

Carnival and Spectacle in Krewe de Vieux and the Mystic Krewe of Spermes: The Mingling of Organization and Celebration

Gazi Islam

Michael J. Zyphur

David M. Boje

Insper Working Paper

WPE: 061/2006



Copyright Insper. Todos os direitos reservados.

É proibida a reprodução parcial ou integral do conteúdo deste documento por qualquer meio de distribuição, digital ou impresso, sem a expressa autorização do Insper ou de seu autor.

A reprodução para fins didáticos é permitida observando-se a citação completa do documento

**Carnival and Spectacle in *Krewe de Vieux*
and the *Mystic Krewe of Spermes*:**

The Mingling of Organization and Celebration

Gazi Islam

Ibmec São Paulo

Michael J. Zyphur

National University of Singapore

David M. Boje

New Mexico State University

ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study of the *Mystic Krewe of Spermes*, which does float construction and a parade that occurs two Saturdays before the New Orleans Mardi Gras, compared spectacular and carnivalesque elements of the organization in its preparation for and enactment of its annual parade. It shows that both system-maintaining spectacular theatrics and system-challenging carnivalesque protest govern the event, which at once leads to opposition and tension, and acceptance and renewal within the context of the krewe and its local audience. Implications for critical organization studies are given, and within the context of the recent destruction of New Orleans, a brief discussion of the importance of the Krewe as an indigenous organizational form is provided.

INTRODUCTION

The common people's carnival—with its subversion of the dominant order, wild dancing, and festive transgressions, iconoclastic celebration of freedom through cross dressing, 'obscenity,' and other behavior offensive to genteel Americans—was relegated to the back streets and ignored by the press. (Smith, 1994).

It is hereby decreed that melancholy be put to route, and joy unconfined seize our subjects, young and old of all genders and degrees...that the spirit of make-believe descend upon the realm and banish from the land the dull and the humdrum and the commonplace of daily existence. (Public proclamation by King of Mardi Gras [Rex], 1967)

Krewe de Vieux (KdV) is a Mardi Gras krewe that was created when a parade through the French Quarter by the Krewe of Clones (KoC) was denied permission to march by the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD); the reason given: the 1986 "Super Bowl" traffic concerns. As the KoC and its sub-krewes represented a carnivalesque tradition of local culture that parodied the demands of corporatized spectacle-events, two sub-krewes of KoC decided to march in opposition. Upon reports of the transgression by the two KoC sub-krewes, 12 NOPD patrol cars sped to the scene of the mini-parade, forcing them off the street and onto the sidewalk, where they continued to march for the length of the normal parade route... escorted by the NOPD. Building on this event of rebellion, KdV was formed shortly thereafter to keep alive the ancient tradition which is Mardi Gras carnival. Since its inception, KdV has secured a position marching through the French Quarter each year—the only krewe allowed to march through the historic area—two Saturdays before the official MardiGras (i.e., "Fat Tuesday").

This article is an exploration of carnivalesque organization. Specifically, our study focuses upon one sub-krewe of the KdV: the Mystic Krewe of Spermes (MKS).

This sub-krewe was begun by a mélange of graduate students and professors at Tulane University—although its current membership is not limited to the university community. We explore how its members revitalize the ancient carnivalesque tradition of the middle ages, when carnival was about social commentary through parody and satire, and was meant to facilitate the disinhibition of free self-expression. The remainder of this paper takes the following route: First, we provide an overview of the theoretical foundations of our work, drawing on diverse literatures in sociology and anthropology in addition to organization studies. Next, we offer a contextual background of the site studied, with a brief introduction to Mardi Gras in general and an outline of the historical progression of the KdV. This outline focuses on the KdV as organizing out of resistance to commercial interests in New Orleans and developing into a unique Mardi Gras entity. We then describe the methods of the study, elaborating on our sources of data and giving a description of the organizational makeup of MKS. In our findings, we lay out the study as it relates to the grotesque in political satire, then to the travesty of sacred texts, and finally at ambivalence of the actors and spectators to the carnival. This is followed by a discussion of the carnival in terms of its implications for critical and postmodern organization studies.

Theoretical Tensions in the Study of Social Action

Mystic Krewe of Spermes (MKS) is an example of the critical management study of carnival, an area in which there have only been a few examinations (e.g., Boje, 2001; Oswick et al., 2000; Rhodes, 2001). Following these previous works, and by localizing the study of carnival within the larger context of the study of social action in general, we may clarify the social-theoretic roots of the current work. We broadly frame these roots

as originating in the grand debate between system reinforcing and system transformational views of symbolic action (e.g., Durkheim, 1961, Turner, 1969), reflected in organizational treatments of stability and change of status quo structures and norms (e.g., Leanna and Barry, 2000).

To explain the creation of consensus within pre-modern societies, Durkheim (1961) discussed the importance of ceremonial displays. Similarly, many of the key figures in the study of ritual saw periodic, organized social displays (of which Mardi Gras is an obvious example) as a way to maintain social roles and norms. For example, Van Gennep (1960) notes patterned, recurring social behavior as structuring role transitions throughout the lives of individuals. Turner (1969), in addition, saw the importance of communal symbolic behavior in maintaining order, stressing the communal bond or *communitas* as the ultimate goal of social events.

At the same time, these key thinkers recognized a basic tension within patterned, ritualistic social enactments. For example, Van Gennep (1960) saw rituals as attempts to restore equilibrium in the face of the constant tendency for social orders to come apart, due to individual, group, and environmental changes. Similarly, Turner viewed social displays as ways of negotiating between stability and revolutionary change, while Durkheim doubted the ordering function of carnivals, asserting that “an ordered tumult remains a tumult” (Durkheim, 1961, cited in Piette, 1992:37). Finally, Moore and Myerhoff (1977), similar to Turner, saw repeated social enactments, such as carnivals, as not only reinforcing and maintaining social structures and relations, but also as able to shift these structures and relations by reframing how issues are seen by participants:

It is our contention that certain formal properties of that category of events ordinarily called collective ritual (or ceremony) all lend themselves singularly

well to making ritual a “traditionalizing instrument”...collective ceremony can traditionalize new material as well as perpetuate old traditions. (7)

