

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Every thing is what it is, and not another thing.

Joseph Butler¹

Everything is what it is [...].

Isaiah Berlin²

BUTLER'S REMARK WAS AMONG Isaiah Berlin's favourite quotations, and Berlin echoes it in one of his most important essays. I take it as my starting point here because the first thing to be said about the present volume, in order to dispel any possible misunderstanding, is that it is not in any degree the new work on Romanticism that Berlin had hoped to write ever since giving the (unscripted) A. W. Mellon Lectures on this subject, in March and April 1965, at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. In the years that followed, especially after his retirement from the Presidency of Wolfson College, Oxford, in 1975, he continued to read widely with a book on Romanticism in mind, and a large mass of notes accumulated. In the last decade of his life he collected all his notes together in a separate room and started afresh on the task of pulling them together: he made a list of headings and began dictating on to cassette a selection of the notes, marshalling them under the headings as he went. He also considered using his material as a long introduction to an edition

¹ *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, 2nd ed., 'To which is added a PREFACE' (London, 1729), preface, xxix.

² 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958): *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford, 2002), 172.

of work by E. T. A. Hoffmann rather than as a free-standing study of his own. But the new synthesis continued to elude him, perhaps partly because he had left it too late, and so far as I am aware not so much as a sentence of the intended work was ever written.

Clearly it is a matter of great regret for his readers, as it certainly was for Berlin himself, that he did not write his revised account. But its absence is not all loss: had it been written, the present book, which is simply an edited transcript of the lectures, would never have been published; and there is a freshness and immediacy, an intensity and excitement in the transcript that would inevitably have been obscured, to some extent, in a carefully reworked and expanded version. There are several other unscripted lectures delivered by Berlin that survive as recordings or transcripts, and some of these can be directly compared either with published texts that derive from them, or with previously composed texts on which they are based. Such a comparison shows how the repeated revisions Berlin tended to undertake on the road to publication, for all that they enrich the intellectual content and precision of a work, can sometimes have a sobering effect on the extempore spoken word; or, conversely, it shows how a long underlying text – a ‘torso’ as Berlin called it – can acquire new life and directness when used as a source for a lecture not read from a prepared script. The lecture delivered from notes and the carefully constructed book are, one might say in pluralist terminology, incommensurable. In this case, for better or worse, only the former incarnation of one of Berlin’s central intellectual projects is available.

The title I have used is one Berlin himself suggested at an early stage. It was supplanted by ‘Sources of Romantic Thought’ for the delivery of the lectures¹ because in the opening pages of Saul

¹ The change, made by IB in a letter of 28 February 1965 (see 175 below) came too late to be reflected in the March 1965 National Gallery of Art ‘Calendar of Events’ leaflet, but the April leaflet did use the new title.

Bellow's novel *Herzog*, published in 1964, the hero, a Jewish academic called Moses Herzog who is undergoing a crisis of self-confidence, is struggling unsuccessfully to deliver a course of adult-education lectures in a New York night-school – lectures entitled precisely 'The Roots of Romanticism'. This was merely a remarkable coincidence – Berlin denied any connection, and Saul Bellow later confirmed that he was right to do so: 'I was writing a comic novel; I needed a title and picked one out of the air, as one is apt to do in novel-writing, never dreaming that this shadow-paragraph of a mere nothing would require investigation and would come back to haunt me. At the time, I knew Isaiah Berlin only by reputation. I had not yet met him.'¹ In any event, the earlier title was certainly more resonant, and if there were any grounds for abandoning it at the time, they have by now surely disappeared.²

Even if Berlin's introductory remarks before he began the lectures proper are too occasional to appear in the body of the published text, they remain of some prefatory interest. Here, accordingly, is the greater part of them:

These lectures are primarily intended for genuine experts on the arts – art historians and experts on aesthetics, amongst whom I cannot possibly count myself. My only valid excuse for choosing this subject is that the Romantic movement, naturally, is relevant to the arts: the arts, even though I know not very much about them, cannot be altogether kept out, and I promise not to keep them out beyond measure.

There is a sense in which the connection between Romanticism and the arts is even stronger. If I can claim any qualification for

¹ Letter to Henry Hardy, 8 March 2001. I had wondered if they might have met before the novel was finished and discussed Berlin's plans.

