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Nadeau Awarded Prestigious Fellowship

Feb. 27, 2015

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has awarded a highly competitive fellowship to an Illinois Wesleyan University Hispanic Studies professor for the translation and critical analysis of a 17th-century Spanish cookbook.

Fewer than eight percent of applicants received fellowships for the 2015-16 academic year such as the one awarded to Byron S. Tucci Professor Carolyn Nadeau. In addition to the NEH fellowship, the Renaissance Society of America has awarded Nadeau a research grant for travel to libraries in Spain and New York in conjunction with the same project.



Carolyn Nadeau

In 1611, Francisco Martíno Montañó, chef to both King Philip III and IV of Spain, published *Arte de cocina, pastelería, vizcochería y conservería* (the art of cooking, pie making, pastry making and preserving), which Nadeau calls the most recognized Spanish cookbook before the 20th century. Nadeau proposes to write the first critical edition and translation of *Arte de cocina*.

Dismissed by cultural historians until recently as too commonplace to merit critical attention, cookbooks are now recognized as valuable primary sources providing “social and cultural meanings of food and, by extension, cultural identity, from the very society that produced them,” Nadeau said.

Because Martíno Montañó’s court cookbook was written for the king’s palette and originally targeted to the royal kitchen staff, Nadeau plans to explain how the book reflects questions of taste beyond the court and social elite to the cottage and farm kitchens across Spain. The number of editions printed – 25 between 1611 and 1823 – point to a wider reading audience, Nadeau noted.

“My critical introduction will explain how court cookbooks compare with cultural practices found in university treatises, religious instruction manuals, women’s domestic manuals, and health manuals,” Nadeau said. “In this way, the project will also bring to light how cookbooks, and more generally the culinary arts, intersect with other types of cultural knowledge and function as potent social, gender, political and cultural markers.” She noted *Arte de cocina* arrived in the same era that the first vernacular monolingual dictionary was published in Europe. The same era found dramatists producing theatre that explored cultural divides, abuses of political power, and questions of social identity.

“Passionate about this profession, Martíno Montañó wrote with a critical eye, often complaining about the deficits found in other cooking manuals,” Nadeau said. “Yet he conveyed the deepest respect for long-established processes that continued to present challenges for each generation of cooks.

“This type of reverence is evident, for example, in his recipe on how to prepare couscous, a dish with clear ties to Spain’s Muslim heritage, at a time when the state had just exiled all *Moriscos*, or Muslims recently converted to Catholicism,” Nadeau explained. “He often communicated a sensitivity to diverse palettes by allowing flexibility of meats, fats and other products used in several of his culinary creations.”

Following the same line of inquiry to examine and explain real cultural practices, Nadeau will devote some of her sabbatical next year to preparing most of the cookbook’s 453 recipes to better understand their flavors and subtleties. The archival work in libraries across two continents is exciting, but Nadeau can’t wait to get into the kitchen.

“I’m looking forward to preparing the dishes to better understand the subtleties and flavors,” she said. “This cookbook was considered ‘the’ model for Spanish cooking well into the 19th century. By examining each recipe and his passionate side notes, I can enliven Martínez Montañó’s authorial pride and acute attentiveness to his readers with appropriate glosses.”

Nadeau has written a number of articles on food representation in Golden Age texts. She specializes in 16th- and 17th-century Spanish literature and is the author of three books: *Food Matters: Alonso Quijano’s Diet and the Discourse of Food in*

Early Modern Spain (to be released late 2015); *Women of the Prologue: Imitation, Myth, and Magic in Don Quixote I* and a critical edition of Francisco de Quevedo's *El Buscón*. Nadeau joined the faculty at Illinois Wesleyan in 1994 and has directed off-campus studies in London, Madrid and Barcelona. She has chaired the Hispanic Studies department and received the University's highest teaching award, the then-named *Pantagraph* Award for Teaching Excellence, in 2003.

NEH supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation.