

# The Author – “Specialize[d] in Having Fun”?

Cognitive Theories of Emotion and Literary Studies

in the Context of Two Interviews with Michael Stavarič

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Why is the classic song by The Doors quoted in a paper that deals with theories of emotion and literature? One short answer may be that, as the main focus of this volume lies on the relationship between human emotions and the writing process, the position of the author deserves our special attention. Whether the writing process is “fun”, and how deep this connection to having fun is, is not covered in this article.

What is, in sum, the objective of this paper? As the ten central questions raised as a basis for this volume are of great general interest and deserve to be studied intensively, and because a number of these questions closely touch on the process of literary writing, it seems reasonable to discuss them with an author.

Michael Stavarič is a Viennese writer who has authored numerous books, amongst which are *Brenntage* (2011) (“Burning Days”) and *Königreich der Schatten* (2013) (“The Kingdom of Shadows”), as well as several children’s books such as *Die kleine Sensefrau* (2010) (“The Little Reaper”). The Chamisso award winner and lecturer on poetry at the International Research Center of Chamisso-Literature of the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich considers the role of emotions in his lectures and agreed to be interviewed on these questions. I have therefore conducted two detailed interviews with him on the subject of “writing emotions”. In the interviews, we managed to cover some selected aspects of the ten questions mentioned. In the second part of this paper, I shall provide an overview of some contemporary theories of emotion.

## 1. THE INTERVIEWS WITH MICHAEL STAVARIČ

In the following part, I [GLS] am going to summarize my interviews with Michael Stavarič [MS] step by step.

### **Which roles do emotions play within writing as an aesthetic process?**

MS: As an author one has an emotional connection to the work as something which has been created. An author has no emotional connection to a commissioned task (such as reviews etc.), which he or she would not do without the need to do it. The decisive aspect is how much of autobiography is involved. Autobiographical aspects are often linked to emotionality and this may be stronger than in the case of pure fiction, also within the writing process.

For example, personal childhood memories play an important role in the novel *Brenntage*. The reason is that personal autobiography is emotionally experienced. This is different from the situation when, for example, a poem has been successfully created. Therefore, it is necessary to look for the autobiographical connections within literary works.

GLS: An author's first work, especially, is often very autobiographical. Is there a decline of emotional involvement in later works?

MS: Yes, but renewed emotional involvement may occur through the catalyst of new formal possibilities which engender a kind of extended personal speech. Literary writing is often born when attempting to process emotions, and the first creative steps often take the form of therapeutic writing (as with a diary). Emotions which are processed in literature often cause the birth of literary writing. Later, this impact is reduced. Self-development takes place during the process of growing up and getting older, for example at the age of twenty years, forty years, and later. The degree of emotional involvement also differs when one is writing autobiographically. Emotion as an aesthetic process is important, especially when one is just becoming an author.

For example, Jaroslav Seifert becomes once again especially emotional in his later works (like a "life summary"). The question of which sort of language I can preserve becomes a highly emotional matter in old age.

GLS: Autobiography comprises various things, for example, What have I been through? What do I know? Which principles do I have? – Is there any

strong emotionality when important things like principles and attitudes are concerned?

MS: Yes, there is; for example, in the case of my new novel, which talks about faith. Where relevant social issues are concerned, one should take a clear position, show an attitude. Vital topics, which are important in the world, are also linked with emotional attitudes, although they must not necessarily have autobiographical involvement.

Also, literary composition is emotional (for example, how the dialogues of the characters are structurally integrated in the scene). As an author, I am not an indifferent observer who designs characters like puppets. Even when the characters are passive (as in Kafka), an author should not behave in an indifferent manner.

GLS: A poetic concept of withdrawal or restraint (incarnated, for example, in the early Döblin’s so-called “*Steinerne Stil*”) can be further developed into a concept of involvement. I can imagine that you have various connections to your characters at various working stages?

MS: Yes, that is so. When an author has written several books, he or she has different attitudes to the characters. An emotional connection with the character depends on how successful the production of the whole text is.

GLS: Well, there are examples, such as Jean Paul or Uwe Johnson, who resort to their characters several times.

MS: Perhaps there are only few literary characters created by an author that appear again and again in different manners. Certainly, there is an emotional connection to such characters. In such cases, they could be part of an authorial identity.

GLS: Characters can then function as carriers of emotional connection through several texts, even though they bear different names, etc., right?

MS: That is right.