² Other titles considered by Berlin include 'Prometheus: A Study of the Rise of Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century' (mentioned only satirically and immediately rejected), 'The Rise of Romanticism', 'The Romantic Impact', 'The Romantic Rebellion', 'The Romantic Revolt' and 'The Romantic Revolution' (used in 1960 for a lecture).

talking about this subject, it is because I propose to deal with political and social life, and moral life as well; and it is true, I think, to say of the Romantic movement that it is not only a movement in which the arts are concerned, not only an artistic movement, but perhaps the first moment, certainly in the history of the West, when the arts dominated other aspects of life, when there was a kind of tyranny of art over life, which in some sense is the essence of the Romantic movement; at least, I propose to try to demonstrate that this is so.

I should add that the interest of Romanticism is not simply historical. A great many phenomena of the present day – nationalism, existentialism, admiration for great men, admiration for impersonal institutions, democracy, totalitarianism – are profoundly affected by the rise of Romanticism, which enters them all. For this reason it is a subject not altogether irrelevant even to our own day.

Also of some interest is the following fragment, which appears to be a draft opening of the lectures proper, written before they were delivered. It is the only piece of prose composed by Berlin for this project that I have found among his notes:

I do not propose even to attempt to define Romanticism in terms of attributes or purposes, for, as Northrop Frye wisely warns, if one attempts to point to some obvious characteristic of Romantic poets – for example, the new attitude to nature or to the individual – and to say that this is confined to the new writers of the period from 1770 to 1820, and to contrast it with the attitude of Pope or Racine, someone is bound to produce contrary instances from Plato or Kālidāsa, or (like Kenneth Clark) from the Emperor Hadrian, or (like Seillière) from Heliodorus, or from a medieval Spanish poet or pre-Islamic Arab verse, and finally from Racine and Pope themselves.

Nor do I wish to imply that there are *pure* cases – a sense in which any artist or thinker or person could be said to be *wholly*

Romantic, and nothing else at all, any more than a man could be said to be *wholly* individual, that is to say, to share no properties with anything else in the world, or *wholly* social, that is to say, to possess no properties unique to himself. Nevertheless, these words are not meaningless, and indeed we cannot do without them: they indicate attributes or tendencies or ideal types whose application serves to throw light, to identify and perhaps, if they had not been sufficiently noticed earlier, to exaggerate what, for want of a better word, have to be called *aspects* of a man's character, or of his activity, or of an outlook, or of a movement, or of a doctrine.

To say of someone that he is a Romantic thinker or a Romantic hero is not to say nothing. Sometimes it is to say that what he is or does requires to be explained in terms of a purpose, or a cluster of purposes (perhaps internally contradictory), or a vision, or perhaps glimpses or intimations, which may point towards some state or activity that is in principle unrealisable – something in life or a movement or a work of art which is part of its essence, but not explained, perhaps unintelligible. No more than this has been the purpose of most serious writers on the many – the countless – aspects of Romanticism.

My intention is even more limited. It appears to me that a radical shift of values occurred in the latter half of the eighteenth century – before what is properly called the Romantic movement – which has affected thought, feeling and action in the Western world. This shift is most vividly expressed in much of what seems to be most characteristically Romantic in the Romantics: not in all that is Romantic in them, nor in what is Romantic in all of them, but in something quintessential, something without which neither the revolution of which I intend to speak, nor those consequences of it recognised by all those who have acknowledged that there was such a phenomenon as the Romantic movement – Romantic art, Romantic thought – would have been possible. If I am told that I have not included the characteristic that lies at the

heart of this or that or even every manifestation of Romanticism, the case is made – I assent only too readily. It is not my purpose to define Romanticism, only to deal with the revolution of which Romanticism, at any rate in some of its guises, is the strongest expression and symptom. No more than this: but this is a great deal, for I hope to show that this revolution is the deepest and most lasting of all changes in the life of the West, no less far-reaching than the three great revolutions whose impact is not questioned – the industrial in England, the political in France, and the social and economic in Russia – with which, indeed, the movement with which I am concerned is connected at every level.

In editing the transcripts of these lectures (in the light of the BBC recordings) I have tried to restrict myself, on the whole, to making the minimum changes necessary to ensure a smoothly readable text; I have regarded the informality of style and the occasional mild unorthodoxy of idiom that are natural in lectures given from notes as assets to be preserved, within certain limits. Even though a good deal of syntactic repair-work was sometimes required, as is normal in most transcripts of spontaneously uttered sentences, there is rarely any real doubt about Berlin's intended meaning. A few minor alterations made to the transcripts by Berlin at an earlier stage have been incorporated, and this explains some of the few substantive discrepancies that will be noticed by a reader who, with this book in hand as a libretto, listens to the recordings of the lectures that are available.¹

