Conclusion and outlook

The reconstruction of concepts of intention in literary interpretation from a historical perspective has resulted in distinguishing four different types. This typology is meant, first of all, as a tool for description and classification for each specific concept at any moment in time, but also in historical perspective. Before summarising the four types briefly, I would like to explicitly address once more that the types are definitely not part of an evolutionary development in which each new concept gradually replaces its predecessor. The synchronicity of different concepts at specific moments in time has been touched upon in several parts of the present book, for example concerning the rather heterogenous concepts of intention in interpretation to be found within the lines of New Criticism. Instead of an evolution, the relationship between the four types should rather be described in terms of addition. Each new concept of intention in interpretation joins the already existing ones, forming a new option for position taking by the relevant actors from then on. With each new type, the number of possible legitimate views within the debate on interpretation grows, as does the number and range of possible specific interpretations of specific texts. For an imagined eternally wandering critic, every new concept of intention (1838, 1946, 1967), offered extra options to present himself as a professional critic concerning intentional questions.

Of course, the perspective of a non-fictional, historically bound critic is usually completely different, whatever view on intention in interpretation he defends. Because these views are always related to a specific conception of literature, they are in the end normative and often present themselves as the only adequate way of dealing professionally with literature. This individual normativity in connection with a tendency towards addition from an overarching historical perspective has, over the last 200 years, led to constant changes in what at specific historical moments is regarded as a professionally appropriate way of defining and interpreting literature. The speed of these typological changes has accelerated since the nineteenth century, at least until 1967. But, as may be clear by now, these conflicting position takings cannot be seen as a road towards consensually using a more and more adequate concept of authorial intention (or not) in interpretation. All we can say is that at specific moments in time, there are dominant ideas of the most legitimate way of dealing with intention when interpreting texts – but this dominance is always contested, usually fuelled by academic actors or groups. Regardless of the temporary dominance of newer models, the older models keep on existing, sometimes even within the very same circles that claim to adhere to new ones.

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After this caveat, I would like to recall in very condensed versions the four types distinguished above.

I. The oldest concepts of intention in interpretation can be found in ancient Greece around 500 BC where a secular concept of human responsibility for the work of art was shaped, in competition to an even older concept in which the singers, performers etc. were seen as a medium of the Muses or other Gods. Only when texts or artworks are conceived as made by humans, can intention be part of ideas on their production and interpretation. The first concepts of authorial intention in interpretation in Aristotle and other sources were based on the idea of an intentional continuum between author, text, context, and reader. However, in Classical Greece as in Classical Rome, the author was primarily praised, criticised and taught with regard to his choices on the level of words, genre and composition. These formal choices were made within a rather stable world of moral and other knowledge about humans that basically gave little room for individual messages from the authors. Authorship and the intention of the author was primarily about correct phrasing and understanding: the author must try to say what had to be said. The same goes for interpretation: the interpreter must read what had to be read from the text.

   It is towards the end of antiquity around 400 AD that within the Classical model a change of focus comes into sight. The standard model combines the Classical secular idea of human responsibility on the basis of intentional continuity with the idea of authorial intention as the final point of orientation in interpretation. The role of the author in interpretation in the standard model can be compared to the role of the pole star in navigation. This includes in both cases, interpretation and navigation, the possibility of practical problems. Of course sometimes one does not know anything about authorial intention except for what the text offers, of course authors can lie or tell only part of the truth, and sometimes it is unclear in which context the author wrote the text and in which context the text functioned – as a sailor may not see Polaris due to clouds, mistake another star for it, may not be accurate enough in setting his course with the help of the pole star etc. Nevertheless, these problems do not jeopardise the model of interpretation – or navigation – as such. Church Father Augustine played a central role in conceptualising this type around 400 and in its spreading in the Middle Ages (based on passages from Hugh of Saint Victor's influential textbook *Didascalion* [1127]), with an undisputed dominance of this standard procedure for interpretation far into the nineteenth century.

