‘Emergent Structure’ in the Abu Ghraib Political Cartoons of Emad Hajjaj in a News Context, or, What do the Images of Abu Ghraib ‘Want from Us’?*

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Abstract: The Torture scandal of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq was exposed in 2004 when 60 Minutes introduced the story by placing on its web site the photo of a hooded prisoner on a box. That particular image, chosen by many cartoonists and scholars as the iconic image to represent torture, is the subject of this study. I apply the theories of “conceptual blending” (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) to the Abu Ghraib cartoons of the hooded prisoner as well as to the cartoons that draw on that iconic image years later. By tracing the cognitive and visual strategies political cartoonist Emad Hajjaj used to transform that powerful icon into 24 cartoons between 2004-2010, I illustrate how the image continues to be blended into new “emergent structures” that are applied to other news events. I suggest that, over time, the Hajjaj cartoons changed from timely commentary on the mistreatment of prisoners, to icons that encourage “a devotional reading” (Mitchell, 2006) of related and unrelated news events. Those same images have also inspired political “culture jamming,” in which artists turned the iPod into iRaq, and posted mock iRaq posters, extending the life and reach of the image.

Keywords: Political Cartoons, Abu Ghraib, Iraq, Editorial Cartoons, Emad Hajjaj, Conceptual Integration, Blending, Emergent Structure, Visual Communication, Culture Jamming

* The concept of images wanting things from viewers is inspired by Mitchell, W. J. T.’s book title, What do pictures want?: The lives and loves of images, 2005

Introduction

The HUMAN RIGHTS scandal of the prison of Abu Ghraib began to unfold on January 13, 2004, when Spec. Joseph Darby gave the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command (CID) images of Iraqi prisoners being mistreated by American prison guards. A June 6, 2004, CID investigation report includes the following summary of the material: “A review of … a total of 1,325 images of suspected detainee abuse, 93 video files of suspected detainee abuse, 660 images of adult pornography, 546 images of suspected dead Iraqi detainees, 29 images of soldiers in simulated sexual acts, 20 images of a soldier with a Swastika drawn between his eyes, 37 images of military working dogs being used in abuse of detainees and 125 images of questionable acts” (Benjamin, 2006). CBS’s 60 Minutes on April 28, 2004 broke the story with the photo of a hooded prisoner on a box featured as the main visual on its web page.1

1 http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch?id=4674645n&tag=mncol;lst;3
Figure 1: U.S. Soldier Appears to be Checking his Camera Next to the Iraqi Man on the Box. Photo Found at http://apertura.hu/2008/osz/mitchell2

The British magazine, *The Economist*, in its May 6, 2004 issue featured the hooded Iraqi on a box as its cover photo with the title, “Resign, Rumsfeld” (The Economist, 2004).³

Iraqi artist Salah Edine Sallat painted a mural in Baghdad with the hooded man on his box standing next to the Statue of Liberty on her pedestal (Figure 2). “That Free DOM … For Bosh,” says Mitchell (2005), “provides the verbal counterpoint to the visual image, activating the metaphorical transfer between the American icon of Liberty and the Iraqi icon of abjection like the current flowing through a wire.”

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² Photo Found at http://apertura.hu/2008/osz/mitchell2
³ See cover at DemocraticUnderground.com
http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=103x49240
The hooded man also was featured in the first cartoon Emad Hajjaj drew on the subject (Figure 5), and is the object of this study. According to his web site, the cartoonist, was born in the West Bank in 1967, and grew up in the Wehdat Palestinian Refugee Camp in Amman, Jordan. He now works for Al Ghad newspaper (Amman, Jordan), and Al Quds Al Arabi (London). Hajjaj’s cartoons are also available on www.cartoonweb.com and www.political-cartoons.com, and his own web site www.mahjoob.com. In the first quarter of 2009, his web site registered 14.4 million page views, and 1.4 million visitors. He has APS for iPhones, iPads and iPods.

