

MICROHISTORY
GOES PUBLIC
FROM GINZBURG'S
PARADIGMA
INDIZIARIO
TO WEIZMAN'S
FORENSIC TURN

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An object which speaks of the loss, of the destruction, of the disappearance of objects. It does not speak of itself. It speaks of others. Will it also include them?

– Jasper Johns, ca. 1960¹

You take an interest in the trace, the impression? – Yes, in all kinds of traces, impressions, markings that we leave behind: footprints, skin imprints, movements of the hand that modify the space, breathing and so on. The impression implies a boundary: the boundary of the body in touching, the boundary of the thing in being touched. At this boundary point, visual and tactile readings coincide.

– Giuseppe Penone (in conversation with Günter Metken), 1976²

To the untrained eye, bones look similar – skulls are devoid of the expression and the gestures of a human face. But the bones of a skeleton are exposed to life in a similar way that photographic film is exposed to light. A life, understood as an extended set of exposures to a myriad of forces (labor, location, nutrition, violence, and so on), is projected onto a mutating, growing, and contracting negative, which is the body in life. Like a palimpsest or a photograph with multiple exposures, bones can be quite complicated to interpret.

– Thomas Keenan & Eyal Weizman, 2012³

The importance and persisting influence of Carlo Ginzburg's essay on "Clues" is not only widely acknowledged, but has also been attested to in a variety of ways. However, quite a few years have stolen by since the essay was first published. A great many things have changed in the academy as well as in wider society – and not least, in the relation between the two. It would therefore seem that the time is ripe for rethinking not only Ginzburg's thesis in itself, but also its wider implications.⁴

In the pages that follow, I will approach the potential – and no less important, the limitations – of “Clues” in two consecutive steps. To begin with, I will provide a brief overview of the publication history of Ginzburg’s seminal essay, an account that will take us back to the late 1970s. I will then go on to discuss how the ‘paradigm’ proposed by Ginzburg has been applied, by him as well as others, to matters of public rather than strictly professional concern. Although my argument proceeds in distinct stages, I implicitly regard this entire development as *mutatis mutandis*, one continuous process of publication in the extended sense of ‘becoming public.’⁵ If “Clues” did indeed make a proverbial splash, what I attempt to follow are the widening concentric rings on the water, in the conviction that they will reveal something about the broader significance of Ginzburg’s approach.

In this regard, my approach to “Clues” can be said to parallel Sylvie Lindeperg’s recent study of the production and reception of Alain Resnais’ classic essay film *Nuit et brouillard* – a study that, as it happens, was conceived as a “micro-history in motion.”⁶ Although a brief discussion such as my own can hardly presume the exhaustiveness of Lindeperg’s work, I like to think of what follows in the same terms: as a microhistory in motion of Ginzburg’s essay.

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Let us start out with a bird’s-eye view. Although “Clues” has been translated into almost twenty languages,⁷ we can safely assume that, in the rapidly globalizing academy of the late 20th century, the average reader will have consulted Ginzburg’s essay in English and, more specifically, in the collection *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, translated by John and Anne Tedeschi and published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 1989.⁸ At that point, however, several versions of the text had already been available for more than a decade: there are two main redactions of “Clues” in the original Italian and three different English translations which, to some extent, should actually be regarded as versions in their own right. It is the ins and outs of this publication history that I will now review, however briefly.

The story begins at least a year before the essay was first published in the conventional sense of the word.⁹ Strictly speaking, the ‘becoming public’ of “Clues” was already well under way in June 1977, when Ginzburg presented an early draft of his argument at a colloquium on “The Humanities and Social Thought” hosted by the Rockefeller Foundation at its Villa Serbelloni, a study and conference center just outside the town of Bellagio on the shore of Lake Como. When the essay eventually appeared in print, the author expressed his gratitude to the other attendants for the comments they provided.¹⁰ At this point, of course, Ginzburg’s audience was still rather limited; according to the Foundation’s annual report, there were “twenty European and American scholars who

share a common interest in cross-disciplinary studies of subjects relating to social thought and cultural criticism.”¹¹ Unfortunately, the document only names the organizers – the historian Joel Colton, the Foundation’s director of humanities, and his colleague Ronald Florence, head of the recently established New York Council for the Humanities – and not the participants.¹² In the paper trail left by the event, I have only been able to find one lead: the session was chaired by a young Richard Sennett, who published his classic account of *The Fall of Public Man* the same year.¹³

However, we should not make too much of this particular event: Ginzburg had probably already discussed his ideas with his own circle in Bologna before presenting them in Bellagio.¹⁴ Besides, one could argue that even the very act of committing a train of thought to writing – if only for one’s own private use – is, in principle, an act of publication in the broad sense that I have in mind. For the moment, the simple message that I would like to transmit is this: even the first extant version of “Clues” has a history – and this history, in its turn, is potentially significant for how we interpret the essay. The implications of this point will hopefully become increasingly tangible in the course of my argument.

So, let’s get to it. When the first printed version of “Clues” (or “Spie,” to call in mind the original title) appeared in 1978, it was not in *Quaderni storici* – as one might expect, considering its significance for the microhistorical undertaking as a whole – but instead in the *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, a Turin-based journal which, in the words of its publisher, “aimed to occupy itself with problems that society posed to historians.”¹⁵ This would certainly seem to hold true, even in multiple regards, of Ginzburg’s essay. Whether it also explains its swift success is a matter for discussion. In any case, within a year, this initial version had also appeared in Dutch in the literary review *De gids* as well as in an English translation by Marta Sofri Innocenti, the sister-in-law of Ginzburg’s long-time friend Adriano Sofri, published in the academic journal *Theory & Society*.¹⁶ Without undertaking a detailed dissection of Ginzburg’s argument at this stage of its evolution, I will provide a few observations that seem relevant to my own line of reasoning – starting, as is customary, from the beginning.

First of all, then, the subtitle: “Roots of a Scientific Paradigm” (*Radici di un paradigma scientifico*). At this point, thus, there is no mention of the ‘evidential’, the notion to which readers have since grown accustomed – not in the title, and neither in the body of the text. Instead, the argument centers on a “semiotic” (*semeiotico*) paradigm defined in contrast to an “anatomic” (*anatomico*) one. These, in turn, are aligned with what Ginzburg calls “aphoristic” and “systematic” thought.¹⁷ Granted, it is not difficult to see how this pair of dichotomies already gestures towards the notion that he would eventually develop, but by the look of it, we are not quite there yet.

Secondly, the opening paragraph, which I take the liberty of quoting at length. In Sofri Innocenti’s translation, it reads as follows:

The distinction between sciences of nature and human sciences has been long debated and will probably be discussed for some time. Although some, like Lévi-Strauss believe that the distinction does not exist *on principle*, there can be no doubt of its existence in fact. The following brief remarks approach this issue from a standpoint that is perhaps rather unusual. In particular, I intend to show how, towards the end of the nineteenth century, there quietly emerged in the sphere of human sciences an epistemological model (or “paradigm”) which has not yet been given enough attention.¹⁸

What is significant in this quote will, of course, only become apparent once we actually compare it with subsequent versions. For the moment, let us just take note of how Ginzburg frames his argument with allusion to a long-standing debate within epistemology and, more specifically, to Claude Lévi-Strauss, one of the leading lights of French structuralism. Perhaps I should say: as an afterthought? In fact, the explicit reference to Lévi-Strauss does not feature in the *Rivista di storia contemporanea* but only in *Theory & Society* – introducing, from the very first, a slight deviation between original and translation.¹⁹ Then again, the possibility that Ginzburg had the anthropologist in mind already in 1978 cannot be dismissed, and, in any case, the difference can be considered marginal for all practical purposes. Indeed, it would hardly merit our attention, were it not for another, less negligible discrepancy between the two versions.

