

# Three Poems

by [Peter Lopatin](#) (March 2020)



*Harbor at Trieste*, Egon Schiele, 1907

## Recollection of an Afternoon Storm

As it was when I  
saw it then,  
gathering itself fast  
over the fine seascape  
late in the day  
after the sun had  
given its best and  
then begun its slow decline,

(I remember how I  
expected then  
to recall it now,  
seeing it as it gathered  
in the dimness,  
playing itself out  
over the blackening bay)

so we—who, in remembering,  
are no longer one—  
try to say now what we were then  
and what it means to be,  
and gather ourselves—  
conjuring ourselves out of some  
sweet confection of memory and  
damp air—then decline too,  
nourished, just enough, as we fade,  
passing too swiftly by this bay,  
yet grand and fair.

## Skipping Stones

They come to nothing in the end,  
no less so than those artlessly thrown.

The difference is in the show they make  
before they go. You need the right raw material though:

flat and true but with heft enough to slice the water  
when it hits. Water has the density of life and demands

that you persist and come up for air,  
if only to cut a smaller slice and fall again

before you thought you would. There. Now you have it.  
Search for more and fling them side-arm with

backspin snap and smooth authority. Wow the idle  
sunbathers to their core with two-digit skips through

breezy chop. Saunter off with nonchalance and  
leave them wanting more. You've had the better of this day.

Perhaps you'll have another one, when the stones  
slice clean and play the water well before they drop.

The Eternal Present

No wind on the lake

as there was before,

when sails sighed with fullness

and the water bore the boat's weight

as if passing it hand over

liquid hand. No more.

Becalmed close to a shore

which is not my destination,

but another's, I note the hour

and consider whether,

paddling with a single oar,

the better choice is to

point the bow there and

camp 'til morning or to keep

my heading true and wait for wind.

Then, hesitating there, I see

the lake and hills as if

the scene were frozen vitreous,

painted like an antique Chinese lamp

from my youth, wondering

how it would be to be the one

depicted there,

glazed with indecision,

feeling myself

both agent and object,

moving slowly, always,

always frozen fast.

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

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**Peter Lopatin** was born and raised in New York where he earned his JD degree and practiced corporate law for thirty years. Along the way, he studied philosophy as a graduate student at the New School for Social Research. After retiring from his legal practice, he obtained a Certificate from the New School in teaching English as a Second Language and has been an ESL teacher since then. He has taught at the University of Connecticut/Stamford, Norwalk Community College, Manhattanville College and, most recently, at the Stamford English Language Academy. Peter's short stories and book reviews have appeared in *Commentary*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The New Atlantis*, and *New English Review*. His poetry has appeared in *New Millennium Writings* and *Poetry East*.

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