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Frozen Festivals: Ceremony and the *Carnaval* in the Montreal Winter Carnivals, 1883–1889

Don Morrow
The University of Western Ontario

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;"
—Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II, vii, 139–140

The purpose of this paper is to explain the rise and demise of the Montreal, Canada, winter carnivals during the 1880s in terms of concepts and constructs related to *carnaval* and to the theatre of sport. Two major studies of the function of Canadian winter carnivals have been done to date: one, by Abbott, concerns the Quebec City carnival of 1894 (1), and the other is a descriptive study by Sylvie Dufresne (2) of the first three Montreal carnivals. The whole concept of "carnival" is centuries-old; in this case, the carnival is frozen, literally because of the hibernal timing of the events in Canada, and figuratively because of the reflective tapestry of carnival as timeless pageantry and celebration. Furthermore, it seems clear that the constructs associated with a medieval concept of carnaval and more modern concepts derived from theories pertaining to the theatre of sport can be used to explain the Montreal winter carnivals in terms of cultural, sporting, and social performances.

It is generally accepted that the idea of hosting a Canadian winter carnival originated with powerful Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA) member R.D. McGibbon sometime during 1882 (3). Regardless of the specific originator, the idea was to showcase Montreal winter sport via a festival of some kind. As the "flaming lacrosse evangelist" and zealous patriot W. George Beers exhorted on the occasion of the 1883 carnival: "The blood-born and bone-bred love of open-air sports is the most marked physical characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon heritage in Canada"(4).

Don Morrow is with The University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Kinesiology, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 3K7.

By the early 1880s, Montreal had established its supremacy in the development of Canadian sport in terms of sporting firsts, leadership, and power/control within and over important sport governing bodies (5). It would seem natural that winter sport could be showcased in some kind of celebration. However, before examining the nature and significance of the winter carnivals, it is important to this analysis to explain the concept of carnaval and the recent work pertaining to sport-as-theatre.

Carnaval

Pieter Bruegel's 1559 painting masterpiece "*The Fight Between Carnaval and Lent*" illustrates the underlying theme of the carnival historically and in terms of human consciousness. This painting typifies a kind of template of the whole concept pervading carnival-as-event. The painting depicts Shrovetide, a time of celebration in the Christian calendar when three days of revelry and excessive festive behavior immediately precede Ash Wednesday and the ensuing forty weekdays of Lent leading up to Easter.

Typical of all Bruegel works, this depiction is busy with people; however, the foreground is instructive: On the left side of the picture is a lusty (full codpiece) and gluttonous male figure, riding astride some kind of barrel and brandishing a "weapon" of a lanced suckling pig. This individual is Carnival, and he and his retinue flow out of the Blue Ship tavern in varied costumes. Carnival and his followers seem to be revelling in unusual food decorations adorning their clothing—pancakes, waffles, sausages, and eggs abound among the throng on the left. In sharp contrast, facing Carnival is the figure of Lent, a thin and haggard female. She is austere, gaunt, and apparently unhappy while being transported in seated position on some make-shift conveyance. Lent's foods are modest: pretzels, fish, and figs. Her lance is a baking stick carrying two fish. Lent and her followers have ushered out of the church on the right side of the painting (6). We have projected before us the full confrontation of values—excess versus austerity—as extremes of human existence or behavior. Just as Bruegel's artwork is frozen, so too are the winter carnivals; the whole notion of hibernal celebration and festival seems antithetical to more traditional carnival celebrations held in warmer seasons. Furthermore, the concept of carnaval as festive and festival is ethereal, as though the whole notion of carnival had/has a life of its own. Its pattern of processions and parades and revelry and excess appears to be the essence of carnivals everywhere in anytime.

MacAloon addresses a similar idea with reference to what he calls "cultural performances." He perceives such festivals as much more than entertainment; rather, they are occasions in which we, as a culture, dramatize our collective myths (7). Social dramas like stage plays, rituals, films,

and carnivals all work on a "script," an organized but not always tangible program of behavior, suggests MacAloon. Further, these scripts become almost commentaries or critiques, as well as celebrations, of different dimensions of human relatedness (8). Essential to all carnivals, as is reflected in Bruegel's *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent,* is the practise of "sanctifying streets," whereby processions move into and along certain pathways as though encoded to do so. Particularly emblematic of carnivals is the "transformation of the everyday world into an *inverted universe*" (9). In short, carnivals like the Montreal winter carnivals are not everyday life; they are unique events, perhaps, as this paper suggests, even social imprinting events. The concept of carnaval complements and mirrors certain constructs inherent in the notion of the "theatre of sport."

Theatre and Sport

In *The Theatre of Sport,* Karl Raitz explores the truism that all sport takes place in a distinctive setting. Raitz asserts that sport places are "complex landscape ensembles," in that both the physical action of sport and its place or *theatre* contribute to the total experience. The particular theatre in which a sport takes place shapes the play and provides context for the experience for players and spectators alike. Nostalgic memory and myth-making contribute to the notion of specialness of each sporting theater (10).

