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The Hybrid Made Flesh. The Legacy of a Hispanic-American Thinker: Jorge/George Santayana

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Daniel Moreno-Moreno
IES Miguel Servet (Zaragoza, Spain)

Abstract: This study aims to introduce Santayana to present-day North American Hispanists, from whose perspective it analyzes the hybrid or two-pronged nature of his work and life. Santayana offers a paradigmatic mode of being Hispanic and being American, which could be of significant interest: his life and work do not contain nostalgia and alienation but, rather, liberation and release. This study also examines the bilingualism that can be found in all of the translations of his work into Spanish (in both Latin America and Spain), and in his secondary bibliography (works cited as well as the list of publications included as an appendix.)

Keywords: hybridism, bilingualism, translation, biography, philosophy, Santayana

¹ This is an English translation, offered by the Observatorio, of the Spanish original submitted by the author (see 057-01/2020SP).

[A]s a thinker I was born at the wrong time and bred
in the wrong way. I like to hope that someone
may later revive parts of my philosophy in
more favorable circumstances.
(Santayana, 1957, p. 19)

1. Introduction

To any casual observer, Santayana's appearance is decidedly multifaceted. For this study, I have chosen to examine the facet that most attracted my attention as I delved into his life and work. Santayana, like the god Janus, had two faces: one looking to the past, the 19th century, and the other looking to the future, the 20th; one looking to Europe and the other looking to the United States. Or perhaps he was like the *Mona Lisa*: now a man, now a woman; now joyful, now melancholy. For some, Santayana is Don Jorge, while for others, he is George. These names compound in the hybrid *George Santayana*, a name that we often see in writing, but which grates at the ear whenever it is spoken aloud: Spanish speakers struggle with the *George*, and for English speakers, *Santayana*—with its four identical vowels that do not allow for the varying tones of English—is practically torture. As we will see, this is no minor detail. Bilingualism defined not just Santayana, but also translations of his work and his secondary bibliography. Thus, this study will appear in the standard bilingual format of this series, highlighting the synchronicity between Santayana and the work of Harvard's *Observatorio Cervantes*.

I trust that this theme will be a sound introduction to Santayana for the many Hispanists in North America today. To that end, I will rely on the support of several scholars. First among these is Antonio Marichalar, who, as early as 1924, called Santayana “El español inglés George Santayana” (the English Spaniard George

Santayana)²; more recently, Beltrán Llavador called him a nomad (Beltrán 2002); Gustavo Pérez Firmat went a step further, viewing Santayana as a man who lived “on the hyphen,” as Pérez Firmat demonstrated in a chapter of *Tongue Ties* (2003) that he dedicated to the philosopher: “Saying Un-English Things in English” (Pérez Firmat, 2003, pp. 23-43).³ Krzysztof P. Skwroński aptly described “Santayana’s In-Betweenness” in his book *Santayana and America: Values, Liberties, Responsibility* (Skwroński, 2007, pp. 1-28). As for me, I prefer to characterize Santayana’s life and work as the incarnation of hybridity, in the sense that he could successfully combine—or, at times, simply juxtapose—diverse and even apparently incompatible realities and points of view; he did so with a sense of relief, rather than pain or distress; for him, there is only liberation and release, not nostalgia and alienation. It was not in vain that he made the interpreter Hermes his divine protector:

A traveller should be devout to Hermes, and I have always loved him above the other gods for that charming union which is found in him of youth with experience, alacrity with prudence, modesty with laughter, and a ready tongue with a sound heart. In him the first bubblings of mockery subside at once into courtesy and helpfulness. He is the winged Figaro of Olympus, willing to yield to others in station and to pretend to serve them, but really wiser and happier than any of them. [...] His admirable temper and mastery of soul appear in nothing more clearly than in his love-affair with the beautiful Maia. [...] The approach of Hermes awakes her and lends her life—the only life she has. Her true name is Illusion; and it is very characteristic of him, so rich in pity, merriment, and shrewdness, to have chosen this poor child, Illusion, for his love. [...] Here is a kindly god indeed, humane though superhuman, friendly though inviolate, who does not preach, who does not threaten, who does not lay new, absurd, or morose commands on our befuddled souls, but who unravels, who relieves, who shows us the innocence of the things we hated and the clearness of the things we frowned on or denied. He interprets us to the gods, and they accept us; he interprets us to one another, and we perceive that the foreigner, too, spoke a plain language: happy he if he was wise in his own tongue. It is for the divine herald alone to catch the meaning of all, without subduing his merry voice to any dialect of mortals. He mocks our stammerings and forgives them; and when we say anything to the purpose, and reach any goal which, however wantonly, we had proposed to our selves, he applauds and immensely enjoys our little achievement; for it is inspired by him and like his own. May he be my guide: and not in this world only, in which the way before me seems to descend gently, quite straight and clear, towards an unruffled sea; but at the frontiers of eternity let him receive my spirit, reconciling it, by his gracious greeting, to what had been its destiny. For he is the friend of the shades also, and makes the greatest interpretation of all, that of life into truth, translating the swift words of time into the painted language of eternity. That is for the dead; but for living men, whose feet must move forward

² See Antonio Marichalar, “El español inglés George Santayana,” *Revista de Occidente* (No. 9, 1924, pp. 340-341). The article was republished for the monograph that *Teorema* dedicated to Santayana in 2002, No. 1-3, pp. 167-177]. This edition is available on Dialnet.

³ Santayana can be found throughout Pérez Firmat’s book, not just in the abovementioned chapter.

whilst their eyes see only backward, he interprets the past to the future, for its guidance and ornament. Often, too, he bears news to his father and brothers in Olympus, concerning any joyful or beautiful thing that is done on earth, lest they should despise or forget it. In that fair inventory and chronicle of happiness let my love of him be remembered (Santayana, 1922, pp. 259-264).

