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Chapter 3

Italian Intellectuals and the Promotion of Islamophobia after 9/11

Bruno Cousin and Tommaso Vitale

During the 2000s, the intellectual field played a determinant role in the development of Islamophobia in Italy¹. Beyond the public declarations of numerous right-wing political leaders opposed to multiculturalism regularly proclaiming the moral inferiority of Islam, and a level of popular and institutional hostility towards Muslims that constitutes a record for Western Europe (EUAFR 2009), we find in Italy the mobilization of cultural producers behind an intellectual Islamophobia. Highly publicized journalists/writers – such as Oriana Fallaci and Magdi Allam – as well as the intellectuals of Berlusconi's party, numerous prelates and academics close to the Catholic Church, and several of their secular conservative colleagues, have contributed to legitimate and reinforce an anti-Islamic *Zeitgeist* that has developed and reinvented the assortment of stereotypes (Bourdieu 1991, Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976: 61) about the 'migration question' and generated a specific xenophobia against Muslims.

This chapter proposes a review of these different Italian thinkers and promoters of Islamophobia in order to both clarify their respective ideas and describe the relations and links that join them to one another in a cartel branching out through all the arenas of power. It thus presents both a preliminary network analysis and a prosopography (detailing the social properties and the trajectories of the authors and their works) that provide a collective portrait previously undrawn: an indispensable precondition for any approach seeking to identify the processes of reconfiguration in the Italian intellectual field since 9/11, to measure its influence on the public debate about Islam, or to analyze further the role and strategies of a particular group or author without being restricted to the scholastic illusion that often characterizes history of ideas.

The Media Champions: Saga and Prophecies of Oriana Fallaci...

The most well-known figure in Italian Islamophobia is undoubtedly Oriana Fallaci (1929-2006), whose essays (*The Rage and the Pride*, 2001; *The Force of*

1 We would like to thank Alfredo Alicetti, Daniel Cefai, Giacomo Costa and Simone Tosi for their comments on an earlier version of this text.

Reason, 2004; Oriana Fallaci *Interviews Herself – The Apocalypse*, 2004) have been translated and commented on throughout the world. Islam is described in these volumes as a monolithic enemy at war with the West: an ahistorical and undifferentiated monad, without distinctions or internal tensions worthy of analysis. No substantial difference is seen to exist between fundamentalism and moderate or secularized Islam: all Muslims are potential terrorists, and immigrants the vanguard of an 'invasion' that it would be deceptive to believe could be integrated through citizenship or acculturation. Therefore, war and the closing of borders are described as the only solutions to this centuries-long conflict between civilization and barbarism. Fallaci thus denounces the lax attitude of civil societies and European governments, which have done nothing to counter the scourge of migrants and on-going Islamization, the symptoms of which she sees in any form of tolerance towards the cultural specificities of Muslims. According to her, a grand conspiracy and planned manoeuvres to transform Europe, and particularly Italy, into a province of the Ummah are underway: an entirely Islamized Europe ('Eurabia') is on the doorstep, so advanced is the insidious action of the allies of Muslim fundamentalism, which are – all together – the social sciences, the anti-globalization movement, the Western governments who have yielded to the sirens of a multicultural society, and the Vatican of John Paul II (accused of preaching benevolence towards foreign immigrants instead of leading the fight against Islam).

Despite their systematic falsification of facts (or multiple glaring errors), their massive resort to conspiracy theories, to describing their opponents as animals, sexual pervers or health hazards, their gutter racism, their homophobic insults and their calls for state violence, all in a form closer to muddled invective than to reasoning, these works have dominated book sales (all genres included) in Italy during the first half of the 2000s and, shortly before her death, their author was awarded the highest civil honours (by several political representatives from both the right and the left). During the past decade Fallaci was an unavoidable reference in the public debate on intercultural relations and the possibility of Muslim integration. How has this exceptional success been possible?

Firstly, the success arose from the sweep and culmination of her career. Her unique path – from 14-year-old courier of the anti-fascist Resistance during World War II, to respected field reporter (notably from the Muslim world) who risked her life many a time, popular novelist, and charismatic feminist icon – is constantly referred to in her works and allowed her to adopt, at the end of her life, a multifaceted dominant posture at the heart of the national intellectual field; a posture made possible from autumn 2001, also because she took on the role of national critical conscience, conservative but non-partisan and supposedly

2 For a detailed study on the origins, modalities and effects of Fallaci's intellectual leadership on Islamophobia in the Italian public sphere between 2001 and 2006, we take the liberty of directing the reader to a forthcoming article by the present authors. Elements of analysis have also been presented in previous papers (Cousin and Vitale 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008).

non-conformist, left vacant a few months earlier following the death of Indro Montanelli (1909-2001).