In Canada, the recent closing of the Montreal Forum signified the regrettable demise of a Montreal locale of almost revered proportions. More modem theatres of sport—the generic "concrete doughnuts"—seem to be creating "placeless stadiums" (11). A wide variety of elements such as social groups, commercial interests, entrepreneurship, cultural traditions (commodification separately or in combination), mold the form, design, location, and even the gratification derived from sport(s). Of considerable import to this analysis of the Montreal winter carnivals is the idea of landscape. As Raitz demonstrates throughout his study of some twelve widely-differing sports, the more complex the landscape ensemble, the more gratification is derived by all concerned. Thus, magnificent golf courses create an aesthetic, complex landscape ensemble, while traditional customs apparently disconnected with the sporting event—strawberries and cream at Wimbledon (12), for instance — become part of the aura or atmosphere of the venue. Much akin to MacAloon's conceptualizations about the drama of sport, Raitz discusses the significance of props, choreography, staging, and so forth to sport-as-theatre. For the purposes of this analysis, the intent is to apply the constructs associated with the theatre of sport combined with the timeless template of carnaval, so explicitly portrayed by Bruegel, to explain the nature and significance of the Montreal winter carnivals during the 1880s.

The Props

Primary sources utilized in this analysis were primarily English language newspapers: the *Montreal Gazette,* the *Montreal Daily Star,* the *Toronto Globe,* the *Toronto Daily Mail,* and, to a lesser extent, the *New York Times.* All of the papers were examined during the two weeks leading up to the annual carnivals, the actual week of the carnival events (normally mid- to end-January), and the two weeks following each winter carnival. There is no intent here to cover the details of each carnival; instead, this paper focuses on three specific carnivals: the first one in 1883; the most lavish—and by all accounts—the most grandiose in 1885; and the last one in 1889.

During the seven-year period between and including the first and the last carnivals, two carnivals were cancelled. The one in 1886 was not held because of a smallpox epidemic; however, a smaller scale carnival of the Montreal prototype was held that year in nearby Burlington, Vermont (13). For the 1888 carnival, plans were firmly in place until both the railway companies and the powerful MAAA withdrew their financial and organizational support, due to their perceived inability to host the event on a grand scale (14). It is noteworthy that this analysis uses English language sources only. Dufresne's study of the first three carnivals does employ francophone newspaper sources (15); however, the Montreal winter carnivals were dominated by anglophone interests. While the population of Montreal in the mid 1880s was about 141,000, almost sixty percent were French Canadians (16). Yet, it is well established that sport, particularly its organization, was overwhelmingly dominated and participated in by anglophone Canadians. Furthermore, the intent in this paper is to underscore the *carnivalesque* aspects of the winter carnivals, not to document language or cultural rivalries, although there is some anlaysis of cultural distinctions and biases throughout the paper.

The sets or structures and events for the winter carnivals were established in 1883 and varied only slightly throughout the carnivals' existence. Props included these:

- The Ice Palace
- The Ice Condora
- The Ice Lion
- The Living Arch

These props—not all were used in every carnival—were symbols of the carnivals, serving as signatures that the carnival was in place and sanctified. Sporting events were stable and consistent across all Montreal winter carnivals. The sports were

- snowshoeing;
- tobogganing;
- skating: races, figure skating, and masquerades on skates;
- ice hockey;

- ice trotting; and
- curling.

Finally, the prestige events of the winter carnivals were the social events:

- The mock-attack on the ice palace
- The masquerade skating ball
- The various sleigh "drives"

If the winter carnivals could be thawed and distilled, as it were, these props—the structures, the sporting events, and the social events—would be the dehydrated residue. These were the forms that provided the framework for the winter carnivals. The discussion and analysis of the three carnival years selected will be in three sections:

- 1883: Setting the Stage
- 1885: Centre Stage
- 1889: The Finale

Setting the Stage: the 1883 Montreal Winter Carnival

The first form that gave substance to the real prospect of hosting an 1883 winter carnival was the creation of the ice palace. As if to lend credibility to the winter carnival concept, Montreal newpapers documented the construction of the 1741 ice palace in St. Petersbugh. According to an 1853 publication of the book *Wonderful Things,* this special edifice represented a "new order of architecture," and it was built under the auspices and financial contributions of the Empress Anne "for the amusement of royalty, the satisfaction of the curious, and the wonder of the world" (17). Citing this historical ice castle precedent seemed to legitimize the structure. Each year, the stage for the winter carnival in Montreal was literally set on Dominion Square, right at the heart of the downtown area, with the construction of the ice palace. The ice was cut in five-hundred-pound blocks from the canal on the St. Lawrence River, and the finished castles reached heights up to 130 feet. All the blocks of ice were squared and carved before being set in place against or on the wooden frame using water to adhere the blocks to each other. Each year, the ice palace architect, Mr A.E. Hutchinson, created a different pattern of palace; no two palaces ever looked alike. And each year, this building was the centre piece of the carnival and served as the focal point for many of the events.

An executive committee composed of prominent Montreal businessmen, some of whom were well-known members of the MAAA, orchestrated the managerial and organizational details of the carnival. Subcommittees were appointed to plan and supervise the various sporting and social activities within a budget and the guidelines provided by the executive committee. The attention to detail provided by the organizers was impressive.

