

# **MCDONALD'S: GROTESQUE METHOD AND METAMORPHOSIS OF THE THREE SPHERES: MCDONALD'S, MCDONALDLAND, AND MCDONALDIZATION**

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## **Abstract**

In this article we pull together and apply the shards of grotesque method to McDonald's Corporation. Grotesque method was first used by Mikhail Bakhtin in his 1940 dissertation, and is the basis of his later work. We demonstrate the grotesque method in an intertextual analysis of three spheres: McDonald's corporate grotesque body, McDonaldland grotesque bodies, and McDonaldization of the earthly global body.

## **Key words**

- Grotesque method
- Grotesque realism
- Spheres
- Intertextuality
- Carnavalesque

## **INTRODUCTION**

When trying to analyze a corporation's strategy using grotesque method, one must first have a clear understanding of what it means by 'grotesque'. Bakhtin (1968, 1986), in his early works and concluding works, described grotesque as the image of a becoming. As this image becomes clearer, the boundaries between people, and people and objects become fuzzy as everything merges and becomes the whole space. Metamorphosis defined by Bakhtin looks at the cycle of all transformation to be ascending (R-words) and descending (D-words) that, through humor, accomplish an organizational (and/or social) transformation. D-Words being one aspect of Metamorphosis, (Debase, Degradation, Disintegration, Death, Disintegration, and Debase ...) - are parts of the descending part of the cycle of metamorphosis. R -words, (Rebirth, Regeneration, Renewal, Reinvention, Reinvigoration...) - are parts of the ascending part of the cycle of metamorphosis. As the individuals transcend in terms of metamorphosis, either ascending (rebirth) or descending (death), the characteristics of the original physics of the body is neglected while the new images become the center of the system. In the carnivalesque focus, the death and rebirth of an individual only represent the original physics of the body. Although the biological body is despaired, the emerged life continues.

Grotesque humor can be found in more places than anyone can imagine, even in the making of today's corporations' strategies. Grotesque method (Bakhtin, 1968) is particularly useful in

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analyzing the regeneration and renewal of long-lived (half century) corporations such as McDonald's. When studying organizations, grotesque method has implications for strategy, organizational development and change, and organizational behavior. Looking at corporate strategy with a humorous perspective is not new, but with a grotesque humor is not done by previous studies. The method has been applied in only two management studies (Rhodes, 2001; Boje, 2001b), of which we are aware.

This paper is structured in five parts: Part I is a brief literature review to show contributions; Part II articulates Bakhtin's Grotesque method; Part III demonstrates Grotesque method in the three spheres: McDonald's Grotesque corporate body, McDonaldland grotesque characters, and McDonaldization of the global condition; Part IV looks at the Chronotype and four types of narratives in the series; Part V is about the Superaddressee in dialogism.

## **PART I - LITERATURE REVIEW & CONTRIBUTION**

A review of the application of Bakhtin's work in management and organization studies reveals ample use of Bakhtin's other theories (heteroglossia, polyphony, polylogic, intertextuality, & dialogic imagination) but not grotesque method (see review by Boje, Jabri, and Adrian, 2004). Only two management applications of carnivalesque (Rhodes, 2001; Boje, 2001b): both are valuable contributions to a Bakhtinian analysis of popular culture. Both applications privilege the negative pole, the organizational-mocking (of Simpsons' Springfield Nuclear Power plant or Nike Corporation by activists) and do not elaborate or apply regenerative aspect of grotesque's positive pole that enables renewal and organizational metamorphosis. The contribution of this article is to make up for this area by using McDonald's as an example, analyze the organizational metamorphosis from a grotesque perspective.

Hazen (1992, 1993) has the most extensive application of Bakhtin's dialogic imagination (1973, 1981, & 1986c) in developing her polyphonic organization theory (see also Bate 1997, 2000), but did not touch on Bakhtin's 1940 dissertation on François Rabelais novel (published in English, 1968). Oswick, Anthony, Keenoy, Mangham, and Grant (2000) use Bakhtin (1981, 1984, & 1986c) to operationalize a Bakhtinian dialogical analysis of organizational learning. Though, they did not use grotesque method. Barry and Elmes (1997) propose a narrative strategy method based in Bakhtin's (1981, 1984) work. They argue that strategic narratives are written in plain speech to enhance clarity (provoke objectivity) by erasing peopled-identities, as opposed to tempered speech to stimulate interest (provoke emotion) with real people. In their analysis, they too overlooked Bakhtin's grotesque method.

Birth of grotesqueness can be viewed in two ways, one is intentionally created, and the other is unconsciously emerged. You can perhaps find grotesqueness in a simple one toned/colored environment (homogenous narrative), but most often it exist in a more complex context where networked fragments exist. This is what we understand as the 'intertextuality'. In this article, beyond our development and use of "grotesque method," a second contribution is to explore the "intertextuality" of three spheres: McDonald's grotesque corporate body; McDonaldland grotesque character bodies; and McDonaldization of the global grotesque body. The first sphere: McDonald's grotesque corporate body illustrates McDonald's corporation from several dynamics, the corporate management team, the franchise restaurant management, the restaurant workers, and the international labor force. The second sphere: McDonaldland grotesque character bodies illustrate the grotesqueness found in the cartoon video tapes released by McDonald's corporation. This utility of grotesqueness can be related to the corporate strategy of this advertising theme. The third sphere: McDonaldization of the global grotesque body looks at the international impact of McDonald's both from the global consumer and labor force aspects.

In management studies, the Academy of Management journals contains the top articles in the area. These article topics represent most recent and popular topics in organizational studies. However, it is difficult to find references to McDonaldland or grotesque method, except, perhaps, only one reference to George Ritzer's (1990/2002) sociological theory of McDonaldization. Ritzer (1990/2002) calls "McDonaldization" (efficiency, calculatability, predictability, & control by non-human technology) the spread of the American business model to other industries (real estate, law firms, etc) through the Weberian iron cage of rationality. The only mention of Ritzer's (1993) work is in an AMJ study (Combs & Ketchen, 1999) of capital scarcity and franchising of 91 restaurants chains using agency theory perspective'. Yet, this Ritzer-reference is only a citation of Ritzer's industry study and not about McDonaldization theory. What is interesting is that McDonald's is the exemplar in 51 mainstreams Academy of Management Journals (AMR, AMJ, & AME). None of them mentioned grotesque.

Finally, in a literature review of Bakhtin's work in Academy and international management and organization journals, we found 51 articles that cite Bakhtin or his concepts, but not one developed the grotesque method. In sum, grotesque method can make a significant contribution to management studies, and also to interrelating Ritzer's work on McDonaldization with the spheres of corporate McDonald's (widely studied in strategy) and McDonaldland (not studied presently in management disciplines).

