

“It's showtime. You're on a dangerous path”: Intertextual Elements in Constructing Arafat in the NYT

Mohammed Mosheer Amer

Department of Linguistics & Applied Linguistics, The University of Melbourne

m.amer@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

“Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances” (Bakhtin, 1999: 124), and part of the dialogic nature of texts is that they often contain traces of other voices as text producers partly construct meanings by explicitly or implicitly invoking, reproducing, or recontextualizing such voices, especially those of authoritative figures (Maybin, 2001). This paper presents some key findings of work-in-progress which examines some intertextual elements in the reportage by the NYT of Arafat during the second Palestinian Intifada. I have taken as my corpus news reports published in April 2002. Drawing on Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) framework for intertextual analysis, I show through this analysis that reporters tend to appropriate a particular version of reality which is primarily mediated by the discourses of mainly American official voices who speak directly and indirectly into the news texts and who do ‘most of the talking’ in a Bakhtinian sense. These discourses largely contribute to the negative and problematic construction of Arafat in this coverage.