The services of the president of the Great North-Western Telegraph Company were procured to advertize the program (the script) for the carnival across the New England states. Special invitations were sent to the mayors of major Canadian and American cities, to the United States president and his consul general, as well as to Dominion cabinet ministers and the lieutenant governors of each province. Even Francis Parkman, the celebrated American historian, received a special invitation. Little details like standardizing hackmen's (taxi drivers') rates, soliciting the cooperation of the fire department to "hose" the various ice surfaces, having the harbour commissioner procure a city generator to run electric lights to/on the river for curling competitions, and convincing the *Canadian Illustrated News* to run a special issue featuring the carnival (18) were preplanned and carried out skillfully. American newspapers responded to the campaign; the *New York Herald*, for example, carried announcements about the carnival events, the value of the prizes for curling, and even some of the rules for sporting competitions (19).

The "handsome" official carnival program was in full distribution at least two weeks before the 23 January opening of the carnival. Each day's events were listed in this scripted brochure; the front page was lithographed with various sporting activities such as tobogganing and skating sketches and "a central figure of a habitant in regular winter costume" (20). The irony here is the lack of involvement of the francophone population as participants or organizers, with the exception of some concessions for the 1885 carnival discussed later in this paper.

The significance of the "habitant" in the lithographed cover is the evocation, by implication, of heritage nostalgia or the memory of cultural roots and history. Carnaval was seeking legitimation at the outset of the first carnival. This daily program was published and repeated in the newspapers of major Canadian and some New England cities, thereby providing a clear, concise, standardized, and authorized script for the unfolding of the winter carnival in 1883. Moreover, an abbreviated children's carnival took place about eleven days preceding the carnival, with a fancy dress skating event at the Victoria Rink complete with a Santa Claus visit and a Punch and Judy show (21). This children's event both foreshadowed the full-scale carnival—a kind of mini-rehearsal for the main show—and lent a fine, romantic tone preceding the full version. A similar gathering of symbols was evident on the river where the curling committee erected a miniature ice palace under the revetment wall where the players stored their "besoms and stanes" (brooms and curling stones).

As opening day of the 1883 carnival arrived, the spectacle and *social drama* orientation of the winter event became crystal clear. Montreal papers published, on a daily basis, two to three columns entitled "New Arrivals at Major Hotels," featuring alphabetized guest lists at the luxurious Windsor Hotel and at smaller ones such as the St. Lawrence Hall, Albion Hotel, the Richelieu, and the St. James Hotel. While some listing of arrivals

by sport or team members were mentioned on the first day of the carnival, it was the social *dramatis personae* that was brought to the forefront by the local media in these lengthy guest lists. Both the press and the carnival executive committee seemed very conscious of showing well to carnival guests and of being successful. The greatest challenge in this effort was to both embrace and dismiss the one uncontrollable element—the weather:

> The opening day of the Carnival may be set down as a successful one. The day was a typical Canadian winter day. What a cloudless sky! And such beautiful sunshine! How white the snow and how clear the atmosphere! And at the same time, how cold the wind that seemed to cut through the thickest garments like a knife! (22).

The real carnival was in the streets of activity, the landscape of the events. In the anglophone, west end of Montreal, the roads were described as "crowded with sleighs," or "crawling" with people "bent" on enjoying themselves in sliding, skating, or snowshoeing —a veritable Montreal mirror of Bruegel's vision of mirth and celebration and activity illustrated in *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent.* At night, the ice palace had a red fire burning from inside the structure giving the appearance of huge blocks of ruby-like ice. People remarked on its alabaster columns, and the press was ecstatic in description: "The moon cast a silvery light over the *landscape*, bringing out the mountain in bold relief, and casting an additional charm over the *scene*" (23).

Peel Street was described as a "*scene* of the greatest animation" when the whole sidewalk from Sherbrooke Street to Ravenscrag was filled with an eager crowd of spectators and people pulling all manner of toboggans. Americans were often hailed as "our translinear friends" and were fascinated by the various toboggan runs of two-thousand feet in length with four to six iced and grooved tracks. At night, the runs were lit by torches, chinese lanterns, and some by electric lights. And these too were the *landscapes* warmed "by a huge bonfire [that] gave a vivid effect to the whole *scene*" (24) of winter carnival. As if the theatrical effect could be more choreographed, local snowshoers were distinctive in their blanket-coated *costumes* complete with uniquely colored sashes and tuques signifying their club affiliation.

As for the actual sporting events (the raison d'etre of the original carnival focus), they were secondary or even tertiary to the more carnivalesque aspects of the festival. Curling took place under "wretched and windy conditions on the river," and draws were made that pitted two Nova Scotia teams or two Toronto teams facing each other in the first round, solid evidence that the meticulous planning so characteristic of the carnival was not necessarily transferred to the sporting venues. For indoor events like the skating races at the renowned Victoria Rink, some two-thousand spectators and skaters were drawn to the competition that featured an "ice

grotto" at centre ice and the Victoria Rifles band entertaining the crowd and enlivening the proceedings; however, it was the more unorthodox events at this facility—the barrel races and the three-legged races, often jocular in process and consequences—that were most appreciated and received the best publicity not the more competitive, standardized races. Press descriptions of hockey games were framed very briefly and often in field hockey terminology like the number of repeated "bullies." By contrast, detailed descriptions were given in the papers for the rates of hackney carriage rides, the routes taken, portraits of the decorative rosettes in the horses' ears, the names of the drivers, and their party-colored whips (25). Clearly, setting the stage did not embrace sport as centre stage events.