**Why was this Particular Image Important?**

There is a general agreement that out of all the Abu Ghraib photos, one emerged as iconic: the hooded man on the box (Walsh, 2006). Sarah Boxer called the photograph “the icon of the abuse” although it shows “no dogs, no dead, no leash, no face, no nakedness, no pileup, no thumbs-up” (Boxer, 2004). W.J.T. Mitchell wondered why that image “had become … possibly a historical marker” (Mitchell, 2004). He found the image powerful because, “despite its context in scenes of horror and scandal, it has a curious modesty and dignity” (Mitchell, 2005a). Ray Morris observes that political cartoons portray groups, using individuals to stand for groups, and using familiar, simple contrasts to stand for complex, competing powers (Morris, 1993). It is not surprising, then, that the man has come to stand for the country of Iraq in cartoons as well as in counter-culture posters discussed later in the study.

This study applies the theories of conceptual blending or conceptual integration to cartoons whose subject matter is triggered by factual news events to determine how emergent structure is achieved in a news context. After a theoretical discussion on blending and emergent structure, I first review the literature that describes how different disciplines have used blending, and then review blending studies on political cartoons. Finally, I use the work of cartoonist Emad Hajjaj to illustrate how blending and emergent structure enable cartoons to perform new and creative functions beyond the original purpose of commenting on daily news.
Research Questions

1. How is blending triggered and elaborated in cartoons to create emergent structure?
2. What function does blending perform in a news context?
3. How does “emergent structure” tell us what the images of Abu Ghraib by Emad Hajjaj “want from us?”
4. When did the imagery of Abu Ghraib begin to trail off?

Research Methodology

Every single cartoon that appeared in the Arabic Archives of the cartoonist Emad Hajjaj for the period of May 1, 2004 until December 31, 2010, was examined to identify the general themes that emerged out of the 1,967 cartoons published during that period on local, Arab and international topics. After isolating the cartoons on Iraq, three main themes were identified: Cartoons lamenting what Iraq has come to; cartoons that used the fallen statue of Saddam Hussein to provide a running commentary on the new rulers of Iraq; and cartoons of American soldiers mistreating Iraqis in various locales, for example, the killing by a U.S. Marine of a wounded and unarmed Iraqi in a Fallujah mosque in 2004 (Sites, 2005), or the rape of a teenager and the murder of 24 in Haditha on March 12, 2005 (Jervis, 2005). There were cartoons on several photos of the various abuses of Abu Ghraib, but I narrowed down that topic by focusing only on the 24 cartoons that employ the iconic image of the man on the box. In the next segment, I describe blending and emergent structure and show how Blending Theory has been applied in other disciplines.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) is a methodological framework developed to capture and account for the creative aspect of the way human beings manipulate semantic content. The theory primarily focuses on conceptual constructions made up of elements from two or more input spaces (Kowalewski, n.d.). Fauconnier & Turner, (1994b; 1998) developed the theory of conceptual integration to account for what happens when two or more concepts are blended to form a new “emergent structure.” So conceptual blending operates over mental spaces as inputs (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 1). Because elements in one mental space often have counterparts in other spaces, an important component of mental space theory involves establishing mappings between elements and relations in different spaces (Coulson and Oakley, 2000). A mapping, or mental space connection, is the understanding that an object or element in one space corresponds to an object or element in another space. In this way, complex scenarios can be represented by a series of mental spaces and connections between them (Coulson & Fauconnier, 1999). Below is an illustration of the four-space model followed by an example of how that model works.

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In this four-space model “The Christian Taliban” expression consists of two input spaces structured by information from discrete cognitive domains (The Taliban on one side and the American religious right on the other), and a generic space that contains structure common to all spaces in the network (religion). In blending, structures from the two input spaces are projected to a separate generic space. The blend inherits partial structure from the input spaces (religion and extremism), and has emergent structure of its own (Fauconnier & Turner, 1996, p. 113), in this case, the emergent structure posits that Christian extremists look like Muslim extremists. The flexibility of this model rests on the fact that it carries within it the potential “for emergence of new content, not available from either of the input

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6 Wizard of Whimsy
http://www.bushwatch.com/attackamericantaliban.htm
spaces. New juxtapositions, new frames, new features all arise when we combine elements from distinct mental spaces.” In fact, when we see those “bits of emergent structure” we know that we have blending (Grady, Oakley, & Coulson, 1999).

