

Poetic Play Communities: bpNichol's *Fraggle Rock* Screenplays

by

Andrew McEwan

B.A. Hons., University of Toronto, 2012

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(English)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

August 2014

© Andrew McEwan, 2014

Abstract

This thesis analyzes the screenplays written by Canadian experimental poet bpNichol for the Jim Henson produced children's television program *Fraggle Rock* between 1982 and 1986. Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* writing represents a moment in his multi-genre oeuvre at which to observe his poetics and creative philosophies on display in a popular cultural setting. The ludic poetics exhibited in both the form and narratives of the screenplays display the ways in which playful engagement with language may create interactive communities of play. Through shared attitudes towards language, language games, nonsense, and absurdity, play and play communities emerge as a preoccupation of Nichol's work within the *Fraggle Rock* narrative constraints, and links them with his poetry and poetics. To explore Nichol's specific figuring of play, this thesis surveys theories of play from diverse theoretical backgrounds to develop a ludic model based in player-to-player relationships and communication. It also analyzes canonical treatments of play to mark off the concerns of the current study, and address the ambiguities of the term. Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays employ song, language, and poetry as forms of community experience and engagement that foster play relationships, and allow individuals to collectively manipulate the forms of their communication. These language games and language play constitute the *Fraggle* world of Nichol's episodes and highlight the play community as a paracosm based in shared manipulation of communicative conventions. Further, this thesis analyzes the "pataphysical elements of the *Fraggle Rock* play community in Nichol's episodes, and how these provide a playfully creative and critical angle with which to view the normative "human" world.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Andrew McEwan.

An early and abbreviated version of “Chapter 4: ”Pataphysical Play Communities,” was delivered at the 2014 UBC Endnotes academic conference under the title “Familiar Logic, Absurd Results: ”Pataphysical Play Communities in bpNichol’s *Fraggle Rock* Screenplays.”

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: From Play to Community	7
2.1 Networks of Players.....	7
2.2 Language and Structure in Play.....	9
2.3 “Potential space[s]” for Play.....	13
2.4 Play Community Formation	15
2.5 Literary Play and Play Paracosms	17
2.6 Player Communication and Relationships.....	21
Chapter 3: “Fraggles live together. And have fun and make noise.”.....	22
3.1 Fraggie Play.....	22
3.2 The Fraggie Play Community.....	25
3.3 Language Games	30
3.4 The Potential Space of Language Games	33
3.5 “A poem is a gift”	37
3.5 Collaborative Construction.....	40
3.6 “back into language thru play”	42
Chapter 4: ”Pataphysical Play Communities	44
4.1 Electronic Sponges and Supplementary Universes	44
4.2 From ’Pataphysics to ”Pataphysics.....	45

4.3 The Origins of "Pataphysical Exploration.....	50
4.4 The Light and Life of Play	58
4.5 Extensions of "Pataphysical Play	64
Works Cited	66

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Glenn Deer, for his advice, knowledge, and insight, which has allowed me to develop this project from a general interest and question into the thesis as it stands now. I am deeply grateful for his support and guidance since before my degree at UBC even began. Thank you also to my second reader, Dr. Kevin McNeilly, for his encouragement and advice about this project both around the table at Play Chthonics events, and in notes and edits. Thank you also to the many other professors who have taught, encouraged, and guided me through my Master's degree at UBC. I am indebted to all of my fellow grad students at UBC for sharing their knowledge and experience. Thank you to Amy Catanzano for a discussion of 'pataphysics, which although spread over a number of years, has shaped many of my ideas about the fantastic pseudo-science. Thank you to Roy Miki for the many conversations about poetry generally, and Nichol in particular, at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Thank you to Tony Power and the Simon Fraser University Special Collections for their help in navigating the bpNichol archive. Thank you also to my mother, Virginia, and sister, Holly, for their love, support, and encouragement. Thank you to Ashley Taylor for love and friendship, and thoughtful readings of drafts of this thesis at every stage.

I was able to conduct this research thanks to the generous financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the UBC Faculty of Arts.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Between 1982 and 1986, Canadian experimental poet bpNichol wrote ten screenplays for the Jim Henson produced children's television show *Fraggle Rock*. Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* writing represents a moment in his multi-genre oeuvre at which to observe his poetics and creative philosophies on display in a popular cultural setting. Although the involvement of an experimental poet in a widely circulated television show appears surprising, the formal novelty of the television form follows Nichol's interest in working within many genres throughout his career. Nichol wrote lyric poetry, concrete poetry, comics, theoretical prose, sound poetry, children's books, as well as his nine book long poem, *The Martyrology*. In "statement, 1966," included in his first full-length published work, he describes his desire for communication with others and with himself "thru the poem by as many entrances and exits as possible" (18). Through the many forms in which he worked, Nichol created texts that function as spaces of mutual engagement and communication. He described his methodology as "borderblur," since he shifted, even within texts, between different generic and artistic strategies ("Interview: Nicette Jukelevics" 135). As Nichol's body of work highlights formal diversity and experimentation, the omission of his writing for *Fraggle Rock* from critical consideration, except as a biographical note, or as an interesting fact for a book sleeve, represents a blindspot in Nichol criticism. These scripts work within the narrative constraints of the television program, but through them Nichol incorporates themes developed in his work in other genres. Most importantly, Nichol's screenplays employ the *Fraggle Rock* show as a platform with which to express the ability of the linguistic play of poetry and song to foster and bond communities in shared play.

Fraggle Rock aired between 1983 and 1987, and was “lauded for its innovative attempts to teach children ... lessons of cooperation, tolerance, and peace” (Garlen 2). It follows the Fraggles who live below the floorboards of a human inventor’s workshop, but also border, on the other side, another outdoor world filled with the giant Gorgs. The “Writers’ Notebook,” given to the writers as a story guide, writes that “[b]ehind the goofy exterior of *Fraggle Rock* lurks some serious thinking.” (9). Among the key words with which “Notebook” associates the show are “harmony,” “symbiosis,” “community and groups,” and “exploration and experimentation” (9-10). Such themes resonate with Nichol’s poetics, and his episodes explore the ways in which play with language and communication foster such environments. Nichol’s involvement in the program coincided with a period in which he wrote a number of children’s books, including a book of silly poems titled *Moosequakes and Other Disasters* (1981), and a nursery rhyme titled *Once: A Lullaby* (1983). Although intended for a specifically children’s audience, such work maintains a connection to Nichol’s poetics through the forms of language play involved, and Nichol’s use, for both, of his writing name: bpNichol. In his work for children in a popular cultural setting, Nichol’s poetics emerges through playful narratives, and inventive language games.

To date there has been very little analysis of Nichol’s screenplays for *Fraggle Rock*. Often, Nichol’s contribution to *Fraggle Rock* features as a side note in brief biographical statements to indicate the surprising range of his textual output. On the back cover of the recently published *Book of Variations*, which collects Nichol’s three books *love*, *zygal*, and *art facts*, the blurb cites Nichol’s “unparalleled output, the reach of his curiosity, wit and inventiveness,” backed up by a list of forms in which Nichol worked, which finishes by noting “even a television show, *Fraggle Rock*.” Similarly, in his

introduction to the bpNichol reader, *An H in the Heart*, George Bowering writes that Nichol was a “polymath” who made “books,” “songs,” “cartoons,” and, finally, “TV shows” (xi). The fact of Nichol’s involvement in the program frequently appears in reviews of posthumously published collections. In a review of *The Alphabet Game: A bpNichol Reader*, Jed Rasula cites the *Fraggle Rock* screenplays as a surprising example of Nichol’s substantial and diverse output: “indefatigably productive, Nichol authored children’s books and even contributed to *Fraggle Rock*, produced by Jim Henson.” In a review of *An H in the Heart*, Douglas Barbour cites Nichol’s screenplays as a way in which Nichol, as an experimental poet, reached a larger audience:

Well known to that small audience that pays attention to the most innovative writing, he also reached a huge audience that probably did not know who he was, via his scripts for *Fraggle Rock* and other programs.

(C5)

Although Barbour does not continue with this thought, it provokes the question of the ways in which the concerns in the screenplays follow or deviate from the concerns in Nichol’s other work. In another review of *An H in the Heart*, John Moore writes that Nichol “pushed the definition of poet’s role far beyond its conventional parameters,” and, again, after a list of the forms in which Nichol wrote, “even writing TV scripts for ... Jim Henson’s *Fraggle Rock*.” (D13). This “even” represents a common way in which Nichol’s *Fraggle Rock* writing stands in for an example of the furthest and most surprising reaches of his formal experimentation. Yet to date there has been no analysis of Nichol’s screenplays in relation to the other forms in which he worked, or even of the content of the episodes themselves.

Frank Davey's *aka bpNichol: a preliminary biography* discusses Nichol's involvement with *Fraggle Rock*, providing many key details about this collaboration. He writes that, "By September 1982 [Nichol] had an invitation to write potentially profitable scripts for Henson Associates' popular television series *Fraggle Rock*." (238). He continues to delineate Nichol's involvement with the program as a job that had him travelling between Toronto and New York, and writing screenplays between other publishing pursuits (243-247). Davey also writes about Nichol's disputes with Henson Associates in regard to payments (264-265). The account provides important biographical information about Nichol's television work, but does not consider the actual content of this writing, or its relation to his other literary works.

The following analysis treats bpNichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays as literary work that follows the necessarily collaborative form of all television creation, as writers work within a relatively fixed narrative structure. With Nichol as primary writer, the screenplays display formal and thematic similarities to his other works. This analysis works with Nichol's personal copies of the *Fraggle Rock* screenplays, which are housed in Simon Fraser University in the bpNichol Collection. These scripts are "Final Read Thru Drafts," "Final Shooting Scripts," or "Second Read Thru Drafts." I have utilized these scripts to maintain a closeness to the written word, and Nichol's contribution. What emerges from these screenplays, and from Nichol's notes and other writings around the television show, is the thematic and formal engagement with play and play communities through language, song, and poetry, which links the narratives of these episodes with Nichol's poetry and poetics.

Types of play and playfulness in Nichol's writings have been noted by a number of critics and writers to describe the free ranging humour and formal experimentation of

his work. Steven Scobie writes that play enters Nichol's writing in his concrete poetry, in which the slide between the significations of letters and words fosters a movement between text and reader (23). Scobie writes that in *The Martyrology*, though, Nichol's play "takes on a new seriousness" in the "fragmentation of words and letters" through "deconstructive tactics." (23). This later form of play in Nichol's work becomes what Steve McCaffery describes as Nichol's "paragrammatic method" (63). Paragrams form through the redistribution of spaces between letters of a word to create new words and meanings from within. Such play with language opens up alternative and subversive meanings that disrupt the fixedness of signification. At the time of Nichol's death, McCaffery and Nichol were planning a Toronto Research Group report on children's literature, which McCaffery writes began with "an initial gathering of quotations on the subject of play," which includes Schiller, Fink, Rilke and Ehrmann, among others (*Rational* 293-294). The link between Nichol's interest in works for children, and aspects play again emerges in Paul Dutton's *Open Letter* essay titled "bp Anecdotingly":

Another of the abiding loves reflected on Barrie's bookshelves was that of children's literature... It's no accident that he wound up writing for children's television programs such as *Fraggle Rock*... (84)

Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* writing appears as a natural form through which to explore play and children's literature. Yet for Nichol, the childish and playful attitude towards language transgress all ages and forms. In an interview with Raoul Duguay, he writes that "when it comes to language i'm a child ... my teacher is language" (121).

The following chapters analyze bpNichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays with a focus upon the ways in which they utilize, dramatize, or reconfigure play with language. The ludic poetics exhibited in both the form and narratives of the screenplays displays the

ways in which engagement with language may create interactive communities of play. Through shared languages, language games, nonsense, and absurdity, play and play communities emerge as a preoccupation of Nichol's work within the *Fraggle Rock* narrative constraints and links them with his poetry and poetics. To explain the way that these screenplays figure play and play community, Chapter Two describes key theorizations of play among a number of disciplines. Chapter Three analyzes the language, song, and poetry in Nichol's screenplays, and how these activities bind communities in a shared and interactive play. Finally, Chapter Four discusses the "pataphysical elements of the *Fraggle Rock* community in Nichol's episodes, and how these provide a playfully creative and critical angle with which to view the normative "human" world. As nebulous and always shifting concepts, play and language serve as interactive engagements in Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays that bind players in the negotiation of the forms and expressions of their experience, relationships, and world.

