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THE POLITICS OF REPLACEMENT

From “Race Suicide” to the “Great Replacement”

Sarah Bracke and Luis Manuel Hernández Aguilar

Aims of the Volume¹

On May 14, 2022, a white supremacist terrorist entered a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, and assassinated ten African Americans and wounded three more. He livestreamed his attack and posted a manifesto with the motivations behind his deadly political violence. This white supremacist violence was, in the view of the perpetrator, retaliation and a call for arms against the “great replacement” of white populations. The perpetrator saw “Jews” as orchestrating a nefarious plot that would eventually wipe out white populations, and, accordingly, his attack was “intended to terrorize all non-white, non-Christian people and get them to leave the country” (Associated Press, 2022). Like the growing list of white supremacist terrorists inspired by fears of being replaced, the Buffalo perpetrator considered nonwhite migration and higher fertility rates as tantamount to “white genocide”, believed in a eugenicist-Malthusian ecofascist worldview, and understood sexual diversity to be a threat to the white nation. Moreover, he was an avid visitor of 4chan/pol/, carved his weapons with racial slurs and symbols of white supremacy, livestreamed his attacks, and posted a manifesto in which he recycled the racial arguments of what he deemed his forebearers (and notably the Charleston, Christchurch, and Utøya terrorists who have made global headlines in the past decades). Both the modus operandi and the ideology behind this kind of white supremacist violence have, unfortunately, become more common. Contemporary population replacement conspiracy theories are on the rise: from *Eurabia* fantasies to Camus’ *The Great Replacement*, from “Jews will not replace us” (a rallying cry at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017) to “It’s the birth rates” (the opening of the Christchurch killer’s manifesto), white supremacist discourses are

thriving and increasingly broadcasting in mainstream venues. They have been mobilized by political parties and (anti)social movements such as Generation Identity, Counter-jihad, and Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA) and are proliferating through imageboards, blogs, chat-rooms, messaging servers, and memes.

This book offers insight into such conspiracy theories as well as their current traction. It engages questions like: what histories do we need to consider for understanding contemporary population replacement conspiracy theories? What are the relevant geopolitical contexts that give rise to them? Which different shapes and contents do replacement conspiracy theories take? How can we understand the circulation of these conspiracy theories, both over time and in between national spaces? *The Politics of Replacement* takes on these and many other questions as we explore current demographic conspiracy theories and their entanglement with different forms of racism and sexism. We do so with the aim of providing a solid cartography – which, following feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2002), we understand as a *theoretically based and politically informed* reading of the present – that enables a deeper understanding of what is at stake in contemporary population replacement conspiracy theories. We approach population replacement conspiracy theories as those imaginaries and discourses centred on the idea that the national population is under threat of being overtaken or even wiped out by those considered as “alien” to the national body as well as the idea that changes in population dynamics are not the outcome of organic processes but rather the consequences of plots devised by powerful actors. While population replacement conspiracy theories have taken different forms and signatures – such as *Umvolkung/omvolking*, white genocide/suicide, *Eurabia*, Islamization, The Great Replacement, Saffron Demography, Love Jihad, Demographic Jihad, *Bevolkerung verdunnung*, or the Kalergi Plan, to name but a few – the imaginaries and discourses of such conspiracy theories consistently rely on the production of ontological distinctions between those who belong to the nation versus those who are “alien”. Such distinctions are both rooted in long embodied histories, with notably “the Jew” and “the Muslim” as *aliens par excellence* in European history, and are also versatile, operating along the lines of how Stuart Hall has conceptualized race as a *floating signifier* (Hall 1997; see also Laclau & Mouffe 2001).

Replacement conspiracy theories, in other words, are entangled with questions of race and racialization. While they have been developed in the context of the demonization of the “non-European Other” and the closing of the Western borders, they have not been confined to that context: they are extremely preoccupied with delineating the racial makeup of the national body, also beyond European/white contexts (see, for instance, Saffron Demography in India, explored by Das in this volume). In this vein, they are invariably concerned with policing the crossing of the material and symbolic borders of the

racialized nation and, notably, with discussions about migration. At the same time, the imaginaries and discourses of population replacement conspiracy theories are preoccupied with the reproduction of that nation and, notably, with questions about who should procreate more and whose procreation is alarming and should be halted, thus implying racially differentiated visions on the regulation of women's bodies and sexual practices. As a result, population replacement conspiracy theories are as much about the regulation of gender and sexuality as they are about race and racialization. In this sense, engaging with the multiple histories and articulations of population replacement conspiracy theories means undertaking an analysis of the convoluted relations between gender, sexuality, race, and the conceptualization of the nation.