Wednesday afternoon, mid-point in carnival week, was officially declared a half-holiday by the mayor of Montreal, a kind of vocational *intermission* to allow for full enjoyment of the "inverted universe" that the winter carnival provided. That half-holiday immediately preceded what was by far the most popular event within all the winter carnivals, the Wednesday night mock-attack on the ice palace. A "seething, swaying, good-humoured mass of humanity" gathered in thick lines or huddled in clusters anywhere within viewing distance of the ice palace. On cue—the whole "attack" was very carefully choreographed—hundreds of snowshoers carrying lighted torches marched in *procession* from the heights of Mount Royal to Dominion Square, encircled the palace, and ignited roman candles while the interior of the building was illumined, in colorful response, by fire-work volleys of a "pyrotechnic storm." Amidst great cheering and loud applause, the palace was declared open, and the ubiquitous Victoria Rifles band played the national anthem followed quickly by "Yankee Doodle" to amuse the coveted American guests (26). It was pure hibernal theatre, carnival at its winter best.

All over the city, people thronged to events: four-thousand came to the McGill College gates to witness the start and wager on the outcome of the snowshoe and steeplechase races. Similarly, twelve- to sixteen-thousand spectators endured the cold to gamble on the ice-trotting races on the river. The human penchant to bet or to engage in the spectacular far outstripped any real interest in competitive sport for its own sake. The interest in sleigh drives anywhere in the city seemed limitless; drivers were busy all day, every day. Ultimately, the carnival drive mirrored this fascination with excursions to the world-famous covered Victoria bridge or to the falls of Montmorency, or up the snake-like trail of Mount Royal. The carnival drive was a very carefully *choreographed* processional.

The local press published daily lists of the carriage and sleigh and car deployments by singles, tandems, fours, and so on so that everyone knew their place in the drive-event. As much as the landscape was created in the streets, so too was this event one of street sanctification, even to the point of planning the route into the east or francophone-dominated end of Montreal. Maps of the parade route were published frequently, and the

drive was an ostentatious display of equine finery, sleigh-decorating talent, and winter-dress fashion. Repeated here were the retinue of Bruegel's carnival in the painting as well as the timeless, processional aspects of carnaval.

Closing out the winter carnival of 1883 were the prestige events of the masquerade skating ball at the Victoria Rink and the Grand Fancy Ball at the Windsor Hotel. The former witnessed spectators going as early as 5:00 P.M. to reserve a seat for the 8:30 "flourish of trumpets" to announce the parade of masquerade skaters, a

> bewildering animation . . . a gayly costumed throng—shepherdesses, fairies, spanish maidens, soldiers, negroes, knights—all in one dazzling circle of gorgeous colour (27).

It was a tableau, a moving panorama of costumed revelry that was feted in the next day's press by two full-page columns listing, in alpha order, the names of the ladies and their outfits, then the same for gentlemen. The Grand Fancy Ball, held at the Windsor Hotel, was the crowning, gala occasion on the last night of the 1883 Montreal winter carnival. The menu was published in French only; the full program of dances—quadrilles, waltzes, galops, lancers, polkas, promenades—was given in the local press and the six-hundred-person guest list was printed in almost four columns with dress detail such as "Mrs. Thornton, ocra cashmere, sation trimmings, Lama lace." It was, by all accounts, a fascinating "coup d'oell" and, in all likelihood, a nasal treasure as well—flowers brought in from Boston included four-thousand roses, three-thousand strings of smilax, two-thousand yards of laurel, five-thousand carnations, five-thousand violets, one-thousand orchids, and three-thousand camellias (28). Given all of that color and the varied hues of costumes and floral splendor, and with men dressed in black tie apparel, it was quite remarkable that the Montreal press remarked consistently on the prevailing hue of white, winter carnival's color distinctive to the pageantry of this particular festival.

The "introspective" and retrospective analysis of the success of the 1883 event is revealing. Overwhelmingly, it was the commercial gain that was listed and applauded in the media of the day. Furriers reported "stampedes" for muffs, collars, cuffs, gauntlets, coats, and cloaks; many of them reported individual profits ranging from $1,000 to $10,000, and they stated publically that they would gladly make a financial contribution toward staging the next carnival. Railroads were reported to have "reaped a golden harvest"; similar profits were enjoyed by booksellers and stationers and photographic firms such as the famed Notman Studios. The latter sold some fifteen-hundred copies of the ice palace at $2 per print. Thirty-thousand copies of the *Carnival Number* of the *Canadian Illustrated News* brought gross sales of $6,000. Rinks, hotels, especially the Windsor Hotel, reported huge profits—some hoteliers took in $8,000 for the week, where normally they

would take in $400. So, too, did hackmen and livery stable owners reap pecuniary rewards. And the list of profit-making ventures extended to restaurants, dry good stores, and so forth (29). In the final analysis, such sheckle-counting tangibly and materialistically reinforced the template established for the Montreal winter carnivals during the ensuing decade. The pinnacle of these festivals occurred in 1885.