   Diversity within this model is basically concerned with the views attributed to the author, ranging from hardly visible in antiquity, via Augustine's con-

cept of rather general authorial intention as the overarching point of orientation, to a more pronounced individuality within the standard model from the fourteenth century onwards. In the Renaissance, this stressing of individual views is not only visible in the interpretation of canonised texts but also in what authors themselves claim about their texts, especially when they become part of a public dispute, legal proceedings or worse. Variation of this type can be found from then on up to recent times, for example in actual intentionalism.

II. The first conceptual competitor for this concept of authorial intention in the interpretation of literary texts emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with an exemplary version in the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher defended the view, published in 1838, that a literary critic had the expertise to see meanings in literary texts that can go further than what the author himself would have agreed upon as his intention: "To understand the text at first as well and then even better than its author." However, Schleiermacher was in no doubt that step one in the professional's work must aim at reconstructing the intention of the author, before possibly going one step further on a road that leads beyond the horizon. His view provided the critic, so to speak, with a passport that allowed him, in special cases, to travel outside the interpretive borders of the text that were constructed on the foundation of authorial intention.

This special privilege formed an important conceptual foundation for the professionalisation of the critic, in several senses. First of all the critic can distinguish himself as a *professional* reader from other types of readers, including authors, who do not possess the expertise for this transgression and specialisation. Furthermore it functioned as an instrument of distinction with regard to the growing number of colleagues in different literary institutions, from journals to universities. The critic who, due to his professional knowledge, can add legitimate interpretations to those based on authorial intention (or rather on the standard model, in our terms), has more possibilities for professional actions than those acting within the boundaries of the standard model. These extra possibilities include a possible distinction in terms of concepts of interpretation, in addition to a broader range of specific interpretations which were restricted to a lesser degree by authorial intention. Finally, the better understanding was functional for the literary critic with regard to a field that showed a substantial growth of writers in terms of numbers and social heterogeneity to an extent that made it more and more difficult for the critic to act on the foundation of generally shared knowledge about the writers he had to deal with. The "better understanding" concept allowed for the argumentation that whatever an individual

writer might have intended with his text, the author was in the end the object of regularities of literature only the professional critic knew about. This view gave the critic a legitimation to deal with *every* literary author, however large their number and how heterogeneous their social and ideological background might be.

The differences within this model of intention in interpretation concern basically the degree to which they are author focused. For instance, E.D. Hirsch's reading of Schleiermacher emphasises step one of the model (understand the text as well as the author) to a degree that step two (understand the author better than he understood himself) plays only a marginal role for him. The Russian Formalists can be situated at the other pole of the spectrum. As interpreters and literary theorists they concentrate on the text as their primary focus of professional work. They do not deny the existence of an author and his intentions, as they do not principally oppose efforts to understand both – but they see their professionalism definitely on the level of the rules of the artwork, regardless of what the author may or may not have known of this. The common ground for all critics within this model remains that understanding the author better than he understood himself is no longer restricted to the area of mistakes and error, as in the tradition of the Homer's nap: this transgression is now primarily based on the professional knowledge of the critic.

III. From the middle of the twentieth century onwards, concepts of literary interpretation can be found that leave authorial intention behind not only in special cases, but as a rule. Under the label of intentional fallacy, scholars defend interpretations that do not rely on the intention of the author at all, neither as their final aim nor as point of departure. The author is given no authority regarding the work's meaning. Only as the producer of his works is a special position left for him within this concept. Again, strategic dimensions can be recognised in launching the new concept of intention around 1946. The very notion "intentional fallacy" had a polemic implication, since "fallacy" refers to what others – the established literary history scholars – do dramatically wrong. By the same token, the concept promised a greater methodological rigour and technical teachability in comparison with the competitors from the literary history schools. Finally – and again, similar to the "better understanding" model – it offered the critics more opportunities to distinguish themselves, with extra space for original interpretations of texts, whether canonised or not, since the adherents of intentional fallacy could no longer be bound by biographical and historical contextual factors, even not as a starting point. This time, however, the extra space was not built on top of an established foundation (as for exam-

