

## THE LANGUAGE OF DISCRIMINATION: THE TEXTUAL TOOLS OF POLEMIC IN THE FALLACI CASE

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**Abstract:** this study aims to construct a typology of language that has been used in a polemic to discriminate against a social group. The proposed typology was developed from a qualitative analysis of “The Rage and the Pride”, an article by Oriana Fallaci (2001), and uses the theory of social representations as its basis. We conclude that the polemicist uses her own forms to label and evaluate the other – in this case, Muslims. Employing particular lexicalizations and assigning actions to make evaluations are typical features for designating the other in Fallaci’s controversial discourse. Prescriptions are addressed solely to the own group, but their object is the way of addressing the other.

**Keywords:** discrimination, controversy, polemics, Muslims, the West, Fallaci.

## A LINGUAGEM DA DISCRIMINAÇÃO: AS FERRAMENTAS TEXTUAIS DE UMA POLÊMICA NO CASO FALLACI

**Resumo:** O objetivo deste estudo é construir uma tipologia da linguagem utilizada para discriminar um grupo social em uma polêmica. A tipologia proposta foi desenvolvida a partir de uma análise qualitativa do conteúdo do artigo “A raiva e o orgulho” de Oriana Fallaci (2001), tomando como base a teoria das representações sociais. Conclui-se que a polemista utiliza formas próprias de denominar e avaliar o outro, neste caso, os muçulmanos. Típico da denominação do outro no discurso polêmico de Fallaci são as lexicalizações próprias e as avaliações por atribuição de ações. Prescrições se dirigem unicamente ao próprio grupo, mas têm como objeto a forma de lidar com o outro.

**Palavras-chaves:** discriminação, controvérsia, polêmica, muçulmanos, Ocidente, Fallaci.

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## **Introduction**

A controversy is a dispute, a discussion, or a regular debate on a subject of common interest (MacMullin, 1987). Because it influences the political and civic culture of a society, controversy has the following functions:

(A) **Reinforcement of social and moral rules.** The defense of positions deemed unacceptable or indisputable may contribute to the imposition and/or consolidation of norms and values. The group can learn to acknowledge and work with the other to ensure a peaceful and constructive coexistence.

(B) **Cognitive Function.** Controversy leads to collective learning through intergroup relations based on the dissemination of information, acknowledgment of different points of view, and greater knowledge about the involved groups and interests.

(C) **Articulation.** Articulation involves both a specific group that is formed and positions itself on one side of an issue, and a society that unites around an issue to discuss it (Bergman, 1997).

(D) **Democratic-political Function.** This function encourages democratic participation in the political decision-making process through public debate that aims to achieve a consensual solution (Rußmann, 2010: 171).

## **Polemics**

Polemical statements are employed as a strategy to draw the attention of the mass media. In the case of professional polemicists, they intend to stimulate both the news market (generating topics) and the editorial market (selling books).

Polemics are characterized by aggressiveness, personalization, and conflict involving basic values (Straub, 2004: 17). Moreover, the two central dimensions that distinguish a polemic from a controversy are the polemic's negation of the opponent's status as an equal and the polemic's focus upon the conflict itself rather than the search for solutions as its objective.

The polemicist presumptively denies equality to the opponent. According to Foucault (2004: 226), the polemicist sees before him or her “an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat”. Whereas controversies

try to reach a consensus, the solutions proposed by polemicists are not acceptable to the other side.

**Table 1: Differences between Polemics and Controversies**

|                                       | <b>Polemics</b>  | <b>Controversies</b>                                 |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Generator event</b>                | Planned for the mass media (such as polemics declarations)                                 | Planned and unplanned (accidents, crimes, etc.)      |
| <b>Status of the opponent</b>         | Deny the condition of equality of the opponent (Foucault, 2004)                            | Recognize the condition of equality                  |
| <b>Relationship with the opponent</b> | Must be destroyed and eliminated because it represents a danger                            | Must be convinced and its arguments must be defeated |
| <b>Objective</b>                      | Conflict in itself (Straub, 2004)  | Search for a solution and/or consensus               |
| <b>Availability for consensus</b>     | Proposed solutions or conclusions from the arguments are not acceptable to the other actor | Proposed solutions can be accepted by both           |
| <b>Type of action</b>                 | Strategic action (Habermas, 1981)  | Communicative action (Habermas, 1981)                |

The polemic’s cognitive quality is less than that of a controversy because the polemic includes no search for the truth. On the contrary, “Perhaps, someday, a long history will have to be written of polemics, polemics as a parasitic figure on discussion and an obstacle to the search for the truth” (Foucault, 2004: 725). In addition, polemics lead certain groups to radicalize around their positions and segregate others, excluding them from the debate. If controversies constitute communicative actions that are aimed at generating understanding, polemics fits in what Habermas (1981) has called strategic action, which is focused exclusively on the conflict itself.

## **Constitutive elements of a polemic**

To generate a polemic, a previously existing polarization or antinomy is necessary. In modern societies, mass media retrieve and agglutinate these polarities, transforming them into thematas:

Antinomies in common sense thinking become themata if, in the course of certain social and historical events, e.g., political, economic, religious and so on, they turn into problems and become the focus of social attention and a source of tension and conflict. It is during such events that antinomies in thinking are transformed into themata: they enter into public discourse, become problematized and further thematized (Marková, 2003: 184).

When a polarization is activated (thematized and problematized), it generates social representations (Marková, 2000: 444) that replace the objects of discussion. Social representations embody systems of values, ideas, and models of action through which an object is known and a relationship with it is established (Moscovici, 2000).