Thirdly and lastly, then, the ending: here, curiously, the translation in *Theory & Society* departs markedly from its purported original in the *Rivista di storia contemporanea*. In the latter, Ginzburg concludes his argument by “speculating about some connections” between the semiotic paradigm and developments in wider society – finishing, after a brief allusion to Francis Galton’s technique of fingerprinting, with the following innuendo:

Knowledge of society is possible only when based on symptoms, clues [*indizi*]. In such an increasingly complex social structure as that of fully developed capitalism, obscured by the clouds of ideology, every systematic pretention appears to be utterly far-fetched. Recognizing this does not imply abandoning the idea of totality. On the contrary: the existence of a profound connection that explains superficial phenomena is confirmed the very moment it is stated that direct knowledge of such a connection is not possible. Though reality may seem to be opaque, there are privileged zones – signs, clues – which allow us to penetrate it.²⁰

For anyone who has read the canonized version of “Clues”, this passage will no doubt have a familiar ring to it. From the same, retrospective point of view, it will seem all the more surprising that it was entirely omitted from Sofri Innocenti’s

translation. Here, the passing mention of fingerprinting has been supplemented with a discussion of its most significant precursor, the anthropometric method of identification pioneered by Alphonse Bertillon. After describing in some detail how and why this method was superseded by Galton’s invention towards the end of the 19th century, Ginzburg concludes his argument in the following fashion:

This example shows the deep connection between the problem of individuality and the problem of social control. In fact, it can be said that the individual, born in a religious context (*persona*), acquired its modern, secularized meaning only in relation with the State. Concern with an individual’s uniqueness – as taxpayer, soldier, criminal, political subversive and so on – is a typical feature of developed bureaucracies. Most aptly, in the nineteenth century, traditional figures of those who control everyday life in society, such as priests, were increasingly superseded by new ones: physicians, policemen, psychiatrists, later on psychoanalysts and social scientists. It is in this context that we can understand the pervasive influence of the model based on clues – the semiotic paradigm.²¹

And what conclusion can we as readers draw from all of this? To my mind, what is most striking about this version of “Clues” is really what it lacks. At this point, there is no clear indication that the ‘paradigm’ delineated by Ginzburg is actually something that he would later embrace in his own research. In the first place, as the last quote makes clear, it pertains to modern societies in general rather than (pace the subtitle) to one strand of scientific inquiry or another – or rather, it pertains to society precisely by way of science as it is applied, for instance, in criminology.

In other words, “Clues” does not really read as a manifesto, at least not initially. For the time being, Ginzburg does not elaborate on his initial hint at ‘privileged zones’, and if anything, the implicit criticism of the paradigm’s ‘pervasive influence’ on contemporary culture would seem to put him directly at odds with the historical development that his essay sets out to analyze; surely, the author would not want to align himself with ‘physicians, policemen, psychiatrists’ and their ilk? This criticism would be retained and in some regards even amplified, but at the same time deflected in a somewhat unexpected direction as Ginzburg continued developing his argument.

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In fact, the work had already begun. By the time that “Clues” figured in the pages of *Theory & Society* in May of 1979, a new version of the essay was already well underway. It first appeared about a month later in the June issue of the leftist cultural review *Ombre rosse* and was subsequently included – essentially

unaltered, but now with all of the footnotes in place – in *Crisi della ragione*, an anthology edited by the philosopher Aldo Gargani and published by Einaudi.²² In hindsight, this volume can be said to have ushered in the disputes about ‘the postmodern condition’ that, in Italy as elsewhere, would dominate the following decade – although, as Stefano Rosso has maintained, “the Italian debate on post-modernism differs from that of other countries such as the USA or France.”²³ If only for that reason, the book deserves a brief discussion before we move on to Ginzburg’s contribution.

To begin with, a few words about the editor: Aldo Gargani (1933–2009), Ginzburg’s senior by almost a decade, was a professor of philosophy in Pisa. Trained in an analytic tradition, he would appear to have gradually moved in a more hermeneutic direction.²⁴ Although most renowned for his work on Ludwig Wittgenstein, by the late 70s, he had also written on Hobbes, Locke, and G. E. Moore; his most ambitious work to date was *Il sapere senza fondamenti* (“Knowledge without foundations”), published by Einaudi in 1975. Later on, he would increasingly turn his attention to literature, dedicating himself to authors such as Robert Musil, Franz Kafka, Thomas Bernhard, and Ingeborg Bachmann, as well as experimenting with narrative forms of philosophical writing.²⁵

And what about the anthology? The complete title read *Crisi della ragione: Nuovi modelli nel rapporto tra sapere e attività umane* (“Crisis of reason: new models in the relation between human knowledge and activity”). Causing quite a stir when first published, it has subsequently appeared in a number of reprints as well as in a Spanish translation, published in Mexico in 1983.²⁶ According to Rosso, the contributions – in addition to Ginzburg’s “Clues” and Gargani’s extensive introduction, *Crisi della ragione* featured essays by linguists, literary critics, philologists, philosophers, and political theorists²⁷ – should not be regarded as “homogenous in terms of ideology or discipline.” Nevertheless, they share a common point of departure in “the awareness of the crisis of classical reason [...] to which they oppose a ‘plurality of reasons.’” In a nutshell, the message of the anthology was that “we can no longer speak of *one* way of thinking, but only of *many*.”²⁸

This realization, in turn, became the starting point for more drastic departures in Italian philosophy such as, for instance, the *pensiero debole* (“weak thought”) espoused by Gianni Vattimo.²⁹ A starting point, however, is just that and nothing more. While some of the contributors – the editor himself is a case in point – later became associated with a broadly postmodern position; others would take issue with ‘postmodernism’, especially in Vattimo’s interpretation.³⁰ To summarize, if *Crisi della ragione* can indeed be seen as “emblematic” of contemporary intellectual developments, as Rosso claims, it should clearly not be regarded as representative in any straightforward sense.³¹ The same thing could no doubt be said about Ginzburg’s contribution – which has pride of place as the first essay in the volume, directly following Gargani’s introduction.

When “Clues” first appeared in print, Ginzburg characterized it as “the first,

summary formulation of an inquiry that I will publish elsewhere in a different and extended form.”³² When first translated, it was similarly introduced as “a draft of on-going research” – an apt description, considering the significant differences that we have just examined.³³ In *Crisi della ragione*, the author presents his renewed effort as “an extended (but still all but definitive) version.”³⁴ How, then, does this version of the essay compare with the one from the previous year?

As before, let us start at the beginning. The first thing to note is the subtitle, which now features the more familiar “evidential paradigm,” or *paradigma indiziario* in the original Italian. Appearing at first as little more than a slight change of phrase, it actually reverberates through the body of the text, giving rise to a significant variation in terminology. As we have seen, the first version centered on a ‘scientific’ and, more specifically, a ‘semiotic’ paradigm; a year later, this comparably clear-cut reference has given way to a cluster of terms: Ginzburg now speaks of a paradigm that he describes – “depending on the context” – as either *venatorio*, *divinatorio*, *indiziario* or *semeiotico*.³⁵ Four words in the place of one.

