

# Poetic Inquiry of and on Play

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## Abstract

Dear Carl, Pamela, Natalie, Sandra, and Kimberly,

Would you like to come out and play? John, Lynn, Celeste, and I are knocking at your door.

We wonder if you might be interested in joining us in a poetic inquiry? The call from CJE asks for papers that address play, playfulness, and childhood.

Poetically yours,

John, Lynn, Celeste, and Sean

*P.S. Can't, too busy, don't have time? Ready or not, here we come.*

*Keywords:* childhood, education, poetry inquiry, play

## Résumé

Chers Carl, Pamela, Natalie, Sandra et Kimberly,

Ça vous dirait de venir jouer dehors avec nous? John, Lynn, Celeste et moi cognons à votre porte.

Nous nous demandions si vous aimeriez vous joindre à nous dans une recherche poétique? La RCÉ lance un appel de communications sur le jeu, l'esprit ludique et l'enfance.

Poétiquement vôtre,

John, Lynn, Celeste et Sean

P.-S. : Trop occupés? Pas le temps? Prêts, pas prêts, on est là.

*Mots-clés :* enfance, éducation, recherche poétique, jeu

\*The poems in the text are written by the authors.  
A full list of poems and the authors are listed at the end of the article.

## Call and Response

**John:** Could we focus primarily on poetic play, and not give too much space to the prose and quoting? I am thinking that we just need to show some playfulness, something that appears to have been forgotten. Do we want to focus the piece(s) on our own memories of play, on watching our children/students play and on playing with them, or both, or more?

**Sean:** Or how about tackling an issue, such as the one of “readiness”? It seems that the concept of readiness is crowding out the importance of play. The early childhood educators I have talked with recognize the value of play, but are also quick to point out that time to play is reduced each year. An Internet search of “kindergarten readiness” generates 475,000 hits in .27 seconds. What does the prevalence of this readiness discourse mean? Are you ready for kindergarten, for Grade 1? For Grade 5? For high school? For life? Why is it that my heart resists this word? Have I simply had enough of getting ready?

**John:** Readiness? I’ve resisted laughing, but not resisted responding, when I’ve heard that word mentioned in reference to students. My response is, “The child is coming to school and we are the ones who need to be ready...not the child.” Okay, maybe that’s the beginning of my poem, but I don’t want to be cranky all the way through this process. I will remind myself to play.

**Celeste:** We’ll have to remind each other! I’d rather focus on play, as we experience play through our bodies, our flesh. Here’s “BodyPsalm for Playing” that I wrote awhile back that can be a teaser to play with, off, and from (<http://bodypsalms.com/?p=672>):

What ever happened  
to the sheer delight of  
p l a y i n g  
where your fingers and feet  
touch the earth  
and you play in the mud  
let sand run through your palms  
and sea, salt and dirt glide  
on the edge of your skin

Remember the joy of  
rinsing your hair in the rain  
and running through an open field  
and dancing on the shores

of the body of water  
you knew as a child

Why does Jesus say  
you must be like a child  
to come into the kin(g)dom of heaven  
fresh and fragrant  
is the place  
to play and pray  
in dusk and dawn

Now is the season  
to call back your heart  
to live with lightness  
and cherish the chance  
to take back what you deeply know  
find the joy in movements  
which sweep your being  
into first utterance

The sound of words falling from breath  
the touch of wet sand on arms  
the scent of sky  
the dance of wind

Re-inhabit  
the ecstatic pause  
where play takes up its vital cause  
and you answer  
YES!

Can't we just rent a big house near the ocean and go play in the mud and write from that?  
Who wants to play?

**John:** I love the "Who wants to play?" invitation, Celeste. Maybe, "Who wants to play poetically with us?" or "Who wants to poetically play with us?" But, "Who wants to play?" is such a universal—in my universe, anyway—request.