ple with Schleiermacher), but in explicit opposition to both existing models at the time, by dismissing authorial intention rigorously as "neither available nor desirable". The effect of this conceptual choice was that now for the first time in history an actual *debate* got off the ground on the role of intention of the author in the interpretation of literary texts. While the difference between type I and II could be seen as one between different types grounded on the same foundation, the difference between types I/II on the one hand and type III, on the other, is more fundamental – at least concerning how it was presented in 1946. In that sense, the launch of the concept of intentional fallacy in order to overcome an older model prepares the stage for literary criticism as we know it today in terms of intention: competing concepts standing next to each other, with no consensus in sight.

IV. At the end of the 1960s, the fourth concept in our typology can be located which again establishes a new benchmark in comparison to the existing models. Among others, Roland Barthes declares in 1967 the author's death and by this annihilates the last remnant of authority left to the author in relation to intention and interpretation. This conceptual choice can be situated on a line on which critics, step by step, had turned away from the author as the overarching point of orientation in interpretation (type I), via being only its stepping stone (type II), to being not available and desirable in interpretation activities (type III). The poststructuralists basically agree on the latter: also for their interpretations, the author is not relevant. But for all the types I – III summarised above, there was no doubt about the author still remaining in a privileged position as the writer of his texts. With the death of the author, this last stronghold of authorial authority falls. From a poststructuralist view, the process of meaning production is uncontrollable and locates the author, his intention, and intentionality at the periphery of that very process. Again, this enlarges – in relation to the range of already existing conceptual positions in the literary field – the space of possible positions for professional poststructural critics. First of all on the theoretical level of course, but at the same time, this view on language and meaning goes along with a further increase in the number of possible legitimate meanings that can be connected to specific texts. The horizon for poststructural readings is permanently on the move due to the very working of language as poststructuralists see it. Since the role of the critic is to unravel what is excluded by established hierarchies and relations of power, this horizon of interpretation cannot be limited and definitely not controlled, not by the author who is marginal, nor by the text that is not stable, nor by the context that is structurally unsaturated. Consequently, the introduction of this type of intention in interpretation implies further persistent growth in pos-

> sibilities for critics to distinguish themselves, since it is the critic who brings in the professional theoretical knowledge of that very process of endless shifts in meaning and hidden relations of power in language itself, in opposition to other critics and their readings of texts.

Summarising, the picture presented here has led to a coexistence of four different types of intention in criticism during the last fifty years (standard model, "better understanding", intentional fallacy, death of the author). This typology should facilitate the description of every specific concept of intention in interpretation at any historical moment, including mixtures between types.

In addition to this possibility for specific description of individual models, a structural dynamics of the literary field itself became visible in the overview of the typology as a whole. This regularity can, from the perspective of intention in interpretation, be described as an *in*crease in space for the professional acting of the critic since 1838 in three senses: first, space to be distinguished as a professional critic; second, space to distinguish himself from his fellow critics; third, space to present original legitimate readings of a text. These growing possibilities for differentiation are accompanied by a *de*creased importance of the author of the literary text as a possible limiting factor. While in type II the transgression of the boundaries of authorial intention in interpretation was an exception in special cases – which still were founded on that very authorial intention – in type III neglecting the author in professional interpretations became the rule. For type IV, then, the author disappeared even as producer of text into the margins of the language processes under the scrutiny of the professional critics.