This book aims to account for (the rise and development of) contemporary replacement conspiracy theories by bringing together new and variegated scholarship that addresses population replacement discourses or engages relevant topics for understanding these conspiracy theories. The volume consists of case studies from different social scientific and humanities (inter)disciplinary backgrounds, working with different geographical case studies (across Europe, North America, Southeast Asia, and Oceania), focusing on different time periods (medieval archives, colonial archives, Nazi archives, postcolonial migrations, and post-9/11), engaging with different forms of racialization and racisms (Islamophobia, antisemitism, racism against migrants and refugees), and drawing on different theoretical and methodological approaches.² Eighteen chapters analyze the convoluted history, formation, and spread of conspiracy theories that postulate that there are concerted efforts to replace populations, notably white populations, by Muslims, migrants, refugees, and generally racialized Others. These contributions provide an interdisciplinary critical engagement with the theoretical foundations, entangled histories, and empirical manifestations of contemporary conspiracy theories fuelled by racism. Taken together, they offer an understanding of where these conspiracy theories come from, how they travel, how they work and gain traction, and how questions of race, gender, and sexuality are (re)figured in the process.

The Palimpsest of Population Replacement

Population replacement conspiracy theories come in many different versions. Their transnational and versatile character, moreover, can pose scholarly difficulties in the systematization and analysis of a discourse that is so dispersed, uneven, and continually morphing. Specific dimensions of population replacement discourses are mobilized in some contexts and at certain moments, while others remain in the background or are absent. On far-right channels on the internet, for instance, Jews are often constructed as the evil masterminds behind the global replacement of white populations, while this feature of conspiracy theories fades or is absent in more mainstream

articulations such as the books authored by Bat Ye'or or Thilo Sarrazin. While the former relies heavier on the structure of conspiracy theories, the latter draws on eugenics, Islamophobia, and neo-Malthusianism. This begs the question of whether, in effect, these discourses should be understood and studied altogether.

We approach this broad and variegated field as discourse and incitement to discourse, in a Foucauldian sense (Foucault 2010). These conspiracy theories can be seen as articulations of racialized knowledge built upon other historical archives and narratives aspiring to become regimes of truth, entangled with and marshalling various subject positions and subjectivities, while being embedded in and crafting power relations and calls for action. Elsewhere (Bracke & Hernández Aguilar 2020) we have proposed the metaphor-concept of *the palimpsest* to account for the continuous shifting dimensions, or layers, of the population replacement discourse. The palimpsest of population replacement stands in as a piece of writing in constant re-making while keeping the core ideas intact: the white (masculine) Western world is declining, and such decline is not accidental but rather the outcome of a nefarious plot deploying migration and birth rates as warfare tactics.

The material upon which the population replacement discourse is written and rewritten is made of conspiratorial parchment, so to speak. The structural narrative of the palimpsest, in other words, has been modelled on the structure of conspiracy theories; that is, a discourse operating under the assumption that “the fate of governments, institutions and society as a whole is secretly determined by a small group of individuals bound by a common purpose and interests” (Soyer 2019, 5). Accordingly, the replacement of whites by nonwhites is explicated as the outcome of different actors, acting in varying degrees of secrecy, plotting, and commitment to fulfil this process. Very often, population replacement discourse identifies Jews as the main actors in this respect, and one key characteristic of the palimpsest is the recycling and reworking of antisemitic conspiracy theories.

The palimpsest as a metaphor-concept allows us to approach the population replacement discourse as a historical and contemporary archive that is expanded in real time, enlarging and acquiring new meanings in every novel iteration while leaving enough blank space to remain an unfinished palimpsest open to be re-inscribed. Every new iteration of population replacement discourse, either in the form of a meme, a blog, a book, a political platform, or a manifesto, thus reveals itself as a bricolage of older and new scripting. When reading Renaud Camus' *Le grand remplacement*, it is, for instance, possible to decipher Guillaume Faye's *La colonisation de l'Europe* (see Lou Mousset in this volume) as well as Jean Raspail's *Le Camp des saints*. And similarly, when reading Thilo Sarrazin's (2010) *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, one can detect the scribbles of Francis Galton, as well as the Malthusian archive being overwritten by the pen of an author who resents the presence of Muslims in Germany.

It is possible to discern shared layers or inscriptions in this palimpsest. In this volume, and at the conference from which this volume emerged, we have made sense of the variety of contributions through three concepts: *race wars*, *demographic fears*, and *apocalyptic visions*. First and foremost, these conspiracy theories are centred on a “race war” frame (Foucault 1997; Sheth 2011): the palimpsest of population replacement invariably rests upon an ontologically binary understanding of social and political reality where one front seeks to destroy-replace the other. As mentioned, this Other can be fleshed out in different ways: the motility and polyvalent mobility (Stoler 1995) of this discourse can craft racialized enemies out of migrants and refugees, Muslims and Jews, or Latinxs and African Americans.