Chapter 2: From Play to Community

2.1 Networks of Players

Play, as a concept at the intersection of culture, creativity, language, structure, movement, and pleasure, presents a rich yet daunting theoretical field. As such, the field ranging among many academic disciplines, each with its own language and motivations in theorizing play. In his work on the ambiguities in the rhetorics of play, Brian Sutton-Smith observes that, “almost anything can allow play to occur within its boundaries” (3). Such difficulty in defining and demarcating the concept of play surely stems from the very nature of the concept, and leads to the diverse theoretical approaches and descriptions of play. As Jacques Derrida argues, play disrupts and destabilizes structures, and figures the nature of the meaningful world as a constant movement of “infinite substitution” (365). I will return to Derridian notions of play and structure below. Play occurs in the exceptional and the ambiguous as players disrupt categories of interpretation. As structures that inhibit movement, taxonomies and definitions constrain the tendency of play to shift and slide between discourses. In his psychological writings on play, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes the experience of a player’s direct contact with such movement and play as “autotelic,” since the player immerses herself in direct experience and interactions with other players, rather than in extrinsic motivations and concerns (47). The value of this form of play derives from the players’ interaction with each other and the forms with which they play, rather than external rewards. Such interactions separate the players and their play world in some way from external motivations. Similarly, Eugen Fink writes that, “[p]lay is ... existence centered in itself... Play is not for the sake of a ‘final goal’ ... [P]lay is characterized by calm, timeless ‘presence’ and autonomous, self-sufficient meaning...” (20-21). Play remains isolated

from other motives and meanings, and instead the experience of play must be defined from within and especially from the perspective of the players.

As the dynamics of play tend to resist both structured meanings and extrinsic teleologies, according to some theorists, this chapter will develop a description of how play modifies conventional communicative structures through the development of novel forms, fosters player relationships, and allows communities to form based in a shared play experience. Players' pleasure in immediate interaction in such play exists in some way apart from concerns related to the pursuit of an objective beyond the play experience. Situated between players, we may locate the play of language and communication in the "overlap" of play experiences described by D.W. Winnicott (51). Since this space must be actively negotiated between players, play is a fundamentally precarious state of engagement. There is always the chance that, in Johan Huizinga's words, the play won't "come off" (47), that a miscommunication or transgression between players will disrupt their relationship and return them to the concerns and relationships of the non-play world. Yet, if it does "come off," play joins players in the shared pleasure of the language and demarcations of the game, and their mutual negotiation of this space.

To analyze play in bpNichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays, this chapter will develop a field of play based on the interaction between language and play from within player experiences. In addition, it will analyze canonical treatments of play to mark off the concerns of the current study, as well as develop upon a specific set of ludic functions. By drawing the connections between play and communication in its many forms and from different perspectives, a field of play that focuses on the linguistic experiences of players in the communities and worlds they collaboratively create will

emerge as the central focus of this study in order to describe the forms of play with which Nichol's television and poetic work engages.

2.2 Language and Structure in Play

In *Homo Ludens*, anthropologist Johan Huizinga's modernist treatment of play, the author defines play in its relationship to the expression and formation of culture. Huizinga's wide-ranging treatment of the "play-concept" develops it as the foundation of civilization, and plots its development through language, ritual, and, art. He defines play as "a free activity standing outside of 'ordinary' life as being not serious," and engaged in without "material interest" (13). In addition, Huizinga writes that play becomes a demarcated space in which "social groupings" may form and express their difference from the counterposed culture (13). He also notes that play is necessarily "superfluous," "free," and "voluntary" (8). As such, Huizinga's work on play expands its definition to include almost all creative and interactive activities, but does not convincingly define play against the "ordinary life" he postulates. Instead, he sets the concept of play among cultural activities that somehow focus on players' pleasures in the immediate act, rather than teleological motivations, but does not fully define this division. Huizinga maintains that, "genuine and spontaneous play can also be profoundly serious" (21). Seriousness, though, becomes the only way to determine the "ordinary life" that opposes play, as noted by many of Huizinga's critics (Edwards 19; Ehrmann 32; Caillois 6-7; Hans 1-2; Motte, *Playtexts*, 4). As such, this constitutes a central problem with the treatment of play in *Homo Ludens*. Nevertheless, Huizinga's proposal of the apartness of play provides a helpful conceptualization in the discussion of literary paracosms. Huizinga's model, which requires "ordinary life" to oppose play, needs to be rethought, but his description

of communities formed through acts of play that maintain a distance from the motivations and forms of non-playful communicative acts remains valuable. I will continue to develop this refinement below through descriptions of the play models of other theorists. Once this is refigured, Huizinga's notions of community formation may be applied to an apartness developed through communication and play's negotiated demarcations. In addition, Huizinga's attentiveness to the importance of language, and especially poetry, remains a useful starting point in the analysis of forms of literary play.

In his attempt to develop a sociology of games in his book *Man, Play, and Games*, Roger Caillois critiques and modifies Huizinga's theories of play by approaching the subject with a taxonomy with which to categorize forms of play and games. Like Huizinga, he works towards a description of the role of games in the formation and expression of culture. Caillois attempts to include games that take place within the general economy of culture, such as betting games and competitive games, and critiques Huizinga, whom he claims "views play as action denuded of all material interest" (5). Caillois writes, though, that play "is a separate occupation, carefully isolated from the rest of life" (7). Yet this form of separation is spatial and temporal, rather than in terms of interests or motivations, as in the demarcated space and time for chess or soccer. Nevertheless, Caillois writes that "play must be defined as a free and voluntary activity," and that a "game which one would be forced to play would at once cease being play" (6). In this, play functions as a superfluous activity tied to general activities and expressions of a culture. Central to Caillois' descriptions of play are the rules with which players act out the game. He concedes that many games do not imply rules, but rather "fictions," but argues that the fictions created between players "perform[...] the same function as do rules" (8). As such, Caillois proposes a taxonomy of games with which to categorize the

types of structured experiences described as games. He terms these “agôn,” competition; “alea,” chance; “mimicry,” fiction; and “ilinx,” a play-induced sensation of vertigo (12). Although Caillois’ terms provide useful categories with which to analyze the structure of games, his methodology focuses upon external analysis of the ways the structures of games relate to the serious non-play world. Caillois focuses upon institutionalized games, writing that “in the earlier society [games] were an integral part of its basic institutions, secular and sacred” (59). He diverges from his previous argument in this, since his descriptions of competition, betting, theatre, and many other games, remain integrally connected to his own cultural moment. Caillois’ theories of play and games provide a strong language for demarcating categories of play, but his sociological taxonomy diverts him from a description of play located in player experience and interaction.

Jacques Derrida figures play in relation to structures of thought in his chapter titled “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.” His theory defines play as a “field of infinite substitutions” (365) that resist the totalization of the structure. He writes that the centre of a structure is that which stabilizes it and limits play (352). Yet, the centre also allows for the freeplay of elements within the totalized form. This is the paradoxical nature of the centre: it both “closes off the play which it opens up and makes [play] possible” (352). Because of this paradoxical nature of the centre, Derrida argues that it is both inside and outside of the structure (352). When engaging in this form of structured freeplay, we manage the anxiety of “being implicated in the game, of being caught in the game, of being as it were at stake in the game from the outset” (352). Derrida counterpoints this structured play with the idea of pure play without the orienting centre of a “transcendental signified” (354). As such, the structures of language become a discourse of substitutions and play “without security” (369). Derridean freeplay

gestures at the infinite and substitutive play that undermines any structure. This form of deconstructive play highlights the necessary limits of defining play itself. Finally, Derrida collapses the difference between play and non-play, making freeplay an ontology of being (369-370). Although this chapter will continue to develop play as a negotiated space between play participants, Derrida's freeplay highlights the way play interacts with structures, especially in language.

In his philosophy of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein employs the term "language games" to describe the dynamic and active quality of language (10^e). This form of language play resists institutionalized forms of games and language, as well as the abstraction of play in Derrida, and instead defines games as constituted by contingent rules agreed upon between participants (28^e). He writes that although languages present the speaker with a set of signs, speakers modify the rules of language in practice (33^e). Through the transformation created in play, language develops a "complicated network" characterized by "family resemblance" (27^e-28^e). In this, language becomes an intertwined series of rules and connections without a single defining feature common to all language games. Wittgenstein's notion of "language games" productively highlights the contingent nature of games as actively negotiated between participants. For any communication to succeed in Wittgenstein's model the play participants must agree upon its rules and demarcations actively and in an ongoing exchange. Although connected to other language games through "complicated network[s]," the immediate experience of language between participants is "made up as [it goes] along." (17^e). Through this notion of "language games," Wittgenstein highlights the processes of communication in both language and games when conceived as a series of non-institutionalized, player-negotiated demarcations.

2.3 “Potential space[s]” for Play

Also developing a theory of play upon player-to-player communication, psychologist D.W. Winnicott writes that, “psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist.” (51). To do the work of psychotherapy, the patient and the therapist must join in a shared play in which the communication between them creates a “potential space” that exists outside of either’s “inner world” and “actual, or external, reality.” (55). This space becomes the interplay of communication, in which the player interprets and responds to another player. Play becomes an immediate site of negotiated communication without either participant directing its course. Through the idea of “potential space” Winnicott highlights play’s voluntary nature, as well as its precariousness. One must freely consent to the creation of a “potential space” through engagement with another person. It cannot be forced or institutionalized. In psychotherapy, if the patient is not able to engage with the therapist in this form of communicative play, the therapist’s role in the pre-play psychoanalytic relationship is to “bring[...] the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play.” (51). The therapist facilitates the types of situations in which the patient is encouraged into a state analogous to a child’s in play. Winnicott characterizes this state as one of “preoccupation” and “near-withdrawal,” in which the patient focuses on her immediate engagements (69). As a precarious space of communication, play requires the management of anxiety in order to avoid overwhelming the experience and destroying it (70). Winnicott writes that institutionalized games, “[w]hen an organizer is in a managerial position,” function to “forestall the frightening aspects of playing” (67). Such games regulate the anxiety produced by play in the uncertainty of its outcomes, as well as the possibility for a disconnect between “overlapping” play experiences. Such

regulatory actions destroy the type of play for which Winnicott advocates, since play cannot be “compliant or acquiescent” (68). Finally, Winnicott stresses the “satisfying” nature of play (70). The overlap of play experiences, and the formation of a relationship of play is fundamentally pleasurable. Through its focus on the actual experience of play for players, Winnicott’s description of play provides a useful model for locating play in immediate communication between players, rather than in institutionalized games.

Although much of Winnicott’s discussion focuses on the potential, through play, for the development of a psychoanalytic relationship between analyst and analysand, this relationship does not take on the power dynamic or institutionalized control of the forms of extrinsically regulated games. Winnicott writes that this type of play must be “spontaneous, and not compliant or acquiescent,” because the types of “significant moments” that the therapist attempts to facilitate must be those in which the patient surprises herself (68). This relationship, in which the therapist may set up the circumstances of play without determining its outcomes, corresponds to Jacques Rancière’s notion of the “ignorant schoolmaster” (8). Rancière’s description of this figure provides a model for nuancing Winnicott’s idea of communication. Rancière proposes a schoolmaster who renounces her “knowledge of ignorance.” (11). The schoolmaster refuses to determine the course of the pupils’ learning, and instead, allows her pupils to “venture into the forest of things and signs,” thereby allowing the pupil to translate these “things and signs” through her own experience (11). Doing this, the schoolmaster teaches the pupils something she does not know herself (14). Rancière writes that the distance of position in communication between the two should not be abolished, or attempted to be overcome, because it constitutes “the normal condition of any communication.” (10). The product of the communicative space becomes “the third thing owned by no one, but

which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” (15). Rancière aligns this distance with the distance between the spectator and the spectacle, and the political agency of an audience, but it speaks also to Winnicott’s relationship between psychotherapist and patient. Rancière’s “ignorant schoolmaster,” works analogously to the way the psychotherapist in play acts as an “ignorant” player who promotes play but does not determine its outcomes, and instead fosters the patient’s “potential space.”

2.4 Play Community Formation

The forms and relationships developed in play suggest the potential for communities of players to form through such playful engagement. Both Huizinga and Winnicott describe the separation from conventional relationships and situations. These theorists’ explanations of play worlds and communities provide a framework for discussing the separateness of play with which to compare Nichol’s creation of linguistic and literary communities of play.

For Huizinga, play communities develop through the group identification with forms of interaction separate from those of a wider society:

A play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over... [T]he feeling of being ‘apart together’ in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game. (12)

In the segregation of the play community from the concerns of “ordinary life,” the community maintains relationships through the negotiated demarcations of their play. For

Huizinga, this community forms and maintains itself through the assent to a set of rules that determine “what holds” in the play (11). Thus, the pleasurable participation in play involves the individual’s relinquishment of individual power in favour of the shared play experience. Such acts involve the group transgression of “usual norms” (12). The play community becomes one characterized by members’ mutual pleasure and validation of a society “apart” from the dominant social order. Nevertheless, the play, and so the play community, is, for Huizinga, “temporary,” “fragil[e],” and characterized by “illusion” (11). The group enjoyment of the apartness of the play remains contingent on its temporal, spatial and teleological limitedness. What transcends these demarcations are the relationships and the “magic” of shared experience for the participants.