2. Dispatches from a Habitable Non-place

Interpreting, translation, borders, and being in no place and all places, living as a nomad or as someone in permanent transit with only a hyphen for a home—not quite *en vilo* (“in suspense”), which is how Pérez Firmat translates his “on the hyphen” into Spanish—occupying the space *between* people and *between* places, not in a dissolving void but in a non-location where one can exist. Santayana establishes himself not in an uninhabitable place, but in a habitable non-place: hybridity in its essence. He does this without any desire to proselytize. In his time, he would be viewed as odd, in the sense of out of the ordinary, but today, many have come to view him as a friend or a kindred spirit: at minimum, he is not considered far removed from a certain modern disposition—never in the majority, always in Juan Ramón Jiménez’s overwhelming minority—that was viewed as surprising in his time, but which is not abnormal today. There is no shortage of people comfortably living out their own hybridities in contemporary society.

What other thinker plays such a key role in the history of two different nations’ philosophy? In 1951, Max H. Fisch included Santayana in his *Classic American Philosophers: Peirce, James, Royce, Santayana, Dewey, Whitehead*, and, in 1970, Alfonso López Quintás included him in *Filosofía española contemporánea*. In both cases, the editors justified Santayana’s inclusion, as he was a Spaniard and, at the same time, had been raised in the U.S. and wrote the entirety of his oeuvre in English. These pioneering editors were followed by John J. Stuart, who included Santayana alongside Charles S. Peirce, William James, Josiah Royce, John Dewey, and Herbert Mead in his *Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretative*

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Essays (1987), which was released in several editions; by José Luis Abellán, who included Santayana in his monumental 1989 *Historia crítica del pensamiento español*; and by Manuel Garrido, who gave Santayana a place of honor in both *El legado filosófico y científico del siglo XX* (2007) and *El legado filosófico español e hispanoamericano del siglo XX* (2009).

In the secondary bibliography, many complain that Santayana's style draws readers in but does not seem to lead them anywhere. Perhaps those readers, who are unfamiliar with his penchant for writing in multiple voices, were not the ones Santayana had in mind as he composed. In a letter to Logan P. Smith on March 16, 1919, Santayana admitted:

There is a real vacillation or incoherence in my expressions, because I take alternately and without warning now the transcendental and now the naturalistic point of view; i.e. I sometimes describe the *perspectives* of the senses and imagination, and sometimes the natural sequence or relations of *facts*. Of course both things are worth describing, and there is no inconsistency in the difference which exists between the two views; but it is a grave defect not to have made it clear how this difference arises, and why it is inevitable and indeed makes the chief interest in the drama of thought. (Santayana, 2002, p. 344)

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Baker Brownell, who was once Santayana's student at Harvard, describes how disconcerting his classes could be, given the ease and versatility with which he could "dramatize both sides of a situation, both pro and con" (Brownell, 1940, pp. 40-41), which made it easy for listeners to lose the trail of his argument. It is not surprising, then, that Santayana had a predilection for personifying the various positions presented in *Dialogues in Limbo* and in *The Last Puritan*.

As a poet, Santayana composed sonnets at a time when the fashion was to write in free verse. As a critic, he is a key figure in the image that North America has of itself, and today, his opinions on the character of U.S. philosophers and poets are just as alive as they are provocative. As a philosopher, Santayana is one of those realities that, for lack of a better word, we call ambiguous, hybrid, odd; a figure who tests his own limits. Countless labels have been proposed in an attempt to classify his

proposals, all of which, I think, are equally inadequate, though they are nevertheless useful. Some, I think, force too much onto Santayana, to the point of making him seem, for example, like a Catholic or a pragmatist. In my paper *Santayana filósofo. La filosofía como forma de vida* (2007)/*Santayana the Philosopher: Philosophy as a Form of Life* (2015), I propose describing his relationship with religion as “spiritual atheism,” a term that embraces his hybridity, though it is perhaps an oxymoron; I propose describing his disposition as “ironic nihilism;” his systematic philosophy as “Platonic materialism;” and his political philosophy as “critical liberalism.” I attempt to capture his amphibian status relative to standardized categories and to highlight how he wants not just to perform these opportune categorical distinctions, but also to offer an approach on how to live after everything we trust in has been exposed as illusion. Santayana wrote from two perspectives simultaneously, perhaps causing some confusion in the way he provoked the unexpected and the apparently vague, but he lived in that place too, and he lived there philosophically. Thus, it is not just his work, but also his life that presents a characteristic hybrid face, a visage filled with encounter and intermixture, like a preview of a way of being that is increasingly pervasive and habitual, multifaceted elements that initially seem dissimilar. A certain sensibility, a certain state of mind.

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I should explain why I have called Santayana *Hispanic* instead of the more precise *Spanish*: I believe that his life aligns with that of many Hispanics who, like Pérez Firmat, moved to the U.S. after spending their earliest, most formative years elsewhere. I have also chosen to describe him as “American,” rather than the more precise “North American” or “U.S. American,” because that label encompasses the fact that, though Santayana spent forty years in the U.S., much of his influence came from elsewhere in the Americas—Mexico and Argentina in particular, which produced many of his studies and translations, which I will discuss shortly—places that contributed to Santayana’s international renown. For that reason, I have chosen these terms more to describe the figure that Santayana has become, rather than the living person he was. In a sense, Santayana is like the fellow countryman that a traveler is happy encounter abroad; even if he already speaks the language of the new country, in his message,

his humor, or his experience, the new arrival feels recognized; soon they draw parallels, such as the one that Maricio Tenorio established between Sergio “Atila” Guerrero and Santayana (Tenorio, 2000, pp. 37-47). Not to mention, among North American Hispanists, there is the (somewhat paradoxical) draw of finding that one of the members of the foreign culture that they study and are so fascinated by, Santayana, also occupies a prominent position in their own culture, even if he manages “to say plausibly in English as many un-English things as possible (Santayana, 1930).⁴ By the same token, I am afraid that if Santayana had written in Spanish he would have plausibly said just as many un-Spanish things.