This apparent disjunction between order and disorder appears in subsequent organizational literature, where both system-maintenance functions (e.g., Van Maanen, 1975; Vaught and Smith, 1980), and system-transformational functions (e.g., Biggart, 1977; Gephart, 1978) appear as central aspects of symbolic enactments in organizations. A possible explanation for the apparently contrary effects of social action is that such actions can sometimes “backfire,” opening up possibilities through their enactment that were not part of the original function of the enactment (Moore & Meyerhoff, 1977). Cases of backfiring socialization processes are well documented in the organizational literature, where, for example, socialization techniques may produce rebellion instead of commitment (Hallier & James, 1999; Pratt, 2000); or committee membership for opposing groups, intended to placate oppositional voices, may end up functioning as a real soundboard for those voices, causing organizational change which was not initially intended (Conrad, 1983). Such risk of true system change makes is particularly relevant in the study of carnival, where the “tumult” that Durkheim described may spill over the boundaries of social control, and the passion, violence, and proliferation of illicit activities may result in a dilution or diversion, rather than reinforcement, of social categories.

Carnival and Spectacle

While the literature on carnival in organizations is small, it is ubiquitous in its debt to the foundational work of Mikhail Bakhtin. The work of Rhodes (2001, 2002), for example, has used Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of carnival to explain the transgressive humor of television shows such as *The Simpsons* (Rhodes, 2001) and *South Park* (Rhodes,

2002). Rhodes' work draws additionally upon Eco's (1984) treatment of limited carnival, suggesting that limited spaces of transgression meet popular demand in contemporary society while limiting transgressive effects to within a television screen. Boje (2001), also drawing on Bakhtin, concurs with this diagnosis, asserting that "Contemporary carnival is more controlled, a safer theater than ones in the Middle Ages" (p:438). However, Boje's analysis allows for non-televized, open manifestations such as sit-ins and parody shows as carnival, contrasting these acts with the mass-numbing performance of collective spectacle. We continue this comparison, using the ideas of carnival and spectacle to analyze a Mardi Gras krewe. Thus, we begin with a brief discussion of the theoretical aspects of carnival (Bakhtin, 1968) and spectacle (Debord, 1968).

During the Middle Ages and into early Renaissance, spectacle, festival, and carnival were distinguishable spheres of discourse. For Bakhtin (1968: 8-9), festival was "agrarian in nature," including the comic elements of the "pagan feast" as well as a celebration of "cyclical time," and was utopian in its appeal to "community, freedom, equality, and abundance." Spectacle, on the other hand, was progress time, and "betrayed and distorted" what was "the true nature of human festivity" into the official storyline (1968: 9). "The men [and women] of the Middle Ages participated in two lives: the official and the carnival life" (Bakhtin, 1968: 96). Bakhtin (1968: 9) viewed carnival as "moments of death and revisal, of change and renewal" that stood in-between spectacle and festival, accomplishing societal renewal using the billingsgate of marketplace humor. With the advent of modernity, the power-elite stopped attending carnival. Yet, for Bakhtin, it was long ago that the spheres of spectacle, festival, and carnival were separate parts of an overall social system of metamorphosis and renewal (Boje & Cai, 2004). We

would like to suggest that although festival and carnival have been appropriated by the spectacle of marketplace capitalism, here-and-there, and quite rarely, there is still some interplay between spectacle, carnival, and festival.

Because of their obvious sensuous character and their strong element of play, carnival images closely resemble certain artistic forms, namely the spectacle. In turn, medieval spectacles often tended toward carnival folk culture, the culture of the marketplace, and to a certain extent became one of its components. But the basic carnival nucleus of this culture is by no means a purely artistic form nor a spectacle and does not, generally speaking, belong to the sphere of art. It belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped accordingly to a certain pattern of play (Bakhtin, 1968: 7).

It is this carnival nucleus of the social system of marketplace-play that we seek to explore. Mystic Krewe of Spermes, we will show, uses “numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanation, comic crownings, and uncrownings” (Bakhtin, 1968: 11); it uses an ambivalent carnivalesque laughter that is “also directed at those who laugh” (12). In short, MKS does not place itself as a bystander to the mockery; it belongs to the spectacle marketplace, and it is in the spectacle marketplace that MKS uses its carnival of mortification and ambivalent humiliation to accomplish the revival and renewal of carnival metamorphosis.

Further, Bakhtin’s ideas about spectacle predate and anticipate Guy Debord’s (1968) *Society of the Spectacle*, a treatise to move Marxism from the accumulation of production to contemporary issues of accumulation of spectacle. Debord explores the notion that modern society has traded all notions of authenticity for commodified forms of authenticity. In this perspective, the reality of the subject is objectified as images, which are traded among people to create, extend, and reify social relations. Thus, what may appear as social transgression or a movement toward an anti-bureaucratic ideal—such as MKS—is, following Debord’s view, a force which itself contains and serves to

reinforce existing hierarchies. In such a view, MKS may serve not to upend hegemony, but rather to codify it as a requisite for anti-hegemonic theatre.

What Bakhtin (1968: 20) adds to Debord's critique is the role of grotesque realism, the way "not only parody in its narrower sense but all the other forms of grotesque realism degrade, bring down to earth, turn their subject into flesh." Grotesque realism means "to hurl an object down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place" in the "bodily grave (belly, bowels, earth)" (21-22); "The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming" (24). It is in this conception of renewal that the "gay popular spectacle of the marketplace" undergoes transformation in the "regenerating flames of carnival" (393-394).

We argue that the concept of grotesque realism is important for several reasons. First, the use of the grotesque has often been linked with a de-emphasis on cultural expression as a vehicle for elite values, and an assertion of the local, vulgar, and commonplace (e.g. Rhodes, 2001). Dominant cultural systems have often been studied as taming or channeling of bodily functions (Aho, 2002; Elias, 2000), transforming into cultural processes the basic mechanisms of food ingestion, digestion and excretion (e.g., Mosko, 1991), as well as channeling sexuality into normative categories (e.g., Bordo, 1989). The enculturation of bodily process, in these views, reflects the most basic form of cultural control, forming the basis for cultural resource procurement and sharing (food metabolism) as well as kinship systems (sexuality). In light of these anthropological treatments of bodily processes, the blatant social display of bodily fluids and orifices put

to non-traditional uses is not simply “shock value,” or rather, the shock value itself is not atheoretical, but is shocking only in light of the very norms that such displays flout.