## **Part II – Bakhtin's Grotesque Method**

Grotesque method is not precisely defined by Bakhtin (1968: 28). There is a double meaning and a double-body in his definition. First, the method by which grotesque cycle takes place of a degrading and a renewal, which represents the regeneration (metamorphosis). Second is the method that is used in studying this cycle. An object says Bakhtin (1968: 28) is "degraded according to the grotesque method: they send it down to the absolute bodily lower stratum, to the zone of the genital organs, the bodily grave, in order to be destroyed." The context of his partial definition is how the grotesque cycle is incomplete in modern times, so that it "brings down to earth" (p. 27), but only the "negative remnants of the grotesque concept of the body" remain (p. 28). Grotesque method is intertwined with "grotesque realism." In grotesque realism, "elements are used to amplify and distort reality to make it more credible"; it is also used "for any sort of hyperbolic distortion that creates a sense of strangeness through the confusion of interpenetration of different realms" (Delbaere-Garant, 1995).

To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving (p. 21).

Bakhtin goes on to explain the principle of grotesque realism, in ways that gives us further method insights. Degradation lowers and grounds the "high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (p. 19-20). Bakhtin states that "Grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis of death and birth, growth and becoming" (p. 24). To this principle Bakhtin always adds the indispensable trait, ambivalence.

In sum, 'grotesque method' is the basis of Bakhtin's (1968) study of the history of grotesque, how grotesque aesthetic developed. Its grotesque tastes changed from Medieval Renaissance of the

16<sup>th</sup> century to the modern centuries, to modernity, before the postmodern turn that followed his work. With these changes in epochs, there is a renewal of what counts in the historical moment as grotesque. During Rabelais's (1532/1873) novels, it was appropriate to ridicule the king and clergy, to use dung and urine to degrade. This was not to just mock, it was to unleash what Bakhtin saw as the people's power, to renew and regenerate the entire social system. It was the power of the people's festive-carnival, a way to turn the official spectacle inside-out and upside down, just for a while; long enough to make an impression on the participating official stratum. With the advent of modernity (science, technology, industrial revolution), the mechanistic overtook the organic, and the officialdom no longer came to join in festive-carnival. The bodily lower stratum of humor dualized from the upper stratum.

Next we look at applying grotesque method to the study of grotesqueness in the three spheres: McDonald's Corporation, McDonaldland, and McDonaldization.

### **Part III – Grotesque Method in three McSpheres**

#### McDonald's grotesque corporate body

Corporate bodies are renewed for the next generation of employees and customers in ways this section seeks to explore using grotesque method. The theory is that at each historical moment the corporate grotesque body is at the intersection of its old and new body offering death (retirement & downsizing) to old workers and life to newly hired ones; this Bakhtin (1968: 322) calls the "two-bodied image." The two-bodied image is not a life cycle theory; McDonald's uses hyperbolization to express the simultaneity of its –two bodied grotesque corporate bodies. Organs are severed from the corporate body; new ones are added, at each moment in McDonald's history; both Bakhtin (1968) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) pursue the body dismemberment (& memberment; grafted parts) or body without organs image of capitalism. McDonald's found in our literature review (Boje, Driver & Cai, 2004) of strategy is theorized and studied as a closed system whose strategy and form are finished, unchanging.

If you look at the changes in Ronald from Speedee (pre-Ronald with chef's hat) through Bozo the Clown (pre-Ronald) on to Ronald's transformations, we see strategic humor's traces. McDonalds corporate has promoted the Ronald clown as their Chief Happiness Officer for 41 years, since Ray Kroc introduced Ronald as corporate symbol in 1963, and put him in the 1965 Macy's Thanksgiving Parade.

In 1999, McDonald's hired ad agency Leo Burnett, who hired a LA stylists to refashion Ronald's hair: give it waves and more hipness; a recent software distributor gives Ronald images a spiked hair look.<sup>1</sup> Ronald, in 2003, got an executive office next to the CEO, Jim Cantalupo.

As the clown-symbol of McDonald's Corporation, Ronald is carefully and minutely controlled, every detail micro-managed. Careful ad agency research, focus group trials, gets done to make the corporate brand-mascot conform to rational systems of corporate control; yet Ronald is played by humans; there are 250 Ronald, making about \$40 K if they do 400 appearances a year, and get a role in ads. Clowning is serious business. Bakhtin cites Marx and Engels famous quote, how representatives of old authority are "mere comedians of the world order whose real heroes have already died."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wacky Adventures of Ronald McDonald <http://shop.store.yahoo.com/cooltoons/wacadofronmc.html>

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1968: 213, from Marx and Engels Works, vol. 1, p.118.

A brief review of clownery shows that the fashion, speech, and gestures change with the fashion, as a way to renew McDonald's to each generation of customers and employees (to old dies; the new is born). In 1963, Ronald was a marketing gimmick created by ad executives Barry Klein and Ringling Brothers clown Michael "Coco" Polakova to put McMagic into the fast food world.<sup>3</sup> Willard Scott (NBC Today Show) played Ronald until he was dumped in 1966; "I was too fat," says Scott.<sup>4</sup> Ronald did not appear in TV commercials until 1966.

Ronald was an orphan clown until 1971 (the year McDonald's opened in Japan), when McDonaldland and companions for the clown prince, conceived by an ad agency (Needham Harper & Steers) in 1970 (as a way to compete in the Saturday morning cartoon market) began airing. The first companions included Mayor McCheese (with head of cheeseburger), Hamburglar (a masked burger-headed bandit), Sheriff Big Mac (also with head of a burger), the Professor (always carries a wrench in his tool kit), Captain Crook (imitative of Captain Hook, symbolize Filet O' Fish sandwiches), Grimace (a bumbling purple blob), CosMc (hybrid of space vehicle and alien creature).

Woods (2002) theorized that "Ronald the Clown has experienced a metamorphosis into a fun-loving, powerful creature that promises children magic... a character known by the academic world as a trickster."<sup>5</sup> According to Voight (2003: 20), Ronald McDonald "follows a closely guarded set of rules that govern how the fast-food icon looks, moves and talks, and where he can go." The design is carefully done, with few mishaps (an exception is the 1996 Arch Deluxe Burger where Ronald played adult games, like golf. Ronald is being strategically re-fashioned, reports Voight (2003) to spearhead McDonald's new global brand initiative.

