction of suffering nature in the Grave is followed here by the *moral resistance* to suffering—that the dominating aspect in the first movement is Schiller’s pathetic. Three elements, in particular, support this interpretation. First, the syncopated accent in the third measure of the theme—strikingly turning the

73. V. Kofi Agawu’s attractive discussion of the introduction is concerned primarily with the interaction of three topics, identified as French overture, “sensibility,” and “cadenza”; see his *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), pp.45–48. The powerful dotted rhythms remind us that Prince Carl von Lichnowsky received the dedication not only of the *Pathétique* but also of the Sonata in A*, op.26, with its Funeral March.

74. Uhde (*Beethoven’s Klaviermusik*, p.211) points out the series of questions.

75. Schindler–MacArdle, p.78, comments that the title was to be given to op.10, no.1, because of the “marked similarities between the first and third movements”—in short, unity of expression.
Example 3: Beethoven, op.13, movt.I.
a. First theme.
b. Second theme, consequent phrase.

C-minor tonic into a major chord to prepare the dominant of F minor—reenacts the *correctio* of the Grave and functions here as both a sign of resistance and a moment of sublimity (ex.3a). Second, the contrasting theme deliberately obscures its slurred appoggiaturas with trills so that they assert mastery over the sighs of the Grave (ex.3b).

Finally, the returns of the Grave at the beginning of the development and coda reveal that the Allegro is able to co-opt effectively the most fiercely passionate of the Grave’s gestures. The G-minor return in the development (ex.4) gets stuck in its questioning at the same point as the introduction: the diminished seventh with C in the treble still cannot find its way out without correction. Now the Grave’s question-phrase appears for the first time in the Allegro, accompanied by second-theme throbbing chords, with the sigh but without the dotted rhythm. It alternates with the bridge passage until the bridge takes over its slurring in m.149. This section illustrates rhetorical *dialogue* and suggests a struggle, although it goes too far to find moral resistance in every nook and cranny of the piece. In fact, another sort of struggle is underway here, between the “sonata style” of the Grave and the brilliant “symphony style,” identified by Czerny in the Allegro; the sonata style is
intimate and expressive, whereas the symphony style can evoke sublimity. The last return of the Grave (ex. 5) is but an echo, lacking a downbeat at all—its diminished-seventh downbeat was appropriated by the Allegro (mm. 294–95), where its resolution is shortly to take place (see mm. 305–10). Is this Grave the last emotional appeal at the end of the oration? In fact, this entire final return is a vision, a *phantasia*—a distant image imported to the present.

The idea of dialogue, present in a registral sense in Dussek’s “Sufferings,” is writ large in the *Pathétique*. Dialogue has been a problematic idea in Beethoven scholarship since it was discovered that Schindler forged the conversation in which Beethoven asserted that op. 14, no. 2, was a “dispute in dialogue form between two principles.” Yet, dialogue was not only a figure of pathos, it had immense prestige as the format of Plato’s *Dialogues*. C. P. E. Bach had cast his single programmatic trio sonata (H. 579, W. 161/1, 1749) as a dialogue between a “sanguinicous” and a “melancholicus.” J. A. P. Schulz wrote in Sulzer’s encyclopedia that the sonata genre was uniquely suited to depict feelings without words, whether as a monologue or as a dialogue. Perhaps we need look no further than the tension between ethos and pathos for a sanction. In a study of pathos in Schiller’s youthful poetry, Werner Keller identified a “pathetic dualism” as one of the principal elements in

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the search for emotional transcendence; this sometimes manifested itself in a sustained use of antitheses.

Drawing on this notion, we find two large-scale antitheses in the first movement: between the Grave and Allegro, and, within the Allegro, between the agitated tremoloando (characteristic of the first group and found elsewhere) and the throbbing-chord passages (exemplified by the second group). Occurring elsewhere in the exposition and recapitulation as well, these textures are brought into starkest relief in the development, of which the alternation—as-argument has just been mentioned. The Adagio cantabile movement exacerbates the second of these two antitheses. First, the tremoloando is tamed as the accompaniment to the beautiful refrain melody; then, the pulsating chords of the B section are raised to a higher power in the C section. A corollary element of dialogue is the bass-treble trade-offs in both episodes.

Although many commentators find that the rondo finale does not serve fully to sum up the pathetic side of the piece, it takes several opportunities to hammer home critical elements of the pathetic framework by stressing relationships among them. Its central episode (mm. 79–107) displays copiousness of language in its set of contrapuntal variations on a skeletal figure four measures long, developing the argument of its relationship not only to the main theme of the rondo but also to the theme of the Adagio.80 That the variations are seamless and introduce progressive diminution of note values puts aside the antitheses of the earlier movements. The chromatically expanded second theme in the recapitulation (mm. 154–70) recalls the Grave in a series of ascending and finally descending questions and also amplifies the intervallic shape of the central episode (especially mm. 158–63). Finally, the recurring fiery descending runs, acting like retransitions to the refrain, recall the apostrophe of the Grave. During the last of these (ex. 6), the violent descending run is conflated with a syncopated accent (recalling m. 3 of the first Allegro?) and the distant vision of the Adagio theme, in the strange version of the rondo theme in A♭ major, followed by brief questions (mm. 193–208) and a defiant conclusion.

The primary and most sustained impassioned accent occurs at the beginning of the Pathétique—in contradistinction to the end-directed rhetorical manuals—and this fully realized pathos generates a series of conflicts throughout the piece that, it must be concluded, are inherent in the nature of the pathetic style itself. Whether

gentle or vehement, sentimental or sublime, ethos or pathos, suffering or the moral resistance to suffering, the pathetic style always stands in opposition to something else. Its rhetorical stance is confrontational and given to hyperbolic antitheses that assert a moral status as well as a personal vision. The *Pathétique* violates Hugh Blair’s admonition of 1783: “Never give warning that you are about to be pathetic, and call upon your hearers to follow you in this attempt. This almost never fails to prove a refrigerant to passion.” But the title enables us to perceive, in the elevated tone and sense of struggle of Beethoven’s sonata, a complex pathos that embodies the rhetorical and aesthetic history of the term. By the end of the piece, the impassioned accents have become so deeply rooted that it takes but a moment of *phantasia* to provide the exemplary pathetic peroration.

81. Arno Forchert’s illuminating study, “Die Darstellung der Melancholie in Beethovens op. 18, 6” (in Ludwig van Beethoven, ed. Ludwig Finscher, *Wege der Forschung*, vol.428 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983], pp. 212–39) develops the idea that melancholy comprised both a sad and a manic element, and that the Allegretto following “La Malinconia” is, in fact, part of its representation. An exploration of melancholy in such works as the Largo e mesto of the Sonata op. 10, no. 3, and the “Romeo and Juliet” slow movement of the Quartet op. 18, no. 1, lies outside the scope of this study. The similarity of the pathetic accent in the Largo e mesto (a series of ascending diminished-seventh chords, mm. 23–25 and mm. 62–65) to a passage in the chromatic coda of Haydn’s celebrated F-Minor Piano Variations (1793, publ. 1799) ought also to be taken into account. On the Haydn set, see my *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, pp. 192–94.