However, the inconsistency is not quite as pronounced as it may seem when we come to Ginzburg’s argument by way of the Tedeschi translation; here, the single adjective *indiziario* is variously rendered as “conjectural”, “evidential”, and “presumptive” in order to convey the different connotations of the Italian term.³⁶ Out of these three alternatives, ‘evidential’ actually turns out to be most seldom employed by the Tedeschi, making it difficult to understand why it would deserve a place in the essay’s title. Additionally, the net result also seems slightly inconsistent. While the first word suggests boldness and even a hint of risk, the second implies reliability and soundness of method, whilst the third would appear to gesticulate towards some half-hearted in-between where nothing much is really at stake (“Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”).³⁷ In contrast, the Italian term – alluding at once to the detective’s lead, the lawyer’s circumstantial evidence and the semiotician’s index – conjures up a kind of intellectual balancing act which goes to both extremes at once without ever losing its sense of urgency. Why none of the three translators seems to have considered the English term ‘indicial’ is beyond me (but I am admittedly not a native speaker). To avoid confusion, I will simply retain the original Italian and, throughout the rest of my argument, speak whenever I can of Ginzburg’s *paradigma indiziario*. Thereby, I bring this digression to a close.

Even disregarding the effects of translation, however, there is still the variation in the Italian version to consider. In fact, the author does so himself. “These, clearly,” he feels the need to remark, “are not synonymous adjectives, but nonetheless refer to a common epistemological model, expressed through various disciplines that are frequently linked by borrowed methods or key terms.”³⁸ In sum, the original reference to semiotics is still retained, but its importance is considerably diminished by the *longue durée* of Ginzburg’s new take on his subject. More on that in a moment.

Before arriving at the essay's actual argument, though, there is another hurdle to jump. In fact, there are two: in *Ombre rosse*, the author had already appended a pair of epigraphs that did not feature in the initial version of the essay. The first one should be familiar to any reader of Ginzburg: "God is in the detail," credited to Gustave Flaubert and Aby Warburg.³⁹ The second, on the other hand, is both less expected and more enigmatic:

An object which speaks of the loss, of the destruction, of the disappearance of objects. It does not speak of itself. It speaks of others. Will it also include them?⁴⁰

Ginzburg gives credit to the American artist (or, as some would have it, anti-artist) Jasper Johns for this quote.⁴¹ It is probable that he first encountered this passage in Susan Sontag's classic essay *On Photography* from 1977, published in Italian translation by Einaudi already in the following year, where it figures in the concluding "anthology of quotations." This conjecture is strengthened by the fact that Ginzburg, just like Sontag, omits a word that – whatever it may be taken to mean – seems crucial to the interpretation of the original: "DELUGE."⁴²

For the moment, I will resist the temptation of speculating about what Ginzburg saw in Johns' rather cryptic statement.⁴³ Instead, I will proceed at long last to the actual body of the essay, where we find the Italian historian taking a somewhat new approach to his topic. Dropping the reference to Lévi-Strauss, his point of departure is no longer the distinction between the natural and cultural sciences, but rather, as he now puts it, "the fruitless opposition between 'rationalism' and 'irrationalism'."⁴⁴ Although clearly not an unrelated conflict, this is a different way of drawing the battle lines, possibly prompted by the theme of Gargani's anthology. Moving on, the first few paragraphs are more or less identical, but the rest of the argument has been both reshuffled and significantly expanded. Most importantly, it now features the speculations on the prehistoric origins of Ginzburg's *paradigma* for which the essay has become famous, if not infamous. As before, the paradigm is most clearly defined in relation to what it is not – but now contrasted with a "Galilean" or "generalizing" paradigm rather than with an 'anatomic' one.⁴⁵

Finally, the ending of the essay is also quite different. As you may recall, the first version – particularly in Sofri Innocenti's slightly modified translation – gave the impression that Ginzburg was merely registering an aspect of the historical development in modern societies, without really taking up a position of his own. If anything, the author would seem to distance himself from the tendency he describes. In this regard as well, the battle lines have been redrawn in the second version. Although its deployment by "the State" is still highlighted, the role of the *paradigma* has once again become ambivalent, but more distinctly now. Instead of ending on a somber note, Ginzburg now elaborates on his initial hint

at 'privileged zones', explicitly claiming that "the same conjectural [*indiziario*] paradigm employed to develop ever more subtle and capillary forms of control can become a device to dissolve the ideological clouds which increasingly obscure such a complex social structure as fully developed capitalism."⁴⁶

In contrast to the preceding version, this indisputably reads as a kind of manifesto, although it seems to speak with a somewhat forked tongue. More specifically, Ginzburg explicitly positions the approach that was increasingly being called microhistory at this point as an outgrowth of a certain trend in modern society – a highly objectionable one, from the author's political perspective – and *at the same time* as an attempt to subvert that very trend, as it were, from within. This tension, however, is easily lost (judging, to some extent, from personal experience) on the growing number of readers that first come to Ginzburg's essay expecting some sort of plea for an approach to historical research that they presume to be firmly established and clearly defined.

In short, only over time did "Clues" evolve into a manifesto, and never quite to the extent that has often been taken for granted in retrospect. Rather, the essay is probably best regarded as "a kind of intellectual crypto-autobiography," as Ginzburg himself would later put it.⁴⁷ In this regard, the subtle allusion to Warburg, Spitzer and Bloch – three of the Italian historian's most important sources of inspiration – seems much more decisive than the manifest reference to the trio of Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes.⁴⁸

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The fact that most readers today come to Ginzburg's essay expecting a manifesto clearly has a lot to do with the growing international recognition of Italian *microstoria* – which, in turn, hinges considerably on the author's own professional fortunes. However, the essay itself certainly merits some credit. Just what, then, was it about "Clues" that made it such a remarkable success? Here, the translations provide us with a lead or two.

The second version of "Clues" appeared in English in 1980, less than a year after it had been published in Italian. More specifically, it figured in the spring issue of the *History Workshop Journal*, the most important vehicle for the eponymous movement in British historiography, under the heading "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method" – a title most reminiscent of the Dutch translation from two years before. Indeed, this is not the only difference. At first sight, the text published in the *History Workshop Journal* seems an amalgam of the two Italian versions. As the first version, this version still departs from a "borderline between natural sciences and human sciences" – adding parenthetically: "or as it is sometimes seen, between science and everything else", but it also gestures, like the second version, towards a "sterile contrasting of 'rational' and 'irrational'."⁴⁹ In addition, the inveterate academic will not fail to point out

that it only features 109 footnotes, as compared to 131 in the Italian version.⁵⁰ However, both the prehistoric speculation and the idea of subversion are in place here. All in all, it seems reasonable to regard it as an adaptation of the second version to a different publication context rather than as a previous stage in the essay's development, a conclusion borne out by the explanatory sub-headings probably added by editors at the *History Workshop Journal*. But, of course, few readers will be interested in such minutiae.

What is noteworthy about this version of "Clues" is not so much the essay itself, but rather the way in which it is framed by its publisher. The text is preceded by a two-page introduction by its chief translator, the historian Anna Davin, also one of the journal's editors and a leading member of the London-based Feminist History Group.⁵¹ While presenting Ginzburg as "an Italian comrade", thereby situating him squarely in the Marxist camp, she also feels the need to issue a warning to her readers that his contribution is, indeed, "very different from anything we have included in *History Workshop Journal* before." Anticipating (probably with good reason) that the philosophical references, the dizzying variety of sources and the quantum leaps in historical spacetime would come across as "extraordinary – even shocking – to the English reader," she goes to great lengths in her attempt to exculpate the author from complicity with "the educational institutions and political power of a privileged elite."