Winnicott too draws the connection between play and community writing that “[p]laying leads into group relationships” (41). In his model, the “group relationship” developed in play, which we may call a “play community,” results from the positive overlap in the “potential space” between players. When, in play, such spaces overlap for participants, they mutually negotiate this space, and play with its language and forms while maintaining the overlap. This involves trust on the part of participants, as each depends upon the other to continue the play. Winnicott writes that “[t]his is the precariousness of magic itself, magic that arises in intimacy, in a relationship that is being found to be reliable” (64). Although we may participate in activities that resemble games, or even, outwardly, play, it is the relationships between players that constitute play and not its forms and expression. These relationships then found communities of overlapping shared play, which remain continually contingent on interaction. As Winnicott stresses that “playing is doing” (55), it might be more appropriate to describe such communities as communities in play. Based in overlapping player experience, play

communities resist the potential homogenizing effect a notions of community that Iris Young critiques as an “ideal community,” which “presumes subjects can understand one another as they understand themselves,” and “denies difference” (234). In such formations participants wish to experience group identity, so they conform to the modes and rules of a community identity, and become homogenous to fit in. In Winnicott’s theory of play, such community could not engage in true play, since his idea of “group relationships” is based in an intimate “potential space” equally negotiated between participants. Brian Sutton-Smith cites descriptions of play that entail a homogenizing form analogous to Young’s “ideal community,” in which performances of play function to express the power of the group, and solidify a largely uniform identity within the community (92). Such flattening of difference typifies institutionalized games, in which players submit to rigid rules, but not the type of play communities that form through constant, active negotiation between participants. Instead, Winnicottian play communities are extremely precarious, and rely on the maintenance on the part of all play participants of the overlap of play experience that cannot be forced.

2.5 Literary Play and Play Paracosms

As a form of creative manipulation of language, literature presents an obvious area of study for the study of play elements. Huizinga gives poetry a privileged position in his description, writing that “[p]oetry, in its original culture-making capacity, is born in and as play” (122). Here, literature functions as the civilizing formation of culture and ritual. He argues that “the function of the poet still remains fixed in the play-sphere where it was born. Poesis, in fact, is a play-function.” (111). Yet Huizinga argues that the play of literature is limited in its textual form, since play requires “activity” (165). Only

in performance does art truly become play (165). This constitutes a major oversight in Huizinga's description of literature's, or any art's, relationship to play, since it omits the active, and potentially playful, engagement between reader and text.

Peter Hutchinson, like Huizinga, misses the play involved in engagement with language. He writes of play as a game enacted by the author that the reader passively assents to follow (21). Through this, the reader may be enthralled or excited, but she does not actively engage in the play experience. Rather, she passively reads through the author's game. One of the categories for such games typical of Hutchinson's analysis is the enigma (24). In this type of literary play, as observed in the detective story, the author presents the reader with a riddle, and takes her along the path to its conclusion. "The author," writes Hutchinson, "erects a form of guessing game, which he invites the reader to play in the manner to which he is long since accustomed." (26). This description of literary play figures the reader as passive and the author as active and subscribing to institutionalized rules of genre. Hutchinson eliminates the interplay between participants in this description of games. Like Huizinga, Hutchinson fails to see the reader as an active participant in the communication of reading.

As an alternative to such theories, the model of play derived from Winnicott's ideas, and modified through the consideration of Rancière's notion of the "ignorant schoolmaster," the play between reader and text may be figured as an active and playfully negotiated site. This model of a communicative relationship, in which a "third thing owned by no one" (Rancière 15) may develop as a result of Winnicott's overlap of play experiences, provides the basis for a model of literary play in which the text and the reader play without institutionalized rules or determined outcomes. We may relate the reader in play to Rancière's "emancipated spectator," who actively translates and narrates

the spectacle in her own experience (13). Like the pupil of the ignorant schoolmaster, the spectator need not passively subscribe to the forms of knowledge presented. Through the participation of both the spectacle and the spectator, the site of communication creates a relationship in which the space of negotiated meaning becomes “the third thing owned by no one.” (15). Similarly, in literature, the reader, emancipated from the definition of reading as necessarily inactive, translates and narrates the text into her own experience. This mutually active exchange becomes a potential play site. In the pleasure of this mutual overlap, the reader may play with the text, enjoying the immediacy of this interaction with, rather than determined by, the text and its structures. As such, a playful reading may be possible with any text. The text, though, may facilitate such an engagement by employing elements that promote a playful reading, yet do not determine its outcomes. These are not the types of narrative games described by Peter Hutchinson, which are largely determined by the author and promote a prescribed engagement from the reader that follow the course of the game. Instead, like Rancière’s ignorant schoolmaster, the text may prompt the reader to “venture into [its] forest of things and signs,” (11) without determining the outcomes of such exploration. In this, the reader’s and the text’s respective potential spaces overlap and constitute a communicative relationship formed in a play that is mutually active.

In literary representations of play, the concept of the play community becomes a realized space in the form of fantasy worlds and secret spaces segregated from the serious world. Usually this distinction takes the form of children’s play worlds separated and hidden from the adult world. Child psychology uses the term “paracosm” to describe imagined societies and spaces, but the term may also apply to literary forms of imaginary separation from a more serious world (Singer and Singer 111-116). Literary paracosms

realize the ambiguous apartness theorized for play by Huizinga as real places in which to enter and engage with other players. In such spaces, the location becomes the physicalized overlap of the psychological “potential space” in Winnicott’s theory. Here, the safety of the mutual location for interaction manages the anxiety of the play community. Nevertheless, the potential for a disturbing or uncanny turn in such paracosms (Eberle) highlights the precariousness of such locations. Rosemary Jackson writes that such paracosms “could be taken to represent the spectral region of the fantastic, whose imaginary world is neither entirely ‘real’ (object, nor entirely ‘unreal’ (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two,” which she calls the “paraxial” (19-20). As a liminal space between the totally real, and the totally unreal, such locations may be seen to represent Winnicott’s “third area of potential space” (72) created between participants in play. Fictional works may dramatize the negotiation of play communities in relation to other modes of interaction and communication. Such paracosms of play are clearly most noticeable in the fantasy worlds in works for children such as Lewis Carroll’s Alice books, or Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are*, but, more subtly, we may locate the separate worlds of play created by characters or narrators in play with their environment or each other. Indeed, Huizinga writes that any literary engagement of the world creates a “a second, poetic world alongside the world of nature.” (4). In this, mimetic representation creates a world in play beside a physical, “real” world. Those who engage in such a space do so as a communicative community of play. For Winnicott, play creates an “intermediate area” (xv-xvi) between an individual and the world as a space and community of play. Play paracosms, then, may be theorized more broadly as the negotiated spaces created in the play between players and their

environment that refigures both in the exchange, and in some way physicalizes this exchange as a space.

2.6 Player Communication and Relationships

This thesis will continue to explain how play specifically with language and communication among groups of players facilitates the creation of alternative paracosms of play. Specifically, it will investigate bpNichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays as texts that develop narratives of players interacting with the physical and linguistic forms of their environment, as well as their own negotiated play relationships. Through a focus upon play from the perspective of player experience, we may observe how play relationships and communities are formed through the maintained overlap of "potential spaces" between players. Although these relationships and communities form through the shared language game of their play, they maintain a flexible attitude toward structures, especially in communication, since their autotelic experience of play within a community remains paramount. Play paracosms maintain a flexibility to changing physical and social circumstances, since, as a communicative experience between players, they stand in some way separate from the motivations of the non-play world. This thesis will continue to discuss how communication within play experiences facilitates flexible communities that maintain a creative and critical distance from other modes of interaction. Further, it will discuss how the popular television format of Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays depicts in narrative the types of play relationships he develops in other ways in poetry.

Chapter 3: “Fraggles live together. And have fun and make noise.”

3.1 Fraggles Play

In an unpublished, handwritten text titled “The Poems of Mokey,” which bpNichol wrote as part of his notes for *Fraggle Rock*, the poem’s speaker, Mokey, attempts to define what a Fraggles is, and what makes Fraggles Rock significant.

Fraggles is, as Fraggles does,
a fragile Fraggles thing
A fleeting flight of flickering fluff
That flaps its arms + sings

The alliterative verses by Nichol describe Fraggles as fundamentally active, defined more by what they do than by what they are. They exist as ephemeral beings who are “fragile” because of their “fleeting” existence. Through their songs and flapping arms, Nichol characterizes the Fraggles as beings whose existence centres on modes and expressions of play. In the poem, their actions constitute their being as a fluid play experience, which they maintain in each “flickering” moment. This form of existence fits with Eugen Fink’s description that, “The mode of play is that of spontaneous act, of vital impulse. Play is, as it were, existence centered in itself.” (20). Nichol figures the Fraggles as players in this sense, since their spontaneous acts centre their existence on their own “vital impulse” to move and give exuberant expression to their experience. Fink further writes that “play is characterized by calm, timeless ‘presence’ and autonomous, self-sufficient meaning” (21). He describes play as both “spontaneous,” and yet nevertheless “timeless,” since play arises in the autotelic experience of the present moment of existence beyond its temporal location. Similarly, in Nichol’s verses, Mokey defines Fraggles as “fleeting,” yet also reminds others, at the end of her poem, to “give a wand’ring thought” to “the

luck with which the world is kissed / As we roll on + on.” In Nichol’s writing, Fraggles, like play, exist as both “spontaneous” and “timeless,” as their play experience constitutes their being in the eternal present of the game.

Elsewhere in the poem, Nichol writes that Fraggles “dance + spin + whirl” through their “wavy, wobbly world.” As their expression of play gives rise to their own being, so to does their play constitute their physical and social world. Play’s structures create a “wavy” and “wobbly” space as a negotiated environment that moves in relation to the forms of play. This world, which is the physical location of Fraggles Rock, functions as a paracosmic play community. As such, it exists in the liminal space at the edge of the “real” human world of the show. The demarcations of this space and experience, though, remain fluid, as the Fraggles negotiate their relationships through communicative play. The language of Nichol’s poem for Mokey employs the aural play of alliteration and other rhythmic patterns, as well as playful nonsense, that draws reading and speaking players into the game of the poem. D. W. Winnicott’s notion of play as an experience that exists in the “third area of potential space” (72) between players emphasizes the importance of dialogue in the play experience. Although they may sing or dance alone, the Fraggles of Nichol’s poem perform these activities as part of a shared community experience. Similarly, the poem’s play requires readerly activation through a performance of its aural elements. The poem draws its readers into a dialogic play experience. This relationship is analogous to the ways in which the *Fraggle Rock* television show invites its viewers into the play world of Fraggles Rock, and so includes them in the play experience and community.

The narratives of Nichol’s screenplays and other writings for *Fraggle Rock* dramatize the how communities form through a shared engagement in communicative

play, and, specifically, how the manipulation of language fosters group identity and interaction. Play with language allows individuals to create meaningful connections with others, and to develop communities actively engaged in the forms of their communication. The play scenarios in Nichol's episodes figure play as a collaborative experience in which individuals negotiate the Winnicottian "potential space" of their interaction. These potential spaces require their own forms of communication, so games of language emerge as methods to communicate within the play community. This focus upon the linguistic negotiation of play experience and community in Nichol's screenplays reflects a thematic and formal preoccupation that may be traced through much of Nichol's other writings, especially his poetry and poetics. The screenplays' attention to songs, poetry, and language among the Fraggles dramatizes how playful forms of communication create collaborative communities.

This chapter begins by analyzing the play community of *Fraggle Rock* and how Nichol's screenplays play with existing narrative structures and characters to investigate the potential of language to bond communities. Next, through an analysis of the exchange between the human Doc and his dog Sprocket, and its contrast with the Fraggles' interaction, this chapter investigates how language games and games of language require an active and negotiated potential space in order to succeed and build community. Further, it also describes how poetry and song serve to bind a play community in shared forms of language that maintain a flexible attitude to description and meaning. Finally, through a description of Doozer collaboration and Nichol's own collaborative work both in *Fraggle Rock* and in other projects, this chapter analyzes the way both figure modes of creative communities engaged in play with the forms of their expression.

3.2 The Fraggie Play Community

D. W. Winnicott writes that in play the player withdraws from wider concerns to focus on the play experience.

To get to the idea of playing it is helpful to think of the preoccupation that characterizes the playing of a young child. The content does not matter.

What matters is the near withdrawal state, akin to the concentration of older children and adults. The playing child inhabits an area that cannot be easily left, nor can it easily admit intrusions. (69)

The concentration exhibited by the child, or anyone, in play displays a focus upon immediate interactions and experience. The actual object of this focus matters less than the creation and negotiation of relations within the potential space of play. When playing with others, this relationship exists in the forms and objects of communication. Winnicott develops a vague equivalence between communication and play. He writes that play is universal, forms “group relationships,” “can be a form of communication,” and that “psychoanalysis has been developed as a highly specialized form of playing in the service of communication with oneself and others” (56). Winnicott’s ideas and phrasing here resemble Nichol’s descriptions of his poetics. In his early “statement, 1966,” Nichol writes that

the other is emerging as a necessary prerequisite for dialogues with the self that clarify the soul & heart and deepen the ability to love. i place myself there, with them, whoever they are, wherever they are, who seek to reach themselves and the other thru the poem by as many entrances and exits as possible. (17)

Nichol figures the poem as a medium with which to engage with others in the negotiated textual, aural, and visual space of the page and the performance. In this, Nichol's description of the poem as a negotiated interrelationship of "entrances and exits" may be aligned with the Winnicottian potential space as a communicative space that fosters community and shared languages.

Eugen Fink describes "play worlds," which we may view as similar to Winnicott's "group relationships," and Huizinga's "play communities," as "an enigmatic realm that is not nothing, yet is nothing real" (23).

