

Anne Carol, *La mise en pièces de Gambetta. Autopsie d'un corps politique* (Paris, Jérôme Million, 2002, 318 pp., £19.33).

In her many works, the French historian Anne Carol has renewed the cultural history of death in nineteenth-century France and has become the foremost specialist in the field. After considering the romantic practice of embalment and describing the funerary rituals around the scaffold for those condemned to capital punishment, she provides here another thought-provoking – and very readable – account. The book cover is almost funny, with a dismantled photo of Léon Gambetta, showing his brain, his viscera and his heart, like an old children's game in which one has to rebuild a character. All very colourful. The stamp 'Archives' has been added to show the seriousness of the research, but the reader cannot restrain a feeling of amusement in reading this fine description of Gambetta's corpse's trajectory. The topic is serious and even gloomy, but the book reads like a crime story.

Born in 1838, Léon Gambetta was a politician who led France in the Franco-Prussian War – a war France lost – and was (and still is) seen as one of the founders of the Third Republic. When he died on 31 December 1882, the regime was stabilised but still fragile. The projection of feelings, emotions and political manipulations on to his living, wounded, sick, dying and then dead body is described in detail. Only a simple deputy in the National Assembly, half-retired in a city near Paris, he was injured in a domestic accident and died a few days later. The fate of his corpse was determined first of all by his private life – he had a lover, Léonie Léon, whom he had promised to marry, but the illegitimate status of the woman did not at that time permit her to claim the body. Gambetta's father had the upper hand over the Republican parties and had the body buried in the des Jardies cemetery in Nice. The corpse was transferred several times, and Anne Carol describes the many tensions and complex power play over it.


When in April 1909 the corpse was exhumed from the Nice cemetery to be transferred to a more monumental grave – one of the many stages in a complex odyssey – officials and family members realised that Gambetta's corpse was far from being complete. The head, one arm and part of the entrails were missing. This dismembering of the corpse is carefully described by the author, who from the start does



not describe medical experiments on the body. She carefully demonstrates that the process of separating some body parts from the trunk was in fact political. The process was not planned; it did not result from a careful ritual (nothing to do with the modern embalming or a spiritual journey). Gambetta was not a pharaoh. Gambetta was revered by the Republicans and hated by the reactionaries and the Catholics, and those political tensions explain, according to the historian, what happened to the corpse.

The journey was long. After the First World War, the heart was taken to be transferred to the Pantheon, the republican shrine where the remains of great men were and are buried. After many changes, discussions and tensions, Gambetta's heart was transferred to the Pantheon at the same time that the corpse of the Unknown Soldier (a very new relic) was transported to the Arc de Triomphe, to be buried beneath it. That was on 11 November 1920. Around Gambetta's corpse, the troubled political life of France unfolded. Which does not mean that his corpse embodied France or the nation (this was done by a female, mythical figuration: the Marianne). The meaning of body parts' appropriation by various agents was very complex and also changing. 'The narrative of these adventures may appear anecdotal,' writes Anne Carol (p. 263). 'It permits though to disclose how the perception of Gambetta's corpse has evolved since 1883. At the time of his death, both the Republic and the Nation could incarnate; in 1891 still, his heart constituted a powerful synecdoche. In 1920, Gambetta could hardly embody the Nation. A second corpse is needed for the symbolic to be effective.' This ballet of the dead permitted to avoid separating the Republic from the Nation and to reconcile – at least for a moment – the opposed political partisans.

But this fascinating monograph does not end with the description of the heart's transfer to the Pantheon, in a day of mourning and victory: the right eye of Gambetta also was transferred many times, lost and recovered. Due to an accident in his youth, Gambetta had to have his eye removed and replaced by a glass one. However, the original eye was kept by doctors, analysed and finally donated to the museum of Cahors (where it is still kept but not exhibited). The precise dissection of those strange ceremonies – that, if made today would appear quite inadequate – ends on a mysterious note: in her research Anne Carol could neither determine when Gambetta's head was removed from the body, nor where it is. The scientific dismantling of the corpse, in order to distribute the symbolism of the Republic, retains a dimension of mystery. Perhaps of political sacredness. It would be fascinating to compare the treatment of Gambetta's corpse to that of one of the French kings or other powerful men in modern France.

