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# Feelings in Conflict: *A Clockwork Orange* and the Explanation of Audiovisual Emotions

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**Abstract:** Controversial films like Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* represent a challenge for current theories of emotion elicitation. Combining theories of emotional appraisal, film comprehension, and the formal analysis of film, this article outlines a model of audiovisual responses to films that distinguishes between four levels of information processing and corresponding emotional reactions: 1. the perception of images and sounds triggers *perceptual affects*, sensations, and moods; 2. the development of mental models of a represented world, its inhabitants and events, calls forth *diegetic emotions* like sympathy, empathy, and situation-related feelings; 3. grasping indirect or more abstract meanings leads to *thematic emotions*; and 4. reflection on the communication process and its elements (text, producer, recipient) leads to *communicative emotions*. These four levels of emotional reactions interact in time, leading to the development of complex emotion episodes.

**Keywords:** appraisal theories, *A Clockwork Orange*, film and emotion, film pragmatics, film reception, identification

Theories of the elicitation of audiovisual emotion are designed to model the connections between media offers and viewers' feelings. Their aim is, among other things, to explain how films and television programs trigger particular emotions in their viewers. In this context, Stanley Kubrick's controversial classic, *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) represents a challenge because reactions to this film have been so extremely divergent.

According to the film poster, *A Clockwork Orange* narrates "the adventures of a young man whose principal interests are rape, ultraviolence, and Beethoven." The protagonist Alex is the voice-over narrator of these adventures, which take place in a near-future English town. Alex and his gang maltreat other people for the sheer fun of it. Having committed a murder, he lands in prison where he is conditioned against violence by means of drugs and the compulsory exposure to film scenes. After his release, he becomes the help-

less target of the revenge of his former victims until his sadistic character is re-established. We have here, therefore, the study of a sociopathic system of emotions that is to be fitted into society through a specific kind of emotional film reception (Figure 1).

This article concentrates less on Alex's feelings than those of the viewer. The emotions triggered by the film must be distinguished from those which it presents and expresses or which are intended by the filmmakers. Viewers' feelings build up within three phases of communication: first, films are selected because of particular emotional expectations; second, viewers react with manifold emotions while watching the film; finally, the later processing of the film through memory, contemplation, and conversations is also accompanied by emotions. The focus here is on the second phase. The empirical observation of the emotions arising during the process of watching a film (by means of measurements of bodily excitation, registration of facial movements, etc.) is fraught with considerable problems, and is obviously impossible with past audiences. Media research, therefore, often uses secondary texts about the selection and the processing phases in order to reconstruct the viewers' feelings. In the case of *A Clockwork Orange*, however, these sources themselves present a contradictory picture.

This contradiction is already evident with the *intended* emotions. The film-trailer mixes images of sex and violence—accompanied by a twisted version of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* overture—with screen-flashes of emotion words like “witty, funny, satirical, musical, exciting, bizarre, thrilling, frightening, metaphorical, comic, sardonic.” The film-trailer thus promises predominantly a combination of intensive feelings of surprise, comedy, black humour, eroticism, intellectual stimulation, and thrill. Another mix of emotions has been



Figure 1. A special kind of audiovisual emotions: Alex (Malcolm McDowell) during the Ludovico treatment.

suggested by Stanley Kubrick in interviews (e.g., Weinraub 1972): although the film is a satire (the genre of comic social criticism), and although the viewers ought to condemn Alex morally, they are, at the same time, expected to share subconsciously his unscrupulous feeling of wild freedom which is in accord with the “true nature of humans” prior to civilisation. The interplay of these contrasting reactions is intended to bring about a positive experience of art and learning.

The heated debate about the film and Kubrick’s conception of humanity supports the conclusion that the intended feelings were not at all triggered in the totality of viewers. Many of them reacted with other kinds of negative moral emotions. Pauline Kael ([1972] 2003), for instance, insinuated that Kubrick cultivated a perverse attitude toward (sexual) violence. She accuses him of targeting the voyeuristic lust of the viewers, which provokes her repulsion; her judgment, however, that he does not even achieve this goal, makes her react with nothing but contempt for the film’s aesthetic design. Kael represented a widespread position. Many reviews of the film were devastating; in England, the film continued to be the object of a public campaign that ascribed negative social effects to it and made it responsible for copycat crimes, until Kubrick withdrew it from public distribution. Internationally, however, *A Clockwork Orange* won enthusiastic critical acclaim and several awards, proved a huge commercial success, and finally gained cult status. Equally contradictory, just like the reactions of the earlier critics, oscillating between rage and passion, are the comments of contemporary viewers. In Internet forums, the film is characterized simultaneously as disturbing, bizarre, sickening and funny, which indicates a *mélange* of ambivalent emotions. Generally it is either assessed as a “masterpiece” and a “delight to watch,” or as “disappointing” and even “boring.”