3. The Life of Santayana, Don Jorge

Though he was born in Madrid in 1863, it is well known that for family reasons Santayana was educated in Boston; that he was a Harvard University professor for twenty years; that he completed his studies in Berlin and at Cambridge; that, in 1912, after the death of his mother, he left Harvard and the U.S. to travel throughout Europe while he read and wrote in peace, far removed from all philosophical and national ghettos; that he regularly visited Spain until 1930 and held a Spanish passport; that during World War I he was trapped in Oxford and during World War II he was trapped in Rome, a city where he established his preferred residence in 1925, and where he died in 1952.

That, in brief, was the life of George Santayana, though readers may expand upon this biography by reading the meticulous “Chronology,” which William G. Holzberger prepared for his critical edition of *The Letters of George Santayana*, for context on this study’s theme.

⁴ This quote is from “A Brief History of My Opinions.” This important text was translated into Spanish by Antonio Marichalar for *Sur* in 1933, and included in the anthology *Diálogos en el limbo*, published in Buenos Aires in 1941 and 1960; it was also translated by Ricardo Baeza for *Índice* in 1952. Manuel Ruiz Zamora included the first translation in *George Santayana, Ejercicios de autobiografía intelectual* (Seville: Renacimiento, 2011, pp. 19-57).

To start with, readers must familiarize themselves with the website *The Santayana Edition*, whose “Texts” section includes the original 110 letters that Santayana’s father, Agustín Ruiz de Santayana, sent to his son between October 3, 1873 and May 27, 1893. Reading these letters is highly advisable, as it makes it possible to reconstruct the cultural and political climate of the time, reminds us of Agustín Ruiz’s religious notions—which had a profound impact on his son—and gives us insight into the very moment that Santayana chose to study philosophy, rather than diplomacy or law, as his father rather agonizingly encouraged. It offers a first-hand glimpse of the tug-of-war that the young Santayana experienced between his mother, who lived in Boston—with the children from her first marriage and near her in-laws, the Sturgises—and his father, who lived in Ávila.

In his memoirs, Santayana chronicles the circumstances of his childhood, the life and personalities of his parents, his young adulthood, his passage through Boston-area schools, his arrival at Harvard, his travels in Spain, his philosophic and recreational wanderings across Europe, and his friendships. These memoirs were widely read at the time and do not cease to amaze. They bring the reader directly into Santayana’s amphibian world: for North Americans, they include gorgeous passages on Spain, its history, and its peoples, enough to make anyone want to cross the Atlantic; for Spaniards and Hispanics, or continental Europeans, it offers equally precious passages on life in Boston, at the convergence of the Puritanical and the Anglo-Saxon.

I will focus, however, on the process by which he wrote and distributed his memoirs: (1) in 1944, *Personas and Place: The Background of My Life* was published in New York, though not before the manuscript was sent via a bizarre route across a world at war; that same year, a translation by Pedro Lecuona was published in Buenos Aires; (2) *Persons and Places: The Middle Span*, published in 1945, underwent the same process, with the publication of the translation in Buenos Aires in 1946; (3) after Santayana’s death in 1953, *Persons and Places: My Host the World* was published,

and was made available to the Spanish-speaking world in 1955. I believe that this series of events alone speaks to the impact that Santayana's autobiography had in both the English- and Spanish-speaking Americas.

Present-day Santayana scholars also have access to more than 3,000 of Santayana's letters, which were published in Volume V of *The Works of George Santayana* (2001-08). We can also read the notes he made in the margins of many authors' writings in *George Santayana's Marginalia: A Critical Selection* (2011). This is in addition to the numerous texts of intellectual autobiography that he left us, some of which Manuel Ruiz Zamora collected in *George Santayana. Ejercicios de autobiografía intelectual* (2011).

Because, of course, no one could describe his own unique perspective as concisely as Santayana:

As for me, it is only by accident that I am numbered among American philosophers. I cannot be classed otherwise, since I write in English and studied and taught for many years at Harvard College. My mother's older children by her first marriage were American on their father's side; and that fact caused my father to take me to Boston to be educated. But in feeling and in legal allegiance I have always remained a Spaniard. My first philosophical enthusiasm was for Catholic theology; I admired, and still admire, that magnificent construction and the spiritual discipline it can inspire; but I soon learned to admire also Hellenistic and Indian wisdom. All religions and moralities seem to me forms of paganism; only that in ages of ripe experience or of decadence they become penitential and subjective. When a student my *vade mecum* was Lucretius; and of modern philosophers I never intimately accepted any except Spinoza, and in a measure Schopenhauer.... I cannot understand what satisfaction a philosopher can find in artifices, or in deceiving himself and others. I therefore like to call myself a materialist; but I leave the study and also the worship of matter to others, ... my writings... [are] essentially a literary labour, a form of art; and I do not attempt to drive other people to think as I do. Let them be their own poets. (Santayana, 1952, p. 284)

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4. Works of George Santayana

George Santayana's works include a doctoral thesis on Lotze; sonnets that are alternately of a personal, historical, or theological nature; a novel; the abovementioned autobiography; a treatise on aesthetics; a five-book series that became the one of the most important texts of naturalism; countless studies on the U.S.'s cultural past and present; a collection of fifty-five brief, intimate essays; a treatise on epistemology; a dramatization of his philosophy in fifteen dialogues that take place in Limbo; numerous articles that analyze contemporary developments in philosophy; a four-volume treatise on ontology; a study on the figure of Jesus Christ; a treatise on politics; and the 3,000 letters mentioned above. So many impeccable pages that paint the portrait of a thinker for whom reading and writing are the focus of life, an attentive *philosophe* who is always willing, over a cup of tea or a blank page, to share his original point of view on the happenings of his age, be they political, literary, philosophical, or religious. The result is an oceanic oeuvre, as wide as the Atlantic that he crossed so often (in both directions) over the course of forty years, so broad that it is easy to become disoriented in page after page of delicate, idyllic pleasure, pages as deep as the sea, with hints of restlessness and madness.