These conspiracy theories, moreover, are animated by demographic fears. The concern with demography revolves around two population processes: population migration and natural population growth. Population replacement conspiracy theories problematize migration and, notably, nonwhite/Muslim migration to the West, which is constructed as a strategic warfare tactic (Bracke & Hernández Aguilar 2022). At the same time, these conspiracy theories are centred on questions of fertility and birth rates. Within its frame of war, the population replacement palimpsest posits birth rates, and, in particular, Muslim birth rates, as a combative strategy to replace populations. The framing of “demographic jihad” necessitates at least two further discursive elements: Muslim male hypersexuality and Muslim female hyperfertility (de Hart 2017; Bonjour & Bracke 2020; Bracke & Hernandez Aguilar 2020; Hark & Villa 2020). Many versions of the population replacement discourse, moreover, articulate a deliberate critique of feminism, as it is conceived of as an ideology proselytizing European women to not have (white) children, thus negatively affecting birth rates (Hark & Villa 2020; Roth 2021) and the reproduction of the white nation.

Finally, weaving together issues of race, migration, and sexuality/fertility, population replacement conspiracy theories present apocalyptic visions of the imminent destruction of the racialized nations and, in particular, the white/Western nation. The conspiracy theories seek to describe the upcoming rapture of the West; the destruction of its values, ideas, norms, culture and what-not; and the replacement of “native” European and Western populations, for which this hostile takeover (Sarrazin 2018) stands in for the end of times (see O’Donnell in this volume). This apocalyptic impulse, moreover, contains a call for solutions: as a discursive problematization, the population replacement discourse calls for politics to solve, in a myriad of ways, the upcoming destruction of the West. These “solutions” range from harsher migration policies, positive and negative eugenics techniques, and targeted terrorist violence.

This approach to population replacement conspiracy theories, moreover, enables us to contribute to the existing knowledge in at least three ways. First, while there are informative and critical analyses of different versions

of the population replacement discourse, the metaphor-concept of the palimpsest allows us to think about the different signatures and versions of the discourse together, within the context of a transnational Western discursive formation on white decline mounted on white supremacy. Second, the study of different signatures of population replacement has been compartmentalized by disciplinary approaches. Most of the scholarship dealing with *Eurabia* and Islamization comes from Islamophobia studies (Carr 2006; Fekete 2012; Larsson 2012; Bangstad 2012, 2013, 2019; van Buuren 2013; Zia-Ebrahimi 2018), whereas studies delving into “the great replacement” have emerged mostly from the study of conspiracy theories and populism (Davey & Ebner 2019; Ekman 2022). Both the concept of the palimpsest as well as the interdisciplinary character of this volume enable us to draw upon different disciplinary insights and approaches. Finally, the existing scholarship on the population replacement discourse necessitates a deeper analytical engagement with gender and sexuality as categories of analysis, especially with respect to how these categories shape and structure conspiracy theories (Thiem 2020). This is a crucial analytical gap to be explored and researched, especially given the increased visibility of questions of gender in relation to far-right politics, such as the instrumentalization of gender issues for racial propaganda, the backlash against feminism, and the underlying understandings of racialized masculinity and femininity part and parcel of population replacement discourses. This volume contributes to these explorations.

A Genealogy of Population Replacement Conspiracy Theories

This multilayered understanding of what population replacement conspiracy theories consist of brings us to a complex genealogy with many articulations of different strands of thought. In ideological terms, the population replacement discourse is nurtured by a wide range of bodies of literature such as Malthusianism, eugenics, social Darwinism, Orientalism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and overall racism, the clash of civilization thesis, eco-fascism, and some versions of evangelical eschatology, to name only some of the most important strands, which are further discussed in the following chapters. As this book aims to provide a solid framework for understanding contemporary population replacement conspiracy theories and where they come from, we find it important to not only conceptualize what population replacement conspiracies are but also to (re)construct a genealogy that enables an analytical grip on the emergence and development of these conspiracy theories – in other words, to reconstruct a *history of the present* (Foucault 1995). Genealogies are always situated, in the sense that they are particular ways of organizing and presenting histories that are invariably more complex and messier than a clear-cut or linear scheme allows for and that could also be organized and presented in different ways (Foucault 1995; Stoler 2016).

The genealogy we work with here is shaped by an analytic which attends to two dimensions, that is, making visible relevant geopolitical forces that shape discursive articulations and providing the outlines of an intellectual history that connects different recursions of these conspiracy theories centred on the gendered and sexualized white fears of racialized Others and the desires for white supremacy. Our genealogy, moreover, is also informed by three characteristics of our own scholarship: a focus on the study of Islamophobia and the “Muslim Question”, the study of Europe, and the study of the contemporary era. In this genealogy, we discern four crucial junctures.

First, versions of population replacement conspiracy theories as we know them today emerged at the turn of the 19th century when the establishment of modern nationalism in the West concurred with the high days of European colonialism and imperialism. Such versions of replacement conspiracy theories are articulated in relation to a modern understanding of the nation as ethnically and racially homogenous and relying on the insights from scientific racism.