#### McDonaldland grotesque characters

The folly of McDonaldland qualifies as deeply ambivalent grotesque humor, a 21<sup>st</sup> century "feast of fools" and fast food banquet with a 16<sup>th</sup> century Rabelaisian legacy. McDonaldland, while G-rated, and carefully scripted to present the politically correct and strategically intended corporate image, has moments of corporate debasement. For example, in the Wacky Adventure video series, Ronald McDonald (part I) sets up the cartoon storyline that will occur when he enters the cartoon world (part II); he always returns to the human world of human-clown (part III). The episode involves sightings of aliens; Ronald pulls out the McDonald's operational manual for alien visitation protocol; McDonald's has action plans for every conceivable situation. This corporate parody is self-reflexive, and it is not the only instance.

In each McDonaldland ad, video, computer game, and toy merchandise release, there are shifts in the grotesque material's bodily appearance of characters. Figures like the Professor, Captain Crook, Mayor McCheese, Fry Girls, Ronald, Grimace, Hamburglar, Sheriff Big Mac, and others are created.<sup>6</sup>

We (Boje, Driver and Cai, 2004) suggest Sheriff Big Mac and Mayor McCheese were too bodily grotesque in appearance and reminded people of crime in the streets; Captain Crook, with one arm, is literally grotesque being bodily real, perhaps too real. They were retired by the early 1980s (Hamburglar, Grimace and Fry Girls and Boys survive).

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<sup>3</sup> Ethan Switch August 29, 2003 <http://www.thewaxconspiracy.com/wicked/200308.php>

<sup>4</sup> p.8 Leung, Shirley and Suzanne Vranica (2003) Ronald McDonald is so busy: But how does he do it? June 3 [www.inebriantia.org/2003/06/ronald\\_mcdonald.html](http://www.inebriantia.org/2003/06/ronald_mcdonald.html)

<sup>5</sup> Woods, William Walker (2002). Ronald McDonald as trickster. Marketing the old as new. <http://www.harding.edu/alphachi/PDF/ONLINEPUBLISHERS/2001Alum/Ronald.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> McDonald's Spain Christmas Eve ad 1999 can be viewed at <http://visit4info.com/details.cfm?adid=13248>

There is a historical and symbolic intertextuality between McDonald's and McDonaldland that the grotesque method reveals (see Boje, 2001a. for more on narrative intertextuality and deconstruction). The symbol of McDonald's corporation is the golden arches; this "M" appears everywhere in McDonaldland. The "M" is on Ronald (front and back), on the coats of Birdie and Hamburglar, on the sash of Mayor McCheese, on the cap pirate's hat of Captain Crook.

We can use grotesque method to deconstruct the bodily symbolism of the McDonaldland video series (Wacky Adventures). In each episode is a series of what Bakhtinian scholars would easily recognize as food banquets, full of food theft, food wars, and most of the entire grotesque banquet. Grotesque banquet is a parody of Plato's symposium (found in Rabelais, 1532/1873, prologue to Book I). In the Wacky series we can deconstruct the characters and the grotesque banquet. We start with Hamburglar, then Mayor McCheese, Birdie, and end with Ronald. In McDonaldland and McDonald's, these two spheres are joined by the banquet: "The sphere in which the new birth of an image takes place is a material bodily sphere, in this case a banquet" (1968: 215).

Hamburglar has the role of the "gaping mouth," the open abyss where Cheeseburgers and Hamburgers disappear (Bakhtin, 1968: 317); he is addicted. For Bakhtin (1968: 325): The gaping mouth is related to the image of swallowing, the most ancient symbol of death and destruction." Hamburglar's head looked literally like a hamburger, but by the 1990s, he was re-stylized to be a boy prankster, wearing a blue denim jacket with a yellow "M" on the back. Hamburglar is the alter-ego of Ronald; Hamburglar has all the negative lower stratum vulgar traits: gluttony, food addition. Ronald retains the positive upper stratum traits: never gets angry. Hamburglar is the exaggerated open mouth, the grotesque bodily material image of devouring and devoured: the swallowing mouth.

In 1980, Birdie, the Early Bird joined the McDonald's characters (along with Sundae the talking dog). Birdie is McDonaldland's first leading female character (not counting the Fry Girls). Birdie is strategically fashioned to represent McDonald's breakfast meals. Deconstructing Birdie, using grotesque method is quite revealing. Birdie is also a hybrid: bird and young girl. She is perky and smart, able to fly helicopters, drive race cars, and navigate a starship. She also knows Kung Fu and appears to be the smartest character. As bird-woman, Birdie symbolizes the animal body of chick and female body of young woman. Birdie, as a hybrid (human/bird), is a grotesque parody, but of what? One deconstructive reading is she is the beast before chicken slaughter, but one that has been genetically altered through genetic gene-splicing. This is a travesty and parody of the genetically modified food controversy that surrounds McDonald's and the kinds of unmodified beef and free range chickens European markets prefer. As such Birdie can be read as the female bird/woman hero of the genetically modified chicken banquet, a goddess of the biotech century. She is an uncrowning of that spectacle, as well as its crowning. The main duality for Birdie is her relation to other hybrid animal/human characters in McDonaldland, a legitimation of McDonald's impunity in animal slaughter, by enchanted animal/human characters. The treatment of animals is systematically organized in the system of McDonaldland carnivalesque banquet and character images.

If we apply Lévi-Strauss' (1969) raw and cooked structuralist distinction, then birdie has a special relationship to the other hybrid characters. Birdie is pre-cooked ('raw') while Hamburglar and the McNuggets (McNuggets appear approximately in 1985; plus the retired characters of Mayor McCheese and Sheriff Big Max) are 'cooked.'

The McNuggets (usually a trio, not sure of year introduced, guessing 1985) are small, oval, potato-brown figures with faces. Like Fry Guy and Fry Girl they too wear a variety of costumes.

Not all characters survive (being cut from the stage is part of the constant regeneration and renewal). In 1988, CosMc joins the other characters in McDonaldland. CosMc is strategically fashioned to take advantage of Star Wars mania, but did not catch on and was quickly retired. In the next image (L-R) is Birdie, Sundae (dog) Grimace (in back), Hamburglar, Ronald, and Mayor McCheese)

In Mayor McCheese mid-1980s comeback, a walk on appearance by the grotesque character in a video adventure about time travel. In the time travel episode of McDonaldland, we revisit the ancestral character (Mayor McCheese) and see Ronald in 1970s fashion. During this period, Ronald has sideburns and is wearing lift shoes (not shown); they are dancing to disco. The ancestral grotesque body of Mayor McCheese attests to the management philosophy of “historic immortality” (Bakhtin, 1968: 324). At each time travel stop (prehistoric dinosaur, Renaissance castle, Wild West, & 1970s disco) the costumes and even the speech patterns of characters change to meld with the historical context. In this sense, the McDonaldland episodes are a self-parodic look at McDonald’s corporate sphere: how it adapts and renews its grotesque images to be immortal in its own eyes, and the eyes of each generation. This is what Bakhtin describes as the grotesque method of regeneration and renewal. We just looked at the corporate sides (McDonald’s & McDonaldland), next we study the exterior, the McDonaldization.