Jean-Marc Dreyfus 
University of Manchester

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Christos Lynteris, *Human Extinction and the Pandemic Imaginary* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2019, 190 pp.; 2021 for the paperback edition, £36.99).

Christos Lynteris's book, published in 2019 by Routledge, couldn't be more current and thought provoking. *Human Extinction and the Pandemic Imaginary*, as the author explains, is an unexpected result of his research as the head investigator of the Visual Representations of the Third Plague Pandemic project at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Humanities and the Social Sciences of the University of Cambridge and the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of St Andrews.

Threats to humanity, such as apocalyptic ends, viruses that turn humans into zombies, diseases created in the laboratory, bacteria from space, ecological catastrophes and others, are increasingly present in public discourse and art nowadays. According to Lynteris, the book seeks to understand how the past and the present are rendered into the preface of a non-future, the prelude to human extinction, the permanent expectation of the next pandemic. The entire analysis, divided into five interesting chapters, is part of the intersection of anthropology and history, permeated by rich examples and perspectives that lead us to reflect on the post-COVID-19 pandemic days.

As Schopenhauer remarked, human beings, unlike animals, are aware of death, and this makes them reflect on their existence, thinking about their past and future, going through a suffering that goes beyond their present moment. Could this awareness of death turn into an expectation of collective disappearance? In his brilliant work, Lynteris reflects on how humanity is configured and transformed by ideas, policies, anticipations and representations of the next pandemic. The author also discusses the way in which this 'pandemic imaginary' has come to institute visions of humanity and its relation to the nonhuman.

In dialogue with the work of Cornelius Castoriadis,¹ in the book, the expression 'pandemic imaginary' is not understood as a reflective surface of reality but as a creative principle. Lynteris explores the ways in which science, policy and cultural production interact to constitute the pandemic imaginary, merging myth and scientific authority in this process.

In Chapter 1, he summons several authors to lead us to reflect on apocalyptic vision of the end that configures the relation between the time of the end and the end of time as a relation involving the activation of a state of anomy. More specifically, he questions whether the next pandemic will constitute an apocalyptic End of Times.


The second chapter focuses on the transformation in the understanding of zoonosis, or animal-derived infection, as a source of human illness. Enriching the most recent debates on the origin of COVID-19, the chapter brings questions about the sanitary-utopian paradigm, which promised the isolation of such diseases in the nonhuman realm. Lynteris starts from an emblematic cover of *New Scientist* magazine of 2015 to develop how the idea of a killer virus as uncontested agent of the next pandemic and human extinction penetrated society, consolidating a certain 'pandemic imaginary'.

In Chapter 3, we read about the emergence of the *superspreader* hypothesis, which is the belief in the existence of an exceptional individual who can transmit pathogens to an extraordinary number of contacts. This idea arises from the uncertainty of the origins of SARS-CoV in 2003 and becomes the basis of a prevailing imaginary. The author analyses this phenomenon from two synergistic causes: the operation of biopolitics to shift attention away from infrastructural and procedural causes of the pandemic and, at the same time, the construction of the mythical figure of the *superspreader* as a reversed anthropogenesis.

Who among us has never watched a movie about mass contamination whose catalyst for civility and sociability was an epidemiologist? The fourth chapter analyses the figure of the epidemiologist as cult hero, a significant operator in the pandemic imaginary portrayed in Hollywood films and other fictional works.

With the paradoxical quote by James Berger, ‘before the beginning and after the end, there can only be nothing’, Lynteris begins his analysis of the post-pandemic condition in Chapter 5. Instead of nothing, the pandemic imaginary is rich in assumptions regarding ‘after the end’ scenarios.

To conclude, the book ends with thought-provoking reflections, from Castoriadis’ philosophical key, on an institutionalised imaginary about the conditions of possibility of the extinction of humanity, illuminating the way in which society is configured and transformed.

