

The Discovery of Play

Even now I can feel the weariness of those first six months,
numbness from unremitting focus on attention's sponge,
suddenly lift—the weight that kept me stooped simply gone.

We were on the floor. His bottle's lid lay temptingly
before me like a tiddlywink, so of course out of idleness
I flipped it toward him. Miracle of miracles, he flipped it back,

and when it twirled his way again and he returned it to me,
the smile once the aftereffect of burps now came with purpose,
bursting to laughter as we flicked the plastic back and forth.

We were alone. Those were the years of tag-team parenting,
and her work had thrown my wife out of town, as mine would me
the next night, so when we were at last at home together,

our son in bed, my eagerness to tell was overtaken
by her account of their reinvention of Whac-A-Mole.
She had stuck a finger up through a gap in our back room's

lattice-top table and he had grabbed at it, and again
each time she poked through another space. If she stopped
for a moment, his eyes seized hers, insisting on surprise—

game bearing language-game. We each had seen a change make its
fresh leap across a synapse, as if one night in Venice
a new bridge came to be arching a never-crossed canal

to allow access to a quarter where narrow back streets
emerged onto campos fronting brilliant palazzos.
His new portal to the world opened us. It was not long

before I was standing his still-pudgy legs on my lap
and, holding hands, helping him wiggle to “Let's Twist Again,”
to dance before he could walk. What our eyes shared, call it joy.