

## The Question of Intertextuality and the Perception of Muslims: The Study Case of the New York Times Op-Eds

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*"Texts are rarely completely original but borrow and quote from other texts.  
Reporting other people's speech or thought is a form of intertextuality."  
(Fairclough, 1992)*

### Abstract

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The main objective of this paper is to question intertextuality, as one literary discourse device, in the *New York Times* Op-Eds addressing Muslims inside and outside of the United States. The researcher argues that the *New York Times* employs a whole plethora of texts to disseminate specific arguments and assumptions about such people. The periodical use of poetry, for instance, enables reporters to trigger powerful emotions in their readers, and get them take sides as regards matters related to Muslims. Add to this, the continuous occurrence of different intertextual strategies such as quotations, allusions, translations, songs and so on, are fashioned to create fixed and unstable images about Muslims in the world of print media. It is thus claimed that the reporters of the *New York Times* take shelter in intertextuality with a view to producing a sense of intimacy with their readers and attract their full attention more easily. To approach the issue at hand more effectively, the researcher starts by introducing how some scholars have perceived intertextuality. Then, he shifts into demonstrating how intertextuality occurs and manifests itself in the overarching media as represented by the *New York Times* Op-Eds. Finally, he suggests some pedagogical implications to assist students (re)consider thoroughly the multiple voices spoken inside the *New York Times* Op-Eds.

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**Keywords:** Intertextuality, the *New York Times*, Muslims, Op-Eds, Voices, Quotations

### Introduction

This paper aims at discussing the presence of intertextuality in the discourse of the *New York Times* (and henceforth, NYT) Op-Eds. It is founded on the premise that media discourse creates a new discourse out of fragments of quotation, proverbs, allusion, and the transformation of human discourses.

This means, as Talbot (2007, p. 63) contends, "Conceiving of a media text as a tissue of voices and traces of other texts." Remarkably, when people engage with discourse, they customarily go into dialogue with them, but hardly do they excavate for the hidden and out of sight voice speaking throughout.

The concept of intertextuality, therefore, turns out to be "an important additional frame through which to view media texts" (Potter, 2012, p. 27). The reader (and also the viewer) ought to make meaning from the juxtaposition of excerpts and quotations of media texts, which are believed to be in dialogue with one another. In fact, that is what intertextuality is all about: the relationship between a text and (an)other text(s), between a text and its environment, as well as between segments of the same text and between the producers and consumers of media texts themselves. It is very important to note that the reporters of the NYT Op-Eds would love to share a story or a joke with their audience by making allusions to other media texts. They would likewise quote a number of authorities and figures to embellish their texts with credibility and authenticity. In doing so, they smartly engage an entire audience with their texts by allowing them to feel pleased that they have understood the allusion and become party to the cleverness of it.

The present paper sheds light on this phenomenon of intertextuality as a pervasive discursive device within the overarching media as represented by the discourse of the NYT Op-Eds. It shows how complex the notion of intertextuality is as it occurs on multiple levels and layers of discourse. These layers are themselves sometimes interwoven and hard to detect given their cryptic nature. In order to provide a comprehensive study of this multi-faceted concept, the researcher deploys Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Within CDA, intertextual analysis has two main functions: (1) it plays an important role in revealing speaker's and writer's strategies in reinforcing or re-formulating ideas and beliefs; and (2) it can reveal traces of the dominant ideology or evidence of ideological struggle (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 54). The following queries will be considered:

- a) What are the major intertextual devices which are used in the NYT Op-Eds dealing with Muslims?
- b) Is the inclusion of such intertextual devices innocent or ideologically based?
- c) How can students approach intertextuality with a critical lens?

Before answering the questions above, it is essential to provide a comprehensive synopsis of intertextuality and its development.

### **Theoretical Background**

Intertextuality is one of the most commonly used and misused terms in contemporary critical vocabulary. '

An intertextual Study of...’ or ‘Intertextuality and...’ are such commonplace constructions in the titles of critical works that one might be forgiven for assuming that intertextuality is a term that is generally understood and provides a stable set of critical procedures for interpretation (Allen, 2000, p. 2). This term is arguably defined so variously because it has been used across different disciplines. As a result, it has taken on multiple meanings and applications. Consider the following definitions:

- Intertextuality is about how readers weave together new texts from innumerable other texts and thus rewrite every text (Litwak, 2005, p.49).
- Intertextuality insists that no work is ever truly free from dependence on other texts, both written and unwritten (Wakefield, 2003, p. 101).
- Intertextuality itself is a dialogue between one’s own text and other texts (Weigand, 2008, p. 278).