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Here, our discussion of his work will be organized thematically—given that Santayana was a poet-reader-novelist-philosopher—along with the American and Spanish translations, and his most relevant studies and papers. I will do this without forgoing Santayana's own comments on these topics, as I have done thus far.

4.1 Poetry

It so happens that the first thing Santayana ever published was poetry. In November of 1885, his sonnet "Dream I To-night the Dream of Yesterday" appeared in the *Harvard Monthly*. His works consisted of the following: (1) In 1894, he published *Sonnets and Other Verses*, a collection of twenty sonnets with impeccable breakage,

along with four poems dedicated to Warwick Potter, five odes, as well as miscellanea, including, notably, “Cape Cod,”⁵ and “Lucifer: A Prelude”; (2) in the second edition, published in 1896, he added an additional thirty sonnets; (3) in 1901, Santayana published *A Hermit of Carmel and Other Poems*. In 1923, the publishers Constable and Charles Scribner’s Sons published a revised edition of poems selected by Santayana, to which he added a preface that is critical to our understanding of his personal view of himself as a poet, as well as his conception of poetry. This edition was called *Poems: Selected by the Author and Revised*.

These poems have been published and translated many times,⁶ and several include references to Spain, including “Ávila” and “Spain in America.” Of particular note is the exchange of translations between Santayana and Jorge Guillén that took place around 1950. When Guillén was in residence at Wellesley College, Santayana sent him a translation of “Estatua ecuestre” (“Equestrian Statue”), from Guillén’s *Cántico: fe de vida* (1950); when Guillén visited Santayana in Rome, he proposed translating Santayana’s “Sonnet L” (cf. Soria Olmedo, 1992, pp. 586-7).⁷ Both were published in *The Journal of Philosophy* in a 1963 issue commemorating the centenary of Santayana’s birth. The journal *Teorema* also printed in 2002 the two original poems and their respective translations in an edition published on the fiftieth anniversary of Santayana’s death.⁸

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⁵ Luis de Pablo set “Cape Cod” to music in 1995.

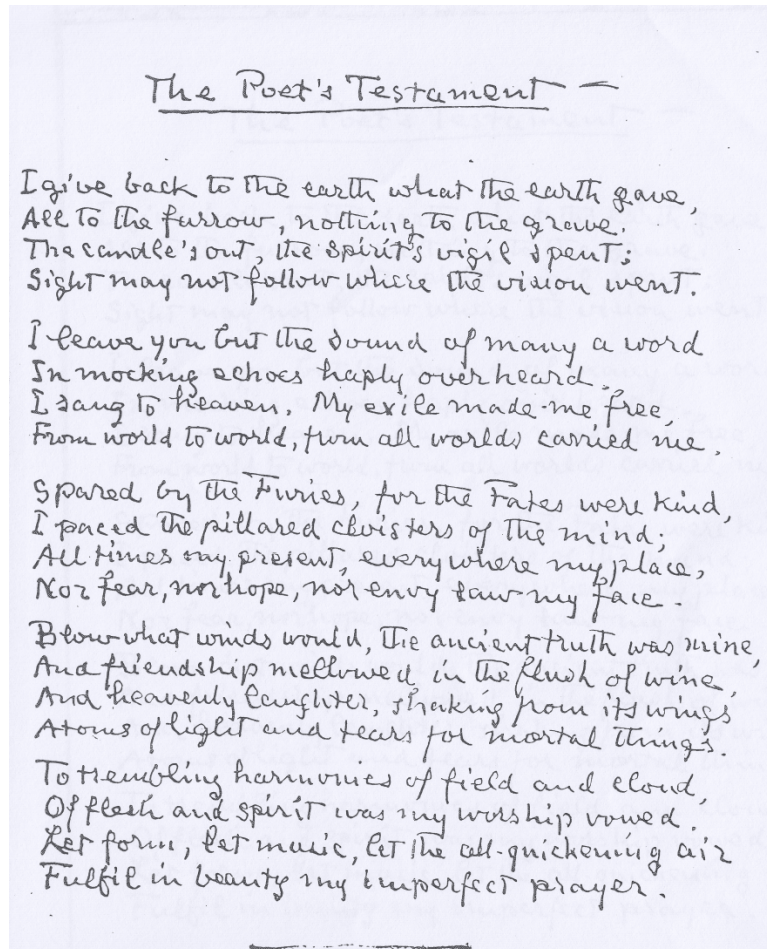
⁶ Santayana’s uncollected sonnets and other poems were published in a bilingual edition by José María Alonso Gamio in *Un español en el mundo: Santayana*. In 2016, the publisher Salto de Página also printed a bilingual edition of *Sonetos* (Sonetos I-L, 1894, 1896), translated by Alberto Zazo.

⁷ The letter from Santayana to Guillén, dated November 3, 1951, states: “I am full of *achagues de la vejez*—deafness, half-blindness, toothlessness, and loss of memory, especially for words, in all languages. They flow better from my pen than from my tongue” (Santayana, 2008b, p. 391).

In 1968, Jorge Guillén dedicated one of his “Marginal poems,” entitled “Huésped de hotel” (“Hotel Guest”) to Santayana. It began with an epigraph taken from *Persons and Places III* (possibly from the combined edition released in 1963): “preserving my essential character of stranger and traveller, with the philosophic freedom...”. The poem reads: I. Entre desconocidos que le ignoran, / Solterón casi siempre solitario, / Vive —sin convivir— con extranjeros, / Mínimo alrededor acompañante. / Si rentista feliz, perfecto artista / II. De incógnito caudillo de monólogo / Pensamiento cabal, amor frustrado, / Independiente en orden, serio ambiguo, / Huésped de un astro, rumbo hacia la nada. / III. A la materia con su fe se asoma / Y español de raíz, inglés de idioma, / Entre las soledades de su cima, / Libre de lazos, palpa el mundo lego, / Sin dioses. La verdad le da sosiego (Guillén, 1974, p. 90).

