

Intention and Interpretation: A Revised Moderate Actual Intentionalism

By

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B.A., Bridgewater State University, 2009

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**SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis is an examination of the role of artistic intentions in the interpretation of art. Chapter 1 is a survey of the recent theories of interpretation that attempts to establish the shortcomings of anti-intentionalism and hypothetical intentionalism while making a case for the superiority of the view I prefer, moderate actual intentionalism. Chapter 2, then, is concerned, almost exclusively, with the major point of difference among its advocates: namely, the criteria for successfully realizing an intention. Chapter 3 is concerned with a latent tension in the position itself. Resolving this tension involves rethinking the role of conventions and context and placing a greater emphasis on intentions themselves.

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## DEDICATION

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This work is dedicated to those family and friends whose affection made leaving home so difficult and to those friends unlooked-for whose affection makes returning home just as difficult.

### 1.1 Interpretation—Preliminary Remarks and Distinctions

Before we address particular theories of interpretation, it is best to offer a few preliminary remarks and distinctions that will help clarify what I mean by ‘interpretation.’

(1) Art critics engage in a number of activities of which interpretation is one. Interpretation typically refers to an activity that aims at understanding or making sense of artworks: to offer an interpretation is to provide an account of an artwork’s meaning.

(2) An artwork’s anomalous, paradoxical, or puzzling features typically occasion interpretive activity, for it is unclear how these features fit together coherently.

(3) An interpretation, then, is an hypothesis that attempts to disclose an artwork’s unity by making sense of how its parts or features fit together. Points, purposes, concepts, messages, or themes are among the things that serve to unify an artwork. A typical interpretation might identify the theme of a work and attempt to show how the artist’s choices contribute to establishing and reinforcing that theme.

(4) An interpretation seeks to account for what we are given in the artwork by going beyond it (Carroll 2009, 110). The simple language of a poem—for example, Williams’ “The Red Wheelbarrow”—might not pose a problem to

competent English speakers, but grasping the meaning of the words used is only preliminary to interpretation. An interpreter would need to go on to say what the poem's purpose is and how Williams' choices concerning the poem's stanzaic structure, odd meter, lack of rhyme, and other features contribute to (or detract from) that purpose.

(5) Interpretation is not equivalent to *description* or *evaluation*. To describe an artwork is to provide statements about what the artwork is like. To evaluate an artwork is to render a judgment about the artwork's value. Consider these two claims: "The Red Wheelbarrow' has four stanzas" and "The Red Wheelbarrow' is a great poem"; the former is descriptive, the later evaluative. Generally, interpretation precedes evaluation and description precedes both: before we can say what an artwork means we must at least describe it, and before we render a judgment as to its value we ought to at least understand it. These critical activities may be interrelated in actual practice, but we can nevertheless separate and examine them independently (Iseminger 1992a).

## **1.2 Recent Theories of Interpretation**

In what follows I will provide a survey of the recent theories of interpretation. By 'recent' I mean those theories that have been defended seriously in the last twenty to thirty years. There are three such theories: anti-intentionalism, actual intentionalism, and hypothetical intentionalism. Each theory will roughly be given the same treatment: I will articulate the position and analyze the arguments

commentators typically deploy in its support. I prefer the moderate version of actual intentionalism, so the purpose of the survey is to clarify the position and address concerns from rival positions. These next sections are arranged topically, but, where necessary, I will provide historical background.

### 1.3 Anti-Intentionalism

No account of anti-intentionalism would be adequate without reference to Wimsatt and Beardsley's (1946) seminal article, "The Intentional Fallacy."<sup>1</sup> Prior to the article's publication, the issue of the relevance of intentions to interpretation was certainly debated, but the debate was far less impassioned. After its publication, the relevance of intention to interpretation became the central question that a theory of interpretation must answer. The article also helped to define the New Criticism, a movement in literary theory that regarded the artwork (particularly a work of poetry) as an autonomous, unified, and ahistorical object. The New Critics practiced 'close reading,' or diligent scrutiny of an artwork's formal features which privileged the conventions of language and rhetoric. The New Criticism remained popular until the late 1960's (Castle 2007, 122-128). Although their paper was first published over a half-century ago (and thus contravenes the sense of 'recent' mentioned above), there is good reason to consider it: it is the *locus classicus* of the anti-intentionalist position. Though

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<sup>1</sup> A similar critique is found in Wimsatt and Beardsley (1943), though they do not name the alleged fallacy.

recent theorists employ new arguments, they have not done much to alter the core position found in this early article.

The anti-intentionalist position we find in “The Intentional Fallacy” can be called strong anti-intentionalism. The position is that the artist’s intentions are always irrelevant to the interpretation of artworks.<sup>2</sup> “Intention,” here, is understood as “design or plan in the author’s mind” (469). It should be noted that their article is not a sustained argument for that thesis; rather, the article focuses primarily on why intentions are irrelevant to *evaluation* (Lyas and Stecker 2009b). Their stated aim is to argue against the idea that “[i]n order to judge the poet’s performance, we must know what he intended” (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, 469). This is not to say, however, that their considerations for avoiding intentionalist evaluation do not also apply to intentionalist interpretation—we will get to these arguments shortly.

Some context is helpful, since the target of their criticisms is not always clear. Biographical criticism was popular around the time “The Intentional Fallacy” was written. This form of criticism construed the artwork as an allegory or reflection of the artist’s life. Even intentionalists agree that Wimsatt and Beardsley correctly identify the interpretative failings of biographical criticism, for it threatens to turn all literary works into *romans à clef* (Carroll 1992; Livingston

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<sup>2</sup> The anti-intentionalism found in “The Intentional Fallacy” is not about all artworks across all media; the primary concern is literature generally and poetry specifically. Other theorists will use similar arguments about linguistic meaning to then generalize to all the arts. Though Wimsatt and Beardsley were concerned with poets and poetry, I will use ‘artists’ interchangeably with ‘poets’ and ‘artworks’ interchangeably with ‘poetry.’

2005b, 282). Their chief worry is that critics were not adequately separating talk of the poet from talk of the poetry. In a later essay, Beardsley (1982) tells us that, at the time he and Wimsatt were writing, literary criticism was a “mishmash of philology, biography, moral admonition, textual exegesis, social history, and sheer burbling [...]” (188). I am stressing two things: that (1) their chief target is biographical criticism and that (2) biographical criticism is not the only thing to which they are reacting. If the various practices just cited were the historical backdrop against which their essay was written, it is not evident from their article which one they are taking as their target at any one time—i.e., they are not reacting to a unified practice in literary criticism, but to a “mishmash”—so their article appears at times disjointed.

Because Wimsatt and Beardsley were reacting to biographical criticism (among other things), we can see why they want to distinguish two different sorts of studies: personal and poetic. The former studies the author, the latter studies the poem. Such a division is possible, they believe, because artworks and artists are radically separate things: “The poem [...] is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it” (470).

There is also a decidedly empirical flavor to their conception of criticism. In the sentences following the one just cited, they stress the public nature of poetry: language is public, the poem’s medium is language, therefore poetry is public; likewise, knowledge of human beings is public, poetry is about human beings (or the abstraction: ‘the human being’), therefore poetry’s subject matter is public.

Critical statements are, they say, on a par with statements in linguistics or psychology (470). Such statements will be supported by publically available evidence. Literary criticism (poetic studies) makes appeals only to empirical properties which are those properties that are there *in* the poetry. They call this sort of evidence “internal evidence,” or evidence that is “discovered through the semantics and syntax of a poem, through our habitual knowledge of the language, through grammars, dictionaries, and all the literature which is the source of dictionaries, in general through all that makes a language and culture” (477). No reference to “external evidence,” which consists of artist’s diaries, correspondence, etc., should be permitted to poetic studies—to personal studies, yes, but not to poetic studies. The artist’s actual intentions, then, have no place in their conception of literary criticism.

Wimsatt and Beardsley’s redrawing of the boundaries of literary criticism as well as their commitment to the division of artist and artwork informs their considerations about interpretation, which brings us to their arguments for the irrelevancy of intentions to interpretation.

Wimsatt and Beardsley begin their essay by delivering a series of five statements that they see as axiomatic. Some of these are relevant to our purposes, and one, which we will get to shortly, is perhaps their most important criticism of intentionalism. A common theme that runs not only throughout these five statements but also in their essay at large is the idea that intentions are

inaccessible or unavailable to the critic. We can abstract, then, the following argument:

- (1) Intentions are private, episodic mental events that are logically separate from the artwork (the intention is *outside* the artwork).
- (2) The object of art criticism is the artwork itself, not the artist.
- (3) Given (1) and (2), the critic cannot know the intention on the basis of the artwork.
- (4) Therefore, intentions are inaccessible or unavailable to the critic.

Call this argument *the inaccessibility argument*.<sup>3</sup> The intentional fallacy is essentially a fallacy of irrelevance, so, according to this argument, intentions are irrelevant *because* they are inaccessible.

The best way to understand this argument is that it involves both an ontological claim and a normative claim. The inaccessibility or unavailability of intentions rests on a conception of intention as private and ultimately detached from the artwork. It is the fact that the intention is thus detached that supports the normative claim that the intention *ought* to be off-limits to the critic. This conception of intention also allows Wimsatt and Beardsley to redraw the boundaries of literary criticism in the way that they do. The critic who claims to be doing poetic studies but lets her critical remarks wander into biographical territory has begun to talk about something entirely separate from the artwork.

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<sup>3</sup> I am following Carroll's (2009, 65-81) terminology.

The first problem with the inaccessibility argument is that it does not draw distinctions between authorial intentions, reports of authorial intentions, and the artist's biography (Carroll 1992, 98; see n. 5; also, Lyas 1972). Wimsatt and Beardsley seem to want to disallow all of these, but they are quite different things and denying all of them isn't necessary to defend their position. For example, they really want to banish authorial intentions, but at times they argue for the irrelevancy of authorial intentions on the basis that reports of them are unreliable. Likewise, as we have seen, they also attack biographical criticism for making references to facts about the artist that, strictly speaking, aren't *in* the artwork; but denying the relevance of the artist's life story isn't by itself a reason to eliminate intentions from interpretation.

It's true that artists sometimes have idiosyncratic or outlandish beliefs and that they may not be completely sincere when they report these beliefs, or, if they are sincere, they might be patently mistaken. Insincerity, outlandishness, or dissembling are reasons to disregard an artist's report of his intention (especially if it clashes with the artwork) but presumably there is still a matter of fact about the artist's actual intentions: thus denying the authenticity of the report is not a reason to disregard actual authorial intent. Moreover, the existence of fishy reports is no reason to endorse anti-intentionalism, but it's also not a mark against the moderate actual intentionalist. One of the hallmarks of moderate actual intentionalism is that it recognizes the relevance of only those intentions that are realized in the artwork. Wimsatt and Beardsley's arguments are directed at the

significantly less subtle position, strong actual intentionalism, which holds that an artwork means whatever its creator says it means. We will briefly discuss criticisms of strong actual intentionalism in the next section.

The inaccessibility argument is meant to show us that critical statements that rely on talk of intentions are epistemically worrying. Strictly speaking, the inaccessibility argument can't apply to all reports of intent or biographies, for in these cases we might very well have rich sources of direct and indirect evidence of artistic intent. What the anti-intentionalist needs to demonstrate is that, on the basis of the artwork alone, we can't have epistemically adequate access to the artist's intentions. Wimsatt and Beardsley anticipate this and respond with a dilemma for the intentionalist, which we will consider shortly.

The second problem with the inaccessibility argument is that its success depends on a particular conception of intention. Once intention is understood differently the inaccessibility argument will lose much of its force.<sup>4</sup> Lyas and Stecker point out that a conception of intentions as wholly private seems to commit Wimsatt and Beardsley to a conception of mind that tends towards precluding us from any knowledge of other minds (2009b, 369; Lyas 1983, 292). If intentions are as private as Wimsatt and Beardsley maintain, then we could not have knowledge of anyone's intentions. But this flies in the face of everyday experience. We often infer correctly the intentions of others on the basis of their

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<sup>4</sup> As Livingston (2005a) notes, the anti-intentionalist will have an easier time defending her view if it were the case that intentions were epiphenomenal or that they didn't much matter to the production of artworks (which is highly unlikely). Additionally, construing intentions as unknowable or private makes for an easier defense of anti-intentionalism as well.

behavior. The person running after the bus as it pulls away from the stop most likely wanted to catch it. We can infer this despite the fact that his intention (to catch the bus) is logically separate from his action (running after the bus). Moreover, the capacity to make our intentions known—either verbally or otherwise—is essential for collaborative action. Indeed, there are various art forms that rely on this capacity, such as film and theatre. There are certainly better accounts of intention available, but providing such accounts is outside the scope of this thesis. I only want to highlight the inadequacy of the early anti-intentionalist commitment to a conception of intentions as private and inaccessible.

It's a matter of fact that poetry and other art forms are the results of intentional action, for Wimsatt and Beardsley clearly allow that intentional action is how poems come into being in the first place. They state, however, that to grant that the intention in the mind of the artist is the cause of the poem's existence should not be taken as a reason to admit the intention as an evaluative standard (469). We should note that this point is about evaluation and not about interpretation. They readily accept that artworks are the products of various decisions and actions all on the artist's part, yet they deny that from that fact it follows that we then have a standard by which to judge the artwork.

Wimsatt and Beardsley are responding to a form of intentionalist evaluation wherein the critic finds out the artist's intention and assesses her work on whether it fulfills that intention. After "The Intentional Fallacy" each author independently continued his defense of anti-intentionalism. The argument against this form of

criticism is found in Beardsley's *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958, 458). The argument runs as follows. First, we need to know the intention independent of the work so as to compare the two, but we can rarely do this with the degree of exactness necessary to critical evaluation; second, even if we did, we would be evaluating the artist, not her work. The problem of knowing the intention independent of the work becomes acute when we have no external evidence of intention; for example, Shakespeare and Homer. According to intentionalist evaluation, the anti-intentionalist thinks, these works are all successes because inferring intentions from the artwork alone will force us to see all its qualities as intentional: if the artwork has quality  $x$ , we will infer that quality  $x$  was intentional. Comparing the intention with the artwork we see that the two match up and will always match up, no matter what quality we happen to consider. These artworks, then, cannot be failures. Moreover, the critic who argues like this, argues circularly; we'll call this argument, following Carroll, *the circularity argument* (Carroll 1992, 100; 2009, 69).

The circularity argument presupposes that artworks can't evince failed intentions. We simply aren't forced, as the circularity argument contends, to regard all aspects of an artwork as intentional, even when we don't have any artwork-independent evidence of intention. I will, however, save my response to the circularity argument because the argument we will consider next shares the same presupposition.

The next anti-intentionalist argument is arguably the best, and this argument, like the inaccessibility argument, is meant to establish the irrelevancy of intention to interpretation by first making a case for the epistemic difficulty of inferring intentions from the artwork alone. The argument runs as follows:

- (1) If the artist realizes all her intentions in the artwork, then we don't need recourse to the artist's intentions.
- (2) If the artist doesn't realize all his intentions, then discerning what those unrealized intentions are will not help us figure out the artwork's meaning.
- (3) Given (1), intentions are dispensable; and, given (2), intentions are irrelevant.

Call this *the intentionalist dilemma* (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, 469; Livingston 1998, 831-2; Livingston cites this as something that any viable intentionalism must avoid). There are two related presuppositions that work to undermine the dilemma. The first is that intentions are either realized or unrealized, which I take to be a false dichotomy. While some intentions are either realized or not, others might be only partially realized. An artist might intend an artwork to convey a single mood consistently throughout the entire work, yet overlook some detail that detracts from our securing the intended emotional uptake. Here I only want to make room for the possibility that realizing some intentions is a matter of degree, not of kind.