In addition, the use of grotesque realism during carnival is constitutive of what Bakhtin (1968) referred to as “cyclical time,” a temporal orientation that focused on the metabolic properties of feast and harvest rather than the linear progression of unfettered growth. According to Bakhtin, “degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one... Grotesque realism knows no other level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving” (1968: 21). The notion of cyclical regeneration has been used in the study of ritual in opposition to modern linear conceptions of time (e.g., Eliade, 1975). The theoretical importance of cyclical time provides a counter-point to Schumpeter’s (1975) classic formulation of “creative destruction;” carnival represents a “re-creative” destruction, the breaking of traditional institutions not to give way to the radically new, but to recycle and replenish the eternally old. As we will see below, the KdV and Spermes sub-krewe were rife with symbolism pertaining to cyclicity, birth, and fertility.

Our thesis is that Mardi Gras and local culture have been largely reified into spectacle, and that the rebellious sub-krewe we studied boldly reinscribed the kinds of carnivalesque tradition that folklorist Francois Rabelais (1532/1873) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1968) wrote about. Often through its explicit content, our study of MKS addresses questions relevant to organization studies. Particularly, our approach raises the central question: In what ways does the MKS parade reintroduce the ancient idea of carnival that satirizes and parodies the mainstream? Alternatively, in what ways do the krewe celebrations perform a system-reinforcing “safety valve” function? In other words, are

exhortations to “come on down, let’s have some fun!,” “sperm gone wild!,” and such, just part of the Bourbon Street commercial spectacle, or is there deep transformative potential in these acts? This difference between safety-valve and social moment functions has been noted elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Humphrey, 2001; Kinser, 1990); because of the unique positioning of MKS within the Mardi Gras event, we argue that this krewe manifests this tension in interesting ways. In short, we seek to tease out where MKS is satiric carnival versus spectacle illusion.

METHOD

Background of Site and Data Collection

While there is debate regarding its origin, modern-day carnival was a time for cyclic, ritualized indulgence in Greece, Rome, and medieval Europe (Schindler, 1997). Following the Latin carnelevare (to lift or to remove meat), Mardis Gras was originally called boeuf gras (“fat cow”) and marked a day of feasting before Lent—although the ritualized feasting often began long before Mardis Gras itself (Schindler, 1997).

Mardis Gras, and the carnival that precedes it, burgeoned into a series of parades and masquerade balls meant to allow for revelry and social protest in many parts of the Southeastern United States (Tallant, 1989). For example, following the U.S civil war, krewes of masked “Indians” and paraders in black-face protested racial discrimination in New Orleans (Smith & Govenar, 1994). More recently, Mardi Gras has been a site for protest for the rights of homosexuals (Gill, 1997). Despite such protest, by the middle of the 1970’s, Mardis Gras had become largely a tourist attraction with large floats and celebrities meant to generate revenue for New Orleans (Kinser, 1990). It is with this historical background that we introduce KdV and MKS.

Following the dissolution of the KoC in 1986 following the “Super Bowl” incident described in the introduction, the KoC sub-krewes and various other individuals banded together to form KdV. Many of these individuals were not simply discontented with events like the Super Bowl, but even viewed the traditional Mardi Gras parade skeptically as spectacle, constructed to pacify the populous and generate profit. Indeed, the very name of “Krewe de Vieux” (crew of old) attempts to revive an age before consumerist spectacle, and, paradoxically, furthers political protest through the invocation of tradition, the tradition being the carnivalesque symbolism of Mardi Gras prior to its commercialization. Krewe de Vieux, as the “mother” krewe, is funded by dues and organized around meetings at local bars. New members are recruited through informal and highly decoupled networks. The organization also does fundraising to finance its activities, such as a beer-brewing contest. Sub-krewes have manuals of etiquette, practices, norms, and rules that they disperse among their new members.

It should be emphasized that, as a carnivalesque flaunting of anti-institutional norms, KdV focuses on themes which may be offensive in most contexts. Floats extravagantly portray political and religious figures in sexual acts, reflecting alternative sexual preferences including, for example, fornication with animals. Floats with exaggerated penises and banners say things like “drips and discharges,” and, “year of the cock” (see Figure 1).

----- INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE -----

There is cross-dressing and a general challenge to traditional sexual mores that includes outlandish allusions and *jeux de mots*. Particular to the Krewe of Spermes— itself a parody on the more traditional Mardi Gras krewe “Krewe of Hermes”—past

themes have included “Stuffing the Bush Ballot Box” and “Carnal- val Cruises” (with inebriated sailors wearing outfits labeled “wasted seamen”). The current year’s theme was “Turning Wad into Wine,” with an enormous Christ figure ejaculating a red- glowing stream which turned to white as it was caught by a bejeweled golden chalice.

In short, what we view as organization and societal parody and satire, others may readily view as pornographic. Not only sexual, KdV and MKS parody political and religious symbols and motifs, with signs saying “Lost Commandments: Burning Bushes,” or, “What would Jesus bomb?” (see Figure 2);

----- INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE -----

some people are dressed in President Bush and Vice-President Cheney masks, wearing a papal crown or bishop’s cap (see Figure 3).

----- INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE -----

Some parades feature tank-replicas with signs that say “sponsored by Hali-bear-ton” (see Figure 4).

----- INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE -----

In addition, some break racial/sexual taboos against mixed-race marriage. In sum, these costumes and floats are meant to be shocking and sexually, politically, and capitalist- provocative.

Given the nature of the organizational data described above, one may ask if our own article is too controversial, dealing with body parts and fluids and grotesque humor. In defense of our article and its presentation of the taboo, we note that several key works in the academic cannon have stressed the importance of taking on the very frames of reference implicit in the subjects involved, thus using narrative to participate in the

traditions under study. This is apparent in such classic works as Geertz's (1973) "penetrating" exploration of the Balinese Cockfight as "Deep Play," and de Andrade's (1970) "Anthrophagy Manifesto." Thus, some degree of grotesqueness is called for so as not to betray one's subject matter under the guise of academic style.