⁸ *Teorema*, XXI/1-3, 2002. The complete issue is available on Dialnet.

At the end of his life, Santayana returned to poetry, which bore fruit in his posthumous *The Poet's Testament: Poems and Two Plays* (1953). This volume includes more translations and several of his unpublished poems, including five poems that he penned at the end of his life and the abovementioned translation of Guillén's "Estatua ecuestre." The edition's title poem is of particular note:



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Figure 1. Manuscript of the poem "The Poet's Testament."

The manuscript is dated October of 1947, and it was included in *The Complete Poems of George Santayana: A Critical Edition* (Santayana 1979, p. 259). It is well

known that Daniel Cory, Santayana's secretary and executor, read this poem⁹ at Santayana's burial at the Spanish Pantheon of the Obra Pía in Verano Cemetery in Rome on September 30, 1952. It so happens that Emilio Garrigues, who was present at the funeral, included his translation of the poem in an article on Santayana's death, which he wrote for *Ínsula* in November of that year (Garrigues, 1952).¹⁰ This translation was actually the first publication of the poem, as it would not be printed in English until the following year, in *The Poet's Testament: Poems and Two Plays* (1953). A new Spanish translation of the poem was also included as a colophon to the ceremony that took place at the Spanish Pantheon on September 26, 2016, held by the Embassy of Spain in the Holy See, at the initiative of the Instituto Cervantes's Rome branch and in collaboration with the Obra Pía in Rome (Moreno, 2019).

However, Santayana, always swimming a bit against the current, also wrote plays that landed somewhere in between theological and light-hearted, including "A Hermit of Carmel," "The Knight's Return" (1901), *Lucifer or the Heavenly Truce: A Theological Tragedy* (1899, 1924), "The Marriage of Venus," and "Philosophers at Court" (1953), which have yet to find a translator with sufficient audacity and taste.

I would be remiss not to include Santayana's book on aesthetics, *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), which was based on lectures he gave during the academic years 1892-1895. This work is of particular importance, as it moved away from Romanticism and gave voice to the new Classicism and Objectivism that emerged in the early 20th century. Raimundo Lida made that aspect of *The Sense of Beauty* the topic of his 1943 doctoral thesis, which has recently been republished and is included in this study's

⁹"I give back to the earth what the earth gave, / All to the furrow, nothing to the grave. / The candle's out, the spirit's vigil spent; / Sight may not follow where the vision went. / I leave you but the sound of many a word / In mocking echoes haply overheard. I sang to heaven. My exile made me free, / From world to world, from all worlds carried me. / Spared by the Furies, for the Fates were kind, / I paced the pillared cloister of the mind; / All times my present, everywhere my place, / Nor fear, nor hope, nor envy saw my face. / Blow what winds would, the ancient truth was mine, / And friendship mellowed in the flush of wine, / And heavenly laughter, shaking from its wings / Atoms of light and tears for mortal things. / To trembling harmonies of field and cloud, / Of flesh and spirit was my worship vowed. / Let form, let music, let the all-quickenning air / Fulfil in beauty my imperfect prayer." (Santayana, 1979, p. 259).

¹⁰ In 2018, this translation was republished in *Limbo* 38, 89.

bibliography. José Rovira Armengol translated the work into Spanish and, along with other texts by and about Santayana, transformed it into an Uruguayan university handbook—over four hundred pages long!—in 1945 (Beltrán, 1945). That same translation was published by Editorial Losada in 1969; a new translation by Daniel Vieitez was published by Uthea in Mexico in 1968. In 1999, Tecnos commissioned a new translation based on the critical edition of the book from Carmen García Trevijano; a second edition was released in 2002.

Of the numerous studies on Santayana's poetic oeuvre, I would like to highlight the important work that Concha Zardoya has carried out. In 1950, she published her study "Poesía y estilo de George Santayana" (Poetry and Style of George Santayana) in issue 49 of *Cuadernos Americanos*, which was later included in *Verdad, Belleza y Expresión* (1967). At the latter's presentation at Indiana University, she explained: "I have read Santayana mainly because I've always been drawn to poet-philosophers (such as Unamuno, Machado, and Valéry). And because he was born in Spain and was a sort of 'fugitive' from the Generation of '98" (Zardoya, 1967, p. 12).¹¹ It is not strange, then, that upon Santayana's death, she published the piece "Santayana y España" in *Ínsula* (no. 83, 1952). Significantly, she also included Santayana in her ambitious work *Historia de la literatura norteamericana* (1956), in the section on "Realism and Experimentalism" [pp. 360-366].

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4.2 Interpretation of U.S. and English Culture and Philosophy

There is no one better than a follower of Hermes—someone straddling two cultures, with a foot in each—to play the role of the interpreter, which is to say, in a sense, the translator, to engage in the practice of writing in several distinct voices. Santayana, as an interpreter, occupies two positions at once: within and without each culture, in a somehow uncontradictory way. This is Santayana's defining characteristic, his greatest

¹¹ One student, Antonio Barbagallo, wrote about Santayana's presence in Zardoya's classes in 2017, in "Santayana en Harvard," *Limbo*, 37, 148.

weakness and greatest strength. Weakness, because it confuses the careless reader, and strength, because it is difficult to find stringent judgments in his work that are not quickly balanced by their apparently opposing counterparts; in such instances, he has merely shifted his point of view. In this way, he reaches a wide range of kaleidoscopic interpretations. For those who experience that culture as their own, these interpretations are somewhat bitter, albeit enlightening, and for those who approach it from the outside, they are attractive. His writing reveals the perspective of a man between two worlds, with affection for both. There is no doubt that this point of view—somewhat self-sufficient, and by no means simplistic—was one of the characteristics that attracted Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Alfonso Reyes, Xavier Villaurrutia, and Jorge Mañach from an early stage (Moreno, 2011).