Some of the most well known intellectual references for this early moment of population replacement conspiracies are written in the context of the British and French empires. In 1893, Charles Henry Pearson, who taught at both Oxford and Cambridge before emigrating to Australia, published his book *National Life and Character: A Forecast*. Pearson argued that the so-called “higher races” were in decline and would be overpowered by the so-called “Black and Yellow races” through their population increase and, in the case of China, through industrial development. The book, with its “white man under siege” theme, became very influential. Similar ideas were developed within French nationalism of the early 1900s, particularly in the work of Maurice Barrès, who believed the French national character was harmed by immigration and miscegenation, made various claims in favour of racial purity, and propagated antisemitism and antisemitic conspiracy theories – all of this in the frame of the unfolding European “Jewish Question”.

The point is not simply that these forms of nationalist thinking were articulated in increasingly racist ways but that the fantasies of racial purity and fears of white people becoming a minority – “under siege” – were cultivated during a time of colonization.³ Fears of being “taken over” haunted colonial projects that *effectively took over* and often wiped out native populations and societal structures. As Anne McClintock (1995) argues, the colonial enterprise was branded by the unresolved entanglement between white male megalomania and anxious paranoia; violent colonial expansion entangled with deep-seated fears and anxieties of being replaced by the Other. *National Life and Character* was, indeed, shaped by the colonial context, as it was written a few decades after Pearson had first settled in the Australian colonies. Moreover, the “deep American roots of replacement thinking” (Lucassen 2022, 20) also point to the significance of (European) settler colonialism for the historical development of these conspiracy theories. As Leo Lucassen

(2022) lays out, from the 1880s onwards, the ongoing immigration from Europe, and, in particular, migration from Eastern and Southern European countries, increasingly became a matter of concern among scholars, politicians, and journalists. In 1891, the economist and statistician Francis Amasa Walker, who served as commissioner of Indian affairs and led the U.S. Census twice before becoming the third president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), was the first to compile a comprehensive statistical case for what soon would be known as “race suicide” (Weinbaum 2004). The term *race suicide* itself was coined in 1900 by the sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross, who further developed the concept in his 1901 essay “The Causes of Race Superiority”, in which he warned of the degeneration of Anglo-Saxons in the U.S., notably if Chinese and Japanese labour migration was allowed to continue. The essay made a case, as Weinbaum (2004, 71–72) puts it, that the “immigration of unassimilable elements must cease; meanwhile, Anglo-Saxons must reproduce a racially superior nation with haste”. The concept of “race suicide” gained significant traction in the following years; it was, for instance, mobilized by Theodore Roosevelt in different speeches and essays. Its best known usage is perhaps in Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, The Racial Basis of European History* published in 1916. The U.S. was a “Nordic country”, according to Grant, populated by what he considered as the superior “Nordic race”, which was committing “race suicide” as it was “outbred” by immigrants and the other so-called “inferior races”, including “inferior white races”, such as the “Alpine and Mediterranean races”. The book was influential in various ways, including its impact on the racist immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 that would restrict immigration from Asia and Eastern Europe and, notably, of Jews from Eastern Europe (Lucassen 2022, 16). In 1920, Lothrop Stoddard, a follower of Grant, member of the American Eugenics Society and the Ku Klux Klan, and a founding member of the American Birth Control League, articulated one of the most pristine historical examples of population replacement with *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy*, in which he postulates the demographic growth of people of “colour” as an existential threat to white supremacy.

The second juncture of our genealogy is marked by the rise to (totalitarian) power of such racist worldviews and the development of these strands of nationalism into fascism. In the aftermath of the First World War, European nationalist conflicts as well as struggles over colonies continued to brew, while scientific racism had become the dominant episteme (Gilman & Thomas 2016). In Nazi Germany, Hitler referred to *The Passing of the Great Race* as “my bible” (Lucassen 2022, 18), and Albert Brackmann, nationalist German historian and Nazi ideologue, developed the idea of *Umwolkung* (which would literally translate to “ethnic/national inversion”). Originally, *Umwolkung* was a concept-proposal to “Germanize” what Brackmann

deemed as “German-friendly” populations, that is, Eastern Europeans at the border, which also included expelled Eastern Jews. In subsequent years, however, the term *Umwolkung* would be reworked to explicitly denote the fear of white (German) populations being replaced by others. This intellectual labour was notably done by demographer Friedrich Wilhelm Burgdörfer in three crucial books for the intellectual elaboration and propagation of population replacement discourses: *The Decline of the Birth Rate and its Combat – The Vital Question of the German People* published in 1929, *Are White People Dying: The Future of White and Coloured People in Light of Biological Statistics* published in 1934, and *German People in Need* published in 1935.⁴ Here, the re-articulation of birth rates as a warfare strategy and as a key arena for the life of the nation was solidified, from a position of power, scripted in a racial *Weltanschauung*. As Gisela Bock (1983) has brilliantly documented, it is also from this position of power that concrete governmental policies were developed and implemented to incite white reproduction while curtailing the reproduction of “lives unworthy of life”. At the same time in France, René Binet, a fascist who later joined the SS, laid the grounds for thinking in terms of “the end of the white world” and “white genocide”.⁵ Notably, Jews figure prominently as the main threat in population conspiracy theories. As these theories both radicalize and gain political power, their ideas are put in practice with the organization of extermination camps and mass killings, resulting in the genocide of the *Shoah*.

