

## **The Official Opening of McDonald's in Baghdad: A Post-Postmodernist Play on Future of Capitalism**

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### **Abstract**

I will perform a one-man play, the opening of McDonald's in Baghdad, to get the Post-postmodernist future of capitalism. Postmodern capitalism is a virtual reality of political correct humor inside the corporate core (in McDonaldland), while outside the strange coalition of willing protestors engage in grotesque humor. The Post-Postmodern is the merger of Neo-Conservatism with Evangelical Fundamentalism that Ali and Camp 2003) call "Evangelical Capitalism." The future of capitalism is the topic of the play's dialogue.



**Figure 1 – McDonald's Islamic Counter Girls & Ronald's new hairdo<sup>1</sup>**

**Act 1, Scene 1 – Spotlight shines on Grand Opening of McDonald's in Baghdad;** We are inside the restaurant; Characters include: Mayor McCheese who greets the audience; an embedded reporter asks frank questions; Ronald McDonald; Professor carrying his wrench; Birdie, a cross between bird and girl; Hamburglar; Sheriff Big Mac; McDonald's CEO Jim Cantalupo; Larry Light, McDonald's Global Chief Marketing Officer; Ronald McDonald, Chief Happiness Officer; and Lt. General Joseph K. Kellogg Jr., the ranking U.S. military general.

Ronald McDonald cuts the ribbon and makes the dream of capitalism in Iraq come true

Mayor McCheese      "We are here at the grand opening of Iraq's first McDonald's."

Reporter              "Does the future of capitalism depend upon opening McDonald's in Iraq?"

Mayor McCheese      "There are over 30,000 McDonald's restaurants, our chain links 121 countries; with Iraq its 122 countries."

Reporter "Outside some Muslims are protesting the opening. I saw a sign that said: 'Dying for a McDonald's in Iraq.' Another said '9,852 civilians; 11,000 Iraqi soldiers, and 599 Coalition of willing are all dead.' I saw someone trying to put a banner on the Golden Arches, said "over '\$109 billion U.S. tax dollars served."<sup>ii</sup>

Ronald "You will not find that kind of grotesque humor inside of McDonald's."

Reporter "What is grotesque humor?"

Professor "There are two kinds of grotesque humor. First, from Rabelais, you have the bodily lower stratum jokes about urine and dung, being a grave out of which the fertility and birth of renewal occur. Outside you see grotesque clowns with red paint for blood, and black point symbolizing oil; Second, you have the auguste clown like Ronald who has a neat white face.

Reporter "What about Hamburglar?"

Professor "Hamburlar is a tame grotesque clown, who never makes references to bodily parts, other than devouring and digesting lots of burgers."

Hamburglar "I like hamburgers; No I like cheese burgers; No I like hamburgers."

Reporter "Interesting, but are there safety issue?"

Ronald "Certainly, last week, a 4-year-old boy named, Joey, somehow got his head wedged in between the legs of a life-size, grinning fiberglass Ronald McDonald clown. Fortunately our McDonald's employees finally lathered the 40-pound preschooler's head with liquid soap and slipped him out. My statue was put away."<sup>iii</sup>

Reporter "Not that kind of safety! I mean military police and soldiers with M-16s guarding the store."

General Kellogg "The U.S. military is here to protect McDonald's from the threat of terrorist and from the protestors."

Reporter "Is there a difference?"

General (ignoring the comment) "We thought 'the Iraqi people would love a Big Mac and fries as much as the rest of the world.' So we keep our eye on the protestors and the suicide bombers."<sup>iv</sup>

CEO Jim "We thank the U.S. military for making it safe for smiling McDonald's attendants to usher Iraqi customers into the Golden Arches."