The play world is not suspended in a purely ideal world. It always has a real setting, and yet it is never a real thing among other real things, although it has an absolute need of real things as a point of departure. (24)

Fink's "play world" may also be related to a "paracosm," as discussed in Chapter One. The world of *Fraggle Rock*, even beyond Nichol's episodes, represents this type of play paracosm as it creates a liminal connection between a real and an ideal world. The "Writers' Notebook" describes the show's focus on "symbiosis – a group of creatures who live together, who need each other and use each other's resources" (9). The Fraggles are fundamentally players, who "love to sing, especially in large groups," and "play games" (18). The actual location of this wild play, *Fraggle Rock*, lies below the familiar human world of Doc's workshop, and maintains an interactive and critically distinct community. As such, their community functions as a play community that exists in relation to the concerns, relationships, and languages of an outside world, but also maintains an apartness that fosters potential space for the group.

Nichol's episodes develop language, games, and poetry, as fundamental to the Fraggles' play community. In a 1974 interview with Raoul Dugauay, Nichol describes

his poetics and argues that language itself, both as a connection with others and as a shifting network of semantic and phonological units, creates an entrance into other worlds of playful interaction:

i find the alphabet the most mysterious system ... why those 26 letters – what is there in them – it’s like i’m looking for hidden content – they’re like a doorway into another universe – and i want to go down into that doorway & i want to find where it leads – it’s sort of like *Alice in Wonderland* where she falls thru the opening in the foot of the tree... and that other world is really this world – its really this world in the most basic sense. (123)

Following his argument for maintaining many “entrances and exits” in the poem between the self and other, Nichol figures language, specifically poetry, as an entrance to paracosms of language. When the writer, text, reader, and groups of readers join as collaborators in the negotiation of the space of language, it becomes a play community that maintains the potential space of interaction between all participants.

In Nichol’s episode titled “The Riddle of Rhyming Rock,” Gobo and his friends train to solve the rock’s legendarily difficult riddles, which leads them to explore the ways in which their community is constituted as a paracosm of language through play. Red asks, “What’s always round / With a surprising sound?” (3). Before Gobo has a chance to answer Wembley shouts “O!” The riddle functions as a language game, but also serves to elucidate the ways that direct contact and play with the materiality of language and its forms opens up paracosmic play meanings. Once Gobo encounters the Rhyming Rock, he fails to correctly answer its riddle twice (9). With only three tries in a lifetime, he leaves to consider a better approach. The caretaker of the Rhyming Rock

warns, though, that “We don’t want any riddles solved around here, thank you very much!!” (10). Without heed for this warning, Gobo loses focus upon the interplay with friends that the riddles fostered, and instead becomes focused on the competitive aspect of answering the question. In this, it becomes an agonistic game in Caillois’ taxonomy, rather than an interactive play relationship. This leads Gobo to use a riddle solving spell that backfires, and destroys the rock, trapping his friend Wembley under the rubble (24-25). After discussion with the Storyteller Fraggles, Gobo realizes that the Rhyming Rock’s rhymes aren’t actually riddles, which is why the spell failed (32). Gobo repairs the damage caused by his focus on the content and competition, rather than the relationships of the play experience, by listening more closely to the Rock’s rhyme. He realizes that the Rock has been asking for a song, so Gobo sings the *Fraggle Rock* theme song. This singing repairs the rock, as it joins in with musical accompaniment (36-37).

Through a playful interaction with the forms of language in the game of riddles, Gobo and his friends participate in a shared community play. They interact with each other, and maintain their potential space in their interaction. Gobo’s wish to achieve a goal outside of this form of communication leads to disastrous consequences for himself and his friends. His desire for a solution gives the play of riddles a *telos*, and shifts focus from the play of interactive communication. Music and song become the solution to Gobo’s blunder, since they entail an interactive and engaged focus upon direct communication. Gobo enters into a play relationship with the Rock through an attention to its messages, which creates an overlapping potential space between them. This repairs the physical and social damage to the Fraggles Rock play community, and unites the characters in play.

The Fraggles play community often reunites through songs and poetry after conflict and potential division in Nichol's episodes. Community interaction in language allows the Fraggles to refocus their attention on their overlapping potential spaces of play when these begin to come apart, whether through internal or external conflict in the community. In Nichol's "The Garden Plot" episode, the Fraggles play community comes under threat when the Gorgs, a species of giants who live at the opposite end of Fraggles Rock to Doc's workshop, attempt to blow up the Fraggles hole below a stump in their Garden. After the explosion, the Fraggles find Gobo dazed and trapped below a piece of wood (41). In his confusion, Gobo thinks he is speaking to his uncle, Travelling Matt, who is away from Fraggles Rock exploring (42). Gobo asks his uncle to sing him a song, so Gobo's friends Boober and Red begin to sing what appears to be the first song that comes to mind:

Give me one and give me two
Cover me with muck and goo
Give me three and give me four
Cover me with guck and gore (43)¹

"Muck and Goo," continues as a counting song, yet as more Fraggles join in, they muster the energy to lift the piece of wood off of Gobo, and he awakens (43-45). Again, the Fraggles restore their community through a communal play in song. Although the song's content seems nonsensical in the silly rhymes it generates, the action of uniting in shared language play brings them together and restores the potential space of the play community. It also, though, subtly mocks Gobo's situation with hyperbole, insofar as he is not covered in "gore" or other forms of "goo" resulting from an injury in the explosion.

¹ Unlike some songs in his episodes, Nichol authored "Muck and Goo."

In this it lightens the serious mood of Gobo's injuries in the play of music performed as a community. The song also restores the Gorgs' community, as it reminds the feuding parents and child of a shared song from the son's childhood, and allows their reconciliation (44). Although separate communities with antagonistic relations, the Fraggles and the Gorgs share a language of play that unites them within their community, and maintains peace between both. Nichol includes "Muck and Goo," in another of his episodes, "The Day the Music Died," which marks its importance to the Fraggles community of his episodes, and unites their focus upon group play and the restoration of play relationships in the performance of language. Such play with language as a group becomes a form of a game, which Nichol makes explicit in a number of his other screenplays.

3.3 Language Games

In the first scene of Nichol's first aired episode for *Fraggle Rock*, titled "The Garden Plot," the human, Doc, and his dog, Sprocket, employ the game of charades in order to communicate with one another in the absence of a common language. Through their interaction they develop novel methods for exchanging information through the game, including puns and other phonetic coincidences. The scene dramatizes how play functions as a negotiated language between players that shifts based on their needs and desires. As the language of Doc and Sprocket's exchange explicitly takes the form of a game, viewers are prompted to examine the ways in which both normative and non-normative aspects of language allow or limit play with various meanings.

In the opening scene of "The Garden Plot," Sprocket observes Gobo Fraggles scurrying across the workshop floor and into the Fraggles hole. Sprocket immediately

breaks into howls and barks. Doc asks, “What? What’s in there boy?” (1). In response, Sprocket “holds up a single paw,” according to the screenplay notes (1). Although to the audience this gesture at first appears odd, Doc understands and says, “One word. How many letters?” (1). Sprocket realizes that his paws do not allow him to convey this information and he stares at them in confusion (1). He then performs the “sounds like” gesture, which Doc immediately understands (1). Sprocket mimics the word “gag,” but Doc does not follow, and he instead guesses “choker” before telling Sprocket not to get his “fur in a frazzle” (1-2). The screenplay notes that at the word “frazzle” Sprocket’s “ears perk up, he gets very excited, turns around and begins madly pointing at Doc” (2). Doc, just as confused as before, asks, “What’s gotten into you, boy? Is your brain getting fragile?” (2). Doc’s attempts to communicate with a dog, which, although a puppet, is endowed with many of the common animal attributes, creates a humour of naïve interspecies communication. Again Sprocket reacts to the word with phonetic similarity to “Fraggle,” and tries to gesture that Doc is again close to the right word (2). As the scene ends, Doc remains confused by Sprocket’s excitement. Since the audience knows all about the Fraggles and their world below Doc’s workshop, they understand Sprocket’s message, as well as the ignorant Doc’s confusion in this exchange. Because of the lack of a common language, the two rely on a game to communicate with each other. Although, for them, the games functions as an attempt at a serious exchange of information, it generates a humourous dramatic irony for the audience, who are prompted to sympathize with both sides of the exchange, and therefore delight in the many levels on which communication is attempted, and thwarted. In this engagement, the audience plays along with the characters of Doc and Sprocket, and they too must maneuver the flexibility of language and communication.

In Doc and Sprocket's charades, the game becomes a negotiated language in which they interact, albeit imperfectly. Their communication becomes a language game, though not a game in the sense of a rigid structure of play, but rather a modifiable, and so, contingent set of conventions between players. The term "language game," associates this exchange with Wittgenstein's descriptions of language. Doc and Sprocket's exchange – which figures language as a game, and games as a language – constructs an equivalency between the functions of both. Similarly, Wittgenstein justifies his use of the term "language games" in place of the more conventional descriptions of "rules":

Doesn't the analogy between language and games throw light here? We can easily imagine people amusing themselves in a field by playing with a ball so as to start various existing games, but playing many without finishing them and in between throwing the ball aimlessly into the air, chasing one another with the ball and bombarding one another for a joke and so on. And now someone says: The whole time they are playing a ball-game and following definite rules at every throw.

And is there not also the case where we play and – make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them – as we go along.

(33°)

As both a form of language and a game, Doc and Sprocket's charades dramatize how language functions as a set of conventions that players may alter, give up on, or make up as they go along. The two lapse into the form of the game to communicate with one another in the absence of a shared language, but they modify the game to suit their needs by including English, emotive sounds, gestures, and phonetic resonances, which they combine to work towards an understanding. Their shifts in the game from conveying

words and letter combinations, to aural resonance, and finally to exasperated gestures and noises, mirrors Wittgenstein's ball-players, who play without finishing games, or make up games as they go along. Such playful communications index the contingent nature of all communication, as players negotiate the forms of their expression based on their various motivations.

Doc and Sprocket's interaction focuses the audience's attention upon acts of communication, and relates these to a game whose structures and conventions may be adapted as it goes along to suit the need of its players. Due to their lack of a shared language, they rely upon normally marginal aspects of meaning to convey their message. For the audience, their punning word similarities, chance associations, gestures, and non-linguistic noises all become part of the humour of the scene's display of miscommunication. It prompts viewers to reflect upon normative language acts as themselves contingent games, and employ language and its interpretation as fluid and in play. Since viewers understand Sprocket's intended message, his most nonsensical gestures appear clear, and our frustration is more with Doc, and his dismissal of these forms of communication. Their cooperative focus upon negotiating, and playing their language game bonds them, although, in the end, the exchange fails, since Doc dismisses Sprocket's attempted language as nonsense.

3.4 The Potential Space of Language Games

Nichol's episode titled "The Beanbarrow, the Burden and the Bright Bouquet," initially mirrors a similar game-like interaction between interlocutors without a common language, but displays the ways in which players may maintain the potential space of communicative play. Whereas Doc pulls away from a playful, and sympathetic overlap in

his communication with Sprocket, the characters in “The Beanbarrow,” work to foster a communicative play through similar methods, but maintain their play where Doc gives up. Through these actions of negotiating their relationship and language of play, they foster a relationship that leads not only to friendship and understanding, but saves their lives and leads them back to the wider community of Fraggle Rock.

The episode centres on the beanbarrow races, which involves teams of two Fraggles who use wheelbarrows made from a bean-shell in a race through the caves of Fraggle Rock. Red and Mokey form a team, and they feel confident in their ability together. Mokey says, “we’re a real team. The communication between us is incredible,” (3) to which Red replies, “Almost intuitive.” (3). But Mokey disrupts their confidence by insisting that her pet plant Lanford join them in the beanbarrow. Red is upset about the extra weight, and the addition of a character with whom she doesn’t get along. She says, “we don’t even like each other! In fact we hate each other.” (4). Mokey, though, insists, and they pack Lanford into their beanbarrow. When Mokey is late arriving to the starting line, Red and Lanford take off on their own, but soon run off course and become lost. Red begins to call for her friends, while the screenplay describes Lanford making noises “in his plaintive plantuage” (25). With their different forms of communication, Red and Lanford mirror the relationship between Doc and Sprocket, but with added ambivalence, and even hatred. Red realizes that Lanford knows what has gone wrong, and has been trying to communicate it, but Red hasn’t been listening. Finally Red asks, “What is it Lanford? Have you been trying to tell me something?” (30). Lanford, like Sprocket in “The Garden Plot,” uses physical gestures and nods “yes.” When Red asks “What?” the screenplay says that “Lanford shakes the map he’s holding in his tendrils and points at it with his head.” (30). Red replies: “Map? Sounds like map?” (30). As in “The Garden

Plot,” the communication between two individuals without a common language seems to become a game of charades. In “The Beanbarrow,” though, Red is wrong about interpreting Lanford’s gestures as charades, since Lanford is telling her to look at the map (30). The map shows Red that they have wandered into a dangerous area of the caves. This exchange appears to prompt a change their relationship, as afterwards Red and Lanford begin to communicate more empathetically and supportively. Red even begins to see things from Lanford’s perspective:

Being stuck here makes me realize it must be tough being stuck in a pot in the corner all the time. Well, in the future ... if there’s a future ... I’m gonna take you out for walks coz ... for a Deathwort you’re really, you know, lively and ... likeable. (39; ellipses in original)

Red’s empathetic response to Lanford’s situation takes place as they progressively communicate more freely, with Red speaking English, and Lanford pointing, and even somehow grinning and kissing (39-40). Although their communication rejects the form of a specific game, the two demonstrate how language may function as an interplay, with each partner reacting to the abilities and desires of the other, and working to maintain a potential space of communicative movement. The exchange shows the benefits of a flexible approach to communication that creates a relationship in the actively negotiated game of language. Now working cooperatively, Red realizes that they need flowers, which act as a repellent. Lanford gestures enthusiastically to tell Red that he will soon bloom, but asks, in gestures and noises, for a lullaby to aid the process (40). Although Red says that lullabies are “sloppy and sentimental,” she begins to sing, and Lanford blooms, which scares away the vines and allows the two to escape (60-61). Such play between forms of communication displays an interplay between partners that transcends

the conventional structures of games and language because of a shared focus on an empathetic play in their communication.