The third juncture is marked by yet another shift of power: after the Holocaust, fascist political projects were pushed to the margins and scientific racism was delegitimized, at least in the public sphere. In Europe, this also entailed an interruption in race talk as the main episteme, insofar as the previously existing language about race was largely avoided and discourse on race had to take different forms and shapes (Chin et al. 2009; Lentin 2008). The postwar context also presented a momentum for decolonization struggles that resulted in political independence for former European colonies and the dismantling of the European empires as well as postcolonial migration to the former metropolises. Other emancipatory and liberatory political projects were pursued in terms of civil rights struggles in the U.S. and around the globe, such as the rise of feminist and LGBT movements. These shifting balances of power, towards more egalitarian power relations, continued to fuel conspiratorial fears of “white genocide”. One (infamous) high-profile articulation of such fears in that postcolonial moment is represented by the anti-immigration speech by the MP Enoch Powell in relation to the proposed Race Relations Act 1968 in the UK – a speech which became known as the “Rivers of Blood speech” (see Lucassen 2022). Yet it also appeared that the political space for such conspiracies had shrunk in an era of decolonization and emancipatory movements, and it might not have been a coincidence that two of the most popular expressions of population replacement discourses at the time took

the form of fictional accounts. In 1973 Jean Raspail published *Le Camp des saints*, a dystopian novel in which the shores of France are “swamped” by endless ships filled with brown bodies, in this case from India, that herald the end of French civilization. The English translation announces the book as “a chilling novel about the end of the white world”. In the U.S., *The Turner Diaries* by Andrew Macdonald (William Luther Pierce) was published as a book in 1978. The book is set in the United States around the end of the 21st century and depicts a violent revolution instigated by a white revolutionary movement that waged a race war leading to the systematic extermination of Black and Brown people, Jews, and “liberal actors”, who are framed as a threat to the survival of white people.

The current juncture of this genealogy emerges with a significant geopolitical restructuring of the world at the turn of the 21st century, when the Soviet Union is dismantled and the Cold War frame loses its encompassing grip to the new “clash of civilizations” frame. The new frame, consolidated by the “War on Terror”, comes with a new prominent threat to the survival of white nations and European civilization: the figure of the Muslim (Kundandi 2014; Bracke & Hernández Aguilar 2022). In 2006, Bat Ye’or published *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*, a full-fledged conspiracy theory in which Europe is purportedly turned into an Islamic continent with Muslims in power. The book travelled widely: it was used to justify the Utøya massacre in 2011 and is a point of reference for many different far-right populist political parties, such as the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany) in Germany and the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom) in the Netherlands (Mudde 2019). In 2011, Renaud Camus published *Le grand remplacement*, an internationally influential book, which left us with the popular terminology for these demographic conspiracy theories, that is, conspiratorial “replacement thinking”. While invoking a history harking back to the medieval Iberian Peninsula, the conspiracy theory of “Islamization” became a cornerstone of Western Islamophobia as it accompanied the unfolding of the “War on Terror” (Zine 2022, 2008), gaining its most intellectual elaboration in 2011 with the writings of Thilo Sarrazin in Germany. A significant development in the current formation and articulation of population replacement conspiracy theories pertains to how social media, instant messaging, and the internet have influenced both the dissemination of these discourses as well as the different shapes and forms these conspiracy theories take (Davey & Ebner 2019; Ebner 2019; Hernández Aguilar 2023; Tuters 2020; Tuters & Hagen 2020). The digital world has become a key arena not only for the re-articulation and dissemination of population replacement discourse but also for population replacement political violence. It has been the virtual location where perpetrators of replacement white supremacist violence consume ideologies and express their views, where they announce their plans and post manifestos, and even livestream their deadly violence (van

Buuren 2013; Gardell 2014; Davey & Ebner 2018; Fielitz & Thurston 2019; Schwartzburg 2019; Wilson 2019; Tuters 2020; Rose 2022).