Obviously, what *A Clockwork Orange* intended and actually expressed and evoked diverge widely; the feelings of different viewers, the emotional experience of every person seem to be ambivalent in themselves. All this seems to contradict Ed Tan’s well-known comparison of film with an “emotion machine” (1996). Whereas this concept seems to imply a quasi-mechanical precision of

the filmic emotions generated, Tan’s own theory leaves ample space for variable reactions. Apparently, the development of emotions in the cinema does not bear so much similarity to a machine product, but rather resembles Borges’s famous “garden of forking paths” ([1941] 1964): one principal course of emotion elicited seems quickly to split into alternative paths.

Different dispositions of viewers come into play here. Approaches deriving from evolutionary psychology proceed from the assumption that basic emo-

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tions must be connected with innate affect programs and that viewers are, therefore, biologically conditioned to react in a specific way to represented (social) environments. At the same time, neuroscientists have shown that emotional dispositions, whether of a collective or an individual kind, are acquired when emotional experiences become stored in memory (see Hogan 2003: ch. 7). The development of emotion is directed by individual goals and interests but we learn to feel like others and to assess their emotions. The social and the historical sciences have demonstrated that we are all molded by sociocultural emotion schemata, in-group/out-group dynamics, emotion rules, and historical emotion cultures (e.g., Reddy 2001; Turner and Stets 2005). Psychoanalysis focuses on the conflicts between innate drives and internalized norms as well as on the shaping influences of the relationships within primary groups (e.g., Krause 1998). Communication studies, finally, insists on situative preferences (e.g., Suckfüll 2007). An interdisciplinary discussion would be needed to integrate as broad as possible a spectrum of relevant findings (Bartsch and Hübner 2004; Eder [2003] 2005, 2005).

The diversity of reactions to *A Clockwork Orange* has been explained by reference to conflicting interests, images of humanity, and attitudes toward art, violence, and sexuality (Barker 2004; Staiger 2003). General models of emotional dispositions, however, are not sufficient to explain the specific reactions of viewers. In particular, the question has to be raised regarding to which elements of a media text viewers react with which kinds of emotional processes. In what follows, I shall examine various answers to this question. As the abundance of relevant theories has in the meantime become impenetrable, I start out from certain fundamental systematic options and then attempt to connect various explanatory approaches. Consequently, I work my way from current explanations of audiovisual emotion elicitation through less well-established aspects to the proposal of a synthesis of my own.

### **Emotional Reactions to the Represented World: Identification or Appraisal?**

The modeling of audiovisual emotions by the majority of approaches concentrates on the level of the represented world. Accordingly, feelings are triggered through the perception or mental representation of characters, objects, situations, and events that are turned into emotional objects in this way. The “narrative emotions,” suspense, surprise, and curiosity, are important aspects here (Sternberg 2003; Tan 1996: 206–13). They stem from the expectations of the viewers, their desire to gain orientation with regard to what is happening, and not least from their engagement with the characters, their hoping and trembling for them and with them, from sympathy, antipathy, or empathy. It is through the dramaturgical standard pattern of mainstream films that we observe the linear problem-solving process of the protagonists with growing suspense, and that we experience positive feelings with their successes that

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usually climax in a happy ending (see Eder 1999). *A Clockwork Orange* significantly deviates from this pattern. The film has a picaresque episodic structure; its phases of action—Alex’s crimes, trail of suffering, and his conditioning and unconditioning—do not follow the classical dramaturgy of mounting suspense. Alex’s incalculable behavior, the bizarre world, the upheavals in the plot, the shocks of violence, encourage the speculation that manifestations of surprise and curiosity play a larger part than usual.

Such general statements concerning the structure of suspense, surprise, and curiosity are compatible with various models of audiovisual emotion elicitation. However, the specific shape of concrete reactions to the represented world, especially to its main characters and their behaviors, is explained in two different ways. Essentially, two positions clash here, which may be characterized succinctly in the following way. According to the *identification thesis*, emotions arise principally whenever viewers share the feelings of the protagonists in their changing situations.<sup>1</sup> According to the *appraisal thesis*, emotions are triggered whenever viewers appraise characters and situations as uninvolved observers and thereby orient themselves by moral norms or their own interests.<sup>2</sup>

These two theses lead to different assumptions with regard to the development of emotions. In the case of identification, viewers would share the motives and feelings of a figure; for example, Alex’s sadistic pleasure in torturing his victims. If viewers were to appraise the character and the quality of Alex’s actions from outside, they would distance themselves from them and feel, for instance, repulsion. Whether one hopes for Alex and accordingly experiences suspense, depends on whether one identifies with him, or whether one primarily evaluates him morally.