We have saved the best character for last: Ronald. Ronald in the Whacky adventures is the character with magical powers: the ability to transform the world with a thought or a word. In the first and last parts of each episode, we see a human Ronald clown and his stuffed dog Sundae. Ronald sings songs, does some comic standup, and chats with Sundae. The middle episode is the adventure (quest journey) where Ronald is called to adventures by one of the pals who live in the virtual cartoon world of McDonaldland. Ronald communicates with them by computer screen or with his Dick Tracey-style video/radio watch. The cartoon companions do not venture out into the real world, where Ronald (& Sundae) lives. Ronald descends into the McDonaldland, a sort of underworld.

In one of the six episodes: “*Have Time Will Travel*”, the McDonaldland characters, at Ronald’s urging, decided to be swallowed by a (devouring) dinosaur; once devoured they can reenter the time machine the dinosaur swallowed at the beginning of the segment. We will revisit Ronald’s savior image in the next section on McDonaldization.

### McDonaldization of the global condition

McDonaldization (Ritzer 2002) is both an embracing mimetic as McDonald’s is spread to other industries (insurance, real estate, schools), and it is resistance (all the environmental, vegetarian, animal rights, anti-GMO & nutrition activists). We can hypothesize an intertextual relation between the three spheres: McDonald’s, McDonaldland, and McDonaldization.

In terms of grotesque method, some of the characters point to McDonaldization in parodic ways. Hamburglar is a symbol of the McDonald’s corporation’s gaping mouth, devouring, swallowing, and birthing new outlets (30,000 in 121 countries). McDonald’s is the gaping mouth, swallowing the world whole, morphing animal and human character elements in McDonaldland characters, and outwardly swallowing and devouring franchises in McDonaldization, as well as in the mimetic spread to other industries that Ritzer (2002) describes. Ronald, the symbol of McDonaldization reterritorialization of the globe, is being reterritorialized. Ronald is transitioning from the fragments of “broken grotesque figure” (Bakhtin, 1968: 53) we study here. In its inner and outer swallowing and wallowed, devouring and devoured; the grotesque elements of the three spheres become intertwined, and interpenetrating.

Next we offer an example of more external propagation of grotesque symbolism (using the body to resist). McDonald's and McDonaldization is resisted with grotesque humor. For example, a human figure of one of the Lettuce Ladies, who stand outside McDonald's outlets, wearing nothing but lettuce leaves; there are also Cucumber Gentlemen (wearing you guessed it).

Activists use grotesque method to reconnect the ever-changing McDonald's corporate body to the grotesquely real bodies in the slaughterhouse, to the genetically modified beef and chicken, to the dismembered and minced flesh of animals. It shows where spectacle "transgresses its own limits: (Bakhtin, 1968: 26); it removes the romantic mask to reveal through mockery the grotesque real that hides behind the façade." To the activist, McDonald's "hides something, keeps a secret, and deceives" (p. 40). Bakhtin's (1968: 225) grotesque realism is applied to the between space between human and animal: "The dividing line between man's consuming body and the consumed animal's body is once more erased."

In 1999 McDonald's Spain ran a commercial on Christmas Eve. The restaurant is dark except for a spotlight that moves the spectator through the restaurant. A biblical hymn, sung by an unseen choir (Peace on Earth), is sung. The spotlight focuses attention on a Hamburglar doll under the tree. The spotlight climbs the strains and shines down on a larger than life, Ronald McDonald statue, as the choir sings "Christ is born in Bethlehem."<sup>6</sup> The ad introduces ambivalence: is Hamburglar being reborn the Christ in the manger, and is Ronald a God? As Bakhtin (1968: 223) remarks "nothing is impossible to God" in the carnivalesque travesty humor: in this case the transformation of Hamburglar, under the Golden Arches takes on the meaning of under the cross.

Activists parody the religious symbolism they read in McDonaldland. One image found during our research is typical of the genre: the spirit Birdie flies above the crucified Ronald (Christ) while the companions (representing the two thieves) receive blood's redemption.

Another image found in a recent art exhibit in the UK depicts the last supper (called McSupper) where the meal served is McDonald's cheeseburger, coke and fries. The ambivalent scene serves to bring McDonaldland down to earth, to situate Ronald and the companions as a travesty, a parodic degrading of the gospel. In this way the spheres of McDonald's (its heroic image), McDonaldland (its religious symbolism), and McDonaldization (its evangelical capitalism & activist opposition) are once again, interpenetrated and made intertextual using grotesque method. Bakhtin (1968: 296) looks at parodies of the Last Supper in Renaissance times: "In the comic banquet there are nearly always elements parodying and travestyng the Last Supper." We saw this in the religious allusions in McDonaldland, and in the above parody of resistance.

As we now have three videos in the Whacky Adventure series, it is time to ask some questions about the type of story being told. It turns out there is not one type of story, not just adventure story, but altogether four types of stories; and these exactly coincide with the typology that Bakhtin (1986d) designed for novels. The four types are summarized in Table 1 (note: will substitute carnivalesque for Bakhtin's term *Bildungsroman*) and we categorize stories, not novels. Bakhtin builds his typology in order to articulate the more fundamental concepts of chronotype and its relationship to emergence.

#### **PART IV: The CHRONOTYPES and FOUR NARRATIVE TYPES**

Chronotype, put simply, is meaning embedded in time-space, meanings of time embedded in space, and vice versa. In the first video, *Scared Silly*, there is an excursion into the underworld of

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<sup>6</sup> McDonald's Spain Christmas Eve ad 1999 can be viewed at <http://visit4info.com/details.cfm?adid=13248>

McDonaldland, a camping trip that morphs into a trip to a Haunted Mansion, powered by a mouse on a treadmill (an allusion to, & parody of Disneyfication). In short, the first video chronotype is a biographical history which is embedded in camping trip to this part of a hellish and ghostly theme park (it ends up being parody not only of Disneyfication, but of McDonaldization).

In the second video, the *Legend of Grimace Island*, the chronotype is the embedding of corporate meaning in past time, within the historical (biographical) legend of tribal Grimaces and Grimace, as well as the travel adventure through rough seas, past sea monsters and pirates, down the whirlpool into the caves, then ascending into a kind of Odyssey to the mythological past, and a kind of colonization by corporate characters of tropical, hidden, green and peaceful native island, a kind of return to Garden of Eden before McDonaldization.