Outline of the Chapters

This book consists of eighteen chapters that explore a particular dimension, case, or national context within the wide landscape of population replacement discourse that we have laid out with broad strokes. Most of these chapters were first presented at the *Politics of Replacement* conference that we organized at the University of Amsterdam in June 2021. In this volume, we have organized the chapters into four sections. The first section, *Genealogies of Replacement*, further delves into various archives of the current population replacement discourse. Perhaps inevitably, we begin with Malthusianism as a key component in the formation and articulation of the population replacement discourse. From the racist and sexist writings of Jean Raspail in France, linking overpopulation in the Global South (India) to the destruction of the West (France), passing through Paul and Anne Ehrlich's influential *The Population Bomb*, coupling overpopulation in the "Third World" and India, in particular, with the survival of the "First World", to informing one of the most influential contemporary proponents of the population replacement discourse: Thilo Sarrazin in Germany. In the first chapter of this volume, *Soumaya Majdoub* unravels how Malthusian fears continue to shape demographic concerns and conceptualizations of population. To account for the persistence of Malthusian thinking, Majdoub introduces the concept of *Malthusianization*, understood as the powerful frame linking population dynamics to scarcity and population reduction to climate change policies by means of racial fearmongering and anticipating calamities. Majdoub argues, moreover, that current (climate) migration debates, in fact, mask a fear of underpopulation. This chapter is followed by a critical engagement with a powerful metaphor drenched in Malthusianism, which is deeply influential in the formation and articulation of the population replacement palimpsest: "The boat is full". *Esther Romeyn* demonstrates how, in political terms, the metaphor-image of *the full boat* has been inverted in order to show not the suffering of people fleeing but rather the (Western) nation under siege. Romeyn traces some of the earliest usages of the image metaphor to Eduard von Steiger, a Swiss Council member, who invoked *Das Boot ist voll* as a justification to close Swiss borders to Jewish refugees from Germany. Since then, in a recursive way (Stoler 2016), the metaphor-image continues to be deployed, as Romeyn fleshes out, to advance anti-refuge and migration policies as vital politics for an imagined national self-preservation understood in racial terms. The next chapter brings us to the Balkans and investigates how Bosnia and Kosovo became prominent tropes of the Islamization myth, which

holds that Islam poses a threat to a Christian, white Europe. *Dino Suhonic* unpacks the ways in which Muslims in this part of Europe are posited as a problem to European civilization, either as “the Turks” or “Turkifiers” who must be assimilated or removed and, in any case, prevented from further “penetrating” Europe. Tracing the systematic character of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments, Suhonic draws the contours of “Balkan’s Muslim Question”, centred on “replacement” and birth rates anxieties. The expulsion of Muslims in the Balkans, he argues, serves as a model for white nationalist and supremacist ideologies worldwide. Subsequently, we move to the French archives, from where, more recently, the signature term “replacement” originates. *Lou Mousset* traces how some of the key concepts and reasonings within Camus’ *Le grand remplacement* and, notably, the concept of “reverse colonization” are not novel combative strategies but hark back to the ideological intellectual production of the GRECE (*Groupement de Recherches et d’Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne*), a French far-right group that emerged in the wake of the Algerian War of Independence and pioneered a myriad of cultural and political strategies to advance the discourse of French national decline. Mousset notably explores different meanings that were attached to concepts such as nation, race, and Europe in the intellectual dispute between Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye. The next chapter brings us to a “frontier of Europe” outside of the continent, with an examination of the Christchurch killer. *Jack Wilson and Louie Dean Valencia* argue that the killer is not solely an avatar of chan culture and its hazards of radicalization but deeply and idiosyncratically embedded in a historical imaginary that invokes an “alt_history” of the West driven by the fight against an always-expansionary Islam – from the attempted expansion of the Umayyad Caliphate into central Europe in the 700s to ISIS and finally “the great replacement”. The killer inserts himself in this history as a “great actor” defending “Europe” in its “frontier” settler-colonial territories of Australia and New Zealand. Wilson and Valencia discuss how this historiography can be interpreted as an extension of anxieties and discourses of invasion and replacement that are a motif of Australian history. Finally, *Sindre Bangstad and Maria Darwish* bring us back to the “Nordic” dimension and explore yet another key, but understudied, layer in the discursive formation of the population replacement discourse, namely, ecological thinking in its articulation with fascism, or ecofascism. By taking a historical-conceptual approach to unravel the early formation of fascist preoccupations with the environment in Norway as well as the contemporary political violence enacted in the name of halting “population replacement” while protecting the environment, Bangstad and Darwish make a compelling argument to take seriously the fascist ideological engagement with environmental concerns, not only due to their historical trajectories but also as a means to understand the ways in which such concerns go beyond the far-right spectre.