The second presupposition is that the artwork can't provide us with evidence of a failed intention (Carroll 1992, 100; 2009, 76). The example in the preceding paragraph relies on the notion that artworks can indeed provide us with such evidence. To illustrate this point, Carroll cites Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* wherein Kuhn mistakenly writes 'weaned' when he clearly meant to write 'nurtured,' that is, he failed to realize his intentions—specifically his intention to write something, though perhaps not his intention to communicate something (Carroll 1992, 100). Moreover, we can glean as much from inspecting only the text itself and our shared knowledge of the English language. Even competent English speakers sometimes mix up the meanings of such word pairs as 'weaned' and 'nurtured' or 'invigorate' and 'enervate.' Occasionally, as the example demonstrates, we might produce an utterance that says the exact opposite of what we intended to say; but, given the text, its context, and our linguistic knowledge we can readily see that such an utterance might be at cross-purposes with the work as a whole.

Analogously, when we examine artworks we find that they are often made according to well-established artistic categories, such as genres. For example, one of the main purposes of science fiction, whether literary or cinematic, is to explore the effects of science and technology on the human condition. In the case of science fiction film, we can often see evidence that a particular filmmaker is attempting to realize this essential purpose of science fiction, yet over-the-top performances, bad editing, or laughable special effects can spoil its articulation;

that is, we see quite clearly from the film that it fails to realize the filmmakers' intentions. Consider Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. It seems clear from the film that Wood's central theme is apprehension concerning the uses and misuses of scientific knowledge: we don't know what we are getting into scientifically speaking—a common theme in 1950's Cold War-era sci-fi. The film is meant to be admonitory with the opening sequence setting the tone for the rest of the film. What we find, though, is The Amazing Criswell, in his big, theatrical voice, reminding us that “future events such as these will affect [us] in the future” while we plainly see his eyes moving as he reads his lines from cue cards. We don't take the warning as seriously as we might in an earlier, better executed science fiction film such as Robert Wise's *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

One last intentionalist response to the dilemma is that intentions are necessary for implicit meaning. Implicit meanings are indirectly conveyed by first conveying some other meaning. Ironic utterances are instances of implicit meaning since they involve saying one thing,  $p$ , to imply its negation,  $not-p$ , which implication is the meaning of the utterance. What we can glean from inspecting the surface features (including conventional meanings) of the artwork is not enough, we must correctly hypothesize the artist's intentions as well. In these cases considering the artist's intentions is not redundant as the intentionalist dilemma presupposes (Livingston 2005a, 149-50).

The inaccessibility and circularity arguments and the intentionalist dilemma all grant that intentions have causal efficacy and that at least some

intentions are indeed realized in artworks. These intentions, the anti-intentionalist thinks, are irrelevant to interpretation because considering them makes us turn our attention inappropriately from the work to the artist and our epistemic access to them is seldom adequate for interpretation. These arguments are also instructive in that they point to a wider anti-intentionalist concern, namely, that actual authorial intentions cannot *determine* the meaning of artworks.

The idea that intentions do not determine meaning is hinted at in “The Intentional Fallacy,” but it is not explicitly argued for. Nevertheless, the claim that intentions do not determine meaning is the core of the anti-intentionalist position as it separates the anti-intentionalist from the intentionalist (Livingston 2005a, 141). In addition to the arguments we’ve seen, the anti-intentionalist will generally argue that intentions do not determine meaning because artists sometimes fail to realize their intentions and artwork’s can have unintended meanings. The result is a greater emphasis on the role of context and convention in fixing the meaning of the artwork (for this reason the position is sometimes called conventionalism). Context and convention, it is argued, also take care of seemingly intentionalistic concepts, such as irony and allusion. As we’ll see in § 1.5, however, the moderate actual intentionalist can readily meet the above two challenges. Additionally, one of the theses of Chapter 3 is that context and convention *per se* are not independent determiners of meaning. For these reasons we can leave anti-intentionalism behind and move on to consider the intentionalist side of the debate, beginning with the stronger form of actual intentionalism.

#### 1.4 Strong Actual Intentionalism

'And only *one* for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!  
 'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said.  
 Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant  
 "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"  
 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected.  
 'When *I* use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I  
 choose it to mean—neither more nor less.'  
 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'

–Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

Humpty Dumpty is advocating strong actual intentionalism regarding linguistic meaning (sometimes the position is called *absolute* or *extreme* actual intentionalism). The corresponding view in interpretation theory is simply that the artwork's meaning is logically equivalent to the artist's intention. This position is associated with Hirsch (1967) and especially Knapp and Michaels (1985), though Knapp and Michaels are most likely the only ones to argue unwaveringly for the position as stated. Beardsley (1970) argued against what he called the Identity Thesis, that is, that textual meaning is identical to intended authorial meaning, a position he attributes to Hirsch. Stecker (2008) believes the Identity Thesis to have been successfully refuted. In recent discussions of interpretation strong actual intentionalism is often given abrupt treatment, quickly being dismissed so as to hurry on to the more subtle forms of moderate actual intentionalism. But considering the position helps us to see that several objections to actual intentionalism at best only apply to its stronger form and not to its moderate form.

There are two main objections to strong actual intentionalism that render it untenable. The first is that the position amounts to Humpty–Dumpty–ism, one

consequence of which is an infinite regress.<sup>5</sup> Contrast the view suggested by Alice's remarks that utterers (or artists) cannot make their words (or artworks) mean whatever they *merely* intend them to mean with the view suggested by Humpty Dumpty's remarks that they can indeed make their utterances mean whatever they merely intend them to mean. Alice's view is sensible, Humpty Dumpty's absurd—indeed, his position is funny *because* it's absurd. If to understand the meaning of all of Humpty Dumpty's utterances required him to report what he had intended by them, then an infinite regress would ensue and communication would be impossible. For example, if by 'glory' he means 'nice knockdown argument' he would then have to specify what he means by 'nice knockdown argument' and so on.

The distinction drawn earlier between intentions and reports of intention is important here. It may sound as if strong actual intentionalism is committed to accepting all, even spurious, authorial reports. Strong actual intentionalism, however, may still deny dubious reports, for the strong actual intentionalist, like the moderate actual intentionalist, is interested in actual intention. For example, if the sculptor tells us that he intended his obviously blue statue to be red we would most likely think he were mistaken about his intention; but, if we discovered that his report was genuine—that his intention truly was to produce a red statue—then the strong actual intentionalist would have to accept that his obviously blue statue

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<sup>5</sup> The phrase 'Humpty-Dumpty-ism' derives from Alfred MacKay's (1968) "Mr. Donnellan and Humpty Dumpty on Referring."

was indeed red. Moderate actual intentionalism does not incur this bizarre consequence, for the moderate actual intentionalist is interested only in authorial intentions and genuine reports thereof that are compatible with the artwork. An entirely blue statue does not support the artist's intention that it be taken as red because unrealized intentions, the moderate actual intentionalist thinks, are not constitutive of the artwork's meaning.

The second objection to strong actual intentionalism is that it implies that artists cannot fail to do what they intended. If the artist has a genuine intention that her artwork have some meaning or feature, then the artwork must have the intended meaning or feature. Merely having an intention, however, is not equivalent to realizing that intention. We do not want a theory that implies that all intentions, even unrealized intentions, are constitutive of the artwork's meaning, for an unrealized intention is simply not part of what was done in the artwork. If the finished statue is blue, then redness is not part of what the sculptor has done (and cannot be constitutive of its meaning) even though she may have formed and acted upon an intention to produce a red statue. As agents we know that we sometimes fail to realize our intentions and, after all, artists are agents, too.

### **1.5 Moderate Actual Intentionalism**

If the strong form of actual intentionalism will not do, then perhaps a more moderate form of intentionalism will fare better. Historically, a number of theorists have defended the position, but its current form did not emerge until

around the time Gary Iseminger's (1992) *Intention and Interpretation* was published; ultimately, though, the position's source is Hirsch (1967). There are three leading proponents of moderate (sometimes called modest or partial) actual intentionalism: Noel Carroll, Paisley Livingston, and Robert Stecker. I will not attempt a close examination of each here; rather, I will abstract from what they have said and consider motivations for, and objections to, the position.

The essential shortcoming of strong actual intentionalism is that it equates work meaning with the artist's intended meaning. This allows both realized and unrealized intentions to determine work meaning; moreover, the view also admits genuine reports of intention to determine meaning, even if these genuine reports of intention are incompatible with the artwork and make the artist seem as if she is wildly mistaken about her own intentions. Moderate actual intentionalism is the view that only realized intentions can play a part in determining the artwork's meaning. Each of the theorists mentioned above gives a different account of the success conditions for realizing intentions, but examining these accounts is reserved for Chapter 2.

We can begin by adducing some general motivations for intentionalism. I say 'intentionalism' because these motivations can apply to intentionalism in either its strong or moderate form. The point of the last section is to discuss those objections to intentionalism that *only* apply to its strong form. In what follows I am not restricting myself to those motivations (or objections) that apply only to moderate intentionalism.

There are a few observations that help motivate intentionalism. One observation is that we often anthropomorphize the artworks with which we are engaging. For example, we may say things like “the film wants us to see that *x*” or “the text does *y*.” But artworks cannot rightly be ascribed wants or deeds. Carroll (2009, 142-43) suggests that anthropomorphic language is natural when talking about artworks because we are in fact interested in intentions: knowing them will help us to appreciate the accomplishments of the artist, or, in other words, what the artist has done.

A second observation is that we often attribute a range of *personal qualities* to artworks. Personal qualities are qualities of the actual artist that are manifest in the artwork. For example, when we say of a work that it is immature, intelligent, ironic, sincere, shallow, witty, etc., these are qualities that speak to the personality of the artist manifest in the artwork (Lyas 1972). Moreover, it matters to us whether the sincerity on display in the artwork is genuine (Lyas 1983b). Certain kinds of moral judgments about artworks, then, seem to presuppose the relevancy of artistic intentions to critical activity. We care whether the artist is attempting to fool us and whether or not the artwork before us is a forgery or an instance of some other sort of artistic fraud (Carroll 1992, 123; Livingston 2005b, 283).

One of Lyas’ motivations for considering personal qualities is to show, *contra* early anti-intentionalism, that talk of the artist and talk of the artwork are, in at least one way, not altogether separate; rather, qualities of mind find their way

into the artwork and detecting these qualities does not require searching, as it were, ‘outside the artwork.’

There is a general worry, then, that intentionalist interpretation initiates a search for the artist’s intention that will take the critic outside the artwork, that is, her scrutiny of the artwork will shift to scrutiny of the artist. (We have seen this worry at work in our discussion of anti-intentionalism.) Once we correctly hypothesize that Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is an allegoric critique of Stalinist Russia, our attention to the artwork should increase rather than decrease. There is a general consensus among intentionalists that the best evidence, even though it is *indirect* evidence, of the artist’s intentions is the artwork itself (Carroll 2009, 76). Extratextual evidence (journals, diaries, interviews, etc.) is only potentially important because the expressions of intention we find there must be seen to have been realized in the work if they are to contribute to its meaning.

In order to flesh out what moderate actual intentionalists often maintain, it’s helpful to remind ourselves of the general argumentative thrust of anti-intentionalism. Anti-intentionalism tends to employ two lines of argument: one ontological, the other aesthetic. The first claims that the nature of artworks is such that they ought to be treated anti-intentionalistically (Nathan 2006). For example, Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) maintained that poetry and “practical messages” were distinct and that the latter were “successful if and only if we correctly infer the intention” (469-70).

Moderate actual intentionalists typically see interpretation of art to be on a continuum with interpretation in other, non-artistic realms. Artworks are not ontologically special and do not require an altogether different interpretive strategy from the one we employ when we attempt to understand the behavior, verbal or otherwise, of our conspecifics. Intentionalists often point to the acceptability of the historian's attempts to ascertain the intentions of historical figures or the archeologist's conjecturing about the intended use of some artifact, even when there is no separate record of the maker's intention. Likewise, philosophers have no qualms hypothesizing about the intentions of long deceased philosophers. For example, we readily interpret Plato's dialogues intentionalistically (Carroll 1992, 110).

The second line of argument that anti-intentionalists (as well as other critics of intentionalism) employ has to do with our aesthetic interests in artworks. These arguments maintain that interpretations aim at maximizing aesthetic value, pleasure, or experience and that admitting intentions into the interpretive project runs counter to this aim and may even diminish our appreciation of the artwork. These objections need not be supported by considering the nature of artworks themselves; rather, the focus is on the purpose of interpretations themselves. In what follows we will consider these arguments and some responses from moderate actual intentionalists.

There is a number of related objections to moderate actual intentionalism that stem from considering the goal(s) of interpretations and our interests in

artworks. The former is usefully framed by what Robert Stecker calls the Proper Aim Issue. The issue concerns the proper aim(s) of interpretation and what role, if any, intentions play in realizing those aims. The critic of moderate actual intentionalism argues that:

- (1) The proper aim of interpretation is enhanced appreciation, maximizing value, or increasing aesthetic pleasure.
- (2) Considering the actual artist's intentions is inimical to this goal.
- (3) Therefore, the correct theory of interpretation is one that precludes the artist's intentions.

Call this *the aesthetic argument*. It should be noted that the aesthetic argument applies to all forms of intentionalism, strong or moderate. I treat it here because it has been used historically by anti-intentionalists, such as Beardsley (1970), but it has also been used more recently by hypothetical intentionalists, namely Levinson, and those, like Davies (2006a), who hold a value maximizing theory of interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

It is not clear that premise (1) is true. Both the above objection and actual critical practice suggest that there are multiple legitimate interpretative aims (Stecker 2003). We have noted two such aims: discovering the artwork's meaning, which moderate actual intentionalism thinks is partly determined by intentions, and maximizing aesthetic pleasure, appreciation, satisfaction, etc. Many academic

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<sup>6</sup> Though Davies and Levinson do allow a role for actual intentions in the determination of the categories to which an artwork belongs.

critics, however, interpret artworks with a particular theory in mind such as feminism, Marxism, or Freudianism. Perhaps the goal here is to articulate what an artwork *could* mean in light of the theory. Additionally, it is sometimes the case that an artwork is enigmatic to the point that interpreters seek *any* way to make sense of it. In this case interpretation might not aim at tracking the artist's intention (Stecker 2003).

The claim that there are many legitimate interpretive aims may seem incompatible with moderate actual intentionalism, but Stecker (2003) maintains that moderate actual intentionalism is correct and that there is a plurality of interpretative aims with no one aim being superior to any other. Stecker draws a distinction between what an artwork *does* mean, what it *could* mean, and what significance it could have for some group. If one's interpretive aim is to discover what an artwork does mean, then understanding the artist's intentions is necessary. If, however, the aim is to understand what the artwork could mean in light of some theory, say Marxism, then reference to the artist's intentions is not necessary.

With regard to premise (2), it is unclear why considering the artist's intention should be at odds with, as the argument claims, enhanced appreciation or some other similar goal. There is no reason in principle that the artist's intention could not be the basis of an interpretation the goal of which is enhanced appreciation. Simply because an interpretation aims at recovering the artist's intentions does not preclude the interpretation from enhancing appreciation. We cannot know *a priori*—for any artwork—that intentionalistic interpretations can't

be the ones most likely to afford us the best aesthetic experience; the interpretation that is most aesthetically rewarding might in fact be the one arrived at intentionally. There seems to be a fear that the artist's intention will spoil the critic's interpretative play, but it has not been established that such a fear is well-founded.

