

## **Literary Intentionalism: A Shared Interpretive Policy**

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### *Abstract*

In the philosophical debate about literary interpretation, the actual intentionalist claims, and the anti-intentionalist denies, that an acceptable interpretation of fictional literature must be constrained by the author's intentions. I argue that a close examination of the two most influential recent strands in this debate reveals a surprising convergence. Insofar as both sides (a) focus on literary works as they are, where work identity is determined in part by certain (successfully realized) categorial intentions concerning, e.g., title, genre, and large-scale instances of allusion, allegory, and irony and (b) allow that works can acceptably be interpreted for unintended meanings—since an intentional act can, under a different description, exhibit unintended features—then they turn out to share the same interpretive policy concerning authorial intention. This suggests that philosophers should shift the interpretation debate away from issues of authorial intention and toward issues about the aims of interpretation.

*Keywords:* Aesthetics; authorial intention; intentionalism; interpretation; literature; philosophy of literature

### *1. Introduction*

In the philosophical debate about literary interpretation, two major positions have emerged. The actual intentionalist claims that an acceptable interpretation of fictional literature must be constrained by the author's intentions (see Hirsch 1967; Knapp and Michaels 1982; Carroll 2001a, 2001c; Iseminger 1992). The anti-intentionalist denies this (see Davies 2006; Goldman 1990, 2013). For the purpose of this paper, I treat hypothetical intentionalism as an instance of anti-intentionalism, because it denies that

acceptable interpretations must be constrained by an author's actual intentions (see Tolhurst 1979; Nehamas 1981; Levinson 1996.<sup>1</sup>

My contention in this paper is that a close examination of the two most influential recent strands in this debate reveals a surprising convergence concerning the relevance of authorial intention to interpretation. I first locate the debate around the normative issue of which interpretive policy we should adopt toward literary works (§2). I consider next the views of each side's leading proponents: Noël Carroll in the case of intentionalism (§3) and Alan Goldman and Stephen Davies in the case of anti-intentionalism (§4). I then argue that anti-intentionalists can meet a recent challenge made by Carroll to justify their position in terms of normative considerations, and that in meeting that challenge they close the gap between their position and the intentionalists' (§5). I conclude by suggesting that philosophers should shift the interpretation debate away from issues of authorial intention and toward issues about the aims of interpretation (§6).

## 2. *Locating the Debate*

Philosophical interest in literary intentionalism dates back at least as far as Wimsatt and Beardsley's paper on "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946), but the debate has been clarified in three important respects since then. First, it is widely recognized that the debate concerns a *normative* matter, namely the interpretive policy that we as readers ought to adopt. A different construal of the debate considers the *semantic* question of the extent to which the meaning of an utterance (as recorded in a text) is determined by the utterer's (here, the author's) intention, as opposed to the standard linguistic meaning of the words used. Those with entrenched positions on the semantic question will not find anything here to sway them in either direction. But both sides of the normative debate agree that the semantic question is not in dispute, since the kind of meaning at issue is not confined to utterance meaning but extends to something like the 'point' or 'significance' of longer passages and works as a whole. Carroll, for instance, says: "Often it seems that

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<sup>1</sup> Davies (2006) also treats hypothetical intentionalism as an instance of anti-intentionalism (which he calls the "value-maximizing theory"). For a general overview of the intentionalism debate, see Irvin (2006).

arguments about the relevance of authorial intent to interpretation become so preoccupied with the issue at the level of word sequences that sight is lost of the fact that much of our interpretive activity is spent in trying to ascertain the point, often the implicit or implied point, of large segments of discourse and entire works” (2001a, 166–167). On the anti-intentionalist side, Goldman also sidesteps the semantic issue, noting: “When we understand the relevant language, we can agree on what the text is (in a given published edition), despite disagreeing on its proper interpretation. We can also often agree, for example, on the events, settings, and character traits explicitly described in a novel, and on the ways they are literally described, despite disagreeing on the significance of those elements” (2013, 27).