The second section of this book is entitled *Technologies of Replacement*. Loosely relying on the Foucauldian concept of *dispositif* (often translated as “apparatus” rather than “technologies”), we understand this section to focus on some of the institutional, political, administrative, epistemological, and other mechanisms or infrastructures that produce the conditions facilitating current articulations of population replacement discourse. The first chapter in this section attends to the terrain of scientific knowledge production and, notably, the discipline of demography, which has been heavily mobilized in replacement discourse as one of the main mediums through which the fear of replacement has been advanced and pandered. It’s precisely the demographic “calculation” and “prospective” of being outnumbered that serves as the bedrock of ideological formulations of this discourse as well as the formation of “solutions”. The political and racial production and instrumentalization of demographic knowledge have indeed been at the heart of population replacement conspiracy theories. *Sayan Das* examines the construction of *Saf-ron Demography*, that is, the strategic use of demography by the Indian far right in order to both problematize and demonize the presence of Muslims in the country as well as a powerful discourse to imagine and strive towards a racially homogeneous Indian nation based in Hindu communalism. Contrary to commonsensical views taking demography as a neutral academic discipline, Das takes a sociohistorical approach in order to trace the political uses of censuses and demographic knowledge production. While continuing to engage with practices of knowledge production, the chapter by *Tamar de Waal and Jan Willem Duyvendak* adds yet another layer of “technologies”, that is, a specific deployment of liberal rights to what is delineated as the majority and is increasingly seen as in need of legal protection through “majority rights”. In their critical examination of the rise of this concept, including in academic publications, de Waal and Duyvendak find that this new usage of “majority rights” rests on erroneous depictions of multiculturalism; denies the empirical realities of the integration processes of immigrants in liberal democracies; relies upon nativist normative premises or are even explicitly racist; advocates practices of unequal citizenship; and aims to hamper social, cultural, and political change triggered by immigrant minorities. The third chapter considers the “technologies” of online spaces and milieux, which are interrogated in the public debate about the extent to which new forms of social media, internet fora, and private messaging services enable the dissemination of replacement discourse while also becoming sites of recruiting and the planning and livestreaming of violence. *Emillie de Keulenaar and Marc Tuters* trace the convergence of replacement narratives and, notably, the French “great replacement” and North American “white genocide” variants in poorly moderated online milieux such as 4chan and YouTube. They show how such convergence is based on specific speech affordances, where vernaculars, ideas, and tropes associated with extreme ideologies effectively meet and converge ideologically. The final two chapters of the section engage

with the fraught relation between the political mainstream and the extreme right fringe; they explore different ways to conceptualize this relation and interaction in the Dutch context. While discourses on population replacement have become a cornerstone of the far right, *Nik Linders* argues, some of the main tenets or discursive strands of population replacement have effectively become mainstreamed. Linders grounds his argument in a detailed analysis of a campaign ad run by Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte in 2017, which shows that key narratives and ideas of population replacement, for example, “the alien Other” within the nation as an existential threat, are firmly embedded within the acceptable political vocabulary. *Merijn Oudenampsen* makes a different argument: the rise of population replacement discourse, Oudenampsen argues, must be understood against the background of the decades-long development of the clash of civilizations discourse, which first rose to prominence in the 1990s and which heralded a new Western self-understanding in opposition to Islam and Muslim immigrants. In the Netherlands, the tenets of the population replacement discourse were already present and discernible in the rise of the liberal right, notably the mainstream figure of Bolkestein in the 1990s, and it is this clash of civilizations discourse that cleared the way for population replacement conspiracy theories. Read together, these chapters push us to reconsider the complexities and, indeed, dynamics of “mainstreaming”, or, in other words, the interaction between the political mainstream and the fringes.

The third section of the book is dedicated to *Islamophobia and Replacement*. While this focus is informed by how we have come to the study of population replacement discourse through the study of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, it also reflects the centrality of Muslims and Islam within the contemporary rise of population replacement conspiracies, both in Europe but also beyond (see the chapters by Das, Wilson & Valencia, and O’Donnell). This section opens with *Sabar Ghumkhor’s* acute exploration of how racial imaginaries were elaborated and symbolic and material boundaries were drawn in the aftermath of the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York. Ghumkhor’s chapter brings us back to the body – ruptured skin and vulnerable flesh among debris and bodies that matter for Islamophobia, both in terms of what body it expulses as well as the body it exalts as the one whose enjoyment alone matters. The chapter by *Margaretha A. van Es* keeps us close to the body: taking a material approach, van Es looks at food and traces the widespread concern with a perceived “alimentary replacement” that is taken as a harbinger of a Muslim takeover and inspires all sorts of “gastro-political battles” to save Western civilization. In these battles, van Es points out, pork is often made into the “totem” of (post-) Christian Europe. The contribution by *Iskandar Ahmed Abdalla* addresses yet another dimension of daily life subjected to the phantasmagoria of “take-over”, namely architecture, and specifically

the establishments of mosques. Abdalla takes a closer look at how *Der Moscheereport* by Constantine Schreiber, a German author and journalist, not only panders to the fear of Islamization but most importantly articulates a call for Muslim “transparency” which, following Abdalla’s analysis, is a call to further govern Muslims in Germany. Finally, S. Jonathon O’Donnell’s chapter explores the connections between the demonologization of Islam and Muslims, on the one hand, and the evangelical fears of supersession of Christianity by Islam, on the other (see also: O’Donnell 2020). They argue that such linkage is well-mobilized to advance the fear of demographic replacement in the U.S. and demonstrate how the fears of replacement can also be articulated in a religious evangelical frame, thus adding another layer to the population replacement palimpsest, namely the evangelical demonologization of Muslims and Islam.