We noted at the outset to Chapter 1 that interpretation often aims at understanding or, more broadly, making sense of an artwork. It is simply not true that the chief goal of all interpretation is to enhance appreciation or deepen one's aesthetic experience, though an enhanced understanding of the work will often be the occasion (or at least a necessary element) of valuable aesthetic experience. Interpretations, though, do not seek appreciation *simpliciter*; rather, they seek appreciation (if they seek it at all) by way of better understanding. So the aim that the objection purports to establish as the goal of interpretation is inherently misguided. It is more accurate to call the goal "appreciative understanding" (Stecker 2006a, 271). Again, there is no reason that the artist's intention cannot be the basis of an interpretation that aims at appreciative understanding.

The aesthetic argument is ineffectual: it may succeed in establishing that recovering the artist's intentions is not *the* goal of *all* interpretations, but it certainly does not succeed in denying that recovering the artist's intentions is *an* interpretive goal. What I've tried to show is that rejecting a theory of interpretation based on a dogmatic pronouncement that there is a single aim or goal to all interpretation is unjustifiable, especially given actual critical practice.

Those persuaded by the aesthetic argument might retort that, in developing a theory of interpretation, we are engaged in a normative enterprise, so it is acceptable to stray from actual critical practice. That is to say, regardless of what critics *actually* do we are primarily concerned with what they *ought* to be doing ideally. Our construction of a theory of interpretation is normative but it is also descriptive. It may be true that some critics interpret to maximize value, but it is also true that some critics interpret to discover the artist's intentions. In order to respect the normative and descriptive dimensions our theory should remain faithful to what critics do while serving as a corrective to any missteps.

We might be inclined to regard symptomatic interpretations—interpretations that seek to identify latent, involuntary expressions of ideology—as well as interpretations that analyze works according to some *-ism* as non-interpretations because they do not consider the artwork *qua* artwork, but we should resist such thinking. If we don't acknowledge that there are multiple legitimate interpretive aims, then we might be forced to conclude that critics who offer such interpretations are not really engaged in interpretation. But it seems unlikely that such a large portion of critics is fundamentally misguided about their profession. It is better to acknowledge that there are multiple legitimate aims, and either conclude that these sorts of interpretations aim at what a work could mean (rather than actual work meaning) or that they ought to be constrained by what the artist has intentionally done in the artwork. Indeed, Carroll (1993) argues that

symptomatic readings actually presuppose intentionalism, which we will discuss below.

We must note one last thing before moving on. While it might seem as though interpretative aim(s) is what distinguishes between the theories of interpretation under discussion, this is only partly true. How the theories construe work meaning also distinguishes them from one another. The aim of value maximizing does not follow from the way anti-intentionalists, moderate intentionalists, or hypothetical intentionalists think work meaning is determined, yet each of these theories differs (among other things) about what determines work meaning. For the anti-intentionalist, work meaning is determined by the conventions of the art form to which the artwork belongs, but broad contextual concerns (historical, cultural, social, linguistic, etc.) also aid the interpreter in fixing the artwork's meaning. For hypothetical intentionalists work meaning is identified with utterance meaning, but utterance meaning is explicated as an hypothesis about the actual author's intentions that an ideal audience would attribute to the author based on all the relevant, acceptable evidence. Value maximizers seem to be in line with hypothetical intentionalists, yet they insist that value maximizing is always the primary interpretative goal, rather than, as the hypothetical intentionalist thinks, a way to arbitrate between two epistemically optimal interpretations. Moderate actual intentionalists, however, think that work meaning is determined by the artist's realized intentions, but, if the intention fails, the relevant conventions determine meaning (the justification for this claim is one

of the subjects of Chapter 3). Of course the moderate intentionalist also recognizes the importance of the contextual concerns listed above. Some moderate intentionalists identify work meaning with utterance meaning, but the latter is explicated differently than the way in which hypothetical intentionalists explicate it.<sup>7</sup> The aim of value maximizing can be attached to any theory of interpretation. Likewise, one could interpret with the aim of recovering the artist's intentions yet not think that work meaning is determined by those intentions (Stecker 2008).

Carroll (1992) also discusses the aesthetic argument, but rather than dealing with the argument in terms of the proper aim of interpretation, Carroll frames the issue in terms of our interests in artworks. We are still dealing with the second line of argument that critics of intentionalism use, i.e., that our aesthetic interests in artworks should lead us to prefer something other than intentionalism. In the case of Beardsley (1970, 34), who also endorsed the idea that interpretations should aim at maximizing value, that something other is anti-intentionalism.

Carroll's response to such arguments is that we do not only have aesthetic interests in artworks but also "conversational interests," and whatever we want to say about the former should be constrained by the latter (1992, 117). Here I want only to introduce the idea of conversational interests as a way to motivate moderate actual intentionalism. I want also to emphasize that in motivating moderate intentionalism this way, Carroll is not necessarily committed to the idea

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<sup>7</sup> Stecker (2003) explicitly adopts this strategy. It is less clear that Livingston (2005a) does, though he often uses examples that presuppose that utterance meaning is what we are concerned with. Carroll (2011), at least in his latest article on the subject, seems to have distanced himself from this strategy.

that work meaning is utterance meaning. The idea is that our encounters with artworks place us into a relationship with their creators, which relationship is *analogous* to a conversation insofar as we have some of the same interests. One conversational goal is to understand those with whom we are speaking.

Understanding the speech acts of others requires, in some cases, hypothesizing and grasping their intentions. There is little reason to think that any conversation that left its participants puzzled as to what the other was communicating could be considered a success. Moreover, one of the reasons we engage with others in serious conversations is the potential for communion or community, which need not be a feature of all conversations, just those that Carroll calls “serious” (1992, 118).

Carroll’s claim is that part of our interest in artworks is the possibility of communion or communication with their creators. Insofar as successful communication requires understanding and insofar as we bring such interests to bear on artworks, intentions will need to factor into our interpretations. If we do in fact have such interests in artworks, then it does not follow that we should always interpret artworks in order to make them out to be as aesthetically satisfying as possible. Indeed, it would be absurd to do this in ordinary conversation, that is, to willfully eschew communicative intentions in favor of making the utterance more valuable aesthetically. Carroll also maintains that we can still bring aesthetic interests to artworks, but they do not automatically override our conversational interests. The two need to be reconciled. If we do wish to interpret with aesthetic

interests in mind, then the range of such interpretations should be constrained intentionalistically.

Carroll cites Wood's *Plan 9* to illustrate that our conversational interests should take precedence over our aesthetic interests when interpreting. There was a trend in film criticism contemporaneous with Carroll's (1992) article that praised films for subverting the conventions (e.g., continuity editing) of Hollywood filmmaking. These avant-garde filmmakers, the critics claim, disregarded Hollywood filmmaking codes to protest what they saw as an "ideologically suspect" filmmaking style (1992, 119). Indeed, many avant-garde filmmakers most likely had such intentions given all the available evidence, so a critic's interpretation that these films are transgressive, the moderate intentionalist thinks, are certainly justified. However, some critics began to apply this sort of thinking to any film that might fail to maintain its narrative coherence.<sup>8</sup> Wood's *Plan 9*, then, can be seen as a post-modern parody of Hollywood science fiction.

The reasons for rejecting the parody interpretation of *Plan 9* are several. One is simply that it is anachronistic. The avant-garde trend in filmmaking to which critics were attuned in the 1980's can't simply be extended backwards through time to apply to any film that does not observe Hollywood conventions. More importantly, the transgression found in *Plan 9* is unintentional. In contrast, later use of transgression is intentional, it is for the purpose of subverting a suspect filmmaking industry. Intentions presumably require beliefs and desires, but our

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<sup>8</sup> As Carroll points out he has not invented this example; see J. Hoberman's (1980) "Bad Movies."

best evidence about Wood suggests that it is highly unlikely that he could have had the beliefs and desires to make a transgressive film; he presumably wanted to be a part of Hollywood rather than deliberately distance himself from it. It is much more reasonable, not to mention accurate, to regard the moments the film breaks with Hollywood conventions as outright mistakes or blunders.

Our aesthetic interests would lead us to gloss over Wood's obvious blunders and construe the film as a clever parody. Likewise, we could take any overtly racist or sexist artwork to be a case of subtle irony. But, if it is true that we have something like conversational interests, then several ethical motivations for rejecting the parody interpretation emerge. In general, our conversational interests should preclude us from offering similar interpretations for other works.

There are at least two ethical motivations which follow from our conversational interests that entreat us to take seriously the claim that artistic intentions are relevant to interpretation. The first ethical motivation is that once we view artists as historically situated communicators and their artworks as communications, then it becomes a matter of historical accuracy that we not misunderstand those communications. We owe it to the artist to employ an interpretative methodology that tracks the actual artist's intentions lest we misidentify the meaning of their artworks. The second ethical motivation is that we owe it to ourselves, as members of the 'conversation,' not to willfully enter into the absurdity of treating incoherence as profundity. The analogue in real conversations is certainly possible, when, for example, we attempt to engage in

serious conversation with someone whom we do not know to be intoxicated.<sup>9</sup> If we wish to maximize aesthetic value, we must do so in light of what the artist has done in the artwork. We do not want to misconstrue willfully the artist's action because we risk not giving the artist her due, our own self-respect, and historical accuracy.

It should be stressed that Carroll is not arguing that artworks or our experiences with them are literally conversations, something which moderate intentionalists, such as Livingston (2005a, 150-51), and anti-intentionalists, such as Dickie and Wilson (1995), may be presupposing when they offer their critiques of Carroll's position. That being said, there are more ways to support moderate intentionalism of which conversational interests is only one.

Livingston (2005a, 150-2; 1998, 82) prefers what he calls "axiological" arguments for moderate actual intentionalism. If we do not properly understand the artist's intentions or, at the very least, have a working conception of what those intentions might be, then we cannot properly assess her achievement. One kind of value (hence 'axiological') that artworks possess is whether or not they are the result of a skillful realization of the artist's plan or purpose. Knowledge of intention (or at least our best hypotheses about intention) matters to the interpretation of artworks because such knowledge (or hypothesizing) gives us a

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<sup>9</sup> This is not my invention. Carroll cites Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which reads: "a sober man engages in sympathetic and confidential conversation with one whom he does not know is intoxicated, while the observer knows of the condition. The contradiction lies in the mutuality presupposed by the conversation, that it is not there, and that the sober man has not noticed its absence" (quoted in Carroll 1992, 121).

way to know whether some feature of an artwork is accidental. The horror movie that has us laughing the whole way through does not deserve our praise for eliciting that response nor does the comedy if the humor we find there turns out to be purely the result of luck. Livingston seems to be on board with the idea that interpretations can have various aims, but if we want to understand the artwork in its historical context and as having certain value as an artistic accomplishment, as a skillful (or unskillful) realization of the artist's goals, then we need a theory of interpretation that tracks the artist's intentional activity.

Some critics of intentionalism think that the theory is too narrow because it excessively restricts what we can say about an artwork. The worry is that once we adopt moderate actual intentionalism we must abandon all other interpretative or evaluative projects that do not focus on recovering the artist's intentions; moreover, once we have a working hypothesis about the artist's intentions we have exhausted what we can say about her artwork. A general response to the worry that intentionalism is too narrow is to remind the objector that a good many artists intentionally create artworks that invite multiple interpretations. We often talk of how artworks can be 'layered,' ambiguous, or just plain complex and they are often made that way intentionally (Davies 2006b).

Moderate actual intentionalists have at least two responses to the 'too narrow' worry. As we observed earlier, Stecker does not believe that once we have tracked the artist's intentions expressed in the artwork we are finished interpreting the artwork; that is, not all interpretations aim at discovering work meaning—we

can aim at what something could mean or what significance the work has for some group. Carroll's response to the worry that intentionalism is too narrow is to argue that symptomatic interpretations are compatible with moderate actual intentionalism, and may even presuppose it.

Clearly, actions sometimes have unintended consequences and insofar as we are concerned with what the artist has done in the artwork it is reasonable to talk of unintended consequences. In the case of artworks, Carroll (1993) discusses the unintended racism in Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island*, originally published in 1887. The idea here is that Verne undertook certain intentional actions that he was unaware fit under the description of racism. He intentionally and non-ironically characterized Neb, the freed slave, as docile, naïve, and childlike, doing so presumably in the service of antiracism. Unbeknownst to Verne, however, that same non-ironic intentional characterization fits under the description of racism as we know it today. Additionally, Carroll argues that the attribution of racism or antiracism depends crucially on uptake of Verne's intentions to non-ironically characterize Neb as he does; if the characterization were ironic, we might not be as inclined to call it racist. Moderate actual intentionalism, then, readily accommodates unintended meanings insofar as they are understood in light of what was intended.

## 1.6 Hypothetical Intentionalism

The label ‘hypothetical intentionalism’ can apply to two distinct views that differ according to what sort of entity is hypothesized. The first view—which can also be called fictionalist intentionalism—identifies work meaning with the intentions of a hypothesized (i.e., fictional) author or artist who is assumed to be verisimilar, but not identical, to the actual, historical artist. As I have stated this view, it is most similar to Alexander Nehamas’ (1981) position; Nehamas calls his hypothesized author the ‘postulated author.’ There seems to be a family of views whose conception of work meaning is tied to an hypothesized author.<sup>10</sup> I will not be discussing these theories of interpretation, mainly because they simply do not have the requisite presence in the recent literature. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish the preceding sense of ‘hypothetical intentionalism’ from the one which I will discuss next, for they are sometimes conflated.

The label ‘hypothetical intentionalism’ is perhaps more properly given to the second view (defined below) in which the hypothesized entity is not the author, but the intentions of the actual author.<sup>11</sup> This form of hypothetical intentionalism was originally proposed by William Tolhurst (1979), but the most prominent proponent of the view is Jerrold Levinson. Because Levinson is modifying

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<sup>10</sup> Livingston (2005, 139-144) provides an excellent taxonomy of the various theories of interpretation, including, but certainly not limited to, the forms of fictionalist intentionalism mentioned here. Stecker (1987) also criticizes three theories of interpretation, including Nehamas’, that involve an hypothesized author.

<sup>11</sup> In some sense both the first and second views deal in hypothesized intentions as it would not make much sense to talk of an *hypothetical* author’s *actual* intentions.

Tolhurst's view, I'll begin by stating briefly the latter's account, but the rest of this section will be concerned only with Levinson's version.

Tolhurst argued that work meaning is identified with utterance meaning. (It should be noted that some moderate actual intentionalists also think that work meaning is identical to utterance meaning, yet they differ as to how utterance meaning ought to be conceived.) Utterance meaning is understood as an hypothesis of utterer's (or speaker's) meaning that one is most justified in attributing to the actual author on the basis of evidence that one possesses in virtue of being a member of the intended audience. This account of work meaning recognizes both that artworks are the products of intentional activity and that artists sometimes fail to realize their intentions. Additionally, by virtue of equating work meaning with utterance meaning, hypothetical intentionalism takes into account various contextual factors that contribute to fixing work meaning. Notice that these last points cannot be cited as an advantage of hypothetical intentionalism over moderate intentionalism because these are the starting premises of both theories, which premises follow from treating work meaning as a species of utterance meaning (Stecker 2003).