Red and Lanford's shift from antagonism to playful interaction serves to clarify some of the failures of Doc and Sprocket's exchange. They succeed in their communication and their playful friendship where Doc and Sprocket find that their potential space for play fails to overlap. As Winnicott writes, "The precariousness of play belongs to the fact that it is always on the theoretical line between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived" (68). As such, play involves the interplay between the subjective experience of both partners in the Winnicottian "third area of potential space" (70) between them. Red and Lanford work towards a better understanding of each other in their exchange as they reject the familiar form of the game of charades that served for Doc and Sprocket, and instead shift between words, noises, gestures, and song, to develop a relationship built on a negotiation of the forms of language games that arise as necessary for their communication. These language games are made up as they go along and are contingent upon the needs of the two players, thereby illustrating Wittgenstein's description of the forms of language. The relationship between Red and Lanford shows how language, song, and play serve as redemptive activities for a community in conflict. By communicating together in friendship, they save themselves from danger, and re-enter their wider play community in Fraggie Rock. Yet, play with forms of communication also bonds them as their own small play community upon their return, as they describe it as a "happy ending," (44) and Red "gives a whoop and throws her arms up into the air exuberantly," and Lanford "grunts his agreement" (44).

3.5 “A poem is a gift”

In Nichol’s episode titled “Booberock,” Mokey tells Boober: “A poem is a gift, Boober. Just listen.” (9). She offers her advice and her poem after Boober expresses his annoyance with the noise and chaos of living with all the creatures of Fraggle Rock. The poem-as-gift in Nichol’s *Fraggle Rock* screenplay resonates strongly with his own poetic practice, and the title of his posthumously published *Martyrology Book 7&: gIFTS*. Pauline Butling writes that Nichol’s practice of “‘excessive’ editing, publishing, performing, and various other activities” created and participated within a gift economy of the small press avant-garde in Canada (62-63). She cites Lewis Hyde, who writes that gift economies create social capital through acts of giving, and that such gifts may be “the economy of the creative spirit,” that becomes “a vehicle for culture” (cited on 63). The excessiveness of poetry given freely within a community creates a play of language and “creative spirit” among individuals. Mokey offers her poem as a gift to Boober to allow him to re-enter the play community from which he feels himself severed. Boober, though, cuts Mokey off halfway through the poem once he hears the line “A calm and sleepy quiet world apart” (9). He takes this line out of context, and decides that he will find his own “quiet world apart” from the chaotic and loud expressions of play in Fraggle Rock in the legendary Caves of Boredom. Rather than accepting Mokey’s gift as an expression of community interaction, Boober reads his own personal desires for isolation and division from the group into the gift.

Mokey’s supplication that Boober “just listen” functions as a plea for Boober to maintain an active role within the community of Fraggle Rock, which involves the transmission of songs, language, and play. As such, Mokey welcomes Boober back into the gift economy of creative spirit by both reminding him what he plans to leave, and

asking him to engage in a conversation as an active listener, and therefore as a player and participant. Fraggles are fundamentally players, so Mokey reminds Boober that “Fraggles don’t live by themselves. Fraggles live together. And have fun and make noise.” (12). As a community of play, Fraggles, especially in Nichol’s episode, need the noise and fun of cooperative community to happily live and thrive. Boober, though, remains convinced that he must leave, and so travels to the Caves of Boredom (19). He soon forgets the names of his friends (19), the name of Fraggles Rock (28), and even his own name (29). The Storyteller reveals to Boober’s concerned friends that the Caves of Boredom used to be called the Caves of Forgetfulness (32). Without a community of play and friendship with which to interact, Boober loses his identity as a Fraggles. He says, “I wanted to be alone... Boy, you’re never more alone than when you don’t have a name.” (30). In this, Boober begins to realize that in the noise of songs and games of Fraggles Rock, he constituted himself and others linguistically. When his friends venture to save him, they begin to forget names, places, and even why they are in these caves (40). It soon becomes clear that their forgetfulness comes from the gasses given off by a predatory plant (42). Mokey drops her poem as the plant grabs her and the other Fraggles, but Boober soon finds it on the ground and reads it in full (41-43). After reading the full poem, which begins with a description of the noisiness of Fraggles Rock, and the desire to find “a calm and sleepy quiet world apart,” (41) but continues, “once alone I miss my friends / the meals we’ve shared, the songs, / which sends me back to find the Fraggles of my heart” (42). The poem reminds Boober of his friends, and moves him out of his forgetfulness (42). With a clear mind, Boober soon finds his friends, and tries to remind them too. He says to Wembley: “I remembered. Your name. Fraggles Rock, my name.” (44). Boober,

now realizing that he needs his friends and the community of Fraggles Rock, saves them all and they return to their home (47).

Mokey's poem focuses the episode on the importance of poetry and language to the Fraggles community. This is, of course, the second poem for Mokey that Nichol wrote, and whereas the first describes the nature of Fraggles through their play, as they "dance + spin + whirl" through their "wavy, wobbly world," this second poem for the Mokey character focuses on the importance of community to the Fraggles' world. Although, as the poem says, Fraggles Rock may sometimes be just "noisiness," and one may long for "a calm and sleepy quiet world apart," (41) the shared experiences of food and songs "sends me back to find the Fraggles of heart" (42). Mokey indexes the potential for conflict in the chaos of play, but also how empathetic acts of interplay, especially through shared songs and poems, reconstitutes play communities. Her poem serves as a linguistic reminder of the community it describes, which functions as a gift economy in order to maintain empathetic play. Boober's performance of the poem in his reading breaks the spell of forgetfulness, and allows him to save his friends and return to their community. His realization, when he says to Wembley: "I remembered. Your name. Fraggles Rock, my name." (44) displays the how Fraggles Rock serves as a liminal space of play between the individual and the other in the linguistic space of their interaction. Mokey's poem saves the Fraggles and reconstitutes their community as a play paracosm. As in Mokey's first poem by Nichol, "Fraggles is as Fraggles does," Boober realizes that to be a Fraggles means to give the gift of playful communication to oneself and others.

3.5 Collaborative Construction

Nichol's texts written for *Fraggle Rock*, implies, like any television program, a collaborative method of composition. Nichol's screenplays are necessarily collaborative texts, as they work within the constraints of the existing structures, narratives, and characters of the television program. Elizabeth Stephens describes the collaborative workplace of *Fraggle Rock* as one in which writers attended shooting, and performers attended writers' meetings. Stephens cites head writer Jerry Juhl saying that there was collaboration in the development of scripts, though writers were given creative control of their episodes, so "at the end of the show it was still your script." Davey notes that Nichol repeatedly travelled to New York to supervise and develop the shooting of his *Fraggle Rock* episodes (243, 245). Nichol's participation in such a collaborative writing activity, along with his work in the sound poetry ensemble The Four Horsemen, his theoretical work with Steve McCaffery under the title The Toronto Research Group, and his participation in the gift economy of small press avant-garde poetry all display an ongoing consideration of the creative and social potential of collaboration. Stephen Joyce writes of Nichol's collaborative work that:

One might begin to think of these [collaborative writing and performance] activities as provisional unities within the collectively produced canon of several authors, functioning as points of convergence where poets congregate and amalgamate. In this sense, we might begin to conceive of collaboratively written texts in terms of the community formations they imagine. (66)

The modes and expressions of interaction, for Joyce, indicate an idealized vision of community through the interplay of language. Through the collaborative production, and

the collaborative nature of the communities depicted in the show, Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays both formally and narratively figure acts of creation are as based in the social play among the forms and ideas of others.

The Fraggles community contains within it a Doozer community, who collaborate to build the physical structures of Fraggles Rock, which are also, conveniently, edible to the Fraggles, though seemingly without structural function beyond ornate decoration. The Doozers' rebuild their constructions, and continually attempt to innovate new architectural possibilities. In Nichol's episode "Cavern of Lost Dreams," Cotterpin Doozer becomes dissatisfied with the constructions in Fraggles Rock, calling them "boring," and instead wants to make something "really different" (4-5). This desire leads Cotterpin to venture away from her artistic community in Fraggles Rock in search of The Cavern of Lost Dreams, which the head architect says is "the legendary cave," "full of towers ours ancestors built," which Cotterpin thinks will be "*really* different," and will give her inspiration (7). The head architect warns, though, "you're on your own Cotterpin" (8). When she discovers the Cavern, she says it's "completely amazing," "completely original" (21). She soon discovers that the isolated Doozers who maintain the Cavern are hostile to her Fraggles friend Gobo, who has accompanied her, and they object to his practice of eating Doozer constructions (21-26). She finds the old Doozers inflexible, and their desire to maintain their constructions without renewal equally as intolerable as the Fraggles Doozers' constructions. Cotterpin realizes that "what's old is new," and so decides to take them to Fraggles Rock to work alongside the rest of the Doozers (36). She tells them, "I'm taking you some place different. I'm taking you home." (42). Cotterpin realizes that the best way for her to innovate, as well as maintain a connection with her fellow Doozer architects is through collaboration. She introduces the

old style of the Cavern Doozers to the style of the Fraggles Rock Doozers, in order to create an original design that unites all aspects of her community. Through collaboration, the Doozers avoid stagnation and conservatism, and also allow for more play with the elements and styles of their construction. Collaboration unites the architect and Cotterpin, and unites “home” with something “different” through the collaborative play with styles and relationships. Cotterpin’s narrative enacts a vision of collaborative artistic communities of “provisional unities” who maintain play by allowing space for innovation and experimentation among their practices.

3.6 “back into language thru play”

In Nichol’s *The Martyrology Book 5*, he writes that he

felt forced to find [his] ‘own’ path
back into language thru play
as tho [he were] learning to speak again (Chain 3)

Similarly, the Fraggles of Nichol’s episodes confront language and social communication through their play, which illustrates the ways in which play constitutes communities of players within the paracosm of the game. As with Sprocket and Doc, Red and Lanford, Boober and his friends, Cotterpin and the Doozers, and many of the other *Fraggle Rock* characters, players in Nichol’s episode “learn[...] to speak again” through forms of communicative play that unites them as players, because of the the shared maintenance of their overlapping potential space. As Nichol’s unpublished poem states, “Fraggle is, as Fraggles does, / a fragile Fraggles thing,” so these experiences of play constitute Fraggles play relationships, their world in the caves, and their own being as players. Nevertheless, as the conflicts and miscommunications in these episodes indicate, such play

relationships are inevitably fragile, since play results from the positive experience and willing engagement from all players. Nichol's episodes repeatedly enact the potential for shared play with language through the form of song, poetry, and language games, and how these create modes of communication that focus on the experience and active participation of all members of the play community in each "fleeting" moment of play.

Chapter 4: "Pataphysical Play Communities

4.1 Electronic Sponges and Supplementary Universes

In bpNichol's screenplay for the *Fraggle Rock* episode titled "Booberock," the human inventor, Doc, explains his new invention to his dog Sprocket. The screenplay notes that Doc holds a sponge with "tubes and springs sticking out of it," (2) which he tells Sprocket is the prototype for an "electronic sponge" (1). The object appears in the episode as a regular kitchen sponge with exposed wires and springs. As viewers, we understand that the joke of this section is in Doc's hyperbolic use of electronic components for the purpose of enhancing the sponge's functioning. We know that the sponge's contact with water will render the unprotected electronic elements ineffective, and that the simple object doesn't need such "electronic" improvement, so the scene evokes a gently critical humour. Doc's sponge serves as a "pataphysical invention in Nichol's screenplay since it parodies conventional logic through an ironic over-application of a generalization to its own exception. The joke playfully mocks logical inductions, but it also elucidates an alternative perspective by encouraging viewers to seriously consider the exceptional and its relation to the general. Viewers know why this object will not work, and yet they nevertheless understand the logical connections that would lead Doc to think that an "electronic sponge" would be more effective. As such, Doc's sponge showcases an inventive play that questions conventional logical inductions and invites viewers into a "pataphysical perspective on invention and meaning.