Then again, shielding the author from suspicion is hardly sufficient to motivate the publication. As Davin goes on to insist, however, that "the Italian historian can make political interventions within philosophy and the classical tradition" – an opportunity which, alas, is not readily available to his comrades in Britain, where the classics are no longer "centrally part of political theory" but rather "the irrelevant preserve of the English gentleman, the specialism of the few in their ivory tower." Thus, although readers of the *History Workshop Journal* should approach Ginzburg's essay with some caution – not as a recipe for research, one might say, but rather as a little Mediterranean stir-in seasoning – it could hopefully provide them with "greater confidence for generalising, for theorising, and for speculation."⁵²

No such cautions were necessary when, three years later, Davin's translation was published a second time; indeed, the context could hardly have been more different.⁵³ In 1983, "Clues" was included in *The Sign of Three*, an anthology edited by Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Sebeok that approached the investigative methods of Sherlock Holmes and his Franco-American colleague C. Auguste Dupin (the protagonist in three of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories) from the perspective of C. S. Peirce's logic of abduction.⁵⁴ Suddenly, the contemporary political situation – indeed, almost anything contemporary, except the latest advances in semiotics and related subspecialties – became almost unimaginably distant.⁵⁵ Eco offered "some hypotheses on three types of abduction" illustrated with reference to a chapter from Voltaire's *Zadig*; Sebeok scrutinized the "strangely obses-

sive eccentricity" evidenced by such figures as the inventor Nikola Tesla, the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, and the physicist Georg Gamow – not to mention the author himself – when confronted with the number three; and the Finnish logician Jaakko Hintikka managed to condense the reasoning of Sherlock Holmes, at a decisive moment of the short story "Silver Blaze" (abbreviated SILV), into the following terse formalism:

- (1)($\exists x$)($W(x) \ \& \ S(x)$)
- (2)($\forall y$)(x)[($W(x) \ \& \ S(x)$) $\supset \ \sim B(x,y)$]
- (3)(x)[($W(x) \ \& \ S(x)$) $\supset \ \sim B(x,th)$]

And so forth.⁵⁶ How on earth, one might ask, did Ginzburg end up in such company?⁵⁷

Turning our attention to "Clues," another variation in the title – however slight – indicates that Ginzburg was still tinkering with his essay. Listed in the table of contents as "Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific method" – that is, exactly as in the *History Workshop Journal* except for the trailing comma – it actually appears under the heading "Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes." The first paragraph now conforms more or less exactly to *Crisi della ragione*, but the essay only features 75 footnotes. And so forth. As before, the real interest obviously lies elsewhere. What I find striking about this entire episode is, as you will have already guessed, the contrast between the two contexts of publication. Technicalities aside, what we are discussing here is not only the same text, but even the same translation – and yet, the readers who first encountered Ginzburg's name in the pages of the *History Workshop Journal* must have formed a very different impression of the author than those who discovered him in the company of Eco, Sebeok *et alii*. To my mind, this attests to the exceptionally broad appeal of Ginzburg's approach to scholarship, as well as of his intellectual orientation and even his literary style.

In her introduction, Davin refers to an earlier piece by Ginzburg on the historical opposition between 'high' and 'low' knowledge, an inquiry pursued further in "Clues."⁵⁸ In itself, however, the essay is an example of how the high and the low can be brought together with great fruitfulness – or should I say uberty (*ubertà*), an obscure notion that figures in Sebeok's discussion of Peirce?⁵⁹ Here as elsewhere, Ginzburg himself would seem to appear as a kind of Gestalt figure – both hedgehog and fox – straddling the border between theory and practice, philosophy and history, the strictly professional and the highly political, allowing his readers – at least to an extent – to see whatever they would like to see.⁶⁰ And then, he moves on.

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Indeed, if the essay that eventually became “Clues” has passed through a number of different stages, these stages have at least one thing in common: Ginzburg regarded them all as preliminary. What began as a ‘first, summary formulation’ in the *Rivista di storia contemporanea* was gradually elaborated into ‘a draft of an on-going research’ in *Theory and Society*, but is still described in *Ombre rosse* and *Crisi della ragione* as ‘all but definitive’. The same attitude is evidenced in 1983, when Ginzburg announces in a footnote: “The author hopes to publish a revised and enlarged version in the near future.”⁶¹

As it turned out, that never transpired (and at this point, it seems unlikely that the situation will be remedied). The version first published in its entirety in *Crisi della ragione* in 1979 would eventually be included in Ginzburg’s own collection *Miti emblematici* in 1986 and subsequently translated by John and Anne Tedeschi in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* in 1989. In the meantime, the essay had also been published in German (1980), French (1980), Dutch (1981), Swedish (1983), Spanish (1983), Japanese (1986) and Danish (1986) – and many other translations were to follow.⁶² Throughout this entire unfolding, “Clues” has gradually crystallized into the version that would in time be regarded as canonical. While Ginzburg’s line of reasoning was already established by the end of the 70s, the essay’s title continued to vary until the mid-80s; after that point, the only variations were in the titles (and, to some extent, the content) of the anthologies in which it appeared in translation. Among these, some follow more or less closely that of the Italian collection, whereas others – beginning with the German anthology *Spurensicherungen* (roughly, “the securing of trace evidence”), which actually predates *Miti emblematici* by three years – gives “Clues” primacy over the other essays, thereby recognizing and at the same time reinforcing its authoritative status.⁶³

In that case, the exceptions are more thought-provoking: the Dutch title, *Omweg als methode* (“Detour as method”), and the subtitle to the reduced German edition, *Die Wissenschaft auf der Suche nach sich selbst* (“Science in search of itself”), both seem to preserve something of the tentative character of Ginzburg’s inquiry.⁶⁴ We should keep that in mind particularly now as we proceed to the second step in my discussion, where the very notion of publication will gradually take on a considerably wider sense. If the various versions of “Clues” are so many pebbles tossed into the sea of public discussion, I will now attempt to follow the widening rings on the water.

The most straightforward way of approaching this task would no doubt be to take another dive, this time into the essay’s reception history. Although – and indeed, precisely because – the content as well as the form of “Clues” gradually settled into what was to become their final guise, the text was increasingly stirring up debates. As the definitive version was included in the collection *Miti emblematici*, the author himself already saw fit to remark on the “numerous comments and rejoinders” elicited by his modest proposal. Citing extensive de-

bates in *Quaderni storici* as well as in the German journal *Freibeuter*, he especially singled out a review from January 21, 1980, published in *La Repubblica* and signed Italo Calvino.⁶⁵ Taking a closer look at Calvino’s assessment, we find plenty of compliments but also some rather shrewd questions:

Carlo Ginzburg’s essay has already been and will continue to be discussed, not only for the great number of ideas it hosts, interwoven like the threads of a tapestry (in a provisional arrangement – the author informs us – that we are likely to see thicken), but also for its declared intention of presenting an epistemological paradigm in opposition to what is known as the Galilean tradition, based on generalization, quantification and the reproducibility of phenomena. [...] Will this opposition, however, be at all relevant? The name ‘Galileo’ in itself indicates that things are not all that simple.⁶⁶

Whatever their disagreements, however, it is altogether understandable that the review would have been a particular cause for pride; after all, Calvino was not only one of the most celebrated authors in postwar Italian literature, but also a colleague and friend of Ginzburg’s mother, who in fact acted as a kind of mentor for the young historian.⁶⁷ However, to trace the debate surrounding “Clues” in its entirety would obviously take us far beyond the scope of this discussion.

Another possibility would be to consider how Ginzburg’s *paradigma* has been employed in other academic settings, sometimes in quite creative ways. Remaining in the Italian context, at least two cases would deserve closer investigation. On the one hand is the conception of the “historical project” articulated by the historian of architecture Manfredo Tafuri (1935–94), the most famous spokesman of the so-called Venice school, with direct reference to his colleague in Bologna.⁶⁸ On the other hand is the recently proposed “theory of signatures,” again with reference to Ginzburg, in an essay by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben (* 1942) that almost reads as a sequel to “Clues.”⁶⁹ But again, such an inquiry – even if limited to these two cases only – would lead us too far astray from our present purposes.