I have as always done my best to trace Berlin's quotations,

¹ Berlin's highly individual and arresting manner of delivery has been a central ingredient in his reputation, and the experience of listening to him lecturing is highly recommended. The whole series may be heard (by prior appointment) at the British Library in London, or at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. A CD of the last lecture was provided with the hardbound British edition of this book so that readers could hear something of how the lectures sounded when they were given. This edition is no longer in print, though many libraries hold copies. The recording of the last lecture is also available via <<http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/information/recordings.html>>.

and have made any necessary corrections in what were clearly intended as passages quoted verbatim from an English source, or as direct translations from another language, rather than as paraphrase.¹ There is, however, another device in Berlin's armoury, intermediate between verbatim quotation and paraphrase, that might be called 'semi-quotation'. The semi-quoted words are sometimes presented between quotation marks, but they have the character of what an author might say, or what he in effect said, rather than claiming to reproduce (or translate) his actual published words. This is a familiar phenomenon in books written before our own time,² but has perhaps rather fallen from favour

¹ In a perfect world, perhaps, all sources would be provided, not only for (semi-)quotations but also for paraphrase, and even for material more loosely based on identifiable works. But the world is thankfully not perfect, and the time taken to track down such sources would be out of all proportion to the benefit of specifying them, even if the task could be completed, which is extremely doubtful. Indeed, if such an exhaustive process of annotation were pursued to its logical conclusion, the apparatus would be longer than the text, and the predicament of the reader would be even worse than in the case of a map drawn on a scale of 1:1, which would unhelpfully duplicate aspects of the reality it represented. Besides, sources themselves often require checking, so that the attempt to validate every statement by reference to sources would generate an indefinite regress towards primary empirical observations (themselves often, if not always, equivocal and/or uncheckable), and would therefore in practice prevent the completion of any non-fictional writing or editing.

² Though it is hard to distinguish it from a straightforward lack of the intention to be accurate by today's standards. As Theodore Besterman puts it in the introduction to his translation of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* (Harmondsworth, 1971, 14), 'modern notions of textual fidelity were unknown in the eighteenth century. The words Voltaire places within quotation marks are not always accurate or even direct quotations.' In Giambattista Vico's case matters were even worse, as Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch record in the preface to a revised edition of their translation of Vico's *New Science* (New York, 1968, v–vi): 'Vico quotes inexactly from memory; his references are vague; his memory is often not of the original source but of a quotation from it in some secondary work; he ascribes to one author what is said by another, or to one work what is said in another by the same author [...]. However, as Bergin and Fisch put it in the preface to the first edition of their translation of this work (New York, 1948, viii), 'A complete exposure of Vico's errors [...] would not touch the heart of his argument.'

In Berlin's case, at any rate, there is the further problem that, to the extent that his quotations are not strictly accurate, they are usually improvements on the original. He and I often discussed this, and he was delightfully self-mocking about it, but usually insisted on correction once the facts were established, even though his relaxed approach to quotation almost never distorted the quoted author's meaning, and sometimes clarified

in the contemporary academic climate. In the collections of Berlin's essays that I published in Berlin's lifetime I usually confined myself to either direct quotation, checked against a primary source, or avowed paraphrase. In a book of this kind, however, it seemed artificial and unduly intrusive to attempt to conceal this perfectly natural and rhetorically effective middle way by insisting that quotation marks should be used only for exact quotation. I mention this so that the reader is not misled, and as background to some further remarks about Berlin's quotations that I make at the beginning of the list of references (181).

The lectures were first broadcast by the educational radio station WAMU-FM (based in Washington, DC) in June and July of 1965. They were aired by the BBC on its Third Programme in August and September 1966, and again in October and November 1967. They were repeated in 1975 in Australia (without authorisation), and in Britain, on BBC Radio 3, in 1989, the year that Berlin reached the age of 80. Excerpts have also been included in later programmes about Berlin's work.

Berlin himself steadfastly refused to allow the publication of a transcript in his lifetime, not only because, until the last years of his life, he still hoped to write the 'proper' book, but also, perhaps, because he believed that it was an act of vanity to publish a straight transcript of unscripted lectures without undertaking the labour of revision and expansion. He was well aware that some of what he had said was probably too general, too speculative, too crude – acceptable from the podium, maybe, but not on the printed page. Indeed, in a letter of thanks to P. H. Newby, then head of BBC Radio's Third Programme, he describes himself as 'letting loose this huge stream of words – more than six hours

it. Of course, the remarks made about Vico by Bergin and Fisch are an exaggeration if applied to Berlin, though, since Vico was one of Berlin's intellectual heroes, the (partial) analogy has a certain resonance. However, Bergin and Fisch aptly point out (1968, vi) that Fausto Nicolini, Vico's famous editor, treats Vico's scholarly shortcomings 'with chastening love' – surely an exemplary editorial attitude.

