am "scandalously uninformed" but that these distinctions seem to make no difference in the use of the critical practices that are my main concern, as I explain in note 2. He is also right in saying that I later shift my focus—as I indicate on 498—to look at the basic causal scheme of Marxism (and Freudianism). I acknowledge there that many new Marxists claim to loosen the tie between base and superstructure (though they usually find that the base is the "ultimate" cause "in the last instance," or words to that effect); but my concern, I repeat, is the practice governing their readings, which regularly insist that whatever the cause of the play's action may appear to be, it is really located in the base. I agree with him that this is "reductively simplistic," but that is not my doing. Marxism, like Freudianism, gives us a reductively simplistic account of literature and of human behavior.

Levin denies irony. Here he conflates two kinds of irony that I distinguish in *New Readings* (78–79). The irony of the typical detective story is very different from the kind produced by what I call the ironic approach, where the apparent meaning is never "proved wrong" in the ending. I say in my book that I yield to no one in my admiration of irony and that my principal objection to this ironic approach is that it has given irony a bad name (145).

Levin scorns a rhetorical effect of texts. I do not know what this means. I believe that literary texts have emotional and intellectual effects (which my own approach centers on) and that these effects can involve politics. My article, however, is concerned with the political effect not of literature but of criticism. It certainly affects professional politics, but I question its effect on politics in the outside world—specifically, in promoting the transformation of society that Marxist critics claim is their goal—and I am glad to see that he finds one of my points "intriguing." But I must object to the classism implicit in his stereotyping (and conflating) of my "middle-class" students, whom he apparently feels superior to. I do not.

Levin proves intentionalism by default. He reveals his own "intentionalist faith" here by attributing an intention to me, but it is wrong. In *New Readings* I use intentionalist arguments because the readings examined there all claim to interpret the author's intended meaning. My own approach is also intentionalist, but I am a pluralist and believe there are valid nonintentionalist approaches that do not personify the text. In my article I am "scandalized" (not the word I would use), not because the critics assert that we can never attain objective knowledge of a text, but because they assert this position and then violate it in their own practice (499). And I do not call their antiobjectivist position a fallacy; I say that they call the objectivist position a fallacy (492).

Karleen Middleton Murphy's question about my taxonomy is easily answered. I divide the feminist critics I discuss into Marxists and neo-Freudians; most of the first group are British and most of the second are American, but I think their approaches are more relevant than their nationalities. Of course there are other kinds of feminist critics, but I am not dealing with them. I am not even focusing on feminist criticism, as she seems to think. Most of my examples of the principal practices that I examine come from nonfeminist Marxists.

There are two answers to her question about recentness. I submitted my article in 1988, when the readings I discuss were more recent than they were when it was published two years later. But she herself supplies a more important answer in her remarks on the recent rapid changes in criticism—not only, I would add, in feminist criticism—that have shrunk the time span denoted by *recent*, since a reading can now become obsolete in a few years (the fate of the first-wave feminists treated in "Feminist Thematics"). This does not apply, however, to the practices treated in "Bardicide," which have not yet gone out of fashion—at least not at the time I write this reply.

We seem to agree on politics. I certainly do not want to regress to an earlier stage of gender relations and strongly support the struggle for full equality. Until that happy day of Blakean "higher innocence" arrives, however, feminists should not be faulted for "hostility" toward those whom we must struggle against. But I do not see what this has to do with my article.

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On Mario Vargas Llosa on Truth and Freedom

To the Editor:

In "Updating Karl Popper" (105 [1990]: 1018–25), Mario Vargas Llosa uses the philosophy of Karl Popper as the starting point for a connected series of reflections on science, history, politics, ethics, and literature. Vargas Llosa tells us that Popper understands freedom as the soul of science and culture. He also claims that for Popper truth is invented, not discovered (1018), and Vargas Llosa finds in this notion the room for free human thought. Primitive, closed societies mistake their truths for objective absolutes. The critical rationality,

which Popper makes central to science, unmasks the pretension of absoluteness and subjects all truths to ruthless criticism, inaugurating an open society in which the critical spirit roams free.