Centre Stage: the 1885 Montreal Winter Carnival

The 1884 version was basically a repeat of the first winter carnival; in effect, the one in 1883 served as a kind of dress rehearsal for the remaining five performances. The form and function of the winter carnival became institutionalized—*a* way of presenting and engaging in winter carnival became *the* way of conducting the festivals (30). Without question, the 1885 carnival was both the pinnacle of success, of carnival excess in the Bruegel tradition, and the beginning of the decline of the frosty celebrations.

The social and sporting events of the carnival were changed in minor ways. Significant in appearance and function was the inclusion of the francophone element, though more in concession than in full partnership. An "East End Carnival Committee" was established to supervise the construction of two new ice structures and one social event. An "ice lion," a kind of winter sphinx, was constructed under cloak and great secrecy at Place d'Armes and unveiled with full fireworks followed by a torchlight *procession* of "eastenders" on the opening day of carnival. It was an adjunct, another feature of street theatre:

> All things now being in readiness, the audience summoned and trooping in by hundreds to see the show, let the curtain rise and disclose the marvellous attractions which for a week in mid-Winter can be found in dear old Montreal (31).

The other east end construction was the "Condora," a kind of icy tower of Babel located on the Champs de Mars near the courthouse and city hall. And it too seemed token in effect in that the mock-attack with fireworks on the last day of the carnival was described in almost derisive tone by the press, belittling the effect of having snowshoers standing, in literally frozen posture on a bitterly cold night, in rings around the Condora's circular exterior staircase while the fireworks illuminated the sky (32).

It is tempting to draw parallels between the francophone culture and the Lent-figure symbol from Bruegel as a confrontation of cultures amidst the revelry. However, the francophone presence was more a shadow of carnival, complete with its own derivatives of the festival. For example, on Friday afternoon, the last day of the carnival, the east end committee staged a "Farmer's Drive." Farmers and other residents of St. Laurent, Cote des

Neiges, Longue Pointe, Cote St. Michel, Outremont, Toutes Graces, and Back River made application to be included in the parade. The result was "two hundred vehicles from the modest traineau of the habitant to the princely equipage of the millionaire" (33). Still, the press provided little description of the processional; nevertheless, it was at the very least another example of the element of street sanctification of carnival-characteristic procession, albeit less magnified in the press than anglophone events.

Immediately preceding the opening of the 1885 carnival, warm temperatures and extended thaw threatened the building of the ice palace and the carnival itself. In addition, an economic decline in the eastern states along with attention focused on the world's exhibition in New Orleans forecast an unsuccessful carnival. However, these elements only added dramatic tension; a cold snap hit Montreal just before opening day, and organizers had done their work in promoting the carnival. The central committee reported that it was "swamped" by requests for information from the United States and parts of Canada; sixty-three thousand visitors arrived by train at the two major stations in Montreal for the carnival week; the Notman photographic firm had been commissioned to have a huge copy of its coulage, "Winter Sports," placed in the window of a prominent New York City firm for the two weeks leading up the carnival opening (34). More than any other element, the publication of the *Montreal Daily Star, Carnival Number* sealed the prosperity of this edition of the carnival. Twenty-five pages in length, this publication sold for fifteen cents per copy and went through seven full and official editions over a three-week period sandwiched around carnival week. While there had been a similar *Carnival Number* for the 1884 carnival (it was small and not well produced or advertized) and a *Canadian Illustrated News* publication of the 1883 carnival, nothing rivalled the quality or the popularity of the 1885 *Montreal Daily Star, Carnival Number*. A full-page lithograph of the ice palace, in four-color tint, accompanied full pages of sketches of all the structures; "swell old hotels" of Montreal were pictured together with tableaus by caricaturists of popular events such as the storming of the ice palace or the "Grand Sleigh Drive rivalling the finest parades ever seen in the Russian capital."

Seven pages of essays and poems provided text for the issue and for the entrenchment of carnaval in readers' imaginations. Perusing the *Carnival Number* now, one is struck by the romantic and stylized artwork. For example, the front cover depicts a charioteer-snowshoer driving three feisty steeds, reins in one hand, a jester's whip carried high in the other, all against the backdrop of a moonlit night, toboggans in full descent in one corner and a banner of Canadian symbols surrounded by the motto "Frosty But Kindly" in the opposite corner. Homuncular sketches of children in winter blanket coats were also a full-page feature, and the skating sketches were almost in the style of Renaissance artists. Detailed sketches of the sleigh-cars showed off the grandeur of the larger, eight-horse vehicles. Finally, near the back pages were clever cartoon sketches satirizing and celebrating

different events and people in the carnival panoply (35). So popular was the *Carnival Number* that some vendors sold bogus issues or reduced numbers of pages to unsuspecting tourists (36). The significant point here is that the Montreal winter carnival now had a significant record and testament put into both words and pictures, and it was a publication eagerly sought as a souvenir by thousands of people.