As a critical term, intertextuality is generally dated from Julia Kristeva’s use of it in ‘Word, Dialogue, and Novel.’ Published in 1966, the above essay is primarily a recapitulation of Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic nature of the novel, and thereby, itself an illustration of intertextuality (Shastri, 2001, p. 5). In fact, the compound noun *intertextualité* was viewed as a neologism: it was coined by analogy with terms from the Latin prefix *inter* (“between, in, among, or shared”) that denote mutual dependence, complexity, connectedness, and relations between texts (juvan, 2008). According to Bakhtin, any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double (Worton & Still, 1990, p. 130). Barthes reiterates the same point even more comprehensively, and with more precision:

Every text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at variable levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the text of the previous culture and those of the surrounding culture; every text is a new fabric woven out of bygone quotations. Scraps of code, formulas, rhythmic patterns, fragments of social idioms, etc. are absorbed into the text and redistributed in it, for there is always language prior to the text and language around it. A prerequisite for any text, intertextuality cannot be reduced to a problem of sources and influences; it is a general field of anonymous formulas whose origin is seldom identifiable, of unconscious or automatic quotations given without question marks (qtd in Krauth, 2003. p. 5).

In this fashion, it is believed that intertextuality is more capable of multiplying the potential meanings of the text; it enables one to go even beyond those meanings produced by the interrelationships of the text’s actual words and account for the meaning-making of a text.

Fairclough (1992), building on Bakhtin (1981) and Kriesteva (1986), introduces a systematic approach to intertextuality designed to allow for a systematic application of the concept. He points to a useful distinction between manifest intertextuality and constitutive intertextuality, or interdiscursivity. Manifest intertextuality occurs where a previous text has been brought and integrated structurally through a 'rewording of the original.' Manifest intertextuality refers to the presence of certain words of others such as quotation marks and insertions. Constitutive intertextuality, or interdiscursivity, concerns the relationships that the current texts have with conventions of text constitution, namely genre, discourse, and style which they 'reaccentuate, rework and mix in various ways' (Bullo, 2014, p. 28). It subsumes into its intestines the combination of multiple discourses and genres.

Fairclough (2003), hence, employs intertextuality to express the presence of different elements from different texts within a text-therefore the potential for the presence of different voices. Reported speech and quotes are examples of "intertextuality" (Reyes, 2011). At this juncture, it must be stressed that any text is not a static, independent entity with one inherent meaning. Rather, it should be conceived as a dynamic process, an intertextual space that is fraught with a wide range of voices that speak directly or indirectly to the reader.

Intertextuality becomes one of the most salient and pervasive features of discourse and it are closely tied to what has been called by Bakhtin (1981), heteroglossic and dialogic aspects of texts. For the present paper, the researcher adopts Fairclough's (2003) definition of intertextuality (borrowed from Bakhtin, 1981): The intertextuality of a text is the presence within it of elements of other texts (and therefore potentially other voices than the author's own) which may be related to (dialogued with, assumed, rejected, etc.) in various ways[...] The most common and pervasive form of intertextuality is reported speech (including reported writing and thought), though there are others (including irony). Reported speech may or may not be attributed to specific voices, and speech (writing, thought) can be reported in various forms, including direct (reproduction of actual words used) and indirect report.

This definition lays much emphasis on reported speech because it is regarded as the most common form of intertextuality. Nevertheless, other forms and strategies of intertextuality ought not to be overlooked on the grounds of their pivotal role in and contribution to the intertextual nature of the NYT text that is characterized by much complexity and intricacy at the level of voices and ideas. Several strategies of the intertextual representation of Muslims in the NYT Op-Eds will be identified as the analysis unfolds. Poetry, multivocality, borrowings and proverbial language need to deserve the researcher's attention because they are not introduced accidentally in the NYT Op-Eds.

Moreover, direct or indirect quotations, alongside references to authorities from politics, religion, economics and so on, are (un)intentionally included to fulfill a particular objective, alternating between information and persuasion. The first subsection presents the usage of poetry, borrowings and proverbial language.

### **Poetry, Borrowings and Proverbial Language**

The NYT Op-Eds represent one of the most outstanding sources of intertextuality. In the Op-Eds, the reporters repeatedly evoke past events in order to contextualize 'new' ones and allow the readers to follow different episodes in the lives of Muslims inside and outside of the United States. Poetry is, for instance, chosen among other literary genres, given its rhetorical dimension and lasting emotional impact on the reader. Put differently, poetry has been a central concern of several reporters of the NYT in as much as it has helped them shape the meaning of the Op-Eds written on Muslims. The poem below, aside from communicating a human emotion vis-à-vis the enemy, serves as a medium through which al-Qaeda's ideology is diagnosed. The inclusion of this poem is not coincidental merely because it fulfills some political goals. The poem represents al-Qaeda affiliates as bombers, hell-bent on taking revenge and causing destruction to the World Trade Center. This is facilitated by the dominance of numerous lexical items that suggest wars and a strong resentment for the United States. Consider words like "darkness", "poisoned", "blood", "assailant," "swords", horses", "fighter", "striking", "raids", and so on. This vast repertoire of negative words borrowed from the lexicon of war definitely alludes to Islam's long history of conflict with Christendom, from the Crusades to the war on terror.