Tolhurst proposed this account of work meaning as a way to bridge the divide between the strong anti-intentionalism of Beardsley and the strong actual intentionalism of Hirsch. Since the artist's actual intentions determine the work's intended audience, Tolhurst's account is susceptible to the charge that utterance (work) meaning is ultimately linked, albeit indirectly, to the artist's actual

intentions. Although Tolhurst wants to avoid incurring all of the trouble of actual intentionalism by speaking of an audience's best hypothesis of actual intention, his account, as Nathan (1982) has argued, might invite all the familiar worries associated with strong actual intentionalism. Levinson takes this criticism seriously and modifies Tolhurst's position to avoid the objection.

In short, Levinson's revision of Tolhurst's position is to replace the notion of an intended audience with that of an appropriate (or ideal) audience. The motivation for speaking of evidence which one possesses in virtue of being a member of the intended audience on Tolhurst's view underscores one of communication's necessary conditions: namely, that speaker and audience, in order for communication to occur, need to have access to the same publically accessible information. Levinson's replacement of intended audience with ideal audience is meant to avoid any potential problems the view might inherit from any residual actual intentionalism. The advantage of Levinson's view (over Tolhurst's) is that the specifications for what kinds of evidence are admissible are independent of the artist. We can often quite clearly tell what it would take properly to understand an artwork without needing to discern who the artist's intended audience is. From consulting the novel itself, we can tell to whom Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* is intended: competent Russian readers who are aware of Russian history and religious traditions. Some of the members of Dostoyevsky's intended audience might lack the requisite knowledge, but it still makes sense to say that, ideally, one who wants to understand the novel ought to possess such

knowledge. Dostoyevsky, then, is not the one in charge of the determination of the audience; rather, the practice of literary (or artistic) communication itself recommends certain criteria for what sort of evidence is admissible in generating our best hypothetical intentions.

An ideal audience is one aware of all the relevant and admissible contextual information. Just as we use context to point to the correct way to understand an utterance, an artwork must be understood in its “generative matrix,” aspects of which include “issuing forth from individual A, with public persona B, at time C, against cultural background D, in light of predecessors E, in the shadow of contemporary events F, in relation to the remainder of A’s artistic oeuvre G, and so on” (Levinson 1996, 184). Speaking of an ideal audience is also meant to capture the distinctiveness of literary (or artistic) communication; for, although hypothetical intentionalism views work meaning as a species of utterance meaning, there is something different about the enterprise of artistic communication that warrants treating artworks differently from utterances in other communicative contexts. As a result, only public information about the context of creation and not, Levinson claims, the artist’s private avowals of intention can be used in forming our best hypotheses of intention. (The claim that artistic communication proceeds according to certain rules that ban considering authorial intentions has received heavy criticism from moderate actual intentionalists, which we will discuss later.) For Levinson, the “crux of the issue” is knowing where to stop on the continuum from merely considering the linguistic conventions in place during the artwork’s

creation to expressions of the artist's intentions such as we might find in journals, letters, or interviews, or any other private sources (1996, 178). Levinson's answer, despite his claim later in the same essay that he doesn't have a "principled answer" to the question, is to go well beyond linguistic conventions but stop short of the author's actual intentions (206). This still requires some qualification.

Levinson doesn't allow us to treat as evidence what he calls semantic intentions, or intentions that an artwork have some meaning. Semantic intentions are distinct from categorial intentions, or intentions about the way in which something is to be "fundamentally conceived or approached" (188). The most basic categorial intention would be the intention to create art; other categorial intentions include that something be classified according to some art form, genre, or style. Though both sorts of intention are fallible, categorial intentions "virtually cannot fail" (188). Intentions, then, are distinguished not only according to their content but also according to their degree of fallibility. It is highly unlikely that in settling on a plan to create a lyric poem one fails and ends up creating a documentary film, or, more realistically, that one intends to create a poem and instead creates a text that cannot be taken as a poem. Semantic intentions do not determine work meaning, they can only play a heuristic or suggestive role in forming hypotheses. Categorial intentions, however, do determine the general way in which a work ought to be approached, and so knowledge of categorial intentions is necessary to interpretation insofar as they "indirectly affect what [the artwork] will resultingly say or express" (189).

There is one final point about Levinson's position that we will discuss before exploring how it is often criticized. This final point concerns what Levinson means by 'best hypothesis.' We have already intimated that 'best,' in one sense, means epistemically best, i.e., an hypothesis that optimally takes into account all of the admissible contextual information. There may be two hypotheses that differ but are nevertheless on a par epistemically. In these cases we are to prefer the hypothetical intention that makes the artwork artistically better, perhaps by making it out to be more clever, imaginative, or striking (179).

We can now give a better sketch of Levinson's hypothetical intentionalism. Work meaning is determined by an ideal audience's best hypothesis of the actual artist's actual intentions. The ideal audience is one that is informed of the total admissible evidence, which includes everything except expressions of semantic intentions. The best hypothesis is one which is primarily epistemically best, but, when appropriate, one which is artistically best. Levinson sometimes calls his position non-intentionalism. But it seems fair to say that he is a moderate actual intentionalist when it comes to categorial intentions, for (1) such intentions do determine the categories to which an artwork belongs only if (2) these intentions square with the artwork in question.<sup>12</sup> When it comes to semantic intentions, he is an anti-intentionalist, for the central tenant of anti-intentionalism is that intentions never determine work meaning.

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<sup>12</sup> Levinson (2002, 314) writes: "Hypothetical intentionalism regarding work content or meaning is rightly coupled with *actual* intentionalism as it pertains both to the *status* of works as literature and to their *categorial* or *genre* location within literature."

Moderate actual intentionalists and hypothetical intentionalists agree that most of the time the two theories will produce convergent interpretations. This is largely due to the similarity in methodology: interpretation on both accounts proceeds by way of hypothesizing the intentions of the actual author (or artist), but moderate actual intentionalists do so with the goal of discovering those intentions whereas hypothetical intentionalists maintain that the best epistemically warranted hypothesis about actual intentions (rather than actual intentions themselves) just is work meaning. I will illustrate a point of divergence between the two theories before discussing criticisms of hypothetical intentionalism.

Henry James' 1898 novel, *The Turn of the Screw*, is often invoked to illustrate hypothetical intentionalism. Though *The Turn of the Screw* features a prologue that functions as a frame story in which characters share ghost stories with one another, the rest of the novel is a governess' manuscript which records, in the first person, her experience with ghosts. The critical history of the novel is divided as to whether (1) the distraught but reliable governess tells us a story of actual ghosts or (2) the governess functions as an unreliable narrator because she is not simply distraught but wavering between madness and sanity which renders the ghosts' existence genuinely ambiguous. One might justifiably conclude that the proper interpretation of James' story is the former (call it the 'supernatural reading') where the evidence for such a reading is that the story appears to be in the tradition of the Gothic ghost story, James wrote other stories in which ghosts

were actually present, and there are a number of the author's notebook entries, letters, and prefaces to various editions that suggest that the supernatural reading captures his actual intention.<sup>13</sup> One might still favor, as some critics do, the second interpretation (call this the 'ambiguity reading'). The hypothetical intentionalist will favor the ambiguity reading.

The hypothetical intentionalist might disregard the letters, notebooks, and other pronouncements of authorial intent on the basis that these were not publically accessible at the time of the novel's publication. If the hypothetical intentionalist doesn't rule out such evidence, then she will have to take the reports of actual intention as merely suggestive in which case the novel will still appear ambiguous between the two readings outlined above. Said differently, the hypothetical intentionalist now has two competing hypotheses, which for the sake of argument are both epistemically optimal. The ambiguity reading will be preferred because it is the aesthetically best; that is, when we compare the two readings, the first makes the novel out to be simply a ghost story but the second reading makes the novel out to be cleverer or subtler as the unreliable narration makes the tale deliberately ambiguous.

There are two big criticisms of Levinson's hypothetical intentionalism. The first criticism concerns the seemingly arbitrary ban on semantic intentions and the

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<sup>13</sup> Livingston (1998, 841-4) uses this example. He cites one of James' prefaces to a later edition of *The Turn of the Screw* in which James writes that "prodigies, when they come straight, come with an effect imperiled; they keep all their character, on the other hand, by looming through some other history" (quoted in Livingston 1998, 841).

second criticism concerns the ban's purported motivation about which critics have been quite vocal.

Because of the acknowledged similarity of moderate intentionalism and hypothetical intentionalism (at least in terms of methodology), the focus of criticism is often on the hypothetical intentionalist's attempts to restrict the acceptable evidence base. As Stecker (2003, 43) notes, the restriction on evidence proceeds according to two principles. The first is that the less public some potential piece of evidence is the more it ought to be disregarded. Levinson says that artistic communication "needn't—more, musn't—require of the reader 'inside' knowledge, so to speak, that which may be in the possession only of family members, private secretaries, and clairvoyants [...]" (1996, 207). Rather, it should only require information regarding the artist's public persona or identity, what can be publically known about the artist. But it seems like an artist's public identity can change when his or her private, letters, journals, diaries, and other papers are published. Levinson acknowledges that hypothetical intentionalism rests on a distinction between "*essentially public* and *essentially private*" but this distinction cannot be equated with one between published and unpublished information because "that would have the consequence that a work's meaning [...] would implausibly change upon the publication of certain appreciatively relevant facts about how a work came to be that, it just happened, were not known outside of the author's immediate circle" (2002, 317). The earlier quotation about 'inside' knowledge (which I understand, for Levinson, to be never appreciatively relevant)

suggests that there couldn't be 'appreciatively relevant facts' that were only known to the 'author's immediate circle,' for these would be essentially private.

Levinson responds by suggesting that 'essentially public' be construed as "what the author *wanted* readers to know about the circumstances of a work's creation," which presumably won't change when private information is published (2002, 317). I agree that an artwork's meaning should not be linked contingently to whether information is published, but what Levinson suggests seems to commit him to actual intentionalism. In a revised version of the essay, Levinson (2006) attempts to address the inadequacy. Essentially public is now understood as "what the author *appears to have wanted* readers to know" (310). Perhaps this new phrase is meant to signal a hypothetical intentionalism rather than an actual intentionalism about what authors want readers to know about their artworks' creations. Yet the problem of what sorts of evidence can be consulted repeats itself: are we allowed to consult private information or are we restricted to only publically available information? We are now owed an account of how to determine what authors appear to want their readers to know. In any event, the burden of proof is on the hypothetical intentionalist to work out a plausible way to refine further the concept of publically accessible information. The moderate intentionalist is not burdened thus as she does not place any restrictions on the information that can be brought to bear on our interpretations of artworks.

The second principle that restricts the legitimate evidence is that direct expressions of semantic intentions, no matter where they are to be found, should

be disregarded. Although the two principles converge as to what they restrict, they are nevertheless separate: essentially public evidence (like an interview) may contain direct pronouncements of intentions, but essentially private evidence (like a journal) may not (Stecker 2003).

Levinson tells us that legitimate evidence must exclude “any fact about the author’s actual mental state or attitude during composition, in particular what I have called his semantic intentions for a text” (1996, 206). It should be stressed that this is not because, as the early anti-intentionalists thought, semantic intentions are inaccessible; instead, this is a purely normative claim. In the case of *The Turn of the Screw*, it seems arbitrary to disregard James’ stated intent, or if it is not disregarded, to believe that it should be merely suggestive. (Note that no theory we have discussed, except perhaps strong actual intentionalism, would take the author at her word; the moderate intentionalist would regard such authorial pronouncements as suggestive but only until they were known to meet the success conditions for realizing intentions in which case they become decisive.) For it seems like there is a matter of fact that the hypothetical intentionalist willfully misses, namely, that *The Turn of the Screw* is a straightforward ghost story. To conclude otherwise invites the same criticisms leveled against those who interpret to maximize value (which goal is built in to the hypothetical intentionalist’s dual conception of ‘best’), even if they are attempting to respect the context of utterance; namely, we misrepresent the artist’s achievement. It is odd that hypothetical intentionalism aims at what the actual author actually intended, but

allows, at times, interpretations at variance with actual intent. Additionally, interpretations are often political or moral and would seem to be directed at what the actual artist has actually done, not, as the hypothetical intentionalist thinks, at our best hypothesis about what the actual artist has done (Carroll 2000, 208-9). Again, this is exacerbated when we have access to reliable information about authorial intent, when we can, in effect, confirm our hypotheses.

Levinson's response to this last criticism is to note that although the methodology of moderate and hypothetical intentionalism is essentially the same, the hypothetical intentionalist goal is "not to discover for its own sake, the author's intention in writing the text, as if criticism were at base a matter of detective investigation, but to get at the *utterance meaning* of the text, that is, what *it*—not *the author*—is saying, in its author-specific context" (2002, 315). But neither is it the goal of moderate intentionalism to discover the artist's intention for its own sake, because she thinks that the actual intention is constitutive of work meaning. Levinson's response misconstrues moderate intentionalism's conception of work meaning. It is not that the moderate intentionalist is after the author's (or utterer's) meaning instead of work (or utterance) meaning, it's that the former is the latter when it is realized in the artwork.

The last thing we will discuss is the motivation for the hypothetical intentionalist's belief that we ought to place the above two restrictions on the evidence we can legitimately use in interpreting artworks. The motivation is provided in part by the intuition that artist's should not have to provide

accompanying explanations of their artworks. Levinson writes that artworks “retain [...] a certain autonomy from the actual mental processes of their creators during composition” (1996, 194). Ideally, one could argue, artists shouldn’t have to explain their works, but this might be better advice for those who want to create artworks rather than those who want to interpret them.

The justification for the ban on private evidence or direct authorial expressions of intention is that that is how artistic communication works. In other words, the ban is one of the “ground rules [...] of the literary enterprise, of the implicit contract between writer and reader” (1996, 183-4). Later, in the same essay, he tells us that: “it is arguably one of the ground rules of the game of literary decipherment that literary works are not supposed to require authors to explain what they mean, and thus that direct authorial pronouncements of meaning can be set aside by the reader devoted to the central job of interpretation” (208). At numerous places throughout Levinson’s writing he refers to the ‘language game’ or ‘game’ of artistic communication. The criticism frequently directed at Levinson is that hypothetical intentionalism, or at least the ban on private information and direct pronouncements of intention, rests on a dubious empirical claim, namely, that actual critical practice is such that we ought to observe the rules of the game, to observe the ‘implicit contract’ between artist and audience. Critics are also quick to point out that these claims have never received argumentation (Stecker 2003, 44; Carroll 2000, 2002, 2010). As a matter of fact, though, actual critical practice pursues all manner of private information including diaries, letters,

notebooks, even interviews with the artist's friends and relatives; if there is an actual ban on this sort of evidence, it is not observed.

Levinson's response is that these critics have misconstrued the justification for the evidential ban. He writes: "Hypothetical intentionalism does not ultimately rest on an empirical claim about actual interpretive *practices*, taken in their full and motley variety, but rather on what are arguably *norms* underlying the most defensible of such practices, understood as ones that truly answer to our interests in literature as literature" (2002, 317). The implication here is that other theories of interpretation which don't observe the alleged norms governing what sorts of evidence are legitimate do not answer to our interests in art *qua* art. The moderate actual intentionalist is not interested in artistic intention simply to conform with actual critical practice. I would suggest that moderate actual intentionalism does give us a way to respect artworks as being the utterances of their art-historically and socially situated makers, to understand and appreciate artworks in their capacity as artworks, but which also allows us to incorporate the obvious interest we have in the actual intentions of artists. Moreover, the burden of proof is, again, on the hypothetical intentionalist to produce an argument for the purported evidential ban.

