

## **Time is Relative**

Jane Rosenberg LaForge

When I asked my mother how old I was as our family began to crack apart, she said only, "You and your sister were children," which might have meant before we tried painting a mural on the side of the house with doves and peace symbols; definitely before our father made us wash it off, cleanser bleaching a shadow on the stucco as if it were haunted. Or it could have been before I let the boy next door throw my orthopedic shoes into the ivy though how could I have stopped him; he was so much taller than all of us, parents included; or maybe it was before my mother's father had his first heart attack because there would be two others, on top of his Parkinson's.

I wonder if my daughter was ever that same age or if her time would be unmarked but for benign occasions: the fight we had at her gymnastics class about taking her stuff off the table after I had lugged it up four long blocks and up the stairs; or when she was frightened by my yelling at my father over long distance after he called the Fire Department but refused to get into the ambulance. He was having second thoughts about the hospital, the paramedics; perhaps the firefighters recognized him as the man who once left his oven on, smoking out

the entire building. This was,  
after all, only his first stroke,  
though it would become one  
of a series; the smaller episodes  
we lost track of, like he did,  
until the last one left him  
broken and restless.

Jane Rosenberg LaForge writes poetry, fiction, and occasional essays from her home in New York. She is the author of seven volumes of poetry, a memoir, and two novels. Her novel, *The Hawkman: A Fairy Tale of the Great War*, was a finalist in two categories in the 2019 Eric Hoffer awards. Her new novel is *Sisterhood of the Infamous* from New Meridian Arts Press; and her new book of poems is *Medusa's Daughter*, from Animal Heart Press.