Regarding social distribution, Moscovici (2000) distinguishes between hegemonic representations (shared by all groups, even if the representations were generated by one group), emancipated representations (which have lost their connection with a specific group) and polemics representations (which are linked to a group and normally contradict hegemonic representations).

Social representations may be anchored in public discourse via three modalities: diffusion, propagation, and propaganda (Moscovici, 2000). Diffusion is based on description that presents different points of view; with arguments structured in “and”, diffusion embodies the normative principle of moderation and does not seek to produce rules (Castro, 2005). With propagation, existing models of interpretation and action merge with new models; arguments are structured in terms of “yes, but” and are aimed at establishing a standard. Meanwhile, propaganda is communication from a group that produces a standard in opposition to others that is typically interpreted as a threat; its arguments are based on “yes or no” (i.e., “they defend position A, and we defend position B”) and are intended to close its own battlefronts.

## Types of declaration

In a polemic, social representations communicate through declarations that cause scandal and that are characterized by the following techniques: a) categorizing; b) segregating/delimiting; c) evaluating; d) breaking intentionally with implied rules or taboos; e) containing an appeal to common sense (i.e., “Everybody knows that...”); and f) referencing underprivileged groups in power relations. This last element is particularly important, because polemics attempt to (and must) provoke a collective reaction; the success of polemics is directly connected to moral rules and the division of power in the public sphere (Straub, 2004, 239).

Scandalizing declarations fall into the category of linguistic discrimination (social discrimination performed through language), which consists of the categorical denomination of a person connected to an evaluation (Wagner, 2001: 15).

Categorical denomination occurs when a linguistic reference to a person is carried out through a social category, and the person is treated solely as representative of this category.

Based on Wagner (2001: 13), linguistic categorizations may be classified as follows:

**Direct reference:** “Blair understood it. He came here and brought to Bush, or rather renewed with him, the solidarity of the **English people**” (Fallaci, 2001: 24).

**Customization:** Personal pronouns are used, and a categorization might appear in direct discourse: “Accustomed as **you** are to the double-cross, blinded as **you** are by myopia, **you** don’t understand or don’t want to understand that a war of religion is in progress” (Fallaci, 2001, 24, emphasis added). Conversely, the categorization might appear as self-reference: “Because when the destiny of the West, the survival of our civilization is at stake, **we** are New York. **We** are America” (Fallaci, 2001: 24, emphasis added).

**Indirect reference:** The group is discussed through religious, cultural, and geographic symbols, “And we’ll find **muezzin** instead of **church bells**, **chador** instead of **miniskirts**, **camel’s milk** instead of the old **shot of cognac**” (Fallaci, 2001: 24, emphasis added).

**Depersonalization:** Reference is undetermined ("nobody", "some", "who", etc.): “**Some** are neither happy nor unhappy” (Fallaci, 2001: 24, emphasis added).

**Dehumanized reference:** People are referenced as “it” or animals: “I am not speaking, obviously, to the laughing **hyenas** who enjoy seeing images of the wreckage” (Fallaci, 2001, 24, emphasis added).

**Part by the whole:** An individual denomination is posited as the collective: “Because there are tens of thousands of **Osama Bin Ladens**” (Fallaci, 2001: 25, emphasis added).

**Use of adjectives:** “But in Italy, where the mosques of Milan, Turin and Rome overflow with **scoundrels** singing hymns to Osama Bin Laden” (Fallaci, 2001: 24, emphasis added). The use of adjectives should not be confused with insults. The latter is reduced to swearing, whereas the polemic takes refuge in argumentation (Stenzel, 1986: 4) that is the result of conscious and intentional reflection.

The second component of linguistic discrimination, evaluation, follows Rokeach’s (1973) classifications of *belief*, which he differentiates into descriptive, evaluative, and prescriptive belief. Evaluation may take the following forms:

**Descriptive:** This type of evaluation judges content using a false/correct scale. Descriptive declarations need only express this pretension and are not required to correspond to reality.

**Use of adjectives:** This type of evaluation judges objects as good or bad.

**Prescriptive:** This type of evaluation indicates whether an action or situation is advisable.

Although explicit in cases that involve the use of adjectives, evaluations may also occur in descriptions or prescriptions. When a group of immigrants is described as assembling in a “tent placed in front of the cathedral with Brunelleschi’s cupola and by the side of the Baptistery with Ghiberti’s golden doors” (Fallaci, 2001: 25), an evaluation is made. In prescriptive evaluations, a certain action or situation is considered desirable or undesirable. In the declaration, “Nobody can keep him from enrolling in a University (something I hope will change) to study chemistry and biology” (Fallaci, 2001: 23), a certain group is devalued by means of a prescription.

The delimitation between these types of evaluations cannot be performed hermetically; i.e., a descriptive declaration may include adjectives, and a prescriptive evaluation may combine descriptive elements.

In descriptive evaluations, the following four types may be observed: intersubjective, testimonial, and illustrative declarations, as well as declarations including attributions of action. In intersubjective declarations, both information and sources result from an indirect observation and can be verified, such as, “almost fifty thousand people worked in the two towers” (Fallaci, 2001: 23).

Testimonial declarations include information derived from personal experience. The source is not accessible to others and makes reference to what was observed and to the observation itself, as in, “in war I’d always seen a limited number of deaths” (Fallaci, 2001: 23).

Illustrative declarations describe situations without referencing the subject, resulting from an observation that directly produces an image: “the pigeons of Piazza San Marco have been replaced by little rugs with ‘merchandise’” (Fallaci, 2001: 26).

