

**Title—‘They love death as we love life’: The Muslim Question and the Biopolitics of Replacement**  
**Journal—BJS: The British Journal of Sociology**  
**Author—Sarah Bracke**  
**Year—2019**

Categories: Islam, The West, Politics, Power

Place: Western Europe

Time: 1970-Present

Argument Synopsis:

Bracke’s article is focused on the role of demographics in the modern debates in Europe around the ‘Muslim Question.’ She argues that concerns about ‘Muslim demographics’ within Europe have been entertained, mobilized, and deployed to not only construct Muslims as problems and dangers to the present and future of Europe, but also as calls to revive eugenic policies within the frame of biopower. Bracke notes how Western discourse often frames Islam and Muslims themselves as the antithesis to modernity, being inherently violent and backward. She utilizes the analytical frame of the ‘Muslim Question,’ which traces the problematization of Islam and Muslims in Europe and seeks to apprehend the systematic character of this process. In particular, Bracke approaches the Muslim question from a particular angle: the discursive and conspiratorial use of demographics as an alleged threat to Europe, specifically birth and migration. This refers to the popular discourse on ‘waves’ of migration as well as high birth rates among ‘migrant’ populations that has gained traction throughout the continent. This predicament is often framed as a deliberate and combative strategy on the part of Muslims. Bracke argues that demographic questionings and biopolitical-eugenic answers constitute a key discursive site where the Muslim question unfolds now.

In terms of organization, the article is roughly divided into three parts. The first part offers a concise account of the rise of the ‘replacement’ discourse through a brief discussion of some of its major articulations. The discourse of replacement is what is at play in discussions of fear of birth rates among ‘migrants.’ The second part provides a close reading of two recent images that juxtapose life and death as imagined within the replacement discourse and that capture that discourse in powerful ways. One of the images originates in political campaigns, while the other comes from the alt right blogosphere. Both images depict pregnancy and emphasize the importance of not allowing the Muslim birth rate to overtake the ‘native’ European. The third section claims that a close reading of these images provides the ground to develop an argument on biopolitics and eugenics in the context of the Muslim question.

According to Bracke, if the Muslim question can be approached as the general problematization of Muslims as ‘Muslims’ then the Muslim question is biopolitics. The Muslim question, and specifically fears over replacement, has become central to the regulation, management and control of national populations in Europe. Population replacement discourse crafts an artificial reality and frames it in a wider civilizational context where Europe must be defended. This fantasy of replacement is utilized in such a way that politics understands itself as merely a ‘response’ to a demographic threat. Bracke focused on tracing the formation and dissemination of the replacement discourse and to situate this discourse both in light of biopolitics and within the contours of Europe’s Muslim question.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- The Muslim Question represents a paranoid reading of the postcolonial predicament from the mindset of the former colonizer
- The Muslim Question can be seen as a form of governmentality
- Analytic of Muslim Question revolves around the accusation of being an ‘alien body’ to the nation and the demands of integration and assimilation