

Two Poems

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



Great Blue Herons, Marie Hull, 1925

It's All in the Book

A Math and Physics major friend from
fifty years ago—his name was 'Cooper' (let us say)—

haggled back then with his *confrères*
over a point of quantum subtlety,
insisting that their notebooks were—imagine this—
“too full” because they filled them, uselessly, with
what could already be found in books.

Cooper couldn't understand that, for lesser minds
than his, the transition from Equation 23.1 to 23.2
was a journey of toil and doubt.

“It's all in the book,” was all he had to say.

These transitions—these leaps from time to
place, from places here beside this creek
where the going down is continuous,
but proceeds in breaks, to the placid pond
whose outlet barely makes a sound,
even after rain—
are acts of grace.

They cause me to pen so many notes,
preposterously repeating Cooper's friends'
egregious mistakes. I want to say,

like him: "It's all in the book"—and it is—
but the pond waters wait, the Herons
skim and dip, and the yellowed pages
split in two, the two
into four and the four
into eight, taking the self-evident
out for a spin.

So I plod and fill my book with dubious
scrawl, imagining Cooper's dismay.

I parse and specify, showing
all my steps and derivations.

But still, Equation 23.2
remains so very far away.

At Present

There is nothing to anticipate.

There is, instead, an unkempt room with

shafts of light instead of plans,

and books that one has read and
read again,

railroad timetables long expired,

garments rich with mileage,
rich with narrative,

a pair of weathered shoes that
saw no road untrod.

There are no dead.

The air is not sickly here
as elsewhere,

and one is led
to breathe the life
of all lives lived.

There is no time to bide,
no wait, no *until*.

You are present, here,
in the clear, bright cell
of your open heart, where you
rest and eat your fill.

Voices, once inflamed,
flow like a honeyed aquifer,
silent now beneath an arid plain.

The sea, lashing at the sand,
falls unfettered

on your outstretched
hand.

There is something here right now,
something which has not been sought,
a sound that goes unclaimed—

Claim it now! Expand! Don't wait!

Avoid all artifice! Be unchained!

There is nothing to commemorate.

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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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