In the case of attributions of action, the author refers directly to third parties engaged in action, as in, “They’d go after him with knives. At the very least, they’d insult his mother and progeny” (Fallaci, 2001: 26).

Separating categorical denomination from evaluation serves as an instrument for the empirical operationalization of the concept of linguistic discrimination and not as a closed definition. In a concrete sense, this means that a group can be evaluated in the form by which it is called (“the Osama Bin Ladens”) (Fallaci, 2001: 25).

The relationship between parties involved in the debate may be abstracted from the different types of categorical denomination and evaluation (and vice versa). A direct reference to a person or a group (“Muslims”) does not indicate a denial of the condition of equality, but depersonalizing the group by denomination (“hyenas”) and using a particular lexicalization (“sons of Allah”) may be considered evidence of devaluation.

With respect to the evaluation types, the different treatments of the poles of a themata may be understood, for example, when the polemicist’s group is evaluated with descriptions, but prescriptions are not made for it. The type of evaluation also identifies the group’s social representation and how it is built. In addition, this category is able to show the proposed solutions and whether they are acceptable to both sides.

Using the linguistic components of social discrimination, one can determine how two basic operations of the polemics, accentuation and insinuation, occur (Stenzel,

1986: 8). These strategies are not necessarily linked to a particular type of categorical denomination or evaluation, but whether the specific types described herein are used consistently as resources is worth noting.

### **The Fallaci case**

The *New Yorker* magazine called her “the Agitator” (Talbot, 2006). *Der Spiegel* in Germany labeled her “a choleric journalist” (Breitfeld, 2006). *Corriere della Sera* in Italy called her “our most famous writer” (Bortoli, 2001: 23), whereas she is a “provoker” to the Italian newspapers *La Repubblica* and *L'Unita* (D'Arcais, 2006; Marsilli, 2001). If her writings are analyzed using the concepts illustrated above, Oriana Fallaci may be regarded as an exemplary polemicist. In this sense, we analyze “The Rage and the Pride”, an article published in *Corriere della Sera* on September 29, 2001 as Fallaci's testimonial about the September 11 attacks. With strong emotional content, Fallaci positions herself against Muslim culture, which she considers a threat to the West.

We do not intend to evaluate whether its social representations have achieved a hegemonic position. There were other representations, even in Italy, where the author enjoyed broad approval. For example, Umberto Eco (2001) drew attention to the need for dialogue and mutual tolerance in *La Repubblica*. Fallaci's positions received approval and enthusiasm from a good part of the press and criticism from other Italian writers (Ania, 2012). The division in public opinion caused by the article is described by Vecchi (2001: 13): “Thousands of faxes, phone calls and messages. Favorable and contrary, the press also aligns itself. [...]. Thousands of e-mails and faxes that arrive as if it rains at the *Corriere*; the newspapers that multiply the comments”.

This was not the first instance in which Oriana Fallaci began a polemic. Interviewed by *Playboy* in 1981, the writer demonstrated intolerance of homosexuals and feminists and accused these groups of exhibitionism and victimization (Scheer, 1981). Her political positions fall into an agenda determined by an ideology of inequality:

She is opposed to abortion, unless she “were raped and made pregnant by a bin Laden or a Zarqawi.” She is fiercely opposed to gay marriage (“In the same way that the Muslims would like us all to become Muslims, they would like us all to become



homosexuals”), and suspicious of immigration in general. The demonstrations by immigrants in the United States these past few months “disgust” her, especially when protesters displayed the Mexican flag. “I don’t love the Mexicans,” Fallaci said, invoking her nasty treatment at the hands of Mexican police in 1968. “If you hold a gun and say, ‘Choose who is worse between the Muslims and the Mexicans,’ I have a moment of hesitation. Then I choose the Muslims, because they have broken my balls.” (Talbot, 2006: 6).

In addition to her strong personality, Fallaci’s extraordinary journalistic and literary career have led to the support she has received in her homeland. She began working in the 1950s, and by 1960, she was in charge of reporting on the condition of women in the East for the magazine *L'Europeo*. In 1967, she was sent to the military front in Vietnam and became the first Italian woman to work as a war correspondent.<sup>1</sup> She experienced significant international repercussions in the 1970s with the publication of two books with autobiographical content, *Letter to a Child Never Born* and *A Man*. Fallaci also became famous for her prominent interview subjects (including Yasser Arafat, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Henry Kissinger) and her interview style. Her recent successes, which marked the end of a long retreat from the public scene, occurred after the attack on the Twin Towers. Fallaci died in 2006 from cancer.

### **The Rage and the Pride**

Although one of its strategies is to access the mass media, polemicizing is not risk-free. Therefore, polemicists and publishers may use “trial balloons” (Thiele, 2008). A greater venture (a book) is undertaken only after a smaller product (an article, an interview) is introduced as a test, as occurred with Fallaci's text.<sup>2</sup> With its resonance and acceptance previously tested, Fallaci's theses were deepened and radicalized in the book, *The Rage and the Pride* (2001), to great success; two weeks after its launch in Italy, over 700,000 copies were sold (Belpoliti, 2002: 84).

Because of its sectarian nature, human rights organizations initiated proceedings against the book in Switzerland and France. In France, the book was boycotted and the author declared *persona non grata* by the French Authors and Publishers Association

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the work and life of Oriana Fallaci, see: <http://www.oriانا-fallaci.com> .

<sup>2</sup> *The Rage and the Pride* was disclosed as an integral version of the letter sent to *Corriere*, which, for reasons of space, had a summarized version.

