Notes

From Harvard to Acadia: A Discovery at the Cataloguing Desk

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This paper reports on the discovery of a holograph manuscript by the American poet and philosopher George Santayana and the subsequent inquiry into its provenance.¹ During a retrospective conversion project in 2004 at the Vaughan Memorial Library of Acadia University (Wolfville, Nova Scotia), a cataloguer examining an old book for bibliographic details came across some old-fashioned handwriting on the back flyleaf. It appeared to be a rough draft of some verse, scribbled in pencil and dated February 25, 1894. A Google search of the first two lines was enough to identify it as Sonnet XXV: “As in the Midst of Battle” by George Santayana, first published in the *Harvard Monthly* in October 1895 and then as part of a sequence in *Sonnets and Other Verses* in 1896.

As in the midst of battle there is room
For thoughts of love, and in foul sin for mirth;
As gossips whisper of a trinket’s worth
Spied by the death-bed’s flickering candle gloom;
As in the crevices of Caesar’s tomb
The sweet herbs flourish on a little earth:
So in this great disaster of our birth
We can be happy, and forget our doom.
For morning, with a ray of tenderest joy

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1 A much briefer account of this discovery, omitting the details of the investigations into the manuscript’s provenance, has been published in *American Notes & Queries* 22, no. 2 (2009): 48-50.

Gilding the iron heaven, hides the truth,
And evening gently woos us to employ
Our grief in idle catches. Such is youth;
Till from that summer's trance we wake, to find
Despair before us, vanity behind.

Another Google search yielded a fine image of Santayana's handwriting, and it looked a match. Further examination of the book revealed penciled marginalia in the same hand throughout, and on the front flyleaf the impressions of more pencil writing, again in the same hand, barely discernible after being erased who knows when by who knows whom:

G Santayana
Cambridge
1894

The book was *Pain, Pleasure, and Aesthetics*, written by Henry Rutgers Marshall and published by Macmillan in 1894. Accession records indicated that the book had been donated to Acadia by one Benjamin Rand in 1912. How had a book owned by Santayana come into his possession? Rand was a local boy born in Canning, Nova Scotia in 1856, some nine miles from Wolfville. Canning at the time of Rand's birth was an important ship-building port of some 2000 people² (it is now a small village of several hundred³) and the Rands were (and indeed still are) a prominent local family. Their name is linked in local history to a famous tragedy of 1852: youngest son Benjamin, twenty-four years old, was one of the four Acadia College students drowned in the Minas Basin while sailing home to Wolfville from a geological expedition at Cape Blomidon, along with the College's only Professor, a visiting Baptist minister, and a boatman. Had he lived, this Benjamin would have been the book donor's uncle on his father's side.⁴

Benjamin Rand the second graduated from Acadia University with a B.A. in 1875 and an M.A. in 1879 and from Harvard University

2 1860-61 Nova Scotia Census (Halifax: Public Archives, 1979).

3 798, to be precise. 2006 Canadian Census, available at <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/> (accessed 22 August 2006).

4 Arthur W. H. Eaton, *The History of Kings County, Nova Scotia, Heart of the Acadian Land: Giving a Sketch of the French and Their Expulsion and a History of the New England Planters Who Came in Their Stead, with Many Genealogies, 1604-1910* (Salem, MA: Salem Press Co., 1910).

with a Ph.D. in 1885. He subsequently embarked on a career at Harvard that included stints as Assistant in Philosophy from 1892-1897, Instructor from 1897-1902, and finally Philosophical Librarian from 1906 until his retirement in 1933.⁵ Santayana was also a graduate of Harvard University and spent the bulk of his professional career there, first as Instructor (1889-1896) and then as Associate Professor (1898-1912). Rand and Santayana were, then, colleagues in the same department for many years.

Did Santayana give the book to Rand? Did Rand borrow it and not return it? It is impossible to tell, and irresistible to guess. Santayana took some care with his books; his letters to his friend Charles Augustus Strong reveal a preoccupation with the packing, transport, storage and arrangement of his books after his departure from Harvard. In one letter, he refers to them as “the only earthly chattels I retain.”⁶ In another, he writes of books that he lent to a pupil who happened to be in Paris, where Strong was living and where Santayana was a frequent visitor, and makes arrangements for their return.⁷ It seems unlikely that the book found its way into Rand’s hands through error or carelessness on Santayana’s part.

Despite a reputation for aloofness, Santayana had many friends at Harvard. Rand does not seem to have been among these. They certainly knew each other; in fact, Rand was a kind of teaching assistant to Santayana at one point. Correspondence from 1902 indicates that Rand was “reading the theses” for Santayana’s Philosophy 10 course. The letters are strictly businesslike, and concern a stipend of fifty dollars for this service. Santayana sticks to the matter at hand:

Dear D^r Rand

I have received word from the President’s secretary about your money, and he says that if you will send in a bill to the Bursar approved by me the President will also approve it, and then the Bursar can pay it. If you have not already done so,

5 Michael Jasenas, *A History of the Bibliography of Philosophy* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1973), 100.

