

LARA ANDERSON. *Cooking Up the Nation: Spanish Culinary Texts and Culinary Nationalization in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*. Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2013. 171 pp.

Jennifer Smith

Lara Anderson's *Cooking up the Nation: Spanish Culinary Texts and Culinary Nationalization in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century* analyzes the discourses involved in the culinary nationalization project in fin-de-siècle Spain. Central to this investigation are the tensions between preserving autochthonous Spanish dishes and modernizing Spanish cuisine through the incorporation of French recipes and customs. Also key to this discussion is the degree to which regional cuisines were included, without being subsumed, in the formation of a national culinary identity. Acknowledging the pivotal role of discourse in culinary nationalization, Anderson focuses on cookbooks by five fin-de-siècle Spanish authors: Dr. Thebussem and the King's Chef, Ángel Muro Goiri, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and Post-Thebussem. Chapter one introduces the theoretical questions related to the creation of a national cuisine as well as the history of its emergence in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spain. Anderson agrees with those scholars who argue that the creation of national culinary identities began in the nineteenth century, not the early modern period. Focusing on France, the pioneer in matters related to food, Anderson argues that despite efforts in the early modern period to record traditional recipes, French cookbooks produced at the time were essentially compendiums of court cuisine. It was not until after the French revolution, and the creation of print technology, that cookery books were written to appeal to a wider audience. This meant that culinary nationalization, even in France, did not truly emerge until the nineteenth century.

Turning the focus of the first chapter specifically to Spain, Anderson asserts that Spanish culinary nationalization emerged as a topic in the 1870s, at a time in which the Spanish elite—who remained the dominant class—consumed primarily French dishes. It was precisely the relative weakness of the Spanish middle class that explains Spain's inability to revolutionize its cuisine by creating an autochthonous *haute cuisine* as had been done in France. Accepting the hegemony of French cuisine at the time as a cultural reality, Anderson seeks to correct Spanish culinary histories that have tended to disregard Spanish cookbook authors who continued to create works that included primarily French recipes. She argues that it is essential to give these works equal attention as they testify to middle- and upper-class Spaniards' continued preference for French food as well as the tensions created by attempts to simultaneously preserve national traditions and to modernize. Nevertheless, Anderson does show how Spain's culinary nationalization project deviated from that of France in its embrace of regional recipes. In other words, while Parisian food became synonymous with French food in France, in Spain regional diversity was embraced in Spanish cookbooks; Spaniards preferred to speak of national Spanish cuisines in the plural.

Dr. Thebussem and the King's Chef's *La mesa moderna* (1888) is the subject of chapter two. *La mesa moderna* was initially published as a series of 12 letters between Mariano Pardo de Figueroa, aka Dr. Thebussem (1828-1926), and José Castro y Serrano, aka *Un Cocinero de*

Su Majestad (1829-1926) in *La Ilustración Española y Americana*. In these letters, they debate various issues related to Spanish cuisine. Dr. Thebussem generally champions Spanish cuisine and criticizes French influence, such as the fact that court menus were all written in French. The King's chef, on the other hand, defends culinary modernity and French influence. This explains why Dr. Thebussem has been remembered as a culinary nationalist while the King's Chef has not. Nevertheless, this overlooks the fact that both Dr. Thebussem and the King's Chef were invented personae employed as a rhetorical strategy for exposing the differing views on the state of Spanish cuisine, and that, as the work progresses, they come closer together in their views. Furthermore, both of these authors concurred in their support of giving equal status to regional cuisines. Anderson also shows the way in which Dr. Thebussem engages questions of Spanish nationalism through discourses on literature (such as his praise of Cervantes) and nation building (such as his call for a centralized postal service). As a whole, *La mesa moderna* criticizes the nation's rulers for failing to employ nation-building strategies, one of which would be the creation of a national cuisine and the rejection of French assimilationist practices.

In chapter three, Anderson gives attention to the frequently ignored Ángel Muro Goiri (1839-97). Muro's highly popular cookbook, *El practicón: tratado completo de cocina al alcance de todos y aprovechamiento de sobras* (1894), written six years after *La mesa moderna*, went through 34 editions and is often considered Spain's first culinary bestseller. As Muro wrote out of economic necessity, he had to give his readership the types of recipes and information they sought, which at the time were French recipes and advice on domestic organization and cleaning. Muro, nevertheless, aligns himself with Spanish culinary nationalization through his praise of Dr. Thebussem and the King's Chef, his democratization of cuisine by making upper-class dishes economically available to the middle class, his praise of regional diversity, his inclusion of a colonial dish (the *cazuela chilena*, which he renamed the *sopa Colón*), and the creation of culinary others (such as Italians and the English) whose recipes were said to be wanting. Despite the book's success at the time, *El practicón* is usually not discussed in histories of Spanish national cuisine because of its reliance on French gastronomy. Anderson argues, however, that rather than ignoring Muro's highly influential text, it makes more sense to study his work as emblematic of the culinary practices of the time.