These different types and their mixtures do exist next to each other as established concepts of interpretation. Because the choices between them are in the end normative choices, a disappearance of one of the types is unlikely – comparable to the case of poetics, where the same applies for example for the four poetic traditions M.H. Abrams reconstructed from antiquity to the twentieth century (mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, objective). What is likely, then, is that the four types of intention form a repertoire that in its full range can and will be used for actual position takings in professional interpretation. Recent literary theory can for example legitimate itself with older models as in the case of the return of the author. Think for example of the debate around actual and hypothetical intentionalists in the US, but also about recent literary theory in France ranging from genetic criticism (*critique génétique*, for example Almuth Grésillon or Dirk van Hulle), discourse analysis and grammar of texts (for example Ruth Amossy and Dominique Maingueneau) to recent forms of sociology of literature (Alain Viala and Jérôme Meizoz). However, none of the names mentioned argues for going back to the standard model of authorial intention.

What they are doing looks more like a positioning in the line of type II, with gradually more attention again for arguments related to the biographical author, his *ethos*, and the utterings in their context.

Looking back from this point to the structural dynamics of the decrease in the role of the author and the increase in the critic's space for positioning, not only the names just mentioned seem to suggest that the four types have fully used the potential productivity of this dynamics. With poststructuralist positions marking the far ends of the poles involved, I would hold that with intentional fallacy and poststructuralism the options for launching radical new views on intention in interpretation have been exhausted, at least within the dynamics reconstructed here. Accordingly, what is found in the debates since 1967 are mainly relaunches of variations of the existing four types, or combinations of them (see for example Stecker 2008). If that is true, then one might predict that this picture of variation and combination will probably dominate future debates, too. Of course not for any kind of teleological reason, but due to the exhaustive use of the space for potential positions on intention in interpretation over the last 200 years.

At the same time, one might feel tempted to recognise another kind of regularity at work behind the back of all the critics discussed here. It becomes visible after having reconstructed the typology of historical concepts of intention in interpretation as a whole, when connecting the conceptual dynamics (increased space for professional critical actions within each new model) with the dynamics of position takings (increased number of models on display, for literary theoretician or critics). This might be interpreted as a tendency towards maximising professional participation within the literary field: enlarging over the last 200 years the space for legitimate professional actions *of* and *for* growing numbers of literary critics.

Of course, with this regularity we are not talking about the actual, conscious intention of the scholars and the positions they took in the debates reconstructed above. So in a sense, what has popped up at this point of the argument is a constellation where, after having finished the effort to understand the critics as well as they understood themselves concerning concepts of intention, this reconstruction might allow us now to understand them better than they understood themselves. Since this is not the main focus of the present book, all I will do here is give this tendency in academic literary criticism a thought or two. The level on which I will try to discuss some aspects of hidden regularities in the debate on intention in interpretation will be focusing on the production of knowledge in literary studies as an academic institutional context.

Outlook

Let me start with looking back at the point when common ground between legal and literary studies was at its largest. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, scholarly behaviour in philology and law was fuelled by the better-understanding-than-the-author-understood-himself, I have argued. This motor for academic disciplinary specialisation offered extra room for scholars in both disciplines to take legitimate professional positions. At the same time, however, the formula coined by Schleiermacher and von Savigny bound the scholars of the respective disciplines together in a collective project of growth of knowledge, as the parameter "better" implies. Each scholar contributed so to speak his brick to this project as part of the disciplinary building of scholarly knowledge – a building, by the way, with no fixed plan or fixed outlines, being always under construction. In the course of the twentieth century literary studies seem to have taken a different turn, as the historical reconstruction of concepts of intention in interpretation has shown. From the introduction of the concept of intentional fallacy onwards, the fierce fight against biographical, contextual, textual or other constraints on interpretation brought a new dynamics into the way literary scholarship produces knowledge. Primarily, this dynamics can be characterised as a shift between two poles, getting on the move around 1946: aiming for distinction within a joint project of contributing to the *accumulation of better knowledge* about authors, texts and interpretations (standard model, 1838-better-understanding), as opposed to aiming for distinction primarily via *deviation* from established scholars, their theoretical positions and their specific interpretations (intentional fallacy, death of the author). Obviously, more and more scholars of literary studies tend towards the latter pole during the last decades.