### **Where and how do a writer’s emotional moments of writing leave their traces within the text?**

MS: When connected with real emotions, autobiographical features leave their traces. Successful text passages are one hint of such traces. Emotional components can also be recognized by the conceptualization of literary characters (for example, the choice of occupation). Formal language aspects should be studied as well.

GLS: What about the constellation of characters and the emotional potential of this (for example, in your novel *Böse Spiele*)?

MS: In *Böse Spiele*, where men and women have confrontations, the formal features of language are also relevant: how the dialogues are built, where the punctuation marks are placed etc. All of this reflects emotionality. Emotions in the writing process leave traces in this way.

A highly important element of involvement (for example, fear) and an interesting illustration of emotional reactions are observable in literary animal characters. They allow a more powerful depiction of emotions and can be found in all my books. An example is the stallion in *Stillborn*. At the same time, an emotional area of tension can be created that can serve as a steering mechanism for sympathy. An example of this could be a serial killer and an animal torturer. In this case the violation of norms becomes an important instrument.

### **How do authors play with the emotional impact?**

MS: People should be touched. Readers should develop an emotional connection to the book.

GLS: Let us take the example of authorial readings: reading aloud as part of a productive process by continually fabricating new realizations of the text.

MS: The spoken word, the voice, can play a role. The emotionality of the spoken language is like a magic spell, because the attraction of various senses strengthens emotional involvement. The personal presence of the author enhances the emotional components and the reader's relationship with the text.

### **What kind of role do intermedial strategies play?**

GLS: In books for both adults and children, pictures and illustrations play a vital role.

MS: Yes, because technical options (programs, apps, music etc., i.e. everything which can be applied in the context of a book) can enhance the emotional connection.

GLS: These are aspects of emotionalizing on the reader's part. Are cross-medial forms also connected with a writer's emotions?

MS: As an author, I partake in a visual depiction and, in this respect, I am emotionally involved, even though I do not create these depictions myself.

## Where does intertextuality come in?

MS: All authors have their own artistic context and pieces of art that they know. It is a part of their autobiography. There are topics, artistic topics and motives which are memorable for an author and which have become a part of his personal memories and identity.

GLS: Arno Schmidt must have been, for example, of interest to you, because you referred to Schmidt’s *Seelandschaft mit Pocahontas* (1953) with your *Déjà-vu mit Pocahontas* (2010). Is intertextuality relevant for the emotional components of writing?

MS: Yes, Schmidt created rather rude or aggressive metaphors. I studied his manner of writing and integrated it into my own style in this text, so that the corresponding emotions are preserved and transmitted. All in all, it is my way of showing appreciation for his work.

## Which kinds and types of emotion and which forms of literary emotions can be found in the context of writing as agency?

GLS: Is it possible that an author has an influence on the emotionality of the readership?

MS: In terms of authors such as, for example, Umberto Eco, who see themselves as a moral institution? The author-as-authority?

Yes, there is indeed a wish to have influence. For example, the hope is not unknown to me that the government will notice us literary authors and recognize us as authorities.

GLS: What do you think of the idea that, for example, Goethe’s *Wahlverwandtschaften* can be seen as a model for a new and different attitude towards marriage and the corresponding emotions? Can you imagine being able to transmit such emotional models by means of your texts?

MS: Very often the relationships between men and women as well as between individuals and society are important.

GLS: A moment ago, when we were talking about animals as literary “characters”, that the author is able to steer the reader’s sympathies with animal characters, you also mentioned the violation of norms. I would like to discuss this issue in more detail. To which extent can the violation of norms influence the readers’ emotionality?

MS: The cliché as a simple form of understanding norms serves here as a starting point. The cliché in literature or as a literary motive is useful because it serves as a trigger (man–woman, good–evil, hero–antihero

etc.). In a literary text, the dialectic of clichés is reduced to an absurdity. This is the main point and this creates precisely the situations in which the violation of norms is required. The *Persiflage* as a genre is an example.

GLS: Can this be specifically connected to playing with language?

MS: Take, for example, my children's book, *Die kleine Sensesfrau*. The transformation from the *Sensenmann* ("reaper man") to *Sensesfrau* ("reaper woman") is introduced by the grammatical gender of 'death' in the Czech language ('smrt'), which is feminine. Generally, an emotional individualization can be achieved through the violations of norms.

GLS: Nonetheless, in literature emotions are often perceived as private.

MS: This notwithstanding, an author has a sort of "moral leadership". For example, in totalitarian systems literature is perceived ideologically. It is especially in restrictive countries that literature often serves not only to tell a well-written story but also to negate ideology. Prohibitions on writing as well as on non-conforming texts can suddenly be regarded as a political statement, whether explicitly or implicitly. In this new context literature can become a sort of stage.