Fauconnier and Turner (1998) lay out five “optimality principles” of conceptual blending, constraints under which blends work most effectively. These are: Integration between the two spaces; Web: Tight connections and correspondence between the blend and the inputs; Unpacking: the ease of reconstructing the inputs and the network of connections, given the blend; and Topology: Elements in the blend should participate in the same sorts of relations as their counterparts in the inputs. And finally, Good Reason: If an element appears in the blend, it should have meaning (Grady, Oakley, & Coulson, 1999).

**Literature Review**

Even though Conceptual Blending Theory originated in the field of linguistics, it has been successfully used to describe virtually all types of semiotic data (Kowalewski, n.d.). It has been used to study language and grammar (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998), metaphor (Grady, Oakley, Coulson, 1999), one-line jokes (Wu, 2000), humor (Coulson, 2005). Blending has also been used in teaching cultural narratives (Howell, 2010), in the philosophical study of character (Fenton, 2008), in the processing of emotions (Cánovas, 2010), and in song (Zbikowski, 1997). Hiraga (1999) used it to explore poetic creativity. Robert (1998) employed blending in the interpretation of mathematical proofs, Imaz and Benyon (2007) argued that blending has become increasingly important in software engineering and human-computer interaction. Tim Roher (2001) analyzed the metaphors of the Internet. Blending has also been used to study political cartoons. That is not surprising, given that conceptual blending is viewed as one of the central cognitive processes governing human thought and imagination (Turner, 1996).

**The Study of Political Cartoons**

Political cartoons are a good source for the study of blending and emergent structure because they persuade by “the purposeful condensation of sometimes complex meanings into a single image” and are “bundles of judgments” that “show how things were, how they are and how they may be” (Bostdorff, 1987, p. 44). Because editorial cartoons comment on factual events, they provide a unique opportunity to study both the event trigger for the cartoon, the blending that takes place in the cartoon, as well as how a political cartoon is extended to other events over time to create a framework or a general narrative for the way the reader should view the issue at hand.

Rhetoricians have suggested that cartoons may be viewed as visual arguments “which constitute the species of visual persuasion in which the visual elements overlie, accentuate, render vivid and immediate, and otherwise elevate in forcefulness a reason or set of reasons offered for modifying a belief, an attitude or one’s conduct” (Blair, 2004, p. 50). Like other editorial outlets, cartoons both reflect and influence trends in public thought. Bergen (2003) finds that they “are thus a source ripe for cognitive linguistic analysis” because of their use of “the same mechanisms that every day as well as political language do.” After identifying several recurrent metaphors in pronouncements made after the September 11 attacks, Bergen analyzed the role three cognitive mechanisms used to understand the cartoons: conceptual
blending (Turner & Fauconnier, 2002), conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and cultural models (Holland & Quinn, 1987); (Bergen, 2003). Bergen, who compared the way the various cognitive mechanisms are used in language and in cartoons, found that “the discovery of the use of common metaphors, blending strategies, or cultural models in language and in editorial cartoons can serve to confirm the non-linguistic nature of these cognitive mechanisms” (Bergen, 2003). In political communication, visual arguments have been used by the state to demonize the enemy (Conners, 1998), and by social movements to demonize the state. Kari Andén-Papadopoulos notes that cartoons do not always support dominant views. In fact, she says, the Abu Ghraib images “were not in any simple way ‘spoken for’ or tamed by the dominant news frames.” Because of them, the previously banned “sight of American troops in the role of sadistic torturers has become an integral part of our understanding of the Bush administration’s ‘war on terror’.” She also found that the proliferation of those visuals in the wider culture, “where they, through various creative and counter-framing practices, often have been transformed into sites of protest and opposition to the very deeds they represent” (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2008). Edwards and Winkler (1997) note that the photos of prisoner abuse raise questions about the rhetorical functions of wartime visuals. They point out, however, that “the images of Abu Ghraib do not exist in a vacuum, but participate in a hypertextual environment of remembered images regarding war, atrocity, and other habituated aspects of bodily presentations” (pp. 10-11). Furthermore, such images are viewed and discussed “in terms of their existence within a wider arena of visuals, both as presented in print media, and as remediated in editorial cartoons.”