(Bialasiewicz, 2006: 711). In Poland, the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* published a translation of the text and was criticized by the Council for Media Ethics for “diffusing anti-Islamic psychosis” (Bialasiewicz, 2006: 711). Fallaci's publisher in Germany, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, refused to publish the book.

Nonetheless, *The Rage and the Pride* became an international bestseller, surpassing even *Harry Potter* and *The Da Vinci Code* (Bialasiewicz, 2006: 711) and confirming the article's publicity potential.

Covering four pages of the newspaper, "The Rage and the Pride" is introduced by the editor of *Corriere della Sera*, Ferruccio de Bortoli (2001: 23), who announces that Oriana Fallaci broke “the silence of a decade” with this piece of writing. While explaining that the writer lived for an extended period in Manhattan, de Bortoli (2001: 23) says: “She doesn't answer the phone, opens the door rarely, and goes out even less. She never gives interviews. Everyone has tried, no one has succeeded. Isolated.”

The cataclysm that struck New York broke her silence. Bortoli (2001: 23) had “asked her to write what she had seen, experienced and felt after that Tuesday”, and she complied with the request. Fallaci's words were presented as a type of prophetic announcement and public duty: “Someone had to say these things. I said them. Now leave me in peace. The door is closed again”, Bortoli says of Fallaci (2001: 23), which prepares the public's expectations for the detonation of that bombshell: “People are going to be talking about this piece. And a lot”.

Presenting the article in the form of a letter, Fallaci addresses in direct speech both the actors of the group with whom she identifies and those belonging to the group that her speech antagonizes. She makes it clear to the public that she is responding to a call from Bortoli: “You ask me to speak, this time. You ask me to break at least this once the silence I've chosen, that I've imposed on myself these many years to avoid mingling with cicadas”. The author differentiates herself from “others” who wasted themselves in bawlings and noises, positioning themselves next to the “enemy”. She indicates that she decided to speak, “Because I've heard that in Italy too there are some who rejoice just as the Palestinians of Gaza did the other night on TV. 'Victory! Victory!' Men, women, children. Assuming you can call those who do such a thing man, woman, child” (Fallaci, 2001: 23).

The opposition between “self” and the “others” is also radicalized to the extent that the discourse focuses on the objects of her anger; the kamikazes, she says, are not heroes or martyrs, but proud men who cause their own death and the death of others in

their search for glory. She contrasts them with the martyrs of that new war, the victims of the attacks, the citizens of modern democracies, because, “The more democratic and open a society is, the more it’s exposed to terrorism” (Fallaci, 2001: 23). A line of separation is drawn between non-democratic countries accused of supporting terrorists and the West. If terrorism had reached American society, it was because its “multi-ethnic being” (Fallaci, 2001: 23) was among the causes of its vulnerability: “...about 24 million Americans are Muslim-Arabs. And when a Mustafa or a Mohammed comes, say from Afghanistan, to visit his uncle, nobody tells him he can’t attend pilot training school to learn how to fly a 757 jet airplane” (Fallaci, 2001: 23).

The object of the discourse is decharacterized; a Mohammed equals a Mustafa, both aggregated under the nickname “sons of Allah”. Against these figures, Fallaci beckons that part of Europe that is rocked by “prudence and doubt” to wake up, encouraging it not to be afraid of being “against the current” and to appear racist (Fallaci, 2001: 24). The term is considered inappropriate, because “we are speaking not about a race but about a religion” (Fallaci, 2001: 24).

Criticizing Europe, in which she does not see “any Richard the Lionheart” other than then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, she levels hard attacks at the Italian government. Unlike other European countries, where several terrorist suspects were arrested, in Italy, “where the mosques of Milan, Turin and Rome overflow with scoundrels singing hymns to Osama Bin Laden and terrorists waiting to blow up Saint Peter’s cupola, not a one” (Fallaci, 2001: 24) was arrested.

Speaking of racism would be as inappropriate as discussing a clash between cultures, because the cultures cannot be understood in terms of equality:

Because behind our civilization we have Homer, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Phydias, for God’s sake. We have ancient Greece with its Parthenon and its discovery of Democracy. We have ancient Rome with its greatness, its laws, its concept of Law. [...]. And finally we have Science, for God’s sake. A science that has understood a lot of diseases and that cures them. I am still alive, for now, thanks to our science. Not Mohammed’s. (Fallaci, 2001: 25).

As for “their culture or supposed culture”, in which even music is prohibited, “I search and search and find only Mohammed with his Koran and Averroë with his scholarly merits” (Fallaci, 2001: 25). Proud of her own civilization, the polemicist identifies the other with barbarity in the bellicosity of the Koran and in the sexism that forces women to look at the world through a veil, to marry polygamous men, to neither

go to school nor consult a doctor. The risk that this barbarity will be imposed upon the entire Western world is imminent: “Osama Bin Laden says that the entire planet Earth must become Muslim, that we must convert to Islam, that he will convert us by fair means or foul” (Fallaci, 2001: 25).

The danger of Islamization is not only terrorism, but is also found also in immigration, which is described as an invasion with the purpose of occupation; Turin “now doesn’t even seem like an Italian city. It seems like Algiers, Dacca, Nairobi, Damascus, Beirut”. In Genoa, the “marvelous palazzi that Rubens so admired have been seized by them and are now perishing like beautiful women who have been raped”.