Data were collected during the formal and informal events leading up to, and including, the MKS parade on Mardi Gras day (as mentioned above, the second, informal parade after the official KdV event two weeks earlier). The first two authors had participated in MKS for four years prior to the beginning of data collection, and began participant-observations with note-taking in September of 2004, concluding data collection in March of 2005. During this time, all KdV and MKS functions, including monthly meetings, were attended and notes were taken at these meetings by the second author. All KdV meetings were held at the "Rock n' Bowl," a local jazz-bar bowling-alley. At these meetings, two representatives were present from each sub-krewe. Because the second author was not an official krewe representative, he did not participate; only notes were taken.

The MKS meetings were held at a local bar called "Cooter Brown's," which has traditionally been the meeting place of choice for MKS. There were a total of two meetings, which were meant to allow idea-generation and consensus formation for the year's float theme. For these meetings, the first two authors attended. During these meetings, these two authors participated vigorously and took notes concurrently. Finally, the main KdV social event, the "Krewe de Vieux Brew Doo"—the official KdV fund raising beer brew—which occurred at approximately mid-way through the planning process, was attended and KdV members from a variety of sub-krewes were asked about

the significance of KdV for them, and to describe briefly KdV's fundamental mission. For most photographic data presented in the current work, a free-lance photographer was employed to document pre-parade festivities and the march itself. This assured that such data were not lost along the parade route. However, other photographic material, especially any dealing with the Mardi Gras day march, was collected from MKS members after the festivities.

RESULTS

Grotesque Realism in Political Satire

There are many examples to suggest that MKS is, in part, a revival of the Rabelaisian heritage of grotesque humor. According to Bakhtin (1968), medieval cultures used "grotesque realism" to link the cosmic, the cultural, and the physical, bringing the pretension of grandiose culture to the level of the community. The Rabelaisian grotesque was thus a fundamentally populist reply to aristocratic appropriation of cultural forms, a protest against regulation and taboo through the celebration of filth and the praise of folly (see also Masters, 1969; Schwartz, 1990).

For example, when asked at the "Brew Doo" what KdV meant to them, participants gave responses such as "I like the donkeys," "Vomit, a lot of vomit," "Unadulterated sperm in the street," and "The big penis that skates" (the last response being an allusion to an actual character present at the Brew Doo). These responses employed corporeal images that would be inappropriate for "civilized" discussion. Alternative sexual practices (the donkey), oft-unacknowledged corporeal functions (the vomit, the sperm), and hidden body parts (the penis) all fit together in a kind of synthetic unity of the taboo. In this way, even in the explicit materiality of the themes present in

the Krewe, each may be substituted for each without loss of meaning, because they all derived their meaning from the grotesque realist principle of exposure of the hidden.

During the KdV meeting, the use of the grotesque as an explicit technique of political criticism became very evident. The following excerpts, for example, from a poll (double entendre intended during the meeting) taken to determine the parades' theme, demonstrate how the use of sexual metaphors are used to parody political events, including the U.S. presidential election and the war in Iraq:

- "How about 'shriveled liberties!'"
- "Uncivil liberties!"
- "Electile dysfunction!"
- "Weapons of mass distraction!"
- "How about 'The Iraqtion?' Something with penises and Iraq?"
- "No, I've got it, let's go after the Bush daughters!"
- "How about 'Bush Polls his Daughters?'"
- "'Polling the Bush Women!'"
- "'Spermes Promises to Pull-Out?'"
- "Ah! 'Iraqtile Dysfunction!'"

The determining of a theme for the krewe thus followed a logic of the grotesque that was overtly political, directing sexual innuendo towards topics usually discussed seriously. From the ubiquitous way in which such themes were tossed out by all members of the meeting, there seemed to be assent that sexualizing things such as war and political oppression was an appropriate way to post a public critique of policy. We may turn to Bakhtin once again to understand why this may be the case.

Following Bakhtin's (1968) conceptualization, the explicit flaunting of sexual and corporeal aspects forms part of both festival and carnivalesque projects of re-inserting the material into cultural processes. Notions of food and feast (fest-ival, carn-ival) were manifest in the open sharing of food and alcohol among sub-krewes and the open drinking of the participants during the march. This tradition echoes Rabelais' *Gargantua*,

where the birth of a new society is marked by feast and drink (Masters, 1969). Similarly, notions of sexuality and fertility (Spermes) echo the medieval functions of fertility ritual during carnival described by Bakhtin: the attempt to celebrate the material fecundity of a culture through the lavish openness of consumption and libertine exposure. For example, the MKS march on Mardi Gras day is a procession of sperms-on-sticks, following a glowing orb which is “The Egg” from Uptown New Orleans toward the French Quarter (see Figure 5).

----- INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE -----

In this sense, perhaps it is no coincidence that the frontline band for the parade each year is the local brass band “Rebirth,” sometimes mingling members with its offshoot, “New Birth.” In a similar vein, we might extend our analysis to the name “Spermes,” which not only parodies “Hermes,” but does so in such a way as to emphasize the corporeal and material over the formal and representational.

Bakhtin’s description of the vulgar, in this respect, can be informative. The standpoint displayed in carnivalesque vulgarity is not one of distancing but of rapprochement. Following Bakhtin’s analysis, this vulgarity is akin to the linguistic familiarity of informal language between friends, who use vulgar language that is often sexual or corporeal in nature, but this very vulgarity is a sign of the closeness of the parties involved, and marks their closeness by the unmasking of formally inappropriate forms of communion.

Such ritual degradation should not be seen as aiming at the destruction of political forms, but rather as the bringing down to earth of these forms, captivating them at the level of local material culture. In this sense, the sexuality in carnivalesque forms is

semiotically opposed to the formalized forms of sexuality in spectacular events. For examples, Barthes (1970) has described the sexuality of striptease as anti-sexual and distancing, and the notion of the “objectifying” nature of sexual exposure has an elaborate history in the academic literature (e.g., de Beauvoir, 1952, Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This use of the body in an objectifying way seems well embodied in mainstream Mardi Gras parades, where the “King and Queen” of the krewes stand on tall platforms, intricately adorned and masked (Kinser, 1990). The opposite is the case with KdV, whose “subjectification” of the body emphasizes the exposure and celebration of bodies of all shapes and sizes, adding caricatured bodily enhancements, and turning on its head the traditional norms of physical beauty (see Figure 6).