In addition, Fallaci's essays enjoyed huge media launches resulting from an advertising synergy between the two largest national press groups – her publisher RCS and Mondadori, owned by Berlusconi – the three television channels belonging to the latter, and the three public ones he controlled directly as prime minister. The author was also able to draw on her influence among journalists and intellectuals. Last but not least, she enjoyed a singular artistic licence as a consequence of her *multipositionality* (Boltanski 1973): between journalism, literature, the intellectual field and the media; and between Italy and the United States (where Fallaci mostly lived during the last two decades of her life, often claiming she was better known there than in Italy). Her prestige is not the product of a reputation established in a specific national field, progressively expanded to a neighbouring one sharing some institutions or modes of legitimation with the first, and so on. It results instead from crossed and simultaneous guarantees, whose iteration masks the fact that the public image of brilliance Fallaci enjoys is not solidly based in any specific domain.

...Testimony and Hagiography of Magdi Allam

Magdi Allam (born in 1952) was the other main intellectual herald of the anti-Islamic mobilization of the 2000s, in a way that both reinforced and complemented the stands taken by Oriana Fallaci (whose praises he often sang). Allam is a journalist and essayist of Egyptian origin, who was schooled in Italian by the Combonian nuns and the Salesians of his hometown of Cairo, before emigrating at the age of twenty to Italy. Here he studied sociology and started a career in journalism that led him – drifting progressively to the right – to work for *Il Manifesto*, *La Repubblica*, then *Il Corriere della Sera*, of which he was a deputy editor and a columnist from 2003 to 2008. A fluent speaker and writer of Arabic (in a country where oriental studies, anthropology³, and critical sociology of migrations are little developed⁴), he moved at the end of the 1990s from the status of chronicler

3 Notably because academic themselves often turn to opinion writing. For instance, Ida Magi (born in 1925), once a recognised specialist in cultural and religious anthropology at the Sapienza University of Rome, has now adopted an exclusively critical approach which has set her up as an additional rhetorical force defending Italian cultural heritage by denouncing the 'peril' supposedly represented by immigration in general and Muslim immigrants in particular (see her virulent column published by *Il Giornale*, one of the most aggressive newspapers belonging to the Berlusconi family).

4 Even if Italian journalists/writers and essayists, from the right and the left, sometimes refer to the main international specialists in Islamic studies (rather than to those teaching in Italian universities) to prop up their thesis. This is the case for Fiamma Nirenstein (born in 1945): a journalist who covered the Middle East during two decades, author of several books on Israel and anti-Semitism, lecturer at the LUISS, deputy for Berlusconi's party and

and reporter specialized in the Muslim worlds to that of expert and media-hyped critic, first of the effects of fundamentalist Islam and later of Muslims as a whole.

Although he has less symbolic capital than Fallaci, he has since 2002 written several alarmist books (often autobiographical and all published by Mondadori – Allam 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) through which he consolidated a posture of multifaceted legitimacy similar to hers. He presents himself, at the same time: as a heretic breaking with a predominantly violent Islam (which went so far as to sentence him to death and forced him to live under police protection) and with an Italian intelligentsia who underestimates its dangers; as a moralist with anti-intellectual hints invoking the primacy of a clear and normative stance over explanatory quibbles; as a true specialist in the topics he deals with and a 'sociologist' giving in to simplification only for a pedagogical purpose; and as an expert whose advice is appreciated by those few truly enlightened leaders fighting against Islamic violence (be they politicians, magistrates, or the Italian intelligence agencies). However, where Fallaci poses as a martial adversary of Islam, Allam prefers to present himself throughout his books as a still-defiant victim of persecution and tells his life story in the form of a hagiography rather than a saga. At a young age he was deprived of his father whose polygamist attempts led him to abandon his mother, who herself eventually left to work in Saudi Arabia and embraced Wahhabism. He also witnessed the end of the Cairo cosmopolitanism of his youth, dismissed by the rise of Egyptian nationalism after the Six-Day War. Then he experienced repeated humiliations within the Italian journalistic milieu which – he complains – was slow to recognize his value, before scaling its heights through implacably denouncing those he saw as responsible for such misfortunes (and many others to boot).

His successive books thus go back on many of his previous analyses: while in the past he had stated the compatibility of Islam with democracy, praised immigration as salutary for Italy, advocated a balanced Israeli-Palestinian peace process and denounced the Clash of Civilizations thesis, he later adopted the opposite positions. Finally, carried away by the conviction of the moral and spiritual superiority of Christianity, he veered from an attitude of pluralistic critique – engaging in controversies with reformist Islamic thinkers such as Tariq Ramadan and Rached Ghannouchi – to the condemnation of multiculturalism itself and of what he describes since as the death-dealing essence of Islam. This conviction led in 2008 to his apostasy and sensational conversion to Catholicism (he was baptised by the Pope in St. Peter's Basilica during the Easter Vigil), and then to the formation of his party *Protagonists for Christian Europe / I Love Italy*, which enabled him the following year to be elected to the European Parliament on the UDC list (Christian democrat right). It was a turnaround which, like Fallaci's

vice-chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Chamber, she considers herself a student of historian Bernard Lewis, whose recent analyses of current affairs she helped popularize in Italy (Nirenstein 1999, 2003).

last successes, must be situated in a context of relations structuring the Italian public debate about Islam during the last decade, as we will now see.