But, of course, I am also reminded of those who can't, or feel they can't play, or aren't ever invited to play. We are hoping to create in this piece a space for all to play. Who will read us? How do we continue to invite those who don't hear, see, feel, understand our invitation to play? Are we really inviting everyone if we aren't reaching everyone?

**Lynn:** Inspiring to wake up to these wonderful playful words and a joyful mud full bodypsalm!! ... Frankly, play for me has a shadow side.... Okay, I'll plunge in. Here's my jumping off place...

**With Apologies to Robert Louis Stevenson and other games we used to play**

*I have a little shadow...*

Tugs at my sleeve

Remember me?

I want to play?

Not now I say

Go away

*Come again another day*

Play

Controlled

Out of control

Scripted

Improvised

Compromised

Play turns on a dime  
on edge on a ledge

Recess time child screams in rhyme  
hop skip jump foot on the line  
You're out! Safe! Out! Out! Out!

One patate two                      patate three patate                      four  
I'm a little girl guide dressed in blue  
These are the actions I must do

Stand at attention

Pay attention!

Pay

For toys, for electronics, for look alike play alike be alike

Don't sing

Don't dance

Don't move

Don't groove

Child lost in play  
Lost at play  
Play lost

Class assignment: Everyone outside! Play on the monkey bars! Hang upside down!  
student council president violinist soccer player  
Grade 12 class valedictorian in waiting  
swings on swing recess bell feet on ground laugh into frown returns to class don't pass go  
don't collect don't recollect write a poem

singular path

Why are you crying asks her English teacher

I can't remember the last time I played...?

*I have a little shadow...*

*And what can be the use of him*

*is more than I can see...*

**Pamela:** Thank you ! I would love to come out and play! And I don't even need to ask permission! Wheeeee! (That's French for yes! ;) ) I love the emphasis on poetic play and embodying it in this piece. Play is the language of spirit. Play connects across difference.

I remember when my niece was in kindergarten a few years ago and she got this super looooooong report card. She was assessed for things like sharing and cooperation and listening. How many adults would pass kindergarten?

What is so dangerous about play anyway that we have to exclude it? Hmm...?

Oh boy! Let's go!

Later skaters!

**Carl:** Sounds lovely and lively, Sean!

**Natalie:** So happy to join! I'm holding on to my son's toys while he insists on having outgrown them. Then I catch him play with them in secret. I'm playing tug of war with his need to grow.

**John:** Ah, this is so lovely. I will write right in this email.

Not right as in the opposite of wrong,

as if there were opposites...real ones, but right here

located  
in this spot  
this very spot  
where I am writing.  
Sean calls us out to play  
and we all say "YAY."

Sean calls John.  
Sean is John  
and John is Sean  
when languages are melted and mixed  
like stew. Yum.

Celeste centres us  
with dance from the heavens  
and to them, too.  
Lynn lets loose with apologies  
and tongues  
and cheeks.  
Cheeky.  
Lovely.

Pamela doesn't even turn around to ask permission;  
she runs into the street to play with us  
shouting "Wheeee" in French  
and other languages  
we all understand because we're playing.

Natalie's here, too.  
Will Natalie be naughty and make us laugh more,  
and maybe even cry fun tears,  
like the last time she played with us.  
The fun part about tug of war  
is when someone's bum hits the ground.

Carl calms,  
just enough before he starts us up again.  
Carl is kind  
and cares

about who is playing.

Kimberly is kind, too;  
she cares, too.

Where is Kimberly?

Has anyone seen Kimberly?

Is Kimberly coming out to play?

And Sandra?

Did Sandra hear us?

Let's all call Sandra together.

SAAAANNNDRA. ARE YOU COMING OUT TO PLAY?

**Natalie:** John, your playfulness is contagious

look who's tugging now

you smile across the seas

a naughty grin playing with words

with people

and possibilities

Who will be the first to hit the ground

in our tug of war?