of hectic, in places incoherent, hurried, breathless – to my ears sometimes hysterical – talk'.¹

There are those who believe that this transcript should not have been published even posthumously – that for all its undoubted interest it has devalued the currency of Berlin's *oeuvre*. With this view I disagree, and I have derived support from the opinions of a number of scholars whose judgement I respect, in particular the late Patrick Gardiner, the most fastidious of critics, who read the edited transcript some years before I first published it, and voted unequivocally for its publication as it stood. Even if it is indeed a mistake to publish material of this kind in its author's lifetime (and I am ambivalent about even that), it seems to me not only acceptable but highly desirable to do so when the author is as remarkable and the lectures as stimulating as in this case. Besides, Berlin himself clearly accepted that the transcript would be published after his death, and referred to this eventuality without indicating that he had serious reservations. Posthumous publication, he believed, is governed by criteria quite different from those that apply in an author's lifetime; and he must have known, though he would never admit it, that his Mellon Lectures were a tour de force of the extempore lecturer's art that deserved to be made permanently available, warts and all. It was time for this view – to quote his own words about his avowedly controversial book on J. G. Hamann – 'to be accepted or refuted by the critical reader'.²

John Gray's foreword is new to this second edition, for which I have also made a number of minor corrections, added some sources that have come to light since the book was first published, some of them via Google Books – that deeply flawed but

¹ Letter dated 20 September 1966. See 179 below.

² From the foreword written specially in 1994 for the German edition of *The Magus of the North*: see Isaiah Berlin, *Der Magus in Norden* (Berlin, 1995), 14. The original English text of this foreword has now been published in Berlin's *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (London and Princeton, 2000): for this remark see p. 252 in that volume.

transforming tool of the literary researcher's trade – and compiled an appendix comprising a selection of letters about the lectures, mainly written by Berlin. Most of his correspondence on this topic survives in his own papers and/or at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. I am grateful to Maygene Daniels, Chief, Gallery Archives, for supplying me with copies of the NGA's holdings. The letters have been chosen to give the flavour of Berlin's almost paranoid attitude to giving public lectures, especially such a high-profile series as this. Acknowledgement is due to the *Washington Post* for permission to reproduce the drawing of Berlin on p. 171.

Among the correspondence is an exchange about possible slides to illustrate the lectures. There are two letters from Berlin. In the first, dated 8 February 1965, Berlin remarks with splendid inconsistency: 'I am still not really intending to show any slides if I can help it; but at the same time I quite want to [in] at any rate one of the lectures.' In the second (24 February) he writes: 'provided the general notion is clear I would not explicate them in detail, but merely have them there as a kind of general background to show the sort of thing'. In the spirit of this last observation I have added five of his suggested images at roughly appropriate places in the text, 'to show the sort of thing'.

Since the new edition has been reset, the pagination differs from that of the first edition. This will cause some inconvenience to readers trying to follow up references to the first edition. I have therefore posted a concordance of the two editions at <http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/published_works/rr/concordance.html>, so that references to one can readily be converted into references to the other.

There are a number of debts of gratitude to be recorded – more, no doubt, than I can remember. Those concerning the provision of references I mention on p. 183. Otherwise my main obligations (mostly the same as in the case of earlier volumes) are to the most generous benefactors who have financed my Fellowship

at Wolfson College; to the late Lord Bullock for ensuring that I have benefactors to thank; to Wolfson College for housing me and my work; to the late Pat Utechin, the author's secretary, who was my patient friend and supporter for some thirty-five years; to Roger Hausheer and the late Patrick Gardiner for reading and advising on the transcript, and for many other forms of indispensable aid; to Jonny Steinberg for some valuable editorial suggestions; to the publishers who had to withstand my many and exacting requirements, especially Will Sulkin and Rowena Skelton-Wallace at Chatto and Windus, and Deborah Tegarden at Princeton University Press; to Samuel Guttenplan for moral support and useful advice; and finally (though I had thoughtlessly not mentioned them before) to my family for enduring the rather strange form of single-mindedness that underlies my chosen occupation. I hope it is almost superfluous to add that my greatest debt is to Isaiah Berlin himself for entrusting me with the most fulfilling task that an editor could possibly hope for, and for giving me a completely free hand in performing it.

Henry Hardy

Wolfson College, Oxford, May 1998

Heswall, May 2012