Edwards and Winkler (1997), who examined the rhetorical function of the 1945 photograph of the flag raising at Iwo Jima as it was appropriated in a number of recent editorial cartoons, argue that the parodied Iwo Jima image “operates as an instance of depictive rhetoric that functions ideographically.” Hariman (2007) observes that “iconic images are an important example of how modern public life depends on the appropriation and recirculation of images across a wide range of media, arts, genres, topics, and audiences.” He also lists the number of artifacts on which the Iwo Jima flag raising is found, including, “commemorative medals, beer mugs, paperweights, fireworks, comic books, Christmas tree ornaments.” (Hariman, 2007a). The type of alterations performed by various groups, “throw key features of political experience into sharp relief. Iconic images are revealed as models of visual eloquence, signposts for collective memory, means of persuasion across the political spectrum and a crucial resource for critical reflection” (Hariman, 2007a).

And that is why oppositional groups find interrogating those valued images useful.

### Analysis of Emad Hajjaj’s Cartoons

In the month of May 2004, shortly after the Abu Ghraib torture came to light, Hajjaj drew six cartoons on Abu Ghraib. The iconic photo of the man on the box was the first cartoon on the subject (Figure 5), and remained on the first page of Hajjaj’s web site from 2004-2008, suggesting that he considered it the most important cartoon. Below, I use blending and emergent structure to analyze that particular cartoon. I also comment on some features of other cartoons below.

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7 Also, see tattoos of Iwo Jima, at, [http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=IWo+Jima+tattoo&FORM=IGRE4](http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=IWo+Jima+tattoo&FORM=IGRE4)
The setting in Figure 5 is the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, where the Statue of Liberty curiously finds itself. Here, conceptual integration is achieved by blending. The first mental space originates from long-term memory (the schema of the State of Liberty and what it represents) as an icon that stands for American ideals. The second mental space is the Iraqi prisoner, representing “tortured Iraq.” The cross mapping between the different inputs that originate from those main input spaces constructs the statue as the counterpart of the Iraqi prisoner and the torture and imprisonment as the counterparts of liberty and freedom.

Input one, the flowing robe of Lady Liberty (worn by judges), is the counterpart of the blanket worn by the prisoner, and is mapped over it. That mapping in the blend changes the meaning of the robe. Instead of its standing for law and order, it becomes prison garb. Furthermore, the robe, whose clasp has a KKK cross, is now mapped against the input of America’s past with slavery. The pointed hood input on the statue’s head is mapped against its counterpart, the prisoner’s hood, reminding some researchers like Apel (2005) of KKK lynching. But while the statue can see, the prisoner is sightless with no slits for his eyes; so he is in the dark literally and figuratively. There is even some internal mapping that gets projected within the same mental space: The torch of freedom in the mental space of Lady Liberty’s better self is mapped on an electricity box with a lever that seemingly delivers an electric shock. The emergent structure is tyranny, instead of freedom and enlightenment. The tablet, which in the original statue is inscribed with the date of American independence in input one, is mapped against what looks like a tablet with an inscription of the KKK. The generic space has a box-like object in both statues. If America was standing on a pedestal in the past, it no longer is. The pedestal on which we metaphorically place people of elevated status is reduced in the emergent structure to a mere box similar to that of the Iraqi prisoner’s. Size is also mapped from one space to another. The statue of liberty has shrunk from the gigantic symbol of freedom to mere mortal size, as has its pedestal. The statue itself is
showing some cracks and parts of it are crumbling in the cartoon, suggesting a crumbling image.

The Lady’s foot, which is supposed to step forward, ready to lead people to freedom, simply mimics the foot of the hooded prisoner as its counterpart in the mapping and is going nowhere. The symbolism of the statue of liberty is hijacked and used to show how far the torturers have gone from the ideals Lady Liberty, a.k.a. America, represents. According to Apel (2005) the image, “resonates with allusions to the crucifixion, robed monks, the statue of liberty, the Klan, the executioner, the mask of death” (p. 2). By blending images from present-day inputs and past memories and images, the cartoon undermines the military’s claim that it is invading Iraq to liberate Iraqi citizens “yearning to breathe free.”

In terms of the use of symbolism, the cartoonist continually draws on sacred American symbols, only to dismantle them, creating a new emergent structure vision of America very different from the image constructed in U.S. civics classes. Mitchell (2006) notes that “It is not just the secular Liberty that is being ironically transferred to Iraq in this image, and not just the initiation into the bizarre homophobic fantasies of the ‘brotherhood’ of the American fraternity system (the Limbaugh scenario), or the routinized rapes of the American prison system. It is, finally, the central devotional icon of Christianity that is being cloned in Iraq, … with the staging of an Arab man as a Christ-like sacrifice” (p. 304). The outstretched arms of the prisoner affirms that image.