Even as we fall

we continue to play

**Sandra:** Sandra is late to the game

because she skipped work

to play and play

to remember when she was a kid

and the best thing was recess

and summer camp

and fishing with dad, drinking Pepsi

in our small row boat

not threatened by the speedier boats

**Kimberly:** What to say about play, today, is this:

that it's not always easy when the mind

intervenes, but from practice becomes

apprehend-able. So let us practice

young, for who knows the human

pains that silence and facility with  
focus will quell. Who knows  
what good the connection with  
nature might cause us to tend later,  
or even soon, when life becomes  
more than fun and delight, games  
laid aside in favour of surviving.  
Practice will hold us to what's  
human, the ability to return to  
what's lovely, even in memory.  
Play keeps us pliable when  
possibility seems stuck between  
spirit and bone.

Peace out, friends.

### **The Untold Story Is**

The untold story is play is a food group not just for children, but adults.  
What if we just left our desks at a certain time and there was "adult recess?"  
We could skip down the halls, extend our torsos  
  
as if we truly remembered or remembered back the joy of dancing spontaneously.  
What if we let the whole body out to play when we became grown-ups  
  
and did what engaged the world and ourselves as we did as children?  
There could be improv, storytelling, squishing our faces,  
  
leaping with glee in the office or even meetings!  
Our tissues and cells could surprise us and we could inhabit our full bodies to  
play,  
  
and we could concentrate on "being" rather than "having" bodies. And curiosity  
would unfurl our fingers and celebrate our toes at least for a few minutes each  
day.  
It may sound silly to some, but our serious contorted limbs over the computer are  
far more toxic.  
  
May the heart of play bring us back to tell a new story.  
  
Only for a few minutes, the world could change.

### **A Cycle of Play**

As infants we play  
gazing at our mother's face  
at the gentle rotation of the bed mobile  
playing with our hands  
with all we can touch, taste

as children we play  
in every way, in any place  
with any friend

as adolescents we play with our bodies, our minds  
testing the limits

as adults we play with other bodies, other minds  
with money and lives

and as elders we play  
through time  
against time

we rest on mobile beds  
and gaze at our daughter's face  
lest we forget how to play

10, 9, 8, 7....3, 2, 1. ZERO!!

Here I come, ready or not!

### **You Have to Be This High to Ride**

Earlier we talked about readiness. What do we remember of getting ready? There were first day photographs, junior high dances, and graduation events. All of these school moments required little more than a shower and clean clothes, and it would be difficult to overemphasize the significance of these rites of passage, the excitement and anticipation.

We remember these moments with ease: they are filled with personal significance and symbolic value. With family and friends we focused on the passing through, the leaving of one stage of life and moving on to another. There is, however, a kind of school readiness that focuses on the gate, and the sign posting is familiar:

you cannot pass,

do not enter,  
private property.

For those who approach the gates  
the culture of fear  
tests and inspections.

Readiness programs in the early years target children, sorting and labelling. Little more than triage, this deficit approach assumes that individuals and their families are responsible for readiness, and for those deemed not ready, questions arise as to why the home (and community) is not able to produce readiness.

It is a problematic model.

When it comes to social constructs such as readiness, Foucault (1975) reminds us to look to the systems, rather than the individuals.

Systems gain authority and power from social constructs, often disguising inequities and imbalances.

Consider how in schools  
the normal approach to readiness  
is to create levels and increments.

Not unlike the amusement park restriction that says

“you have to be this high to ride,”

Schools normalize readiness as a signpost,  
a checkpoint, a threshold.

Doing so ignores basic structural and systemic inequities  
that produce these differences.

Why should a level need to be reached  
in order to gain admission/acceptance/invitation  
to free and public education?

In play, readiness becomes a process  
rather than an attribute;

a matter of human becoming

rather than something predictive;  
readiness becomes part of how we understand  
the complicated nature of communities  
rather than something static and individual.

### **Are You Ready for School?**

When mom asked me if I was ready  
for school  
she wasn't talking about me being caught up  
to anyone else  
or ahead of them;  
she meant

are your boots on  
is your coat done up  
do you have your lunch  
your books  
your cap in case it gets cold  
(because in Newfoundland  
at any time,  
it can get cold.)