For the time being, I will have to settle for just a few observations about a highly particular – but not unimportant – aspect of the essay’s reception: namely, the retrospective assessments provided by Ginzburg himself. Again, a first example can be found already in *Miti emblematici*, where the author seized the opportunity to say a little about his original ambition:

Initially I had intended to justify my working methods indirectly by constructing a private intellectual genealogy, which would include principally a small number of books which I thought had influenced me in a particularly significant way: Spitzer’s essays, Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*, Freud’s *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Bloch’s *The Royal Touch*,

all books that I had read between eighteen and twenty years of age. Then the project burst out in other directions.⁷⁰

What went wrong? To put it bluntly, it would seem that Ginzburg proved unable to resist the temptation of applying his approach – at once “telescopic and microscopic” – to his own justification of it.⁷¹ As a result, the original, subjective impulse behind the essay dissipated into a highly speculative and, at the same time, quite meticulous argument about the historical development of the *paradigma* as an objective, societal process – an argument which returned only eventually, and then mostly by way of allusion (“with great discretion”, as the author would later put it), to the idea of a ‘private intellectual genealogy’.⁷² Symptomatically, of the five authors mentioned in Ginzburg’s recollection, only Freud features centrally as one of the essay’s three ‘cases’. Adorno is at least enlisted as an example of the prevalence of aphoristic thought in the 20th century, but Spitzer and Bloch only figure between the lines – and Auerbach, poor devil, has disappeared entirely.⁷³ In short, on this account “Clues” did not end up as its author had first intended – another reason for emphasizing its tentative character.

Then again, the result was no less profound for being partially unintentional; indeed, Ginzburg would reaffirm its importance. With additional hindsight, it even seems as if he had come to view the process of writing it as a little more deliberate. In the preface to *No Island is an Island*, a collection of essays on English literature dating from the late 90s, Ginzburg explains:

With this model [...] which I dubbed an ‘evidential paradigm,’ I was trying to give some direction to my way of conducting research by introducing it into an exceedingly distant historical perspective, indeed a plurimillennarian one. I dwell on that essay, which from that time has continued to sustain my research subterraneously, because the hypothesis on the origin of narrative formulated at that time can shed light also on historical narrative: dedicated, unlike other forms, to the search for truth and thus shaped, in every phase, by questions and answers in narrative form. To read reality backward, starting from its opacity, so as to avoid remaining prisoners of the designs of the intellect: this notion dear to Proust, it seems to me, expresses an ideal of research that has also inspired the following pages.⁷⁴

Here, the author is no longer overpowered by his own inquiry, as he seems to have been judging from the earlier account. Instead, he is consciously trying to find his intellectual bearing – but precisely by way of losing himself in the vastness of history! If it really happened like this, the Dutch title *Omweg als methode* would indeed be justified.⁷⁵ Furthermore, it would seem to apply not only to the author’s own paradigm, considered as one approach among many, but rather to ‘historical narrative’ in general.⁷⁶ Regardless of which, one thing is clear: the

guiding thread that Ginzburg had begun to unravel in “Clues” would be subsequently entwined into all of his writings – even when it was only visible, so to speak, on the reverse of the text.

Half a decade into the new millennium – speaking of a plurimillennarian perspective – the same thread would once again come into plain sight as Ginzburg offered his most sustained reflection to date on the “hypothesis” advanced in his long-since classic essay, this time in connection with a colloquium in Lille dedicated specifically to his notion of a *paradigma indiziario*.⁷⁷ How, then, does the author approach his own work a full quarter-century after its initial publication? “[As] a very general theoretical proposition” – although, he adds parenthetically, “I do not utter this big word of ‘theory’ without hesitating a little” – which, furthermore, was “advanced in a way that resolutely ignored, not only the separation between disciplines, but also the customary ethnocentric hierarchies.”⁷⁸ Such are the key traits that, to Ginzburg’s own mind, contributed to the spectacular success of his essay. But, of course, there were also other forces at work, forces that were entirely beyond his control:

Right away, this text was received with intense and, on more than one occasion, intensely polemical interest. If I said that I have remained indifferent to this success, I would be lying. And yet, in the swiftness of this reaction, there were factors that did not cease to trouble me. I realized full well that I had grasped something which was in the air at the time and that I had given voice to vague themes which were sometimes based on the latent state [of things]. I began to fear that the immediate appreciation and recognition with which my text had been received could have resulted from the triviality of what I had written. Above all, I was afraid of becoming a prisoner to this fortunate phrase: ‘evidential paradigm’.⁷⁹

It is for this reason, Ginzburg explains, that he has “deliberately avoided using the expression ‘evidential paradigm’ for twenty-five years” – a decision that was further reinforced, not only by an instinctive wariness of catchwords, but also by a deeply felt conviction that “the process of knowledge should start over every time by submitting our own presuppositions to renewed discussion.”⁸⁰ Trying his best to live up to a clearly unattainable ideal, he went on to develop the theme of “Clues” under other guises, focusing on aspects – the proof, the series, the case – that were either lacking entirely or had not been sufficiently articulated in the original essay.

Such conceptual sleights of hand seemed all the more inevitable since the entire “intellectual atmosphere” was in flux around the same time.⁸¹ Ginzburg is referring to the imminent breakthrough of postmodernism, a development that we have already discussed in connection with the *Crisi della ragione* anthology and the debates that it sparked.⁸² “Some”, he observes with annoyance, “read my

essay on the evidential paradigm as a eulogy to the fragment, to the isolated detail, to the anomaly as opposed to the series” – immediately remarking: “Nothing is farther from my intentions, whether implicit or explicit.” At the same time, he still refuses to give in to the inverse temptation of basing his generalizations only on allegedly ‘normal’ cases. This, to Ginzburg’s mind, is merely a result of the unfortunate tendency among historians to mix up “the documentation that they know with the documentation that is available, the documentation that is available with the documentation that was produced, and the latter with the social reality that produced it.”⁸³

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And not only among historians, one might interject. Still, Ginzburg’s remark provides us with a convenient point of entry into the wider problematic that I have been aiming for all along. To be more specific, it attests to the sense of professionalism that, with time, has increasingly come to the fore in the Italian historian’s writings. While having voiced his disregard for disciplinary strictures often enough, he has always been careful not to overstep the boundaries of his jurisdiction as a scientist (if not of the Galilean stripe). Indeed, in one regard, his censure of postmodernists left, right, and center is nothing but the flip side of this coin: you can criticize the ravages of reason all you like, but there are still professional standards that need to be upheld. A remark from the beginning of the 80s is revealing:

It is perhaps an element of psychological ‘armor’ in me that prevents me from crossing the border between my research and my personal life. I am not fond of what once used to be called irrationalism. To be sure, reason has given its consent to all kinds of mystification and disgracefulness. But there is a kind of parasitical and stupid evasion. [...] Critique as merely an armchair, the simulation of crisis as a way of keeping it under control – something that, moreover, leads to grotesque effects in writing. I keep that at arm’s length – in favor of, so to speak, a kind of Enlightenment-style common sense.⁸⁴

On the other hand, professional standards *do* need to be upheld – and I trust that Ginzburg himself would agree⁸⁵ – because they are unable to uphold themselves of their own accord. No boundaries, whether between academic disciplines or between the academy and wider society, are simply given, as if ordained by some higher power. Rather, they result from individual and collective acts of distinction that need to be either repeated every so often or else perpetuated in one way or another, typically in institutional form. Hence, to some extent, all boundaries are negotiable, malleable, and amenable to changing circumstances. They display

the same “flexible rigor” that Ginzburg regards as his own intellectual ideal.⁸⁶

What, then, if the *paradigma* proposed by Ginzburg as an approach to historical scholarship could be applied not only in other academic settings – as would seem to be the case, although perhaps to different degrees, with both Tafuri and Agamben – but also in wider society? Could it be set to work on matters of public concern as well as on strictly scientific problems? Should its restriction to theoretical questions be regarded an undue limitation to its potential reach – one that has been imposed, to no small extent, by Ginzburg himself? To my mind, these are the kind of questions to which the gradual ‘becoming public’ of “Clues” has inevitably given rise.