However, it becomes clear very quickly that neither one of these two theses is tenable in its simple form. One of the touchstones for the identification thesis is the spectrum of the represented emotions, and in *A Clockwork Orange* this spectrum is wide. Alex’s sadistic pleasure must be contrasted with the horror, the pain and the despair felt by his victims. And his sadism goes hand in hand with a fundamental sense of complacency and a passion for classical music that only multiplies his sufferings at a later stage. At the mercy of the longing for revenge of his former victims, Alex is subjected to continuous torment until his original affect structure is triumphantly re-established. Alex’s emotions can only rarely be shown to correspond with documented viewer reactions and, therefore, raise many problems for the identification thesis, particularly when they conflict with the emotions of characters: with whom does one empathize as viewer—with Alex or with his victims? Does one actually share all the diverse feelings—even Alex’s agonies of pain, his drugged states, and his passion for music? Moreover, what do viewers like Pauline Kael actually feel, who patently reject any identification?

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The identification thesis in its simple form cannot provide answers to these questions. The simple appraisal thesis, however, which ties emotional reactions to moral judgments, is equally problematical. In this case, viewers would be expected to react with antipathy, disgust, or anger to Alex and his misdeeds, feelings that would eventually be replaced by feelings of satisfaction whenever Alex is himself being punished. It appears, however, that both kinds of reaction neither match the intentions of the filmmakers nor the empirically recovered reactions of viewers.

If the two basic theses are applied in a weaker form, however, either one can supply a provisional explanation for discrepant feelings. The identification thesis may be augmented by the assumption that identification and empathy are not all-encompassing phenomena focused on a single figure, but are always partial, gradual, and distributed across several different characters (a point stressed by Gaut 1999; Wulff 2003, and others). We consequently share some of Alex's feelings only for a limited span of time and with regard to certain details, and we also empathize with other characters; this means that we can find ourselves being thrown back and forth.

The appraisal thesis could similarly be expanded, for instance, by taking into account the contexts and the non-moral aspects of characters and actions. Alex undoubtedly has attractive qualities: he is bursting with vivacity, clever, good-looking, and so on. Taking into consideration his bleak environment (ugly piles of concrete, nasty civil servants, priggish victims) could further relativize the negative appraisal of his personality. Individual systems of values are hardly ever consistent; the differing interests of viewers may very well come into conflict with each other and with the norms of their particular social reference groups. Viewers might, therefore, become torn between antipathy and sympathy and might respond ambivalently to Alex's experiences; they might detest his misdeeds, admire his coolness, and perhaps nurture some compassion.

It is significant that recent approaches to a theory of emotion distinguish between different levels of emotion-triggering cognitions (*appraisals*), from automatic reactions of body and brain through the activation of emotional schemata to conscious processes of reflection.<sup>3</sup> Audiovisual emotions can thus be understood as processes that spread out in the course of time into variably complex episodes through the interaction of stimulus-representations, memory content, motivational tendencies, and mechanisms of control (Eder and Keil 2005). Understood in that way, the domain of potential releasers and objects of emotions is enlarged: it comprises, apart from actions, motives and conflicts, the totality of the properties of the represented objects, and extends even beyond these.

Breaking up the identification and the appraisal approaches in this way eventually leads to abandoning any strict separation of the two. If the assess-

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ments of characters and situations are no longer reduced to objective judgments by detached observers, they become quite compatible with partial and changing identification and empathy. Kubrick himself had, in fact, from the start grounded his film implicitly in the combination of both approaches by conceiving of Alex as an affective trap: the viewers were to condemn him morally but, at the same time, subliminally share his feelings of pleasure.

Considering the case for such a combination of appraisal and identification, one may either see the two positions as two essentially different attitudes that alternate in the reception process due to specific situational features, or as the two poles of a continuum. That the latter is more plausible is made clear by a re-examination of an often-neglected fact: mental processes of appraisal are, as a rule, *perspectival*. They move within a spectrum between distanced objectivity and close subjectivity (see also Barratt 2006).