No, Mom knew what I/She was responsible for  
and she trusted that school  
would be ready for me  
in ways that schools must get ready  
in ways that mom didn't know  
and never gave a second thought to.

Nope, Mom wanted me to be ready  
boots  
coat  
lunch  
books  
cap  
and that was it.

Within each of us is a child—full of memories, fears, laughter, movement, play—a child who is taught to quickly line up, sit quietly, put hands on desk. As educators, we could demonize our schools, or open ourselves to play, to model what is possible.

How do we receive children in our midst?

How do we choose to engage in each encounter of natality (Arendt, 1958)? Hannah Arendt (1961) challenges us to love children enough so as to invite them to engage into the world's renewal, not as we would dictate, but as they will imagine it into being (p. 196).

How did we as educators come to embody an institutional venture without play? We fall into someone else's game plan—the new nicely bound script, the latest one that everyone must have in order to be included in the game, or even our own well-worn yellow papered script with coffee stains—and in so doing, create environments where play is seen as disturbance, resistance, uncontrolled, without meaning or benefit.... No wait, we could all list the benefits of a child at play: social, physical, emotional, mental well-being. And there is problem solving, collaboration, communication, leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution. Let's not forget encountering and reconciling differences, meeting the unknown, creating and recreating rules, organizational and personal skills, communication, environmental exploration. In play we are present, engaged, and wide-awake (Greene, 1978) to what matters.

Who is the child within us we wish to bring forward into the future?

### **From Masters to Pests**

We shepherd them into the playground  
fuel their energies with love  
teach them rules of play  
bandage their scars  
boost their confidence

we are masters of their playground

we explain that life is tackled one step at a time  
on the monkey bar  
we teach them to manage relationships  
on the seesaw  
overcome their fear of heights on the slide  
and take measured risks jumping off a swing

And when their heads can touch the high bar  
in the blink of an eye  
we transform from masters of their playground  
to pests in their playing field

## **Mother, Mother, May I Take a Step?**

*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.  
When I became a man [sic]—yada, yada, yada*

In a detailed account of the history of human reason, Wong (2009) explains, “Reason and consciousness are often cited as the critical qualities that distinguish man [sic] from beast. Appetite, will, reflex, and instinct, unless severely restrained, are widely believed to lead inevitably to a life of ignorance and immorality” (p. 193). Along the way, perhaps play has been something a reasonable person is supposed to leave behind, graduating to more serious and morally significant activity.

But what if play were the more ethically responsible activity?

It may already be. Schools are part of a social contract established with children, families, communities, and the future. Looking to the future (and simultaneously back), is play not a critical part of how we imagine thriving socially, personally, and economically? If so, then to deny someone the opportunity to play denies that person a right of citizenship, a right to participate in what is imagined as a public good.

### **Two-Hour Delay**

My daughter commands me  
to stop, to play CandyLand

to close the computer, pay attention,  
skip email and skip with our pretend

pieces of cookie around the block  
with the dog and her scooter.

We move around an edible world  
from the gooey molasses swamp on Grove Street

to the swirled cinnamon camp behind the library  
to the fairyland of lollipops in our backyard.

Hungry for time and fun,  
we write notes to the Goblins

that keep our space and ask  
how they like the fog

and the day's delay  
and cookies for breakfast?

As a means of being good to one another, as a way of acting ethically, we are seeking to make play more resonant in our lives; listening to one another and ourselves as we navigate the competing interests and allegiances of the institutions that we dedicate time and energy to. We've learned that poetry can be emancipatory, that the playfulness of poetry critiques cultural codes. Through its experimentation and language play, poetry creates new images and invents new myths. Poetry tastes the caress of wind between lines. Poetry introduces alternative memories and histories, sometimes contentious, often in jest; such alternatives enter the cultural discourse to complicate conversation and help us reimagine ourselves, our words, and our ideas in transformative ways. Poetry in playful encounters opens us to revelation, evaluation, meaning-making: a simple rhyme turns into a complex cycle of pedagogical resistance, exclusion, invisibility, illusion.