----- INSERT FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE -----

Travesty of the Official and the Privileging of the Informal

Besides the Bible, Torah, or Koran, business has become a sacred text. The language of the marketplace is no longer burlesque or grotesque; there is not the cursing that took place in the town square up through the Renaissance. A woman’s breasts might be featured in corporate advertising, but the zone of the genital organs is strictly taboo. Yet, at one time it was “the marketplace [that] was the center of all that was unofficial” (Bakhtin, 1968: 153-4).

The attempt to emphasize the unofficial was clear in the krewe’s organizing activities. The krewe had leaders (captains) and, like all Mardi Gras krewes, had the tradition of a “king;” however, unlike mainstream krewes, these positions were stripped of their absolute authority and essentially functioned as coordination mechanisms rather than figures of reverence. In addition, the positions were chosen democratically. The

following discourse from the selection process of the king of the parade demonstrates the unofficial and highly sacrilegious aspect of this process:

- “OK, let’s vote on royalty: They must not have an entourage, they must not feel like royalty! They must be able to make fun of themselves!”
- “How about a New Orleans historian?”
- “[let’s choose] Rick _____, he really celebrates the Mardis Gras tradition, the culture, the history, etc.”
- “How about a public official?”
- “How about Dick Cheney!” (laughter!)
- “Only if he has chains and bells on!” (everyone laughs!)
- “How about Condoleeza Rice?! She can bring her oil tanker!”

The deliberate reference to and flaunting of the idea of using public officials as krewe leaders reinforces the emphasis on keeping local, traditional (but not institutionalized) actors central to the values of the krewe.

Similarly, one thing observed was that unofficial critiques of marketplace ideology are no longer at the center of the marketplace; they are not to be held on the day of Mardis Gras, their consumption is for locals. That these critiques be unofficial is key to the mission of the MKS and KdV in general—in essence, that which is official is the object of KdV parody, and thus the critique must be couched in a performative, rather than declarative, manner. Damatta (1991), in his comparison between Brazilian and New Orleanian carnivals, noted the highly structured, hierarchy-enhancing aspects of the latter, due in part to the divorce of large krewes from local neighborhoods and their alliance with socio-economic groups—further, it is well-known in New Orleans that joining a large, “official” Mardis Gras krewe costs many hundreds of dollars. Thus, it makes sense that an interruption of spectacle would be held peripherally to major krewes, centered around local culture, and temporally distant from Mardi Gras day.

It is no surprise, then, that KdV (and only this krewe) runs past the historic French Market—one of the oldest markets in the United States. What is resurrected in the KdV is

not anti-capitalist sentiment per se, but a kind of celebratory atmosphere that at once challenges contemporary capitalism and harkens back to an imagined past where the market was a place for liberty and expression. Hence the tension within the movement of the Krewe: it both embodies and critiques the drive to organization and institution. Conducting the carnival in the festive marketplace with a carnival crowd, while parodying corporate spectacle, can be a force of transformation and social renewal. However, the “Krewe of Old” is by no means progressive; it remains tied to cyclical tradition of social revel, and while its spectacular elements note what a “fun break” the parade is, its carnivalesque elements make a very serious statement with their march (see Figures 7 and 8).

----- INSERT FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE -----

----- INSERT FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE -----

For a carnivalesque procession is not a “break” from the social world at all, but rather its creative principle, the yet-undefined act of cohesion and movement out of which formalities and structures can later draw their momentum. The mesh of colors, costumes, and contradictions within the parade—at first glance seeming to give no in-road into a coherent social system—by their very arbitrariness make their social protest: anything goes, including the mainstream. Thus, in a past year, even MTV (i.e., the Music Television network) sent young women to march with KdV in an attempt to capture the “real” Mardis Gras. This addition generated heated dialogue, but the KdV captains ultimately agreed. The MTV contingent began the parade with high spirits, but complained of the cold rain that had come to be expected during the parade, drenching participants and spectators alike; they danced warily astray of projectiles and around the

vomit of the Spermes captain, and finished the parade on a somewhat more subdued note. They did not repeat the march the following year.

The clearest example of the travesty of the sacred, however, is the *second* MKS march, the unsanctioned and illegal annual appearance of the Spermes on Mardi Gras day. In this event, MKS leaves behind even the KdV, and marches alongside the large 18-wheeler semi-trucks that are decorated as floats on the day of Mardi Gras. At a strategic point between uptown and downtown, the Spermes break through the parade barrier and march between the official floats, until they are, inevitably, escorted off the route by the municipal police (we note here that, depending upon a variety of factors, MKS as a whole, or individual members themselves, may attempt multiple other break-ins). They then (re)organize and head into the French Quarter, continuing the march until they eventually dissipate into smaller clusters over the course of the next several hours. The on-parade trespass typically lasts between 30 seconds and 20 minutes—during the current study, MKS marched for approximately 5 minutes before being expelled.

Ambivalence of Spectators & Actors

The MKS has comic writers and satirist characters performing in many-voiced ambivalent styles. It is not just a negative satire that provokes the spectators; it is the ambivalent moment that must be explored.

More so than the later, more grandiose parades, KdV muddles the distinction between spectator and actor. Firstly, it is ground-level. While the larger parades' participants stand on tractor-pulled floats, the Spermes march on foot, their vulgar float pulled by donkey (see Figure 9).