Generally, “perspective” can be defined as the mental stance of sentient beings toward the objects of their external or internal environments. The perspective on objects of perception, thought, emotion, or volition is the specific realization of these processes of the mind. In the film analysis, one may compare these mental object relations of characters, narrators, and viewers with regard to different aspects. Both Alex and the viewers see the victim, perhaps even from the same angle of vision (visual perspective), but in contradistinction to Alex the viewers evaluate the suffering of the victim in a different way (evaluative perspective) and possibly feel compassion (affective perspective).

The phenomenon of perspectivity is hardly ever taken up in empirical theories; it is, however, intensively discussed in narratology and film theory.<sup>4</sup> There appears to be wide-ranging agreement here that viewers may react to characters with different degrees of mental simulation and somatic empathy (e.g., Brinckmann 1999; Grodal 2001; also see Bauer 2005 on neurobiological findings illuminating the mirror system of the brain). To put it simply: viewers may roughly feel what characters are feeling. However, such processes of emotional simulation can be blocked, for instance by antipathy or the dubious reality status of the represented world. In this respect, the world of *A Clockwork Orange* creates a strong impression of artificiality (see the following sections of this article), which may facilitate processes of emotional detachment and also the admission of amoral reactions: “It is just film (art).” The perspectives taken by the viewers may, therefore, more or less coincide with, or deviate from, the perspectives of the characters. In any case, perspectives are not only dependent on *what* is represented in the film but also on *how* it is represented; that is, how sensory experience, attention, and reality impression, are directed by means of the structures of image, sound, and editing.

The mental perspective is part of a more comprehensive *system of imaginative relations to characters* (Eder 2006): the degree of knowledge about their properties and motives; the implied spatiotemporal relation to them; the per-

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ceived degree of familiarity, similarity, social closeness, and interaction; as well as further factors considerably influence processes of appraisal. There are numerous strategies employed in the film to generate forms of closeness to Alex: we accompany him through his most important experiences; his inner life is made accessible by means of an expressive style of acting, close-ups, voice-over commentaries, point-of-view shots, and other techniques. By the use of his voice and by repeatedly looking right into the camera he seeks to address us directly in both his roles of narrator and the film's central agent. We are strategically moved to develop at least certain forms of closeness with him and to share his perspective with regard to a number of aspects. That he belongs to a juvenile subculture that is up in arms against the Establishment could, in addition, provoke the particular sympathies of viewers who belong to comparable groups.

Thus, there is a complex pattern of imaginative closeness and distance that underlies our emotional reactions to Alex and his experiences. As these forms of closeness are in part group-specific, the affective reaction both toward his person and toward the events are probably complicated and contradictory. One may primarily expect conflicts between moral and non-moral appraisal and conflicts between appraisals performed from differing perspectives. The dissolution of the resulting tensions ultimately depends on the mental dispositions of different viewers (and their social groups).

The complexity of emotional reactions can be demonstrated by the disturbing scene in which Alex and his droogs beat up a writer and rape his wife. Alex tortures his victims as a performer, dancing to "Singin' in the Rain" and displaying an obscene facemask. His demonstration of aggressive power and control reaches a climax as he bares the naked body of the young woman (Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Alex and his droogs prepare for the rape.*







*Figure 3. The husband is forced to watch the rape of his wife.*

It is such a scene that might have caused Pauline Kael to accuse Kubrick of calculated voyeurism because the scene drastically parades a sexual stimulus for many male viewers. Are then such male viewers engaging here in voyeuristic viewing or (by way of identification) in amoral sadistic fantasies? And what do women feel—is there a gender-specific division of identification with either victim or agent? Or do all viewers feel moral revulsion toward Alex and compassion for his victim? The changing perspectives on the scene open up another possibility. The take presenting the stripping of the woman's body is continually interspersed with the despairing face of her husband whom Alex sneeringly forces to look on (Figure 3).

Is empathy generated with the helpless human being or rather the apprehension that one might be caught in a similar situation some day? Against the background of the previous considerations, each of these assumptions would be acceptable but each one would still appear to be too restricted on its own. We are confronted with the inescapable fact that emotion releasers can only be viewer-specific. Moreover, due to its enormous stimulus density, the scene will probably activate conflicting reactions. Apparently, its essential point is precisely to allow for contradictory emotions: moral revulsion, sexual arousal, compassion, the enjoyment of power through identification, empathic horror, and self-directed apprehension. What one will actually be feeling will depend in part on pre-decisions and preferences that are anchored in one's identity.

*A Clockwork Orange* thus initiates a complex interplay of affective reactions. Moral appraisals are confronted with amoral appraisals and empathic emotions; detached value judgments interact with automatic reactions, emotional memories, and personal feelings. The conflicts between such reactions will, one may expect, generate affective ambivalences in individuals and discrepancies between the emotions of different viewers.