Second, it is widely agreed that there is no special problem of epistemic access to author’s intentions. In most cases, intentions are discoverable on the basis of the literary work itself, just as ordinary intentions are discoverable on the basis of actions themselves. Some anti-intentionalists even acknowledge the relevance of intentions discoverable outside the work. Goldman claims that one of the values to be derived from literary appreciation is “interpreting a work as its creator intended it to be taken, if those intentions are discoverable in the work or outside it” (2013, 30). The debate concerns whether or not acceptable interpretations *must* be constrained by those intentions, however they are discovered.

Third, it is important to note that most agree that the debate concerns works *as authored*. The object of interpretation is the historically-situated work, which is individuated by, *inter alia*, facts about contemporary linguistic practices, the reigning literary conventions, and the author’s identity. Thus, even anti-intentionalists are able to deny that Ed Wood’s schlock science-fiction film *Plan 9 from Outer Space*—to use Carroll’s notorious example—is acceptably interpreted as transgressive and avant-garde, since all the evidence points to the fact that Wood intended to make a mainstream Hollywood science-fiction film, not to parody one (see Levinson 1996, 201; Davies 2006, 244–245;

and Goldman 2013, 51).<sup>2</sup> This third point in particular will play an important role in my argument.

### *3. Actual Intentionalism*

No one has done more than Carroll to rehabilitate actual intentionalism in philosophical circles. In a series of essays spanning two decades, Carroll has succeeded in turning the tide against the interpretive policies recommended by formalist New Critics such as Wimsatt and Beardsley. Beardsley, for one, claimed that the primary value at which literary interpretation aims is “aesthetic satisfaction,” which is achieved by interpreting works in their artistically best light (1970, 34). Although Carroll has never denied that aesthetic satisfaction is one of the values realized by interpretation, he claims that our interest in aesthetic satisfaction needs to be “reconciled” with our other interests, notably our conversational interests, which realize the value of “the prospect of community” (2001a, 174). According to Carroll, when we read a literary text, our interpretations should be constrained by what authors actually intend, as that intention is realized in the work, just as our interpretations of ordinary conversations should be constrained by what speakers actually mean.<sup>3</sup> When we ignore authors’ intentions, or fail to make ourselves aware of them, we fail to realize the value of community that inheres in a genuine conversation with another person, since we have to at least believe that we have understood someone’s meaning in order to count as having such a conversation with them.

Andrew Huddleston has argued, however, that much depends on the specific way in which the conversation is construed. A monologue in which the author simply tells the

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<sup>2</sup> One exception is Andrew Huddleston, who is open to the possibility that interpreting Wood’s film as transgressive is acceptable (2012, 252). But Huddleston denies that the object of interpretation must be the work as authored.

<sup>3</sup> This distinguishes Carroll’s position from extreme actual intentionalism, which holds that acceptable interpretations are fully determined by author’s intentions, such that, if we have external evidence of an author’s intention (evidence external to a work) that contradicts our best internal evidence of which intentions are realized in the work, we must interpret in line with the external evidence. For Carroll, as for the anti-intentionalist position I consider here, the locus of interpretation is the work as authored, not the work plus intentions that are not realized in the work.