## 1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has mainly been a survey the purpose of which is to clear the way, so to speak, for moderate actual intentionalism. The survey, however, is far from

exhaustive in several respects: (1) there are many other theories of interpretation (and variations of the ones discussed) that I have omitted; and (2) much more could be said for and against each theory discussed. I have restricted the survey to only those theories of interpretation that have a strong presence in the recent literature: anti-intentionalism, moderate actual intentionalism, and hypothetical intentionalism. The reason for considering the other theories on offer is twofold: first, I want to remain faithful to the development of interpretation theory in the literature; and second, that the failings of the other theories are instructive insofar as they are occasions to demonstrate the superiority of moderate actual intentionalism. In the next Chapter I will consider the primary difference that distinguishes those theorists who advocate moderate actual intentionalism: namely, the success conditions for realizing intentions.

## CHAPTER 2

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### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to develop the most defensible version of moderate actual intentionalism. The moderate actual intentionalist believes that work meaning is determined by (among other things) the intentions that are successfully realized in the artwork. Not all moderate intentionalists agree, however, about the success conditions for realizing intentions. Once I have discussed the accounts on offer I'll respond to an objection to the project of attempting to give an account of successful intentions. I'll then give some reasons for preferring Livingston's view. Before examining the various accounts of success conditions, I would like to describe an actual case where it is questionable whether the artist successfully realized her intention which will be used to illustrate the views under discussion.

### 2.2 J. K. Rowling on Dumbledore's Sexuality

After the publication of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the seventh and final book in the Harry Potter series, J. K. Rowling began a promotional tour for the novel that included Q&A events. These events give fans an opportunity to ask the author all sorts of questions, including details about the fictional world, which are, strictly speaking, not represented in the novels; for example, fans might ask about the fate of some minor character. One such event took place at Carnegie

Hall in New York City on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. During the event Rowling was asked a question about whether Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts and Harry’s mentor, had ever been in love, to which Rowling responded: “I always thought of Dumbledore as gay” (quoted in Drogos 2007).<sup>14</sup>

Rowling’s response was met with ovation from the audience at Carnegie Hall. As Gendler (2010) notes, the general public responded in at least three different ways: (1) some were thrilled; (2) some were disappointed; and (3) some challenged Rowling’s authority. Interestingly, responses (1) and (2) both seem to presuppose Rowling’s authority—and perhaps actual intentionalism—despite the news eliciting the opposite reaction. For our purposes, however, (3) is the most interesting reaction.

What makes this a curious case is that, throughout the series’ production, Rowling has been revealing ‘facts’ about her fictional world that go beyond what we find in the novels. On the night in question, Dumbledore’s sexuality was just one of many revelations, but it was the only one to be challenged. Sexuality is a politically sensitive issue, so perhaps it is unsurprising that Rowling’s news caused a stir. But the controversy is also one of timing: Why did Rowling wait until the series was complete to reveal such big news? The odd timing, Rowling claims, is the result of two things. One is how she plotted the novels—Dumbledore’s history is not dealt with until the final novel—the other is that she, having completed the

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<sup>14</sup> A note on this source. Edward Drogos is an editor of *The Leaky Cauldron*, a very popular, fan-run blog. The webpage I’m citing is Drogos’ transcription of the Carnegie Hall Q&A.

novels, was asked a direct question that she saw no reason not to answer truthfully (Ahearn 2007).

There are a number of ways one could challenge Rowling. One way to challenge Rowling is to simply deny that authorial intentions are relevant to interpretation. Indeed, some of the actual responses of type (3) smacked of anti-intentionalism (Gendler 2010, 144). I won't pursue this response since I hope to have shown that these familiar anti-intentionalist worries can be readily met.

Another challenge we could put to Rowling is to doubt the sincerity of her answer, to deny that what she has provided us is an accurate report of her intention. Perhaps we could charge her with attempting to use her novels to advance a political agenda. But we should draw a distinction, as Stecker (2003, 56) does, between intentionally (or unintentionally) doing something *in* a work and intentionally (or unintentionally) doing something *by* a work. Rowling may have intended to write a bestseller, but this is not something she has done in the work, rather it is something that she has done by creating the work. Likewise, she may have intentionally expressed broadly Christian themes, but this is not something she has done by the work, rather it is something she has done in the work. I think it is clear that Rowling's claim is about something she did in the work and that she isn't dissembling; such behavior would be at odds with her public persona. She has also claimed that Dumbledore's sexuality was decided prior to the first novel's publication, which is more than ten years prior to her announcement, so it would seem that this is not something she manufactured on the spot (Ahearn 2007).

While it may be true that she has a political agenda, I do not think that she is merely using her novels' success to advance it.

I see no reason to doubt the sincerity of Rowling's various reports of her intention. But moderate actual intentionalism does not require us to take the author at her word, even assuming that the authorial report is sincere. If we accept that Rowling formed and acted upon the intention in question, then the best way to challenge her would be to question whether or not the intention was successfully realized.

### **2.3 Proposals for Success Conditions**

The moderate actual intentionalist maintains that work meaning is determined by only those intentions that are successfully realized. When an intention is not realized, the relevant conventions of the art form and the context of its issuance determine meaning. (Chapter 3 will be concerned to revise the latter claim.) This means that successful intentions are not the only determiner of meaning.

Moderate actual intentionalists have offered at least three distinct proposals for the success conditions of intentions. In order of increasing stringency, the proposals are: (1) an intention is realized if it is *compatible* with the artwork; (2) an intention is realized if it is compatible and *meshes* with the artwork; and (3) an intention is realized if it is *capable of uptake* or *apt to be recognized in virtue of the artwork's context and conventions*. I prefer the second approach.

## 2.4 Compatibility

The first proposal, that an intention is realized if it is compatible with the artwork, is associated with Iseminger (1996), who, following Hirsch, writes that the meaning of an artwork is “the meaning *compatible with the text* that the author intended” (321). I would also associate this view with some of Carroll’s writings. Carroll (2002) tells us that intentions matter only if they are “compatible with and/or supportable by what the author has written in terms of the conventions and histories of language and literature” (321). If we discover that the author actually intended something but this something strikes us as incompatible with the artwork, then the author has failed to realize her intention. Carroll adds ‘supportable’ to his analysis to deal with irony. For the intention to mean *not-P* and the ironic utterance (or work) the conventional meaning of which is *P* are not just incompatible, they are straightforwardly contradictory. But the incompatibility here is only between the content of the intention and how the utterance is standardly or conventionally interpreted. Once the irony is correctly hypothesized, the incompatibility dissolves. So ironic utterances can be said to *support* the intentions with which they are made. But I don’t think that we have two different criteria here. (Perhaps supportability is a stricter species of compatibility?) Since Carroll uses the two interchangeably in his other writings, I’ll subsume supportability under compatibility in what follows. For Carroll, then, there seem to be no other criteria for realizing one’s intention other than compatibility with what is produced.

All moderate intentionalists accept, at minimum, the criterion that the actual intention be compatible with the artwork. The original inspiration for this criterion is to block the charge that actual intentionalism is committed to Humpty-Dumpty-ism. If Humpty Dumpty intends 'glory' to mean 'there's a nice knockdown argument,' his intention has failed because his intended meaning is simply incompatible with the possible conventional meanings of his utterance.

Is Rowling's intention regarding Dumbledore's sexuality compatible with her novels? There are two pieces of textual evidence typically given in support of the interpretation that Dumbledore is gay. The first piece of textual evidence is that there is no mention of any heterosexual love interests for Dumbledore throughout all seven novels, yet the novels do feature the heterosexual relationships of many other characters (not only Harry and friends, but also several of their professors).

The second piece of textual evidence is that, as we find out in the final novel, a young Dumbledore had an intense but brief friendship with another wizard, Grindelwald. During their friendship, they both had aspirations to create a world in which wizards dominate muggles (i.e., non-wizards). They began scheming to collect three legendary items (the titular Deathly Hallows) that would aid them in their plans. Dumbledore's brother insisted that Dumbledore could not go off hunting for the hallows as he has, since Grindelwald arrived, been neglectful of his ill sister. During the subsequent argument, an enraged Grindelwald attacked Dumbledore's brother whom Dumbledore attempted to defend. During the scuffle

Dumbledore's sister was killed. The following day Grindelwald fled, his and Dumbledore's friendship at an end. Decades later the two would duel—Grindelwald having become a powerful Dark wizard—with Dumbledore prevailing.

If compatible means 'consistent with,' then we do indeed have a case of the author's intention being successfully realized in the artwork. None of the preceding explicitly contradicts Rowling's stated intention regarding Dumbledore's sexuality. One could object that the textual evidence does not suggest (or does not adequately suggest) the hypothesis that Dumbledore is gay. But even if it were true in the fiction that Dumbledore is gay, one might wonder what this adds to the story. (I think it might add something to the story, but I'll save this for the second account of success conditions.) Compatibility, as it is defined, is not a stringent enough condition.

To see why compatibility *per se* is not a sufficient condition for realizing one's intention, we can modify our test case: What if Rowling had insisted that Dumbledore was a Martian in disguise?<sup>15</sup> This would also be compatible with what she has written. Yet for those that felt that the Dumbledore-is-gay reading is extraneous, the Dumbledore-is-Martian reading should appear utterly ridiculous. Occasionally compatibility is used interchangeably with words like 'resonate,' which betoken something stronger than 'consistent with.' Whatever we take 'resonate' to mean, it seems as though this suggests an important relationship

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<sup>15</sup> I borrow this from Livingston (2005). He uses a different artwork, but the same seemingly outlandish (but compatible) hypothesis.

(beyond mere compatibility) that the intention ought to bear to the artwork, and in the case of the Dumbledore-is-Martian reading such a relationship does not exist. The meshing success condition that we'll discuss next is an attempt to redress this inadequacy.

## 2.5 Meshing

The second proposal, that an intention is realized if it is compatible and *meshes* with the artwork, is Livingston's creation. Meshing incorporates the compatibility criterion (where compatibility means 'consistent with') that all moderate actual intentionalists must acknowledge, but introduces a stronger criterion "involving relevance and integration: if there is a sense in which an extraneous hypothesis is consistent with data, but bears no meaningful, integrative relation with them, we would say that the two do not mesh" (2005a, 199). If, however, knowledge of the intention "opens up previously undetected connotations of various features of the text, the partial [i.e., moderate] intentionalist would accept this new reading, even if one of its implications were that the novel is far less worthwhile as a result" (155). Before we examine meshing in greater detail, let's explore the latter claim about the implications of realizing certain intentions.

Imagine that the Dumbledore-is-Martian reading meshes with Rowling's novels. It may be tempting to want to employ a success condition that blocks such interpretations outright, for if it did happen to mesh with the artwork, one might yet contend that: (1) it is highly unlikely that anyone should ever arrive at that

interpretation without being notified by the artist; and (2) that the novel's value is greatly diminished. We should, however, not be so tempted.

Consideration (1) overlooks the fact that sometimes authorial avowals gleaned from private sources provide the key one needs to finally 'unlock' the artwork. In most cases, however, if the intention does mesh, then it will be recognizable, though it might go unrecognized until one is apprised of the relevant intention. Consideration (2) is unfortunate for the artist because the artwork turns out not to be of very much value. But it's the critic's job to *identify*—and not to *create*—the value of what the artist has done in the artwork.<sup>16</sup> It is not a vice of the meshing success condition that it lets unlikely, banal, or simple semantic intentions contribute to work meaning. If we are committed to a larger interpretive-appreciative project that seeks not only to understand the artist's artwork in its proper context but also to evaluate the artwork as a skillful or unskillful realization of the artist's plan, then we do not want a success condition that would have us obscure or misconstrue the artist's actual intentional doings.<sup>17</sup> The point of the meshing success condition (or any success condition) is not to pass judgment on the content of the artist's intentions but to give us a reliable

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<sup>16</sup> Value is a complex property. I'm only talking about the value that an artwork has as the artist's particular accomplishment seen in the light of its context of creation.

<sup>17</sup> Consideration (2) is motivated by something like value maximization, but as I've mentioned before, most moderate actual intentionalists are committed to the interpretive-appreciative project mentioned, so they tend to eschew interpretations that try to maximize an artwork's value.

metric to determine if the intentions in question were in fact realized, despite, as it sometimes turns out, the diminished value of the artwork.

In his more recent writings, Livingston (2009; 2010) attempts to spell out meshing in greater detail. Meshing is the relationship that the content of an intention bears to an artwork's conventional meanings which includes "those explicit and implied ideational relations that give the text its coherence, such as rhetorical connections between its clauses and sentences" (2010, 415). The phrase "clauses and sentences" replaces the phrase "its various parts," which we find in an earlier work (2009, 100). (The shift is likely due to the fact that the earlier work is specifically about film, the later almost exclusively about literature.) We must ask, though: What are the (1) "various parts" between which (2) "ideational relations" hold?

The parts in question include not only conventional meanings but also what Livingston calls "rhetorical patterns" or "rhetorical structures" or perhaps more generally "patterns of coherence" (2009, 101). Different art forms will have rhetorical structures constituted by different elements. Broadly speaking, if we are dealing with fiction, then the elements that constitute the work's rhetorical structures will be such things as motifs, dialogue, characterization, narrative voice, plotting and other artistically relevant elements. If we are dealing with cinema specifically, then we would also want to include editing techniques, lighting, *mise-en-scène*, as well as diegetic and non-diegetic sound. These various parts will have "ideational relations" or "internal semantic relations" between them, including, but

not limited to, contrast, parallelism, and exemplification (2009, 100-101).

Livingston invents an example of an artist who wants to articulate implicitly the theme wealth corrupts by creating a narrative film that contrasts a fisherman's life before and after coming suddenly into a large fortune. Livingston writes:

The virtues of a simple, honest fisherman's life are exemplified in a host of narrative details and are further articulated by means of parallels to the similar lives of other characters in the village; these descriptions stand in stark contrast to the vices and misfortunes that follow from the initially joyous windfall. The rhetorical relations between the film's segments serve to elaborate this more general contrast, which in turn instantiates the intended explanation of the events of the story. (2009, 101)

Since the intention to produce a work that implies (i.e., does not express overtly or directly) the thought that wealth corrupts meshes with the artwork, the intention is successfully realized.

The main idea in the preceding section is that the production of an artwork is generally the result of a series of decisions, but these decisions are not unconnected to one another. There is usually a coherent purpose for which the intentional action is undertaken that tends to give the artwork unity. An idea, concept, or theme may give an artwork its unity, since these are all ways to connect an artwork's various parts. These connections need not be explicitly stated

in the artwork; they can remain implicit, like the theme wealth corrupts in the above example.

Meshing obtains when the nature of the relationship between the content of the intention and the rhetorical patterns found in the artwork is one of a “high degree of coherence” (2009, 100; 2010, 415) Meshing, then, is a matter of degree: an intention is realized when it meshes *sufficiently* with the artwork. Livingston admits that the meshing condition is metaphorical and vague and that he has no detailed procedure for how to apply it, but he can nevertheless produce examples which either clearly do or don’t satisfy the condition (2009, 100-101).

There are several things to note about the meshing condition. The first is that the intention in question does not need to be conceptually related to *everything else* we might find in the artwork, but if the intention does mesh, then we will be able to see readily the way in which it integrates with the artwork’s features. Additionally, a suitably prepared audience would be able to recognize the relevant intention, even if the audience is made aware of it only through an interview with the artist. The audience would then be able to give a somewhat systematic interpretation of the artwork in accordance with the relevant intention, as Livingston does in his imagined case (2009, 101).