A number of generalizations may be noted: emotional reactions to the represented world—I call them *diegetic emotions*—stem from processes involving the appraisal of characters and events, which are oriented by differing perspectives. These processes may develop various degrees of imaginative closeness, may clash with each other, and may evolve through several stages. These generalizations suggest, at the same time, that there must be further levels of emotion releasers beyond the represented world. This seems sensible because the conflicts between diegetic emotions demand processes of reflection and control. In addition, the audiovisual means that created representations and perspective already release feelings independently of the represented world. We must now, therefore, take into consideration further levels of potential emotion releasers.

### **Beyond the Represented World: Perceptual, Thematic, and Communicative Emotions**

The world of film is not directly accessible to viewers; it is constituted through operations of information processing (Eder 2008; Persson 2003). The mental models of characters and situations evolve gradually out of the preconscious perception of forms, colors, textures, sounds, and movements. Such basic perceptual impressions trigger *perceptual emotions*, sensations, and moods already from “below” the represented world.<sup>5</sup> The title sequence of *A Clockwork Orange* begins with distorted synthetic sound and a frame in glaring red that is abruptly replaced by an equally glaring blue. In this way, an aggressive, menacing atmosphere is created whose perceptual shocks foreshadow further shocks in the forthcoming actions.<sup>6</sup> The instantaneous perceptual impressions at the beginning immediately create a special general atmosphere and dye the world affectively.

The most common strategy for creating affect exploits redundancy: perceptual affects prepare emotional appraisals and reinforce the emotional stimuli of the level of events (Smith 2003). *A Clockwork Orange*, on the contrary, often chooses to explore other avenues. Various techniques make the represented world appear intensely artificial: the hyper-expressive style of acting, wide-angle distor-

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tions, ostentatious camera movements, theatre-like illumination and cold colors, striking symmetries in the plot and in the composition of images, music, slow motion, and accelerated motion. All this reduces the impression of reality and changes the emotional readiness for reaction. The sensation of artificiality allows for emotional detachment; but the technical means of film are also employed in a contrastive manner in order to intensify affective tensions on the level of perception. In the rape scene, brightness, brilliant colors, floral shapes, ballet-like movements, and the sing-along motive of "Singin' in the Rain," all contribute to create an overall perceptual impression of treacherous gaiety. This impression conflicts with acoustic, mimic, and gestural stimuli of horror and sadism—faces torn by fear and lust, camera, focus, staging, and montage. The film thus presents a stimulus package pregnant with conflicts not only on the level of events; preconscious perception also supplies contradictory sensations and moods, which may lead to strong irritation.

As I have already indicated, the contradictory sets of stimuli presented on the perceptual and the diegetic levels provoke further operations of emotional processing. But even without such contradictions, films generally contain additional emotion releasers on two levels of higher processing above the represented world. There is, first, the *thematic* or *symbolic* level. With the represented events before their eyes, viewers begin to search for deeper meanings, to work out the significance of symbols and metaphors, to grasp more wide-ranging themes, and to relate all this to their own life experiences.<sup>7</sup> Even smaller details in the comprehension of indirect meanings and allusions may already provide intellectual pleasure and engender emotions strengthening ego and self-esteem. The challenge of interpretation starts with the enigmatic title. In addition, *A Clockwork Orange* operates with the drastic exaggeration of conventional metaphors: women are objects; sex is violence; watching film is brainwashing. The indirect meanings of the scenes of violence reach far beyond the ever-present profusion of phallic symbolisms. The contrast between the perceptual impressions of gaiety and the gruesome events infuses disturbing associations, for instance, that one can never and nowhere feel safe, or that the outside world is totally unimpressed and unmoved by one's own fate. *A Clockwork Orange* deals with a broad spectrum of other themes: human nature, free will, the causes of sadism and social decay, the limits to the power of the state, the instrumentalization of science, the relationship between art and morality. All these themes may exercise subliminal effects; themes may, however, also be taken up quite purposefully, particularly whenever viewers feel that they are directly involved themselves. One special feature of *A Clockwork Orange* is the ambiguity of the thematic level. Instead of proclaiming simple messages, the film raises dilemmas: How are we to deal with evil, with violence? Is there a way to escape destructive anarchy and the loss of freedom? Viewers who prefer cognitive closure will probably attempt

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to disambiguate the film by pinning it down to a singular statement, accusing it of a glorification of violence, for instance.