reader exactly what the work means fails to meet the conditions of mutuality and openness that genuine conversations require; those conditions are violated by any exchange in which the author does not allow the reader to speak and is not open to the reader's independent ideas about what the work means (Huddleston 2012, 249–251). But as Anthony Jannotta has pointed out, Carroll's own interpretive practice seems to be captured not by the monologue model but by Huddleston's own model of conversation as a meta-level dialogue in which readers are imagined as presenting their own ideas to authors about how the work is best read (Jannotta 2014, 373). Jannotta instances Carroll's reading of Jules Verne's 1874 novel *The Mysterious Island*: Carroll claims that although Verne intended to write an anti-racist novel, today's readers cannot help but judge Verne's depiction of the former slave, Neb, as racist, since the novel portrays Neb as "docile, childlike, naive, and rather close to the simian origins of the human race" (Carroll 2001b, 186). According to Jannotta, Carroll's interpretation of Verne's novel as unintentionally racist shows that for Carroll, an acceptable interpretation need not be limited *to* an author's intentions, but rather limited *by* those intentions (Jannotta 2014, 374). An acceptable interpretation must demonstrate awareness of what the author's intentions are, even if the interpretation goes on to attribute unintended features to the work. In the example at hand, this is analogous to a meta-level dialogue in which Verne speaks (through his novel) and Carroll presents his own response to the author. Verne intended to portray Neb as docile, but that intentional act turns out, under another description, to be racist, even though Verne was unaware of the applicability of that other description (Carroll 2001b, 187). This makes Carroll's position a weak intentionalism, since an acceptable interpretation can consider not just meanings that are explicitly and successfully intended, but meanings that are unintended by the author and would perhaps even be disavowed by the author (as Verne would presumably have disavowed any racist

content in his novel).<sup>4</sup> Thus the reader maintains an independent voice in the conversation and can even come away convinced that the author is mistaken about the intended meaning of her work.

These concessions do not license an interpretive free-for-all, however, since it is still necessary to first be aware of what the author intended. Furthermore, because our engagement with fictional literature ought to aim at communication realizing the value of community, Carroll argues that certain norms must regulate that engagement: “once we enter a communicative relationship with another, it would appear that we are bound by certain moral responsibilities” (2009, 144). These responsibilities include duties of fairness, charity, and accuracy in forming our best hypotheses about authors’ intentions, duties which imply that “the range of acceptable interpretations will be morally constrained” (2009, 145). Carroll’s language is deontological, appealing to a non-consequentialist view of the value of literary interpretation. Because literary interpretation aims at communication, and communicative relationships are bound by duties, then there are strict limits set to acceptable interpretations.

Carroll does not provide much detail concerning these duties, so I offer a couple of remarks by way of elaboration. First, these seem to be perfect duties, which admit of no exceptions. Unlike the imperfect duty of charity, which can be discharged in a variety of ways and need not be discharged on every possible occasion (to use a standard example, one is not morally obliged to donate money to every charitable cause one encounters), the duties of fairness and accuracy can never be flouted; there are no literary works that we could permissibly interpret uncharitably or inaccurately. Second, accuracy would seem to

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, this means that Carroll’s position is even weaker than the “weak actual intentionalism” toward which, according to Davies, Carroll inclines. The weak actual intentionalist, according to Davies, holds that “interpretation can consider any meanings apparent in the work that are not disavowed by the author or that would not have been disavowed had he the chance to consider them” (2006, 232). I believe that Carroll’s position is an improvement over the weak actual intentionalism Davies considers, since it is doubtful whether an author’s disavowal should always be accorded much interpretive weight. On the point I have been influenced by Stanley Cavell (1969), who imagines a conversation with Fellini about his film *La Strada*, which Cavell holds to be a version of the story of Philomel. If Fellini were to disavow this interpretation, Cavell claims this would not shake his conviction as to the allusion so much as shake his trust in Fellini as an artist.

be the primary duty, taking precedence over the others. If one has not accurately described the work as it is, then fairness and charity—which I would argue both pick out the same duty—cannot come into play. Although there may be difficult questions about what the work contains in a thematic or interpretive sense, I am assuming, and attributing to Carroll the assumption, that there is always some layer of uncontroversial description of a work.<sup>5</sup> That layer is thinner in some works than others: it is quite thin in Kafka’s dreamlike short story “A Country Doctor” and rather thicker in much genre fiction, such as the plot-heavy *Harry Potter* novels. But there will always be some uncontroversial claims about a work’s contents, which it is our duty as interpreters not to deny.