We saw earlier that Rowling’s intention regarding Dumbledore’s sexuality is realized according to the compatibility success condition, but what about the meshing condition? I think it is possible to deliver an interpretation that demonstrates at least some meshing. It is clear from her interviews and other

extratextual comments (including the Carnegie Hall Q&A) that Rowling has the theme of love in mind in connection with Dumbledore's sexuality. On the nature of the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald (the second piece of textual evidence mentioned above), Rowling has stated that "I think a child will see a friendship and I think a sensitive adult may well understand that it was an infatuation" (quoted in Ahearn 2007). The idea here is that the final novel implies that Dumbledore had fallen in love with Grindelwald. If it is fictionally true that Dumbledore is gay, then this deepens the already complex theme of love.

How is the theme of love deepened? Karin E. Westman (2008) provides an excellent discussion of how love is handled in the Harry Potter series. Westman does not argue, however, that Rowling realized her intention, rather she assumes that Rowling has and explores the possible consequences. One of her central contentions is that:

While the earlier books in the series depict love as a generative and protective force, *Half-Blood Prince* and *Deathly Hallows* remind us that love can wound as well as shield. In these last two books Rowling locates love's damaging consequences not only within secondary characters like Voldemort's mother Merope and Bellatrix but also within the seemingly unassailable, all powerful character of Dumbledore, thereby forging unlikely connections between disparate characters. Such parallels diminish easy distinctions

between good and bad people and foreground the paradox of love's power. (2008, 193)

Again, Rowling's comments are also suggestive. At the Carnegie Hall Q&A, Rowling tells us that "falling in love can blind us to an extent" and that that might make Dumbledore's initial commitment to a morally suspect plan for world domination more forgivable (quoted in Drogos). So part of what connects disparate characters—Dumbledore on the one hand and Bellatrix and Merope on the other hand—is an "obsessive love," which often has damaging consequences for those involved (Westman 2008). In Dumbledore's case, his love for Grindelwald causes him to lose sight of what is morally right (not only in terms of world domination, but also in terms of his duty to his brother and sister). In addition to the characters just mentioned, Westman adduces at least three other characters that are involved with this sort of love concluding that "Repeatedly, Rowling demonstrates how obsessive love may wound the lover as well as the object of affection and innocent bystanders" (196).

The fact that Dumbledore had fallen in love, which consequently helps to instantiate the idea that love can be obsessive and damaging, serves to contrast the various other dimensions of love that we find in the novels. Love is sometimes selfish and obsessive (Dumbledore, Bellatrix, Merope) and may have negative effects on those involved. But love is sometimes selfless and protective (Harry, his mother, Mrs. Weasley) and often motivates heroic action. It is stated explicitly in the novels that love is a weapon (something which Dumbledore points out to

Harry). What Westman argues is that this metaphor becomes central to the Harry Potter series: love, as a weapon, “is dangerously double-edged, placing the lover and the beloved at risk if it is improperly handled” (193). Dumbledore is certainly subject to this self-wounding consequence of love. But what we learn throughout the series is that, if love is indeed a weapon, then it is one which “must be deployed with caution, care, and collective sympathy” (194).

Rowling’s intention does mesh with her novels, for one of the consequences of meshing is that a somewhat systematic interpretation is possible. In this instance we don’t just have the possibility of such an interpretation, we have an actual interpretation. The degree to which an intention meshes with an artwork and the degree to which an interpretation demonstrates meshing are separate matters. One could argue that the intention in question does mesh but that the interpretation given does not adequately demonstrate this fact, or one could argue that the interpretation demonstrates that the intention meshes but does not do so adequately. It could be that Rowling’s intention meshes with more than just the novels’ exploration of love, so a yet more comprehensive interpretation would be possible in light of the intention in question. However, I think it safe to conclude that there is sufficient meshing since the hypothesis that Dumbledore is gay has some evidence in its favor, rather than simply having no evidence against it—like the truly extraneous hypothesis that Dumbledore is Martian.

Rather than criticize Livingston’s proposal now, we will discuss Stecker’s proposal and then compare the two. The reason for this is that they both avoid the

leading objection to the idea of successfully realized intentions; namely, that any such account is circular. Since this objection can be dealt with fairly quickly and the compatibility criterion by itself is not an adequate account of success, what we really need are reasons to prefer Livingston's proposal over Stecker's (or vice versa), but both proposals need to be presented before such reasons can be offered.

## 2.6 Uptake

The third proposal for a set of success conditions is Stecker's. To realize an intention to mean  $x$ , the following three conditions must be met:

- (1) the artist intends  $x$ ;
- (2) the artist intends  $x$  to be grasped in virtue of the conventional meanings or contextually supported extensions or departures from those conventional meanings; and
- (3) that the intention in (1) is graspable in virtue of the conventional meanings or contextually supported extensions or departures from those conventional meanings.

One of the (perhaps obvious) necessary conditions for any set of success conditions for realizing intentions is that the person actually have the intention in question—this is condition (1) and all moderate actual intentionalists share this necessary condition. What is less obvious is what is precisely meant by conditions (2) and (3), but before we get to the conditions specifically, I have some comments on the proposal's motivation.

Stecker's approach to interpretation theory is what he calls the 'utterance model,' something on which most, if not all, moderate actual intentionalists agree.<sup>18</sup> The utterance model is an account of work meaning based on utterances in natural language, so the success conditions for realizing intentions are developed with conversational utterances in mind.<sup>19</sup> However, I've deliberately phrased his account of success conditions in such a way that it may not be readily apparent that it was developed with conversational utterances (and literature) in mind. For example, Stecker usually phrases condition (2) in terms of the "conventional meaning of the utterer's words" (2006b, 429). Work meaning and the success conditions of the intentions that partially constitute it are modeled on conversational utterances, which is a specific communicative context; but the utterance model is designed to extend to other communicative contexts, namely artistic communication across the arts. The way in which this is accomplished is by replacing 'conventions' in conditions (2) and (3) with the relevant conventions of the target art form. If, for example, we are dealing with literature, then the relevant

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<sup>18</sup> An exception might be Carroll (2010). He suggests that utterance meaning is theoretically dispensable. It is perhaps the theoretical notion of 'utterance meaning' which he is attempting to dismiss, not the idea that artworks are, broadly speaking, 'complex utterances.' The latter phrase is meant to signal that we are concerned with *what the artist has done* and hence wouldn't be inconsistent with his other writings on the subject.

<sup>19</sup> Why has interpretation theory taken linguistic meaning as its starting point? Two reasons. First, Anglo-American interpretation theory in the twentieth century emerged in response to problems in the interpretation of literature, and since the medium of literature is language, linguistic meaning is the natural starting point. Second, linguistic meaning is presumably better understood than artistic meaning; that is, linguistic meaning is perhaps the only sort of meaning we have a good grasp on, so linguistic meaning, again, is the natural starting point. Though the relationship between intentions and utterances as it is understood in the philosophy of language is not without its controversies, one advantage of the utterance model of work meaning is that it receives independent support from the philosophy of language.

conventions (to name a few) will be literary, linguistic, cultural, and historical. Now suppose we want to extend this to film. Linguistic conventions are perhaps relevant to most works given that most works at least have titles, but literary conventions (say prosody) would need to be swapped for cinematic conventions (say montage), since the target medium is film (Stecker 2001, 247). We are not only interested in artistic conventions but also the relevant cultural and historical conventions that may be applicable, which will largely be suggested by the time and place of the artwork's issuance.

Stecker suggests that swapping out the appropriate conventions may not by itself be enough to properly extend the utterance model. The reason is that in order to extend the utterance model one must "hook intentions up to the routes through which meaning is conveyed in a given art form, which may not always be convention" (2006a, 274). In addition to the relevant conventions of the medium, pictorial representation might involve "natural, innate, species-wide, recognitional abilities" (274). Condition (2) would then need to be modified to include not only generic and stylistic conventions (or their extensions) but also our recognitional abilities. The point is that intentions must be grounded in a specific way to ensure that what is conveyed is what the artwork actually means. Mrs. Malaprop might realize her intention to convey what she intends to convey, but she does not do so by appropriately grounding her intention in the conventional meanings of her words (as she intends to do); so even though she gets her point across, we would not say that her utterance means what she intends it to mean.

There is some vagueness in condition (2) that can be cleared up, but perhaps only to an extent. First, we need to know what is meant by “contextually supported extensions or departures from conventional meaning.”<sup>20</sup> The basic idea is easily illustrated by an example from ordinary conversation. The sentence ‘there are no books on the table’ is typically (conventionally) understood to mean that *there are no books on the table*. However, if it is uttered in a context in which the speaker and the audience know that there are usually three books on the table, the same sentence can be used to convey not only that *there are no books on the table* but also that *three books are missing*. We have, then, an extension, contextually supplied, of the conventional meaning of the sentence ‘there are no books on the table.’

To see how context can extend conventional meaning in an literary context, Stecker uses Blake’s “The Lilly” from his *Songs of Experience*. The poem reads as follows:

The modest Rose puts forth a thorn,  
The humble Sheep, a threatening horn:  
While the Lilly white, shall in Love delight,  
Nor thorn nor threat stain her beauty bright.

The poetic tradition in which Blake was writing attaches special symbolic significance to things like roses, lilies, and sheep. Roses and lilies, for example, conventionally symbolized “fragile, transient beauty” and virginity respectively

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that in some of Stecker’s most recent writings he tells us that contextually supported extensions must also be “permitted” (e.g., [2006a, 274; 2006b, 429; Stecker and Davies 2010, 311]). I will set this aside because it does not receive argumentation.

(Stecker 2001, 248; 2008, 40). But once the poem is contextualized properly by treating it as part of a larger collection of poems, readers are able to see that Blake is not conforming to, but rather departing from, the literary conventions of the English poetic tradition to “deliver his unconventional message about human sexuality” (Stecker 2008, 40). Moreover, with regard to condition (3), the intention to deliver an unconventional message about human sexuality is graspable in virtue of the conventional meanings of the words used in Blake’s poem and the contextually supplied departure from the relevant literary conventions. Condition (3) is sometimes referred to as the audience ‘uptake condition.’ Graspable should not be taken to mean that an actual audience actually grasps the intention in the way specified; rather, Stecker prefers to speak of a potential audience being, in principle, able to grasp the intention. The reason for this is that an actual audience’s recognition of the intention may not imply unsuccessful intentions (1997, 175). The intention to mean ‘three books are missing’ by saying ‘there are no books on the table,’ on Stecker’s account, may indeed be successful even if the actual audience to whom the utterance is addressed does not recognize the implication; a potential audience, however, could recognize the implication.<sup>21</sup>

Stecker admits that his account is vague in regard to how it is that intentions and conventions interact, but this is due largely to the complexity of the phenomenon. We seem to have an understanding of how intentions and linguistic

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<sup>21</sup> Notice that there is a disanalogy with Grice, who would link success to producing an effect in the audience rather than to making something knowable in virtue of conventions (or their extensions) as Stecker’s account does.

conventions interact that would be sufficient enough to produce some more explicit rules. But when we turn our attention to nonlinguistic conventions, e.g., generic, stylistic, or literary conventions, the complexity of the interaction between those conventions and intentions concerning them increases dramatically. It is not clear that in ordinary conversational contexts one can simply disregard the linguistic conventions à la Humpty Dumpty, for it would seem the conventions of language make it nearly impossible for him to successfully mean what he intends. (I say *nearly* because there are perhaps contexts imaginable where one could mean ‘a nice knockdown argument’ by ‘glory’; perhaps if he continued to use glory in his favored way he would begin to establish a context according to which the conventional meaning of ‘glory’ is extended.) Stecker’s suggestion is that nonlinguistic conventions are “less stringent” than linguistic conventions because they can be intentionally “overridden or cancelled” as Blake does with the traditional symbolic significance of things like roses and lilies (2003, 47). As we’ll see in Chapter 3, conventions are not as stringent as many moderate intentionalists have thought.

### **2.7 An Objection**

We can now address the leading objection to the entire project of attempting to find an account of successfully realized intentions. The objection, as I mentioned before, is that any such account will fail because it is circular. More specifically, any account of work meaning (utterance meaning) that relies on successfully

realized intentions will presuppose an independent notion of work meaning (Levinson 2010, 145). Said differently, what we require is an intention-independent ground for determining if an intention has been realized. On both Stecker's uptake view and Livingston's meshing view we do have an intention-independent way of determining success. On Stecker's view the intention independent standard is the conventional meanings (or their contextually supported extensions); that is, uptake is linked to conventional meaning, which is not itself intentionally determined (Stecker and Davies 2010, 311). Likewise, on Livingston's view, although he denies that capability of uptake is a necessary condition, success is still linked to conventional meanings including rhetorical structures and ideational connections between an artwork's conventional meanings; moreover, such things are present in artworks independently of an artist's intention concerning them (Livingston 2010, 415).

## **2.8 Uptake vs. Meshing**

Returning briefly to our test case, we can ask: Has Rowling succeeded in realizing her intention according to Stecker's proposal? I think she has and largely for the same reasons I gave for why her intention meshes with her novels. The reason is that Stecker's and Livingston's views are almost identical. Rather than exploring Rowling's novels again, I'll compare the two views and offer a reason to prefer Livingston's.

As I mentioned, both Stecker and Livingston know that their views are almost identical. If an intention is successful on Stecker's account, then it will necessarily mesh (Stecker 2008, 40). However, that "some well-informed audience is apt to infer the intention from the text is a *symptom* of meshing, but not a necessary condition" (Livingston 2010, 414). When Livingston compares his view with Stecker's, he calls his own a "kindred proposal," and when Stecker compares his view with Livingston's, he thinks that it ultimately boils down to whether or not audience uptake should be a necessary condition (Livingston 2010, 414; Stecker 2008, 40).

Stecker illustrates how he thinks the two views diverge by asking us to imagine that Blake wrote "The Lilly" with the same intention (i.e., his unconventional message about human sexuality) but this time "The Lilly" is the only poem Blake wrote because he started, but for whatever reason, abandoned the poetic project of the *Songs of Experience*. Imagine also that no external evidence (notes, diaries, etc.) exists. Finally, suppose that Blake's intention is not graspable because the context of the rest of the *Songs of Experience* is not present to provide us with the "system of symbols" one would need to make the poem intelligible, nor is there any publically accessible external evidence that Blake had the intention in question (Stecker 2008, 40). On Stecker's view Blake's intention is not successful, on Livingston's it is. Stecker's conclusion is that literary meanings ought to be publically accessible. Blake's intention is realized on Livingston's view, but remains private and inaccessible. Moreover, Stecker thinks that Livingston's

view implies that what counts as work meaning is contingently linked to whether we have any evidence of the intention: “a crucial piece of evidence might disappear, and then the meaning remains inaccessible. It [Stecker’s view] claims that the literary meaning should not be contingent in this way” (Stecker 2008, 41).

Stecker must mean *epistemically* contingent rather than *metaphysically* contingent, for we do not want to say that work meaning shifts based on the evidence available. There is a fact of the matter about what an artwork means but our degree of epistemic access to that meaning can surely vary. The idea that artworks are always communicative in the sense Stecker’s example implies, Livingston thinks, “runs contrary to the idea that there could be successful intentions in the absence of an audience having evidence that the author had such intentions” (2009, 99). I think that we should preserve this insight.