The third video, *Visitors from Outer Space*, is a different chronotype: it begins in a thoroughly McDonaldized metropolis (McDonald Ville with M-images on every surface); the adventure is Hamburglar's kidnapping by aliens (from a Disney-looking fountain with statues of McDonald's characters), then a space ship travel across the galaxy to catch a family of aliens on their vacation travel; it is complete with galactic food war, and ecological cleanup; thus globalization morphs into Fast Food Star Wars, and parodic McDonaldization, in the process of becoming outer space empire, galactic McDonaldization embedded in future time.

Here is a 52 year old corporation imagining strategic changes using visual artistry, developing biography in the first two videos, enshrining ancient culture in the second video (Grimace Island), and giving McDonaldization museum status in the third video (Aliens) which becomes the galactic expansion of McDonald's fast food empire. We believe (consciously or unconsciously) corporate McDonald's is running scenarios of its destiny, deciding how to extend its greatness, and exercising creatively its managerial force of while, not just globally, but with super galactic aims: boldly going where no fast food giant has gone before, conquering fashion tastes, renewing vitality, creating something of enormous strategic consequence; how to repeat its motif in space?

In the first three (of 6) videos (I have 3 more to transcribe), McDonald's is linking times past, to times present and future, and relating in this video global and galactic space; in short, embedding temporal into spatial in this strategic chronotype exploration. This video is a way of visualizing time and space, merging past characters with future expansion in what Bakhtin (1986d) describes as:

... the inseparability of the time of an event from the specific place of its occurrence (*localita und geschichte*), the visible *essential* connection of time (present and past), the creative and active nature of time (of the past in the present and of the present itself), the necessity that penetrates time and links time with space and different times with one another, and, finally on the basis of the history that pervades localized time, the inclusion of the future, crowning the fullness of time...(p. 42)

It is the fullness of time embedded in space, the chronotype that we believe McDonald's does strategically in the series; we also contend that chronotype is an important contribution to strategy theory. The McDonaldization images are done in the fullness of time and link time to in all its historicity with space, the space of the globe that McDonald's seeks to inhabit; after 30,000 outlets on Earth, what next?; Outer Space.

We will give examples of the multi-layered narrative typology, then look at how corporate meaning, strategic allusion is embedded in time-space using the multi-layered narrative (adventure, travel, biographical, & carnivalesque). McDonald's and the animator's creative

visualization of strategic chronotypic scenarios, is an imaginative way to do planning, but also an important way to escape the Weberian iron cage of rationalism. There is something else going on, the strategic imagination is very romantic strategic narration: McDonaldland explores very utopian time-space (Barry & Elmes, 1997), while not dealing nearly as much with the more grotesque reality of its strategy; such as the critics of McDonaldization are quick to portray (Ritzer, 2002). As such McDonald's strategic chronotopic is caught in what Bakhtin (1968d: 42) calls "romantic historicity." Here we can trace all three spheres of "multifaceted activity" (Bakhtin, 1968d: 42): Corporate Strategy, McDonaldization, and the creative dialogic imagination of McDonaldland. Seeing McDonaldization from the viewpoint of eternity (future science fiction) is the power of time, embedding its corporate strategy into space. It is also self-parody, a degrading of its own strategy, which could explain the juxtaposition of so many "M" images on every space (characters, buildings, spaceships, planets). The ad agents and marketing talent perhaps enact this strategic plot: to replicate its corporate motif on all historical time images, and on all spatial surfaces; the fact that this is exemplary of Bakhtin's chronotope concept is either planned, coincidental, an accident, are something the artists threw in as a private joke. Yet, the McDonaldization of past, present, and future, while globalizing the planet is certainly a strategy; one hotly debated in sociology, but less so in management (Ritzer, 2002; Watson, 1999; Telwar, 2003).

This video, we believe is a creative strategic scenario: McDonald's is symbolically not containable by a world, even an entire solar system; it is not confinable to a "patch of terrestrial space" or to some small epoch of "real time" (p. 43). McDonald's is mixing it up, becoming interwoven with all worlds, spreading everywhere, filling in the gaps of time and space, rescuing or impoverishing reality, joining patches of reality with mythological worlds (*Legend of Grimace Island*), in this video, *The Visitors from Outer Space*, becoming otherworldly.

In each adventure, travel, biography, or carnivalesque facet of the video narrating, the four types are also the four types of Bakhtin's novel (See Table 1). In the multilayered narrative, McDonald's ads and symbols are embedded in space-time, reborn in past, or in galactic future, in all videos ascribing corporate fast food chronotype significance, corporate and strategic interpretations to life and desire. Most significant to the field of strategy, is the use of grotesque humor (exaggeration, material bodily, even cosmic body hyperbole) to break out of the iron cage of rationalism; a prison cell. Our literature review suggests that the field of strategy has contained the meaning of McDonald's in its own chronotypic prison of rationality, not seeing the more humorous and comedic manifestations of the creative will to power. This is a new journey for strategy, to look at hyperbole as strategic consciousness, and animation as visual graphic portrayal of what rational mind finds hard to grasp: the visual clarity of strategy in the animators' "graphically visible and perceptible" world (Bakhtin, 1986d: 44).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century McDonald's was theorized in management and sociology as only abstract rationalism. In the time-space of the 21<sup>st</sup> century McDonald's clarifies its strategy with visual humor, graphically working out its romantic strategy, seeing McDonaldland as utopia, while sociology views McDonaldization as nightmare. McDonald's strategically wraps itself in mythology, science fiction, and humor, to purify its utopia (McDonaldland) of all criticism, only what the animator can not resist in parody. Only an occasional Freudian slip or too many M's flashing per minute give the game away. Our task is to analyze the graphically visible strategic allusions and make them more transparent.

Taping the strategic aspects of the carnivalesque grotesque, the otherworldly expedition that is travel, adventure, bits of Hamburglar biography, buy also the carnivalizing of space, with grotesque planetary and alien bodies, embedding the spatial radii in the McDonaldization of

future time. The animation is quite Baroque, lots of visual grotesque detail and exaggeration, interlaced graphically with corporate images. McDonaldization in this video is the “condensation of the whole of life” (Bakhtin, 1968d: 45) into an epic of space adventure, along all four narrative (novel) types in Table 1. It is McDonald’s corporate terrestrial space embrace of the temporality of human and nature time, where the corporation seems almost to swallow space and time in its gaping mouth. It is hyperbole and fantastic “chronotopic artistic imagination” (Bakhtin, 1986d: 46). This is a space fairy tale, yet also a realistic niche for futuristic corporate expansion; after all people in space need their fast food, and as such McDonaldization is double-bodied (on the threshold between globalization and Star Wars Empire). In our analysis, we pause frequently to analyze the mixing of real corporate markers (restaurant in McDonaldland Square, M’s emblazoned on buildings, characters, and space vehicles) and how charming it is embedded in a space fairy tale that morphs into a legend of Fast Food Star Wars, a hyperbole. In this romantic tale, the rebellion is already crushed, the Jedi Knight (Hamburglar) is rescued by his father Darth Vader, played by Ronald McDonald, revealed behind the grotesque mask to be mechanistic rationality, all made concrete and graphically visible in the territorialization of outer space. This is not just artistic fantasy, it is corporately strategic infusion of fantasy time with corporate logo, and it is “naïve realism” the idea that the public would put up statues in its metropolitan parks to the McDonaldland characters.