When it comes to unacceptable interpretations, Carroll seems most concerned to rule out interpretations that incorrectly attribute what I will call intention-dependent properties. Intention-dependent properties are those that can only be produced by intentional activity. If  $p$  is an intention-dependent property, then it is incoherent to say that something is unintentionally  $p$ . Many such properties are ruled out by the best evidence about an author’s actual intentions: *Plan 9 from Outer Space* cannot acceptably be interpreted as transgressive, and Richard Bach’s schmaltzy fable *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* cannot acceptably be interpreted as ironic, because transgressiveness and irony are intention-dependent properties, and there is no good evidence that Wood and Bach intended their works to be transgressive and ironic, respectively. To say otherwise would be to violate our primary duty of accuracy.

But what about Verne’s unintentional racism? Why does this interpretation not violate our duty of accuracy? According to Carroll, the evidence indicates that Verne did not intend his work to be racist, but in portraying Neb in the way he did, Verne intentionally performed an act that, from our current point of view, is racist: “Verne may have produced something that was racist even in the process of intending to produce something that was anti-racist” (2001b, 187). An objector might wonder why we couldn’t say of Wood’s film that he produced something that was transgressive even in the process

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<sup>5</sup> For further discussion, see Goldman (2013, 25–9).

of intending to produce something that was mainstream. Presumably, Carroll would respond that while one can produce something unintentionally racist, one cannot produce something unintentionally transgressive. Wood's film could be unintentionally hilarious, campy, or sexist, but not unintentionally avant-garde. Just as Verne, we imagine, might have rejected our construal of his novel as racist, so might Wood have rejected our construal of his film as hilarious. But that interpretation is acceptable because it is constrained by our attribution to Wood of the intention to produce a mainstream Hollywood film.<sup>6</sup> To attribute to a work an intention-dependent property for which there is no evidence would be to fail to respect its author.

In support of his deontological approach, Carroll offers the following normative consideration: “recall in your own case the indignation you felt when you thought you were being recklessly misinterpreted. Don't you feel wronged when your stated meaning intentions are purposefully neglected” (2016)? On the back of this consideration, he issues a general challenge: until the anti-intentionalist can come up with a better normative argument, she should suspend her claims about the value of literary interpretation (2011, 133). In the next section, I discuss anti-intentionalism before going on to explain how the anti-intentionalist can meet this challenge.

#### *4. Anti-Intentionalism*

The anti-intentionalist, represented here by Goldman and Davies, denies that acceptable interpretations of fictional literature must be constrained by the author's intentions. There are any number of positive proposals that an anti-intentionalist could make as to what *should* constrain an acceptable interpretation. According to Goldman, interpretation should be constrained by its constitutive aim, which is “to facilitate the full appreciation of values in a work” (2013, 30). This statement requires some unpacking.

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<sup>6</sup> As Jannotta points out, if there were evidence that Wood had avant-garde beliefs and desires, then the actual intentionalist could plausibly argue that, despite his intention to make a mainstream science-fiction film, Wood ended up making an avant-garde film (2014, 378 n. 32). But there is no such evidence.



First, it bears repeating that the anti-intentionalist interprets works as they are. This means that some intentions, where successfully realized, must be taken into account in determining the object of interpretation, since such intentions are essential to the identity of a work. These categorial intentions concern work elements such as title, genre, and large-scale instances of allusion, allegory, and irony. A reader who fails to understand that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a Christian allegory could not possibly provide an acceptable interpretation of it, and a reader of Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* who never grasps the allusive parallels to *King Lear* has arguably not even accessed Smiley's work. The relevance of categorial intentions to interpretation explains why anti-intentionalists can agree that *Plan 9 from Outer Space* is not acceptably interpreted as avant-garde. But as Davies points out, not every allusion or quotation is essential to work identity (2006, 233–235). Acceptable interpretations can ignore smaller-scale intended references (this is especially common when the references are obscure or no longer available to a contemporary audience), and can even postulate references that are not explicitly intended, without shifting the object of interpretation away from the work as it is. And of course not every categorial intention is successfully realized. Although Henry James is said to have claimed that *The Turn of the Screw* is simply a ghost story, the rich ambiguity of the narrative and the absence of clear textual evidence that the governess is not hallucinating make it the case that other interpretations of the work may be acceptable.<sup>7</sup>