The cartoon fulfills Fauconnier and Turner’s five “optimality principles” as described by Grady, Oakley, Coulson (1999). There is integration between the two spaces, the connections and correspondence between the blend and the inputs is tight both physically (shape of hoods, type of robe/blanket), and ethically (freedom/tyranny); unpacking the blend is not difficult because it is easy to reconstruct the inputs and the network of connections both within the figures and between them (for example, there is a connection between the outstretched arm that carries a torch and the outstretched hand that grasps the lever of the electric box). In terms of the topology, which stipulates that elements in the blend should participate in the same sorts of relations as their counterparts in the inputs, it is clear that they do. The box matches the pedestal in shape and in that they both work as pedestals of sorts. Metaphorically, the fear of falling has been transferred from the prisoner to Lady Liberty (parts of which are crumbling). Freedom and tyranny have a relation to each other as opposites and so blending them is legitimate. And finally, Good Reason: all elements in the blend have meaning that is understood cross culturally (Grady, Oakley, & Coulson, 1999). The flexibility of this model rests on the fact that it carries within it the potential “for emergence of new content, not available from either of the input spaces. New juxtapositions, new frames, new features all arise when we combine elements from distinct mental spaces.” In fact, when we see those “bits of emergent structure” we know that we have blending (Grady, Oakley, & Coulson, 1999).

Below, I selectively analyze some features of other cartoons with the same image to show how symbols that are familiar and sacred to popular culture (Iwo Jima) are reinterpreted to shed light on what happened in Iraq.

**The Abu Ghraib Prisoner goes to Iwo Jima**

Figure 6 takes advantage of the iconic image of the photo of Iwo Jima and turns it into a cartoon Hajjaj calls, “Iraqi Prisoners.” The cartoon uses the photo of U.S. Navy corpsmen
by Joe Rosenthal as an input space source which, in its original form, denotes bravery, heroism and the planting of the flag of freedom and victory.

Figure 6: “Iraqi Prisoners,” 6 May 2005 (In Black and White)

The artist then superimposes it on the Abu Ghraib iconic figure of the prisoner. The American corpsmen, like the prisoner, have a hood reminiscent of the KKK (Apel 2005). Since freedom and torture stand in opposition to one another, Emad Hajjaj takes America’s triumph and pride and maps it onto its shame, using the slant of the flag pole as an input space to match the slant of the pole that hoists the Iraqi prisoner who used to stand on a C-Ration box. The new meaning that emerges metaphorically equates the old Iwo Jima flag [planted in the name of freedom], with the new American flag, [the hooded Iraqi prisoner, tortured in the name of Iraqi liberation]. Textually, the title the artist gave the cartoon in Figure 6 suggests that the American corpsmen are also prisoners in Iraq. The fact that Figure 6 is drawn in black and white indicates what the political cartoonist feels on the subject of torture.

Three Flags and their Stars

Like other nations, America has constructed its own national identity by using cultural symbols that have come to stand for the nation, one of them, the flag. So it is not surprising that the flags of the USA and Iraq were targets for cartoonists.

