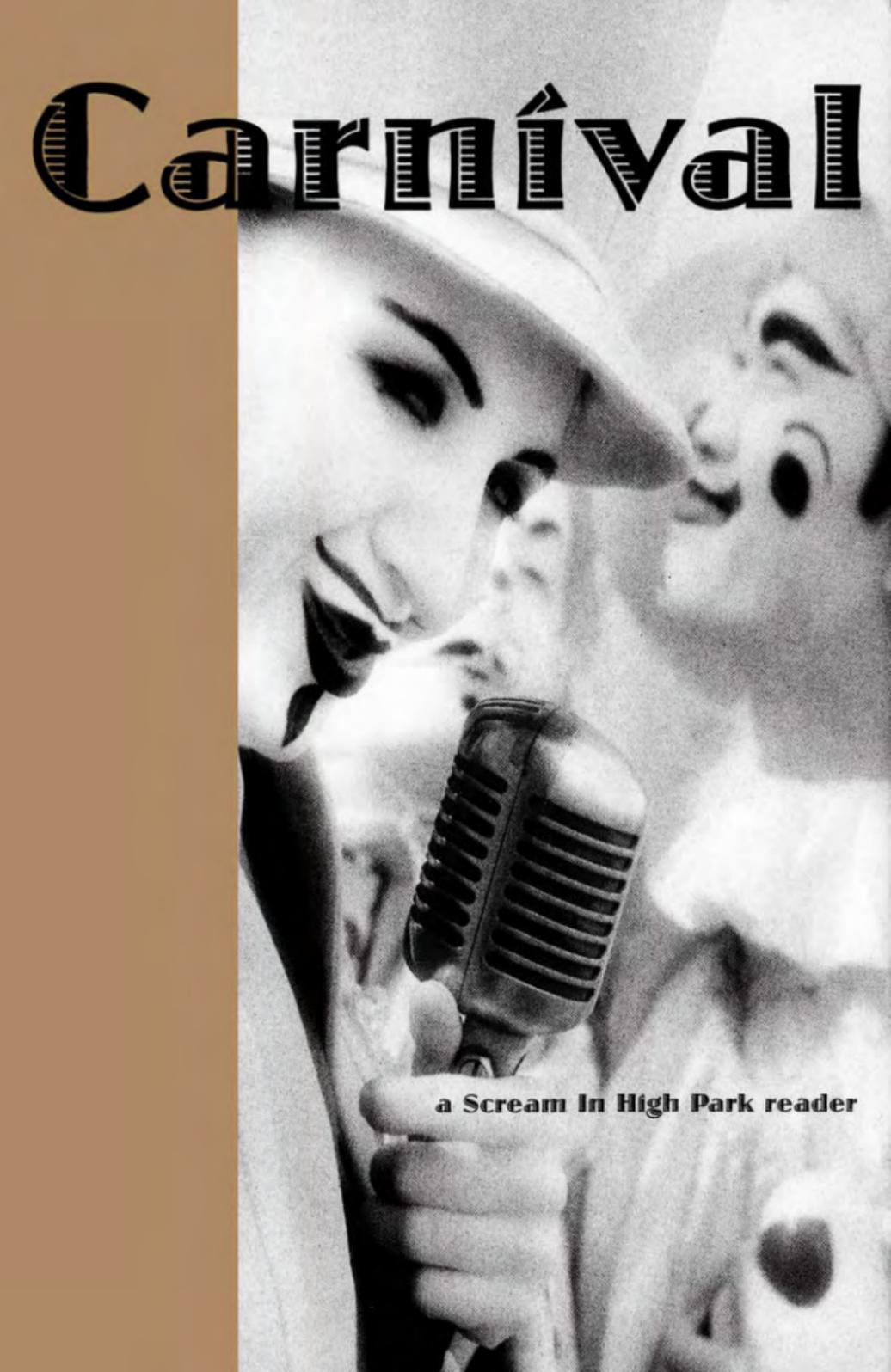


Carnival



a **Scream In High Park** reader

Carnival

This page intentionally left blank

Carnival
a Scream In High Park reader

edited by Peter McPhee



INSOMNIAC PRESS

Compilation copyright © 1996 Peter McPhee
Copyright of the writers' works remain with the authors

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior written permission of the publisher or, in case of photocopying or other reprographic copying, a licence from CANCOPY (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency), 6 Adelaide St. E., Suite 900, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5C 1H6.