- Reporter "What is the history? How did McDonald's come to Iraq?"
- Professor "On October 13 2003, McDonald's attended an<sup>v</sup> investor's conference: "Doing Business in Iraq" and the Golden Arches announced they would start selling burgers and fries in Baghdad in 2004."
- Reporter "Those smiling attendants, they are young Iraqi women, dressed in saris."
- CEO Jim "McDonald's screened 3,300 Iraqi women; the military did background checks, to make sure they were from good Muslim homes, who respect authority, and are not vegetarians or activists."
- Larry "What Jim means to say is McDonald's is bringing capitalism to Iraq. We bring employment to young women with good family values."

### **Act II, Scene 1 – Outside the Baghdad McDonald's**

A group of American activists from Voices in the Wilderness and some Iraqi youth are protesting the official opening. They are being interviewed by embedded reporters. A sign hangs on the side of the building: "Muslim Owned; Keep off the grass!"<sup>vi</sup>

- Protestor A (shouting) "The capitalist dream is a nightmare, the greed of multinational corporations like McDonald's is forcing fast food capitalism on Iraqi people." She carries a sign that reads: "Dying for a Taste of McFreedom!"<sup>vii</sup>
- Protestor B (shouting) "McDonald's had to wait until Bechtel switched on the lights and Haliburton rebuilt the pipeline!"<sup>viii</sup>
- Reporter (embedded) "Don't you think that is reaching? McDonald's sells cheeseburgers; Iraqi people want Americana, it's new!"
- Protestor A "This opening is an outrage. U.S. and U.K. illegally invaded Iraq and are forcing free market ideology on these people, while selling Iraqi assets to the highest corporate bidder."
- Reporter "Yesterday a suicide bomber blew himself up outside this McDonald's injuring 12 people. Do you support that?"
- Protestor B "Sometimes your body is all you have left to lose."
- Reporter "Do you support President Bush and our troops?"
- Protestor A "We support the troops, but do not want to see 599 of them dead so McDonald's can open a restaurant in every axis of evil country."

Reporter "Are you the ones putting the plastic Saddam toy in the Happy Meals; I just saw one inside (pointing to the restaurant)?"<sup>viii</sup>

Protestor B "No, we are the ones distributing the McHussein Nuggets. Care to try one?"

A squad of military troops moves in to disperse the Voices in the Wilderness crowd. Soldiers confiscate the pamphlets entitled: "Boycott American War Profiteers!" They are not sure what to do about the young man (wearing a President Bush mask) who climbed onto of the Golden Arches. They decide to order a crane, so as not to damage the Golden Arches in an all out assault. There is a banner waving that reads: "Killer Capitalism."

### **Act III, Scene 1 – Inside McDonald's**

Professor (to reporters) "You see what I mean about grotesque humor, how the activists exaggerate the body, painting it black and red."

Reporter "Blowing up your body; that is grotesque bodily humor!"

Grimace "We are not mindless robotic drones unable to think for ourselves."

Professor (ignoring the comment) "The activists from the U.S. think that consumers are going to transform global capitalism by protesting McDonald's at official openings, WTO and IMF meetings."

Reporter "In 1999 consumer and socialist activists drove biotech giant Monsanto to the edge of bankruptcy; And what about Mad Cow disease?"<sup>ix</sup>

Ronald "Never happen to McDonald's. There are no cow scandals here."

Larry "All those activists are part of "Parlor Radicalism" just a few leftist professors and some middle class white women. They do not represent working class consumer."<sup>x</sup>

Grimace "There are no class differences at McDonald's; I think Hamburglar has no class whatsoever."

Reporter "Grimace, is McDonald's part of Evangelical Capitalism?"<sup>xi</sup>

CEO Jim "That's enough questions. Do not ask McDonaldland characters questions about political economics. It is absurd to think that McDonald's is the standard bearer for Evangelical Capitalism!"

Ronald "What's Evangelical Capitalism?"