If literary meanings are linked to what is publically accessible, then this would imply that if what is publically accessible can change, then what counts as a literary meaning can also change. Suppose Blake had published only three copies of a journal in which he recorded his intention concerning human sexuality. However, the original manuscript and the published copies were lost due to no fault of Blake’s (perhaps by natural disaster). In this case there is a window of public accessibility during which Stecker’s account would confer the status of literary meaning on Blake’s intention (i.e., it is realized in the work); but after the journals are lost we lose a chunk of the evidence base (the proper context that would extend his poem’s conventional meanings), at which point Stecker’s view

would count the intention as unrealized and hence not part of the poem's work meaning. But this is the conclusion that Stecker wants to avoid, for he doesn't want work meaning to be contingent on pieces of evidence disappearing.

I mentioned earlier that Stecker likes to speak of a potential audience rather than an actual audience. More specifically, Stecker prefers to speak of what a potential audience *could* know (1997, 175). In the original imaginary Blake case the reason that Stecker wants to deny Blake realized his intention is that the case is setup so that the intention in question is not only unknown but also in principle unknowable: there is no potential audience that could ever know Blake's intention. However, my imaginary Blake case has one audience that knows Blake's intention (which audience could have read the journals) and a subsequent audience that doesn't know his intention (which audience can't read the journals). To clarify the conclusion of the previous paragraph: Stecker's view implies that what a potential audience could know can change, and with it the work's meaning. It is odd that an intention is realized or not based on even a potential audience's ability to know the relevant intention. Stecker's account applies, however, to a great deal of *communicative* intentions; in these cases if the artist is attempting to exploit some bit of context but circumstances are such that that context is lost to us (and to any potential audience) then the intention will most likely go unrealized. To echo Livingston's point, however, it is not immediately clear that all intentions work in this manner. Stecker's view, then, has a general problem of specifying the qualities that a potential audience ought to possess.

Livingston's view allows a broader range of intentions to be constitutive of work meaning than does Stecker's view: namely, intentions that mesh (and are therefore realized) but may nevertheless be unknown or unknowable. An impoverished epistemic relationship, however, shouldn't imply, at least not in all cases, unsuccessful intentions.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

It should be evident from the preceding discussion that moderate actual intentionalists consider conventions to be measures of success: in order to be realized, intentions must mesh with an artwork's conventions. What may be less obvious is that moderate intentionalists have historically viewed conventions as restrictions on what can be intended. In the next Chapter, I want to reconsider the relationship between intentions and conventions in order to provide an explanation for how conventions come to be restrictions. Additionally, I will argue that conventions are broader and more malleable than they are typically conceived to be, and, as a result, a greater emphasis must be placed on intentions.

## CHAPTER 3

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### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to address an issue neglected in the literature on moderate actual intentionalism: the relationship between intentions and conventions. As we have seen, the moderate actual intentionalist typically understands conventions to be a measure of success: either intentions must mesh with conventions (Livingston) or intentions must be capable of uptake in virtue of conventions (Stecker). All moderate intentionalists presuppose that conventions matter to the interpretation of art simply because they do. In addition to treating conventions as a measure of success, they are also treated as a restriction on what can be intended. I will argue that, since not all artworks trade in conventions that are comparable to those we find in language, conventions, if they are to be thought of as restrictions, must be thought of as self-imposed restrictions. Lastly, I will argue that intentions, to a large degree, determine which conventions are applicable to any given artwork.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2 Artistic Conventions

I will not attempt to develop a theory of conventions nor will I attempt a comprehensive definition of the term. Rather, I want merely to delineate some of

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<sup>22</sup> I must thank Craig Derksen for helping me to clarify my thinking on this point.

the ways that the term is used in criticism, which, I take it, are also the ways that moderate actual intentionalists understand the term.

There are two main ways in which the word ‘convention’ is used. First, conventions are any “conspicuous features of subject matter, form, or technique that occur repeatedly in works of [art]” (Abrams and Harpham 2009, 58). The sonnet, for example, is a conventional poetic form composed of a single, fourteen-line stanza and a specific rhyme scheme, which will vary depending on whether one is following Petrarch or Shakespeare. In the Petrarchan tradition, the speaker’s unrequited love for his disdainful mistress is a conventional subject matter. As Shelley’s “Ozymandias” suggests, however, one does not need to adhere to the conventional rhyme scheme or subject matter to produce an effective sonnet. Due to conspicuous features of artworks recurring too often or due to an audience’s changing sensibilities, ‘conventional’ can be used pejoratively to indicate that the feature in question is unimaginative or hackneyed—like laugh tracks on sitcoms, perhaps.

Second, conventions are devices or strategies for effective communication that both artist and audience agree upon tacitly. For example, both artist and audience assume that a proscenium theatre (with three actual walls) can represent a room with four walls or that when a character speaks in aside it is inaudible to the other characters on stage (Abrams and Harpham 2009, 58).

The examples given for both senses of ‘convention’ might imply that conventions are being construed narrowly. But, as we’ll see, conventions are not

only quite malleable but also much broader than they have been traditionally conceived—they may even be artwork-specific, having been created and used by an artist in a single work.

### **3.3 Artistic and Linguistic Conventions**

One of the problems with basing the interpretation of all art on the interpretation of utterances is the discontinuity between how determinate linguistic conventions are (including the conventional meanings of words and sentences) and how determinate their artistic counterparts are. When a speaker's intention fails and she ends up misspeaking, we have an almost algorithmic way of assigning meaning to her utterance. Consider the malapropism: 'The police have been looking for the robber all week, he's quite an allusive fellow.' It's clear what the failed utterance means (that the thief is full of indirect references) because natural language provides us with a set of fixed correlations between words and their meanings as well as set of rules for how words can be combined to produce meaningful sentences.

This fact about natural language has misled both moderate intentionalists and anti-intentionalists—I hasten to add, however, that the moderate intentionalist talks about utterances to underscore the idea that we are concerned with what the artist has done and not, strictly speaking, with what she has said. Anti-intentionalists have used the existence of computer generated poetry as an argument against intentionalism. Anti-intentionalists claim that computer-

generated poems are meaningful, but since computers lack intentionality, it follows that intentions and the meaning of artworks are wholly independent.

George Dickie (1997a, 98) considers the following poem:

The cat is on the mat.  
The cat is very fat.

He thinks that this poem's meaning is plain to any English speaker; moreover, if a computer were given enough time, it would generate every poem ever written and no one would have intended anything concerning them. Having dismissed anti-intentionalism in Chapter 1, I don't want to dwell on why this is a bad argument. I do, however, want to suggest that the highly conventional nature of language contributes to why Dickie thinks that the meaning of the quoted poem is clear to any English speaker. For if we know something of English syntax and semantics, the anti-intentionalist thinks, we can easily assign a meaning to each of the lines in the quoted poem.

The analogy between the interpretation of words and sentences and the interpretation of artworks breaks down because not all artistic conventions work in the same way as linguistic conventions; that is, it's not clear that artistic conventions provide us with a mechanical way of assigning meaning to artworks.<sup>23</sup> For (1) there are some things that we are willing to call artistic conventions that lack the sorts of fixed associations that words bear; (2) even in literature, linguistic conventions are quite malleable and ultimately not the interpreter's main concern;

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<sup>23</sup> Carroll (2010, 171) has called this the "Linguistic Fallacy," which is primarily committed by anti-intentionalists.

and (3) not all artworks are composed out of conventional signs as literary works are. Moderate actual intentionalists have assumed both that conventions matter to interpretation (perhaps because they begin with the interpretation of utterances) without providing a justification and that conventions should be seen as a restriction. Given that (1)-(3) obtain, however, it follows that conventions matter to the interpretation of art because the significance of many artistic conventions is intimately connected with the artist's intentions; conventions may still be thought of as restrictions, albeit self-imposed restrictions.

Not all artistic conventions are about fixed associations. Carroll cites two examples when arguing against Dickie's brand of anti-intentionalism. In ballet, the step called *rond de jambe en l'air* does not have a conventional meaning; rather, where it occurs in the ballet, *La Sylphide*, our only recourse is to hypothesize what the choreographer and dancers are attempting to mean by employing the step (1997, 192). In film, the juxtaposition of images or shots has no fixed meaning either (198). After the opening credits in Chaplin's *Modern Times*, we see a high angle shot of sheep jostling their way toward the camera. The film then cuts to a similarly angled shot of people emerging from the subway off to start a new workday at the factory.<sup>24</sup> Since there is no fixed meaning to juxtaposition in cinema, we must, again, hypothesize about what Chaplin means to convey. (Has the modern factory reduced the status of its workers to that of animals? Are they being led to slaughter?) As Carroll concludes, examples of such conventions "can

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<sup>24</sup> Carroll uses juxtaposition but applies it to a different film.

be endlessly duplicated across the nonlinguistic arts” (1997, 193). I would stress that literature also employs artistic conventions that lack fixed associations, such as alliteration and metaphor. Just like the two examples above, these conventions lack fixed, word-like associations, so we must hypothesize the author’s intention for designing and placing the alliterative or metaphorical phrases how and where she did.

Some nonlinguistic artworks do, however, trade in word-like conventional meanings. Iconography might provide us with a close relative of the conventional meaning words bear. It is common for paintings in the *vanitas* tradition to feature skulls and bubbles which are typically meant to symbolize the inevitability of death and the transience of life, respectively. But pointing out these sorts of associations is not interpretation, it is only a preliminary to interpretation. Carroll (2009, 109) calls this sort of preliminary activity *elucidation*, which is akin to determining the literal meaning of words and sentences in natural language, and defines it as “determining the correlation between fixed conventional and iconic symbols and what they symbolize.” The real interpretive activity begins when we ask questions about what was meant by the artist in arranging and depicting the various *vanitas* symbols in the way the artist did. Dickie assumes the meaning of his computer generated poem is simply a matter of elucidation, not interpretation; if the poem were intentionally created, we could go on to ask the interpretive question as to why the poem was constructed so seemingly simplistically.

Literary works, precisely because they are composed out of words and sentences, possess a meaning independent of anyone intending this or that concerning them. Gover (2012) makes a similar point concerning the difference between literature and contemporary (often avant-garde) visual art, which includes found art, installation art, and other sorts of broadly abstract art.<sup>25</sup> These sorts of artworks and the stuff they are composed of (which might include preexisting artifacts, like readymades), Gover says, “do not have meanings in the same way that words do” (2012, 179). Light bulbs, for example, in Benedetto Pietromarchi’s *Untitled* (2006), a sculpture consisting of two oversized light bulbs mounted on pedestals, “while they are employed by artists to *make* meaning, they do not come already bearing meaning as publically legible signs (2012, 179).<sup>26</sup> Gover emphasizes that, in dealing with contemporary visual art, art critics (such as Arthur Danto) and curators often rely on artists’ statements about their work because the works in question are “semantically impoverished” (180). Indeed, as Gover and other writers have noted, since the 1960’s a new category of art has emerged that “asks its audience to *bear witness* to the personal experience of the artist, which the artifact stands for, rather than to *share in an experience* given by the work” (181). It is precisely because these artworks are not governed by

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<sup>25</sup> Gover does not think that literature is simply a matter of the conventional meanings of the words and sentences used; rather, she is arguing that contemporary visual artworks are not utterances, and, *contra* Maes (2010) can’t be used to settle the debate between moderate actual intentionalists and hypothetical intentionalists.

<sup>26</sup> This work was created for an exhibition entitled *Reconstruction #1*, which took place in and around Sudeley Castle, England (Maes 2010).

conventions in the same way that literature and, to a lesser extent, film, music, and painting are that accounts for the preoccupation of critics, curators, and audiences with artists' intentions; for they, i.e., critics and artists, presume that these sorts of artworks can't mean anything on their own (180).

The practices of contemporary visual art should serve as a reminder that an artwork's meaning is not on its surface, so to speak; rather, its meaning lies deeper and gaining access to it is (largely) an inferential matter: an inference to the artist's intention.

### **3.4 Conventions and Restrictions**

Although I've been highlighting a disanalogy between linguistic conventions and artistic conventions, linguistic conventions also seem to be quite malleable, especially if we consider the work of modernist writers like James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, or e.e. cummings. These writers often employ neologisms, portmanteaux or deviant syntactical constructions. In *Finnegans Wake* the expression, "Dyoublong," as Davidson (1991, 8) notes, must lack a conventional meaning, since it is Joyce's invention. Davidson suggests that the point of writing "Dyoublong" is that Joyce wants us to hear both 'Dublin' and the phrase 'Do you belong?' A similar thing occurs with "Why do I am alook alike a poss of porter pease?"—a line in which we are meant to hear "like as two peas,' a request for a pot of porter, please, and a reference to Piesporter wine" (1991, 8). It is not that the conventions of language do not apply to Joyce's writing—language, after all, is still the medium through

which he communicates—rather, Joyce demonstrates that linguistic conventions are in fact quite malleable.

There is a latent tension in moderate actual intentionalism. I will use Carroll's work to demonstrate this tension but it is arguably a tension latent in the position itself and not merely endemic to Carroll's work. On the one hand, he has convincingly demonstrated that the convention- and rule-governed nature of language is not an adequate basis for a theory of interpretation that is meant to hold across the arts (nor is it adequate for literature itself); on the other hand, he and other moderate actual intentionalists want to insist that linguistic and artistic conventions are restrictions on what the artist can intend. As we saw in Chapter 1, Carroll points to Humpty-Dumpty to illustrate that moderate actual intentionalism avoids the absurdity of strong actual intentionalism: "Modest actual intentionalism blocks Humpty-Dumpty-ism because even if Humpty Dumpty intends 'glory' to mean 'knockdown argument,' that is not a meaning that the textual unit ('glory') can have" (2000, 76).<sup>27</sup> But as I have suggested in Chapter 2, 'glory' could mean 'a nice knock-down argument' provided that Humpty-Dumpty does enough to make his intention knowable to Alice. The absurdity of Humpty-Dumpty's meaning-intention is not that it runs counter to established conventional meaning, but his presumption that he is altering the conventional meaning of words by merely intending to do so. He fails to communicate with

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<sup>27</sup> Stecker (2003, 47) says something similar: "because 'suit' refers to suits, but not to soup, I cannot say that there is a fly in your soup with the words 'There's a fly in your suit.'"

Alice because he forms an intention upon which he does not properly act. The essential difference between Humpty-Dumpty and Joyce, as Davidson suggests, is that the former makes correctly interpreting his utterances impossible while the latter makes correctly interpreting his utterances extremely difficult, but ultimately not impossible (Davidson 1991; Puolakka 2006).

Carroll has most recently argued for an explicitly Gricean conception of meaning, which he claims “places an estimable constraint on the speaker, since her intention includes the intention to be recognized which suggests that it should be in accordance with the conventions and practices shared by the speaker and her audience” (2010, 119). What this means for Carroll is that “the intention the artist means to convey must be discernible in the work” or, said differently, that the “intention be compatible with the way the work is” (120). In ordinary conversational situations, we often want to exploit existing conventions because this is generally the most effective means of communication. With Joyce and other artists that radically depart from preexisting conventions, their meaning intentions will not be “in accordance with the conventions,” since, as we’ve seen, expressions like “Dyoublong” don’t have conventional meanings. Yet the intention that “Dyoublong” signal both ‘Dublin’ and ‘Do you belong?’ is certainly compatible (and, to use Livingston’s term, meshes,) with *the way the work is*; and, once we are apprised, by whatever means, of the relevant intention, it is readily *discernible in the work* as well.