In sum, striving for a multilayered, multitemporal and multispatial (i.e. chronotopic) narrative that is graphically visualized, allows us to extend strategic narrative analysis into its visual imagination. As Bakhtin (1986d: 49) puts it “time and space merge here into an inseparable unity, both in the plot itself and in its individual images.” The concrete locality of solar system, is an echo to McDonaldization, both its celebration, its parodic degradation, and in the process its renewal and regeneration descent and ascent; uncrowning and crowning). In fact, its metamorphosis as corporate futuristic strategic scenario. As we transcribe and analyze the dual-one (visual & verbal) dialog, we see that the videos are imbued with the mood of their contemplators, the McDonald’s executives, the Leo Burnett ad agency, and the Klasky-Csupo visual talent. Together, in this video, they condense strategy and space, into historical future. McDonald’s strategy is chronotopic, its plan graphically imagined, McDonaldization globally, transformed into a galactic adventure, but is also a strategic biography, in the early stages of becoming, a metamorphosis that could not occur without grotesque humor (the carnivalesque). Temporally, it extends the corporate life cycle back to the past and into the future.

The elder Grimace islander, the adult Ronald, the youthful explore Hamburglar, the world traveler; Birdie, all are symbols of inter-generational McDonald’s corporation, in a journey through time and now space itself; a strategy visually and clearly depicted in the artist’s Seeing Eye, in the contemplated gaze, that we, as spectators, are to follow. It is a gaze that we find to be profoundly chronotopic, with interpenetratability of space, time; and corporate strategy, analyzing its visual image with its verbal dialogue, lets us see McDonald’s mutual concretized strategy riddle with creative possibilities, scenarios for future development, what Goethe, called “germinative seeds” (as cited in Bakhtin, 1986d: 50). These seeds are romantic, exaggerated, and naively realistic (i.e. McDonald’s fast food chain in space that is as yet uninhabited, as far as we know, except by us). This is the usurpation of idyllic time (cyclical), lacing it with biological time (character’s in family unit watching home movies in Grimace Island) and merging it with historical time (traveling back to Grimace Island, forward to Outer Space). The plot remains utopian, romantic, merry, perhaps blinding corporation to the underbelly of its own strategy, something the sociologists are quick to theorize.

Yet there are little moments of resistance to corporate will and the desire to swallow the world, and the space as a whole. The series reveals quite a critical parody. One we shall explore here is

the idyllic conception of labor time; it is monotonous biographical time, a time a teen worker is trained in the rational systems. In this adventure, as the hero's sing and run through the park in the metropolis setting of McDonaldland Square, the teen worker is not smiling, he appears alienated, not a frown, but a look of disinterest on his face; too busy working to be distracted by play. Yet, it is the heroes who interrupt their space adventure, to return the burgers Hamburglar stole from the restaurant: so the teen has no time to smile, and the product must be returned; demonstrating, we suggest, that surplus value is the highest of them all. The restaurant itself is that full apparatus of Rabelaisian grotesque humor, a cheeseburger exaggerated in size to a restaurant, with a lone male teen worker inside, making cheeseburgers, carrying a serving tray of M-emblazoned drink, burger, and fries to a waiting customer, while Hamburglar steals an entire tray of precious cheeseburgers. And what is a Hamburglar, a grotesque body double, humorous half human have fast food (perhaps not as humorous to labor as to management). The cycle of work day time, is not interrupted by the saga; for a moment labor time, space time, and McDonaldization time are side-by-side, in a graphic visual map that is simultaneously celebratory and parodic. Labor and consumption also meet, labor preparing product for consumption, McDonaldland heroic characters preparing audience for McDonald's rebirth in 21<sup>st</sup> century Tomorrowland. This is labor time, the cycle of work time, becoming juxtaposed with the historical future of space travel, space adventure, and grotesque fast food characters. Ironically, while parodying Disney in the 1<sup>st</sup> video (*Scared Silly*), the Haunted Mansion parody, and for briefer time in this 3<sup>rd</sup> video (*Visitors form Outer Space*), Disney statues in Tomorrowland parody, the McDonaldland characters are far more grotesque than the Disney counterparts (what is more grotesque than half human, half fast food bodies?). Both Disney and McDonald's send their characters to the past, and into the future, in parodies of Greek and other European legends and fairytales.

Pillsbury, owner of Burger King, does not flash a "P" or emblazon P-images on buildings, vehicles, and character costumes (in their sponsorship of animated tale of the Swan Princess, they have a commercial with the doughboy before the film). Here the McDonald's strategy in all six videos, is to repeatedly flash "M's" in some kind of non-subliminal fashion, for who could not notice them everywhere, in every scene, on every conceivable surface. No, here the corporation is embedding itself in the chronotope, as time gets embedded in space, and space embedded in time. We believe this is done to sustain the Golden Age of the Golden Arches, to keep it fresh and alive from generation to generation, but perhaps unlike Disney or Pillsbury, the strategic humor part of the strategy is too grotesque, too much hawking and carnival barking of the "M." Perhaps having escaped the cage of strategic rationality, the grotesque humor strategy is overdone, not as nuanced and subtle as the committee of corporate executives, ad agents, and animation graphic artists imagine it to be. Maybe adorning the world with "M" is itself grotesque, not funny at all. Perhaps a Big Mac eating the world and outer space is more grotesque than Rabelais's Gargantua or Hobbes' Leviathan. After all grotesque realism is not always funny.