Edited by Peter McPhee

Copy edited by Lloyd Davis, Gayle Irwin, Damian Lopes, Mike O'Connor,
Liz Thorpe, Darren Wershler-Henry, Alana Wilcox

Designed by Mike O'Connor

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Carnival: a Scream in High Park reader

Stories and poems from the writers who performed at the Scream in High Park in its first 3 years.

ISBN 1-895837-38-3

1. Short stories, Canadian (English) . * 2. Canadian fiction (English) - 20th century.* 3. Canadian poetry (English) - 20th century.* I. Scream in High Park (Toronto, Ont.). II. McPhee, Peter, 1964-

PS8233.C37 1996

C810.8'054

C96-930387-4

PR9194.4.C37 1996

Printed and bound in Canada

Insomniac Press

378 Delaware Ave.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6H 2T8

Table of contents

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|-----------|
| Introduction | | xi |
| 1995 | | 1 |
| Nicole Brossard | Matter Harmonious Still Maneuvering | 3 |
| Gerry Shikatani | Mezquita | 8 |
| | Who Notes: A Particular Pronoun, A Responsibility | 10 |
| Claire Harris | Jane In Summer | 11 |
| | Kay In Summer | 13 |
| Dannabang Kuwabong | The Guns Of Kigali Are Silent | 15 |
| Wendy Agnew | How To Make Love To An Angel | 19 |
| | <i>from</i> The Lillian Lectures | 21 |
| Matthew Remski | <i>from</i> dying for veronica | 24 |
| Patricia Seaman | <i>from</i> Super Nevada | 27 |
| Stuart Ross | Around The Building | 30 |
| | Velvet Curtains | 32 |
| Eileen O'Toole | Florist | 33 |
| | Sam's | 34 |
| Jaymz Bee | Clint East Woody Allen Alda | 35 |
| André Alexis | Pierrot | 36 |
| Elise Levine | True Romance | 39 |
| | Untitled, artist's collection | 40 |
| | This Is It | 41 |
| John Barlow | The Happy Idea | 42 |
| 1994 | | 47 |
| Bill Kennedy | <i>from</i> Apostrophe | 49 |
| Nancy Bullis | Linseed Oil | 54 |
| Death Waits | Breaking Skin | 57 |
| | Goldfish Loves Wolf | 58 |
| Lise Downe | Déjà Déjà Vu | 60 |
| | Weather I | 61 |
| Rafael Barreto-Rivera | <i>from</i> Shredded What: a Whitman Serial | 63 |
| M. Nourbese Philip | Discourse On The Logic Of Language | 67 |
| Nino Ricci | <i>from</i> I am Salman Rushdie | 71 |
| Karen Mac Cormack | Some Miles Asunder | 74 |
| Al Purdy | At the Quinte Hotel | 79 |
| | My Grandfather's Country | 81 |

| | | |
|---------------------|--|------------|
| Susan Musgrave | Out Of Time | 84 |
| | Arctic Poppies | 85 |
| | Water Music | 87 |
| | Holy Ground | 88 |
| Mac McArthur | We Sat In Open Fields | 89 |
| Nancy Dembowski | Mirror Writing | 93 |
| | Borders | 94 |
| | Ghosts | 96 |
| Steve McCaffery | Novel 39 | 98 |
| | from Teachable Texts | 99 |
| | K As In Sleep | 101 |
| Sonja Mills | I Am So Fat | 102 |
| Leon Rooke | Sweethearts | 104 |
| Stan Rogal | Personations 21 | 107 |
| | Dark Horses | 109 |
| Tricia Postle | Today I'm Going To Be A Man | 111 |
| | Commentary | 114 |
| Clifton Joseph | (I Remember) Back Home | 115 |
| R.M. Vaughan | Requiem from a Heady Height | 117 |
| 1993 | | 123 |
| Yves Troendle | Dead Givaway (re: Robert Rauschenberg) | 125 |
| Adeena Karasick | Floruit Retinue | 128 |
| Christopher Dewdney | The Clouds | 132 |
| | The Fossil Forest of Axel Heiberg | 133 |
| | Vigilance | 134 |
| Roo Borson | Summer Cloud | 135 |
| | The Limits Of Knowledge, Tilton School, New Hampshire | 136 |
| Steven Heighton | Nakunaru | 137 |
| | The Ecstasy of Skeptics | 139 |
| Peter McPhee | Why The Stegosaurus Is My Favourite Dinosaur | 140 |
| Barbara Gowdy | Resurrection (1969) | 144 |
| michael holmes | from 21 Hotels | 149 |
| Christian Bök | from Crystallization | 152 |
| Christine Slater | from The Small Matter Of Getting There | 155 |
| Paul Dutton | Kit-Talk | 159 |
| | Shy Thought | 160 |
| | Bark | 161 |

