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Surviving Old Age

E' possibile uscire vivi dall'vecchiaia?

—Valerio Magrelli, *Exfanzia*

Not by dying (or not dying),
not by counting blessings,
accepting decline (or denying it),
not by remaining youthful
in bearing or young at heart,
not by outlasting family
and friends. I'll tell you how I
did it: I moved to Carrboro.

In Carrboro undying is living
and no one knows your age
because even the babies look
wasted. In Carrboro, haven

and hell, you can't find me
unless you don't ask for me.
In Carrboro, now and again,
marigolds bloom lawlessly
and sunflowers shy away
from the sun. In Carrboro,
here and there, fifty-year-old
marathoners sit on your porch
waiting for you to hug them.

Carrboro, fountain of senescence,
paradise of despair, summum bonum
of cyanide cynicals, last resort of those,
like me, who stand on the corner
of Weaver and Main, waving.

A scholar and writer, **Gustavo Pérez Firmat** is the David Feinson Professor Emeritus of Humanities at Columbia University, where he taught Latin American literature. His imaginative writing has been published in *The Paris Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Southern Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, and others. He has also published books of literary and cultural criticism, including *A Cuban*

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