Though the clothes of darkness enveloped us and the poisoned tooth bit us,  
 Though our homes overflowed with blood and the assailant desecrated our land,  
 Though from the squares the shining of swords and horses vanished,  
 And sound of drums was growing The fighters' winds blew, striking their towers and  
 telling them:  
 We will not cease our raids until you leave our fields.

THE POETRY OF AL QAEDA AND THE TALIBAN. *The New York Times*  
 (May 13, 2012. SR7).

In more than one occasion, the Arab world is pigeonholed as being full of contradictions that result in the immiseration and afflictions of its people. It is a world that blocks human progress and hinders scientific development owing to the authority of religion, the despotic inclinations of Arab rulers, and eventually the subordination of women. The poem that follows is introduced into the NYT Op-Eds to reflect these huge forms of ambivalence and discrepancies within the Arab world.

The tone that is prevalent throughout is sarcastic of the Arab subjects who are overcome by panic and fear of their leaders. Of course, an Arab is not necessarily a Muslim, but most of Arabs are more likely to be so.

When you cannot find a single garden in your city, but there is a mosque on every corner -- you know that you are in an Arab country. When you see people living in the past with all the trappings of modernity -- do not be surprised, you are in an Arab country.

When religion has control over science -- you can be sure that you are in an Arab country. When clerics are referred to as "scholars" -- don't be astonished, you are in an Arab country.

When you see the ruler transformed into a demigod who never dies or relinquishes his power, and nobody is permitted to criticize -- do not be too upset, you are in an Arab country.

When you find that the large majority of people oppose freedom and find joy in slavery -- do not be too distressed, you are in an Arab country.

When you hear the clerics saying that democracy is heresy, but seizing every opportunity provided by democracy to grab high positions -- do not be surprised, you are in an Arab country. ...

When you discover that a woman is worth half of what a man is worth, or less -- do not be surprised, you are in an Arab country. ...

When land is more important than human beings -- you are in an Arab country. ...

When fear constantly lives in the eyes of the people -- you can be certain you are in an Arab country. THE SILENCE THAT KILLS. *The New York Times* (Mar. 2, 2007. A17).

In the pre-mentioned extract, the reporter has included a short translated poem about Arab countries to tease and mock the Arab subjects off. As has been shown, the poem is full of negative assumptions and specious contentions about the Arabs who are projected as aliens, exotic creatures totally different from the rest of humankind. They are chained and beguiled by their past. They are anti-modernists, prioritizing religion over science, relegating their rulers to the position of demi-gods, favoring slavery and fear over freedom, exerting too much authoritarianism over their women and giving more importance to their land than to human beings.

It seems reasonable to say that poetry is a type of literature that is introduced in the NYT Op-Eds with a view to engaging the reader and stirring up his/her emotions as regards Muslims. It is an intertext that is rich in ambiguity, hence, leaving complex and multiple interpretations open to the reader. Dury (2006, p. 21) argues that:

In poetry, ambiguity can be like a 'forking' move in chess (so one piece, such as a knight, can threaten two or more enemy pieces at once). Ambiguous language can suggest doubleness, opposites merging, paths branching out. It can be a way of speaking with proverbial 'forked tongue' or with 'tongue in cheek.' It is also a way to compress the language of poetry, to make it richer, denser, more resonant.

In the discourse of the NYT Op-Eds, where poetry and ambiguity serve to provide freedom of interpretation by involving readers in examining and exploring the innumerable incidents that implicate Muslims, one can note that intertextual borrowings and proverbs are at stake. They are used in the NYT Op-Eds because they are semantically charged and more evocative than ordinary language. Borrowings, for example, have been naturalized, indigenized and accommodated in the NYT Op-Eds as they have far more reaching effects on the audience. Their use, undeniably, varies greatly according to the topic, audience and even the context wherein they occurred. Yet, this can be justified by the inability of the target language (in this case, English) to proffer a more accurate alternative. Note, for example, the occurrence of the phrase "Wein Obama" ("where is Obama?" that featured in an Op-Ed with the headline: "WHAT SYRIA'S REBELS NEED (*The New York Times*. Aug. 15, 2012. A23). Or, even the insertion of controversial expressions such as "Kafir" (an infidel) or the presence of the phrase "velayat-e-faqih" (a divine arbiter standing in for the occulted 12<sup>th</sup> imam his expected reappearance) that was included in the Op-Ed: THE OTHER IRAN LETTER. *The New York Times* (Mar. 13, 2015).

Clearly, the reporter has dwelt on borrowing as another form of intertextuality to reach out to a large public. The word borrowed could yield to a different meaning and interpretation as is the case of the term "wallah" that was introduced in the Op-Ed: "THE PERSON BEHIND THE MUSLIM" (*The New York Times*. Jun, 10, 2006. A13). At first glance, the term "Wallah" may sound as an oath or a sworn statement uttered by a Muslim. However, it comes to be allusive to any kind of profession within the Indian context. This term is arguably a bluster for the security of the Muslim traveling from and to different airports in the United States of America. One reporter reports the problem as follows:

After 9/11, I soon became used to the new rules: double-checking at borders, detentions at airports, suspicious glances on subways, especially if you are carrying a backpack. One memorable incident:

I was detained for three hours en route from Calgary to Los Angeles when the South Asian Arts festival I was attending in 2004 was suspected of being a radical Muslim group. The festival's name, Artwallah, is a play on words, a mix of the words "art" and "wallah." Wallah is a Hindi-derived word that denotes a profession; examples include taxi-wallah and chai-wallah. The presence of (w)Allah in the festival name raised flags.