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Lea Harper | Weekend Indians | 162 |
| | Birth | 165 |
| Sky Gilbert | Why This Poem Is Not Anything | |
| | Like Broccoli | 167 |
| | Breakfast In Key West | 170 |
| Lynn Crosbie | Pearl | 171 |
| David Donnell | What's So Easy About 17? | 174 |
| bill bissett | i was driving in 2 hundrid mile hous | |
| | in th karibu northern bc | 177 |
| | who has seen th defisit | 178 |
| | let th watr sit 4 a day n th | |
| | chloreen evaporates | 179 |
| Biographies | | 181 |
| Acknowledgements | | 189 |



Frontier College Frontière

Part of the proceeds from the sale of this book will go to Frontier College.

Frontier College is a national non-profit literacy organization, which recruits and trains volunteers to tutor children, teens and adults who want to improve their reading and writing.

Frontier College was founded by students at Queen's University in 1899. Today, it works from university campus sites in every part of Canada.

The mission of Frontier College is to organize Canadians to fight poverty and to work for social justice by teaching people to read and write.

To the audience

Volunteers

All the work that makes the Scream possible is contributed on a voluntary basis. Whether collecting donations, making phone calls or putting up posters, we would like to thank the following for their selfless dedication:

Mike Barnard, Hazel Bice, John Boyle, Stephen Cain, Natalee Caple, Fides Coloma, Bonnie Halvorson, Troy and Christie Harkin, Gayle Irwin, Mike Jest, Bill Kennedy, Stefan Lehmann, damian lopes, Tom MacKay, Henry Martinuk, Patrick McPhee, Jay MillAr, Brian Panhuyzen, Lora Patton, Dennison Smith, Clive Thompson, Helen Tsiriotakis, Darren Wershler-Henry, Alana Wilcox.

Friends

The Scream In High Park would like to thank the following for their support and contributions:

Keith Anderson and everyone at Canadian Stage Company, Stan Bevington, Nicky Drumbolis, letters bookshop, the Coach House Press printers, Harold Bulmanis, Lorraine Filyer and the Literature Department at the Ontario Arts Council, Jane Larimer, the Metropolitan Toronto Movement for Literacy, Beth Learn, Joy Learn, John and Nancy McPhee, Tim Neesam, Pat Profiti and the staff of Toronto Parks and Recreation, Aaron Tahm, Printcom, Eddy Yanofsky, Nick Power, University of Toronto Bookstore, Mike O'Connor, Marlene Warnick, Alex Terrier, Quality Hotel, Adita Petrauskaite, Sandra Drzewiecki, the League of Canadian Poets, Diane Alley, Pam Robenson, Coach House Press Publishing, Ray Cronin, Goose Lane Editions, Sean Power, Selina Martin, Sam Hiyate, Katy Chan, Amanda Huggins, Katherine Jevons, University of Toronto Writer's Workshop, Saul Jonas, Ludwig Zeller, Kelly Hechler, McClelland & Stewart, Gutter Press, and John Miller who was a catalyst in the evolution of this collection.

We gratefully acknowledge the UofT Bookstore, Bob Miller Book Room and Canadian Stage for being with us from the beginning. The Scream receives financial assistance from the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council Reading Programme and the League of Canadian Poets through the Metropolitan Toronto Department of Cultural Affairs.

Introduction

As our starting point we have contemporary reality, the living people who occupy it together with their opinions. From this vantage point, from this contemporary reality with its diversity of speech and voice, there comes about a new orientation in the world and in time through personal experience and investigation.