It is the very debate about the “morality” of *A Clockwork Orange* that reveals that the emotional reception of film involves not only perceptual, diegetic, and thematic emotions but also a fourth level of reflexive, *communicative emotions*. This level has to do with feelings that address various elements of the communication process that can be mentally represented by the viewers: the film, the filmmakers, the other viewers, oneself, and their relevant contexts. Communicative emotions thus assume at least four different forms: *text-related or artifact-emotions* (Tan 1996: 81ff.) derive from an aesthetic appraisal of the film and its design. *A Clockwork Orange* is a challenge to judges of taste: one critical reproach in the debate of the film was that it did not faithfully follow Burgess’s novel, but critics were also full of praise for its artful adaptation of the novel, its innovative set design, or Malcolm McDowell’s skilled performance. The last example has already introduced *producer- and recipient-related emotions*: as mentioned in the beginning of this article, Kubrick was admired as an *auteur* but he was also attacked for this film; there were many who were worried about the societal consequences of *A Clockwork Orange*. This kind of moral fury directed at filmmakers as well as the concern about the possible impact of films on other recipients are often connected with *self-related meta-emotions*, emotions about the film’s emotions that often derive from the fact that viewers evaluate their own reactions by social standards. In this way, feelings of guilt, embarrassment, or shame can be triggered by inappropriate feelings, but also pride and a heightened feeling of self-esteem as a compassionate human being, as a moral instance, as an expert on art, or as a rebel (see Bartsch 2007).

Especially intensive and, at the same time, conflict-bent sets of stimuli like the torture scene increasingly trigger communicative emotions that gain particular relevance for the processing and the long-term impact of the film. The internal conflict between moral and amoral feelings may therefore induce forms of emotion control and self-related meta-emotions—such as, for instance, the shame-laden insight into one’s own reactions, or otherwise the personal satisfaction rooted in higher moral self-understanding. The larger part of the public accusations advanced against the film rests primarily on negative communicative emotions: moral fury about Kubrick, worrying about social consequences, a disparaging assessment of the film as a work of art.

In summary, then, *A Clockwork Orange* releases emotional reactions on at least four levels: on the perceptual level the film produces *perceptual affects* and rapidly changing moods. On the level of the represented world, conflict-bent *diegetic emotions* are the result of basically unstable empathies and changing appraisals (here the artificiality of what is represented may increase the discord of feelings). On the third level of indirect meanings, viewers react

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with *thematic emotions*, whose basis may be irritating questions rather than clear messages. Finally, tensions become dense on the level of *communicative emotions*: Did the filmmakers cultivate amoral intentions? Is the film socially irresponsible? Are we actually dealing with a work of art? Are my own personal reactions adequate? On each one of these levels, *A Clockwork Orange* unites high excitement with conflict-pregnant stimuli and initiates attempts to dissolve emotional tensions, to control undesirable emotions, to disambiguate themes, to concentrate on particular aspects of the film, to weigh art against morality, or to take a stance of sarcasm. Whether, and how, viewers react depends on their dispositions. Personal dispositions partially explain why this film provokes such a diversity of reactions.

This divergence of reactions is probably greatest on the thematic and communicative levels because there individual or group-specific pre-conditions play a larger role. The fact that these two levels are neglected in many theories is problematic, not least because perceptual, diegetic, thematic, and communicative emotions certainly do not exist unconnected side by side but build upon each other and are in constant interaction. Useful categories for the more precise description of the interplay of emotions are offered by Anne Bartsch's (2007) conception of meta-emotions, which models affective developments in three stages—stimulus-response, action schemata, cultural symbolisms, and Kathrin Fahlenbrach's (2005) notion of audiovisual metaphors, which elaborates the cross-modal correspondences between emotion releasers. I want to emphasize three things at this juncture. First, viewers' feelings develop over time through several stages into more or less complex episodes. In this process, quick and automatic reactions seem to become overlaid by the slower stimulus processing activity of higher levels (see van Reekum 2000: ch. 1), which will in turn govern the perception of emotional stimuli. Furthermore, it seems that feelings that clash with each other forcefully demand an elaboration on a higher level. Finally, emotions interact sequentially. One important form of their interaction is the *transfer of excitation*, e.g. from scenes of violence to scenes of comic relief (see Zillmann 2005). In this film, the impression of the boisterous car ride segues into the rape scene, and the shock of this latter scene can be felt for a long time afterwards. It is sensible to assume that moral anger (directed at the filmmakers) will have a corresponding effect on subsequent emotions.

If emotional processes do indeed interact in this manner, then film scenes simply cannot be removed from their narrative and aesthetic context without changing their affective impact. Moreover, any model of audiovisual emotion will remain incomplete if it fails to take into account one or more of the levels of reaction distinguished here. To concentrate exclusively on the represented world, on the characters, and the events, does less than justice to the multi-layered and communicative character of the emotional experience of film.