GLS: Usually, in totalitarian countries the subversive potential of literature is acutely perceived.

MS: Yes. For example, *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie is meaningful in this context. Emotionality can partly be transmitted to literary works from the outside.

GLS: Is this important for you? Could the reader find a statement concerning totalitarian countries in your novels, for example, which forms a part of your own biography?

MS: No, but of course I would like my works to be noticed. Sometimes such attention is easier to achieve in tense environments. Publishing houses also prefer books with strong emotional meanings (books about prisoners etc.).

## 2. THEORIES OF EMOTION AND LITERARY STUDIES

In the following part of my contribution, some theoretical principles of emotion are presented, which may be appropriate aides in our attempts to describe the phenomena surrounding the subject of "Literary works and emotions". In this endeavour, I shall concentrate on the autobiographical aspect, which has been given special emphasis by Michael Stavarič. This aspect is linked to the emo-

tional ontogeny of individuals. That ontogeny in turn implies a person’s emotion management as a lifelong development, a development which conditions personal preferences and subjective evaluations.

I would like to begin the discussion by referring to a theoretical concept, a concept which in my opinion is important for understanding the subject. This is the concept of the cognitive theories of emotion. Here it may be necessary to provide some explanations, since the development of these theories within the academic disciplines was caused mainly by the rise of information technology and artificial intelligence within the academic disciplines.<sup>1</sup>

Since Rosalind W. Picard published her studies on “Affective Computing” in 1997, theories of emotion have held great importance in the fields of artificial intelligence, information technology and robotics. Cognitive theories of emotion are not only useful in this context, but they were themselves created by these technical disciplines.

In my essay, the reasons for adopting cognitive theories of emotion in the context of literary analysis will be weighed. Furthermore, I shall make reference to the fact that only cognitively-based emotions result in *individual*, *variable* and *relative* emotionally-steered actions, whereas non-cognitive emotions result in inescapable consequences. This is because cognitive emotions can be defined as radically individual emotions, which permit deliberate choices. Therefore, the dimension of cognitive emotions is of special interest for the study of literature. After all, literary texts prefer to focus on the implications of actions which are deliberate, even though the ultimate consequences are often unforeseen.

## 2.1 Emotional Agents and Theories of Emotion

In information technology and robotics, ‘agent’ is a general term applied to intelligent programs. Normally, these are programs which work with a certain autonomy in the accomplishment of their tasks, carrying out an order in a manner similar to a human agent. Hence artificial intelligence is concerned with ‘agents’.

Some agents feature a so-called BDI-architecture (belief, desire, intention). In this case, human actions, including decision-making processes, acquire special importance as they serve as a template for the artificial intelligence which seeks to emulate them. This means that decision-making is no longer a sequence of computations along fixed algorithms; rather, it introduces a program which perpetually adapts to changing circumstances. In short, whereas the agent is not

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1 Cf. Schiewer 2009; Schiewer 2014.

required to re-check its aims under static circumstances, it frequently does so under dynamic circumstances.

The importance of emotions in decision-making processes has been recognized increasingly in the humanities, in cognitive sciences and in artificial intelligence. “Emotional agents” produce emotional behaviour. This means that emotions are implemented in agent-architectures as a component of decision-making processes. The object of their inclusion is the improvement of man-machine interactions on the one hand, and the steering of behaviours on the other.

At present, important efforts are being made to develop “affective computing”, which was the subject of a fundamental study by Rosalind W. Picard in 1997. Affective computing means computers which “understand” emotions (analysis) as well as computers which “express” emotions (synthesis) and even “have” emotions, which means that they are steered by so-called artificial emotions. In this context, theories of emotion and computer emulations are closely intertwined.

First, emotions comprise many different aspects, including physiological emanations, individual and subjective feelings, cognitive processes, verbal and physical expressions, social and cultural aspects and so on. Dieter Ulich, the German psychologist specializing in the research of emotions, stressed as early as the eighties that the decision for or against a specific model of emotions depends on what we are aiming at. Ulich is convinced that nobody is able to study emotions generally and that the model we choose depends on the purposes for which the model is to be used.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, no authoritative definition and no exclusive notion of emotions exist, but a great number of models have been produced.

In the field of affective computing, the predominant theories of emotions under discussion are so-called cognitive and appraisal theories. The production of emotions is understood as a consequence of specific cognitions. In this framework, cognitive appraisal is considered to be central to emotions. Hence, the core components of research based on these theories are the analysis of cognitive triggers of emotions and their consequences in expression, planning and acting.