Second, talk of the full appreciation of values implies that, for the anti-intentionalist, there can be a plurality of acceptable interpretations. As the Henry James example illustrates, there may be acceptable interpretations of the work as a straightforward ghost story, a religious allegory, a Freudian exploration, or something else entirely. Each kind of interpretation would facilitate a different value, depending on the interpreter's starting point. Although some anti-intentionalists (and some intentionalists) argue that there can be two or more acceptable but *incompatible* interpretations, I take no stand here on the question of whether this is so, or whether there is always a single

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<sup>7</sup> The example comes from Goldman (2013, 33). For a more complicated picture of James' intentions, see his preface to Volume 12 of the New York Edition.

consistent super-interpretation.<sup>8</sup> This is a separate issue that cuts across the debate about literary intentionalism.

Third, and building on the previous two points, since the value of a work varies with the starting point of the interpreter, there will rarely be a single, ‘maximizing’ interpretation. Although anti-intentionalism is sometimes labeled a value-maximizing theory, Davies points out that a better name would be the “value satisficing theory” (2006, 246). Indeed, the value to be uncovered by interpretation need not even be aesthetic value. A reader could interpret with the aim of appreciating the moral or political value in a work, as in Carroll’s reading of Verne’s novel. Since that reading uncovers unpleasant racist elements, it can hardly yield greater aesthetic value, let alone maximal aesthetic value, but it does have historical and political value.<sup>9</sup> Still, I am dubious even about the ‘satisficing’ label, because satisficing involves setting, for some value, a threshold level of fulfillment rather than insisting on the maximum amount of that value, and I doubt that readers do this. The anti-intentionalist would be better off simply to hold that the aim of literary interpretation is to yield some kind of value, derivable from works as they are. Talk of maximizing and satisficing appears to suggest a consequentialist view of the value of literary interpretation, but a focus on works as they are means that anti-intentionalists place the same deontological constraints on interpretation that intentionalists do.

Following from the anti-intentionalist’s stated aim of interpretation, Goldman raises his own normative challenge to the intentionalist:

if interpretation aims to facilitate the full appreciation of values in a work,  
why must we limit those values to those specifically intended by the artist?  
If critics are to facilitate the appreciation of artistic value, shouldn’t they  
aim to maximize that value for their audiences? Surely it is strange to limit  
the value derivable from the work in this way, when such a limit lowers the

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<sup>8</sup> For the claim that there can be multiple, incompatible interpretations, see Goldman (2013, 36–41) and Davies (2006, 245–246). For the opposing claim about super-interpretations, see Carroll (2016).

<sup>9</sup> As Goldman notes, “Part of the significance of a work may lie in its being a symptom of or symbol for social attitudes prevalent at a certain time and place, however objectionable those attitudes might be” (2013, 44).

amount of value that might otherwise be derived. At least the burden of proof must lie with the theory that seeks to enforce such a limit (2013, 30–31).

In the next section, I argue that although this passage appears to take direct aim at intentionalism, the two sides turn out to agree with regard to the relevance of authorial intention to interpretation.

### 5. *A Shared Policy*

Both Carroll and Goldman have raised normative challenges to each other's positions. I will now argue that, by their own lights, they can each meet the other's challenge. This can be illustrated by considering two points.