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### A Model of Audiovisual Emotion Elicitation

The discussion in this article relating to *A Clockwork Orange* suggests a number of general conclusions. What is required, first, is an interdisciplinary framework for the investigation of audiovisual emotions. The relevant fundamental question contains several variables: What emotions are present in whom? Why? In what kind of film? In what phases of the reception? And in what kind of context? Particularly the “why” requires any theory to model at least three things: emotions, their specific releasers, and the systematic connections between the two (Eder [2003] 2005). The core competence for emotional processes is traditionally ascribed to philosophy and psychology; the competence for the audiovisual stimuli to media studies; and a number of other disciplines may contribute to the task of modeling their combination. The following paragraphs outline a general frame that will enable us to integrate systematically the relevant findings of these three domains.

A first requirement is to model emotional reactions as multidimensional processes, the cognitive component of which covers the total bandwidth of information processing from sub-cortical events to conscious reflection. Those specific kinds of cognitive input, which can function as emotion releasers while a film is being watched, will then have to be determined. Here four levels of reception may be distinguished: basic perception, construction of the represented world, apprehension of indirect meanings, and the reflection of communication. These distinctions derive from models of the cognitive theory of film reception.<sup>8</sup> The categories established in cognitive film theory are, however, capable of considerable further differentiation by exploiting film studies and narratology for the analysis of narrative and audiovisual structures.<sup>9</sup> If multilevel models of emotion, theories of cognitive film reception, and categories of film analysis are compared with each other, wide-ranging structural correspondences immediately reveal themselves; the reason is that overlapping fields of problems are dealt with from different perspectives.<sup>10</sup>

The distinctions in reception just discussed can be drawn together in a general model of audiovisual emotion elicitation (Figure 4).<sup>11</sup> The leftmost part of the figure shows the levels with the kinds of information and emotion releasers that can be described by media studies. The part to the right represents the cognitive and emotional reactions to the filmic input: 1. the perception of images and sounds triggers *perceptual affects*, sensations, and moods; 2. the development of perspectival mental models of a represented world, its inhabitants and events, calls forth sympathy and empathy as well as situation-related feelings—in brief, *diegetic emotions*; 3. the recovery of indirect meanings leads to *thematic emotions*; and 4. the reflection of the communication process and its elements (text, producer, recipient) leads to *communicative emotions*. The criteria for distinguishing between these kinds of emotion are the perceptual and cognitive processes forming the foundation of the relevant emotion and

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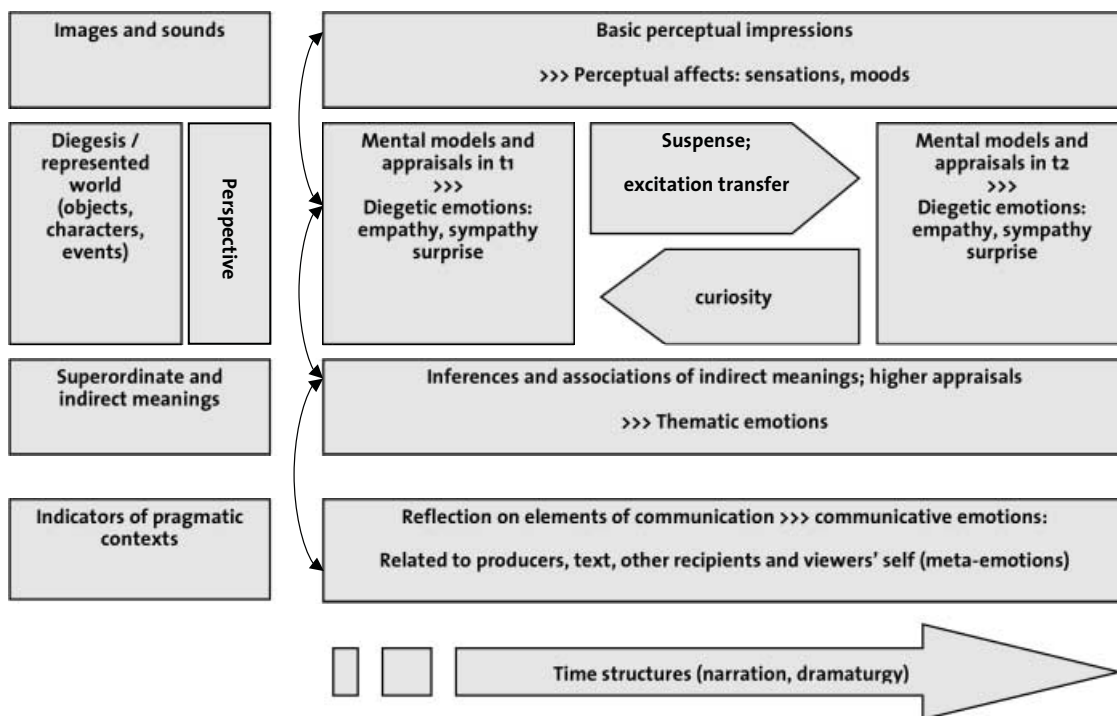