6 Santayana to Elizabeth Stephens Fish Potter, 30 November 1912, in *The Letters of George Santayana. Book Two, 1910–1920*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 109.

7 Santayana to Charles Augustus Strong, 20 August 1911, *Ibid.*, 47

you might send in such a bill, with the order I formerly sent you which will do, I expect, as an endorsement.

I enclose a paper that explains itself. With best wishes

Sincerely yours

GSantayana⁸

Five years later, there is correspondence with another person performing the same function as Rand. Santayana's tone is markedly different:

Dear Kallen

Here is something by way of compensation for your work in Phil. 10. In the old days when B. Rand used to read blue-books for me I used to give him fifty cents for each, but it would be an insult to put you in the same class, even if the wages hadn't gone up in the interval. However, if there is any fraction over the regulation scale, pray spend it in Germany on cakes and ale – I mean Bier and Pfannkuchen – which I thought excellent thought-food in my day.

I hope you have really got out of the infirmary and will not allow the cares of this world and the next to keep you any longer awake o'nights.

Yours sincerely

GSantayana⁹

The only other references to Rand in Santayana's published correspondence are distinctly dismissive:

As to the proposed course in Monsterberggery, Howard and Rand, with their perverted classical minds, must have misinterpreted the great idealist – that fountain of alles Reines.¹⁰

I have been obliged to give a note of introduction to you to Professor Michele Losacco of Catania, who seems to be a sort of

8 Santayana to Benjamin Rand, 3 July 1902, in *The Letters of George Santayana. Book One, [1868]-1909*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 253

9 Santayana to Horace Meyer Kallen, 11 June 1907, *Ibid.*, 367.

10 Santayana to Benjamin Apthorp Gould Fuller, 7 February 1914, in *The Letters of George Santayana. Book Two, 1910-1920*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 172.

Italian Benjamin Rand. He wouldn't accept any excuses or evasions, and will certainly present himself and ask you a lot of questions.¹¹

Clearly, Santayana did not hold Rand in great esteem, so it seems unlikely that he would have made a particular gift of Marshall's book to Rand if he had much regard for it. However, when Santayana was preparing to leave Cambridge in 1912 and sending his books to Charles Strong for safekeeping, he sent a list of titles so that Strong could indicate which he already owned "so that we need not have useless duplicates on our hands. These duplicates I will give to Emerson Hall."¹² Emerson Hall housed the philosophy library, over which Rand presided as Philosophical Librarian at the time. Santayana sent his non-duplicate books to Strong's apartment in Paris on January 20, 1912.¹³ There must have been many duplicates, because Santayana estimated that the entire collection *before* withdrawing the duplicates would occupy about "one and a half meters of shelves from floor to ceiling,"¹⁴ while the pared-down collection he packaged up to ship to Strong occupied only "three cases"¹⁵ and he later referred to these titles as "the few books...that I have not wished to part with."¹⁶ Evidently, it depends on the size of a "case" and Santayana's idea of "few." There is no mention in his published letters of what he actually did with any duplicates, but it is quite possible that he did indeed give them to Emerson Hall. It is further possible that he did not do Rand the courtesy that he did Strong of providing a list with which to identify duplicates (gifts librarians will nod their heads and murmur their understanding), and that the Marshall book was already in the Philosophical Library's collection. Rand donated it to Acadia's library in May 1912, about four months after Santayana had disposed of his books. Given the timing, it is a plausible theory that Santayana deemed the book a duplicate and gave it to his alma mater, and that Rand in turn found it to be a duplicate and donated it to *his* alma mater, Acadia University. The book is the only item Rand donated to Acadia that he did not author himself; all of his other

11 Santayana to Charles Augustus Strong, 23 October 1934, in *The Letters of George Santayana. Book Five, 1933-1936*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 143.

12 Santayana to Charles Augustus Strong, 20 May 1911, in *The Letters of George Santayana. Book Two, 1910-1920* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 39.

13 Santayana to Charles Augustus Strong, 21 January 1912, *Ibid.*, 67.

14 Santayana to Charles Augustus Strong, 13 September 1911, *Ibid.*, 51.

15 Santayana to Charles Augustus Strong, 21 January 1912, *Ibid.*, 67.

16 Santayana to Oliver Wendell Holmes, 21 January 1914, *Ibid.*, 166.

gifts were copies of his own books and offprints of his own articles. Presumably, he thought the Marshall book worth giving, although whether he esteemed it for Marshall's original text or Santayana's annotations is a mystery.

It still remained to confirm that the handwriting in the book was indeed Santayana's. It was necessary to examine, in person, other holograph manuscripts and books owned by Santayana. The University of Waterloo holds a large portion of Santayana's personal library – some 348 volumes – in its Special Collections department, which were carefully scrutinized.