The Occidentalists Ideologists of Berlusconi

The success and the vast audiences of Fallaci and Allam cannot be explained without considering the support they received from (Catholic) institutional intellectuals and/or from (Berlusconian) organizational ones (Sapiro 2009) holding key positions both in the political field, and within scholarly and public debates. Indeed, in comparison to the other European countries, the low level of differentiation between these fields is an Italian peculiarity – already pointed out for the nineteenth century (Charle 1996) – that persisted until today. As the careers of these key intellectuals show:

- Marcello Pera (born in 1943), professor of philosophy at the University of Pisa and heir until the mid-1990s to a Popperian tradition that brought him close to the liberal-libertarian claims of the Radical Party, is today the leader of the Italian the-conservative movement: a Berlusconian senator since 1996, he was president of the Senate from 2001 to 2006, and co-wrote or prefaced several books with Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), notably *Without Roots* (2004) and *Why We Must Call Ourselves Christians* (2008).

- Gaetano Quagliariello (born in 1960) was his adviser for cultural affairs to the Presidency of the Senate. Once one of the national leaders of the Radical Party, he defected to the right, and also pursued a double career in academia and politics: a professor of contemporary political history at the LUJSS in Rome, a Berlusconian senator since 2006 and in charge of the Culture department of Forza Italia⁵ in 2007-2008, he is notably the author of *Catholics, Pacifists, Theocrats* (2006)⁶.

- The essayist and journalist Ferdinando Adornato (born in 1945), a former top official of the Italian Communist Party's youth wing, was for his part one of the co-authors of the 2004 'Charter of Values' of FI. He sat as a Berlusconian deputy from 2001 to 2008 (before joining the UDC), and chaired until 2006 the Culture, Science and Education Committee of the Chamber. He recently published *The New Way: West and Freedom after the Twentieth Century* (2003), and *Faith and Freedom* (2007) with future archbishop Rino Fisichella.

- Father Gianni Baget Bozzo (1925-2009) was active in the Christian Democracy and then in the Italian Socialist Party (for which he was twice an MEP) before

5 FI was created by Silvio Berlusconi in January 1994, and immediately established itself as the first political party of the country and the kingpin of the right-wing coalitions led by Berlusconi during the following 15 years. In March 2009, it merged with the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale, as well as with several smaller parties, to form Il Popolo della Libertà (Pdl).

6 On his standpoints towards Islam and immigration, see also his website www.gaetanoquagliariello.it.

joining FI in 1994. He also contributed to write the 'Charter of Values' and was the special adviser to Silvio Berlusconi on issues related to Islam (Guolo 2003). A columnist and commentator for several media, and a prolific essayist, he is the author of, among other works, *Facing Islam* (2001), *The Western Empire* (2004) and *Between Nihilism and Islam* (2006).

Pera, Quagliariello, Adornato and Baget Bozzo – like Giuliano Urbani (born in 1937), professor of political science at Bocconi University in Milan, columnist, Berlusconi deputy in 1994–2005 and Minister of Culture from 2001 to 2005 – all warmly praised Oriana Fallaci's 'Trilogy'. In addition to having more or less left-wing past, having played key roles in the FI party machine and at the head of its think tanks (Cousin and Vitale 2006), these people had a proximity to the Roman Curia (and especially to his Congregation for the doctrine of the faith), a status of intellectuals recognized as such both by their peers and by the wider public, and the same publisher (Mondadori). They share a conception of democracy as incompatible with multiculturalism and French-style secularism. Democracy is seen as inseparable from Christian origins, to which it supposedly owes its moral superiority, and which should be constantly recognised and valorized to avoid Western civilization and social order being washed away by migration flows. Moreover, just as they often reduce Christianity to Catholicism, the organic intellectuals of FI regard Islam as a unitary religious and cultural entity, intrinsically violent, particularly threatening for the survival of European 'values' and individual freedoms, and overdetermining the actions of all Muslims, who are therefore by definition unable to integrate, even after a long acculturation process⁷.

They bestowed on Silvio Berlusconi's party conservative cultural references and an intellectual critique that part of its electorate had complained to be lacking during the first years of Forza Italia, characterized by more neoliberal leanings (Poli 2001). These ideologists have contributed to setting up one of the convergences that have held the right-wing coalition in place throughout the last decade. Islamophobia and Christian Occidentalism have indeed allowed FI to pledge its xenophobia to its allies of the Lega Nord, which for its part has never really sought to base its essentialist racism on any complex justification (Cento Bull 2009, Biorcio 2010). But they have also simultaneously strengthened its links

7 These preconceptions are also fully shared by Roberto de Mattei (born in 1948), professor of history at the University of Cassino then since 2009 at the European University of Rome (created in 2005 by the Legionaries of Christ), and adviser for international affairs to the Italian Government in 2002–2006. His books on Western-Islamic relations (de Mattei 2002, 2009), as well as his many dogmatic, homophobic, anti-feminist and anti-evolutionist theses, caused a surge of indignation in April 2011 when they were topped with a series of statements arguing that the Eastern Japan great earthquake and tsunami – like the destruction of Warsaw by the Nazis during World War II – were a punishment sent by God. The protest caught on among academics, mainly because the Catholic fundamentalist professor was in 2004–2007 and again since 2008 the vice-president of the National Research Council (the Italian NSF).

with the Christian democrat right and the Roman Church: Forza Italia's defence of Catholicism as a central component of Italian (and European) identity, as well as its positions on bioethical issues and in favour of private Catholic schools, has led them in exchange to tolerate the strong personalization of power to the advantage of Silvio Berlusconi, and the pomocratic dimension of the regime made public over the last three years.

