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For Immediate Release

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Garcia-Castanon
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bloomington, Ill--A previously unpublished 17th century Spanish play--written by the court dramatist for King Charles II--is the subject of a new book by an Illinois Wesleyan University Spanish professor.

Santiago Garcia-Castanon spent three years researching and writing a critical edition of "Sangre, valor y fortuna," ("Blood, Courage, and Fortune"), a play by Francisco Bances Candamo (1662-1704), a playwright and poet appointed court dramatist in 1687 by decree of Spain's King Charles II.

"I did research at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid," Garcia-Castanon explained, "where I found the only surviving, or known, manuscript" of the play--a late 17th century copy that likely was used by an actor in a production of the play.

"I worked for almost three years transcribing the much-deteriorated text," Garcia-Castanon said, "providing my own interpretations and/or corrections to the altered passages and writing an extensive introduction" that runs to 100 pages.

Garcia-Castanon is slated to return to the United States this week, following events last month in Spain, marking publication of his book by the Instituto de Estudios Asturianos in Oviedo, Spain, a branch of the Spanish Higher Council of Scientific Research. Garcia-Castanon delivered a lecture on his new book, which was published in October, focusing on Bances Candamo's role in the history of Spanish theater and his relationship with Spain's monarch in the late 17th century. He also participated in a roundtable discussion with faculty from the Universidad de Oviedo. A review of Garcia-Castanon's book has appeared in the cultural supplement of *La Voz de Asturias*.

"Sangre, valor y fortuna" was written between 1685 and 1695. Set in Poland, it surrounds the notion that countries are conquered through blood, courage, and fortune--a notion Bances Candamo took from "The Prince," a masterpiece by Niccolo Machiavelli, published in 1532 and still regarded as a primer on intrigue and power politics. Bances Candamo's story involves love affairs, incest in a royal family, murder, and a marriage to the king's daughter by the play's protagonist, placing him in line for the throne.

"The play is written skillfully in verse," Garcia-Castanon said. "Bances Candamo was a good poet."

After laboring over the badly damaged manuscript for three years--reconstructing text and correcting alterations that were made by actors performing in the play--Garcia-Castanon said, "I have learned not to judge

literature based on other people's judgments. Something that is ranked as minor in literature needs reevaluation" and continued study.

Bances Candamo lived during the Golden Age of Spanish literature and art. He was the author of about 24 plays and the only Spanish playwright appointed by royal decree. As the court dramatist, Bances Candamo was charged with authoring plays for the entertainment of the royal family and other nobles. However, "Sangre, valor y fortuna" was written for popular audiences and not the court.

"Since his plays were performed for the court and royal family, Bances Candamo was close to the center of power and government," Garcia-Castanon explained. "He was smart in pointing out political defects--corruption. He obliquely criticized the king, as the official playwright, and suggested ways to rule. After Bances Candamo resigned as court dramatist, he held administrative posts--and served as a tax collector."

"Sangre, valor y fortuna" was the only play by Bances Candamo that was unpublished. "There is no explanation as to why it wasn't published," Garcia-Castanon said.

Garcia-Castanon has broad experience in translating historic works. Since 1988, he has translated more than 200 pages of materials on the reign of Spain's King Philip II (1527-1598), the Spanish Armada, and other historic events. His teaching and research interests include: the Golden Age of Spanish drama, poetry, prose, and literary theory, medieval poetry and prose, post-Spanish Civil War poetry, and Spanish politics and culture. He also is a poet, published in the United States and Spain, and is writing a novel and a collection of short stories, as well as a book-length work on Bances Candamo.

Garcia-Castanon joined Illinois Wesleyan in 1989 as a Spanish instructor and was named an associate professor of Spanish in 1990. He earned an undergraduate degree in 1983 from the Universidad de Oviedo, a master's degree in Spanish literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1987, and a doctorate in 1990 from Illinois.