Henríquez Ureña, for example, was captivated by Santanaya's *Soliloquies* and his *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1920). But Santayana's interpretive scope was immeasurably broad, and today, it continues to attract the attention of critics such as Christopher Domínguez Michael (Domínguez, 2013). In 1900, in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, Santayana expressed his opinions on a number of thinkers, including William Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, Robert Browning, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, opinions that are featured in numerous anthologies. He highlighted the "absence of religion" in Shakespeare's work, and labeled Whitman and Browning as practitioners of "the poetry of barbarism." In *Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion* (1913), Santayana discusses a number of thinkers, including Bertrand Russell—who accepted Santayana's critiques (Moreno, 2006)—and Percy Shelley; the book also includes what is without a doubt his most famous lecture: *The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy* (1911),¹² a text to which the U.S. turns whenever it is having an identity crisis.¹³ This lecture's present-day relevance is indisputable. For example, it illuminates the two principal North American cultural

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¹² The most recent Spanish translation, by Pedro García, is available from Krk Ediciones, Oviedo, 2018.

¹³ See, for example, the article by Paul J. Nagy George, "Santayana and the American National Character," written at a critical initial moment during Santayana's renaissance in the U.S (Nagy, 1982).

trends in Peter Farrelly's award-winning *Green Book* (2018), a film that addresses, on the one hand, Southern U.S. culture (which continues to cling to a dead tradition) and, on the other, the lively cultural output of the Bronx (a microcosm of the young nation's new, hybrid vitality). Santayana spoke more on this topic in his 1931 publication *The Genteel Tradition at Bay*.

The subtitle of the abovementioned *Character and Opinion in the United States* is *With Reminiscences of William James and Josiah Royce and Academic Life in America*. In it, Santayana includes lectures he gave to an English audience, after leaving Boston, on the prevailing disposition and ideas in the U.S.: Calvinism, transcendentalism, William James (whose subjectivism and interest in extreme religious experiences Santayana criticizes), Josiah Royce (whose moralist approach to the problem of evil Santayana rejects), liberalism, and Harvard's shift from the somewhat provincial "Harvard College" to the cosmopolitan "Harvard University." Curiously, this book was not translated into Spanish until 1971, when Raimundo Lida's son, Fernando, did so for Hobbs-Sudamericana in Buenos Aires. The Oviedo-based publisher KrK is preparing a new edition of Fernando's translation for the centenary of the first edition, which it will release in 2020.

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In 1922, he published *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*, a collection of fifty-five brief articles of varying tone, whose subject matter ranges from the London climate to Spanish theater by way of Dickens, the effects World War I, liberalism, oscillations in English philosophy, and snobs. Here we see a more intimate, stylistic, informative Santayana. Pedro Henríquez Ureña translated the short soliloquy "Aversion from Platonism" into Spanish in 1922 for *México Moderno* [2(3), pp. 185-186], the first text by Santayana to appear in Spanish.

In 1923, Santayana was invited to give the Herbert Spencer Lecture at Oxford. The result was *The Unknowable*, in which he explains and interprets Spencer, revealing the ontological aspects of his second philosophical system, which I will discuss in the

following section. And ten years later, in 1932, he was invited to speak to the Royal Society of Literature at the tricentennial celebration of John Locke's birth. His lecture was called "Locke and the Frontiers of Common Sense." In it, Santayana highlights Locke's materialism, his moderate radicalism, and the confusion in his use of the term "idea," which had innumerable consequences for subsequent British philosophy. When this talk was published in *Some Turns of Thoughts in Modern Philosophy*, Santayana added eight important supplementary notes.

Perhaps the all-star of this section is *The Last Puritan* (1935), Santayana's sole novel (and a 721-page novel at that), which, in addition to being of tremendous literary merit, is fascinating in that it embodies his philosophy and view on Puritanism and the city of Boston, where he lived and which he so penetratingly understood. The novel was a commercial success and was selected for the Book-of-the-Month Club. In it, Santayana extends the Cervantine play between reality and fiction by including a prologue and an epilogue in which he himself engages in a dialogue with one of the book's characters. Realist romance novels did not form the basis for Santayana's work; rather, he sought to compose the Puritan equivalent of an *auto sacramental*. Thus, *The Last Puritan* warrants analysis more within the framework of symbolism than that of realism, a characteristic that dovetails nicely with the importance of the symbol in Santayana's philosophy. And, as is to be expected, the question of which character represents Santayana, or with which character he most closely identifies, is a misguided one: *all* of the characters represent a piece of the book's multifaceted author. Although it is true that several figures in the novel defend a number of characteristically Santayanan ideas, this is done more or less haphazardly, alongside other thoughts and circumstances that are entirely at odds with the author's beliefs and perspectives. It is almost as if he deconstructed his own singularity and mixed the resulting elements with a diverse array of outside influences in order to create new singularities. Perhaps this is why he writes, at the end of the epilogue—and in the voice of the character Mario Van de Weyer, who is conversing with the real "Professor" Santayana!—that:

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“As a fable you may publish it [The Last Puritan]. It's all your invention; but perhaps there's a better philosophy in it than in your other books.”

“How so?”

“Because now you're not arguing or proving or criticising anything, but painting a picture. The trouble with you philosophers is that you misunderstand your vocation. You ought to be poets, but you insist on laying down the law for the universe, physical and moral, and are vexed with one another because your inspirations are not identical.”

“Are you accusing me of dogmatism? Do I demand that everybody should agree with me?”