However, the way in which such questions readily pose themselves already risks leading us astray, in the sense that every categorical distinction between the academic and the societal, the scientific and the public, the theoretical and the practical, only serves to reestablish the very boundary I am attempting to interrogate and, if possible, renegotiate. On a general note, what seems to be lacking is a ready understanding of how the academy *already* forms an integral part of modern society, how science is *already* organized on public principles (albeit it to an ever-decreasing degree), how theory is *already* a particular kind of practice.⁸⁷ Indeed, one way of working toward such an understanding would be to return once again to Ginzburg’s writings, now on the lookout for traces of this ‘already’.

Again, there are many possible angles from which to approach this problem. One such angle concerns the public resonance of academic scholarship, the way in which even ‘strictly’ scientific questions can – and sometimes do, though perhaps not as often as they should – capture the imagination of a wider audience. To some extent, as we have just seen, “Clues” already provides us with an sample of such resonance, although it has no doubt been largely confined to academic circles. A more striking example is *The Cheese and the Worms*, the Italian historian’s most celebrated work, which has been translated into two dozen languages.⁸⁸ In the preface, Ginzburg overtly describes it as “a story as well as a piece of historical writing” – a truism in one sense, but not in another.⁸⁹ In the first place, that is to say, the quote should not be read as a statement on the role of narrative in historiography – indispensable as it may be – but rather as a gesture towards the multiple audiences that the author envisaged for his book. He would further clarify his standpoint in an interview published by the *Radical History Review* in the mid-80s:

Some historians found my work populist, demagogic and so on. And I think that I am regarded with uneasiness (and some of my critics are very aggressive about their dislike of my work) because I am on the fringe. At the same time, the fact that my books, except *Il nicodemismo*, looked for a different audience, rather than a professional audience, disturbed a lot of academics. It is crucial to me to reach a wider audience. I think the problem

with the Nicodemism book is that it was directed to a more circumscribed audience. In some way, non-professional readers have understood better what I have tried to do.⁹⁰

And what message did Ginzburg hope to send to this wider audience? For all his literary flair, most of *The Cheese and the Worms* reads like strictly historical scholarship, even of the most meticulous kind. However, he also makes clear at the end of his preface to the English edition that the story of Menocchio “implicitly poses a series of questions for our own culture and for us.”⁹¹ In fact, he had already given in to the temptation of spelling them out, if ever so slightly. In the original preface, again at the very the end, we encounter this suggestive passage:

Menocchio falls within a fine, tortuous, but clearly distinguishable, line of development that can be followed directly to the present. In a sense he is one of our forerunners. But Menocchio is also a dispersed fragment, reaching us by chance, of an obscure shadowy world that can be reconnected to our own history only by an arbitrary act. That culture has been destroyed. To respect its residue of unintelligibility that resists any attempt at analysis does not mean succumbing to a foolish fascination for the exotic and incomprehensible. It is simply taking note of a historical mutilation of which, in a certain sense, we ourselves are the victims.⁹²

A message, in short, of responsibility and respect – for the present as well as the past.⁹³ To add emphasis, Ginzburg crowns his meditation with a quote: “‘Nothing that has taken place should be lost to history,’ wrote Walter Benjamin. ‘But only to redeemed humanity does the past belong in its entirety.’” To which he himself adds: “Redeemed and thus liberated.”⁹⁴ With this eschatological gesture, the historian deliberately toes the borderline between his native ‘republic of letters’ and a wider public sphere, hinting at what kinds of conclusions the reader should draw from his historical account. Indeed, a similar hint – although even more allusive – already figures within the account itself, here too at the very end. Ginzburg concludes his story of Menocchio’s sad fate by introducing another, even more obscure case in the narrative: “a certain man named Marcato, or perhaps Marco” who, according to rumors diligently recorded in the Inquisition’s protocols, had given voice to similar heresies. “About Menocchio we know many things,” Ginzburg notes drily. “About this Marcato, or Marco – and so many others like him who lived and died without leaving a trace – we know nothing.”⁹⁵ A telling example, if nothing else, of what we might describe as an aesthetics of omission in the Italian historian’s works.⁹⁶

Still, if there is indeed a lesson to be learned from *The Cheese and the Worms*, it does remain quite nebulous. A second angle from which to approach our overarching problem concerns more precise and purposive interventions. One such

episode is Ginzburg’s rejoinder to Hayden White at the landmark conference on the Holocaust and the “limits of representation” arranged by the Israeli historian Saul Friedländer at the University of California, Los Angeles, in the spring of 1990 – but that case would deserve a study of its own.⁹⁷ Luckily, as before, there is an even more striking example: Ginzburg’s intervention in the trial against his old friend Adriano Sofri, a leading figure in the left-wing *Lotta continua* movement, which ultimately – and from their perspective, unfortunately – resulted in little more than yet another entry in the Italian historian’s already extensive list of publications. To be sure, *The Judge and the Historian* is no less though-provoking than Ginzburg’s other works, but it would not seem to have made any difference in practical terms; despite a long line of appeals and one complete acquittal (which was later revoked on formal grounds), Sofri had to serve his full 22-year sentence, although he was allowed to spend the last five years under house arrest on account of his failing health.⁹⁸

For the present argument, however, it does make a great deal of difference. With *The Judge and the Historian*, Ginzburg actively overstepped his own professional jurisdiction, effectively violating the border between academic historiography and wider society – although, symptomatically, only with regard to questions of procedure, to formal rather than material aspects of the legal process. In other words, he did not attempt to convince the reader of his friend’s innocence, but merely “to show, through an analysis of the documentation adduced during the trial, that the accusations levelled against Adriano Sofri are entirely groundless.”⁹⁹ To this end, the historian applied his *paradigma indiziario* to what, at that time, was still an open case, bringing all of his accumulated expertise in deciphering inquisition records to bear on the documents from Sofri’s trial.

Looking back at this entire ordeal some years after the Supreme Court of Cassation had pronounced its definitive verdict, Ginzburg observed: “For the first time in my life, and up to now the last, the search for and demonstration of the truth did not appear to me as ends in themselves (a notion that I hold in the highest regard) but rather as tools subordinated to a practical end [...]”¹⁰⁰ To my mind, what is significant about this statement is the sheer asymmetry of its antithesis. With the expression ‘ends in themselves’, the historian clearly has scientific aims in mind – but scientific inquiry itself must reasonably serve some wider societal purpose. Indeed, if the quest for truth was entirely self-contained, it would hardly be worthy of our admiration. Could it be that Ginzburg’s ‘psychological armor’, to the extent that it shields his research from merely personal influences, also tends to occlude this larger vista?

A third angle on the problem of how Ginzburg’s paradigm can be applied to public matters also concerns interventions, but now by others than the author himself; for example invitations that come from outside of the academic circuit and therefore, to some extent, bring the historian out of his ‘comfort zone’. An interesting example of such a situation – and another episode that would deserve

its own case-study – is when Ginzburg, in connection with a visit to Moscow, was invited to discuss his essay on “The Inquisitor as Anthropologist” at a seminar organized by the Russian human rights organization Memorial. Here, the Italian historian was provoked to discuss a possibility that he had never had the reason to consider in the course of his own research, namely the application his own methodology to a question of the utmost public concern: how to deal with the records of Stalin’s show trials, which had only recently become available at the time.¹⁰¹

A step further in the same direction, and we leave the Italian historian behind altogether. Can we point to examples where Ginzburg’s *paradigma* is independently applied to public matters – where, so to speak, it is deliberately translated into a (partly) different cultural setting? Or, to bring my argument to its logical conclusion, examples that should reasonably be conceived as such applications, though lacking any explicit relation to the particular example of the Italian historian’s works? As befits a discussion of “Clues,” I will conclude my argument on a speculative note – but in contrast with the bold conjecture of Ginzburg’s essay, my own speculation does not bring us back to prehistoric times. Quite the contrary.