Customarily, the reporter would even coin new terms to achieve his/her purpose in reporting about Muslims. Concepts such as "Bin Ladenism", "Mubarakism" start to circulate widely amongst the reporters of the NYT. What is striking is that these neologisms are virtually a sign of the subtlety and flexibility of the English language that allows borrowing and adaptation and not an infringement upon it. The use of proverbial language in the NYT Op-Eds could be perceived as another powerful instrument of intertextuality. Proverbs themselves are appreciated by the average man for their common and popular wisdom. They are usually quoted to unveil some aspects about the Muslim culture, faith and civilization. Consider the following proverbs that were inserted in the NYT Op-Eds across different years:

- Haste, as we say in Iran, is the devil's work. THE OTHER IRAN LETTER. *The New York Times* (Mar. 13, 2015).
- In War, it's said, truth dies first. LIFE DURING WARTIME. *The New York Times* (Jul. 22, 2012).
- Whether the elephants fight or play, the grass gets trampled. WHY ARABS FEAR A U.S.-IRAN DÉTENTE. *The New York Times* (Oct. 28, 2013).
- If a girl is left unattended by her family, she will run away either to a drummer or a trumpeter. TURKISH MEN GET AWAY WITH MURDER. *The New York Times* (Feb. 24, 2015).
- The enemy of my enemy is my friend. IN THE HOMESTRETCH, OBAMA COMES ON STRONG. *The New York Times* (Sept. 28, 2014).
- But in the eyes of its mother a monkey is a beautiful gazelle. IN YEMEN, VIOLENCE PAYS. *The New York Times* (Jan. 29, 2015).

In all these proverbs, the reporters have tried to express some common truth and familiar experience to their readers. They might be teaching one morale about Muslims, warning against them, or tainting them with the brush of ridicule. The NYT reporters typically draw on direct quotations in their Op-Eds to let sources enrich as well as amplify their ideas about Muslims. Such (in)direct quotations are carefully chosen and ideologically driven. The next subsection considers this intertextual device in full details.



## Direct & Indirect Quotations

Kohn (2003) asserts that reporters in the NYT have developed a huge reservoir of people in politics, business, education and other circles that they count on for a quote reflecting their newspaper's opinion on any subject. The kind of people whom these reporters can draw upon for just the right quote include (a) partisan politicians, (b) political pundits and other experts, and (c) common people. The list can be extended to include religious figures and authorities from the military. These sources of information will be investigated later.

The reporters of the NYT rarely have troubles finding someone ready to serve up a lively quote that is congruent with the editorial line of the newspaper and its opinions regarding Muslims. The next extract carries a colourful quote by the German anti-Nazi activist Martin Niemar, whose words should be celebrated in the Sunni Muslim world. He is portrayed as a victim of war, incapable of being represented. As a model of innocence, this pastor is introduced to prompt Sunni Muslims to take lessons from history about suicide bombing, and hence teach their progeny of the punishment that awaits those who engage in it. The image that is propagated about Muslims is still that of injustice, brutality and fierceness. The whole Muslim civilization is consequently criticized for maintaining silence towards suicide bombing. Consider the extract below:

The Sunni world would do well to reread the famous words by the Rev. Martin Niemar, a German pastor imprisoned in World War II: "First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me."

A civilization that does not delegitimize suicide bombing against any innocent civilian is itself committing suicide. And that is exactly what the Sunni Muslim world is doing when it does not consistently teach its children that suicide bombing against civilians is always wrong -- and that all who engage in it do not go to heaven, but straight to hell. SUNNI ARABS ASK, 'WHY US?' THEY SHOULD ASK, 'WHY ANYONE?' *The New York Times* (Nov. 16, 2005).

In another situation, the reporter directly quotes common people to vehicle their attitudes about Muslims. The extract that follows demonstrates how Muslims are viewed and treated in India. They are depicted as strangers, with whom love affairs or even marriage proposals turn into something inconvenient and unfeasible. By quoting the father, the reporter provides the reader with an opportunity to see how the issue at hand is approached by the layman.

There are millions of welfare fathers, union workers, students, and others who can easily be manipulated to advance the right quote for a slanted Op-Ed. Sita Iyer and Ayub Khan fell in love, but they were enforced to keep it secret lest their parents would know about it. This Romeo-and-Juliet-like story is dramatized to suggest not only the seclusion but also the unsuitability of the Muslim subject in any marital proposition or whatsoever. Moreover, the quotes of the father, "he will have four wives", "you will end up on the street," are after all symptomatic of this phobia that Hindus inherently experience with respect to Muslims. The love story in question reads as follows:

In 1975, Sita Iyer was a 19-year-old college junior with a secret she was desperate to keep from her conservative, middle-class parents. Ms. Iyer, a Hindu, was in love with a Muslim. To avoid detection, she would meet her boyfriend, a dashing 23-year-old business student named Ayub Khan, in downtown Bombay, where she was sure no one would know her.