“Less loudly, I admit, than most philosophers. Yet when you profess to be describing a fact, you can't help antagonising those who take a different view of it, or are blind altogether to that sort of object. In this novel, on the contrary, the argument is dramatised, the views become human persuasions, and the presentation is all the truer for not professing to be true. You have said it somewhere yourself, though I may misquote the words: After life is over and the world has gone up in smoke, what realities might the spirit in us still call its own without illusion save the form of those very illusions which have made up our story?¹⁴” (Santayana, 1994, p. 572)

Antonio Marichalar immediately translated the epilogue and prologue for the Buenos Aires journal *Sur* [34 (1937), pp. 7-28] and it was not long before the full novel was available in Spanish. It was translated by Ricardo Baeza in 1940 for Editorial Sudamericana. The translation enjoyed very favorable reception in reviews by Francisco Alaya, Xavier Villaurrutia, and Enrique Díez-Canedo, and it was released in two later editions in 1945 and 1951. In 1981, the Spanish publisher Edhasa released a new edition, with a wonderful introduction by Fernando Savater, though this edition is now hard-to-find and valuable. A new edition that would put it back in bookstores is long overdue.

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Although it is not, strictly speaking, a work on the cultures of the English-speaking world, I would be remiss not to include a book that is certainly Santayana's most frequently reprinted in Spanish, and which brought the term “philosopher poet”—often applied to Santayana himself—into circulation. I am referring to *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante and Goethe* (1910). In 1943, it was translated by José Ferrater Mora, and subsequent editions were published by Editorial Losada in

¹⁴ Cf. Santayana (1927), p. 89. The exact quote is: “for after life is done, and the world is gone up in smoke, what realities may the spirit of a man boast to have embraced without illusion, save the very forms of those illusions by which he has been deceived? These, and not the things which he thought he saw, were his eternal discoveries”.

1952 and 1969, by Porrúa in 1994, and by Tecnos in 1995 and 2009. A critical edition was released in 2019.

4.3 Two Systems of Philosophy

In the philosophy world, Santayana holds an uncommon position: he remained faithful to the modern humanist tradition in its full worldliness, while eschewing the ecclesiastical. His exemplary, fluid style links him to Locke and Hume, and his arguments draw their strength from a kinship with Spinoza and Schopenhauer. He lived through the apogee of positivism and science, though he did not feel the need that many others did to take shelter in the irrational, the scientific method, or in pseudoscience as a form of self-defense. He was also a contemporary of the Idealist movement and skilled at detecting its inescapable, methodological facets while unmasking its more fallacious elements, which mistook the human experience of nature for nature itself. Santayana also questioned moral Puritanism and political liberalism from the inside. Santayana is a classic author—always surprising, always enlightening—and journeying through his work never ceases to spark one of those “atoms of light” he described in his posthumous “Poet’s Testament,” reprinted above, because, in fact, Santayana shed light—or rather, lucidity—on a period that, by virtue of invoking darkness, is certainly becoming quite shaded.

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Despite its surface appearance, Santayana’s philosophy is by no means simplistic; his positions are very nuanced. To start with, his philosophical system takes two forms, the first of which emerged in 1905-06, and the second of which he began to reveal in 1923. The first is clear from the pentalogy *The Life of Reason or The Phases of Human Progress* (1905-1906): I. *Introduction and Reason in Common Sense*, II. *Reason in Society*, III. *Reason in Religion*, IV. *Reason in Art*, V. *Reason in Science*. Santayana demonstrated how to best handle the (then loud and emergent) cultural wake-up calls that Nietzsche and Darwin had sounded, reformulating their works’ philosophy from a naturalist position: human beings are no longer cleaved between

reason and feeling, nor between their divine and human natures; rather, they are animals, and as such they are naturally developing their reason and aspiration toward an ideal (vol. 1); these human animals, driven by love, form groups such as families and societies of various kinds, though ideals remain their primary companion (vol. 2); naturally, human beings believe in magic and construct religions that make them immortal, even though the only immortality that is truly available to them is the immortality of ideals (vol. 3); also naturally, human beings develop technology and industry, music and language, poetry, painting, and art in general, because art produces joy, which is the great human aspiration (vol. 4); finally, Santayana analyzes the emergence of the loftiest human developments: morality and science. As is clear, Santayana's genius was to realize that accepting ourselves as animals does not force us to disregard any of the things we are capable of: ideals, beauty, and joy.

The only volume of this pentalogy to be translated into Spanish at the time was *Reason in Art* (Santayana, 2008a); a complete translation was never carried out during Santayana's lifetime. Before he died, Santayana signed off on a cut-down single volume of the work, which was published posthumously in 1957, with the help of Daniel Cory; this version was translated in 1958 by Rodolfo M. Agolia and Aída A. de Bogan for the Buenos Aires publisher Nova. An abridged translation of the five-volume work edited by José Beltrán was released in 2005 by Tecnos, but the complete *Life of Reason* remains unavailable in Spanish.

The second form that Santayana's definitive philosophical system took began with the epistemology of *Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy*—translated by Raúl A. Piérola and Marcos A. Rosenberg in 1952¹⁵—and continued with the ontology of *The Realm of Essence* (1927), *The Realm of Matter* (1930), *The Realm of Truth* (1938), and *The Realm of Spirit* (1940). The combined edition, *Realms of Being*, was published with a new prologue in 1942, in the middle

¹⁵ This translation was reissued in 2002. In 2011, Ángel M. Faerna prepared a new translation for Antonio Machado Libros.

of World War II; it received Columbia University's Nicholas Murray Butler Gold Medal for the greatest contribution to philosophy during a five-year period.

The four volumes of *Realms of Being* address the four different categories of reality that Santayana carefully delineated. They are: (1) the realm of essence: a group of very different kinds of identical, simple essences; it is infinite, eternal, and ahuman; (2) the realm of matter: the body of existing facts and events taking place, along with their influence on the human psyche; it is contingent, infinite, and ahuman; (3) the realm of truth: the body of essences that faithfully describe what has already taken place in the realm of matter; it is invariable, ahuman, contingent; (4) the realm of the spirit: a dimension opened by the psyche when it achieves intuition of essences, particularly the body of essences proceeding from philosophy, literature, and religion, as these feed and enliven the spirit.

Antonio Marichalar, always on the lookout for new writing by Santayana, translated the 1927 and 1938 prologues, the former for *Revista de Occidente* in 1935, and the latter for *Sur* in 1939. The complete 1942 edition was not published in Spanish until 1959, this time by Mexico's Fondo de Cultura Económica, in a translation by Francisco González. It has been reissued twice: in 1985 and in 2006.