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In the spring of 2012, the Frankfurt art gallery Portikus devoted an exhibition to what must be considered a rather unconventional topic, even by the idiosyncratic standards of contemporary art: “the forensic identification of the remains of infamous Nazi-doctor Joseph Mengele after his exhumation in 1985.”¹⁰² Incidentally, this was not the only surprise that visitors met. As is customary, the exhibition was accompanied by a publication – only in this case, the former actually preceded the latter. As the curator Anselm Franke explains on the front flap:

This book was commissioned to instigate, rather than represent, an exhibition. In this curatorial experiment, Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman were asked to produce a book and Hito Steyerl was asked to respond to their text by creating a series of works. This process constructed a form of research within the margins of science, aesthetics, and law – an entangled set of circumstances from which we can examine these fields anew.¹⁰³

Indeed, an entangled set of circumstances – for us to disentangle. Thomas Keenan is a literary theorist and associate professor at Bard College, two hours north of New York City. Eyal Weizman, in turn, is an Israeli architect currently teaching at Goldsmiths College in London, where he has been head of the Center for Research Architecture since it was founded in 2006. What brings the two together? Above all, it would seem, a shared engagement with human rights issues:

Keenan serves as director of the Human Rights Project at Bard, while Weizman has worked with a number of NGOs in his native Israel/Palestine.¹⁰⁴

Last but not least, Hito Steyerl is a filmmaker and theorist who first started making a name for herself in the mid-90s. After studies in Tokyo and Munich, she obtained a doctorate in philosophy at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna and is currently professor of New Media Art at the Universität der Künste in Berlin. Her work, which moves in the interstices between documentary film and the visual arts, has been featured in prestigious venues such as the Art Institute of Chicago, the ICA in London and several of the major biennale festivals. In a recent feature on the website of DIS Magazine, an online art journal based in New York, Steyerl is described as nothing less than one of the most important voices in cultural criticism today.¹⁰⁵

Two pieces by Steyerl were on display in the exhibition at Portikus: one was an installation aiming to reconstruct a case of abduction that occurred during the war in Bosnia “with the help of forensic 3D technology,” and the other was a two-channel film dealing with “the certainty and uncertainty of forensic identification methods.” In addition, the exhibition featured a resource room with documents relating to Mengele’s case; a film-lecture by Keenan and Weizman; another film, co-authored by Weizman and one of his doctorate students at Goldsmiths, the Brazilian architect Paulo Tavares, about the genocides in Guatemala perpetrated under the presidency of Efraín Ríos Montt in the early 80s, and finally “what Eyal Weizman calls ‘documentary sculptures’ – three-dimensional prints made from scans of crime scenes, used for police investigation and in courts and media.”¹⁰⁶ In all of this, one name already seems to figure more prominently than the others.

And what about the curator? Like Tavares, Franke also followed the PhD program at Goldsmiths, but his relationship with Weizman goes further back: the two already worked together on *Territories*, a 2003 exhibition at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin.¹⁰⁷ More recently, Franke and Weizman co-curated *Forensis*, a major event, this time at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, where the work of the entire collective around the Center for Research Architecture was on display. More specifically, it presents the results of the five-year research project Forensic Architecture, led by Weizman with funding from the European Research Council.¹⁰⁸ Opening on March 15, 2014 and running for nearly two months, the exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue of more than 750 pages featuring contributions from 45 individual artists and authors.¹⁰⁹ Here again, one name figures more prominently than the others – Weizman penned the introduction to the entire volume – but it would not count for much without all the other names that it brings into play.

But, by all means, let us not get ahead of ourselves. In more than one respect, the project that culminated with the overwhelming statement of *Forensis* was first delineated in the slender volume that had accompanied the exhibition

in Hamburg two years before.¹¹⁰ Both the book and the exhibition were presented under the same heading, *Mengele's Skull*, and both announce what Keenan and Weizman describe as “the advent of a forensic aesthetics.” What, then, might this enigmatic phrase designate?

At first sight, *Mengele's Skull* would simply seem to recount an episode in the history of war crime investigations. Although the essay sets out, as is almost unavoidable, with a brief discussion of the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials, the story begins in earnest only in 1979 – the same year, incidentally, that the definitive version of “Clues” was published – with the death by drowning of a certain Wolfgang Gerhard in the Brazilian resort of Bertioga. Six years later, his remains were exhumed and a forensic investigation could demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that the deceased was actually Joseph Mengele, the infamous SS officer and physician in charge of the medical services at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

After describing the process in some detail, Keenan and Weizman proceed to situate the methods developed for the investigation in the longer historical perspective that they had already established. If the Nuremberg trials had relied on the medium of writing – here, “heads of state and military were tried primarily by reference to the documents that they themselves produced” – the trial against Adolf Eichmann gave pride of place to “the voices of the victims.”¹¹¹ According to Keenan and Weizman, this shift in emphasis had profound repercussions outside of the courtroom. As a result of its public impact, the Eichmann trial brought about nothing short of “a cultural turn towards testimony – the speech of the witness, the first-person narrative of suffering or trauma.”¹¹² In sharp contrast to the impersonal character of official documents, such testimonies were paradoxically at their most eloquent when the witness could no longer bring himself to speak: “it was often in silence, distortion, confusion, or outright error that trauma – and hence the catastrophic character of certain events – was inscribed.”¹¹³

It is only against this background that Mengele's case takes on its full significance. Here, words – whether in written or spoken form – have been displaced by mere things; a skull, not a living face, plays the leading role. As a consequence, the Mengele investigation represents “the birth of a *forensic* approach to understanding war crimes and crimes against humanity.”¹¹⁴ In the course of their work, the international team of experts in charge of the investigation developed and tested a range of innovative techniques that have since become standard procedure within the forensics profession. On Keenan and Weizman's interpretation, “each of these processes did more than introduce new forms of evidence – they did nothing less than shift the conditions by which that evidence became audible and visible, the way juridical facts were constructed and understood.”¹¹⁵ Falling back on Peirce's semiotic classifications, we may describe this entire development as a consecutive shift from the symbolic, via the iconic, to the indexical.