First, the anti-intentionalist need not endorse Beardsley's view that the aim of literary interpretation is mere aesthetic satisfaction, where this licenses the possibility of ignoring an author's intentions to generate a more satisfying reading. As Goldman says, the value disclosed by interpretation "lies not just in any good experience . . . but only in authentic experience based on objective features of the works" (2013, 50). Again, interpretations must be of works as they are. Thus, as long as they agree on which categorial intentions are essential to work identity, then there will be little difference in the policy that intentionalists and anti-intentionalists adopt in interpreting a work. Both sides can agree that to interpret *Plan 9* as an avant-garde attack is to ascribe an intention-dependent property that the film simply does not have.<sup>10</sup>

It should be emphasized that this shared policy will not settle all interpretive disputes, however. There is still plenty of room for disagreement about which intentions are categorial, disagreement which is the stuff of on-the-ground literary debate. For instance, literary critics disagree as to whether the endnotes to T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" entail that certain allusions are part of the poem or not (see Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, 482–487). Furthermore, agreement on categorial intentions will not necessarily determine a single acceptable interpretation, either. But those kinds of disagreements

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<sup>10</sup> As Goldman says, "To describe the movie in those terms is to misdescribe it" (2013, 51).

could occur just as easily among intentionalist interpreters as among anti-intentionalist interpreters. The common point is that if we ignore large-scale categorial intentions, then we are not interpreting a work as it is. This shows that the anti-intentionalist can meet Carroll's normative challenge, because the anti-intentionalist also insists (though not in the same terms) that we fulfill our duties of accuracy.<sup>11</sup>

Second, the intentionalist can allow that works can acceptably be interpreted for unintended meanings. Carroll agrees with Goldman that artists can achieve more (or less) than they intend, as Carroll's discussion of Verne's unintentional racism makes clear. But we can also generate less morally charged unintended interpretations of works. *Hamlet*, for instance, describes actions that are unintentionally Freudian. Shakespeare intended to portray Hamlet in a certain way, but that intentional act is, under another description, a depiction of a man suffering from an Oedipal complex. Describing Hamlet in the way that Shakespeare did *just is* describing him in a Freudian way, just as, in everyday life, holding a cigar in a certain way *just is* expressing an unconscious phallic desire (according to Freud, at least). This shows that the intentionalist can meet Goldman's normative challenge, because the intentionalist also acknowledges that the values we appreciate in a work need not be limited to those that are specifically intended by the author.

Authors are not wronged when we as readers go beyond their interpretations of their own work to derive unintended value from it, so long as we respect their works as written. I will illustrate this with an example from a very different James, an example that is similar to, but importantly different from, the frequently-discussed Ed Wood film. The 2011 erotic romance novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, by E. L. James, is in dire need of

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<sup>11</sup> The anti-intentionalist need not claim, as Carroll puts it, that "the central function of art, one that trumps all other functions, is to engender aesthetic experience by abetting the imaginative play of interpretation" (2009, 143). If so, this means that another formulation of Carroll's normative challenge misses its mark. He writes, "in our search for value, we want to make sure that we have got hold of the genuine article. However, the version of value-maximization before us cannot guarantee this, because in overriding actual authorial intentions in favour of that which puts the work in a good light, our value-maximizing theorist may take what we would recognize as blunders if we took authorial intentions seriously but which might, under value-maximizing interpretations, make the work appear much better than it really is" (2011, 133). But my point has been that the kind of anti-intentionalism advocated by Goldman and Davies does *not* override actual authorial intentions, at least not those intentions that are essential to work identity.

interpretations that heighten its value, since the work as written is an abysmal mélange of gaspingly bad prose and embarrassingly unerotic content. The novel concerns a young female college graduate and her confusing (to her, at least) relationship with a wealthy businessman who seeks to draw her into a dominance/submission sexual relationship. The book's unfathomable popularity notwithstanding, most readers can surely admit that it is a prime candidate for a more interesting interpretation. I submit one that has surely struck other readers: the novel is unintentionally revelatory of the pervasiveness of capitalist ideology. The author's descriptions linger lovingly over particular brands of cars, wine, shoes, sunglasses, and underwear, referring to them by name, and these seem to be no less erotic stimulants than are the various implements the protagonist discovers in her paramour's "Red Room." This sexualization of brands implies, as the critic Andrew O'Hagan puts it, "a desire much larger here than any desire people might have for kinky sex" (2012, 29).