There are some indications that this tendency is not restricted to concepts of intention in interpretation. Recent empirical research on general academic criteria of quality, conducted on behalf of the rectors of Swiss universities (CRUS), found that within literary studies two fundamentally different patterns of norms and values for good research could be discerned, a "traditional" and a "modern" one. These patterns are described, on the one ("modern") hand, in terms of variation, diversification, pluralism, interdisciplinarity, cooperation and orientation towards society, and on the other in terms of orientation towards their own discipline, "scientific truth", intense intrusion into the object and the state of the research in the discipline (cf. Hug et al. 2010, 94). Similarly, to take an arbitrary example, the changes in the prefaces of scholarly text editions since the 1970s underline this polarity regarding aims, norms and rhetoric. Traditional scholarly editors in the wake of, say G. Thomas Tanselle or D.C. Greetham up to the 1980s present themselves in terms of striving for completeness of variations and rele-

vant sources, of working in the line of controllability, inter-subjectivity and systematics, of laying a foundation with critical editions for the professional interpretative work of others in their discipline. More recent developments such as genetic criticism (*critique génétique*), however, undermine the editorial hierarchies between final and preliminary version, emphasise where a manuscript or a published text *might* have gone but did not, adhere to polyvalence in present and future interpretation and maximal freedom for the individual scholar (cf. Grüttemeier 2014).

These are just some indications, but they point in the same direction. Literary studies seem to have turned gradually towards a kind of machine producing ever more individual scholarly options for taking professional positions, in two regards. First, the development of literary studies as a discipline, at least since the middle of the twentieth century, shows to an increasing extent a substantial growth in the possibilities for scholars to present themselves as professionals – as for example our historical typology of intention in interpretation has shown. Second, concerning the underlying concept of knowledge production activities of literary scholars, the development reconstructed in the present book also shows a tendency towards the dominance of ("modern") norms circling around variation, innovation and distinction – as opposed to norms like building on (criticism of) established research and accumulation of disciplinary knowledge.

A metaphorical opposition that Mikhail Bakhtin has coined with regard to linguistics and the novel might be useful to clarify this claim and to avoid misunderstandings. For Bakhtin, language in general is always under the influence of two opposing forces:

> Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward. Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. (Bakhtin 1994, 272; cf. 270 – 275)

On the centripetal side, Bakhtin thinks of dictionaries, grammars, academies, schoolbooks etc., on the centrifugal side dialects, sociolects and other forms of daily use of languages work towards variation in language. In analogy, one might discover two normative conceptions of scholarship at work in every concrete utterance of literary scholars at every historical moment. The first pole could be characterised as being dominated by a primarily centripetal mode of knowledge production, directed towards a common destination such as the growth of knowledge or a more accurate, theoretically informed understanding of facts and rules. At the same time, the adherents of this pole follow norms such as scholarly control, systematic knowledge and a representative choice of

objects of research. These efforts are in the end about navigating towards some kind of truth, even if fulfilling that truth claim will always be beyond reach. In such a centripetally dominated view on scholarship, quite some authority is given to the state of research at a certain moment, either as something to build on or as something to oppose, when it seems to stand in the way of the further development of the scholarly discipline. That is basically how I would describe the conception of scholarship based on variations of the standard model and the "better-understanding" model in the sense of Schleiermacher and von Savigny. Historically speaking, as we have seen, these types were dominant during the disciplinary differentiation of philology and law, contributing to their academic institutionalisation as we know it in the nineteenth century.

At the other pole of that opposition are the centrifugal forces of knowledge production, based on norms such as plurality, difference, innovation and maximising the freedom for individual scholarly activities. As a consequence, authority – be it that of the author, of historical context, of a finished text or of existing research – is much less important for scholarship dominated by the centrifugal vector. What is primarily relevant for this research is distinction in the sense of taking scholarly roads not taken before, while at the same time establishing connections to what is seen as current developments in contemporary society, more often than not with an implicit or explicit political agenda, critical towards those in power and sympathetic with those without. In other words: centrifugally dominated research is to a lesser degree about determining the relevance of one's own research with regard to the results of existing research. Instead, what is aimed for is often based on the rhetoric of innovation, "combining" and "bringing together": combining specific methods, questions or societal developments with specific texts simply *because* they have not been brought together that way previously. The motivation generally is *not* that the combination will solve a research question that existing research has inspired or vexed, neither with regard to the specific text nor with regard to the specific method under scrutiny.