The last section of the book, *The Gendered Violence of Replacement*, attends to the question of gender in its intersection with violence. The chapter by Mattias Gardell puts the gendered figure of the “white lone wolf” at the centre of analysis. One of the most pressing issues related to the burgeoning of population replacement conspiracy theories has been the influence they have exerted in justifying deadly white supremacist violence across the globe. Thinking about Eurabia and the Great Replacement almost immediately recalls the Utøya and Christchurch massacres. Gardell situates white supremacist lone wolves against the background of fascism and white supremacy in its intersection with masculinity. Sarah Bracke’s chapter revisits the recent white supremacist attack in Buffalo, NY, that this introduction opens with and makes an argument for bringing such killings in the same analytical space as the overruling of *Roe v. Wade* by the U.S. Supreme Court, which occurred merely a month later and which was qualified, in a purported slip of the tongue, as a “victory for white life” at a MAGA political event. Bringing reproductive rights and population replacement conspiracy theories to bear upon each other in an analysis of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Bracke shows that this popular culture dystopian story of the absence of reproductive rights was instigated by population replacement discourse. We close the volume with a chapter by Anya Topolski – a chapter that also serves to open further horizons in relation to the question of how to approach contemporary population replacement discourses. Topolski explores medieval archives and offers a close reading of the medieval tale of the King of Tars as a medieval rendition of population replacement narratives, which already in this early formulation postulated simultaneously the inferiority of women and of non-Christian bodies. Without claiming to be exhaustive and, indeed, with leaving many open questions, such as the possibilities of longer and more diverse genealogies, all these chapters together offer a wide range of insights and a variety of different approaches into a kind of thinking and action that, unfortunately, has gained traction in our times.

The palimpsest approach to replacement discourse as well as the thematic and disciplinary variety of the chapters in this volume do not allow for a succinct conclusion – replacement thinking encompasses all the layers and complexities raised in these chapters and many more that have not made it to the book. Yet some words in this palimpsest are inscribed again and again on the conspiratorial parchment, to the extent that they might shine through the different layers by the sheer force of repetition. Sahar Ghumkhor offers us a powerful articulation of some of these more forceful inscriptions:

What of a greater terror than white people who have historically been in a position of privilege – imagined in full recognition – seeing themselves as no longer superior to others but as equals? The paranoid fear of losing privilege is decried as replacement, being rendered irrelevant, or equating it with being extinguished. A death by equality.

It's the *actual* possibility of changing power relations, of dismantling (white) supremacy and its patriarchal foundations, coupled with the *imaginary* impossibility to conceive of new, more equal social relations in a way that is liveable, that animates conspiratorial replacement thinking – its fears and anxieties, its worldview filled with demons, and its violence.

Notes

- 1 This work is part of the research programme *EnGendering Europe's "Muslim Question"* with project number 016.Vici.185.077, which is financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).
- 2 There's another difference between the chapters that we wish to flag: some authors in this volume have opted not to name those who have perpetrated violence and massacred other human beings in the name of replacement discourse, while others have opted to use the names of these killers. Authors who have refused to name the killers have done so to refuse the killers the recognition and fame that they sought and to not contribute to the popularity, infamy, and "martyr" status of some of these killers in online environments. Not-naming as a refusal to contribute to ongoing "hagiographies". Other authors have deliberately named the killers as a form of witness to the erasures that have occurred, notably by states (including states who have taken an official stance not to name the mass murderers, like New Zealand) and within public debates at large, by ongoing refusals to firmly situate the inflicted violence within the (ongoing) histories of racism, white supremacy, and Islamophobia, thus seeking to contain the problem of racism, white supremacy, and Islamophobia within singular events and individuals. Naming as a witness to such erasures.
- 3 Jasmin Zine's book *Under Siege* (2022) poignantly shows how in the context of global Islamophobia and the "war on terror", that "white populations" are not the ones under siege but rather Muslim communities and individuals through a plethora of discriminatory practices, racial and gendered violence, and hate speech.
- 4 Translation by the authors, these are the original book titles: *Der Geburtenrückgang und seine Bekämpfung – Die Lebensfrage des deutschen Volkes* (1929); *Sterben die weissen Völker: die Zukunft der weissen und farbigen Völker im Lichte der biologischen Statistik* (1934) and *Deutsches Volk in Not* (1935).

5 Binet's concept of the "genocide" of white people is further elaborated in his book *Théorie du racisme (Theory of Racism)*, published in 1950.

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