But Vargas Llosa's Popper also tells us that "at the dawning of the open society . . . a contrary enterprise was also born" (1021). This enterprise is motivated by a flight from freedom and its attendant burdens and anxieties, by a longing for stability, certainty, and peace. Historicism, which seeks to compel order on change by discovering the inner law of every change, is "the most serpentine and efficacious enemy of the culture of freedom," and it is in the "totalitarian" philosophy of Karl Marx that this historicist threat to the open society "reaches its apogee" (1022). The central crime of historicism is that it denies human freedom. The world of the gulag is its political expression. Following Popper, Vargas Llosa calls on us to bear the burden of freedom. We must resist all claims to close off the "vertigo, pandemonium, immeasurable absurdity, bottomless chaos, [and] multiple disorder" that the real world offers us (1024). It is the proper domain of literature, not history, to offer us the security and certainty that life denies us.

This understanding of Marxism touches on aspects of our shared historical experience that are undeniable. And yet I believe that it rests on two philosophical confusions that undermine Vargas Llosa's position.

"Truth, for Karl Popper, is not discovered; it is invented. It is, therefore, always a provisional truth, which lasts only as long as it is not refuted. Truth is in the mind, in imagination and reason . . ." (1018). Here, in Vargas Llosa's opening words, there is a serious distortion of Popper's philosophy. For, as Vargas Llosa himself points out (1019), Popper adopts Alfred Tarski's analysis of truth, which is a variation on the classical conception of truth as a correspondence between theory and facts. What Popper himself says is that theories are inventions of the mind, inventions that take on lives of their own as residents of a "third world" of ideational objects. But while theories are invented, their truth or falsity is not. The truth or falsity of a theory is anchored in objective features of external reality—a reality independent of the mind of the thinker. While according to Popper we can never be certain that our theories accurately reflect this objective reality, it is precisely because our theories face the test of objective truth that they can suffer the kind of failure that no human "invention" can make go away.

The second error that runs throughout Vargas Llosa's essay is a confusion between fatalistic and nonfatalistic versions of determinism. The fatalist says that what will be will be regardless of the actions of human beings. Fatalists see the course of history as determined by forces that are independent of human consciousness. Marx's historicism is often seen in this light as an economic determinism in which the transformations from feudalism to capitalism and from capitalism to socialism bypass human subjectivity. Vargas Llosa succumbs to this misconception. He tells us, "The historicists invalidate their interpretations by imputing to them the value of laws to which human events would yield passively, as objects submit to the law of gravity and as the tides to the motion of the moon" (1024). But the historicist need not claim, and no Marxist of consequence ever did claim, that history is independent of conscious human action. Even in its economic determinist formulations, Marxist theory of history is a nonfatalistic determinism. The economic determinist argues that economic conditions produce class-conscious revolutionary action, which in turn produces new economic conditions. In this view the historical process, quite unlike the motion of the moon, depends on the conscious actions of human beings. Freedom is the opposite of coercion, not of causation.

Vargas Llosa treasures freedom. But in his very solicitude for it he in fact dangerously threatens it. Thinking that objectivity and science in history are the enemies of freedom, he champions an invented history: "an arbitrary organization of human reality that defends us against the anguish produced by our intuition of the world, of life, as a vast disorder" (1024). He tells us that history adopts a point of view that is, "in the final analysis, as subjective as artistic constructs" (1022). I submit that it is just such invented history that the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are now rejecting. And they are rejecting this history in the name of an objective historical truth that transcends human invention.

Objectively true history is not the enemy of human freedom. Whatever the failures of Marxism may be, and they appear to be manifold, its understanding of human action as constrained by historical circumstances has considerable merit. Life is full of surprises. But it is not the "vertigo, pandemonium, immeasurable absurdity, bottomless chaos, [and] multiple disorder" Vargas Llosa claims. We will not awaken tomorrow to find that in Peru the rivers of wealth flow plentifully for the benefit of all. The freedom Vargas Llosa protects by denying any possibility of a scientific history is an illusion. And in claiming this illusory freedom he cuts us off from the understanding of the present that real freedom needs.

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