Figure 7: “American Flag,” (11 May 2004)
Flags metaphorically stand for nations. In Figure 7, blending is achieved by using the American flag as a mental space, and the simplified outline of the hooded prisoner of Abu Ghraib as the other. The stars on the American flag input space are made to be the counterpart of the hooded prisoner by mapping the figure of the prisoner on the stars. The generic space has pointed shapes that look like stars as well as the hoods; elements common to the prisoner and the stars. Because of this visual shape distortion, the blend in the emergent structure results in a United States that stands for torture; after all, stars represent states in the original flag. In Figure 8, the first mental space is the old Iraqi flag; the second mental space is the tortured prisoner of Abu Ghraib. The flag in Figure 8 is drawn in the pan-Arab colors of black, white, red, and green. The tortured outline of the man on a box morphs into the three Iraqi stars. The title, “Torture in the New Iraq,” suggests that this is not the Iraq U.S. policymakers had promised. In Figure 9 the black and white color of the flag denotes mourning. The three stars in Ba’athist Iraq (later removed) represented the three goals of the Ba’ath Party ([Arab] Unity, Freedom and Socialism). Those stars now turn into figures of sorrow; the mother with a dead baby, the cleric presumably with a dead martyr, and right in the middle, the symbol of torture; a commentary on what happened to Iraq. Here, the input spaces, in addition to shape, are the absence of color (mourning), and the three stars, representing something other than what they represented during Ba’athist rule.
Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated before her departure for Europe in December 2005 that “[t]he United States Government does not authorize or condone torture of detainees” (Rice, 2005). The cartoon (Figure 10) was a response to her statement. Here, her cape is the input space that, when projected against a wall, yields the shadow of Abu Ghraib. Our knowledge of how shadows are projected on walls, (large when light shines on them), is one input space. That knowledge is also used as a metaphoric input space to suggest “casting a shadow of doubt.” The conceptual integration of the statement of denial and the shadow result in a new formulation: “Condoleezza Rice is a big liar.”

The drawing of Prophet Muhammad’s cartoons in Denmark triggered a cartoon that maps the old Abu Ghraib figure over a pen whose pointed tip is of a similar shape to the pointed hood (Figure 11), resulting in a blend with a new emergent structure that suggests that the American claim that it invaded Iraq only to free it, is not genuine, while the Danish claim that the country was protecting freedom of expression when it refused to censor the Prophet Muhammad cartoons is genuine.

The recruitment of the Danish cartoon issue through blending to comment on Iraq kept the Abu Ghraib issue alive long after it ceased to be in the news. This suggests that the issue was not yet exhausted in the cartoonist’s mind in 2006.

In this study, I also set out to find when the images of Abu Ghraib petered out. The last image of the man on the box appeared in 2006, although other images of Abu Ghraib were
published in March and June 2007. The last month of the Bush administration saw the introduction of a different iconic image: the shoe thrown at President Bush at a press conference on December 15, 2008. The throw inspired Hajjej cartoons four days in a row starting on the 16th of December with the “shoe and awe” cartoon. The cartoons of Abu Ghraib did not appear during President Obama’s presidency, suggesting that the image is exhausted, perhaps by the president’s pledge to do something about the prison population from America’s wars.

Blending as Political Culture Jamming

Harold suggests that “[t]hose who pirate and hijack owned material attempt to challenge our tendency to treat cultural material as property” (Harold, 2007, p. 117). Although Harold was writing about commercial speech in the public sphere, her analysis applies equally to political speech which challenges the static “branding” of nations and political ideas. Just as products with trademarks may be mocked, diluting their brand, as owners of the brand claim in court (Harold, 2007, p. 120), war protesters and some cartoonists dilute the official spin on the conduct of soldiers at Abu Ghraib and open it up for discussion in a way official war briefings from the field to eager reporters does not. Just as the magazine Adbusters jams “the corporate image factory” with its parodies (Harold, 2007, p. 158), political cartoonists jam the war PR factory with parodies that use blending as a cognitive device. The term culture jamming was first used by cultural critic Mark Dery in 1991. Says Lasn, “We jammers are a loose global network of artists, activists … We are … ethical investors” (Lasn, 1999, p. 110). Jammers argue that people absorb “a surreal quantity of information” but find the quality of information “even more disturbing.” Jammers argue that “Information diversity is as critical to our long-term survival as biodiversity … When a handful of media megacorporations control not only the daily newspapers and TV airwaves but the magazine, book publishing … industries … information and cultural diversity both plummet” (Lasn, 1999, 25, 26). Both Iraq wars were distinguished by daily war spin. Culture jamming, says Harold, “multiplies the tools of intervention for contemporary media and consumer activists. It does so by embracing the viral character of communication and culture” (Harold, 2007, 104).

Cartoonists start with old icons like Iwo Jima and rework them into new “emergent structures” with oppositional content. Culture jammers start with an iconic image and turn it into a political poster [e.g. Figure 12] (Bonner, 2004), a doll in an art exhibit (Martin, 2010), or an “insurgent T-Shirt” as a spoof in many colors. Corporations advertise. Culture jammers subvertise. “A well-produced print ‘subvertisement’ mimics the look and feel of the target ad, prompting the classic double take as viewers realize that what they’re seeing is in fact the very opposite of what they expected” (Lasn, 1999, p. 131).

