

The Sixties

Listen up to British novelist L. P. Hartley:
The past is like a foreign country.
Or is a foreign country
Like the past? Think England, circa 1960.
The air feels older. The clothes,
The color of the sky, the shadows
Stretched out from the trees—they all look soft.
As does this gravel path, the way the light falls off
Its crumbling edge. As if a photograph
Has muted over time. Don't laugh.
This family could be mine.
Or yours, ambling in the park. How they're all trying
To have some fun: a bike, a tennis racket,
A sunny afternoon. They're backlit
As the five of them (Mom and Dad, the kids) approach the camera lens,
Half-smiling, in a line. You sense
That nothing could go wrong inside this scene.
Jump forward 50 years. What does it mean
When everything around you shifts? When every open field
Could be a target for a nuke, its deadly yield?
Imagine now a terrifying flash
That fixes each of them, like Pompeii effigies, in ash.

Gary Duehr has taught poetry and writing for institutions including Boston University, Lesley University, and Tufts University. His MFA is from the University of Iowa Writers Workshop. In 2001 he received an NEA Poetry Fellowship, and he has also received grants and fellowships from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the LEF Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Journals in which his poems have appeared include *Agni*, *American Literary Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Cottonwood*, *Hawaii Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Iowa Review*, *North American Review*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. His books of poetry include *In Passing* (Grisaille Press, 2011), *THE BIG BOOK OF WHY* (Cobble Hill Books, 2008), *Winter Light* (Four Way Books, 1999) and *Where Everyone Is Going To* (St. Andrews College Press, 1999).

The Pangolin Review, Issue 13, November 2019