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2 Ulich 1989: 125. This is the corresponding passage in the German-language original: “Die Entscheidung für oder gegen ein bestimmtes Denkmodell hängt davon ab, was wir selbst wollen. Niemand kann Emotionen ‘überhaupt’ untersuchen; immer ist eine Präzisierung des Aspektes nötig, unter dem man sich für Emotionen interessiert. Um solche Entscheidungen treffen zu können, ist es darüber hinaus nötig, daß man sich *begründet* für ein bestimmtes Denkmodell entscheidet bzw. einen bestimmten Weg einschlägt”.

There are many different approaches of this kind; attention should be paid, for example, to those of Andrew Ortony, Gerald L. Clore and Allan Collins, Ira J. Roseman, Klaus R. Scherer, Nico H. Frijda, Keith Oatley and P.N. Johnson-Laird amongst others. Let us look at some of these approaches.

Cognitive theories of emotion began (according to contemporary interpretations) with Aristotle’s remarks about emotions in his *Rhetoric*, accompanied by some remarks in his *De Anima* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. There is an array of other philosophical classics whose analytical treatments may serve as sources for modern cognitive theories of emotion.<sup>3</sup>

The cognitive turn in linguistics, anthropology and psychology, which dates back to the 1960s, was applied to the theory of emotions via an analysis of how appraisals of everyday situations conditioned emotional reactions.

According to the latest variants of appraisal theory, human beings use a fixed number of dimensions or criteria when evaluating situations:

1. *Intrinsic characteristics* of objects or events, such as novelty or agreeableness.
2. The significance of the event for *the individual’s needs or goals*.
3. The individual’s *ability to influence or cope with the consequences of the event*, including the evaluation of ‘agency’.
4. The *compatibility of the event with social or personal standards, norms, or values*.

The concept ‘appraisal’ was first used in Magda Arnold’s (1960) *Emotion and Personality*, and has been expanded on in more detail in the work of Richard Lazarus and his colleagues.<sup>4</sup> The latest in cognitive theories of emotion is reca-

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3 These are some of them: René Descartes’ *Les passions de l’âme*, Baruch de Spinoza’s *Die Ethik und Kurze Abhandlung von Gott, dem Menschen und seinem Glück*, David Hume’s *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Immanuel Kant’s *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* and Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Among early classics in psychology are Wilhelm Wundt’s *Grundzüge der Physiologischen Psychologie und Völkerpsychologie*, William James’s *The Emotions* and Carl Stumpf’s *Gefühl und Gefühlsempfindung*.

4 Cf. Lazarus, Averill and Opton (1970) *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Emotion*, Lazarus, Averill and Opton (1977) *Ansätze zu einer kognitiven Gefühlstheorie*, Lazarus (1984) *On the Primacy of Cognition*, Smith and Lazarus (1993) *Appraisal Components, Core Relation Themes, and the Emotions*, Lazarus and Lazarus (1994), *Passion and Reason. Making Sense of our Emotions in a Historical Perspective* and Lazarus (1999), *The Cognition-Emotion Debate. A Bit of History*.

pitulated in Reisenzein (2000), Reisenzein, Meyer and Schützwohl (2003), and in Scherer (1999) from a historical perspective. A state of development concerning all aspects and dimensions connected with cognitive theories of emotion, together with methodological questions and empirical research, is given in the volume edited by Scherer, Schorr and Johnstone (2001). Another proponent of the presently prominent theory of ‘structural’ access to emotions is Ortony, Clore and Collins (1988) “The Cognitive Structure of Emotions” (abbreviated: OCC-theory), with their ‘emotions-as-valenced-reactions’ claim, a claim based on the situational reactions of individuals, referring to how they process events, actors and objects.

The approach taken by Ortony, Clore and Collins is currently considered to be the most elaborate and systematic.<sup>5</sup> It is characterized by the general intention “to lay the foundation for a computationally tractable model of emotion. In other words, we would like an account of emotion that could in principle be used in an Artificial Intelligence (AI) system that would, for example, be able to reason about emotions.”<sup>6</sup> Here we see a process in which the authors attempt to give an account of how cognitive appraisals are made as antecedents of emotional reactions.

This working model views emotions as “valenced reactions to events, agents, or objects, with their particular nature being determined by the way in which the eliciting situation is construed”.<sup>7</sup> The most general issue concerns the question of emotional differentiation, that is, the question of what distinguishes one emotion from another. A basic distinction between reactions to events, agents and objects gives rise to three general classes of emotions:

- being pleased vs. displeased (reactions to events),
- approving vs. disapproving (reactions to agents), and
- liking vs. disliking (reactions to objects).