----- INSERT FIGURE 9 ABOUT HERE -----

As pedestrians, the only thing that distinguished them from the crowd were their costumes (although the spectators are often also in costumes) and their wooden, papier-mâché sperm-topped batons, which they often let stray into the crowd and sometimes lost to avid spectators. Often, outsiders joined the parade; although they had not paid, no one complained, and many were given “spermes” to carry for a short time. At the ground-level, actors shared kisses and embraces with the crowd, often exchanging personal items such as jackets, hats, shoes or flasks when paraders ran out of beads. Often the parade stopped momentarily, and MKS members ran into local bars to use the toilets. In general, this highly-interactive nature of the parade blurs the boundary of the organization. However, this does not prevent the establishment of tight identity bonds between MKS members, many of whom chanted “Spermes” throughout the entire parade. Similarly, during the Mardi Gras day march, many spectators were surprised to see a new krewe suddenly emerge onto the parade route on foot. While MKS threw beads to the crowd, many threw beads to the krewe (notably, during the current study, krewe members were also given barbecued chicken by a friendly spectator), a practice that would be unheard of in mainstream krewes and which highlights the ambiguity of role-distinctions between audience and krewe members.

The interchange between organizational members and spectators had political implications in KdV vis a vis the larger, more mainstream Krewes. While typical Mardi Gras floats are manned with masked, indistinguishable figures of nobility—an elite *other* that distinguishes itself from the populus—KdV and its sub-krewes sent a fundamentally democratic message: the institution does not hover over the people but dances among them, relying on them to provide beverages along the way and giving *and* receiving alms.

For there is no doubt that Mardi Gras is an institution, and its progression feels at once like a drunken chaos and like the progression of a society through time. If there is a cultural signifier embedded in the flow of the parade through the crowd, KdV added content to the abstraction of the institution, filling it with faces in a move that is subversive because it shows that there is nothing special or other-worldly about being in the parade. This emergence of democratic culture from the “bottom-up” coheres with classic treatments of carnival culture, such as Damatta’s (1991) exploration of Afro-Brazilian carnival tradition, and fits into his conception of carnival as a radically equalizing social ritual.

While, above, we have been discussing the ambivalence between actors and spectators across MKS boundaries, it is also important to point out the ambivalence between actor and spectator roles within the krewe itself. That is, when questioned at the Brew Doo, some organizational members saw the KdV as “Quintessential New Orleans,” typifying and coding the event as in a spectacle. In another example, a member described the event as, “Sperm gone wild,” and intertextual reference to the spectacle-laden series of videos called “Girls Gone Wild,” relying on an identity as spectator to give the statement meaning. Others refused such typification, describing KdV only by making non-referential but highly agentic remarks such as, “We are the Kazoozie Floozies,” a statement which refuses to place the author outside of the event, but presents her as defined within it. Similarly, it became apparent that both carnivalesque and spectacular elements coexist in the krewe, and that, because of the subtle difference between representation/reification and parody, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference. For example, the statement, “I go for the *one* moment, it’s pure joy and ecstasy... I do it all

for that one moment,” as stated by one krewe member, seems to embody the carnivalesque essence of MKS. However, the somewhat similar statement, “Work hard, play hard,” stated by another member seems not only to miss the existential moment in the first, but to deliberately set up the debauchery as a system-reinforcing element, a “venting” that modern capitalism provides its workers so that they can go back to work after the party is over. In this way, a self-satirical play was set into motion within the crew, with carnival actors refusing to comment on, and thus typify their own political action, and, ironically, spectacular actors raving about the marvels of carnival, freezing into discourse the carnival that unfolds around them.

In sum, carnivalesque irony was the basic organizing force. This irony was one that used a critical ideology and a good deal of ambivalence about one’s own role in the spectacle. At the very least, the MKS carnival humor purifies the “false seriousness” (Damatta, 1991, p. 141) of the Mardi Gras commercial spectacle.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CRITICAL ORGANIZATION STUDIES

While much of organization studies is about the corporation, we think that MKS is an important organization to study because of the ironic-yet-serious nature of its activism and the “deep play” (Geertz, 1973) behind its ad hoc organizing. Under “the camouflage of laughter and fun,” MKS engages in societal and corporate critique (Bakhtin, 1968: 90). Perhaps we may add to Bakhtin’s observation by noting that, in essence, *the laughter and fun are the very forms which embody and enact social transformation.*

Critical and postmodern organization studies has long attempted to find, under the “crystallized forms” of structural organization (Haraway, 1991), the ongoing process of

organization that maintains social bonds and leads to new and innovative social forms and interpretive schemes (e.g., Daft & Weick, 1984; Kellogg et al., 2000). In MKS, we see both traditional repetition and innovative creation; the organization maintains its integrity year after year, even through high turnover, infrequent meeting during the year, and loose organizational boundaries. In a globalizing world that increasingly emphasizes loose boundaries, diverse constituencies, and creative innovation, MKS holds lessons that can be applied to organizing.

Similarly, the framing of KdV as social renewal and the falling back upon the idea of the ancient carnival addresses one of the persistent themes in critical and postmodern thought, namely, the relation between tradition and progression. Critics of modernist thinking have long pointed out the grand narrative of progress underlying modern thought (e.g., Lyotard, 1984). In one of the clearest statements of the presupposition of progress, Gadamer (1982) describes the “prejudice against prejudice itself, which *deprives tradition of its power*” (241). On the other hand, postmodern thinkers, perhaps most notably Foucault (1972), have warned against the unthinking reproduction of entrenched ways of thinking, the reappropriation of tradition in the very act of progress. In this way, we believe that much of postmodern thought has struggled with its own progressiveness, wary of the grand narrative of liberation and yet unwilling to turn to the unquestioned authority of tradition.

The carnivalesque approach of the KdV addresses this concern in an interesting way. As described above, the KdV hinges its values on the old, the historic quarter, the old market, and the preservation of the “spirit” of Mardi Gras. The krewe uses the grotesque as an affirmation of the metabolistic, fleshy, fertile, cyclical process of

renewal. However, the free-for-all, uncontrolled progression of the parade suggests that this movement is not a reactionary, conservative one, and does not seek to re-institutionalize old ways. Rather, the parade suggests both transgression and tradition, and suggests a way to challenge norms without reproducing the idea of a better new world. We believe that the idea of anti-structure as renewal, rather than as progress, is a key contribution to contemporary social-theoretic debates.