### **I'm Feeling Guilty**

Play walks a thin line between  
bullying and  
belonging.

In Grade 4, I joined the cross-country running team; I didn't know it then but I was learning to study (or live? about life? survive?). Most days, the best thing you could do was keep running. With my dog Dusty, I ran the forest trails that were just down the street from me. The widest loop was about a mile, and every morning I ran five laps.

### **Running Shoes**

My first new pair  
purchased at Five Season Sports  
old man Harding knew I had saved up all winter  
\$30 a month from my paper route  
I had dreams  
that had not yet found their way to paper

I didn't track my progress, but I could feel my body changing, my heart and lungs expanding, learning to breathe through fire. I'd play this game, lungs vs. legs, pit my body parts against each other. My legs always lost, so I learned to save them for the home stretch.

### **Canada Fitness Test**

50-metre run  
my teacher with a stopwatch  
giving my short legs a second chance  
I wonder if she pressed start

a little after I'd left my mark  
when she wasn't trying to rule over us.

There were Walkmans back then, the kind that had a cassette tape. I didn't wear one. My mind had its own reverie, and once I found my pace, it pressed play on a self-styled subconscious mix tape. It was the closest thing I had to the open road. These days, when it's me and an article from a scholarly journal, I get the same open road. My dog Evan is at my feet, and the mix-tape feeling is familiar—thoughts travel the open road.

An article from a scholarly journal, an open road, a chance to feel ourselves change along the way; how wonderful to have that view of our work—to play with it, rather than labour over it, except in ways that labour is also play...rather than drudgery.

I've watched my daughter growing up. Jolly Dolly, the doll my daughter carried with her everywhere she went now sits on her pillow. She still sleeps with teddy bears, but she doesn't carry them with her, unless we are going for long overnight journeys. I have a teddy bear, too; several, my partner and I gave to each other over the years. When I'm sick, I ask for my sick bear and I'm comforted when my sick bear is in my arms. For my partner, it's his glow worm I gave him for our first Christmas together.

Play doesn't have to be fast-paced, energetic, challenging; it can be all of those things and none of them. Play can be sitting beside each other, telling each other stories, holding teddy bears, playing at being kind, at being thoughtful, at being loving; playing at being human.

### **Wandering**

That dog  
rattling his tags  
with a vigorous scratch  
reminds me of how

dogs in poems mean  
that life  
is happening—Now.

Get up from your chair, mama,  
unglue your eyes.

Go smell the secrets of the backyard,  
kick some spiky green  
chestnuts down the sidewalk,  
run your fingers along  
the waxy laurel leaves of your  
neighbour's hedge,  
catch a peek of bright horizon  
between the row of brown houses.

Let  
that dog  
walk you.

Do not googlemapit!

Even when it gets dark,  
trust  
that dog  
to find  
the way home.

Play is a commitment of presence, of reaching out to others, of returning home to the child within us. Play is poetic pause, remembering what matters, resistance. Play is laughter in the moment of a child's chubby hand reaching for the juiciest blackberry between the thorns of adulthood. Play is remembering and forgetting.

### **Blackberry Brambles**

on the weekend before school begins    again  
    a long life spent in school  
        born again every September  
as the teacher's world   the student's world  
        turns  
    with lunar determination  
        with indeterminate lunacy

I could (perhaps should)  
be checking e-mail  
    Facebook   Instagram  
        Pinterest   Tumblr  
         Twitter   YouTube

I could be reading a book on my patio  
(just started Camilla Gibb's memoir  
    *This Is Happy*  
and I'm hoping Camilla Gibb  
is going to explain happy

so I too can be happy  
can say  
*This Is Happy*  
or  
*This Is Not Happy*)