Dominating the 1885 carnival in all respects was the commodification and commercialization of the festival. Advertisements were in every major paper in central Canada and the eastern United States, even for individual sporting events. Fireworks for the vaious pyrotechnic displays were now paid for by sponsoring businesses. Coffee merchants Chase and Sanbom sold their product at various venues but nowhere more conspicuously than within the ramparts of the ice palace itself. American sport promoter Richard K. Fox. donated an expensive gold medal prize for the five-mile championship skating race. For the Grand Fancy Ball, one patron paid $250 for an Othello outfit purchased from Messrs. Hill and Company, Boston, and another $25 for duty and shipping (this in an era when a good men's dress shirt sold for $1.25). Press receptions were given in a special reserved room within the Windsor Hotel. Montrealers were repeatedly reminded in the press to decorate their homes with flags and bunting supplied by the organizing committee through private sponsors. "At-homes" or parties were held by many clubs and organizations during the actual week of carnival activities. A full-day holiday was decreed for Thursday, replacing and augmenting the Wednesday half-day holiday.

And, of course, the by-products of such commodification of the carnival brought out the downside of financial endeavour: Pickpockets were at every event site; security guards and detectives were posted at all major hotels; one-hundred and fifty policemen were stationed throughout the massive crowd for the storming of the ice palace; street drunkenness was common and was harshly punished with heavy fines (37). This whole emphasis on commercial interests combined with the increased level of organization and activity brought a kind of frenzy to the 1885 edition of the carnival. The landscape became complex, perhaps too busy and even too spread out for the core of the frozen festival to endure. A kind of cancer infiltrated the carnival corpus.

In spite of these changes, the usual events went on in the marvellous kaleidoscope of the celebrations. As the 1885 carnival closed, the press commented on the nostalgia of pleasant memories now inherent in and attached to the landscape:

> For assuredly, the weird beauty of the attack on the Ice Palace, the bewildering movements of the Skating Carnival, the gorgeous display of the Fancy Dress Ball, and the excruciating pleasures of the toboggan slides will live in the memories of the thousands of visitors who came to Montreal to enjoy the Carnival (38).

And yet, it was the financial gauge of success that underscored the perceived "success" of this carnival: over fifty-thousand visitors brought profits calculated in excess of half a million dollars for merchants alone (39). "Customers" had been "of a better class" than previous years, said some retailers, and comments about the attendance by "the wealthiest classes of New York, Albany and Troy" were openly made in the press. What had started out as a carnaval attitude, local and vernacular, had become defined by economic considerations. As Raitz suggests, the more that a place or ensemble is commodified, the more it loses its special status (40).

The Finale: the 1889 Montreal Winter Carnival

The 1887 carnival showed a marked decline (following as it did after the 1886 cancellation due to a smallpox epidemic) in the number of American guests and in business revenue. It was no surprise, in many ways, that the 1888 carnival was forfeited because both the Montreal railroad and carnival organizing officials were opposed to staging a poorly planned product, one that was not scheduled to build the centrepiece, the hallowed ice palace. Concern for the "reputation of Montreal" was expressed by local media sources. Predictably, it was commercical speculation that reinvigorated the carnival for 1889; renowned Bonaventure train station was reinforced by the construction of the brand new Windsor Station by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Ironically, this seemingly sound foundation to lure and transport tourists was stymied by a bout of extremely cold weather and snowstorm conditions that stalled trains for hours and kept American interest to a minimum.

Reading the newspaper descriptions surrounding the 1889 carnival leaves the dominant impression of a dehydrated carnival, a failed performance, as though the juices of enthusiasm were expended on earlier versions. Even the *Montreal Daily Star, Carnival Number* for this festival was limp in comparison to its 1885 counterpart; it went through two smaller editions and received only minor accolades from some Ontario cities. Another Montreal paper, the *Witness,* produced its version of a carnival special, thereby watering down the original product. Trinket-like "bells and whistles" were added to the festival mix, literally in the form of "tube bells" installed inside the palace tower and figuratively with the inclusion of snowshoe races featuring Indians in full warpaint (41). Headlines for the winter celebration gushed superlatives almost too strenuously:

"The Great Carnival of North America"

"A Week of Bewildering Merriment"

"Scenes and Incidents of the Great Spectacular Week"

Even the descriptions of and the pictures and sketches contained within the *Montreal Daily Star, Carnival Number* were grossly exaggerated:

> . . . produced at enormous expense by the best artists in America.

> Thrilling scenes and screaming, side-splitting incidents. One of the greatest triumphs of modem journalism. Something that will set the whole world wondering (42).

A generous gesture by a local Japanese business firm, Ichi Ban, that offered to send a copy of the carnival program plus a map to any destination in North America for the cost of postage only (three cents) was complemented by a profit-making venture to sell eight-color pictures of the ice palace. Names of famous members of the "light-fingered gentry" (pickpockets) were published in the press, leaving the impression that they too were part of the dramatis personae and they were. A snowshoers' arch" was constructed at Victoria Square to receive the Governor General of Canada and his entourage; however, when they arrived, only sixty of the estimated five-hundred snowshoers turned out to usher them into the city via the archway. A dignity was missing even in reference to the ice palace. The Dominion Square edifice had fifty arc lights that illumined it from the inside, showcasing and spotlighting its emabattlements, gateways, ramparts, and fortifications. Yet when describing its attraction to the crowd, one newspaper hissed, "thither came the human moths" (43), a fitting but hollow metaphor of the luminary magnets.