The authors make clear that these three basic classes of emotions can in turn be differentiated into a number of distinct typological groups.

Reactions to events can be divided into three groups: the first, the Fortunes-of-others group, focuses on how events affecting other people will have consequences for oneself, whereas the other two, the Prospect-based and Well-being groups, focus only on the consequences for oneself. Reactions to agents are differentiated into four groups of emotions, one of which is the Attribution

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5 Cf. Reisenzein/Meyer/Schützwohl 2003: 171.

6 Ortony/Clore/Collins 1988: 2.

7 Ibid.: 13.

group. Reactions to objects include the Attraction group of emotions. Beyond these, there is assumed to be a compounded group, the Well-being/Attribution compound, involving reactions to both events and agents simultaneously.<sup>8</sup>

Taking these concepts further requires accounting for the variations of emotional intensity both within and between people. To this end, Ortony, Clore and Collins attempt in their work to address the factors which determine intensity. Their general view is that the intensity of emotions is influenced by a number of variables, all of which are present in the construal of the situation which generated the emotions.

Thus, in order to address the question of intensity, they consider the mechanism whereby emotion-inducing stimuli are appraised. Ortony, Clore and Collins state that a person’s appraisal of an emotion-inducing situation is based on three central variables:

- desirability,
- praiseworthiness,
- appeal.

These apply to, respectively,

- event-based emotions,
- agent-based emotions,
- object-based emotions.

Desirability is evaluated in terms of complex goal structures, wherein the focal goals govern the interpretation of any event. The desirability of the event is appraised in terms of how it facilitates or interferes with this focal goal and the sub-goals that support it.

Similarly, the praiseworthiness of an agent’s actions is evaluated with respect to a hierarchy of standards, and the appeal of an Object is evaluated with respect to a person’s attitudes.

Following this approach, goals are distinguished from standards in terms of what one wants vs. what one thinks the outcomes ought to be. Three kinds of goals are distinguished: 1) active-pursuit goals are goals that a person tries to obtain, such as becoming a concert pianist, 2) interest goals are goals that are usually not pursued, because one has little control over their realization, as with preserving one’s health or seeing one’s friends succeed, and 3) replenishment goals are goals that wax and wane over time, such as hunger and getting gas for

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8 Cf. *ibid.*: 33.

one's car. Whether a goal is partially fulfillable, like making a million dollars, or fulfillable only in all-or-none terms, like winning a Nobel Prize, is a further consideration considered to be orthogonal to these goal types.

Ortony, Clore and Collins are convinced that all these distinctions play a role in determining the intensity with which people experience different emotions.<sup>9</sup> Amongst the factors that affect emotional intensity are global variables, which affect all emotions, and local variables, which affect particular groups of emotions.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond this rather static and structural explanation of emotions, the authors don't exclude the possibility of emotion sequences, which are important contributors to the dynamic flow of emotional processes.

Within such a framework, the ways in which one explains an action based on an actor's internal traits or dispositions may contribute to the mediation of other affective reactions. Because of a pervasive impetus to attach causal attributions to significant events, experiencing an "event-based" emotion will often be the occasion for experiencing one of the "attribution" emotions. From the fact that people tend to seek causes for the significant events and actions that they experience, it may be inferred that there is a tendency within the human emotional experience to move from "event-focused" to "agent-focused", and finally, to "object-focused" emotions.<sup>11</sup> In other words, "there may be a cycle in which emotion-inducing situations lead not only to the emotions themselves, but also to a need to cope with the emotions to which they give rise". The extent to which a person does cope, or thinks he can cope, sometimes forms the source of additional emotions, which in turn present new demands upon his coping mechanisms.<sup>12</sup>

This theoretical framework accentuates the hypothesis that in many cases, the function of emotion is that of a situational coping mechanism. Further attempts are made to explain why and under which conditions human beings are not able to cope with the emotion-inducing situation or the emotion itself. Here, the unexpectedness of an event is considered to be a factor of utmost relevance: "The result may be that there is a great deal of cognitive disorganization. This is true both for positive and negative emotions."<sup>13</sup>

This admittedly convincing explanation, however, does not cover any specific circumstances of the aforementioned disorganization. It was cognitive psy-

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9 Cf. *ibid.*: 58.