But clearly some of the conventions of language still apply: we need to use English pronunciation in order to hear ‘Do you belong?’ in the expression; the syntactical structure of the sentence in which ‘Dyoublong’ occurs—“So This Is Dyoublong?”—might suggest, at least, that we are dealing with a noun; it is capitalized as the proper noun ‘Dublin’ ought to be and surely one familiar with Joyce’s biography and the rest of his oeuvre will have Dublin in mind. Doubtless eschewing or playing with the traditional conventions of novelistic or poetic writing is itself a convention of modernist writing. In one sense ‘Dyoublong’ is unconventional because it lacks a preexisting fixed association, but in another sense it is conventional because it acquires associations in the context of *Finnegans Wake*; that is, some of the conventions at work in *Finnegans Wake* seem to be established in and by Joyce’s writing—they are inherent in the work. What needs to be stressed, then, is that Carroll’s suggestion that the artist be in accordance with conventions and practices needs to be expanded to include conventions and practices that an artist herself creates.

Given that conventions are quite malleable, can they still be thought of as restrictions? I believe they can, but they are self-imposed restrictions. The case of malapropism considered above is a failed utterance because the speaker intends to exploit the conventional meanings of the words she uses. Doing so helps speakers make their intentions known to their interlocutors. In the context of ordinary linguistic communication, it’s likely that speakers and hearers are tacitly agreed that the standard linguistic conventions apply.

### 3.5 Intentions, Conventions, and Categories

In what follows I will argue that it is the artist's intentions that make conventions relevant. This can happen in at least three ways: (1) an artist can explicitly realize an intention to make the convention(s) relevant; (2) an artist's intentional action or the content of her intention can coincide with the convention(s); and (3) an artist, by tacitly assuming that the convention(s) be relevant, thereby makes them relevant. As we'll see, conventions are related to categorial intentions.

The difference between (1) and (2) is roughly whether an artist consciously represents to herself the intention in question. Alliteration is a literary convention according to the first definition of artistic convention in § 3.2. but it is one which can be put to a variety of purposes and so requires hypothesizing the intended effect in the design of the work. In his short story "Markheim," R. L. Stevenson has the titular character recall the "somnolence of summer Sundays." The position for which I'm arguing does not require Stevenson to represent to himself the name of the literary device he is using, something like 'I intend to write an alliterative phrase.' It suffices that Stevenson wrote in the way that he did, that is, he intentionally wrote three words with similar initial sounds, which just is alliteration.

The same is true of genres. The term 'science fiction,' which Hugo Gernsback is credited with coining in 1926, was not available to Mary Shelley when she set to work on *Frankenstein* (Roberts 2006, 38). Yet she intentionally wrote her story about a man who attempts to overcome death by means of science. While

there is certainly no consensus about how to define science fiction, I think *Frankenstein* would fit most definitions on offer. The novel is also an instance of Gothic horror, but works often occupy more than one genre (e.g., comedy and horror, in the case of *Shaun of the Dead*).

It's not surprising that posterity, rather than the artist herself, is in a better position to categorize more precisely her work. This is especially true when an artist produces something novel or innovative rather than a straightforward genre piece. Though the details of how Frankenstein's monster is created are not directly stated in the novel, it's reasonable to assume that, since Frankenstein is a scientist, the monster is created through scientific means.<sup>28</sup> This separates *Frankenstein* from other sorts of broadly fantastic literature in which the deviations from our world might be couched in supernatural terms. It is these sorts of innovations, expansions, and revisions of existing genres that contribute to the creation of new genres; but since critics need to observe a trend across several works in order to declare a new category of art, it's, again, not surprising that the first of a kind is not recognizable as such until sometime after its debut.

The Stevenson and Shelley cases make it clear that some conventions apply because an artist's intentional action fits a certain description, whether or not the description is the one with which the artist undertook the intentional action. We can adapt Carroll's proposal for dealing with unintentional expressions of ideology. In Chapter 1, I discussed the way in which Carroll handles Jules Verne's *The*

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<sup>28</sup> In a preface to a later edition, Shelley suggests electricity (Roberts 2006, 43).

*Mysterious Island*. Verne's intentional action is clearly meant to be anti-slavery, yet that same intentional action is nevertheless racist. What is true of unintentional expressions of ideology is also true of conventions. More formally, we can say that: intentional action A under description D might mean one is doing x but that same intentional action A under a different description D<sub>1</sub> might mean one is doing y. We have, then, two ways in which conventions become relevant to the interpretation of artworks: either the artist intentionally produces an artwork with the convention in question or the artist's intentional action coincides with a convention.

The third way in which an artist's intention makes certain conventions relevant is connected to her categorial intentions. Consider Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Insofar as Wood intended to make a science fiction film in the Hollywood tradition, this categorial intention commits him to employ the conventions of the genre. One of the conventions of Hollywood filmmaking is the use of continuity editing. Continuity editing attempts to preserve spatial and temporal relations from cut to cut; it is an attempt to make the film appear continuous even though it was most likely shot out of narrative sequence. Jump cuts—or two sequential shots of the same subject that differ slightly in terms of camera distance and angle—are to be avoided because, as the name suggests, the image appears to 'jump.'<sup>29</sup> Depending on the severity of the jump cut, the effect

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<sup>29</sup> There is a rule of thumb designed to avoid jump cuts called the 30° rule, which states that if the camera switches positions from one shot to the next while shooting the same subject, it needs to move at least 30° from its original position.

can be quite disorienting. Jump cuts, of course, can be used purposively to create a particular effect, but they can also, like those found in *Plan 9*, be the result of sloppy filmmaking. For example, a jump cut occurs not 20 seconds into the film. We see the silhouette of Criswell with the words “Criswell Predicts” overlaid. As the text fades, the camera begins to track forward; but instead of tracking smoothly as intended, the camera jerks forward abruptly before settling on a tighter shot of Criswell. Although this particular example doesn’t have repercussions for the film’s meaning, jump cuts and other blunders, if they are pervasive, will result in the degradation of the film’s coherence.

Given the categories of which *Plan 9* is a member, the audience is justified in assuming and expecting that the conventions of the category are relevant for interpretation and appreciation. I do not mean to suggest that Wood’s categorial intention thereby requires him to adhere to every convention of continuity editing or science fiction film; after all, things like jump cuts can be skillfully used within the context of continuity editing. But, because he intended certain categories, he must adhere to some of the conventions constitutive of the categories in question in order for his film to qualify for categorial membership. Since the conventions of continuity editing are clearly intended, the audience is fully justified in assuming that there will not be disorienting interruptions of the spatial and temporal relations between cuts (this is why sequences that cut from night to day to night, which are meant, the narrator tells us, to be “minutes later,” are so disorienting). What’s more, though, is that the conventions in question are actually required for

correct interpretation and appreciation precisely because Wood formed and acted on the intention to produce a Hollywood science fiction film. These examples should also reinforce how conventions can be self-imposed restrictions.

Stecker says something similar when he discusses the role of conventions in interpretation. He says that words like 'rose,' 'mandrake,' and 'unicorn' have "fairly standard associations" such that "when these words get used in a context that makes the conventional associations appropriate, the conventional associations are in force, making their use in interpreting the poem's meaning appropriate" (1997, 177). But I think we ought to distinguish between the conventions that are actually relevant to any given artwork and the conventions that an audience can, in the course of interpreting, reasonably suppose relevant to any given artwork. When interpreting a work that issues from a specific context, it may be reasonable to suppose that a certain convention is relevant, but the fact that the artwork issues from a specific context merely makes reasonable the supposition that the convention is relevant. That some convention has been long associated with some context or category of art is strong evidence that certain conventions apply (i.e., that the convention is intended and therefore relevant), but it remains to be seen whether the convention is actually relevant. Stecker hints at this, I think, when he states that the standard associations or conventions apply "barring deliberate intervention of the poet" (177). He goes on to say that someone writing in a context that makes the standard associations applicable "tacitly intends" them (197). This is consonant with how I've described the relationship between intentions,

conventions, and categories, but I would suggest, however, that it's not the context that makes the standard associations applicable; rather, it's the artist's intentions.

Things like the context of issuance or the conventions that have been associated with a particular category (i.e., the 'standard' conventions) are not necessarily independent meaning determiners as moderate actual intentionalists have thought. Since intentions are what make conventions relevant, context and whatever conventions have typically been employed in the past are both evidence for the artist's intention. Conventions can serve as restrictions but they are self-imposed due to the categorial intentions of the artist.

### **3.6 Clarifying the Position**

Moderate actual intentionalism is criticized for its disjunctive definition of work meaning. Moderate actual intentionalists usually insist that there are three distinct determiners of meaning. The meaning of an artwork is constituted by the following: (1) realized intentions; (2) conventions (linguistic, cultural, or artistic, etc.); and (3) context (relationships between an artwork's features and its historical or cultural surroundings). Items (1)–(3) are independent meaning determiners, but often work together in complicated ways. For example, (1) usually involves exploiting one's context and existing conventions. If I'm correct in arguing that intentions determine relevant conventions, then the position is no longer disjunctive, or it can at least provide an explanation for why moderate intentionalists think that if an intention fails, conventions 'take over.'

Since I have already argued against conventions as independent determiners of meaning, I will take a moment to address context. As I suggested in the previous section, context is not an independent meaning determiner either. This is something for which Stecker has argued, but which Carroll has recently denied. Stecker (2003, 48) provides us with two cases to illustrate how context is an independent determiner of meaning. First, he considers a photograph whose upper right hand corner contains an unintended goose. Stecker maintains that it is context—the goose interacting with the photographic process—that determines that the photograph contains a goose, which presumably has implications for its meaning. While it is true that unintended things may interact with the photographic process, it does not follow that the goose is unintended. If the photographer notices the goose and still decides to present the photograph as an artwork, then it's reasonable to assume that the artist has ratified the goose's presence, for the artist could have edited out the goose or taken the shot again. The problem with the example is that it doesn't distinguish between unintended content during production and unintended content in the finished product. An unintended improvisation might be caught on film (even though the actors were meant to stick to the script) and nevertheless make it into the final cut. The actors' improvisation interacted with the cinematographic process in the right way, but it's the director's decision to make use of it or not in the finished product that determines if the putative unintended content remains unintended.

Second, Stecker considers utterances with indexicals. Since the referent of an indexical element differs with context, it follows that context is at least partially responsible for the utterance's meaning. For example, 'I' always refers to the speaker, assuming that the speaker is using, and not mentioning, the word. I will grant that artworks with linguistic content can, as a matter of fact, contain indexicals; it's not clear, however, that nonlinguistic arts have features comparable to indexicals. This is one example from conversational utterances that is misleading when generalized across the arts. It may be true that if the narrator of a novel uses 'you' to address the audience, then that artwork refers to a different audience member every time someone encounters the novel. But specific encounters with artworks are not part of their context of utterance. The act of producing and presenting the artwork fixes its context of utterance. We should be more concerned with the *purpose* of writing, for example, "Reader, I married him" than with the shifting referent of 'reader,' since it's unlikely that the meaning of the artwork changes based on whomever may be reading *Jane Eyre*. Stecker's suggestion, then, applies only to works with linguistic content and then only to works with indexicals.

Speaking of a context of utterance itself might be problematic.<sup>30</sup> I prefer, following Levinson, to speak of a context of issuance, though I don't think he uses the phrase, as I am, to signal a disanalogy with the idea of a context of utterance.

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Lamarque, for instance, thinks that "No *work* is an utterance in the speech act sense for the appropriate idea of a context of utterance is missing" (2004, 7).

In conversational situations, the context of utterance is specifiable to a great degree. For example, the time at which something is spoken is whenever one performs the speech act. But what would the analogue be in an artistic context? Since there may be a long delay, for whatever reason, between the work's completion and publication, it's not clear how we should demarcate its context of utterance. Similarly, where artworks are concerned, production could last for years, which probably doesn't occur with conversational utterances. Moreover, the term 'context' as it is used in the interpretation of art typically encompasses the sorts of things that hypothetical intentionalists rightly consider *evidence* for an interpretation; namely, the broad historical, artistic, cultural, and political backdrop from which an artwork issues—or its context of issuance.<sup>31</sup> Both context and convention, which are typically thought to be independent determiners of meaning, are either, in the case of the former, evidence for an interpretation or, in the case of the latter, made relevant to interpretation by the artist's intentions.

Traditionally, moderate actual intentionalists think that if an artist's intention fails, then conventions can determine the meaning of the affected portion of the artwork. Carroll, for example, tells us that if the artist's intention fails (i.e., goes unrealized), then “the meaning of the work in such cases is its textual meaning” (2011, 131). Though he does not elaborate on this, it's likely that by 'textual meaning' he means conventionally determined meaning. Stecker tells us

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<sup>31</sup> The idea that context is evidence for an interpretation is echoed by Carroll: “Nor can context be thought to fix the meaning of x, since context does not determine the meaning, but is rather only evidence for an interpretation of x” (2011, 130).

something similar: “if the speaker’s intention is not successful, the meaning is determined by convention and context at the time of utterance” (Stecker 2003, 14). My position is not an *outright* denial that conventions can take over when an artist fails to realize her intentions: I allow that conventions can take over provided that the artist intends that the relevant conventions apply. In cases of malapropism (like the one mentioned in § 3.3), the ordinary conventions can take over because the speaker’s categorial intention commits her to the conventions of the practice in which she is engaged; it is plain from the utterance that the speaker attempts to exploit the ordinary meanings of the words used, but nevertheless, by her own standards, fails. The jump cuts in *Plan 9* are meant to have illustrated the analogous case for artworks.

One might wonder if the greater weight that needs to be placed on intentions does not commit me to strong actual intentionalism, the view that the artwork means what the artist intended whether those intentions are realized or not. The answer is “No.” While I draw attention to a greater role of intentions, my position still maintains a distinction between an artist’s intended meaning and the artwork’s actual meaning (strong actual intentionalism results from collapsing the latter into the former). I only want to draw out a latent tension in moderate actual intentionalism. Conventions are typically thought to restrict what can be intended, but as we’ve seen, if conventions are restrictions, they function as such because of the artist’s intentional action. A greater weight does need to be placed on intentions, however, because, as it turns out, not only are artistic conventions

quite broad and malleable, but also some kinds of artworks are not composed of things that already belong to a semantically-laden system of signs and symbols.

## CONCLUSION

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Some theorists, such as Maes (2008) and Puolakka (2006), have rightly begun to reexamine the role of conventions within moderate actual intentionalism. Their work suggests that it is inadequate to think of conventions as simply restrictions on what can be intended. As we saw in Chapter 3, conventions can be restrictions, but they are self-imposed; this in turn provides us with an explanation for how it is that certain conventions (if the intention fails) can determine work meaning.

Proponents of hypothetical intentionalism have pointed out that the position is inelegant because it is “unavoidably and unappealingly disjunctive” (Levinson 2010, 147). Although the objection is minor, if I am correct in arguing that it is the artist’s categorial intention that commits her to at least some of the conventions of the artistic categories to which her work belongs, then the artist’s intention can be seen to unify the account of work meaning without it becoming strong actual intentionalism.

Historically, the central debate in interpretation theory has been between anti-intentionalism and actual intentionalism. Anti-intentionalism, though, is by far the least prominent view in the philosophical literature. In the last ten years more has been written on—and continues to be written on—the debate between moderate actual intentionalism and hypothetical intentionalism. A thesis that is concerned with the role of intentions in the interpretation of art could reasonably attempt to resolve or dissolve the debate. I have not attempted to do this. I have

instead attempted to take a step back, as it were, to reevaluate moderate actual intentionalism itself, for I see alleviating (or at the very least articulating) the latent tension which I identified in Chapter 3 as a prerequisite for moderate actual intentionalism's continued participation in the contemporary debate. At this stage, the implications for the debate are not immediately clear, but the way in which I have revised the position offers some improvement over the way in which the position is typically understood.

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