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9 iRaq (iPod) tee shirt spoof, Available from Redmolotov.com http://www.redmolotov.com/catalogue/tshirts/all/ir-raq.html
The text reads, 10,000 Iraqis Killed, 773 U.S. Soldiers Dead. Videos of the man on the box are also available with the caption, iRaq, Life is Random.\(^\text{10}\)

**Discussion**

This study used the same visual (the hooded prisoner on box) to show that blending inputs result in emergent structure that may depend on similarity of shape, size, or concepts. This emergent structure, however, may be triggered by relevant daily news events (e.g. the release of photos of Abu Ghraib, or a statement made by Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice), or by a concept of freedom in an issue not directly related to Abu Ghraib torture (e.g. the controversy over the Danish cartoons of Prophet Muhammad). Those new blends open up the closed commentary space and prolong the political shelf life of an event the mainstream media consider exhausted, or want buried (Abu Ghraib torture). Cartoonists who continue to use one image long after the event that first triggered it has passed suggest to us that the image is not yet exhausted, and that it still “wants something from us,” or, in the words of W.J.T. Mitchell,

*... A narrative reading of the Hooded Man provides a date and a proper name to the figure. ... A devotional reading is contemplative and empathic, ...This is a ‘seeing as’ that does not assume that the image is exhausted by its narrative reading but asks what it means to live with the image and the world it depicts, to ask what it wants from us.*

_W.J.T. Mitchell (2006)_

Just as culture jammers refuse to ignore ad products that impinge on the serenity of public space, political jammers refuse to give up on a given topic they consider unresolved. Political jammers use emergent structure to metaphorically open up space for discussion not available because of media routines, practices, ideology, or exclusion of alternative points of view when it really matters.

This study concludes that emergent structure that results from blending has an essential function in the news cycle: keeping news alive in the world of the sound byte and Twitter, where news has been constructed as a fleeting commodity that is constantly being overtaken by new events. As such, conceptual integration creates emergent structure that is new, repet-

itive and *insistent* because the cartoons still “want something from us.” At a minimum, they want an “unhurried contemplation” of an event that is old news by the next day (Mitchell, 2004). It is important to note, however, that the emergent structure may be read by different people in different ways. Mitchell observes that while he likes Mieke Bal’s concept of “art that thinks,” he cautions that he does not want “to begin with the assumption that it always thinks like us” (Mitchell, 2006a). New events and actions “are made intelligible against the background of culturally shared knowledge” (Hall, 1980), and so the reading of the cartoons in Iraq and the Middle East and in different parts of the West may be quite different from their reading by the military. Some Western readers saw colonialism writ large, some saw gender and racial scenarios, some saw race and class, others saw a reenactment of the American prison system. In the Middle East, some editors saw an American government that has lost its way.

Political cartoons especially lend themselves to the creation of emergent structure. The interview cartoonist Emad Hajjaj gave to Al-Jazeera on March 12, 2005 suggests that he understands this creative process:

> Cartoons … turn a certain situation into a caricature, and reinterpret it with new details, which then take a whole new different meaning with the receiver. The easy frame of the cartoon … makes it a mass medium, especially in the Arab world. It is the art of moving the [political] street” (Mansour 2005, p. 3).

In the same program, Hajjaj suggests that a cartoonist must be a rebel by nature, “humor does not bear to be polite. To be a real cartoonist, you have to step over red lines, you have to argue the forbidden spaces or turn them into symbols if you cannot directly address them” (Mansour 2005, p. 10). Cartoons, says Hajjaj, tell people openly what is whispered in political salons. “Like the electrician who fixes cut wire, you are dealing with dangerous things … cartoons … only tell people what is already in their heads… but now it is out in the open in a newspaper. This is where the danger of a cartoon lies, and here is where cartoons start to become important” (Mansour 2005, p. 11). Besides, says Sarah Boxer (2004), “the hooded figure in the photograph is on a pedestal. It is already an icon,” and the emerging structure from blending shows us how flexible that icon is, and how much it tells us about the world around us provided we do not treat the context in which the torture took place as a fleeting news item.

References


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