It was not quite 30 years after the Partition of India, a blood-soaked event that killed some million people. India's Muslims had been steadily ghettoized.

When the truth came out, Ms. Iyer's parents were furious. "He will have four wives," her father warned. "You will end up on the street."

After she married Mr. Khan -- and changed her given name to Salma -- her family disowned her. AN ATTACK ON LOVE. *The New York Times*. (Nov. 2, 2014. SR5).

Sometimes, the reporter is more likely to quote people whose opinion agrees with him/her and turn the back to the other side of the story. Using the terminology of news writing, the *Who* here below is Hamat Dorbet, the *Where* is Nuba (Sudan), the *When* is "Sunday", and the *What* is the courage and grit of Nuba people. All of these Ws are included in the following abstract to illuminate the readers' minds about the situation of Christians in Sudan. They are arrested and tortured for practicing their rituals. The reporter is not directly quoting the pastor, but instead, he has placed himself as his mouthpiece. Note the presence of the preposition "according" that tends to introduce the opinion of the pastor and his neighbours. The reporter is making himself invisible. Yet, he is injecting his own opinion into the story. He tells of the incident this manner:

Another contrast is between the timidity and fecklessness of world leaders, and the courage and grit of the Nuba people themselves. Take Hamat Dorbet, a 39-year-old evangelical Presbyterian pastor.

In an anti-Christian campaign a dozen years ago in this Muslim-dominated country, the authorities began arresting Hamat for ringing his church bell and preaching to his congregation. They would arrest him each Sunday, according to his account and that of neighbors, and then beat and torture him for a few days (...).

Hamat is not asking for help, and he's not feeling sorry for himself. I'd like to explain to him why the world lets this happen without even speaking out strongly, and I just don't know what to say. President Obama? IF ONLY OUR LEADERS HAD MARIAM'S GUTS. *The New York Times* (Jun. 7, 2012. A27).

The above extract shows that Pastor Hamat is being persecuted for giving church services; he is hampered from practicing his Christian faith in Sudan, wherein famine has been designed as a government strategy to command and subdue the Sudanese people. The problem with this extract is that it did not subsume other opposite views about Hamat. Objectivity entails that the reporter should question the police officers why they drag him out for more torture. In other words, there is probably an omission of the opposing opinion since it might take the whole Op-Ed to another direction. Also, courage and grit are here epithets that are directly attached only to Hamat and to the church institution as a whole. Muslims here are represented as violent and anti-Christ.

Probably it ought to go without saying that direct and indirect quotes are cognitively constructed to involve the reader and invite him/her to take sides concerning matters related to Muslims. In fact, both quotes are presumed to give power and authority to discourse. Direct quoting, for example, and in so far as Whitaker, Ramsey & Smith (2000, p. 149) are concerned, "accomplishes a great deal. It gives the flavor of someone's else's speech, lets them listen to more colourful language than the reporter's." It lends the news story an air of immediacy: Readers sense they are hearing the words directly from the source's mouth. This feeling of immediacy enhances the story's credibility and encourages readers to respond directly to the speaker and his or her ideas (ibid.).

These intertextual devices are often fused together with an identification of the sources the reporters hinge on for forging evidence and credibility. They are, therefore, more capable of livening up the reporter's narrative about Muslims and according it much weight in terms of form and content. Nevertheless, their presence is questionable because they appear to be sharing an ideological loading. The next subsection examines other types of intertextuality that permeate the discourse of the NYT representing Muslims. As will be shown, media sources and historical records are introduced into the NYT Op-Eds not because they provide reporters with reliable information about Muslims, but mainly because they, seemingly, position the reporter in the realm of neutrality and objectivity.

Media sources and historical records presuppose that the reporter is not writing out of vacuum but basing his/her argument about Muslims on a solid grounding.

### Media Sources and Historical Records

Traditionally, the main sources of information for reporters have been centered on encyclopedias, textbooks and people. In recent times, the new technologies and social networks like Facebook, Twitter and other digital media have introduced an unparalleled diversity of alternative information and media sources that are readily accessible through the Internet. Each snippet of information source, ranging from the printed page through to interactive electronic media is presented from multiple viewpoints, in turn requiring the reader/user to apply sophisticated analytical and interpretive skills (Leaning, 2009, p. 103).