Third, our analysis revealed paradoxical social ideologies present in the interpretation of MKS activities, a feature of organizational life important in organizational studies (Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Eisenhardt, 2000; Hatch & Erlich, 1993). On the one hand, elements of culture-as-spectacle (Debord, 1967) permeated the organization from within as well as externally, pressuring conformity with mainstream Mardi Gras and its corporate sponsors. On the other hand, the grotesque, parodying, carnivalesque ideology (Bakhtin, 1968) behind KdV remained alive in the krewe. We found that through irony, the spectacular was itself absorbed and dissolved in this carnivalesque approach, such that, if the business of spectacle is to colonize the lifeworlds of local actors (see Habermas, 1981), the carnivalesque in turn acts as a catalyst to erode these colonizing structures. MKS thus points critical scholars toward an important lesson in political activism: rather than fighting colonizing structures with liberating structures, a carnivalesque “anti-structure” can effectively produce an enclave for the free play of community without degrading into anarchy.

Finally, the area of critical organization studies has had a strong preoccupation with addressing issues of local and grassroots governance (e.g., Woywode, 2002; Zald & McCarthy, 1987). The possibilities for organizing local social movements, involving

diverse constituencies, has been a key theme in studies of race and gender (e.g., McAdam, 1982; Calas & Smircich, 1996), postcolonialism (e.g., Chiu & Levin, 1999; Prasad, 2003), and globalization (e.g., Frenkel, 2001). Much of this literature has acknowledged the challenges faced by local actors in the face of government and corporations, who often have recourse to resources inaccessible to local actors.

We have described above several ways in which the KdV privileges the local and participatory over the hierarchical and directive. The local composition of the krewe and inexpensive membership fees, the physical proximity of paraders and spectators and lack of elevated platforms, the inclusion of spectators in the parade, the lack of anonymity of the paraders, the pre-parade meetings in local pubs and the opening of pubs as bathrooms for paraders *during* the parade, the use of local bands versus national stars, and the scheduling of the parade long before the tourist rush of Mardi Gras day all suggest that the KdV is a sounding board for local culture rather than supra-local entities. Thus, in the wake of the academic discourse described above, we hope to add to the discussion of possibilities for grassroots organizing by pointing to a unique form of organization that privileges the local, and includes as its beneficiaries all who may happen to stumble by.

Conclusion

Carnival has long been studied as a form of social organization that is fundamentally paradoxical: central to the symbolic life of a society yet based in the refusal to submit to society's structures, carnival points us to a principle of creative becoming that organizational researchers have long struggled to understand. MKS follows this tradition well, being born in dissent, tolerated and, yet, marginalized by the Mardi Gras authorities, perpetuating tradition through its petulance. The "krewe of old"

thus harkens us to an age when kings and queens, popes and bishops attended carnival not just as spectators, but as participants. Now, the power-elite rarely attend, and the media films the main Mardis Gras floats that have little or no social commentary. MKS is, therefore, a reattempt at traditional carnival; it is a reawakening and infusion of the socially profane at its best.

This study began as an attempt to understand this unique form of organization; it ended as an attempt to preserve an indigenous knowledge threatened by disaster. The devastation of New Orleans in August of 2005 by Hurricane Katrina raises the question of how the city's rebuilding will affect its most famous tradition, that of Mardi Gras. Will the parade change through reconstruction, or will it survive the radical rebirth it values so much? Will only the spectacle be reproduced, being tied to corporate sponsorship and top-down planning, while the flooded neighborhoods of the French Quarter and Marigny, the local, spontaneous drivers of the city's ad hoc charm, be left behind in the attempt to create a new, more "developed" New Orleans?

The ability of KdV to retain its carnivalesque character will be a test for the resilience of an organizational form, a form which was built out of hardship, based on the principle of deconstructive levity and spontaneous rebirth. If it is true that "there is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn" (Camus, 1955: 90), then we suggest that this form of local revelry will survive, a feat of organization hard to explain through our prevailing views of market rationality. If we are wrong, then the current study will serve as a celebration of a time that celebrated an older time still, and a story about the struggle of the commons against the "spirit of make believe" (Mardi Gras King, 1967), who "banished from the land" the local existence of the people.

REFERENCES

Aho, James

2002 *The Orifice as sacrificial site: Culture, organization, and the body*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Andrade, Oswald de

1970 Do Pau-Brasil à antropofagia e às utopias: Manifestos, teses de concursos e ensaios. *Obras completas* (Vol. 6). Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

Bakhtin, Mikhail

1968 *Rabelais and his world* (trans. Hélène Iswolsky). Cambridge/London: The M.I.T. Press.

Bakhtin, Mikhail

1981 *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (tras. C. Emerson & M. Holquist). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barthes, Roland

1970 *Mythologies*. Paris: Seuil.

Biggart, Nicole W.

1977 The creative-destructive process of organizational change: The case of the post office. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22, 410-426.

Boje, David M.

2001 Carnavalesque resistance to global spectacle: A critical postmodern theory of public administration. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 23, 431-458.

Boje, David M., and Yue Cai

2004 McDonald's: Grottesque method and the metamorphosis of the three spheres: McDonald's, McDonaldland, and McDonaldization. *The Metamorphosis Journal* 3: 15-33.

Bordo, Susan

1989 The body and the reproduction of femininity: A feminist appropriation of Foucault." *Gender/body/knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing*. In A. M. Jaggar and S. R. Bordo (eds), 13-33. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Calas, Marta B., and Linda Smircich

1996 From "The woman's point of view": Feminist approaches to organization studies. *Handbook of organization studies*. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, and W. R. Nord (eds), 218-257. London: Sage.

Chiu, Stephen W.K and David A. Levin,

1999 The Organization of Industrial Relations in Hong Kong: Economic, Political and Sociological Perspectives. *Organization Studies* 20: 293-321

Conrad, Charles

1983 Organizational power: Faces and symbolic forms. *Communications and organizations: An interpretive approach*. In L. L. Putnam and M. Pananowsky (eds), 173-195. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Cooper, Robert, and Gibson Burrell

1988 Modernism, Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis: An Introduction. *Organization Studies* 9: 91-112

Daft, Richard L., and Karl E. Weick

1984 Toward a model of organizations as interpretation systems. *Academy of Management Review* 9: 284-296.

Damatta, Roberto

1991 *Carnivals, rogues and heroes: An interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma* (trans. John Drury). Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

de Beauvoir, Simone

1952 *The second sex* (trans. H. M. Parshley). New York: A. Knopf.