Similar tensions between preserving traditional Spanish fare and incorporating modern French cuisine are explored in Emilia Pardo Bazán's *La cocina española antigua* (1914) and *La cocina española moderna* (1917), the subject of chapter four. Anderson criticizes those scholars who have studied one of Pardo Bazán's culinary texts independently of the other. By failing to study the two works together, culinary historians have tended to portray the Galician author as either a staunch culinary traditionalist or an unquestioning supporter of French hegemony in matters of food. The reality, however, is that by creating two volumes of unique focus, Pardo Bazán attempts to reconcile in her own way the continuing debates surrounding the preservation of autochthonous recipes and the incorporation of foreign dishes and practices. Anderson makes a point of showing how this meshes with Pardo Bazán's other writings on national concerns, most notably the way in which she justifies the incorporation of French literary trends (realism and naturalism) while simultaneously claiming their indigenous Spanish roots and their unique Spanish features. The first cookbook, which focuses largely on

Galician dishes, documents the culinary history of her own family and region, and has therefore been tied to her interest in Galician folklore. Nevertheless, Anderson argues that Pardo Bazán's aims in this book are more national than regional in that she discusses cuisine in a more general sense and as important part of national identity. A nationalist before a regionalist, Pardo Bazán writes in most detail about dishes that had transcended their regional origins to become national, such as gazpacho. Also testimony to her interest in culinary nationalization was Pardo Bazán's insistence that cookbooks be written in Spanish. Her second cookbook, however, seeks to introduce middle-class Spanish women to the dictates of modern French cuisine. In this work Pardo Bazán criticizes Spanish food for its rustic appearance and abundance. She argues that the French have taught Spaniards how to eat with all of their senses and have introduced refinements such as moderation, harmonization of flavors, and exquisite dining settings. By so doing, Pardo Bazán argues, the French have lifted eating from a purely corporeal act to one that engages the intellect and spirit. This message caused Pardo Bazán to be criticized for being overly Frenchified in her tastes in food. Anderson argues, however, that this misrepresents Pardo Bazán's views. Not only do we detect examples of Pardo Bazán's concern for culinary nationalism in *La cocina española moderna*, but by viewing the Galician author's two volumes as one food treatise, we get a more accurate vision of the way in which she negotiated the tensions between traditional Spanish dishes and modern French cuisine.

The fifth and final chapter looks at Post-Thebussem's *Guía del buen comer español* (1929), *Naranjas: el arte de prepararlas y comerlas* (1930), and *La cocina clásica española* (posthumous 1936). Using the pseudonym 'Post-Thebussem,' Dionisio Pérez (1872-1935) defends Spanish cuisine against French influence, even arguing at times that certain well-known French dishes were actually taken from Spain either after times of military conflict or as a result of marriages between monarchs of the two countries. Despite the questionable historical reality of some of the examples he gives to defend such assertions, the public embraced his arguments because of his impassioned defense of Spanish food. His *Guía del buen comer español* was the most detailed and optimistic compendium of Spain's regional cuisines at the time. His first two texts were actually commissioned by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship with the specific aims of promoting Spain's rich culinary heritage, improving the nation's general image, encouraging tourism to Spain, and growing the economy through increased consumption of Spanish foodstuffs at home and abroad. Thus, ironically, while Post-Thebussem rejected the influence of French cuisine, he did turn to France as an example of how to use cuisine for a national agenda, thereby revealing the seeming impossibility of modernizing Spanish cuisine without turning to France as some sort of model. Moreover, in his attempt to increase the consumption of Spanish agricultural products, Post-Thebussem created works that included numerous foreign recipes. *Naranjas: el arte de prepararlas y comerlas*, for example, sought to address Spain's surplus of oranges by encouraging their consumption through a cookbook whose recipes are mostly foreign in origin. In this way as well then, Post-Thebussem's celebration of Spanish cuisines and foodstuffs was not entirely free of foreign influence.

Cooking up the Nation is an outstanding piece of scholarship and a much needed contribution to fin-de-siècle Peninsular studies. Providing a useful and inclusive history of the culinary landscape of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spain, Anderson's book

is sure to give food studies –a field that has been largely ignored until now– a deservedly more prominent place in the field. In her book, Anderson puts forth and defends a novel thesis: Spanish culinary nationalization was a process that necessarily included those authors who catered to Spaniards' preferences for French dishes and practices. In other words, any discussion of the creation of a national cuisine in Spain must take into account the way in which prominent cookbook authors negotiated the tension between French hegemony and Spanish tradition. Indeed, Anderson astutely ties this seeming contradiction to similar discourses on Spanish national identity where the struggle was often framed as one of either modernizing by adopting aspects of French and English culture or retaining Spanish tradition, but remaining stuck in the past. The challenge, therefore, both on the culinary front and on the much broader national front, was to find a balance between both positions. In this way *Cooking up the Nation* rectifies a lacuna in studies on the discourses of Spanish national identity at the turn of the century. Not only does Anderson bring to light works by understudied authors (Muro) but also the way in which discourses on food were central to the debate on national identity. Equally important is Anderson's emphasis on the fact that Spain broke entirely new ground by giving equal weight to its unique regional cuisines rather than merely subsuming them in one national cuisine that resembled that of the nation's capital. In this regard, Spain showed itself to be independent from the French who put Paris center-stage in the creation of unified national cuisine. In short, *Cooking up the Nation* is a well-written, thoroughly researched, and novel investigation of Spanish cuisine and its role in broader questions of national identity. It is a pleasurable and informative read that is sure to inspire more studies on food as a manifestation of the cultural realities of fin-de-siècle Spain.

Southern Illinois University