The NYT reporters, periodically, resort to media sources and historical records in their text and talk about Muslims. In May 2003, the NYT admitted in a front-page story that *Times* reporter Jayson Blair has fabricated comments, concocted scenes, stolen material from other news services and selected details from photos to create an impression he had been in certain places and interviewed people when he had not (Kohn, 2003, p. 89). Let us look at how the NYT reporters employ voices from the journalism industry to address the question of Muslims in the newspaper. Adam Taylor, a journalist working for the *Washington Post*, is quoted to make provoke ISIS militants. Tweets about ISIS march unto Rome have been clustered and presented as key facts in the Op-Ed to make the information accredited and more convincing for the reader. Let us consider the extract below:

The Italians got this one right. Last week, [The Washington Post's Adam Taylor helpfully collected tweets](#) that Italians put out after a murderous video issued by the Islamic State, or ISIS, warned: "Today we are south of Rome," one militant said. "We will conquer Rome with Allah's permission."

As the hashtag #We\_Are\_Coming\_O\_Rome made the rounds in Italy, Rome residents rose to the challenge.

Their tweets, Taylor noted, included:

"#We\_Are\_Coming\_O\_Rome ahahah Be careful on the highway-Ring Road: there's too much traffic, you would remain trapped!"

"#We\_Are\_Coming\_O\_Rome hey just a tip: don't come in train, it's every time late!"

"#We\_Are\_Coming\_O\_Rome You're too late, Italy is already been destroyed by their governments."

And “#We\_Are\_Coming\_O\_Rome We are ready to meet you! We have nice Colosseum plot for sale, Accept Credit Cards Securely, bargain price.” ISIS HEADS TO ROME. *The New York Times* (Feb. 25, 2015. A23).

The reliance of the NYT reporters upon accredited sources of information is important, then, because many of them do not report from zones of armed conflicts and wars. They, habitually, depend on local translators and other sources to fathom and approach events implicating Muslims from a distance. Attention to the choice of media sources need to be paid and continually questioned. Value judgments (e.g. the most respected and, in another context, famous) are accorded to these sources with a view to making the information more eye-catching and impactful. In the next extract, the reporter has quoted Abdul Rahman al-Rashed from *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* newspaper. S/He has slanted the entire Op-Ed so long as he has included an Arab voice that cast a whole responsibility on Muslims’ in what concerns extremism and terrorism; he is making use of a translation to urge Muslim communities to renounce extremism and take serious actions against it.

Abdul Rahman al-Rashed, one of the most respected Arab journalists wrote Monday in his column in *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*: “Protests against the recent terrorist attacks in France should have been held in Muslim capitals, rather than Paris, because, in this case, it is Muslims who are involved in this crisis and stand accused. ... The story of extremism begins in Muslim societies, and it is with their support and silence that extremism has grown into terrorism that is harming people. It is of no value that the French people, who are the victims here, take to the streets. ... What is required here is for Muslim communities to disown the Paris crime and Islamic extremism in general.” ([Translation by Memri.org](#)). WE NEED ANOTHER GIANT PROTEST. *The New York Times* (Jan. 14, 2015. A25).

Another intertextual technique developed by the NYT involves the use of historical documents and records to influence public opinion. It is no exaggeration to say that the NYT controls which questions to ask, how to ask them, and what types of answers to advance in the Op-Eds. Most of the time, these answers support the NYT editorial position and they go in tandem with the policies of the United States of America at home and abroad. The “paper of record” or the “Gray Lady” has been criticized for disseminating propaganda and hearsays about Muslims. As one begins to turn the pages, one is prone to notice that a great many of the stories have to do with Muslims. The reason Muslims get so much coverage nowadays is quite obvious. What is not apparent, however, is that there are in fact two kinds of stories. The first has to do with Muslims overseas, who mostly enter the American public’s imagination in the context of war and terror, or, to use the now-defunct official nomenclature, “the war on terror” (Bilici, 2012, p. 3).

For many years, this type of news dominated the pages of the NYT. Totally unknown places like Basra, Falluja, Kabul, and Kandahar become part of everyday American consciousness. In these stories Muslims appear as enemies, as troublemakers, or at best as friendly natives. (The recent Arab Spring has somewhat altered the character of stories about Muslims, though the elements of chaos, instability, and danger remain prominent.) These news stories deal with Muslims in their externality to American culture and geography and therefore appear under the rubric of foreign news. One is also more likely to encounter stories belonging to a new genre of news about Muslims. These Op-Eds present stories about Muslims in America. The Muslims in these pieces appear either as suspects of terrorism or as victims of the violation of human rights. The members of this second group of Muslims are generally represented as next-door neighbours or decent Americans, people who are struggling for their civil rights and are in need of empathy, understanding, and respect. They are domestic Muslims (ibid).

In order to address the question of Muslims more effectively, the NYW reporters occasionally make use of historical records and chronicles to consolidate their claims and manufacture consent about them. As well as historical events, specific dates are included in the NYT Op-Eds to empower its discourse about Muslims and embellish it with integrity and trustiness. The following extract details on a historical analysis about Muslim slaves inside and outside America. They are not only viewed as hostile to European invasion and averse to colonialism, but also sometimes sympathetic to Christianity and its teachings.