To the Pope who, in Rome, insists on protecting immigrants, the polemicist pleads: “Your Holiness, why in the name of the One God don’t you take them into the Vatican? Strictly on condition, of course, that they refrain from **shitting** on the Sistine Chapel and the paintings of Raphael” (Fallaci, 2001: 26, emphasis added). Fallaci also opposes Italians who label immigrants as “foreign workers” and expresses doubts about the capability of Muslims, as a specific category to work:

But **those** of whom I speak, what kind of laborers are they? What work do they do? In what way do they satisfy the demand for manual labor that the Italian ex-proletariat no longer supplies? **Camping out** in the city on the pretext of selling merchandise? **Loitering** and **defacing** our monuments? **Praying** five times a day? (Fallaci, 2001: 26).

Rage is poured on Somali immigrants who, in 2000, camped out in the central square of “her” Florence. By means of a hunger strike, the group was protesting the Italian decision to withdraw humanitarian protection for citizens coming from troubled Somalia, plunging them in a state of illegality. The writer becomes irate with the image of that shack with which “Somali Muslims disfigured and befouled and profaned the Piazza del Duomo” (Fallaci, 2001: 25). It was an insult to the government that hosted them but did not give them the documents to “rove about Europe” and bring “hordes of their relatives to Italy. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, pregnant sisters-in-law, and if they had their way, their relatives’ relatives as well” (Fallaci, 2001: 25).

Like the Somalis, other groups have disfigured the Florentine territory, including the “arrogant guests of the city: the Albanians, the Sudanese, the Bengalese, the Tunisians, the Algerians, the Pakistani, the Nigerians who contribute with so much fervor to the drug trade and prostitution which, it appears, are not prohibited by the

Koran” (Fallaci, 2001: 26). Proliferating everywhere, they attempt to obtain public funding, stab and shoot guns, get drunk, sell cocaine, and yell obscenities at women, even to an “old lady”: “One of them’s still there whimpering over his genitals” (Fallaci, 2001: 26). The unpleasant perception of the other is clear in the description of an immigrant protest: “Those **distorted, savage faces**. Those **raised fists, threatening**. Those **baleful voices** that took me back to the Tehran of Khomeni. I’ll never forget it because I felt **offended by their bullying in my home**” (Fallaci, 2001: 26). A home, Italy, of which she takes full possession:

We have no room for muezzins, for minarets, for false teetotalers, for their fucking Middle Ages, for their fucking chador. And if we had room, I wouldn’t give it to them. Because it would be the equivalent of throwing away Dante Alighieri, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, the Renaissance, the Risorgimento, the liberty that for better or worse we fought for and won, our Patria. It would mean giving them Italy. And I won’t give them Italy (Fallaci, 2001: 26).

## **Method**

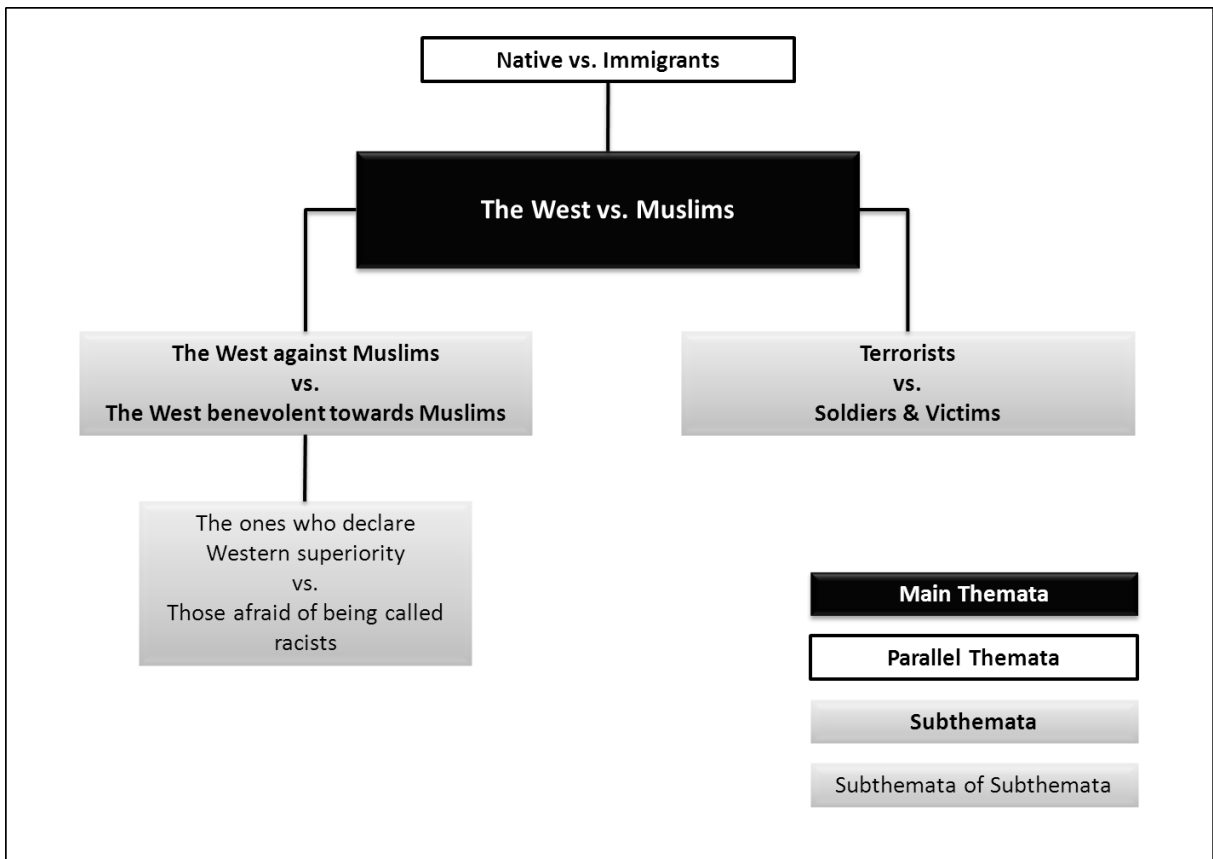
How can categorical denominations and evaluations of the “other” (both constituent parts of linguistic discrimination) be typified in a polemic? In so doing, one can observe how social groups are categorically denominated and evaluated by the producer of the discourse and how differences between denominations are allocated between the native and immigrant groups.