The Catholic Voices: From the Magisterium of the Holy See to the Influence of *Comunione e Liberazione*

The ideological junction of these intellectuals with the Holy See and part of the Catholic hierarchy can only be understood in the light of the evolution of the Church's positions at the end of John Paul II's pontificate, then – in a more distinct manner – when Benedict XVI succeeded him in 2005. Unlike Karol Wojtyła, who was a professor of ethics deeply committed to his pastoral activity and whose pontificate was marked by interfaith dialogue, Joseph Ratzinger (born in 1927) had an exclusively academic career as a professor of dogmatic theology before becoming a cardinal, throughout which he contributed notably to transform the Holy Office (the ex-Roman Inquisition) into the Congregation for the doctrine of the faith, which he then headed from 1981. As the prefect of the congregation, he strongly limited pluralism within the Catholic Church, becoming known for his authoritarianism, his intransigence concerning orthodoxy, and his reservations about ecumenism and the possibility of shared ethics among the major religions. In 2000, his *Dominus Iesus* declaration recalled the primacy of Catholicism in terms of salvation over other Christian and non-Christian denominations. In May 2004, in the thick of the debate on the opportunity to mention European 'Christian heritage' in the preamble to the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, he participated in two conferences with Marcello Pera, extended by an exchange of letters, from which comes the book they published together that same year. In it, Ratzinger denounces multiculturalism as the symptom of Western self-loathing that he defines as pathological. Finally, in 2006, especially since he had become Pope the previous year, Benedict XVI created a worldwide turmoil and built himself a public image tinged with Islamophobia during his now (in)famous Regensburg lecture, when he reflected on a quote from the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos⁸ reducing the essence of Islam to violence⁹.

8 It is unclear if the grounding of the speech in such a reference was the result of clumsiness or a tactical choice. The ambiguity often characteristic of the papal word is based – for Benedict XVI – less on the search for consensual wordings simultaneously congenial to the different sections of the Catholic world, than on the succession of statements and subsequent corrections (or even denials) establishing a segmented communication strategy.

9 'Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he

These positions of the new Pope, supported with scholarly references, were even more willingly welcomed by the Italian right as they concurred with those of the top of the Italian episcopacy – dominated at the time by its most conservative fringe – whose opposition to a national multiculturalism including Islam had been declared many years earlier (Garau, 2010). Since the end of the 1990s, the thesis of the impossibility of integrating Muslim immigrants has been debated at the highest levels of the Italian Catholic hierarchy, where it was vehemently supported by Cardinal Giacomo Biffi (2000a, 2000b) – close to Benedict XVI – and Cardinal Camillo Ruini, who was the president of the Italian Episcopal Conference from 1991 to 2007. The latter declared as early as 1997 that immigrants were not welcome into the country unless their cultural and religious origins were ‘compatible with the Italian ones’, that is unless they were Christians.

Moreover, the convergence of the ecclesiastical hierarchies and the ideologists of Forza Italia on Islamophobic stances was also the fruit of intense bridge-building carried out by actors firmly and simultaneously installed not only in the political and the intellectual fields, but also in the ecclesial one¹⁰ (whose influence in Italy reduces even more the autonomy of each of the other two), such as Rino Fisichella and the *Comunione e Liberazione* movement (CL).

Archbishop Salvatore ‘Rino’ Fisichella (born in 1951) was professor of fundamental theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome until 1998, rector of the Pontifical Lateran University from 2002 to 2010, and president of the Pontifical Academy for Life from 2008 to 2010. A member of the Congregation for the doctrine of the faith, he was handed the presidency of a new Church department in June 2010: the Pontifical Council for promoting the new evangelisation, charged with fighting against the decline of Christianity and the secularisation process in Western countries. His main positions in the public debate, in defence of the ‘Christian roots’ of Europe and against its ‘Islamization’, appear in the volume co-authored with Adornato as well as in two other books recently published by Mondadori (Fisichella 2007, 2009a). But Fisichella also organized (Quagliariello 2006: 120) the conferences with Pera and Ratzinger that led to their joint volume, and was Oriana Fallaci’s principal confidant throughout her last two years of worsening illness (Fisichella 2009b), the architect of her rapprochement with Benedict XVI (who granted her a private audience in August 2005) and the attentive reviewer of her third Islamophobic essay. Moreover, according to Magdi Allam – whose conversion he encouraged and supported – he is his ‘spiritual guide’. Finally, Fisichella is used to getting involved both directly and indirectly in politics: not only because from 1994 to 2010 he was the chaplain of the Chamber of Deputies, but also by regularly defending in the media Silvio Berlusconi’s morality. During the second half of the 2000s, he also got closer to

preached.’ (Palaologos 1966 – The original text is in Greek and the accuracy of the English translation by the Vatican has been debated).