In 1528, a Moroccan slave called Estevanico was shipwrecked along with a band of Spanish explorers near the future city of Galveston, Tex. The city of Azemmour, in which he was raised, had been a Muslim stronghold against European invasion until it fell during his youth. While given a Christian name after his enslavement, he eventually escaped his Christian captors and set off on his own through much of the Southwest.

Two hundred years later, plantation owners in Louisiana made it a point to add enslaved Muslims to their labor force, relying on their experience with the cultivation of indigo and rice. Scholars have noted Muslim names and Islamic religious titles in the colony's slave inventories and death records.

The best known Muslim to pass through the port at New Orleans was [Abdul-Rahman](#) Ibrahim ibn Sori, a prince in his homeland whose plight drew wide attention. As one newspaper account noted, he had read the Bible and admired its precepts, but added, "His principal objections are that Christians do not follow them." THE MUSLIMS OF EARLY AMERICA. *The New York Times* (Feb. 09, 2015. A17).

The strong presence of Muslims in the NYT Op-Eds is not to be limited to curiosity or an attempt to discover and explore the Muslim self. Rather, this interest in Muslims is a farrago of fear and fascination. For a whole galaxy of reasons, the American audience would like to know what it is like to be a Muslim. Sure, the tragedy of the 9/11 had a tremendous impact on Americans and their perception of Muslims in America and elsewhere. Numerous questions kept nagging in the minds of Americans. Are they terrorists? Do they all take after Bin Laden, Ghaddafi, Saddam and al-Baghdadi? Why do they need to set up a mosque in ground zero? And, why do they bombard other mosques in Baghdad? Is Shariah or the Islamic law compatible with democracy and modernity? These questions were hardly answered, but they remarkably fueled this negative attitude towards Muslims and widened the gap between the three antique civilizations: Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

The NYT reporters play on this string of tension between Islam on the one hand and the Judeo-Christian West, on the other. The centralization of the last Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris was meant to caution the NYT audience of this growing enemy very active in foreign soils. The inclusion of the year 2007, in the extract below, is intended to draw the reader's attention to similar events that Muslims were to be held accountable of. Put otherwise, Muslims are thematized as a problem cherishing hatred, bigotry and intolerant dogmas. They are introduced as a monolith and one bloc that does not espouse difference or even plurality. This leads us to observe the workings of intertextuality in the NYT Op-Eds: the reporter quotes another text, develops it, builds on it, and is transforming it to advance some assumptions about Muslims. Consider the use of quotes like: "100 lashes if you don't die laughing" , "The prophet of Islam didn't have to be asked twice", "and we thank him for it" and "Love is stronger than hate." In point of fact, these quotes are borrowed from a number of sources and are deeply rooted in history and religion.

Obviously, there are differences between all discourses in "what is quoted when, how and why." The NYT reporters report other people's ideas, thoughts and sayings, but they rely on different techniques in doing so. The scientific community in turn requires the practice of overt marking of intertextuality, and in this context, citations, quotes, and references relate to the recognition of intellectual property rights of other researchers and they add up to the reliability of a scientific paper (Dalton-Puffer, 2006, p. 123). In the case of the media discourse, and, more precisely in the NYT Op-Eds, intertextuality might be considered as a carrier of ideology in that it directs public opinion and crystallizes certain facts and assertions about Muslims in the minds of readers. The following extract is a case in point:

So earlier this month, when a Molotov cocktail landed in the offices of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo — luckily no one was injured — I wanted to know more. It seems the bomb arrived the day after the publication chose the Prophet Muhammad as its guest editor in chief for that week's issue, and in a reference to Islamic law, or Shariah, temporarily changed its name to "Charia Hebdo." The issue also featured a cartoon image of the prophet on its cover and a caption that said "100 lashes if you don't die laughing."

An equal opportunity offender, the periodical, historically known for pillorying Catholic clericalism and Judaism, was heavily criticized by Muslims in 2007 after reprinting cartoons of Muhammad published by a Danish newspaper that caused outrage in much of the Islamic world. The magazine's editor, who goes by the name Charb, issued a statement saying "The prophet of Islam didn't have to be asked twice" to be editor "and we thank him for it." And the following issue featured a cartoon of Charlie Hebdo passionately kissing a Muslim man under the heading "Love is stronger than hate." WHY ARE POLITICAL CARTOONS INCENDIARY. *The New York Times* (Nov. 13, 2011. SR5).