In this way, bpNichol's screenplays for *Fraggle Rock* highlight the theoretical importance of "pataphysics to the Fraggle perspective on conventional significations and practices. These episodes develop the way this type of logical play with meaning binds the Fraggle play community through a shared attitude towards their interaction with

language and interpretation. In Nichol's screenplays, 'pataphysics functions as a playful method with which to produce a creative "nonsense" that forms communities, both among characters who share a 'pataphysical perspective, as well as between the viewer and the text. For such scenarios and jokes to succeed, and also function seriously within the world of the show, viewers must entertain a playful perspective that overlaps with the 'pataphysical play of Nichol's episodes. From the viewpoint of the Fraggles' peripheral location, Nichol highlights the ability of 'pataphysical approaches to bind interpretive communities, and foster genuine meaning in communication that stands in playful opposition to normative language games. These episodes develop the origins this perspective through narratives of Fraggles' exploration in their creation of the character of Young Travelling Matt, who institutes a quasi-scientific 'pataphysical perspective on human phenomena based in an attention to supposedly insignificant details of meaning. Further, Nichol's screenplays develop a 'pataphysics of light that gives life to the Fraggles' caves as a result of the performance of song and language. These two origin narratives of 'pataphysical perspective highlight the importance of meaningful play with interpretation and language to the creation and maintenance of play worlds and communities, and their creative and critical angle on generalized methods of meaning production.

4.2 From 'Pataphysics to 'Pataphysics

The first writing on 'pataphysics appears in French proto-Surrealist writer Alfred Jarry's novel *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician*. In this novel he writes that 'pataphysics is the "science of the particular," which will "examine the laws governing the exceptional" (21). Jarry argues that through this focus 'pataphysics will "explain the universe supplementary to this one" (21). Marginal phenomena that

mainstream science views as “accidental data” become, for ’pataphysics, a “correlation of exceptions” (22). As an object of study, exceptions subvert the logic of conventional induction, which flattens the particular in favour of the general. ’Pataphysics overturns Enlightenment thinking, which Jarry views as privileging the centre over the margin, to create a science of those phenomena that fall beyond the realm of scientific study and are thus disregarded as anomalous. In Jarry’s spelling, ’pataphysics is written with an initial apostrophe to avoid what he calls “the simple pun” (21). The fact that there is no agreed upon “simple pun” (Bök 27-28, Hugill) makes even ’pataphysics’ spelling exceptional.

Jarry writes that ’pataphysics proposes “imaginary solutions,” by “symbolically attribut[ing] the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments” (22). As such, “imaginary solutions,” as explanations of observed phenomena, arise from the inversion of focus from the centre to the periphery. These may produce ironic inductions, like Doc’s sponge, once general laws are reexamined as themselves anomalous. The focus upon the exceptional undermines conventional methods of reading phenomena and instead prompts one to study each discrete object as a unique and original occurrence. In this, the ’pataphysician experiences the world with an almost child-like naiveté. Each object, ’pataphysics argues, is primary and equally valuable to study. This constitutes the basis for the “equivalence principle,” which says that there are no true anomalies in the ’pataphysical view, since all phenomena, methodologies, and inductions are equally valid (Hugill 5). Through the equivalency principle the humour and seriousness of ’pataphysics exist simultaneously and equally. Henri Bergson, under whom Jarry studied at school and who proved a lasting intellectual influence, writes of the genuine critique provided by humour, saying that “Humor arises when the inflexibility of a mechanism ... is revealed in the context of the flexibility of life.” (qtd.

in Hugill 17). Similarly, much of the humour created through a 'pataphysical approach is in its contrast to normative, accepted logic. As the viewer sees the exceptional instituted in favour of the general, she contrasts a flexible 'pataphysical exception with the familiar inflexible strategies of conventional interpretation. This discord within the mind of the reader is equivalently critical and funny.

The Canadian iteration of 'pataphysics emerged largely through the quasi-scientific theoretical writings of bpNichol and Steve McCaffery individually, as well as in their collaboration under the title of the Toronto Research Group (TRG). As Christian Bök notes in his survey of 'pataphysical literature, Canadian 'pataphysics "strives to present the play of wonder over wisdom" from a philosophically anomalous Canadian site that lies beyond the European origin of 'pataphysics (81-82). In their guest-edited 1980-81 issue of *Open Letter*, Nichol and McCaffery write that in its Canadian theorization 'pataphysics moves from "elision (') to quotation (") through a superinducement on elision ("+" = ")." (reprinted in *Rational* 301). The addition of the initial closing quotation mark institutes citation as 'pataphysics' starting point, to which the theory adds its own exceptional explanation. As Bök writes, the 'pataphysical citation, whether it be European 'pataphysics, or Enlightenment science and logic, "does not tell the whole truth, because it never has the last word," in the Canadian orthography of 'pataphysics (83). Nichol and McCaffery cite the fictional Dr. S. W. Sanderson, a "Canadian scholar and literary agent," who traces the prefix "pata" to a portmanteau that combines "meta" and "para," making 'pataphysics' "supplementary universe" both "beside and beyond the topography of its telos" (*Rational* 301). This *telos* is both the European trajectory of 'pataphysical exploration, as well as the particular discourse in which 'pataphysics may intervene. Bök writes that Canadian 'pataphysics cites European

'pataphysics as both "a parody of a parody," as well as an attempt to research and write "the unknown origins" of "the unknown science" (83). Through an attempt to create pata-narratives of "unknown origins," the TRG's "pataphysics annotates 'pataphysics through the process they describe as "quotation . . . of the given that we do not understand but with emendations that serve to constitute our explanation" (302). The explanation of the quoted given, which may only be gestured at but not fully grasped, provides an exceptional perspective on the significance of the quoted given's arrival in its present citation, and, through this, how it shifts one's perspective on the dialogue itself. This methodology fosters a creative and critical approach in which normative language and signification may be refigured from the perspective of its own anomalous forms and superfluous meanings.

In his later, solo essays, Nichol offers a description of "pataphysics that focuses on forms of textual creation and performance that create alternative perspectives on how we communicate. Although similar to the TRG's theorization, Nichol's later description of "pataphysics indicates a hope for true, transcendent communication through playful manipulations of language:

The way I tend to think of "pataphysics is that very often you climb a fictional staircase that you know is fictional; you walk up every imaginary stair, you get to your imaginary window and you open your imaginary window, and there is the real world. You see it from an angle you wouldn't otherwise ("Talking About" 333)

In Nichol's formulation, the fictional, as peripheral to the real, functions as a "pataphysical supplementary universe from which to reflect upon accepted reality and logic. In this, Nichol's "pataphysics posits a critical perspective on conventional methods

of creating and interpreting texts through a practice of non-normative uses of language to explore anomalous “angle[s]” on the familiar world.

Nichol writes of his own methods of creative discovery of hidden layers of linguistic signification. Through an attentiveness to the typically anomalous features of physical language, which he calls “notation,” Nichol describes a ”pataphysical exploration of forgotten origins of meaning that may be uncovered through playful methods of reading and writing (“The Pata” 354). He conducts this exploration through a methodology that Steve McCaffery describes as the “paragrammatic path” that uncovers the “micro-narrativ[e] of the single word” (“*The Martyrology as Paragram*” 64) in the manipulation of spaces between letters. These redistributed spaces become words within words that indicate a peripheral meaning. In ”pataphysical fashion Nichol uses this method of composition both to describe and demonstrate his form of playful perspective change:

There *is* notation. There is *no* tation. The word erases itself. No it doesn’t. Well yes it does but only if i read it that way. And that’s not real. Except, of course, that it is real. i can literally point to it – no tation.” (“The ”Pata” 354; emphasis in original)

The anomalous, false etymology of “notation,” from a ”pataphysical point-of-view, is equivalent to all other etymologies, and opens up a new perspective on the nature of textual creation. Nichol’s paragrams unsettle semiotic security and scatter the verbal centre of language through the readerly act of managing the spaces of the language. It divines the “no” in “notation,” the forms that substitute absence for presence, and institutes a ”pataphysical origin through a shift from reading at the word-level to the letter-level of language. He writes that this attention to “the surface details of writing,

opens a "pataphysical dimension" (371). Nichol's vision of "pataphysics highlights the potential to refigure meaning and perspective through a direct observation of the very elements that constitute conventional meaning "from an angle you wouldn't otherwise." Through this, Nichol advocates for an exploratory poetics to uncover the "pataphysical origins of observed forms.

4.3 The Origins of "Pataphysical Exploration

Just as the TRG quotes the unknown given of 'pataphysics, "but with emendations that serve to constitute [an] explanation" (302), Nichol's *Fraggle Rock* screenplays creatively explore the origins of the "pataphysical perspectives present in the television show's premise. As a paracosm below the surface of the normal, human world, *Fraggle Rock* functions as a supplementary universe based in a constant playful attitude involving song and games. The caves of the Fraggles function as a play community spatially rendered between other worlds of non-playful relationships. Nichol's screenplays develop the origins of the *Fraggle* play community to highlight the "pataphysical nature of the *Fraggle* community's perspective.

Nichol's screenplays and notebooks indicate a specific interest in arguably the most "pataphysically inclined character: Travelling Matt, who sets up a continual contact between the peripheral world of the Fraggles and the "real" world familiar to viewers of the show. Nichol's work provides the narrative of how Matt became the explorer he is in the show, and, further, more strongly defines him as a "pataphysical explorer whose interaction with anomalous phenomena opens up new worlds of possible play and communication. This interaction with the outside world, which, as will be explained below, Matt doubly establishes, unifies the Fraggles as a play community that stands

apart from the viewers' familiar world. Through an exploration of "unknown origins" of this play community Nichol's screenplays provide a "pataphysical history of the show's premise for Travelling Matt, which establishes the Fraggles' perspective in relation to other communities.

In the very first episode of the series² Travelling Matt leaves Fraggie Rock to explore what he calls "outer space," but what viewers recognize as their own "real" world ("Beginnings"). He promises his nephew Gobo that he will write weekly postcards to report on his findings about the "silly creatures," who live there, which he will publish together as *The History of the Universe Vol. 2* upon his return ("Writers' Notebook" 14-15). Matt's adventures into the human world establish the show's premise of interaction between the human and Fraggie worlds, and provides a recurrent misunderstanding description of conventional objects, practices and logic from the anomalous Fraggie point of view. The example of Matt's perspective given to writers in the show's guidebook describes him interpreting parking meters as creatures whose faces turn red when they aren't fed regularly (14). Through Matt's perspective on the human world, the audience follows his inductions based upon limited observation of particular interactions, which contrast with normative meanings and parody the practice of induction in general. Nevertheless, like Doc's sponge, the audience sees the logic, and even the illuminating potential of Matt's novel observations of familiar phenomena. Through Travelling Matt, viewers travel the "fictional staircase" of the Fraggie point of view, and reflect upon their own use of interpretive conventions through which they parse their world. This highlights the ways in which peripheral methods of reading phenomena function both creatively and critically.

² Not a bpNichol authored episode.

In bpNichol's screenplay for the episode titled "Booberock," Travelling Matt stands on a Toronto subway platform and observes how the "silly creatures" around him travel through caves just like the Fraggles (21). He writes, though, that "it is not like a Fraggles cave. There are no games, no singing or swimming. In fact, it is really quite boring!" (21). The anomalous Fraggles perspective displays quotidian activity in a new light, one in which human seriousness contrasts with Fraggles play. Without "games" and "singing," people only "stand around," and wait. This stasis inhibits the development of the "potential spaces" that Winnicott describes as necessary for play, which the Fraggles form through their community in the caves. Matt's description provides a critical perspective on the isolation and affective state of urban life. Further, he shows dissatisfaction with the lack of possibility for interaction with the space in a playful way. Although, from a viewer's perspective, Matt misinterprets subways as caves moving within caves, his "pataphysical critique provides a persuasive "imaginary window" from which to view the familiar world from the periphery, and see the absurdity of generalized interpretations of their meaning. Nichol describes the situation of one engaged in "pataphysical pursuits:

[O]ne of the identifying features of the "pataphysical [is] that even as you say it exists you know it doesn't exist and even as you know it doesn't exist you see that it exists and so on. Thus one is led thru chains of "pataphysical logic where each step coheres only for the length of the transition and then disintegrates, disappears behind you even as a new, unexpected step appears in front of you. ("The "Pata" 354)

Travelling Matt ventures through the conventional forms of the world with a permanent Fraggles and "pataphysical lens, which allows him to view each object of study as equally

anomalous, and therefore an important and original occurrence. He attempts to make logical inductions about these phenomena, but their rationale “disintegrates” as he discovers new phenomena. Viewers follow this “chain of”pataphysical logic,” yet, upon reflection, the interpretive journey as a whole appears absurd. Travelling Matt’s exploration inserts an unfamiliar subject into the viewer’s familiar world, and offers a ”pataphysical lens that questions generalizations and invites one to engage with the world’s significations in play.