10 Cf. *ibid.*: 83.

11 Cf. *ibid.*: 169-170.

12 Cf. *ibid.*: 181.

13 *Ibid.*: 178-179.

chologist Jerome Bruner who raised this question in 1990 in his book *Acts of Meaning*:

This reciprocal relation between perceived states of the world and one's desires, each affecting the other, creates a subtle dramatism about human action which also informs the narrative structure of folk psychology.

When anybody is seen to believe or desire or act in a way that fails to take the state of the world into account, to commit a truly gratuitous act, he is judged to be folk-psychologically insane unless he as an agent can be narratively reconstrued as being in the grip of a mitigating quandary or of crushing circumstances.

It may take a searching judicial trial in real life or a whole novel in fiction (as with André Gide's "Lafcadio's Adventure") to effect such a reconstrual.<sup>14</sup>

Bruner makes clear that folk psychology focuses upon what is expected and/or ordinary in the human condition. Naturally, this includes the expected and/or ordinary in the affective life. Although a culture must contain a set of norms, according to Bruner, it must also contain a set of interpretative procedures for rendering departures from those norms meaningful within established patterns of belief.

Bruner says that it is narrative and narrative interpretation which achieve this kind of meaning in folk psychology. "Stories achieve their meanings by explicating deviations from the ordinary in a comprehensible form – by providing the 'impossible logic' [...]."<sup>15</sup> In Bruner's view, the function of a story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Bruner encourages us to establish a connection between cognitive science, theories of emotion, and narratology. Following this rationale, it is henceforth essential for us to take a look at some current discussions about emotions in literary studies.

## **2.2 On the reception of current emotion theories in literary studies**

Literature based on rhetoric, as well as the art of rhetoric itself, has always been concerned with emotion. Surprisingly enough, modern studies of literature seem to eschew any systematic discussion of the whole complex of affective aspects in

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14 Bruner 1990: 40.

15 Ibid.: 46.

16 Cf. *ibid.*: 45-46.

literature and of literature. Meanwhile, however, an increasing interest in this topic is perceivable.<sup>17</sup> With respect to literature, Simone Winko points to an essential division within theories of emotion: on the one hand, they concern wider conceptions of cognition that integrate thinking and feeling, and on the other, a narrow conception of cognition exclusively comprising cognition, and therefore excluding emotion as an independent aspect of the human mind. Winko argues for adopting the narrow conception of cognition in literary studies; thus, according to Winko, a broad conception of emotion is not favourable, which regards emotion as a mental phenomenon as well as a physiological, psychological, social and cultural occurrence.

Within her work, she seems to advocate a so-called syndrome theory; however, upon closer inspection, she also raises several objections to such a focus. Winko believes that cognitive conceptions of emotions are not adaptable for literary studies because they do not allow for an account of emotions as they are subjectively perceived. In conclusion, she recommends a concept of emotions where they are regarded as emergent characteristics of the physical system of human beings.

Despite the authority of Winko's argument, a more thorough discussion of the topic is required. Therefore, I shall apply the cognitive model of emotions to the study of literature preferentially, albeit not exclusively, with the reservation that such models are part and parcel of a wider conception of cognition which integrates thinking and feeling. This is all the more necessary due to the fact that, in cognitive narratology, these aspects of emotions have not been touched upon for a long time.<sup>18</sup>

### **2.3 Perspectives of cognitive emotion theories for literary analysis**

As mentioned above, Ortony, Clore and Collins take into account the differentiation between positive and negative consequences of emotions, that is, the condition that emotions may result in a great deal of cognitive disorganization. Furthermore, writers of literature in which the imagined emotions of fictional characters play a central role recognize that emotions can cause dramatic disruptions in judgment and performance.

Ortony, Clore and Collins think that the basic recipe is very simple:

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17 I.e. Alfes 1995; Winko 2003.

18 Cf. for instance Herman 2003.

The writer describes a situation that readers recognize as being *important* to a character in the sense that it has important implications with respect to the goals, standards, or attitudes that the character is known or assumed to have. Then, the character is portrayed as correctly or incorrectly construing the situation as good or bad relative to these goals or standards or attitudes, and typically is described as having, or is assumed to have, a valenced – i.e. a positive or negative – *reaction* to the situation. Finally, the construal together with the reaction usually results in some sort of change in the character’s judgment or *behaviour*.<sup>19</sup>

Further on, the authors express their view that descriptions of situations as they objectively exist are aesthetically undesirable, and that in writing from the point of view of an individual, the situation may be encoded in such a way as to provide readers with an awareness of a character’s affective state. They assume that the situations so described are sufficient to produce individual emotions. If the described situation contains the conditions for eliciting a particular emotion, the experience of that emotion can be inferred. According to Ortony, Clore and Collins, this assumption can be proven by the fact that millions of readers, often over decades or even centuries, all experience similar emotions when exposed to a single description of a particular situation. Thus, they assume that this view must bear general validity.<sup>20</sup>

This rather general but nonetheless convincing perspective on the analysis of how emotions are described in literature, and which effects are produced therefrom, must be elaborated upon.