As we have argued, the reporters of the NYT Op-Eds would dig up an old study, a fact, a quote from different media outlets or from historical records, assemble them, and then present them cogently in order to provide a specific knowledge to their audiences about Muslims. Alongside popular historians and biographers, the NYT reporters have established themselves up as scribes of the historical record and authoritative spokespersons for Muslims worldwide. By advancing several arguments from historical accounts, the NYT reporters would appear more knowledgeable and well-informed about the Muslim case in the world. They might not be eye-witnesses to the stories they write, but they are resolute enough to report, analyze and criticize the Muslim status quo. In the extract that follows suit, the reporter is taking shelter in the First Crusade to market the image of the holocaust. S/He is referring the reader to Hebrew and Christian chronicles to stay more neutral and impartial. Yet, it can be assumed that neutrality in the Op-Eds is seen as impossible to achieve because almost all reporters write and speak from a proper perspective exclusive to them. Thus, media references and historical records are but mere pretexts for reporters to hide and eclipse their ideology. By the same token, what is suggested is that the confrontation, or say conflict between Muslims and Christians or even Jews, is not something new but dates back to 1096. This is what the following excerpt tries to disambiguate:

The first victims of the First Crusade, inspired in 1096 by the supposedly sacred mission of retaking Jerusalem from Muslims, were European Jews. Anyone who considers it religiously and politically transgressive to compare the behavior of medieval Christian soldiers to modern Islamic terrorism might find it enlightening to read this bloody story, as told in both Hebrew and Christian chronicles.



The message from the medieval past is that religious violence seldom limits itself to one target and expands to reach the maximum number of available victims. Just as the Crusades were integrally linked to Roman Catholicism in the Middle Ages, terrorist movements today are immersed in a particular anti-modern interpretation of Islam. This does not imply that a majority of Muslims agree with violent religious ideology. It does mean that the terrorists' brand of belief plays a critical role in their savage assault on human rights. THE FIRST VICTIMS OF THE FIRST CRUSADES. *The New York Times* (Feb. 15, 2015. SR5).

In addition to media sources and historical records, the reporters of the NYT subsume into their Op-Eds polls, surveys and think tanks because they look convincing and completely worthwhile. They might be regarded as a valuable tactical resource deployed by the reporters, who stand out as if representing the active voices of the public. In an Op-Ed headlined: DON'T MUZZLE THE CLOWN, the findings of the Pew Research Center survey were foregrounded to showcase that most Muslims are in favor of executing apostates, that all of them disapprove of homosexuality and support honour killing. This representation is explicitly shown in the following excerpt:

Maheer's comments early this month drew on an exhaustive [Pew Research Center survey](#) last year of Muslim attitudes, based on 38,000 face-to-face interviews in 39 countries. The findings were fairly grim for fans of enlightenment. Most Muslims in at least six countries favored "executing those who leave Islam." A majority also said homosexuality was morally wrong and that a wife should always obey her husband. Most troubling, the poll found high support in countries like Egypt and Iraq for "honor killings" — executing someone, usually a woman, for having sex out of wedlock. DON'T MUZZLE THE CLOWN. *The New York Times* (Oct. 30, 2014).

Although media sources and historical accounts have been a pervasive part of the NYT, an enormous numbers of surveys and polls were published in their Op-Eds whenever there is an indication or a reference to Muslims. To better understand how the NYT reach conclusions about Muslims, one must consider why the survey was introduced in the Op-Eds in the first place. The statistical figures and data are definitely a vehicle for the NYT to transmit its own doubts about Muslims. Owing to its tendency to frame the issue to be fully discussed by its readers, the NYT resorts to all these intertextual devices to thematize and diagnose the question of Muslims. The pedagogical implications of this are certainly far-reaching, for the discourse of the Op-Eds is no longer a hermitage at which the reader can worship to get information, but one site where many voices struggle for existence. Since these Op-Eds derive their meaning from other texts, it is recommended that students should use a variety of analytical tools in order not to be trapped inside the text.

The claim that says that intertextuality allows reporters to achieve objectivity and balance proves erroneous because it was found that through intertextuality these reporters are able to gain the reader's confidence and position themselves as they report on Muslims. Students are, therefore, required to have a good grasp of the workings of intertextuality, the control of media and its promotion of ideology and subjectivity. CDA will be the right place for students to learn more all about these three.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has raised many questions about the use of intertextuality in the discourse of the NYT Op-Eds dealing with Muslims inside and outside of the United States. There is no doubt that the concept of intertextuality has become an important frame through which one can view and approach media texts adequately. The reporter, and subsequently the reader, make sense from the juxtaposition of direct and reported statements, quotations, and translations that take place within several Op-Eds addressing Muslims. It is true that many voices fluctuate in the Op-Eds. Yet, the dominant voice of the reporter is there to control and guide the public opinion about matters related to Muslims. The paper has started with a short synopsis about intertextuality as a discursive structure prevalent in the NYT Op-Eds. Then, it has attempted to study some intertextual devices like poetry, borrowings and proverbial language, each of which has specific political and ideological ends. Afterwards, it has questioned the utilization of direct and indirect quotations because they tend to corroborate and fortify the reporters' claims about Muslims. Finally, the paper has probed into the conventional use of media sources and historical records as they presumably grant much power and weight to the discourse of the NYT Op-Eds. Some recommendations for students have been meanwhile suggested. Briefly stated, in this kind of discourse, a wide range of texts are in dialogue with one another to enable the reader draw inferences as well as make deductions about Muslims. As they are carefully selected, these inter-texts ought to be read critically because they might harbour the newspaper's ideology.

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