— M.M. Bakhtin

At 6 p.m., at Pearson International Airport, the sky is overcast, the temperature steady at 21 degrees. The humidity registers at 81 percent. The barometric pressure is at 101.1 kilopascals and falling slowly. Variable cloudiness this evening, with a low of 17 degrees. Clearing towards midnight.

— Environment Canada Forecast, July 18, 1993

We wanted a celebration of poetry and storytelling. We wanted to be lost for an evening on a midway of voice. Voice like caramel, sticking to our fingers. Voice of adrenaline, of inspiration. Exhilarating, head spinning. We wanted carnival. And where could our Toronto raised image of carnival dance with those raised in Trinidad, New Orleans or Markinch, Saskatchewan? *Scream In High Park* became an eclectic meeting of background, viewpoint, and writing style. A momentary blend of voices forming a single, unrepeatable expression of the possible. The carny wasn't asking us to buy, just to come in and discover...

In the winter of 1993, Matthew Remski, a 21-year-old poet, small press publisher and community radio broadcaster, was organizing a reading. He had learned that the Shakespearean stage, at the site of Canadian Stage's annual summer production *Dream In High Park*, would not be used on

Monday nights. He was going to hold an outdoor poetry festival. (I won't trouble you with the story of how he chose a name except to say, he was inspired.) The rest of us thought a festival was a great idea and offered many suggestions — but very little help. He drew on and then enhanced our sense of community.

By the first week of July, preparations were complete. Sixteen writers would read from their work (and be paid for it). Matthew put up posters. He also put up most of the money. It hadn't rained in weeks.

It rained the night before the first Scream In High Park. It poured. I lay awake listening to it. Matthew, only a few blocks away and likely calling the Environment Canada hot line every fifteen minutes; trying to prepare for the uncontrollable.

It rained off and on throughout the morning of July 19 and only started to clear in the afternoon. We had hoped people would come early with picnics. At 5:30, with a television crew broadcasting live from site, there were seven people on the hill which forms the amphitheatre. We knew six of them. The tv producer was not impressed. However, at 7 o'clock we had an audience of 450. And by the end of the night we knew it would happen again. (Matthew was already talking about August. He needed sleep.)

The following winter, I was late for a meeting at which Matthew confirmed his imminent dispatch to Prague. By the time I arrived, I had the artistic director's job. But I was not alone. Scream In High Park runs on the time and energy donated by a team of volunteers who share a belief in the celebration of poetry. Indeed, many of the writers included in these pages have either been involved from the beginning, or have returned to help in whatever way they can, whether by contacting other writers or by collecting donations on the hill. There are three names that do not appear in the table of contents that deserve mention since they have made integral contributions to all three festivals: Tom MacKay, stage manager; Darren Wershler-Henry, volunteer coordinator and general adviser; and Alana Wilcox, who did everything from making phone calls to copy editing this collection. Together, we have watched the Scream's audience grow to more than 1,200 people.

And now we've gone and put it in a book. It was never our intention to simply document what was read, nor to compile the definitive work of each contributor. *Carnival* is an attempt to capture some of the magic that is Scream In High Park, cast it in a slightly different direction, and create a new spell. It listens to voices that have gathered in the summer

air and asks how they will interact when you, the reader, can choose how to free them from the page.

When programming *Scream In High Park*, we tend to encourage new writing, work in progress, and pure experimentation (though we are not above pure entertainment). Each year, we hope to present a fresh combination of imagery, idea and sound. We have a five-year moratorium on repeat performers. We try to remember our history while looking to our future. Some of the writers we select are pioneers of possibility when it comes to style and language. Others see tradition through unique eyes. Some you will know. Others are emerging, often after years of developing their craft. Many have opposing views, but a brief glimpse at their biographies reveals a shared willingness to promote expression by expanding to other art forms: film, video, music, theatre, and visual art.

When making the selections for this collection, I asked each writer what they would read if the *Scream* were held today. This approach yielded an abundance of new work, and many of the pieces here are previously unpublished. Of course, I made a few requests and these, too, produced some surprises. Al Purdy had recently rewritten *My Grandfather's Country*. The version included in *Carnival* contains a new third verse. Similarly we have included a new version of Christopher Dewdney's *The Fossil Forest of Axel Heiberg*.