First, it is clear to me that, contrary to Simone Winko’s position, cognitive theories of emotion are in general, albeit with some exceptions, extremely interesting for literary analysis, considering the fact that only cognitive emotions result in *individual*, *variable* and *relative* emotionally-steered actions, whereas non-cognitive models result in inescapable consequences.

Wolfgang Gessner discussed this problem in his book, *Die kognitive Emergenz von Emotionen*, in which he propounds a ‘radical cognitive emotion theory’. Gessner argues that because cognitive emotions can be defined as radically individual, they offer deliberate choices. In contrast, non-cognitive emotions, such as disgust, are not individual but constitutive for human beings. Therefore, the use of cognitive models of emotion is of special interest for the study of literature. As mentioned earlier, literature holds a preference for implications created by deliberate actions, even where the consequences are not foreseen.

Secondly, Gessner provides the tools for analysing the inner perspective of human beings and the way in which they perceive situations via their emotions.

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19 Ortony/Clore/Collins 1988: 3.

20 Cf. *ibid.*

He analyses individual interpretation mechanisms when confronted with emotion-inducing situations, whereas appraisal theories usually focus on standard situations involving emotional elicitation. Gessner says that a complete theory of emotions must explain the unique dispositions of individuals, whereby an individual's cognitive triggers provide him with a unique interpretation of an emotion-inducing situation.<sup>21</sup>

Allowing this basic assumption, it naturally follows that there is a need for a theory that focuses especially on the individual and on the subjective processing of a given situation, including erroneous interpretations of it. Such a theory would carry much promise from the point of view of literary analysis.

Perhaps it is useful to provide a short example from a well-known text: Goethe's *Faust*. This text is one of the most striking examples of a complex discussion of the problem of emotion. It shows not only the failure of individual decisions, but also the layers of emotion in the broader context of social and human realities. Already in the "Prologue in Heaven", the Lord and Mephistopheles talk about human error:

Mephistopheles:

"What will you wager that you do not lose him,  
Supposing always you will not demur  
About my guiding him in paths I choose him?"

The Lord:

"You shall have leave to do as you prefer.  
So long as earth remains his mortal dwelling;  
For man must strive, and striving he must err."<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, Faust errs. Let us take an example from the *Gretchen* episode. Even Mephistopheles tries to restrain him in the beginning:

Faust:

"But, none the less, she must be turned fourteen."

Mephistopheles:

"There speaks the lad who plays the libertine,  
And thinks he has the right to every flower,  
Knowing no grace or honourable name  
Beyond his reach, to pluck it and devour;  
It often can't be done, Sir, all the same. [...]"

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21 Cf. Gessner 2004: 127.

22 Goethe 1949: 41.

Pray hear me now, Sir, pleasantry apart,  
I tell you once for all, that lovely girl  
Is never to be taken in a whirl.  
We stand to lose by forcing of the pace,  
When gentle subterfuge would meet our case.<sup>23</sup>

Corresponding to the dialogue in the “Prologue in Heaven” quoted above, Goethe writes in a letter on the 15th of September, 1804 to his confidant Eichstätt that what is justly called a wrong striving is an unavoidable detour on the path to the goal.<sup>24</sup> This is because every return from an error forms the human being both in his individuality and his essential humanity. Therefore, it seems clear to him that God rejoices more for the one sinner who repents than for ninety-nine faithful who need not repentance. Faust’s behaviour driven by passion must be judged in this context.

Nonetheless, the whole problem of emotions and the theories of their description have become even more complex than the theories which Ortony, Clore and Collins and Gessner were prepared to take into account.

It concerns not only individual facets of situation appraisal as described by Ortony, Clore and Collins, and in a more complex manner by Gessner. There are dimensions of ontogenesis and self-development as well as social dimensions of “the human being as a whole” which must also be taken into account.