¹⁰ On the pertinence of studying the Catholic Church as a field, see Bourdieu and Saint-Martin 1982.

CL and was, for instance, invited in 2007 and 2008 to speak at the international summer meeting gathering hundreds of thousands of its members in Rimini.

CL began in Milan in the 1950s and grew in importance after 1968, imposing itself as the organizer of a revival of the forms of mobilization among the Catholic youth: more spontaneist than its predecessors – in particular than Azione Cattolica – and nevertheless advocating entryism and cultural confrontation, aestheticism and anti-Marxism (Zadra 1994, Abbruzzese 2001)¹¹. Recognized by the Church since 1982 as an association of pontifical right, the ‘movement’ is today one of the organizations that dominate the field of power in Northern Italy (the economic heartland of the country), where it has several thousand members and tens of thousands of followers. It has controlled the Lombardy Region since 1995, when one of its historic officials – Roberto Formigoni (now Berlusconi) – was elected governor. His clientelist machine and his hold over the several institutional sectors rely widely on the *Compagnia delle Opere*, the operational arm of CL which functions at the same time as an employers’ union, a services provider, a welfare and philanthropy consortium, and as an educational and cultural federation (Pinotti 2010). Among the principal Italian politicians belonging to CL, many have encouraged over the last decade the defence of ‘Europe’s Christian roots’ against multiculturalism and Islam. For instance, although usually temperate in his positions, Mario Mauro (born in 1961), vice-president of the European Parliament in 2004–2009, current chief whip of the Berlusconi MEPs, adjunct professor at the European University of Rome, and in charge of the Higher Education department of Forza Italia in 2002–2009, has written several essays on these questions, including: *Europe will be Christian or it will not be at all* (2004), *The God of Europe* (2007) and *Little dictionary of the Christian roots of Europe* (Chiappa and Mauro 2007)¹². Maurizio Lupi (born in 1959), a Berlusconi deputy and vice-president of the Chamber, was another strong supporter of Magdi Allam’s conversion and his godfather at his baptism in 2008¹³.

The intellectual influence of CL is also due to the fact that the largest Italian student union is a direct outgrowth of the movement and that the main secular leader of the latter is currently Giancarlo Cesana. Cesana (born in 1948) is a professor of medicine and hygiene at the University of Milan-Bicocca and a

¹¹ Concerning the history of CL since 1954, see also the three volumes written by one of its leaders: Massimo Camisasca (2001, 2003, 2006).

¹² The last title is a children’s book.

¹³ By contrast, some other political or religious leaders originally from CL – conservative Catholics that did not join Berlusconi or to the Ratzinger line against multiculturalism – reject the essentialist approach to Islam in favour of interreligious dialogue carried out on a more pragmatic basis. This is the case notably for Cardinal Angelo Scola (born in 1941), the highly influential archbishop of Milan and former patriarch of Venice, but also for Rocco Buttiglione (born in 1948), president of the UDC, professor of political philosophy at the LUSPIO in Rome, exegete of John Paul II, former MEP, former senator, minister of Culture in the third Berlusconi government (2005–2006), and currently vice-president of the Chamber.

have not yet met a historical and geopolitical conjuncture favourable to their democratization and to the emergence of a 'modern state', and therefore do not socialize their inhabitants to lead respectful and pluralistic civic lives. According to him, Islam is thus only one causal dimension of this situation (among others). For Galli della Loggia, analyst and promoter since the 1990s of an 'Italian national identity' inevitably filled with Catholicism, Islam poses a specific problem in that it too often denies individual rights and freedoms (notably those of women and sexual minorities) and because it is a religion exclusively based on submission to authority, to texts and to divine law, while Christianity is seen to give more space to *logos* and reason¹⁶. Finally, for Panebianco, it is the quest for cultural hegemony inherent to Islam (and exacerbated by the Islamist awakening) that renders Muslim immigrants and their children particularly difficult to integrate peacefully into European societies. Thus, for the three authors, the integration problems that Muslims have faced in Italy can only be caused by their lack of conformity and adaptability – contingent for Romano, doctrinal for Galli, and relational for Panebianco – to their new country, while the possibility that the latter could try to reach a compromise over certain specificities of this fraction of its population (which now totals around a million and a half people) is never mentioned.

Actually, this line of analysis, with its culturalist and assimilationist overtones, has also been adopted and legitimated for a decade by the most famous Italian political scientist: Giovanni Sartori (born in 1924), emeritus professor at Columbia University in New York and at the University of Florence, who is also an op-ed columnist for *Il Corriere della Sera*. Since the appendix to the 2002 edition of his book *Pluralism, Multiculturalism and Foreigners* – where he affirms that 'we can only integrate what is integrable'¹⁷ – until the debate that pitted him against Bocconi economist Tito Boeri (Sartori 2009, 2010), he has maintained that all former and recent historical experiences show without exception that Muslim minorities are impossible to integrate, little inclined to tolerance and to the recognition of other religions, often violent, and would therefore be disruptive of order and social peace in any country welcoming them, especially secular democracies. The problem, according to Sartori, is that Islam is a totalizing religion incompatible with secularization. Therefore, in the name of realism, Italy should both seek to attract the 'good' migrants essential to its economy, and do all it can to avoid accepting Muslims and making them citizens. Sartori defends the right of the native majority to xenophobia, that is to the refusal of a cultural otherness that frightens them.