Simone Rodrigues Pinto 
Universidade de Brasília

Note

- 1 C. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, translated by Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1987 [1975]).

Helena Machado and Rafaela Granja, *Forensic Genetics in the Governance of Crime* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 123 pp., £31.70 paperback).

How do biology and technology intersect in the governance of crime, and what knowledge can we infer from those processes? Throughout six thematic chapters, the readers of this book are introduced to the various roles and places of forensic genetics in the governance of crime. Governance is more than the top-down control of citizens. In this book, the use of the term allows us to look beyond the state and towards all of the ways in which ‘risky’ behaviour is controlled, monitored and responded to, also by non-governmental actors. It is clear from the introductory chapter that we are witnessing a rapidly increasing presence of genetic governance in Western societies. While forensic genetics are applied to the governance of crime, issues of identity, mobility and surveillance are also being negotiated. This book gives special attention to the ethical implications of developing, operationalising and regulating very complex systems of vulnerable, genetic data. The

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authors, Machado and Granja, bring forth important discussions on this topic with precision and with a sense of urgency.

The first thematic chapter begins with the success story of DNA and its use as forensic evidence. Readers are also provided with some key paradigms in sociological theory to make sense of how DNA became established as an objective 'gold standard' of forensic evidence. But how did we get here – how did DNA come to encompass such power in our systems of justice? What social processes have aided the application of genetic technologies to crime governance? To answer this, the authors take us on a journey from the past, to the present and to trends that are emerging within forensic technologies in the governance of crime.

Chapter 3 takes readers back to the origins of criminology: to criminal anthropology, and the rise of ('hard science') biological explanations of crime. Italian doctor Cesare Lombroso was among the first scientists to collect, systematise and publish data on 'risky' individuals in the nineteenth century. He became a highly influential figure and inspired 'scientific' approaches to the governance of crime in justice systems worldwide. The aim of the chapter is to show that old methods of measuring and quantifying visible individual physical traits to determine moral deviance can today be seen in technologies that measure and predict levels of risk, for instance on a molecular level.

In Chapter 4, readers are introduced to the use of DNA as evidence in criminal investigations. There are great expectations of certainty when it comes to DNA, which has created widespread myths of its infallibility. While genetic technologies enjoy great authority in court, there are discussions in the forensic community about the processes that lead to DNA becoming evidence, which do not gain as much attention in the criminal justice system or in the media. The theme of uncertainty and risk associated with the use of DNA technologies continues in chapter 5, where ethical aspects of forensic DNA databases are discussed. Databases support investigations by storing already existing information about persons related to previous crimes, but their use may also reproduce social inequalities by leading to sustained surveillance of already marginalised groups and individuals. DNA also becomes a political issue in light of recent efforts to harmonise forensic data sharing across European countries. This, and the remaining chapters, altogether demonstrate a shift in applicability: the attraction of forensic technologies is no longer only about their ability to find 'truths' about past events, but about their increased capacities for predicting future scenarios and levels of risk. In Chapters 6 and 7, DNA databases and transnational information-sharing regimes are analysed for their capacities for mass surveillance. The view is that collecting biometric information and tracking the movements of people across borders for crime control perpetuates inequality by targeting already criminalised populations. Similarly, the development of intelligence-focused technologies such as familial searching and forensic DNA phenotyping constitute new forms of biometric surveillance. In essence, old categories of criminality and suspicious behaviour are today reinforced on a global scale through rapidly developing DNA technologies.

While the book covers a range of themes, little attention is given to the growing marketisation of DNA technologies. The fact that these technologies exist in a transnational marketplace dominated by private technology providers, and where states, law enforcement bodies, laboratories and other criminal justice actors are purchasers and consumers, constitutes some ethical issues that are intrinsically linked to all of the themes in the book but that are never explicitly articulated. Instead, the major economic market that all DNA technologies are part of remains in the background. Still, this book can provide a reference point for those interested in how the body is related to by criminal justice and control regimes. Each chapter provides discussion points for students, educators and professionals in these fields, as well as a walk-through of key sociological literature on the subject.

Maja Vestad 
University of Oslo