Although "general jollification" was declared for the events, the trappings of demise were apparent. A depiction of the storming of the ice palace in the press was completely surrounded by the lists of "New Arrivals at Hotels." The description of the attack was found two pages later:

> Merrily rang the chimes of the fairy-like but fated Ice Castle last night, as the multitudes flocked to Dominion Square to see the siege of the fortress by the army of the combined snowshoers of Montreal. . . . For a moment, the batteries of the enemy were hushed. Goaded on, nearer and nearer, by the very silence within, the enemy approached. Now was the moment. In the twinkling of an eye ... rocket responded to rocket, torbilions hissed through the night air, and cosmetic gold stars illumined the scene (44).

As always, sporting events were given scant attention, save hockey matches, owing to the Governor General's (Lord Stanley's) interest in the games (Lord Stanley would donate his now famous Cup to the sport only four years later). In lieu of the real drama of the festival of earlier years, there was a sense of forced orchestration in efforts to breathe life back into carnaval. It was accurately described as a winter mardi gras of "costumes, masks and make-up," nowhere more manifest than for the fancy skating masquerade:

> But what a dazzling sight it is; no wonder the aisles and galleries are packed with spectators to such an extent that the marvellous elasticity of the human body is demonstrated to a nicety. All eyes are attracted

> to the shifting, changing scene upon the sparkling ice. . . . Here is the tall sunflower bending her graceful form to elude the half naked savage, who, with swarthy visage and glittering nose ring, lifts his cruel spear to smite his prey (45).

Every description—of the mock-attack on the palace, of the skating masquerade, of the sleigh drive, of the grand ball—was forced, lengthy, and overdrawn, almost tedious in the press reports. Even though "wealth, fashion, and loveliness were united" at the Grand Ball, and even though the ice lion was sprayed to a "leonine lustre," the Montreal winter carnival personified drew a last breath at the 1889 Grand Fancy Ball and expired.

None of the Montreal papers could even muster a word of post-carnival analysis. There had been a "Citizen's Drive" (more politically correct than the "Farmers' Drive" instituted in 1885) and some involvement of the fancophone groups, but not much of substance. Only the *Toronto Daily Mail* remarked on the ill-feeling of the Montreal eastenders who had felt left out for years. The same paper ventured an accurate forecast:

> It is very doubtful whether after the experience of the present carnival, the event will be repeated for some time to come: and whether, rightly or wrongly, an idea has got abroad that the carnivals so far have been got up exclusively by a certain clique who have reaped the principal benefit of it and so long as such an idea prevails the public generally will not take hold of it (46).

One intriguing element about the 1889 version of the Montreal winter carnivals occurred in the *Montreal Daily Star,* the main chronicler and supporter of the carnivals, on 5 February, the second day of the 1889 carnival proceedings. A series of what at first glance appeared to be grotesque cartoons were printed in detailed sketches along the top border of the first six pages of the eight-page edition. About five or six inches in height, the whole cartoon was a parade of carnival vehicles and characters led by a named and prominently-figured "King Carnival" seated on a four-horse sleigh, followed immediately by a smaller sleigh pulling Uncle Sam and then one filled with three clowns or fools pulled by a single black horse. It was as though carnaval was receding into textual format away from the commodified and dehydrated version of that year. The "inverted universe" of carnival was subverted to the press in cartoon-form. It is eerily reminiscent of Bruegel's painting, at least of the Carnival-with-retinue rendering of his masterpiece. The inference is that the essence of carnaval is one of its own device, or, it is a kind of attitude of celebration that has a form of its own.

Conclusions

It was clear even from the press descriptions of the day how much the theatre framework could be applied to analyze the rise and demise of

the Montreal winter festivals during the 1880s. Moreover, the words of theatre were actually part of the text of the times: "landscape," "scene," "stage," "costumes," "procession" were not contrived, rather they existed as carnival terminology. The carnivals were carnavalesque in Bruegel's sense of exaggerated glutton, in this case wealth, prestige, and commercial hype. Lent, if extant at all, was characterized by the eastenders, who were noticeably less visible and rooted in French Canadian culture, not privy to the exclusivity of the English wealthy businessman. Nevertheless, the confrontation of values depicted so clearly in Bruegel's work was noticeable from the emergent shift to commodification from "pure" carnaval. The stage itself was unique: frozen festivals, winter mardi gras that pretended to be a showcase of sport when the real theatre was in the streets of revelry or buried in social exclusivity. The place of sport in the carnivals was intriguing; it was the mirth or pageantry or opportunity to make merry through gambling, through unusual activities (three-legged skating races), or through sheer jollification (the toboggan slide) that attracted interest. Competitive sport, in spite of its often assumed celebratory qualities, was marginalized by carnaval; in fact, such sport may be peripheral to the realm of revelry, of festive engagement.

Overall, the ensemble became too complex, too commodified and lost its special appeal in deference to commercial interests and the bottom line. Carnaval's core is not sport or profit; it is celebration of its own devices and form. The carnivals were hollow dramas of Montreal sporting myths and activities that reflected, at various times, the essence of the spirit of carnaval. At the same time, the carnivals were incredibly well choreographed no matter what the motive, so much so that Halifax, Quebec City, and Ottawa used the template for their own versions of carnival events during the 1890s, albeit intermittently and with varying degrees of success. Finally, the media both shaped and reflected the carnivals' core of events, often in cheerleader-fashion. Echoed throughout the carnivals was the pervasiveness of the essence of carnaval, an attitude of revelry, of celebration, of street festival with expression, form and process.