Carnival echoes the time constraints of the *Scream* in that it is hardest on the prose writers. Nino Ricci confessed to the audience that as he had 12 minutes to read he thought he might only have to write for 12 minutes, and then added that he had been wrong. He has allowed us to excerpt the story he read in 1994, which is still in progress. Other fiction writers dealt with the time constraints in different ways: Leon Rooke contributes the short story he read on the night, Elise Levine sends us postcard fiction, André Alexis combines criticism and fiction, and Barbara Gowdy, Patricia Seaman and Christine Slater contribute excerpts from novels.

I have enjoyed every minute of each *Scream In High Park* and, while piecing *Carnival* together, I tried to include the elements which have made it such a unique event: the casual atmosphere and outdoor setting; the extraordinary writers; the humour and poignancy of the readings; the voices; the celebration; the summer night air. I will never forget reading at the first *Scream*. The sun had just set and the silhouettes of the people at the top of the hill were blending into the sky, mixing with my voice, and approaching infinity. I think one's sense of place becomes distorted.

xiv Carnival

In our current cultural climate there is something unreal about listening to poetry in a park, surrounded by the country's largest city (though the act is natural enough and the writing well grounded). At Scream In High Park we are everywhere at once. A place only magic can take us. We arrive, hear the voices and wonder if this is how carnival sounds.

Peter McPhee
Artistic Director
Scream In High Park

SCREAM IN HIGH PARK

a carnival of the spoken word

July 17, 1995



7:00 pm

Wendy Agnew *er* Matthew Remski
Patricia Seaman *er* André Alexis

8:00 pm

Ahdri Zhina Mandiela *er* Gerry Shikatani
Nicole Brossard *er* Dannabang Kuwabong



9:00 pm

Claire Harris *er* Stuart Ross
Elise Levine *er* Jaymz Bee

10:00 pm

Dionne Brand *er* John Barlow
Eileen O'Toole *er* Black Katt



Location: On the set of the Canadian Stage Company's
Dream in High Park (East of the Grenadier Restaurant).

Suggested Donation \$5.00. Bring a picnic, a blanket, cushions, and a friend.

Host: Peter McPhee phone: (416) 532-6948 e-mail: bo253@toefree.net

Rain date: July 24

MONDAY, JULY 17, 1995
ATTENDANCE: 1,200

This page intentionally left blank

Nicole Brossard

MATTER HARMONIOUS STILL MANEUVERING

I presume that day breaks in more than one place and because this thought comes to me in the midst of reality and its unnameable poses I turn, bearing witness to the mobility of time and languages, to the thought that nothing is either too slow, or too fleeting for the universe

I know that all has not been said because my body has settled into this thought with a certain happiness and because amid the inexplicable jolt which makes of words a passage, running water and so much thirst, I can, by linking vowels and the backside of thoughts, eyes narrowed in fascination, approach death and its opposite

4 *Carnival*

at this late hour when the suppleness of the gaze is at its peak and
life turns and turns again between the blue and astonishing law of
lighted cities, at this late hour when words grip the chest as they do
in operas and images await the flickering line of fever and of the
future, my eyes bent so low upon humanity wonder from the very
root of eyes of desire

all has not been said because I know that in languages I love
radically, the rose shells of meaning, the assiduous structures which
graft ecstasies and torrential matter in the midst of the voice and its
behaviour, secret matter, rounder matter, matter like your sighs and
still other liquids

today I know that the bluest structure of the sea draws near to our cells and to untouchable suffering the way life circles three times around our childhood without ever really touching it because we are close to reality and matter cannot fall without warning us, without leaving us there, our skin hesitating between philosophies and the dawn, half and forever in torment, in the vast complication of beauty

all has not been said since the body is punctual and there remain red versions, and rare gestures, an incredible synchrony of the senses where thought, always positioned well for alliance, takes care to reconstitute in the mind symmetrically and sonorously sometimes even prior to ourselves the scenes and the beautiful portraits we love to dream for there are traits which attract us if only for an instant so as to die close to happiness hollowing out the universe with our shoulders and all the little imaginary lips which work mercilessly, lest we miss life, to invent the world and the cosmos for us very permanently like the absolute proportion of our hands when they caress so indistinctly with voice and palm that human body which has breasts