By means of a qualitative analysis of the content (Mayring, 2008), we proceed to the identification of the thematas in the text. In so doing, we isolate statements that include a comparison between objects presented as opposites. For example, in the statement “I never considered them soldiers. Even less do I consider them martyrs or heroes” (Fallaci, 2001: 23), the themata is “soldiers vs. terrorists”. The relationship between the thematas and the relationship around which the argument is focused are clearly individualized. We define the most cited themata as the “main themata”, whose poles are the central categories that define the others. We consider those thematas that refer to specific characteristics of one of the poles of the central themata or polarization as “subthematas”. Finally, “parallel thematas” are those thematas in which only one of the poles directly intersects with one of the objects of the main themata.

We then attempt to identify the objects and their social representations considered as opposites. For each, the declarations of the main themata and the poles are isolated by removing categorical denominations and evaluations, which are classified according to the types described above.

## Results

The article presents as its main themata the confrontation between the West and Muslims. This is crossed by a series of subthemata (such as “terrorists vs. soldiers”) and by parallel thematas (such as “immigrants vs. natives”).



### Chart 1: Thematas

In the case of immigrants, the intersection between both thematas becomes clear when Fallaci writes that, "instead of sons of Allah, in Italy they call them ‘foreign laborers’. Or else ‘manual-labor-for-which-there-is-demand’". (Fallaci, 2001: 26).

Despite being presented as a parallel themata, the polarization between immigrants and natives is woven into the main themata, which gives it a new facet. In addition to the Holy War that threatens to replace Western values, immigration is part of the process of conquering the West: “If they’re really so poor, who’s giving them the money for the voyage by ship or rubber dinghy that brings them to Italy? [...]. It’s not by any chance Osama Bin Laden looking to launch a conquest not only of souls, but of real estate? (Fallaci, 2001: 26).

The immigrant is dehumanized by reducing the group through coarse characterizations of their physiological activities:

(My, these sons of Allah sure have a long range! However did they manage to hit the target when they were held back by a protective railing that kept it nearly two whole meters away from their urinary equipment?) And along with the yellow streaks of urine, the stench of the excrement that blocked the door of San Salvatore al Vescovo: that exquisite Romanesque church (year 1000) that stands at the rear of the Piazza del Duomo and that the sons of Allah transformed into a shithouse (Fallaci, 2001: 25).<sup>3</sup>

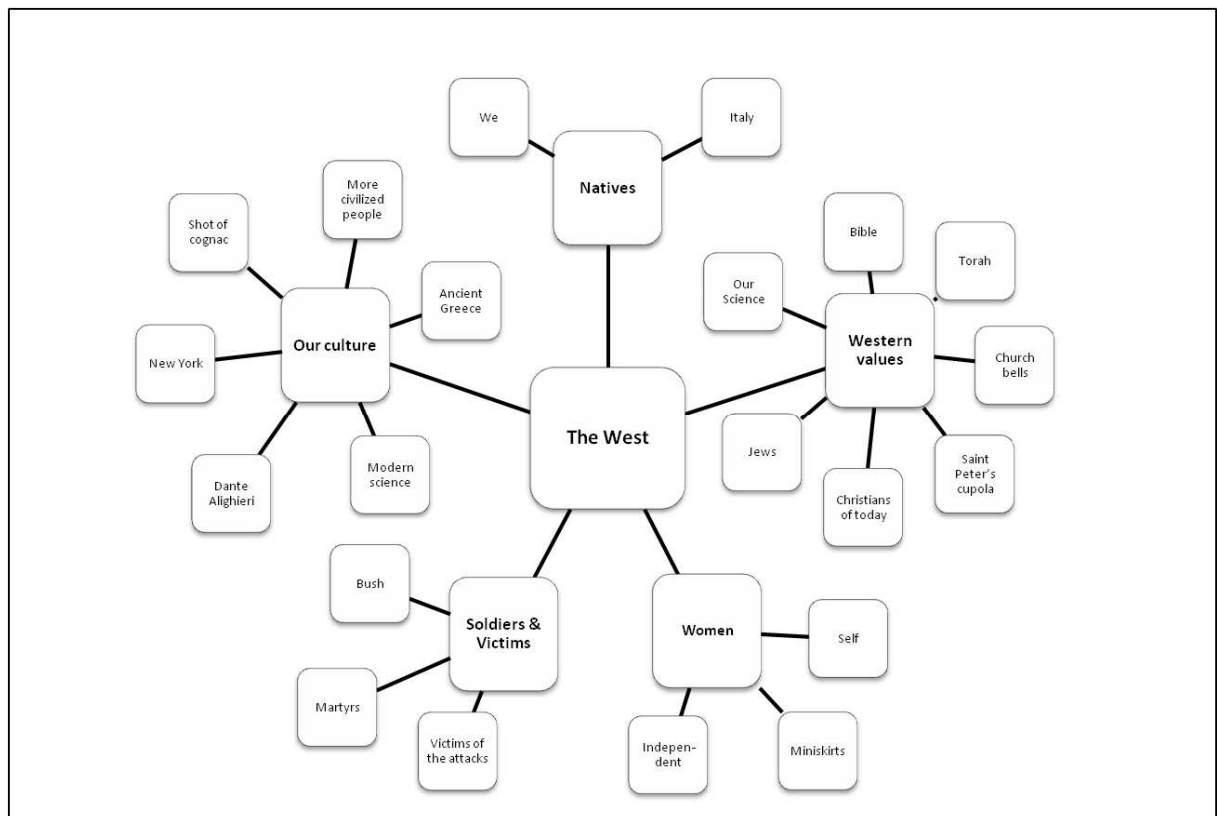
### **Main themata and its representations**