Debord, Guy

1967 *The society of the spectacle*. London: Red & Black.

Durkheim, Emile

1961 *The elementary forms of religious life* (trans. J.W. Swain). New York: Collier Books. Original work published in 1915.

Eco, Umberto

1984 The frames of comic "Freedom". *Carnival*. In T.A. Sebeok (ed), 1-10. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M.

2000 Paradox, spirals, ambivalence: The new language of change and pluralism. *Academy of Management Review* 25: 703-706.

Eliade, Mircea

1974 *The myth of the eternal return or, cosmos and history*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Elias, Norbert

2000 *The civilizing process: Sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*. In E. Dunning and J. Goudsblom (eds). Oxford: Blackwell.

Fredrickson, B. L., and Tomi-Ann Roberts

1997 Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 21: 173-206.

Frenkel, Stephen J.

2001 Globalization, Athletic Footwear Commodity Chains and Employment Relations in China. *Organization Studies* 22: 531-568.

Foucault, Michel

1972 *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York: Routledge.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg

1982 *Truth and method*. New York: Guilford Press.

Geertz, Clifford

1973 Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight. *The interpretation of cultures*. In C. Geertz (ed), 412-453. New York: Basic Books.

Gephart, Robert J.

1978 Status degradation and organizational succession: An ethnomethodological approach. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2: 553-581.

Gill, James

1997 *Lords of misrule: Mardi Gras and the politics of race in New Orleans*. Oxford: University of Mississippi Press.

Habermas, Jürgen

1981 *The theory of communicative action*, vols. 1 & 2. (trans. Thomas McCarthy). Boston: Beacon Press.

Hallier, Jerry, and Paul James

1999 Group rites and trainer wrongs in employee experiences of job change. *The Journal of Management Studies*, 36, 45-65.

Haraway, Donna

1991. A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. *Simians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature*, 149-181. New York: Routledge.

Hatch, Mary J. and Sanford B. Erlich

1993 Spontaneous Humour as an Indicator of Paradox and Ambiguity in Organizations. *Organization Studies* 14: 505-526.

Humphrey, Chris

2001. *The politics of carnival: Festive misrule in medieval England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Kellogg, Katherine C., Wanda J. Orlikowski and Joanne Yates

2002 Enacting new ways of organizing: Exploring the activities and consequences of post-industrial work. *Academy of Management Proceedings*: C1-C7.

Kinsler, Samuel.

1990 *Carnival, American style: Mardi Gras at New Orleans and Mobile*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leanna, Carrie. R., and Bruce Barry

2000 Stability and change as simultaneous experiences in organizational life. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 753-759.

Lyotard, Jean François

1984 *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (trans. G. Bennington & B. Massumi). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Masters, G. Mallary.

1969 *Rabelaisian dialectic and the Platonic-Hermetic tradition*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

McAdam, Doug.

1982 *Political process and the development of black insurgency: 1930-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mosko, Mark S.

1991 The canonic formula of myth and nonmyth. *American Ethnologist*, 18, 126-151.

Oswick, Cliff, Peter Anthony, Tom Keenoy, Lain Mangham, and David Grant

2000 A dialogic analysis of organizational learning. *Journal of Management Studies* 37: 887-101.

Prasad, Anshuman (ed)

2003. *Postcolonial theory and organizational analysis: A critical engagement*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pratt, Michael G.

2000 The good, the bad, and the ambivalent: Managing identification among Amway distributors. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45, 456-493.

Rabelais, François.

1532/1873 *The works of Rabelais*. (trans. Gustave Dore 1832-83).

Rhodes, Carl

2001 D'O: The Simpsons, popular culture, and the organizational carnival. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 10: 374-383.

Rhodes, Carl

2002 Coffee and the business of pleasure: The case of Harbucks vs. Mr. Tweek. *Culture and Organization*, 8, 293-306.

Schindler, Henri

1997 *Mardis Gras New Orleans*. New York: Flammarion Press.

Schumpeter, Joseph A.

1975 *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. New York: Harper. Original work published 1942.

Schwartz, Jerome

1990 *Irony and ideology in Rabelais: Structures of subversion*. NY/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Micheal P.

1994 *Mardi Gras Indians*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co.

Smith, Michael P. and Alan B. Govenar

1994 *Mardis Gras Indians*. New York: Pelican Publishing Company.

Tallant, Robert

1989 *Mardis Gras... As it was*. New York: Pelican Publishing Company.

Turner, Victor W.

1969 *The ritual process*. Chicago: Aldine

Van Maanen, J.

1975 Police socialization: A longitudinal examination of job attitudes in an urban police department. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 20, 207-228.

Vaught, Charles and Smith, David L.

1980 Incorporation and mechanical solidarity in an underground coal mine. *Sociology of Work and Occupation*, 7, 159-167.

Wickens, Thomas Hardy

2002 *Monism and the carnival tradition*. Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press.

Woywode, Michael

1996 Global Management Concepts and Local Adaptations: Working Groups in the French and German Car Manufacturing Industry. *Organization Studies* 23: 497-524.

Zald, Mayer N., and John D. McCarthy

1987 *Social movements in an organizational society*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Figure Captions

1. A float from a Krewe de Vieux sub-krewe (the Krewe of C.R.U.D.E.).
2. A float of the Krewe of T.O.K.I.N. showing a Christ figure and disciples smoking cannabis; inscription reads “T.O.K.I.N. puts the ‘FUN’ in FUNduhMENTALISM.”
3. A portrayal of United States president and vice-president Bush and Cheney, dressed as despots.
4. “Hali-Bear-Ton,” a play on the corporate giant Halliburton. Below the float reads “BEAR THE CONSEQUENCES.”
5. Spermes chase The Egg toward the French Quarter on Mardis Gras day.
6. Exaggerated female genitalia.
7. An exaggerated, inflatable male genital and a cross-dressing woman.
8. The Mystic Krewe of Spermes marching during the Krewe de Vieux parade.
9. Mystic Krewe of Spermes float during the Krewe de Vieux parade.