I could be writing a poem  
celebrating  
the wonders of poetry

I could be attending to e-mail  
mediating my social conscience  
(or sociality) with social media  
reading a book  
writing a poem

but instead on this sun-infused Saturday  
I am lost in our garden at London Farm  
on the edge of the Fraser River  
hacking away at blackberry brambles  
tangled thorny unrepentant  
when suddenly one thorn writes  
a jagged line across my arm  
a tattoo in blood  
to remind me I am not  
necessarily the sharpest point  
in the garden and I remember reading  
Andrew Marvell years ago  
a poem about a mower  
who cuts himself  
with a scythe and I sigh  
remembering the essay  
I wrote about Marvell (how marvellous

he wrote about technology  
tension and attention)  
while I chop more blackberry brambles  
and push the wheelbarrow to the compost  
and compose a few more lines  
as tangled as the blackberry brambles  
going here and there and nowhere

I grow tired more quickly than I ever  
grew tired in the past and I confess  
I'm no longer the robust boy I once was  
at least remember I was hope I was

I have likely spent too much life time  
responding to e-mail reading books  
writing poems  
(especially responding to email)

I am old enough to remember a time  
when there was no email no text-messaging  
no smartphones no iPads no breathless  
waiting for Apple CEOs to convince us  
heaven is just a synonym for Apple Store

I remember a time  
when we wrote  
memos on paper  
slipped in envelopes  
deposited in boxes  
waited and waited  
for return mail  
a slow process  
like the moon's waning

and waxing the ocean's  
ebbing and flowing  
the turn of seasons  
like watching hair grow

and when I bend to scoop  
remnants of my afternoon's sturdy work

I see a snake  
sitting on the thin edge of the fence  
defenceless while blackberry brambles  
invade my garden like Vladimir Putin  
with his megalomaniac agenda  
(are all politicians megalomaniacs?)

a snake so still and scary I wonder

if it is a rattlesnake  
and I recall watching  
Hollywood westerns  
where rattlesnakes bit hapless people  
and other people had to suck  
the poison out of their legs  
and even as a kid I thought sucking poison  
out of legs was kind of gross especially  
with all the lovely body parts  
that might be fun to suck  
but then I remembered I've never seen  
a rattlesnake in Richmond  
at least not the literal slithering  
bone-knocking rattlesnakes  
that hiss at you  
in southern Alberta or Kamloops

and as I remembered movies  
where people sucked

rattlesnake poison  
I also recalled my first  
student teaching lesson  
almost 40 years ago  
the school advisor asked me  
to teach two poems about snakes  
by  
Emily Dickinson & D. H. Lawrence

in that ancient time  
before the Internet  
I brought  
*National Geographic*  
and film strips  
and *Encyclopedia Britannica*  
facts about snakes  
and I taught the best lesson  
about snakes in poetry  
anyone anywhere had ever taught

I've been trying ever since  
to catch up with the wonder  
of that lesson on that fall day  
so many decades ago when I taught  
the kind of lesson Jimmy Pattison's  
*Guinness Book of World Records*  
should record as the most memorable  
lesson about poetic snakes  
ever taught anywhere in the universe

and when the bell rang  
I didn't ask  
for whom the bell rang

I just grinned  
with astonished humility  
anybody could be that good  
in his first student teacher lesson

I turned to my school advisor  
a big bald Christian brother  
who looked red enough for a coronary  
like a canary had gone up his nose  
like a carnivore who was going to eat me  
and he blurted through pursed lips  
like a rattler's bite you did not teach  
them the oxymoron in the poem!  
I couldn't tell him I didn't know  
what an oxymoron was  
(had obviously missed the crucial  
detail in my English methods course  
while probably daydreaming  
about moronic oxen)

all I knew was  
I had failed  
I hadn't gotten it right  
(just like this poem)  
a tangled mish-mash of words  
a bricolage of lines  
a collage of confusion  
a metissage of messiness