In “the West vs. Muslims” themata, categories are defined as opposite and hierarchically different. The condition of equality given to the opponent is denied immediately. The social representation of the West is constructed primarily from cultural references that illustrate its superiority; religion is used to define the West but not as frequently as cultural production (of which the religious works are part). Christ is mentioned as a revolutionary, and the Church is criticized, but its contribution to Western civilization – to which Judaism also belongs – is stressed. The West is not understood as a single block; thus, the Italian “West”, with its ancient and “ready” culture is distinct from the United States “West”, with its recent and open cultural formation.

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<sup>3</sup> The reference to the sexuality and reproduction of Muslim immigrants is a theme that has stabilized in the Islamophobic discourse that fears the invasion of European territory and is articulated in the concept of “Eurabia” (cf. Carr, 2006, 15). In this discourse, an intentionality of territorial conquest is assigned to fertility (Bialasiewicz, 2006, 709).

**Chart 2: Social representation of the West in the discourse of Oriana Fallaci**

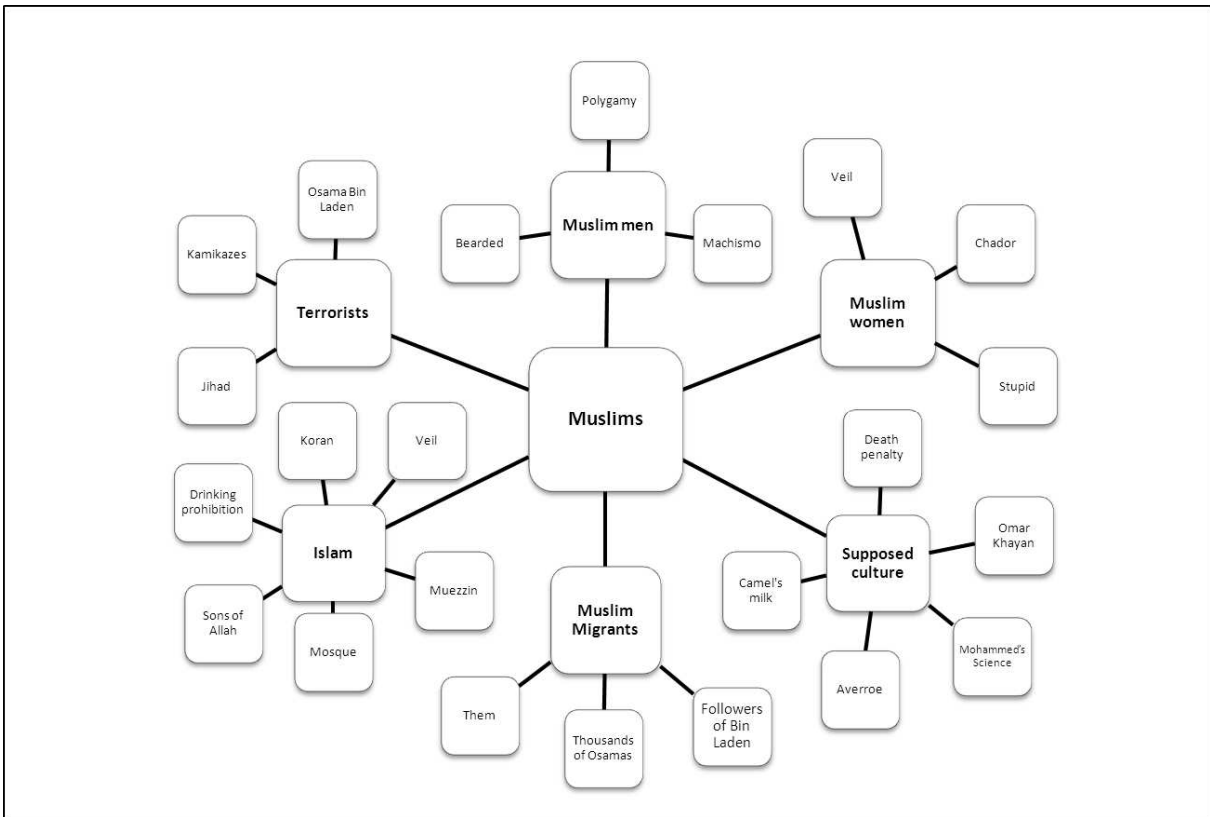


The Western blocks are also defined on the basis of political factors, as follows: the allied West (i.e., Bush and Blair), a separate excessively cautious and faltering West (i.e., those who fear the accusation of racism and the evasive Jacques Chirac), and another West too benevolent toward Muslims (i.e., intellectuals, anti-American politicians, and the permissive Italian government).

Moreover, Muslims form a single block with other groups, such as immigrants and terrorists. Their social representation is built in opposition to Western culture and is composed of people without culture who are dominated by religion and reactionary (“Middle Ages”, “bearded” and “camel’s milk” *versus* “shot of cognac”; “Mohammed’s science” contrasted with modern science).