- Professor “That is a merger of American religious fundamentalism with Neoconservative preemptive strike foreign policy.”
- CEO Jim “I said ‘enough!’” (Crumpling up a pamphlet that reads: “McHussain Nuggets.”
- Reporter “Sheriff Big Mac? Are you Ronald’s body guard?”
- Big Mac “I am. You have to be careful. Kids did throw rocks from parking lots.”<sup>xii</sup>
- Reporter “In Chinese, Big Mac is the word: ‘Ju Wu Ba.’ It roughly translates to ‘Great Imperial Warlord.’”
- Big Mac “Sir, I must ask you to leave the premises.”
- CEO Jim “You print any of this and we will sue you for \$25 million. McDonald’s has nothing to do with Evangelical Capitalism, or war, or oil.”<sup>xiii</sup>
- Larry “While we’re at it, let’s sue those jokers outside who are destroying the Golden Arches.”<sup>xiv</sup>
- CEO Jim “They’re singing: ‘McDonald’s dispatched troops to Iraq? Want a Big Mac?’”
- Ronald “Who knew? Do you want to see my new dance: ‘Do the Ronald?’”

The McDonaldland characters begin distributing Play-Doh Happy Meal Factory, and McDonald’s Drive-Thru Center toys to the Iraqi children.

Ronald “Now you can learn to be McDonald’s counter people.”

<sup>i</sup> Photo is Muslim McDonald’s at [www.mcspotlight.org/media/press/mcdfs/various310303.html](http://www.mcspotlight.org/media/press/mcdfs/various310303.html); 2<sup>nd</sup> image WSJ 6/22/2003 <http://www.delawareonline.com/newsjournal/business/2003/06/23mcdonaldskeepst.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Iraqometer statistics dated Jan 19 2004 at <http://www.iraqometer.com/>; Civilian boby count comes from Iraq Body Count Jan 19 2004 <http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>

<sup>iii</sup> Foo, Rodney (2003). Boy stuck on Ronald McDonald. Mercury News (May 6). <http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/local/5795770.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> This is actual comment reported Oct 15, 2003 ‘A Big Mac and Fries’ by Gary Jones in the UK Mirror [http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/allnews/content\\_objectid=13516409\\_method=full\\_siteid=50143\\_headline=A-BIG-IRAQ-AND-FRIES-name\\_page.html](http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/allnews/content_objectid=13516409_method=full_siteid=50143_headline=A-BIG-IRAQ-AND-FRIES-name_page.html)

<sup>v</sup> ‘Dying for a McDonald’s in Iraq’ By Herbert Docena Oct 24, 2003 Asia Times Source [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/EJ24Ak02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EJ24Ak02.html)

<sup>vi</sup> During the anti-capitalism and anti-Iraq war protests McDonald’s owned by Muslims hung such signs.

<sup>vii</sup> Herbert Docena Oct 24, 2003 Asia Times, *Ibid*.

<sup>viii</sup> Parody of Saddam toy and McHusseain Nuggets was suggest by Deadbrain ‘McDonald’s to pull out of Iraq’ 10 Nov 2002 (no author) Deadbrain [http://www.deadbrain.co.uk/news/article\\_2002\\_11\\_10\\_0912.php](http://www.deadbrain.co.uk/news/article_2002_11_10_0912.php)

<sup>ix</sup> Socialist Workers Website 5 June 2002 <http://www.socialistworld.net/>

<sup>x</sup> *Ibid* Socialist Workers Website

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<sup>xi</sup> Ali, Abbas J. & Robert C. Camp (2003). Risks of Evangelical Capitalism. *International Journal of Commerce and Management*. Vol. 13 (1): 1-10.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid WSJ (2003); also McDonald's 1972 guide "Ronald and How." by McDonald's hands Roy Bergold and Aye Jaye, details everything from how to apply makeup to how to hug children.

<sup>xiii</sup> \$25 million is amount McDonald's sued an Italian food critic named Raspelli who said Big Macs are 'fodder' and "the symbol of Yankee greed.' From Washington Times May 30 2003 McDonald's sues critic who calls it 'obscene' <http://www.washtimes.com/national/20030530-124855-2362r.htm>

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid Washington Times reports how McDonald's sued a London protestor for destruction of their building; Also see widely available reports of a French farmer named José Bové who dismantled a McDonald's and deposited it on an official's lawn.