Endnotes

1. See Frank Abbott, "Cold Cash and Ice Palaces: The Quebec Winter Carnival of 1894," *Canadian Historical Review* LXIX, 2 (1988): 167–202.

2. Sylvie Dufresne, "Le Carnival d'hiver de Montreal, 1883–1885," (Memoire maltrise, Université du Québec a Montreal, 1980).

3. *Montreal Daily Star, 5* January 1883, p. 4, and W.G. Beers, *Over the Snow or the Montreal Carnival* (Montreal: W. Drysdale and Company & J. Theo. Robinson, 1883), 1. For a full discussion of the significance and impact of the MAAA on Montreal and Canadian sporting development, see D. Morrow, "The Powerhouse of Canadian Sport: The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, Inception to 1909," *Journal of Sport History* 8, No. 3 (Winter, 1981): 20–39.

4. Beers, *Over the Snow,* 9.

5. See Alan Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1840–1895," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* XI, No. 21 (May, 1978): 144–166; Don Morrow and Mary Keyes, *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1–22.

6. This description is loosely paraphrased from Roger H. Marijnissen and Maxwell Seidel, *Bruegel* (New York: Harrison House, 1984), 26, 43, 102–103.

7. John MacAloon, ed., *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehersals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984) 1.

8. Ibid., 3–19.

9. Ibid., 208, emphasis mine.

10. See Karl B. Raitz, *The Theatre of Sport* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), vi–xi. This synthesis represents my own interpretation of Raitz's theory.

11. Ibid., xiii.

12. Ibid., 165.

13. In fact, the Montreal architectural firm of A. Hutchinson, the orginal 1883 builders of the famed ice castle in the Quebec city, were hired for the Vermont festival. Several traincar-loads of Montrealers made the trek to Burlington's carnival.

14. *Montreal Daily Star,* 17 January 1888, p. 5. *The Star* reported that both were opposed because of "little planning and no plan for an ice palace" (the centre stage structure of all carnivals). *MDS,* 16 January 1888, p. 3.

15. See Dufresne, "Le Carnival d'hiver de Montreal."

16. *Montreal Winter Carnival, January 26th to 31st 1885: Handbook to the City of Montreal with Carnival Supplement* (Montreal: S.E. Dawson and the Gazette Printing Company, 1884), 15.

17. *Wonderful Things* (London: Edwards and Company, 1853), as cited in the *Montreal Daily Star,* 6 January 1883, p. 2.

18. *Montreal Gazette,* various issues between January 3 and 23, 1883.

19. *New York Herald,* as cited in the *Montreal Daily Star,* 5 January 1883, p. 4.

20. *Montreal Daily Star,* 10 January 1883, p. 4, emphasis mine. Habitant was the French Canadian term for the lower class peasant-worker from Quebec's seigneurial (feudal) system of class structure.

21. Ibid., 12 January 1883, p. 2.

22. *Montreal Gazette,* 24 January 1883.

23. *Montreal Daily Star,* 24 January 1883, p. 4, emphasis mine.

24. Ibid.

25. *Montreal Gazette,* 25 January 1883.

26. *Montreal Daily Star,* 25 January 1883, p. 4.

27. Ibid., 26 January 1883, p. 4.

28. *Montreal Gazette,* 29 January 1883.

29. This information was culled from the *Montreal Gazette,* the *Montreal Daily Star,* the *Toronto Globe,* and the *New York Times* between January 27 and 31, 1883.

30. For a complete discussion of the process and format of institutionalization in sport, see Don Morrow, "The Institutionalization of Sport: A Case Study of Canadian Lacrosse, 1844–1914," *The International Journal of History of Sport* 9, No. 2 (August, 1992): 236–251.

31. *Montreal Daily Star,* 26 January 1885, p. 6.

32. *Montreal Gazette,* 30 January 1885.
33. *Montreal Daily Star,* 26 January 1885, p. 4.
34. *New York Times,* as cited in *Montreal Daily Star,* 24 January 1885, p.6.
35. *Montreal Daily Star, Carnival Number* 20 January 1885. Also articles on the *Carnival Number* appearing between that date and 3 February of the *Star.*
36. *Montreal Daily Star,* 30 January 1885, p.8.
37. *Montreal Gazette, Toronto Globe,* and *Montreal Daily Star*: various issues between 24 and 30 January, 1885.
38. *Montreal Daily Star,* 2 February 1885, p. 4. This nostalgia was reinforced by various accounts of old European carnivals described in the same issue of the *MDS.*
39. Ibid.
40. Raitz, *The Theature of Sport*, xiv.
41. *Montreal Daily Star,* 30 January 1889, p. 1.
42. Ibid., 31 January 1889, p.3.
43. *Montreal Gazette,* 5 February 1889.
44. *Montreal Daily Star,* 7 February 1889, p.4.
45. *Ibid.,* 8 February 1889, p.4.
46. *Toronto Daily Mail,* 11 February 1889, p.8.