**Chart 3: Social representation of Muslims in the discourse of Oriana Fallaci**





Considering the categorical denominations and evaluations used with the objects of the main themata, dehumanized references are notably reserved for defining the other (in this case, those who are critical of the polemicist). Unlike the book, in which Muslims are likened to rats (Fallaci, 2002), they are not defined as animals in the article; instead, anti-American politicians and intellectuals are called hyenas, whereas the Italian opponents of Fallaci are insects, and those who fear accusations of racism are rabbits. This communicative modality is typical of propaganda; anyone who criticizes the polemicist is automatically described as a supporter of Bin Laden: “Between one bowl of spaghetti and another they’ll curse me and hope I get killed by one of those whom they protect, that is by Osama Bin Laden” (Fallaci, 2001: 26).

Particular lexicalizations are used only to define the other, which is a surprising result because, in contrast to dehumanization, this type of categorical denomination does not necessarily have a pejorative connotation.

Denominations of the part by the whole are used both in defining her own group and the other. In addition to referring to Blair as a “Richard the Lionheart”, the part by the whole serves to differentiate between terrorists and heroes: “I never considered them

Pietro Miccas<sup>4</sup> who torch the powder and go up with the citadel to block the arrival of the enemy troops at Torino” (Fallaci, 2001: 23). In the case of Muslims, the expressions used were “the likes of Arafat”, “the Osama Bin Ladens”, and “a Mustafa or a Mohammed” (Fallaci, 2001: 23). Therefore, denominations of the part by the whole categorize, fix and, evaluate but are not used only for devaluation, unlike dehumanization and particular lexicalization.

The typology used to denominate her own group most often is the indirect reference (e.g., describing the “West” by means of “church bells”, “miniskirts”, Homer, Socrates, and Plato). The indirect reference is also used to define Muslims (“chador”, “veil”, “muezzin”); however, categorical denomination of the other is more frequently achieved the use of adjectives, such as “scoundrels”, “bearded”, and “supposed culture”.

In the case of evaluations, both groups are evaluated by means of virtually all the forms classified here. The use of adjectives and descriptions by means of attributing actions to a group are more common. This technique is usually used in reference to Muslims, as in the following:

A tent situated next to the beautiful palazzo of the Archbishop on whose sidewalk **they kept the shoes or sandals** that are lined up outside the mosques in their countries. And along with the shoes or sandals, the empty bottles of **water they’d used to wash their feet before praying**. A tent placed in front of the cathedral with Brunelleschi’s cupola and by the side of the Baptistery with Ghiberti’s golden doors. A tent, finally, furnished like a sleazy little apartment: seats, tables, chaise-lounges, mattresses **for sleeping and for fucking**, ovens **for cooking food and plaguing the piazza with smoke and stench**. (Fallaci, 2001: 25; emphasis added).

The author also attributes actions to her own group: Westerners go to the theater and cinema, listen to music, sing, dance, watch TV, wear miniskirts, expose the body at the beach or pool, and have sex when and with whom they want (Fallaci, 2001: 24). However, for Muslims, actions are attributed with greater frequency and include violence and illegality.

The prescriptive evaluation represents an exception in the text, which shows that the debate proposed by the polemicist does not seek to find solutions; when solutions are proposed, they do not arise from a dialogue. Virtually all the prescriptive evaluations require that the group itself take a position with respect to the opponent

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<sup>4</sup> A historic Italian character.

group, which in turn becomes the object of these actions. This is the case when Fallaci suggests prohibiting Muslim immigrants from enrolling in university chemistry and biology courses, “the two sciences necessary to wage bacteriological war” (Fallaci, 2001: 23). The definition of subject and object in prescriptions indicates a polemicist. This does not recognize the opponent as a subject with the right to take the floor but rather portrays an enemy who must be voided as a discussion partner: “The polemicist relies on a legitimacy that his opponent is by definition denied” (Foucault, 2004: 725).

## **Conclusions**

Based on this analysis, the polemicist’s discourse is identified by the categorization of both her group and the antagonistic group, although certain forms of denomination, such as particular lexicalization, are used only or primarily to evaluate the other group. Prescriptions have as their subject her own group and aim to control the other, transforming it into an object.

The social discriminations performed through these linguistic strategies can be considered typical of a polemic, because they deny the condition of equality for the opponent. Moreover, they exclude the possibility of a consensus, because the proposed solutions do not stem from a dialogue and are not acceptable to both parties.

Fallaci sees Muslims as *the* opposite and *the* opponent and also identifies her critics as opponents. Both groups are denominated with particular lexicalizations (“sons of Allah”) and dehumanized references (“hyenas” and “rabbits”), respectively, but evaluations vary because the opposite/opponent is intensely described through attributions of actions.

Devaluation of the other is also presented as the affirmation of her own group’s superiority. For this reason, Fallaci uses indirect references to the West by listing cultural traditions. Contributions of Muslim culture are placed at a lower level. In addition, the author prefers to use adjectives for Muslims instead of symbols.

Fallaci attempts to present her content as reality while describing the other, not by means of statistical data, but by attributions of actions. As for prescriptions, the resolution of the “problem”, the other, is understood as a task that belongs to her group.

To what extent these results may be imported to other cases of polemics is a question that future empirical studies must examine. However, the instruments proposed

here help collect data to assess when and how a condition of equality to the opponent is denied and what solutions are proposed. These are central dimensions for identifying a polemic and distinguishing it from a controversy.

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