

PMLA

Volume 101
Number 5

*Publications of the
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of America*

October 1986

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Charles Segal

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October 1986

PMIA

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association of America*

Volume 101

Number 5

PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR BY THE ASSOCIATION

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Issues for the current year are available from the MLA Member and Customer Services Office. Claims for undelivered issues will be honored if they are received within one year of the publication date; thereafter the single issue price will be charged.

For information about the availability of back issues, inquire of Kraus Reprint Co., Millwood, NY 10546; (914) 762-2200. Early and current volumes may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Purchase of current volumes on film is restricted to subscribers of the journal.

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10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003

All communications including notices of changes of address should be sent to the Member and Customer Services Office of the Association. If a change of address also involves a change of institutional affiliation, that office should be informed of this fact at the same time.

Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing office.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 12-32040.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Member and Customer Services Office, Modern Language Association of America, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003.

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Abstract. If a dialogics, inspired by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, were recognized as an art of discourse on the level of the arts of rhetoric and dialectic, it might shape a critical practice different from those governed by the more familiar arts. Tzvetan Todorov's recent essay on dialogic criticism and Merle Brown's account of F. R. Leavis's "collaborative exchange" in criticism contribute to the invention of such an art; further efforts to rationalize it seem desirable and possible in the present critical conversation. (DHB)

"Conveniency to Nature": Literary Art and Arbitrariness. CHARLES ERIC REEVES	798
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Abstract. Despite its prominence in many critical lexicons, the term "literary convention" rarely receives sustained theoretical scrutiny. Rather, it has served interpreters, and even theorists, as a kind of general-purpose catchall, loosely synonymous with "custom," "habit," "assumption," "myth," "cliché," "fiction," or the French *convenance*. I argue that a philosophically rigorous definition of social convention may work heuristically to clarify what literary convention means and how it functions within a larger poetics. In particular, an intelligible notion of literary convention will help clarify the dialectical relation of mimesis and semiosis—what derives from the "natural" world and what results from an internal economy of parts and whole. (CER)

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Abstract. Narrative theorists generally assume that narratees in novels are distinct from actual readers, as narrators are from authors. In early novels by Stowe, Gaskell, and Eliot, however, "engaging narrators" encourage actual readers to identify with the "you" that appears in narrative interventions. These novelists explicitly hoped to stir actual readers' sympathy for real-world sufferers, possibly even to move readers to action. An engaging narrator, unlike a "distancing" one, calls the narratee "you" (not "the reader"); assumes that the narratee sympathizes with the story; claims that the characters are "real"; and consistently directs the actual reader to consider the parallels between the fiction and "real life." Since these strategies seem to originate in certain nineteenth-century women's texts, narrative theory's omission of them may have implications for gender criticism. (RRW)

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JULIE RIVKIN	
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