This opposition of centrifugal and centripetal forces of knowledge production is not an absolute one, neither for language nor for literary criticism: it is a relative opposition, on the institutional as well as on the individual level. Of course, innovation plays a role in centripetally dominated research, too, and even the most centrifugally active scholars usually regard their work as being part of scholarship and/or the world of universities. Therefore, this distinction is about dominance and degrees, not about binary categorisation. Used that way, I think it has quite some heuristic value, not only with regard to the reconstruction of the historical debate on intention in interpretation, but also with regard to the present situation of literary studies.

It allows us, among other things, to discover also dominant tendencies in general claims about science. David R. Shumway and Craig Dionne for example hold that although "disciplinary practitioners typically share a set of assumptions, methods, and practices", in the end "the knowledge they produce tends toward dispersion rather than unity" (Shumway and Dionne 2002, 6). From their Foucauldian and from a "centrifugal" Humanities-perspective, this claim has quite some truth in it. However, to take a random but influential example, Max Weber's *Wissenschaft als Beruf* ("Science as a Vocation", cf. Weber 2004) from 1917 leaves little doubt that Weber and with him most scientists, historically and contemporary, would not line up under the dispersion flag. With Weber's strong emphasis on scientific "progress", he is convinced that the main force getting a scientist to work every day is that others will get further than he will. What is nowhere to be found in Weber is a hope to produce "an increasing quantity of narrowly diverging statements", as Shumway and Dionne (2002, 6) have it. In the terms suggested in the present study, their view on disciplinary knowledge production turns out to be based on a centrifugal conception of academia.

From that perspective, summarising the findings of the present book, there is quite some evidence that literary studies over the last 60 years tended primarily towards a centrifugal mode of knowledge production in the interpretation of literary texts. The diachronic development of the typology reconstructed here and the enormous impact of the recent two new types ("1946" and "1967") on scholarship are the main arguments for that claim. At the same time, the dominant tendency towards "dispersion rather than unity" is fuelling an unprecedented growth in publications and participants in literary studies worldwide (cf. Bauerlein 2011). This "modern" tendency in literary studies primarily fosters difference, diversity and innovation, and to a lesser extent pursues shared questions on the basis of what is regarded as the accumulated knowledge of the discipline. It offers unlimited and unlimitable possibilities for new disciplinary and interdisciplinary projects and professional activities. But there is a price to be paid for this domination of innovation and distinction on the level where scholarly relevance is legitimated in competition with other disciplines. As Gerald Graff put it already some time ago: "What proved disabling is not the failure of humanists to agree on objectives, but their failure to disagree on them in ways that might become recognizable" (Graff 1989, 263). The development of the debates on intention and interpretation from a historical perspective are a case in point. Also the projections in interpretation the present book has discussed point in a similar direction and give some evidence for the claim that literary scholarship in the years to come probably should become more centripetal again, or it might not be at all – at least no longer as a discipline in terms of a minimum of shared questions and shared knowledge.

By the same token, one can conclude that discussing intention in interpretation does not necessarily bring out the worst. In this book, it has brought out the outlines of a historical typology of intention in interpretation and tentative institutional explanations for the shifts in the debate reconstructed here. Furthermore, the book has triggered reflections on hidden regularities in the professional behaviour of participants in the debate and literary studies in general. If these outlines, explanations and regularities have been reconstructed here in a way that colleagues, students and interested readers can reflect, agree or disagree on, then at least the intention of this author has found its way into the text of this book.

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