David Herman hinted at this problem and its relevance with respect to cognitive narratology, while Manfred Holodynski presented a complex ontogenetic approach in his study of emotions. Both Herman and Holodynski refer back to the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky.<sup>25</sup>

In light of all this, it becomes evident that a complete theory of emotions as they are treated in literary narratives requires an approach which accounts for individual, social and even normative or ethical dimensions of emotionally-steered actions.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.: 121-122.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Goethe WA 1895: 196-199: “Bey strenger Prüfung meines eignen und fremden Ganges im Leben und Kunst fand ich oft, daß das, was man mit Recht ein falsches Streben nennen kann, für das Individuum ein ganz unentbehrlicher Umweg zum Ziele sey. Jede Rückkehr vom Irrthum bildet mächtig den Menschen im einzelnen und Ganzen aus, so daß man wohl begreifen kann, wie dem Herzensforscher ein reuiger Sünder lieber seyn kann, als neunundneunzig Gerechte. Ja, man strebt oft mit Bewußtseyen zu einem scheinbar falschen Ziel, wie der Fährmann gegen den Fluß arbeitet, da ihm doch nur darum zu thun ist gerade auf dem entgegengesetzten Ufer anzulanden”.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Herman 2003: 163-192; Holodynski 2006: 122.

Here I return to the autobiography and its impact upon emotional involvement on the part of the author, as highlighted by Michael Stavarič. Again: as Stavarič says, traces of authorial emotions may be particularly pronounced in his animal characters. Animal characters not only enhance emotional intensity, they are also used for breaking norms and clichés, which Stavarič identifies as one of his central objectives. Thus, a starting point for influencing common patterns of social thinking may, under certain circumstances, be produced.

This outline of a theoretical approach offers, in my opinion, important viewpoints on autobiography, particularly on the genesis of the author's emotions with its individual preferences and subjective evaluations. At the same time, this approach explains why inappropriate forms of behaviour, actions and emotionality play such important roles in literary texts.

Although the approach of Manfred Holodynski would not alone be sufficient as a theoretical basis, integrating cognitive theories of emotions with the investigation of emotional ontogenesis provides novel theoretical possibilities which invite for further analysis.

### 3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the far-reaching results already achieved by research into the theory of emotion (particularly in general and cognitive theories of emotion), no serious attempts have been made to integrate the multitudinous theories describing the manifold aspects of emotions as they contribute to human behaviour as a whole, with the limited exceptions, perhaps, of the work done by the *Centre Interfacultaire en Science Affectives* (Swiss Center for Affective Sciences), and by Klaus R. Scherer, father of the Component Process Model of emotion (CPM).

Emotions are not solely based on anatomy, biology, psychology or culture. Thus, the study of emotions cannot be confined to individual disciplines, whether psychology, philosophy, ethnology, sociology or linguistics. Emotions in human interaction must be appraised with respect to the particular situation, or to the content of what is being communicated. Equally, their appraisal ought not to minimize the complex and isolating individual aspects inherent in emotions, as analysed from such angles as psychology.<sup>26</sup>

Only via interdisciplinary approaches can researchers hope to arrive at really innovative results which can comprehensively cover the broadest idea of emotions. In such a project, the need to construct efficient communication tools and

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26 Cf. Weigand 2004.

action devices is especially pronounced. Therefore, a broad scientific horizon encompassing psychology, linguistics, information science, image and signal processing, philosophy and, last but not least, literary studies, must be channelled to create an integrated approach, in order to avoid the reproach of psychologism.<sup>27</sup>

Further, there are not only systematic approaches to be taken into account, but historical ones, too. For example, Karl Bühler supplies an outstanding methodological principle in the subtitle of his book on *Ausdruckstheorie* from 1933: a system must be presented by writing the history of the thoughts concerned. It is even Bühler's assumption that a systematic concept must be highlighted and completed by an account of its historical development. He gives several reasons for this scientific principle, one of which is very simple but nonetheless fundamental: familiar knowledge is in danger of being forgotten by reliance on a systematic approach. In fact, structures, incidents and continuities have to be correlated in a constructive manner. Bühler's propositions make an interesting reappearance in his last writings, featured in *Das Gestaltprinzip im Leben des Menschen und der Tiere* (1960). Here, Bühler deals with cybernetics. He makes a comparison between the steering of computers or machines on the one hand and human thinking on the other. At that time, computer storage systems had to be wiped clean completely before the memory could be reused. Human creativity in operation is entirely different: human thinking is inventive or “*gestaltistisch*” only when it is based on pre-existing knowledge, even if this knowledge is not systematized. Therefore, human thinking must be regarded as systematic and historical at the same time and not just as systematic.

With this in mind, there exists great research potential in applying theories of emotion in general, and cognitive theories of emotion in particular, to the field of literary studies.

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27 Cf. Metzger 62001; Scherer/Schorr/Johnstone 2001.

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