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Generations

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 SWOSUTM

Generations

by Daniel R. Schwarz

I.

We celebrated New Year's Day with
generation older than ourselves.
Time—ghostly uninvited
guest—circulated like
stale medicated air in hospice room.
Conversational hum and buzz
touched by mortality
returned me to my past, even as
I saw my future self:
stooped bodies bent by time,
hearing aids, flaccid skin, canes,
wrinkled faces whose geographic
lines mapped worthy histories.

III.

Caught in warp of
another time, greeting me warmly
yet feigning full recognition,
others insinuated intimacy that never was,
as if I were bridge to
younger world they once knew.
Some never appeared, debilitated by illness,
loss of faculties, though present in
to and fro of regrets, memories, elegies.
Yet I imagined them as they were,
in full vigor, at similar parties years ago,
and realized I soon will be them,
my sons me, and the yet unborn
would watch my sons age.

II.

A warm touching occasion:
Among them, men and women I once
held in awe, who were my current age or
younger when I first arrived in Ithaca
bursting with words and promise.
“She is in its worst stage, the time
when one knows one is caught
in its inexorable grip,” grieved a luminary
of his still-elegant wife now
ravaged by Alzheimer's.
A few of the guests huddled
In corner, sharing the pain
Of adult children lost to heroin,
alcohol, and mental collapse.

