

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

*Jane Rosenberg LaForge*  
**Marriage**

You make love with the actress  
you can afford, not the actress  
you dreamed of, for your first  
effort. Should this have been  
one of those wars, you might  
have had a strategy, options  
upon options to distribute to  
your Congress, but instead  
this is marriage, and you might  
laugh or you might throw me  
out. I want to be air again.  
I want to be water. I want to  
be elemental, so necessary to  
the most mundane of processes:  
what elevates fabric in the wind,  
or informs the buds of smell and  
taste. Body, body, body, as mine  
has long since curdled, my wrists  
and palms wicked and dry from  
the birth of all those doves and  
insects. Now I bow my head,  
if not to pray, then to build in  
my imagination The mistress  
I was to become when I was vile,  
I was fresh, a whirling Dervish  
without a vision, and the catalogue  
of my resentments came out in  
more than just school girl rhythms.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

### First Opera

At the opera, where the flute proposed to be more compelling than the whispers of my classmates, and the balcony seats were meant for the lesser class, we proved we could sit without causing an uproar; that we could listen, if not comprehend; that we could cross our legs and keep our fists to ourselves, even as a story unraveled into diatribes and exercises for an over-exuberant intelligentsia and its discontents. After intermission someone in our row asked if we were virgins. I was born in September, when what is sweet and dry rots into what is loose and wet, and I rushed to say yes. Better than life's other options: No, I don't know. Maybe. Why are you asking? All of which had their domino effect on the audience, more attuned to behavior than to magic, and the expectations of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Above our heads were the royal colors, blues and purples in silk and velvet, arranged as if for a procession, the chandelier's entrance, ordained by the tools of heaven. I studied that chandelier and believed in all the things I wanted to believe in: that the lions in "Born Free" were the actual lions, and how the skaters in the Ice Capades could be made to move like puppets, at precisely the same time, in precisely the same way. How dull, then, to have to explain to my daughter At the science fair, what paint and perspective on the Auditorium ceiling were meant to convey: the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life, a barrage of fabric and contoured glass in the dark, the sapphires and amethysts of my imaginings.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

### Aging Los Angeles

Who will be my father now,  
I wonder, now that pigeons  
Roost where women like my  
Mother once congregated, on  
the downscale department store  
tower, blind in its gold plaster,  
although in my day the structure  
was just tawdry in its display of  
cement and tile. The pigeons appear  
as if pinned to the ledges, as if  
each were stationed as separate  
and indivisible mementos of history  
and private allegiances. At the old  
folks' home, where my father lives,  
the most breathtaking scenes in  
the black and white movie I watched  
with his comrades were the moments  
between pauses. On the screen there  
were holes, literal and pinpoint,  
and the slight oohs and aahs they  
elicited, as if left prompted by an  
accident; as if they were spots where  
once some flame had surrendered;  
and in the blackout moments the light  
that emerged through them was specific  
and poignant, like the pregnancy of stars  
no longer capable of rebirth. My mother  
once declared herself as fat as a pigeon,  
and the gray her hair admitted as dim  
as their dusky eyes and feathers. Close  
to death, everyone becomes their own  
best enigma, or is it in old age there is  
time enough for love and misleading visions.

**Before Elton John was Gay**

There were possibilities in  
the blood and the brain,  
the anatomy in between,  
the trap of sensation  
too new for understanding.  
Even if such possibilities were  
not extended to the crippled  
and dim-witted, there were  
possibilities nevertheless,  
in places where sound was  
amplified and repeated, on  
stage or in Spanish class.  
In forests, where we might be  
taken out, bound and gagged,  
and set to wait until the torches  
arrived, those patiently oiled  
brush and branches. What was  
dead and revived like a skeleton  
to feed the unnaturally conceived  
pyre. On the dodge ball court where  
I was neglected, I believed that  
if I held my face long and high  
enough during a running leap  
I would just keep on going.  
Into the sun and behind it.  
Finally, I would be properly  
ignited. On the bottoms of  
my feet, my problematic ankles,  
swollen and feeding into  
the blistered joints, toes and  
their mighty calluses. There were  
possibilities then in spinning baubles,  
factory-manufactured and blacker

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

than the holes on the other side of our imaginations, and we could see our reflection in them amid the male-facing shadows and the directions they demanded. When Elton John came out, all this was over and done with: the dregs, the determination, the winds that made weather or dismantled mental fitness, and we were left with manners and categories, and the rooms where our names were taken down for a list of witnesses.

**My Mother Missed the Arab Spring**

My mother missed the Arab spring.  
The search for stability, she wrote  
in one of her books, is the chief aim  
of American foreign policy. She was  
taking a class at the New School,  
living in that neighborhood that offered  
the soul of experience, and now offers  
mere accessibility. My mother lived in  
an inevitable world, not of roommates  
and fallen engagements, but of the hegemony  
of nurses and doctors, their laboratories  
and literary theories. The eggs, cheese  
and milk were delivered to her doorstep,  
with free custard on Fridays, but without  
any nutmeg. A bloodless donation a  
small spice would have been, for a woman  
who separated herself from so many desires,  
the dreams of revolutionaries and their  
subsequent dictators.