Islamophobic Intellectuals as Moral Panic Entrepreneurs

If the stances taken by these different intellectuals share the common aim of fighting 'cultural relativism' – a claimed aim which is also the feature of a wider

16 See, for instance, Galli della Loggia 2006.

17 See also Sartori 2008.

high-level manager in the Lombardy health system, whose scientific authority is particularly instrumental in supporting CL's 'pro-life' stances. But, at the 2010 annual meeting of the movement he also proclaimed his indignation against Umberto Eco: explicitly denounced as a eulogist of tolerance and ideological pluralism, as well as for his criticism of religious fanaticism contained in *The Name of the Rose*...

The Secular Conservative Experts and the Figure of the Incompatible Alien

In addition to these Berlusconian and Catholic intellectuals¹⁴, a third group of men – sharing common social properties and similar modalities of taking stances – has contributed to the rise of Islamophobia in Italy; notably by unanimously acclaiming the essays of Fallaci, by criticizing their extreme tone to better celebrate their alleged truthfulness and analytical accuracy. This group is made of liberal-conservative political scientists attached to secularism. Critical supporters of the Italian right, they are careful never to lapse into forms of partisan activism that could undermine the claimed neutrality of their expertise, and they all combine a prestigious academic or professional career with writing op-ed columns.

Sergio Romano (born in 1929), was general director of cultural relations at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassador to NATO and to the Soviet Union, then professor of history of international affairs at Bocconi University. He is today a prolific essayist often writing on the relations of Italy with Islam and the Muslim world. Ernesto Galli della Loggia (born in 1942) was professor of contemporary political history at the University of Perugia, at San Raffaele University in Milan, and has been since 2009 at the prestigious *Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane*. He is also the co-author with Cardinal Camillo Ruini (2009) of a book on the social role of Christianity. Finally, Angelo Panebianco (born in 1948) is professor of political science at the University of Bologna. All three have long been columnists for the *Ill Corriere della Sera*, the largest Italian daily newspaper¹⁵ (in which Fallaci published – as first drafts or previews – long extracts of her three books against Islam, and of which Allam was a deputy editor). They don't adopt any Occidental perspective neither claim the moral supremacy of Christianity, but in the name of political realism they resort to a culturalist analysis of Muslim countries and their citizens, in order to maintain the difficulties of the latter in accepting a democratic, secular and tolerant society.

Without denying the possibility or even the possibility of a more multicultural Italy these authors make various diagnoses about how Islam hinders it. For Romano (2007), the problem is due essentially to the fact that the Arab countries

14 Which of course are not representative of all the diverse positions towards Islam existing within the Catholic Church.

15 Romano also for *Panorama*, the second largest weekly news magazine in the country, owned by Berlusconi.

public discourse that has developed in Italy over the last decade (Riviera 2010)¹⁸ – it is the ‘values’ they declare to defend that distinguish them from each other. Some are more secular and pluralistic (but opposed to political multiculturalism), others essentially based on interpretations of Christianity and more specifically of Catholicism, and most are a combination of the two: seeking to establish in one way or another the necessity of the link between Christianity and democracy. Cultural pluralism is seen as often too permissive towards Muslims, therefore as fostering (moral) disorder and (tolerance towards) barbarism.

The 2000s have indeed been marked by a hardening of these two lines of criticism of Islam, but also by a gradual shift of several intellectuals from a secular position to an alignment with the Vatican, often accompanied by an act of faith. In addition to the already mentioned cases of Oriana Fallaci, Magdi Allam and Marcello Pera, we can also cite, in this regard, the case of Giuliano Ferrara, founding editor of *Il Foglio*, a daily opinion paper controlled by Berlusconi¹⁹. Moreover, the numerous books of dialogues with high-level Catholic prelates (Pera with Ratzinger, Adornato with Fischella, Galli della Loggia with Ruini) have further contributed to reconfigure the debate about the place of African immigrants in Italian society in religious terms (Allievi 2005): the ‘Moroccans’ of the 1990s have been transformed into ‘Muslims’ ‘Islamics’ or even ‘Mohammedans’²⁰ in the 2000s. But this renewed influence of the Church hierarchy on several conservative intellectuals is also explained by the historical weakness of the Italian liberal tradition.

