

## RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF

### ***GUSTAVO A. ALFARO***

The members of the Department of Romance Languages and the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Jackson College of Tufts University hereby record our warm appreciation for our retiring colleague, Professor Gustavo Alfaro. Gustavo has served Tufts University as teacher, administrator, advisor and scholar for twenty-three years.

Gustavo Alfaro is first and foremost a man of the world in the best sense of that phrase. He was born in Bogota, Colombia, to a family that prized literature. His earliest memories are of a household in which books and poetry held center stage.

As a teenager, Gustavo came to the United States to attend high school in New York City. He then enrolled at Columbia College as a pre-med student, an unusual beginning for a literature professor, to say the least. Yet, while at Columbia and during his junior year in Paris, he took literature courses along with his science curriculum.

After completing his bachelor's degree, he went to Harvard where he did two years of graduate work in geology. He also met his future wife, Rosanna, while at Harvard. She, too, came from a family that loved literature. Her father was a professor of literature at the University of Michigan and had helped to establish East Asian Studies there. Upon completion of his graduate work, Gustavo took a job in South America working for an oil company. After four years of working in the jungles of Columbia, he decided that oil exploration was not for him, especially in the increasingly dangerous setting of a guerrilla war.

He returned to Boston to work on a Ph.D. in literature. Initially, he wanted to study Russian literature because he was interested in Russian studies at the time. Professor Albert Lord of Harvard convinced him to focus on Spanish literature instead, since, as he observed, Spain also has great literature. He then headed west to take up graduate study at the University of California, Berkeley, where he completed an M.A. in Spanish in 1962. He found Berkeley "too pleasant", and, afraid that he would not finish his doctorate if he remained in California, he returned to Cambridge and Harvard where, as he put it, "things were more structured." Four years later, he had completed his Ph.D. In the course of his studies, he worked as a teaching assistant and also taught Spanish at M.I.T. His dissertation on the picaresque novel was later published by the Instituto Caro y Cuervo in Bogota in 1977.

Once he had completed the doctorate, he received many job offers from universities around the country, finally choosing a position at Stanford. He and Rosanna moved to Palo Alto, California in 1966 and welcomed the birth of their first child, Anna. In 1973, they returned to the Boston area where Gustavo enjoyed a sabbatical and then worked for a

year at Simmons College. Their son, Pablo, was born in 1974 at which time the family was already renting the house on Appian Way where they currently reside. In 1978 they were able to purchase the house when it came on the market, much to the consternation of Harvard. Gustavo takes great pride in the fact that he defeated Harvard in the purchase of this centrally located house. More satisfying still, was the agreement to rent the cottage in his backyard to Harvard, making him, in the process, a landlord to our sister institution.

In 1975, he took a position at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he taught for three years as an Associate Professor. In 1978, he came to Tufts as a full Professor and as Chair of the Department of Romance Languages. As Chair, Gustavo oversaw the growth of the Department in a number of ways. He was immediately charged with filling seven new positions in French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. He helped to revitalize the Italian program and to start a program in Portuguese. He was instrumental in establishing Tufts-in-Barcelona, now Tufts-in-Madrid, which has proven to be a highly successful study abroad option. He also helped to found the "Africa and the New World" interdisciplinary minor and was a co-founder of the Latin American Studies minor. In 1983-1984, he even served as the Academic Advisor of Tufts-in-London.

Throughout his career, Gustavo has maintained his love of literature, especially Latin American literature. Although it was not the subject of his dissertation, the political, historical, and social engagement that marks Latin American literature has nevertheless always intrigued him. The publication of One Hundred Years of Solitude marked a turning point in his life. His initial reading drew him to the text, for he recognized in its setting, areas of Colombia in which he had lived as a child. In addition, his family knew the author, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. His fascination with the Nobel laureate resulted in the publication of his own study of Garcia Marquez's work.

Gustavo's publications have reflected his dual interests in the picaresque tradition and in Latin American literature. He has published articles on the picaresque in Spanish and Latin American literature as well as studies of Garcia Marquez's works. His scholarly work has informed his teaching in the best tradition of Tufts. In addition to introductory courses in Spanish and Latin American literature, Gustavo introduced courses on the intersection between history and fiction in Latin American letters with his classes on Literature and Revolution and the Dictator in the Latin American Novel. He has also taught a full range of courses on Golden Age Spanish as well Latin American literature, including poetry, drama, the novel, short story, and Don Quixote.

As he enters retirement, we are sure that he will devote even more time to supporting Rosanna's efforts as a playwright, to walking in Harvard Square, to traveling to London where he and Rosanna love to spend the theater season, and to watching his children pursue their own careers. The decision to abandon the jungle and the oil business for the halls of academe and the study of literature was surely the right one for Gustavo and for Tufts. We ask, therefore, that this resolution be spread on the minutes of the faculty of Arts and Sciences and that a copy be given to Professor Alfaro.