Figure 4. A four-level model of audiovisual emotion elicitation.

representing its object of reference (for more on this distinction, see Eder 2008). All three higher levels also may give rise to moods and other affects, and more complex emotional episodes evolve across several levels (curved vertical arrows). All emotional processes are in constant interaction with each other; they form a temporal flow that is structured by the film narration (arrow at the bottom), and produces forms of suspense, surprise, curiosity, and excitation transfer on each level during certain transactions of time ( $t_1$ ,  $t_2$ ).

Combining, in this way, theories of emotion, film comprehension, and the formal analysis of film, yields a foundation for the description of the emotional reactions of film viewers. Explaining or even predicting these reactions would require the systematic determination of reaction tendencies as they lead from the cognitive input to emotional reaction. It would thus be necessary to establish the dispositions of the viewers on the biological, socio-cultural, and individual levels (considering the complexity of such dispositions, such a systematic determination would be rather challenging). The emotional analysis of multilayered films like *A Clockwork Orange* will, therefore, hardly ever be reducible to a mechanical procedure but will depend on a certain amount of intuition. Intuition itself may, however, profit from the proposed model: it permits more precise, more plausible hypotheses and it creates an awareness of the conflicts between feelings.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The significance of identification processes is emphasized in psychoanalytic approaches but also in some of the approaches anchored in the neurosciences and the theory of evolution.

<sup>2</sup> The dominant theories in psychology and philosophy relate emotions to cognitive assessments or judgments (*appraisal, thought, or judgment theories*).

<sup>3</sup> A survey of various multilevel models of emotion can be found in van Reekum 2000: ch. 1; an integrative model has been worked out by Bartsch and Hübner 2004.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Gaut 1999; Smith 1995: ch. 5; and van Peer and Chatman 2001.

<sup>5</sup> See Grodal 1999: 57–61; Hogan 2007; Smith 2003. I am employing a broad concept of emotion here, which includes non-object-related affects.

<sup>6</sup> Whenever forms, colors, and sounds become objects of conscious attention, they can very well function as emotion releasers on a higher level: The uncanny sound in the title sequence can be interpreted as an adaptation of Purcell's "Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary"; the glaring red of the title as a symbol of violence and blood.

<sup>7</sup> For cognitive theories of metaphor see Hogan 2003: ch. 4. Metaphorical processes help to grasp the fictitious world already on a level below the threshold of consciousness. However, here I am referring to more conscious processes deriving from mental models of the represented world.

<sup>8</sup> Per Persson's model (2003: ch. 1) is the most comprehensive; others do not consider the more elevated steps of reception. My own distinction, for purposes of simplification, compresses three of the six steps of his model into one, because they all have to do with the construction of the represented world.

<sup>9</sup> From a reception-oriented perspective these analytical categories do not describe an objectively given audiovisual text but much rather cognitive reception processes that are consensually taken for granted; for example, the mental modeling of particular characters and events.

<sup>10</sup> Central relations between models of emotion, of film reception, and of film analysis are indicated in the following table:

<b>models of emotion releasers (e.g., Leventhal and Scherer 1987; van Reekum 2000: ch. 1)</b>	<b>models of cognitive film reception (e.g., Persson 2003: ch. 1)</b>	<b>models of film analysis (e.g., Bordwell and Thompson 2003)</b>
perceptual/sensorimotor appraisals	basic perception	audiovisual means ( <i>discourse / style</i> )
associative/schematic/memory-related appraisals	various steps of categorization and mental model formation of the represented world	represented world ( <i>representational meaning</i> ) and structures of its presentation (narration, story, plot, etc.)
higher cognitive appraisals	recovery of general themes (macropropositions) and indirect meanings	themes and motives ( <i>explicit/implicit meaning</i> )
	inference of pragmatic contexts; aesthetic value judgments	contexts of production ( <i>symptomatic meaning</i> )

<sup>11</sup> I have elaborated parts of this model in more precise detail (e.g., Eder 2008).

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