



11-15-2009

## My Father at 90

Dan Schwarz

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### Recommended Citation

Schwarz, Dan (2009) "My Father at 90," *Westview*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 2 , Article 24.  
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol29/iss2/24>

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# my Father • AT • 90

Dan Schwarz

"I have never been confused in my life," I heard this frail, bent man, my father, say when I told him I had gotten lost driving from Tampa to Bradenton.

Our body language speaks our differences.  
His eyes eagerly seek approval which I,  
Haunted by recurring nightmares, grudgingly withhold.  
No sooner do I warmly kiss my mother,  
than I back up warily when he leans to kiss me,  
as if still desperately trying to keep him out.  
I am frozen in memory, an awkward boy  
dwelling in his weird house of outrageous generalization,  
bathing daily in his critical loquacity,  
quivering again before threatened physical wrath.

Metamorphosized into a  
shrunken, wizened old man,  
garrulous, deaf, complaining about infirmities  
without knowing what they are,  
proclaiming once  
more his intention to live past a hundred,  
he will always be  
large man, physically threatening,  
bullying with corrosive, acerbic remarks,  
harping on my inadequacies,  
scolding, blaming, whining—and I  
the fearful confused boy  
reduced to screams for help that go unanswered.

Wandering in stained labyrinth of past,  
Now in my sixties, well along in my own death walk,  
living for decades with fear of replicating my father's errors,  
fretting about rejection from my own children,  
fearing detritus of guilt when he dies,  
knowing that deep, festering wounds  
prevented my being ministering  
son I might have been, I tremble,  
wondering how his ashes will shadow me.