In Nichol’s unpublished notebook titled “No Tree Book,” which mainly contains drafts of his poetic projects, he fills multiple pages with a list of sixty-three places for Travelling Matt to explore and interpret, including a bowling alley, a rock concert, a school, and a ghost town. The list indicates an ongoing engagement with the ”pataphysical explorations of the Travelling Matt character among poetic work whose concerns and methodology overlap with the *Fraggle Rock* writing. This list of ideas for the Matt character sits between drafts of Nichol’s poem of his return to his own fictionalized history: “In the Plunkett Hotel,” from “The Plunkett Papers.” Irene Niechoda writes that

[Nichol’s] interest in the universal desire among humans to account for the origins of the universe, his impulse to speak about the saints’ ... origins and home, his curiosity about his own family history all met in one work: “The Plunkett Papers.” (20).

The poem, a section of which was published in *The Martyrology: Book 6 Books*, sketches a link between personal and metaphysical origins through the play of language’s flexibility. Nichol connects these origins through a method of composition that treats them as flexible, and able to be manipulated to give alternative angles from which to

view the current moment and poem. In the *Martyrology* section of “The Plunkett Papers,” Nichol writes that,

what we call our history
... is more mystery than fact,
more verb than noun,
more image, finally, than story

Through the “fictional staircase” of family history and its origins in language, Nichol works toward a different perspective on himself and the importance of stories. This return to a familial past functions as a “pataphysical pursuit in which “even as you say it exists you know it doesn’t exist and even as you know it doesn’t exist you see that it exists and so on” (354). In this way, Nichol’s “pataphysics of history figures as “more verb than noun,” as it provides an active methodology for interpreting relationships and phenomena, though one that at any step seems to coalesce into a stable image. Through the act of retracing a family narrative Nichol develops an explanation of his own position, but finds “more mystery than fact” Following his “pataphysical logic, the fictional story that anomalously serves as conventional history influences his interpretation of his present location insofar as it destabilizes the solidity of his self-interpretation. Flexible, even playful, engagement with origins allows such stories to provide an alternative and imaginary angle from which to view current situations and phenomena.

Similarly, Nichol’s *Fraggle Rock* screenplays develop the origins of Travelling Matt and his “pataphysical exploration. The only depiction of a young Travelling Matt anywhere in the television program is in Nichol’s episodes “Born to Wander” and “The Riddle of Rhyming Rock.” “Born to Wander” provides the story of Matt’s beginnings as

an explorer. In it Gobo asks the Storyteller Fraggles to tell him the tale of how “Uncle Matt became an Explorer” (4). Gobo hopes to follow in his uncle’s career, and, in another of Nichol’s episodes, says that like Matt, he is “more an explorer than a writer” (“The Day the Music Died” 7). In Gobo’s description of Travelling Matt, Gobo privileges exploration over composition, which mirrors the TRG’s statement that “there are the writers who write and the writers who read” (169). Nichol figures Travelling Matt as an explorer who reads the world as a method of writing that translates phenomena and language through fluid interpretive strategies.

The Storyteller Fraggles’ narrative in Nichol’s episode describes the young Matt as inept and clumsy, though ceaselessly enthusiastic about becoming an explorer. In the story, Matt’s uncle, also an explorer, continually tries to dissuade him from participating in the exploration of the Fraggles caves, but Matt only takes this as a “test of [his] conviction” (8).

Uncle Gobo: “You?! Ready to be an explorer?!!! You ... you ... you’re such a complete amateur!! Such a dimp!!!

Matt (perking up): Gosh! That’s nice of you to say so. I do try... (26)

In this exchange Matt mistakes the nonsense insult as a compliment. In her discussion of nonsense, Susan Stewart notes, “Nonsense stands in contrast to the reasonable, positive, contextualized, and ‘natural’ world of sense as the random, the inconsequential, the merely cultural.” (4). Therefore, “Nonsense become appropriate only to the everyday discourse of the socially purposeless, to those on the peripheries of everyday life.” (5). As such, nonsense provides an alternative, and sometimes subversive sense, that plays with context outside of dominant semantic interpretation. As a child, and therefore supposedly unable to participate in serious pursuits, Matt is made peripheral even in his

Fraggle world, and therefore finds manipulability and play in the word “dimp,” which he is able to take out of context. Matt’s uncle functions as Jacques Rancière’s classical schoolmaster, who maintains a “knowledge of ignorance” that “stultifies” his pupil (*Emancipated* 11). Matt’s misunderstanding of the term “dimp,” willful or not, though, allows him to read his uncle’s words against the grain. Doing so, Matt treats his uncle’s pedagogical practice as similar to that of the Rancière’s “ignorant schoolmaster,” who prompts pupils to “venture into the forest of things and signs,” and translate this into their own interpretive experience (11). Matt performs a playful misinterpretation that decontextualizes the insult meant to dissuade his participation, and, instead, makes it a form of nonsense that facilitates interpretive exploration with the “things and signs” of his physical and linguistic world. The label “dimp,” which to the audience is already novel, functions as a nonsense word whose peripheral signification gives Matt an interpretive autonomy within his community that facilitates playful exploration.

In Nichol’s “Booberock” screenplay, young Travelling Matt’s willingness to explore through play with the physical forms of his world without a specific telic intent eventually allows him to make his first big discovery: the world of the Gorgs. Matt gathers rocks for his collection rather than helping to find new sources of food. He wanders through the caves singing while he aimlessly taps his rock hammer on the walls. As he finishes his song, his last tap causes the tunnel to cave in. In the rubble Matt apologizes generally, though he is alone, and as the dust clears he sees “[b]right blue light ... and plants of some kind” (29). Through his engagement with his physical world, Matt discovers “another world,” which appears to him as a new outdoor land with singing birds and green grass (30). This provides the origin story of the other world that the subterranean Fraggles sit between, as well as the story of Matt’s beginnings as

an explorer. In the first episode of the show, Matt discovers the “outer space” of the human world, but it is only in Nichol’s “Booberock” episode that the audience learns that Matt also discovered the other outdoor world which Fraggles Rock borders: that of the Gorgs. Travelling Matt’s discovery establishes play with the material context of one’s world as a methodology for the ”pataphysical discovery of new worlds. Matt moves from the cave level of engagement to the rock level, analogous to McCaffery’s description of Nichol’s semantic “paragrammatic” shift from the “literal” to the “letteral” (61). Through this creative exploration, the Fraggles find an engagement with other communities beyond their caves. Matt’s exploration establishes the origins of the Fraggles’ community in relation to an exterior, non-playful world that they make strange through their peripheral perspective.

Elsewhere in his poetic writing, Nichol writes of imaginary origins that reflect an anomalous perspective on the world in his “probable system” poems (*Book of Variations*). The series displays a ”pataphysical play with the forms of language and signification, and proposes quasi-scientific methods for engaging with such phenomena. “probable systems 18” reports on the discovery of the “Manitoba alphabet cult,” of which Nichol finds traces in the alphabetic shapes he observes in a complimentary Ramada map of the province (*Book of Variations* 267-278). Nichol’s preoccupation with geography in this and other poems highlights the correspondence, for him, between geographic and linguistic exploration, and how words becomes worlds of meaning. Nichol calculates the “energy grid” of “alphabetic routings” to which the map indicates. He writes that these forms point to “the ability to analyze reading at a finer level of detail i.e. the change of tempo from letter to letter in any cluster of letters (be they words or more abstract groupings)” (277). As with the Nichol’s “Booberock” screenplay,

“probable systems 18” develops an origin story that elucidates a ”pataphysical perspective on the physical geography of the world and opens up another world, or supplementary universe. Such worlds, as both geographic and linguistic, display representations and interpretations in play. Nichol’s report takes peripheral forms of meaning and centres them in an interpretive reading that creates new worlds and histories through acts of exploration.

Nichol’s origin story of Travelling Matt’s exploration highlights the creative power of ”pataphysical sense to constitute the critical perspective of a play community through the creative discovery of alternative, non-playful worlds and communities. Travelling Matt’s lauded achievement leads him to reply to the complement that he is an “absolutely brilliant explorer,” with the proud exclamation that he has become “the complete dimp.” He makes his discovery, maybe ironically, by being the dimp his uncle accuses him of being. Matt is both a dimp and an explorer, since, for him, dimpiness is the key to his methodology of play with the supposedly solid forms of his linguistic and physical world. His attention to individual phenomena serve to constitute his community as one in which ”pataphysical imaginary solutions function as methods of genuine discovery and interaction with an exterior world. Yet ”pataphysical solutions and alternative logics also create the very light and life of the Fraggie Rock play community in Nichol’s episodes.

4.4 The Light and Life of Play

In “The ”Pata of Letter Feet,” bpNichol writes that “poetry has its physical reality, its metaphysical reality and its ”pataphysical reality” (354). In the *Fraggle Rock* screenplays, he enters a narrative space in which to work through the origins of the

”pataphysical reality of the supplementary universe of the Fraggles. Beyond Travelling Matt’s establishment of a form of exploration that constitutes an ongoing ”pataphysical perspective on non-playful worlds of interpretation, Nichol’s screenplays also establish the ”pataphysical origins of the very physical and social life of the Fraggles’ play community. Nichol’s episode titled “The Day the Music Died,” provides an origin story of Fraggle light and life based in their playful communication. His screenplay centres group play with language in a community as fundamental to the physical, metaphysical, and ”pataphysical life of *Fraggle Rock*.

In “The Day the Music Died,” the Storyteller Fraggie announces a draw to decide the Fraggie who will write the “Glory Song,” which she describes as “the song that will sing of our generation, our cycle of the cave, for all time!” (6). The Glory Song only appears in this Nichol episode, and displays the performance of writing as fundamental to the self-representation of Fraggie culture. The Storyteller pulls Gobo’s name in the draw, but he is hesitant. This is the point at which Gobo politely explains that he is “more an explorer than a writer” (6). Because the song has to be “the most important song [he has] ever written,” (9) Gobo does all he can to concentrate on his composition. After being repeatedly interrupted by the songs and noise of the Fraggles around him, he finally asks his friends to help him by telling everyone to be quiet so that he can think. Since Fraggles are always singing and playing, silence is a strange state for their world. Without the play and performance of song, the Fraggles quickly find that their words don’t quite work as they want them to. A group of Fraggles singing “Flitzzy, witzzy, bitzy / You’re smaller than a ditzzy...” (13), are told to stop singing. They reply, “I guess we can talk it,” (13) and proceed to perform a parody of a bad poetry reading, complete with grave monotone voices and dramatic pauses for line breaks. After three lines, though, they stop, and the

screenplay notes that, “The other Fraggles are staring at them in disbelief and horror and the rhyme trails off in its sheer desultoriness.” (13). Without the play of song and performance they all agree that the words “lack[...] a certain sparkle somehow” (13). Gobo’s friend Mokey observes that “It is hard when you can’t let simply let your essence manifest at will.” (13). In this scene Nichol highlights the lifelessness of language without the movement of “sparkle” and play. The act of performing language as a group is key to giving words and communication their life.

With a quiet Fraggles Rock, the Fraggles soon become restless, and Mokey observes that “a song brightens the day” (16). This metaphor becomes literalized as the light of Fraggles Rock fades, and blackouts roll through the caves. The screenplay begins to associate this darkness with death by describing it as a “stygian gloom,” and refer to it as “the end of the world” (20). Without lights, the Fraggles begin to fall asleep, never to awake without the return of the light that gives them life. Gobo and his friends soon discover that the light of Fraggles Rock comes from strange creatures called Ditzies, who are microscopic beings that, they learn, feed off of the Fraggles’ songs and play. Red Fraggles tells them that she “thought Ditzzy was just a nonsense word” (22). Like “dimp,” the word “Ditzzy” shifts between nonsense and a kind of sense that institutes a marginal world of meaning. Susan Stewart notes that “nonsense results from a radical shift towards the metaphoric pole accompanied by a decontextualization of the utterance,” and that “nonsense can be seen as an activity that replicates the activities of both play and metaphor in that it has to do with the common-sense relationships brought into a paradoxical is/is not status” (35). As such, the questionable existence of the Ditzies, and their name’s use as a decontextualized word in rhymes, makes them a kind of nonsensical being, which, in the show, highlights an alternative “pataphysical universe. As peripheral

to seriousness, play in language itself becomes a "pataphysical universe in which flexibility is tested against the rigidity of normative meaning. The Fraggles fundamentally depend upon the existence of beings whose names are based in nonsense. The introduction of these beings provide a "pataphysical explanation for the light of Fraggie Rock, and beings with which the Fraggles exist symbiotically. From the literal interpretation of songs "brighten[ing] the day" (16) and making the "cave come to life," (11) Nichol explores an origin of the supplementary universe and its play with the performance of language.

Nichol's early notes for his Fraggie Rock writing indicate a specific interest in the Ditzies and their role in the Fraggles' world. The later verses of Nichol's "Poems of Mokey" describe the role of Ditzies:

We only have the Ditzies but
They seem like friends to me
They flicker 'round me when I sit
And light the world I see

Nichol's unused poem for Mokey shows his ongoing interest in the Ditzies, which, as mentioned above, do not prominently feature in other *Fraggle Rock* episodes. Nichol figures Ditzies as "pataphysical beings and aligns them with the play of light and dialogue that reveals a paracosmic world. In Mokey's poem, though, the Ditzies also function as partners in the play of the Fraggles. For Mokey, they live as silent, yet reassuring friends. The "flicker" of the play of light from the Ditzies stands in for the paralinguistic elements of performance off of which they live in Nichol's screenplay. This element of communication lives on its own through the Ditzies, and becomes an element of language with which to engage in play for Mokey. Although they become

participants in the play of language in *Fraggle Rock*, the Ditzies in Nichol's screenplay provides a key explanation of how the Fraggles live in their caves, and how these caves are lit. The establishment of a sentient light source that lives off of song makes the physical existence of the Fraggles fundamentally "pataphysical, as it provides an imaginary solution to the interaction between language and its relationship to the physical elements that foster life.

