

The Gatherers

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



Wooded Landscape, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff

Off the shoulder of the road, three men
with sharp-pointed poles stab at trash
like spear-fishers in a coral cove.

They carry black sacks tied to their waists for
their day's catch, which they slide raw and
ungutted off the poles. I could do well

at a job like that. I like to gather
discarded things: phrases that have
fallen out of favor, unanswered messages,

unspoken misgivings, forgotten heroes,
furtive glances, florid metaphors,
infinitesimal probabilities, the best

of intentions, caution thrown to the winds,
moments that have slipped by unnoticed,
hopes torn to shreds. I might succeed

at a job like that, following every

turn of road, scanning the ground,
doubling back, knowing my sack will never be full.

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

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*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)