The versions and skilful elaborations of Islamophobia presented in this chapter do not however fully make sense outside the comparison with other waves of intolerance – towards, for example, Albanians (Dal Lago 1999) or Roma groups (Vitale and Claps 2010) – that have affected Italy over the last twenty years. In the case of Roma and Sinti, xenophobia doesn’t need any intellectual elaboration. It is based on longstanding popular depictions, on the performativity of recurrent public accusations, and on the institutional – and thus instituting – routines that have long stabilized the *reality* of Roma groups, that is the stereotype used against them (Boltanski 2011). They are almost unanimously perceived as a socially homogenous, fundamentally deviant population – whose appearance

18 See also the groundbreaking research of Alfredo Alietti and Dario Padovan (2010, 2011) that analyzes how Islamophobic prejudices and attitudes among the Italian population are connected to authoritarian, ethnocentric and anomic systems of representations.

19 A formidable neoconservative polemicist, Giuliano Ferrara (born in 1952 into a communist family) spent part of his childhood in Moscow, was a PCI activist during the 1970s, moved during the 1980s to the Italian Socialist Party of Bettino Craxi (as an MEP) and to the CIA (as an informer), then to Forza Italia as minister in charge of the Relations with the Parliament and chief spokesperson for the first Berlusconi government (in 1994). An ardent promoter of the recognition of Europe’s Christian roots and of a moratorium on abortion, during the meeting of CL in August 2005 he publicly announced his embrace of Catholicism.

20 These appellations now have a neo-ethnic acceptance, as shown by Olivier Roy (2004).

provokes repulsion and even physical disgust – constituting above all a social problem²¹. Stories continue to circulate representing them summarily as predatory vagrants, and sometimes as child-snatcher. Similarly, in the case of Albanian and Kosovan migrants, whose religion is only rarely highlighted, the figure of the brutal Balkan bandit predominates, reactivated by the media coverage of the Yugoslav wars during the 1990s. In contrast, until the 2000s there were in Italy no negative narratives or frames peculiar to Islam; hence the recent insistence of Fallaci and her epigones and supporters to innovate by pointing at the alleged dirtiness, violence and/or perversion of Muslims, and to resurrect the ‘memory’ of the medieval Arab invasions, the Crusades, the wars against the Ottoman Empire, and the rivalry between the seafaring Italian cities and the Barbary pirates²²; and hence, especially, the necessity of an ideological construct articulated and displayed in various formats (from the populist booklet to the highbrow essay) in order to build the cultural foundations of a well-spread Islamophobic view.

Avoiding any normative perspective (Garland 2008, Rohloff and Wright 2010), it is then as entrepreneurs and promoters of moral panic (Cohen 2004) that the intellectuals presented here must be analyzed. As a result of (notably) the diversity of their respective trajectories, their criticisms after 9/11 denouncing the dangers of Islam and multiculturalism were received in a highly consensual and trans-partisan manner. The Oriana Fallaci of the 2000s – who was eulogized by prominent left-wing political leaders such as Francesco Rutelli²³ and Riccardo Nencini²⁴ – enjoyed a more widespread favourable reception in Italy than Eric Zemmour in France, Ayaan Hirsi Ali in the Netherlands, Thilo Sarrazin in Germany, Bruce Bawer in Norway, Melanie Phillips in the United Kingdom, Mark Steyn in Canada, or Glenn Beck in the United States²⁵. This Italian achievement in terms of Islamophobia is of course due in large measure to the emotions provoked by the Islamist terror attacks in New York, Madrid and London (which in Italy

21 In a similar way that – during the heroin epidemic of the 1980s – all drug users were associated with the figure of the ‘junkie’.

22 This memory dramatization also took place on screen with the work of Renzo Martinelli (born in 1948), a committed right-wing filmmaker – close to the Lega Nord and to Berlusconi – who describes himself as an ‘intellectual’. Generously funded by RAI (the Italian state broadcaster), he made a series of movies on: Al Qaeda in Europe (*The Stone Merchants*, 2006), Alberto da Giussano, the legendary hero of the medieval Lombard League (*Sword of War*, 2009), and the role of Marco d’Aviano during the Battle of Vienna (*September 11, 1683*, to be released in 2012). Besides, in the cinema world, the last books of Oriana Fallaci were acclaimed by director Franco Zeffirelli (born in 1923), well-known for his television mini-series *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), and who was a Berlusconi senator from 1994 to 2001.

23 Francesco Rutelli (born in 1954) was mayor of Rome from 1993 to 2001, then minister of Culture and vice-prime minister in the second Prodi government (2006–2008).

24 Riccardo Nencini (born in 1959), author of historical essays and novels, was governor of the Tuscany Region from 2000 to 2010.

25 About the ‘Eurabia’ literature in North America, see Vaisse 2010.

awoke the fear of terrorism experimented on during the Years of Lead²⁶), to the sensationalism of national media and the direct control exercised over many of them by Silvio Berlusconi's entourage, as well as to the regularity with which the most recent waves of immigrants are depicted as 'folk devils' (notably by the right-wing political parties, especially the Lega Nord).