The end of the world caused by the death of a light source in Nichol's "The Day the Music Died" episode resonates with the introductory poem to the first book of *The Martyrology*, "from *The Chronicles of Knarn*." The poem appears as a fragment from a science fiction inspired apostrophe to a distant lover. The speaker implies that he will die when "the sun dies," but that his words are already part of a forgotten history, since "the language [he] write[s] is no longer spoken." The poem documents the death of a fictional world through a death of language and communication, especially communication given life in loving dialogue.

where do you hide when the sun goes nova?

i think it's over

somewhere a poem dies

The death of the poem, language, the speaker, and the sun all combine in a doomed communication to the lost lover. Like the Ditzies, the light in the poem lives off of a communicative play in dialogue and movement, which, once stilled, dies, or "goes nova." In an interview Nichol explains that this speaker writes a "language no longer spoken," since "[i]n the literal truth of it, the language I *write* is no longer *spoken*. That is, people reading the printed text don't voice it." (Niechoda 66; emphasis in original). For Nichol, in these texts, the language dies when it is made static, which can occur without the

Winnicottian play between dialogic participants who meaningfully activate their shared “potential space” in the moment of communication. The form of a letter that will never be delivered already indicates a death in language, which the poem further allegorizes in the science fiction scenario of the death of a planet. As with the bad poetry reading by the Fraggles who were prohibited from singing, Nichol’s poem indicates that performance within a community activates texts, and give them life, or “sparkle.” Nichol’s description of the Ditzies and his poem “from *The Chronicles of Knarn*,” overlap in their employment of “pataphysical supplementary universes to display how light and life rely upon the performance of language in a community.

Nichol’s “The Day the Music Died,” screenplay highlights the grave importance of keeping language active in a community through the play of performance. Ditzies act as a form of light that is itself alive, and which lives symbiotically with the communicative play that gives life to communities. Nichol’s figuring of the Ditzies centres performance as the necessary element that gives “sparkle,” or play, to Fraggles communication. Unperformed, language dies with the light of the supplementary universe. The Fraggles only save themselves from such fate by affirming their own nature. Gobo realizes that “nothing is more important [to Fraggles] than music,” and soon he begins to light the caves in a song (42). When all of the Fraggles join the song the caves fully brighten, and the Ditzies thank the Fraggles for saving them. Through this narrative of the origin of Fraggles light and life, Nichol makes the performance of language in a community central to both the Fraggles’ biological and social life. This functions as an imaginary solution for the nature of light, and an alternative angle on the life and communication of a play community paracosm.

4.5 Extensions of "Pataphysical Play

Through his narratives of the origins of the Travelling Matt character, and the light of the Ditzies, Nichol's screenplays develop key details about how the Fraggles came to interact with other worlds of signification, and the interpretive nature of their own physical and social play community. These narratives also establish important connections between Nichol's poetics of "pataphysics and his use of the *Fraggle Rock* themes and characters. Nichol's episodes establish the origins of the "pataphysical "imaginary window" through which the Fraggles' peripheral community critically and creatively engages with normative interpretations of phenomena. Travelling Matt's anomalous, and almost paragrammatic, method of exploration offers nonsense as a playful way to engage with the language of a community, and interact with the physical geography of the world as a linguistically malleable space. It also strengthens the Fraggles' play community in relation to another, non-playful world. In this, Nichol connects Matt's perspective with "pataphysics, and shows how this form of engagement creates a critical play community engaged with other interpretive communities. The Ditzies too establish a flexible play of communication as fundamental to the creation of a community, and centre performance of language as key to maintaining both physical and social life. Nichol's screenplays highlight the fact that all play exists in some relation to communicative meaning, and that the play and dialogue of this communication is more fundamental to group life than the actual words used. In play, language gives life and light to a community, and keeps it alive. Although a nonsensical scientific description of light, Nichol's Ditzies provide a creative critique of the inductions made about dialogue's interaction with physical and social life from the anomalous perspective of *Fraggle Rock*. These two narratives establish the origins of the Fraggles' play community as one

constituted by a shared "pataphysical perspective on interaction with others and other worlds of interpretation.

Viewers of the type of play developed in Nichol's screenplays are also welcomed into the peripheral interpretive community of "pataphysical play. As shown by Doc's sponge, Matt's critique of the "caves," and the Ditzies' light, viewers are prompted to see the sense in the nonsense of the Fraggles' world as a "fictional staircase" with which to view their familiar world from an unfamiliar perspective. This allows viewers to engage with these episodes as players whose overlapping interpretive play experience extends the "pataphysical elements of these episodes into an active critique on normative meanings of interactions with language and community. Without a dialogic partner, the light of such textual play does not exist, as Nichol indicates in his critique of non-interactive and non-performative language. Like the written word, the television show must foster interactive partners in its communication with which to develop overlapping play experiences. In "The "Pata of Letter Feet," Nichol writes that the "pataphysical "dimension [is] filled with short-lived phenomena" (371). Similarly, Winnicott's description of play highlights the "spontaneous" nature of play in the potential space between two participants (68). Nichol's performance of the "notation" of texts exists in, in their moment of communication between reader and text, or between performer and listener. Although such interactions between reader and text may be present in any work, Nichol's screenplays and writings on poetics highlight them as fundamental to a form of play that creates communities who share a "pataphysical perspective that remains equally creative and critical.

Works Cited

“Beginnings.” *Fraggle Rock*. 1983. Television.

Barbour, Douglas. “A brilliant proof of bpNichol’s genius.” *Edmonton Journal*. (12 Feb. 1995). C5.

Bök, Christian. *Pataphysics: The Poetics of an Imaginary Science*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2002. Print.

Butling, Pauline, Susan Rudy. *Writing in Our Time: Canada’s Radical Poetries in English (1957-2003)*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005. Print.

Caillois, Roger. *Man, Play, and Games*. New York: Schocken, 1979. Print.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*. New York: Norton, 1971. Print.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1975. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.” *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 2005. 351-370. Print.

Dutton, Paul. “bp Anecdotingly.” *Open Letter*. Guest ed. Lori Emerson. 13.8 (2009). Print.

Eberle, Scott. “Exploring the Uncanny Valley to Find the Edge of Play.” *American Journal of Play*. 2 (2009) 167-194.

Edwards, Brian. *Theories of Play and Postmodern Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

Ehrmann, Jacques. “Homo Ludens Revisited.” *Yale French Studies*. 41. (1968) 31-57. Print.

- Eugen, Fink. "The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play." *Yale French Studies*. "Game, Play, Literature." 41 (1968). 19-30. Print.
- Garlen, Jennifer and Anissa Graham eds. *The Wider Worlds of Jim Henson: Essays on His Work and Legacy Beyond The Muppet Show and Sesame Street*. Jefferson: Macfarland and Company, 2012. Print.
- Hans, James. *The Play of the World*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1981. Print.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon, 1955. Print.
- Hugill, Andrew. *Pataphysics: A Useless Guide*. Cambridge: MIT, 2012. Print.
- Hutchinson, Peter. *Games Authors Play*. New York: Metheun, 1983. Print.
- Hyde, Lewis. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. New York: Vintage, 1983. Print.
- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Jarry, Alfred. *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Neoscientific Novel*. Trans. Simon Watson Taylor. Boston: Exact Change, 1996. Print.
- McCaffery, Steve. "The Martyrology as Paragram." *North of Intention*. New York: Roof Books, 1986. Print. 58-76.
- McCaffery, Steve and bpNichol. *Rational Geomancy: The Kids of the Book-Machine : the Collected Research Reports of the Toronto Research Group, 1973-82*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1992. Print.
- Moore, John. "The words of a poet transcend even death." *Vancouver Sun*. (18 Feb. 1995). D13.
- Motte, Warren. *Playtexts: Ludics in Contemporary Literature*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1995. Print.

- . "Playing in Earnest." *New Literary History*. 40.1. (2009). 25-42. Print.
- Nichol, bp. *The Alphabet Game: A bpNichol Reader*. Eds. Lori Emerson, Darren Wershler-Henry. Toronto: Coach House, 2007. Print.
- . "The Beanbarrow, The Burden and the Bright Bouquet: Final Shooting Script: Show 59." *Fraggle Rock*. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "Blanket of Snow, Blanket of Woe: Final Shooting Script: Show 54." *Fraggle Rock*. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "Booberock: Final Shooting Script: Show 26" *Fraggle Rock*. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . *Book of Variations*. Toronto: Coach House, 2013. Print.
- . "Born to Wander: Final Shooting Script: Show 63." *Fraggle Rock*. 1985. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "A Brush with Jealousy: Final Shooting Script: Show 78" *Fraggle Rock*. 1985. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "The Cavern of Lost Dreams: Final Shooting Script: Show 68" *Fraggle Rock*. 1985. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "The Day the Music Died: Final Shooting Script: Show 41." *Fraggle Rock*. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "Fire Up Above: Fragglerock story idea – September 16/85." Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "The Garden Plot: Second Read Thru Draft: Show 20." *Fraggle Rock*. 1983. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . *Get Set Nermo! Te Book*. Notebook. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.

- . *An H in the Heart*. Eds. George Bowering, Michael Ondaatje. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994. Print.
- . "Interview: George Bowering." *Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol*. Ed. Roy Miki. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002. 38-41. Print.
- . "Interview: Nicette Jukelevics." *Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol*. Ed. Roy Miki. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002. 133-139. Print.
- . "Interview: Raoul Duguay." *Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol*. Ed. Roy Miki. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002. 120-127. Print.
- . *Martyrology: Book 1*. Toronto: Coach House, 1998. Print.
- . *Martyrology: Book 5*. Toronto: Coach House, 1999. Print.
- . *Martyrology: Book 6 Books*. Toronto: Coach House, 1998. Print.
- . *Martyrology: Book 7&: gIFTS*. Toronto: Coach House, 1998. Print.
- . *Moosequakes and Other Disasters*. Windsor: Black Moss, 1981. Print.
- . *No Tree Book*. Notebook. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . *Once: A Lullaby*. Windsor: Black Moss, 1983. Print.
- . "The "Pata of Letter Feet, or, the English Written Character as a Medium for Poetry." *Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol*. Ed. Roy Miki. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002. 353-372. Print
- . "The Poems of Mokey." Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "The Riddle of the Rhyming Rock: Final Shooting Script: Show 85." *Fraggle Rock*. 1987. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . "The Secret of Convincing John: Final Shooting Script: Show 38." *Fraggle Rock*. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.

- . "statement, novemeber 1966." *Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol*. Ed. Roy Miki. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002. 18. Print
- . "Talking About the Sacred in Writing." *Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol*. Ed. Roy Miki. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002. 333-337. Print
- . Song. "Born to Laugh." "Invasion of the Toe Ticklers: Final Shooting Script: Show 48." *Fraggle Rock*. by David Young. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . Song. "Gypsy Song." "Boober's Quiet Day: Final Shooting Script: Show 45." *Fraggle Rock*. by Jerry Juhl. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- . Song. "The Joy." "Invasion of the Toe Ticklers: Final Shooting Script: Show 48." *Fraggle Rock*. by David Young. 1984. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- Niechoda, Irene. *Sourcery for Books 1 & 2 of bpNichol's The Martyrology*. Toronto: ECW, 1992. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. Gregory Elliott. New York: Verso, 2009. Print.
- Rasula, Jed. "bpNichol's poems celebrate the mutability of words." *Letters to the World. Bookforum Website*. Feb. 2008. Web. 24 July, 2014.
- Scobie, Steven. *bpNichol: What History Teaches*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1993. Print.
- Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 2012. Print.
- Singer, Dorothea and Jerome Singer. *The House of Make-Believe: Children's Play and the Developing Imagination*. Boston: Harvard UP, 1990. Print.

- Spariosu, Mihai. *Dionysis Reborn: Play and the Aesthetic in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989. Print.
- Stephens, Elizabeth. "Why the Ideal Creative Workplace Looks at Lot Like Fraggie Rock." *The Awl*. Dec. 17, 2013. Web. Jul. 29, 2014.
- Stewart, Susan. *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1978. Print.
- Sutton-Smith, Brian. *The Ambiguity of Play*. Cambridge: Harvard, 1997. Print.
- Voyce, Stephen. "The Practice of Community: bpNichol and Steve McCaffery in Collaboration." *Open Letter*. 13.8. (2009). Print. 64-76.
- Winnicott, D.W. *Playing and Reality*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. Print.
- "Writers' Notebook." *Fraggle Rock*. 1982. Simon Fraser University Archives. bpNichol fonds.
- Young, Iris Marion. "The Ideal Community and the Politics of Difference." *Feminism and Community*. Ed. Penny A. Weiss, Marilyn Friedman. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995. 233-258. Print.