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The interpretation of the meaning of texts is the central activity of the humanities and social sciences. But are there limits to what a text can be made to mean? Are the author's intentions relevant to establishing these limits? Should some readings be ruled out as 'overinterpretations'?

This book brings together some of the most distinguished figures currently at work in philosophy and in literary theory and criticism. Three new pieces by Umberto Eco, leading semiotic theorist as well as internationally famous novelist, form the core of the book. Here, Eco develops his view of how the 'intention of the work' may set limits to possible interpretations. Then, from their different points of view, the philosopher Richard Rorty, the literary theorist Jonathan Culler, and the critic and novelist Christine Brooke-Rose challenge Eco's argument and elaborate their own distinctive positions. The book concludes with Eco's reply to his critics.

In a substantial introduction, Stefan Collini sets this debate in its historical and institutional context, and explores the ways in which fundamental human values are at stake. This accessible and often entertaining book makes a major contribution to the debate about textual meaning, and will be essential reading for all those interested in literary theory and in the wider issues raised by the question of interpretation.

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Interpretation and overinterpretation

UMBERTO ECO

WITH
RICHARD RORTY,
JONATHAN CULLER,
CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE

EDITED BY
Stefan Collini



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