Examining these volumes brought to mind an observation of Santayana's from *Realms of Being*: "There are books in which the footnotes, or the comments scrawled by some reader's hand in the margin, are more interesting than the text."¹⁷ Perhaps he was paying himself a compliment, for judging from Waterloo's collection, Santayana wrote in many, if not most, of his books: always in pencil, and usually in the margins. His comments are terse but fully formed sentences that give the impression of immediate dialogue with the author of the book at hand. "Do you mean the coefficient of futurity, etc, affecting an image present to the mind? i.e. the projection of that object into the future?" he demands of Marshall. Elsewhere, he seems to interject, as when Marshall writes "No one who desired to produce an aesthetic work would think of giving it such form." Here Santayana has underlined the "No one" and written "Except God, according to the optimists" in the margin. Many of his marginalia stand alone as pithy epigrams: for example, "Divorce is the comfort of cuckolds," which he wrote in his copy of Bertrand Russell's *New Hopes for a Changing World*.¹⁸

While annotating his books was clearly a common practice for Santayana, writing poetry in them was not. Of all the books in Waterloo's collection, only one contains anything resembling an original manuscript. On a back flyleaf of *The Latin American Front* by Joseph Frederic Privitera are several lines of verse, heavily edited, and then written out "in good" below:

While on earth thrift and circumstance control
Wise custom, freedom makes within the soul

17 George Santayana, *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies* (New York: Scribner, 1924), 124.

18 George Todd, "Notes Show Personality of Author" (Waterloo, ON: n.p., n.d.).

Smiling submits to every civic bond
Builds, as it may, but ever looks beyond.

Privitara's book was published in 1945 when Santayana was eighty-one years old, many decades after his most prolific poetry-writing period had ended. The lines above were never (to the authors' knowledge) published, nor do they appear in William G. Holzberger's critical edition of *The Complete Poems of George Santayana* (1979), which includes many unpublished poems and fragments discovered by the editor.

Scrutiny of the Waterloo collection confirmed that Acadia's discovery was indeed a holograph manuscript of Sonnet XXV. But so what? Even though Sonnet XXV is considered among the best of Santayana's sonnets, and is Paul Fussell's pick as "a good representative Petrarchan sonnet" in his classic text on the mechanics of poetry,¹⁹ it is not Shakespeare. Discoveries such as this derive scholarly value from the light they shed on a literary figure or text, or they borrow cultural value from the fame of that literary figure or text. This one does neither. The path from manuscript to published poem is short and straightforward: one can see Santayana casting about for end rhymes (jotting down "flush" and "crush" as possible rhymes for "rush" and "hush"), dithering between verbs (changing from "destroy" to "employ" and then back to "destroy"), and reversing the order of a pair of couplets, but there are no great revelations of his poetic processes to be found here.

And what might there be to reveal? Santayana's writing, both poetry and prose, is flawlessly transparent and poses few difficulties of interpretation, which may go a long way towards explaining Santayana's current status as a fairly minor poet and philosopher. While most people would recognize his famous epigraph "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it," few could name its author or claim much familiarity with his work. This was not always the case. Indeed, writes Roger Kimball, "there was a time when Santayana's work was part of the normal furniture of educated discourse...until yesterday, it seems, Santayana's influence was woven into the living tapestry of intellectual life."²⁰ He had a significant influence on his students at Harvard, some of whom went

19 Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: Random House, 1979), 121.

20 Roger Kimball, "George Santayana," *The New Criterion* 20 (2002): 18.

on to become poets of more enduring significance: notably Wallace Stevens and T.S. Eliot (although Santayana's apologists note with indignation that Eliot never acknowledged the debt). Santayana's renown extended beyond academic circles, and he enjoyed popular success as well as critical acclaim: two of his books – *The Last Puritan*, his only novel, and *Persons and Places*, his autobiography – were Book-of-the-Month Club selections, and he appeared on the cover of the 3 February 1936 issue of *Time* magazine.

Although Santayana is not the giant of American letters he once was, he is still an important figure and Santayana studies march on. There is an international Santayana Society based at Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis which publishes a scholarly journal devoted to Santayana studies called *Overheard in Seville* and has hosted Santayana-themed conferences in Spain, the United Kingdom, and Poland. Its main business is a massive project currently underway to publish a critical edition of all of Santayana's published and unpublished works: the *Santayana Edition* currently runs to twelve volumes with at least another twenty-four planned – one of them devoted to Santayana's marginalia. This small discovery, like others before it, will inform this ambitious work, even if it is only to furnish a footnote.

SOMMAIRE

Cette étude fournit la documentation sur la découverte et l'examen d'un manuscrit olographe attribué au réputé philosophe et poète américain, George Santayana, et aborde les étapes qui l'ont mené de la collection personnelle de Santayana conservée à la Harvard University jusqu'aux collections spéciales d'Acadia University un siècle plus tard.