However, one of the deeper causes of this moral panic is probably linked to the unease generated by the quadrupling of immigrants during the last twenty years (from one to more than four million) in an economically stagnant society with very few opportunities for social mobility (Cousin 2009), and lacking any model of integration. The Islamophobic arguments exclude Muslims from a common humanity all the more easily because in Italy local realities are largely stabilized by relations of domestic worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) – which tend to be exclusive towards those who 'aren't from around here' – and don't rely on a meritocracy immediately open to all²⁷. Therefore Italians are particularly impervious to antiracist critiques and references to a procedural justice independent of the length of everyone's local involvement.

Finally, we must underline that the contribution to the progression of Islamophobia by the numerous Italian intellectuals we have examined here is not limited to their spoken and written words. It lies also in the *laissez-faire* attitude, the silence – sometimes embarrassed but often benevolent – with which the majority of them welcome the most obvious populist and instrumental political uses of their ideological constructs and the Islamophobic vulgate following from them. Thus, the crude counter-narrative with which in February 2011 Silvio Berlusconi attempted to publicly clear himself of having hired a 17-year old Moroccan prostitute – spreading in the media that he had 'helped her' to escape a family life of rapes, constant fear, and physical abuse inflicted in the name of Islam and of an archaic culture of honour – didn't provoke any comment despite its many incongruities (or perhaps because of them). This too, then, was supposed to be the fault of Muslim immigrants... and during the following months, commenting on the on-going Arab Spring, many Italian intellectuals worried first and foremost that more will arrive²⁸.

It is still too early to know if, in the long run, the 2011 geopolitical turn in the Muslim world (impulsed by the Arab revolutions and the killing of Osama bin Laden) and the aftermath of the Oslo-Utøya massacre (whose author was

an avid reader of Islamophobic intellectuals) will delegitimize and attenuate the anti-Muslim racism that grew in Europe during the past decade. In Italy, after ten years of Islamophobic advocacy carried by many of the most influential public figures, prejudices and aversion towards Muslims are now widely disseminated in common sense. The variety of the Italian Islamophobic repertoire – both in styles and in axiological traditions, as this chapter shows – contributes to this pervasiveness. Because it is based on a plurality of rationales and narratives, it also makes any attempt of refutation more difficult and complex.

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²⁶ The protest cycle of the period 1969–1982, characterized in Italy by the spread of political violence. See for instance Della Porta 1995.

²⁷ We are not referring here to the amoral *familism* (Banfield 1958), the *parochialism* (Almond and Verba 1963), or the lack of a culture of civic engagement (Putnam 1993) supposedly peculiar to Italy or some of its regions (causal analyses that are all highly contested within Italian sociology), but rather pointing the fit of representations and expectations with the local opportunity structure and with the tests that govern it.

²⁸ See for instance the alarmist position taken by Piero Ostellino (2011), former editor of *Il Corriere della Sera*, where he is currently a columnist.

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Foreword

Michael Welch

Ten years after the attacks of 11 September 2001, we continue to witness the scapegoating of Islamic individuals, groups, and even nations accused of supporting terrorism (Welch 2006a, 2009). In March 2011, for instance, a series of US Congressional hearings began, aimed at investigating the supposed radicalization of American Muslims. Facing intense criticism that the panel was a bigoted show trial and would serve little purpose other than reinforce stereotypes that Muslims are somehow prone to political violence, Representative Peter King, the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, defended his platform. 'Al Qaeda is recruiting from the Muslim community,' said King (Shane 2011: 4). Opponents of the hearings countered by accusing King of pushing forward an inquisition rather than attempting to decipher the intricacies of terrorist plots. 'This hearing is not focusing on the acts of a criminal fringe but is broad-brushing an entire community,' remarked Alejandro J. Beutel, policy analyst at the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Washington (Shane 2011: 5).

Congressman King's hearings are emblematic of other campaigns geared at marginalizing Muslims, especially as America stepped closer to the ten-year anniversary of 9/11. In 2010, news organizations around the world gave close coverage to the controversy over the so-called 'Ground Zero Mosque.' Although its sponsors stress that the venue was planned to serve as an interfaith centre for followers of many religions, negative – even hostile – reaction to the 'mosque' gained momentum: some polls indicated that 71 per cent of Americans opposed the centre (Abdel-Fattah 2010: 9). Many commentators reiterated a common sentiment that Ground Zero is a sacred site, despite the fact that strip clubs with nude dancers surround the neighbourhood. When that observation was pointed out, one critic of the 'mosque' responded: 'The terrorists were not strippers' (Abdel-Fattah 2010: 9). Here, an all too familiar calculus persists: Muslims equal terrorists.

Such demonization in a post-9/11 world also resonates in personal testimonies of other self-appointed terrorist detectors, among them is Brigitte Gabriel. A potent public speaker, she lectures a circuit of hundreds of churches, synagogues, and conference rooms, as well as taking centre stage at a Tea Party convention in fall of 2010. According to Gabriel, 'America has been infiltrated on all levels by radicals who wish to harm America. They have infiltrated us at the CIA, at the FBI, at the Pentagon, at the State Department. They are being radicalized in radical mosques in our cities and communities within the United States' (Goodstein 2011: 2). Gabriel has built an aggressive network of activists committed to challenging Islam within American society. Her group, *ACT! for America* claims 155,000