**Table 1: Bakhtin's Four Types of Novel**

Types/ Dimensions	<b>I. Adventure</b>	<b>II. Travel</b>	<b>III. Biographical</b>	<b>IV. Carnavalesque</b>
<b>i. Plot</b>	Ordeals that show deviation from normal course of hero's life (e.g. Grimace's encounters with sea monster and pirates in 2 <sup>nd</sup> video);	Ronald & companions move through time and space, having occasional escapade adventures; the world is static, the heroes	Not a deviation from normal (not adventure or travel); family unit is constructed (birth, childhood,	The emergence is the development of the character; this is Ronald's essential becoming, his transformation

	the gang playing in Franklin's virtual game in 1 <sup>st</sup> video; outer space in 3 <sup>rd</sup> one	move through it (all videos)	school years) located before and after adventure ordeal, travel	from ready-made 1963-1998 hero to superhero
<b>ii. Time</b>	A time taken out of history or biography; a reworking of temporal categories into psychological time, depiction of danger, agonizing suspense, and insatiable passion (for treasure and courage)	No sense of historical time; this is leisure time away from either adventure or biological time; time is poorly developed in travel; history in fragments	Time that is quite realistic, showing life process of characters, the organic parts of family and tribal life; they leave reality to have adventure or travel	Ronald's character is changing, he changes to emerge popular in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century; this is no longer linear time, it is cyclical time
<b>iii. World view</b>	Baroque backgrounds, external world full of exoticism; a world that tests Grimace (in 2 <sup>nd</sup> video)	Much spatial and temporal diversity; contrasts of city/tribe, success/failure, happiness/unhappiness, victory/defeat; all in exotic strangeness	World is no longer background for the hero; islands, sea, city has biological significance	Ronald is betwixt and between two worlds (fantasy and real), between premodern & modern, between transcendental & rational
<b>iv. Hero</b>	Hero (e.g. Grimace) is not changed; the video epilogue reinforces that he always had courage	Hero (i.e. Birdie) travels through naturalistic fragments; inherent hero traits are secondary	Hero (i.e. Grimace) gets parenting and education results, discovers destiny, but is not changed	Hero (i.e. Ronald) is rejuvenated, and now, instead of just clown magic, has godly spiritual power

Bakhtin's (1986d) typology of the novel, holds particular interest to us, since it shows how the humor strategy (IV. Carnavalesque) is interspersed, naturally with the Whacky Adventures (I), but also with the Travel (II) and most interestingly with the Biographical (III) type. In short, we are saying that the six videos constitute an epic, much like an epic novel, but rather than just being one type (i.e. adventure), it is multi-layered with all four types.

In the 3rd video in the epic series (*The Legend of Grimace Island*), Birdie thinks she is on a pleasure cruise; she packs her finest French perfumes, and is clearly part of the travel storyline. Hamburglar and Franklin are in search of treasure; they could care less about leisure and sightseeing; they want adventure (as do the McNuggets, pretending to be pirates). The more biographical material is part of Grimace's storyline: we learn the history of the Grimaces, including its legends, and we are presented with an epilogue, a home video of Grimace as an infant, shots of him growing up, going to school, and performing ballet in a Tutu; finally, there are video clips of Grimace's mother, father, and both grandmothers. That leaves us with only the carnivalesque type, which has been our focus thus far: here we see that Ronald is embedded in a sort of *Bildungsroman* novel. Ronald's character is emerging, in the process of becoming a new Ronald (something that Bakhtin says is not characteristic of heroes in the first three types of novel).

Now, what you may well be asking yourself? What has this to do with strategic management? Changing the character traits of the crown prince, the symbol image of a corporation is a radical transformation, and it is something that is uniquely Ronald. Bakhtin's typology of the novel brings with it an important insight: the significance of realism. At first glance, we do not read any realism in the epic series: it is just whacky adventures, silly travel excursions, some grotesque humor, but certainly not a smidgen of realism. The realism is in the biographical category, in giving Grimace a family history, including legends and myths of Grimace Island, the entire gang gets to be a family unit: Ronald is the father; he has kids sitting around watching his significant other's videos of being an infant, growing up, and becoming an adult companion. In short, Ronald and Grimace are adult pair, and Hamburglar and Birdie are the kids; Franklin, as we learned in the first video (*Scared Silly*) is one of the neighbors kids, visiting the family unit (Franklin's father is a scientist). If we look at marketing strategy, McDonald's is not just selling to kids, but to parents; in short, to the family unit; that is their niche in the marketplace. Grotesque humor, while important, is a piece of the overall strategy; the adventures appeal to kids, perhaps even the sophisticated travel stories of Birdie are an appeal, but the biographical material resituates Ronald as head of the family unit, and that appeals to parents with kids, and to the kid inside each adult. Ronald is on the borderline between epochs, between reality and cartoon, between modern and premodern, modern and postmodern, between his Disco epoch (1971-1998) and his new regenerated persona (1998-2004), as the hipper, more powerful, and more spiritual leader.

## **PART V: THE SUPERADDRESSEE & DIALOGISM**

Grimace is a very interesting character in the McDonaldland video theories. We here point out that he is the superaddressee in this advertising theme. **Superaddressee** – Grimace's utterances are part of the 'dialogism,' the system of utterances (Bakhtin's most misunderstood concept). We know from the 1998 McDonald's press release (McDonald's, 1998), related releases (Hume 1998; Kramer, 1999) and the credits at the end of each video, that a committee of McDonald's, Klasky-Csupo, and Leo Burnett executives and creative talent, worked out the characters' utterances. The 1999 press release (Kramer, 1999) tells us that the executives were worried about the characters' utterances, not wanting, for example, to make Ronald too much a salesman, but wanting the characters to be edgy, timely, more in step with popular culture; the disco epoch of McDonaldland (1971-1998) was over; the new Rugrat epoch of the new video series was meant to rejuvenate, Ronald, Grimace (the whole gang) and McDonaldland. In the words of a Leo Burnett executive, "to reignite the power of this icon," Ronald (Kramer, 1999: 14-18). Participants indicated that McDonald's corporate executives believed Ronald could do more than just being a figurehead spokes clown at "high-profile public relations stunts such as delivering Happy Meals to the United Nations" (Kramer, 1999: 14-18).

Grimace can not see his own cosmic power without Ronald's reflected gaze; Ronald can see Grimace's powers, and through the Ronald-mask we imagine the strategists can see it, and the animation talent in this episodes, reveals its semantic depths. Grimace's outsidership, his foreignness, and his nativeness, plays a powerful role in McDonald's. Ronald (& executives behind his mask) see possibilities for Grimace, see the courage of Grimace, see his great cosmic force, his power over chaos, and in this episode Grimace gets a transmutation magic (the ability to change his material body, at Ronald's request, into surfboard. Grimace sees the corporate world through a native's purple eyes. Grimace does not renounce his Grimace Island culture and worship the god of consumption; he does seek the protection of his savior, the one who addresses his cosmic fear, Ronald.

As such, Grimace's (like Ronald's) utterances have authors, corporate and animator ones, and addressees, superaddressees, beyond Ronald, Hamburglar, and Birdie. Holquist (1986: xviii), in his introduction to Bakhtin (1986a), gives some introduction to superaddressee. The relevance of superaddressee is that it makes the utterance strategic, authored here by a corporate committee, to address audiences beyond the McDonaldland gang, possibly beyond kids. The corporate discourse and the native discourse of Grimace is a dialogic encounter between two cultures, which as Bakhtin (1986a: 7) tells us, "does not result in merging or mixing" since "each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched." McDonaldization too is a dialog between two cultures: McDonald's and 121 foreign nations. Grimace is a mask, where the corporate, ad agency executives, and animator's dialogue with the native, explore the semantic depths of the underworld. Grimace engages the McDonald's corporation in dialogue, to surmount their closedness, their rational managerialist philosophy, and see the depth of meaning in a non-materialistic culture.