To my mind, this is a much more fulfilling interpretation of the novel, stimulating the reader's mental faculties in a quite different way than James intended. If this is so, then the work achieves more than its author intended. We should not, of course, credit James with this particular achievement, as there is no evidence that she intended to write anything but a pleasurable piece of erotic fan-fiction. But we can credit the work with the value of revealing commodity fetishism. Carroll cannot object that this interpretation wrongs James in any way: so long as we are aware of her intentions, we are free to go on to generate fulfilling interpretations that highlight (unintentional) features of what she has written. It would be wrong to attribute to authors meanings that they never intended. But we can attribute such meanings to *works*. On this point, both intentionalists and anti-intentionalists can agree.

## 6. Conclusion

I have argued that, despite starting with allegedly opposed positions in the literary intentionalism debate, we can formulate a shared interpretive policy that captures both sides' desiderata. Interpretation must be constrained by works as they are, including any

work-essential categorial intentions, thus fulfilling our duties of accuracy and charity to authors. But interpretation can also facilitate readers' appreciation of values in a work, where that involves going beyond authors' intentions to focus on unintended meanings that are nonetheless revealed in the work. This implies that many interpretive disagreements will concern which intentions are categorial.

In closing, I should note three limitations to the scope of my argument. First, by choosing to focus on Carroll, I have ignored stronger versions of intentionalism. But I believe that Carroll's, in allowing that works can have meanings that are unintended by authors, is in any case the most plausible (see also Iseminger 1992). Stronger intentionalisms cannot condone a hermeneutics of suspicion—the practice of reading works for their latent, often insidious political content—which literary critics have adopted with gusto and success. Still, I admit that my argument is not likely to sway those of stronger intentionalist persuasion.

Second, by choosing to focus on Goldman and Davies, I have ignored the stronger versions of anti-intentionalism, namely those that deny that the object of interpretation must be the work as authored. A stronger anti-intentionalist need not object to the film critic J. Hoberman, for instance, who popularized the avant-garde reading of *Plan 9*. Hoberman's is not an interpretation of the-film-as-directed-by-Wood but of something ontologically thinner, such as the film-text plus some historical context, with facts about the actual director bracketed. Although I do not endorse Carroll's arguments against this interpretive tactic (which charge Hoberman with a failure of respect), I do maintain that Hoberman is engaged in an importantly distinct kind of interpretation, a fuller discussion of which will have to wait for another occasion.

Finally, given the convergence I have argued for, we should redirect our philosophical attention toward the larger issue of the aims of literary interpretation. The intentionalist and the anti-intentionalist, I have claimed, can agree on the kind of normative policy that should govern interpretation, but they may still disagree as to the overall purpose or function of literary interpretation. For instance, Carroll seems to incline to the view that the purpose of interpretation is to assess the achievement of the

author (2009, 13), while Goldman holds that the purpose is, as discussed above, to facilitate the appreciation of value more generally. Such disagreement is to be expected: as Kwame Anthony Appiah notes, “We can live together without agreeing on what the values are that make it good to live together” (2006, 71); similarly, we can agree on a shared interpretive policy without agreeing on the value of interpretation that grounds such a policy. But I do not think that philosophers are likely to settle this argument conclusively, given the plurality of aims with which readers engage with fictional literature.<sup>12</sup> It is enough to have shown that, if they are to engage with works as they are, they should adopt, at a minimum, the interpretive policy recommended here.

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<sup>12</sup> For a different argument for the same conclusion, one that appeals to the limits of conceptual analysis to determine the value of literary interpretation, see Lillehammer (2008).

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