The political dimension of Santayana's philosophical system did not emerge until he published the lengthy *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society, and Government* (1951), which offers a materialist interpretation of politics from the point of view of the spirit. Santayana reviews the generative, militant, and rational orders of society by outlining the play of "Powers" when they are vital and spontaneous, of "Dominations" when they turn militant and artificial, and of "Virtues" when they momentarily achieve balance and harmony. In the third portion, Santayana argues that liberalism and democracy are rational only in the imagination of their advocates.

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Dominations and Powers was quickly published in not one, but two Spanish translations: by José Antonio Fontanilla for the Madrid publisher Aguilar in 1953 and by Guido F. Pargagnol for Buenos Aires publisher Sudamericana in 1954. The former was reissued by KrK Ediciones in 2010.

Santayana had offered a preview of the spiritual dimension of his system—which he described more fully in *The Realm of Spirit*—in the tiny gem of a book *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* (1927); he rounded out his proposal in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* (1946), which was inspired by P. L. Couchoud's *Jésus, le Dieu fait homme*, a true corollary to Santayana's reflections on religion and the figure of Christ, as it focuses on the relationship between the human and the spiritual that Hellenistic Jews ascribed to Christ, rather than the historical Jesus. In 1947, Demetrio Náñez provided a Spanish translation from Buenos Aires, a year after the publication of the original; the translation was reissued in 1966. My translation of *Platonism and Spiritual Life* was released by Trotta in 2006.

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Nevertheless, in keeping with this study's general line of argument, Santayana reserved the term "my favourite child" for another book (Santayana, 2008b, p. 416),¹⁶ which was written, unsurprisingly, in the form of a dialogue: the masterful *Dialogues in Limbo* (1925). This book consists of ten dialogues with Democritus, Alcibiades, Aristippus, Dionysius the Younger, Socrates, Avicenna, and the spirit of a stranger "still living on Earth." In 1948, on the occasion of a new edition, Santayana added three new dialogues that he had planned from the outset. The first five dialogues are dedicated to the topic of illusion, followed by three on democracy, four (including the three additions) on charity, and two on materialism. These, in essence, comprise the central themes of Santayana's work. The preface to the 1948 edition concludes with one of his most frequently quoted texts: "The gist of the whole is to confirm the

¹⁶ This letter was written on February 7, 1952, and sent to Miriam Trayer Richards. The complete sentence is: "I have had the satisfaction of seeing my favourite child 'Dialogues in Limbo' reappearing in its original type, with additions perfectly prepared to suit."

scientific psychology that I have put into the mouth of Democritus at the beginning. Subjectivity is a normal madness in living animals. It should be discounted, not idolized, in the philosophy of the West, as it has always been discounted in that of the East” (Santayana, 1948, p. ii).

The dialogues “Normal Madness” and “The Secret of Aristotle” were promptly translated by Antonio Marichalar and Jorge Mañach, respectively, and added to the book of miscellanea that took the Spanish title *Diálogos en el limbo* (1940, 1960, 1994), marking Santayana’s first true introduction to the Spanish-speaking world. A Spanish version of the 1925 edition, with the first ten dialogues, was not published in its entirety until 1996, in a translation by Carmen García Trevijano for Tecnos. In 2014, Tecnos finally published a translation of the complete 1948 version of the book, including the thirteen dialogues and the preface.

Readers will find the most important writing from the ample secondary bibliography on Santayana’s philosophy in the section below. I would like to highlight that five international conferences on Santayana’s work have been held: the first, in Ávila (Spain) in May 1992, was organized by Pedro García Martín and Herman Saatkamp; the second, in Opole (Poland) in June 2006, was organized by Chris Skowroński; the third, in Venice in November 2009, was organized by José Beltrán Llavador; the fourth, in Rome in October 2012, was organized by Giuseppe Patella; and the latest, in Berlin in July 2016, was organized, once again, by Chris Skowroński. On the topic of the necessarily bilingual nature of Santayana studies and their usefulness for bridging the Atlantic, Professor Skowroński offered these timely words:

As regards Santayana scholarship, there is a tendency to shift the balance from works by American scholars in English into works of Spanish speaking scholars writing their works in their native tongue; the growing abundance of interesting works in Spanish has started to be an issue for Santayana scholars who do not read this language. (Skowroński, 2010)

* * *

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To close, I would like to cite what I have described elsewhere as the “spiritual testament of Santayana”: the message the encompasses his long personal experience of adopting a kaleidoscopic point of view, *sub specie aeternitatis*, a perspective which many philosophers, including Spinoza, have presented as divine:

The spirit can never be altogether spiritual, or morally other than a caprice of blind Will, until it has traversed the *Dark Night* described by Saint John of the Cross, and adopted his motto: *Nothing, Nothing, Nothing*. It is only on this understanding that all things may be understood without confusion, loved without disgrace, and touched without infection, or that a life of action, for the spirit, can be a life of prayer. Henceforth we are playing a part: we do not become kings because we may wear a crown upon this stage, nor fools because it is set down for us to talk nonsense. We may give commands, when they are in character, without arrogance, follow our fortunes without greed, and declare our affections without fear of disillusion. The disillusion has come already, and the affection flows out notwithstanding, without any claims. We know that the power that creates us and sharpens our passions and prompts our acts is the Poet's, and not our own; that our knowledge is but faith moving in the dark, our joy a gift of grace, our immortality a subtle translation of time into eternity, where all that we have missed is ours, and where what we call ours is the least part of ourselves. We are not impatient of injustice. It is not the fate that overtakes us that makes our dignity but the detachment with which we suffer it. All belongs to the necessary passion and death of the spirit, that to-day rides upon an ass into its kingdom, to be crucified to-morrow between two thieves, and on the third day to rise again from the dead. (Santayana, 1942, pp. 823-4)

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