and I wanted to recite  
this poem to the snake  
but hadn't written it yet  
so I did the next best thing

whipped out my iPhone  
took a bunch of photos

as I prepared to leave the garden  
a woman strolled down the path  
stopped to say hello saw the last  
of the summer squash  
I was planning to dump  
in the compost heap said  
*my brother loved pattypan*  
*he died last year*  
*I always think about him*  
*when I see pattypan*  
we smiled and she took the pattypan

like we knew a poem  
and life too  
grow like blackberry brambles  
invasive tangled rhizomatic  
with no beginning or ending  
serpentine meandering  
with or without meaning  
breathing ludic tensions  
oxymorons juxtapositions  
life's contradictions  
narrated in a linear plot full  
of  
detours deviations distractions delusions

## Tag! You're It!

As a group of scholars who play in poetry, we also need each other as reminders to continue to play, and ask, "What can we contribute to the conversation on play?" First and foremost, we confess that we have our own positions, presumptions, and practices that we seek to disrupt, corrupt, interrupt, and erupt through poetry. It would be naïve and hypocritical of us to speak of how early childhood education might be transformed by, with, and through play without also turning our poetry inward to consider the performance of our scholarly lives, including the spectacle of our inviting each other—nine educational scholars and artists—to playfully, poetically write a peer-reviewed article on play.

Poetry facilitates creative and political agency; thus, as poets, we seek to challenge social, historical, and cultural discourses of institutionalized learning. Poets often play *linguistically* with cultural language codes, *politically* with competing interests and allegiances, and *personally* with memories of family, neighbourhoods, and communities. Yes, we will contribute all of these kinds of play: we will play *on* words and ideas. We will play *through* systemic constraints. We will play *beyond* the methodological norms. We will play *under/over* standard conventions of linearity and form. We will play *for* better educational practices. We will play for ourselves and each other, recognizing that play should not be relegated solely to childhood. We will remind each other to play, recognizing that much of our lives as scholars remains stuck in familiar research discourses. As we weave our words together, we admit to each other that we do not play nearly as much as we would like.

Nor do we all write poetry as often as we would like, whether within our own scholarship, or in pleasure, or despair. When someone is writing poetry, they are being poets; just as when someone is running, they are runners, or when sailing, they are sailors. That does not detract from the reality that, for some of us, poetry is a lifelong and full-time vocation, a way of living and being in the world. For some of us, poetry is an act of inquiry to reveal and express what matters; poetic research that calls attention to what is present and absent in our worlds. For some, poetry is something to turn to when nothing else, none of our other scholarly work (or addictions), is working. And for some of us, poetry is an offering, a celebration of breath and flesh, of being alive and wonderfully present in our lives.

And for all of us, poetry is an excuse and an invitation to play together, to speak to unspoken questions and fears, memories and loss of memories, through poetry, to come home to ourselves in poetic play. What surprises us, in the interplay of poetry and play through

text, are the possibilities and opportunities of meaning-making offered that liberate ourselves from what is known and expected. We tumble into a new space of educational reconnaissance and playfulness that liberates us to new recognitions, *interstandings*, friendships. Ready, or not, we arrive.

Tag, you're it!

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## Poems in Order of Appearance

- Celeste Snowber, "BodyPsalm for Playing" from <http://bodypsalms.com/?p=672>
- Lynn Fels, "With Apologies to Robert Louis Stevenson and other games we used to play"
- Celeste Snowber, "The Untold Story Is"
- Natalie Honein, "A Cycle of Play"
- John J. Guiney Yallop, "Are You Ready for School?"
- Natalie Honein, "From Masters to Pests"
- Sandra L. Faulkner, "Two-Hour Delay"
- Lynn Fels, "I'm Feeling Guilty"
- Sean Wiebe, "Running Shoes"
- Sean Wiebe, "Canada Fitness Test"
- Pamela Richardson, "Wandering"
- Carl Leggo, "Blackberry Brambles"