The higher superaddressee is more an ideological expression (managerial philosophy & truth, conscience in the court of history, a bid for legitimacy in the court of popular culture, or a rebuff to the foes of McDonaldization). The 1989 video (McTreasure Island) has less lofty audiences, and there is no list of McDonald's executives, or even Leo Burnett ad agency ones in the credits. This may well be because the video is produced according to a formula which while evolving, is not undergoing the major revolution that is occurring with the 1989-2002 six-video series produced by Klasky-Csupo, but authored as well by McDonald's and Leo Burnett executives; who if press releases are accurate, went on a strategic retreat (more likely several) to exploit and control the rejuvenation. A sender-message-receiver model (e.g. Shannon-Weaver or Saussure) will not do. In Bakhtin's dialogism, there are many authors and many addressees to be consider; superaddressees such as the marketplace, foes of globalization, the critics of popular culture. It is the tracing of utterances, particularly grimace utterances, and not just verbal, but also visual material with bodily animated language, that we explore, deconstructing authorship, and addressee, beyond what one character says to another. More important intertextuality is at stake: in particular a liminality between the three spheres (betwixt & between McDonaldland, McDonald's Corporation, & McDonaldization).

According to the assembled executives in 1999, the purpose of the camp Ronald retreat was strategic, to exploit this "unexpected hit" series in the as yet unproduced three video episodes planned for 2000 through 2002 release (*The Legend of McDonaldland Loch, Birthday World, and Have Time Will Travel*) (Kramer, 1999). As we analyze *The Legend of Grimace Island* we do not anticipate many changes from *Scared Silly*; the important changes are yet to come. Grimace is part of the history of popular culture. Each strategic change is rooted in a particular popular culture epoch: pre-McDonaldland (1948-1970); McDonaldland without women (1971-1980); Disco McDonaldland (1971-1998); the Klasky-Csupo McDonaldland (1998-2002). Each utterance, each change in character material bodily form, is linked to "socioeconomic factors," (Bakhtin, 1968a: 2) to the dialogue of the strategic actors behind the masks of the McDonaldland characters.

In sum, *The Legend of Grimace Island* is a representation of dialogism, one that goes back into the darkest past, where McDonald's most interesting carnival character finds his voice: Grimace is the peasant native, the Island native, the carnival peasant confronting modern materialism, but appropriated by corporate handlers, to entice a new generation of consumers. Here, we show how corporate strategy can be reconceived in light of Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, double-body, carnival, and superaddressee. As Bakhtin puts it (1986b, as cited in Holquist, p. xix): "there can be no such thing as an isolated utterance." In this episode McDonald's stretches its metaphysical descent, down into primeval mythology, and also the historical time back into native history.

Thus, its managerial ideology is dialogic to the primeval, and this is not a dialectic, not a duet, but a third audience, the higher superaddressee, beyond the immediate audience of companions, and kids.

## **Conclusions**

We hope the images of grotesque bodily images give you some idea of the interdependent intertextual relationships between the three spheres: corporate bodily McDonald's, McDonaldland grotesque bodily characters, and grotesque McDonaldization in the counter-strategies of activists use to challenge McDonald's with an image of a grotesque world being McDonaldized.

We have used Bakhtin's (1968) grotesque method to show the interdependency of grotesque bodily hybrid elements: fast food/human (i.e. Fry Girls & Boys; McNugget trio), human/animal who is raw uncooked bird/girl, the cooked burger/humans (Mayor McCheese, Sheriff Big Mac, & Hamburglar), the gaping mouth of Hamburglar/McDonald's, vegetable/human (Lettuce Lady), and the savior/human (Ronald). The study reveals the deep problems of fast food portrayal (and counter-images) in the globalization of this industry. The three spheres are interrelated in the battles over fast food, nutrition, and environment. My intended contributions was to show the dialectic of the negative mocking (debasement) and the positive pole of organizational (as well as activist) renewal and regeneration. In this way the present study goes beyond Rhodes (2001) and Boje (2001), who show the former, but not the later aspects of the grotesque method. Beyond these works, the scores of other management articles reviewed; do not address either aspect of the grotesque method, focusing instead on polyphonic, heteroglossia, and dialogic imagination.

As Rhodes (2001) and Boje (2001) point out, the carnivalesque can be appropriated in the service of a corporate spectacle, being an inducted messenger of its ideology. McDonald's pares off and elects the most precious grotesque bodily elements to represent food products and dispatches them into the belly (and womb) of the world's global body. The male and female animal/human characters merge the corporate bodily significations with product images that appeal to children. In short the carnivalesque that debases and degrades becomes a "safety valve" to suave activist passions (Rhodes, 2001: 382). As Rhode's (2001; 382), but not Boje (2001), points out the key here is the strategic use of "ambivalence." McDonald's critiques itself in parody, degrades its fast food images, and in the same episode crowns and elevates its own corporate ideology by creating embodied grotesque representations of animal/human and in the case of Ronald spiritual/human characters, which Sundae (the wise-cracking dog) and Hamburglar (the wise-ass teen) constantly debase. Each episode is double-bodied (the old McDonald's degraded and the new McDonald's elevated). In addition to hawking its ideology, McDonald's explores possibilities and options that enable it to sustain the renewed corporate image in popular culture.

In addition, as Bakhtin (1968: 281) concludes that the collective food banquet is the "conclusion of labor's collective process" not only a "biological process" but also an "animal act" that becomes a "social event." This is a theme that in the above analysis interconnects the regenerative and renewal force of the collective, some inside McDonald's and McDonaldland's spheres, others in an outer sphere, resisting or enabling McDonaldization. A Bakhtinian reading is that these spheres are interconnected in a somewhat tamer regenerative cycle than in Rabelais's day.

In the McDonaldland sphere, McDonald's works out its management philosophy. We view this as a corporate struggle for constant renewal, a striving for corporate immortality. Each generation of customers and employees learns anew to appreciate (or depreciate) McDonald's and

McDonaldland. Ronald, I hope I have shown, represents the postmodern spiritual expression, the cosmic connection to the hereafter. According to grotesque method, the spiritual allusion of Ronald to savior and the activists' portrayals as the crucified Christ and the Christ of the Last McSupper, are all travesties of the gospel.

In sum, the three spheres combine to form the regenerative and renewal system of images that are dialectic, and further the renewal and regeneration of all three spheres.

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