

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### GUSTAVO SAINZ

(1940-2015)

Gustavo Sainz, pathbreaking author and professor emeritus of Latin American literature in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, was born in Mexico City on July 13, 1940, and died in Bloomington on June 26, 2015, two weeks shy of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. Gustavo was a distinguished and prize-winning Mexican novelist and essayist whose work was translated into English, French, Italian, and several other languages.

Gustavo joined the department in 1992, after having held positions at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City's Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, the University of New Mexico, Middlebury College, Washington University in Saint Louis, and elsewhere. He taught a wide range of courses on Spanish American and Mexican literature, creative writing, and film, before he retired from the department in 2011.

Gustavo burst onto the literary scene with his first novel, *Gazapo*, in 1965, at the tender age of 25. The novel was translated into over a dozen languages and continues to be a landmark in Mexican literature. Along with José Agustín and Parménides García Saldaña, he was considered to be one of the leading figures of *la Onda*, a Mexican literary movement that coincided with the youth movements and student protests of the 1960s and that was infused with the spirit (and irreverence) of contemporary countercultural movements (although, to be clear, both he and Agustín disputed their association with the movement). Over the years, Gustavo continued to experiment with language, style, structure, and narrative in his many other novels, which include: *Obsesivos días circulares* (1969); *La princesa del Palacio de Hierro* (1974), which received the prestigious Premio Xavier Villaurrutia; *Compadre lobo* (1978); *Fantasmas aztecas* (1982); *A la salud de la serpiente* (1991); *La novela virtual* (1998); *A troche y moche* (2002), which was awarded the Premio Nacional de Narrativa Colima in 2003; and *El juego de las sensaciones elementales: Autobiografía a cuatro dedos* (2006), which he co-authored with Eduardo Mejía. Mexico's Ediciones del Ermitaño has reissued a number of his most renowned works in its collection, Biblioteca Gustavo Sainz. He also wrote short stories and children's books and contributed to numerous newspapers and cultural periodicals in Mexico. His work has inspired numerous books, articles, and dissertations, to say nothing of a broad fan base. In the 1960s, Gustavo participated in elite writing workshops such as the Centro Mexicano de Escritores and the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He also received fellowships to support his writing from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Tinker Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, among others.

In addition to practicing his own craft, Gustavo was actively involved in opening literary doors, creating opportunities for other authors, and to ensuring the vitality and visibility of Mexican literature, whether past or present. He founded the collection SEPSetentas and the weekly

cultural periodical, *La Semana de Bellas Artes*; he was the director of the literature department at the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes; and he held various other editorial positions. He was also involved in a number of film and television projects, and regularly attended the Feria Internacional de Libros in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Gustavo would often talk about his dreams of finding a home for his library of over 75,000 books, films, and artistic works, which was too large—and heavy—to store in many sites. It was a task that he was unable to complete during his lifetime.

I fondly remember inviting Gustavo to speak to my undergraduate students in my course on Mexican literature, where we regularly read *Gazapo*. Students were fascinated by his depictions of youth, its social pressures, questions of generational change, and the exploration of modernity, the modern city, and new technologies. Having a living writer talk to them was always a high point of the course. Students were very excited to hear Gustavo's descriptions of the novel and its origins, and to ask him questions about the work and its significance. The memory of his visit will, I believe, stay with the students long after they have forgotten about the course.

Gustavo is missed, but his work continues to inspire readers.

Gustavo is survived by his sons, Claudio and Marcio Sainz.

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