So far, the story almost reads like another chapter in Ginzburg's charting

of the indicial paradigm. Just like the Italian historian, Keenan and Weizman ascribe a paradigmatic status to forensics in contemporary culture – a claim that only seems to grow stronger in the course of their argument. From the very beginning, the turn to forensics already “occurred in parallel across a number of related fields.”¹¹⁶ With the Mengele investigation, its impact had reached “an expanded public domain” – that is, “a domain that is not limited to courts and press conferences” – that eventually allowed it to leave its mark “in popular culture at large.”¹¹⁷ From The Hague to Hollywood, the fingerprints of forensics were soon showing up everywhere. “Today,” as Keenan and Weizman's suggestively put it, “the bones and the flesh of victims and criminals alike have become a common epistemological matrix on which the discourses of the human sciences, law, and even popular entertainment increasingly draw.”¹¹⁸

Although his dating differs by almost a century, a ‘common epistemological matrix’ founded on the interpretation of material traces is just about exactly what Ginzburg delineated in “Clues” – in more or less identical terms, at that.¹¹⁹ And indeed, the similarities between our two cases do not end there. To begin with, the basic ambition remains the same, although the circumstances have obviously changed rather drastically since the end of the 70s. As Keenan and Weizman explain:

Bones lead investigators to bullets, bullets to guns, guns to the soldiers or policemen who fired them, and the executioners to the officers and politicians who gave the orders. Behind them, there are the ideologies, interests, fantasies, and organizations that animated the violence in the first place. Forensics is not about the single object in isolation, but rather about the chains of associations that emanate from it and connect it to people, technologies, methods, and ideas – the flexible network between people and things, humans and non-humans, be they documents, images, weapons, skulls, or ruins.¹²⁰

Just like in “Clues,” then, forensics holds out the promise of penetrating the ‘clouds of ideology’ – although now in a context closer to the present.¹²¹ The prevailing view of microhistory notwithstanding, Ginzburg would also agree that it is not the detail in itself that is important, but rather what conclusions it allows you to draw, what conjectures it allows you to make, what constructions it allows you to build – in Weizman's case in an altogether literal sense.¹²² For both, the real interest lies not so much in the things themselves as within the traces that make them speak: not with Mengele's bones in themselves, to remain with Keenan and Weizman – but rather with “the events and effects of a life as it had been recorded or fossilized into the bones,” transforming them into “the imprint of a lived life.”¹²³ Apparently, forensics is also a *scienza del vissuto*, to employ the deliberately paradoxical expression of Ginzburg and his colleague Carlo Poni.¹²⁴

Shall I carry on? When Keenan and Weizman characterize forensic work as “a patient and systematic reading” of material remains, they effectively turn it into a subdiscipline of philology – but one that aims to decipher the proverbial book of nature rather than some script of human invention.¹²⁵ When, on the other hand, they describe it as “a ‘trial of the bones,’ undertaken not in a legal but a scientific forum” with the intention, that is to say, not of “judging the actions” of the deceased but merely of “verifying his identity,” they cannot help but conjure up the specter of Leopold von Ranke, the famous German historian, and with it the field of modern historiography that he helped institute.¹²⁶ And when they explain that forensics – “like every other empirical science” – is “a matter of probability” in the sense that it always has to reckon with “the balance of probability or the margin of error of its findings,” Ginzburg’s vigorous plea for the “insuppressible speculative margin” of his indicial paradigm readily comes to mind.¹²⁷

The same line of reasoning could easily be pursued down to the most trivial details. For instance, when Keenan and Weizman claim that “science and law have their own distinct procedures, elasticities, and rigidities in constructing their facts,” it is difficult – at least with “Clues” in the back of your head – not to think of Ginzburg’s notion of ‘flexible rigor’ (*rigore elastico*).¹²⁸ A few pages into their argument, we stumble over the figure of the Devil’s advocate, another of the Italian historian’s favorite themes.¹²⁹ And, as we read on, we gradually realize that the very composition of Keenan and Weizman’s essay embodies something of the same cinematic sensibility as Ginzburg’s work: for instance, when the brief discussion of the Devil’s advocate and its role in medieval canonization processes is abruptly cut off by three asterisks (Ginzburg would have used his numbered paragraphs) and the story of the Mengele investigation taken up again with the cue: “Back in Brazil...”¹³⁰ In effect, both would seem to employ the same kind of montage technique, although *Mengele’s Skull* gives more prominence to images.¹³¹

The more such details we adduce, the more difficult the question of how to account for them becomes to dismiss. Does Keenan and Weizman’s ‘forensic aesthetics’ constitute an application, however inventive, of Ginzburg’s *paradigma indiziario* – or should it rather be conceived as a parallel, but altogether independent development? As if foreseeing my argument, the authors themselves insist in a passing remark that forensics is “different from the traditional police detective work of looking for clues or reading the physical traces of a suspect’s action”; however, they fail to provide any explanation as to why or how it differs.¹³² In its scientific procedure? In the limitlessness of its scene of investigation? For the time being, this will have to remain an open question.

As will the underlying question of how Keenan and Weizman’s approach relates to that of Ginzburg, it would appear: for all the clues that we have examined thus far, the decisive one – that single piece of the puzzle that would make all the other pieces fall into place – still eludes us. Until we finally stumble over it – not in *Mengele’s Skull*, but rather in a footnote in Weizman’s introduction

to the catalogue of the *Forensis* exhibition. The passage concerns itself with the notion of vividness (*evidentia*) in classical rhetoric, while the note reads:

Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, Book 4, Chapter 2, 63. For a discussion of this subject see Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 7–15.¹³³

It may not be much – but for the time being, it is more than enough. A marginal reference, stowed away in a footnote, is all it takes to turn what began as little more than speculation into a working hypothesis – to be substantiated by further research, following up our initial question with many others.¹³⁴ Weizman cites one of Ginzburg’s recent collections, but the essay to which he refers was first published – albeit under a slightly different title – in the late 80s.¹³⁵ Did he already read it at that point, or only when it reappeared in *Threads and Traces*? To what extent is he familiar with Ginzburg’s other writings?¹³⁶ Was he in the audience when the Italian historian came to Jerusalem in late 1993 to deliver the Menahem Stern Lectures, an annual event instituted by the Historical Society of Israel earlier the same year?¹³⁷ And how, all things considered, can Weizman’s explicit reference to Ginzburg help us make sense of *Mengele’s Skull*?

The most important question, however, is another still. It is not how far Weizman can be said to follow in Ginzburg’s footsteps, but rather how far he goes beyond them, thereby, from a certain point of view, improving on the Italian historian’s work. And here, my argument finally comes full circle. Of course, the differences between them are many – but, to my mind, what really sets the approach of the Forensic Architecture group apart is their insistence on an active engagement with a variety of public arenas, something that only can only be found *in nuce* in Ginzburg’s writings. This, in its turn, entails a more refined understanding – rather indebted to Bruno Latour – of what it means for something to become public in the first place.¹³⁸ Thus, when Keenan and Weizman explain how “law and science have related but different methods for establishing facts,” they do not go very far beyond Ginzburg’s argument in *The Judge and the Historian*, although they focus on a partly different set of scientific practices.¹³⁹ But when they go on to observe that public opinion follows “another decision-making calculus,” they overstep the bounds of the *paradigma indiziario* as Ginzburg defines it.¹⁴⁰ (Then again, we already know that the latter has done so himself – in practice, if not in theory.)

In fact, this aspect is key to Keenan and Weizman’s idiosyncratic take on the concept of forensics: “Derived from the Latin *forensis*, the word’s root refers to the ‘forum,’ and thus to the practice and skill of making an argument before a professional, political, or legal gathering.”¹⁴¹ Hence, their own working definition on the term as “an archaeology of the very recent past” and, at the same

time, “a projective practice engaged in inventing and constructing new forums to come.”¹⁴² Weizman subsequently dropped a letter to emphasize this active, projective dimension, effectively reverting to the etymological sense of the word. As he explained in an interview about the eponymous exhibition: “Our insistence on *forensis* rather than *forensics* is meant to engage with the present, with current political processes – not with a dead body under the microscope but rather a living one twisting under pain – [and] this requires political understanding and political intervention.”¹⁴³ This ambition contrasts sharply – at first sight, at least – with Ginzburg’s avowed dedication to what is ‘dead’ rather than ‘alive’ in history.¹⁴⁴

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To sum up, from the point of view adopted here, Weizman’s forensic interventions can be conceived as a kind of ‘historiographic experimentation’ in Ginzburg’s sense – one that is fully in line with the Italian historian’s own perspective while nevertheless going more than one step beyond it, not least in assuming a decidedly activist stance.¹⁴⁵ The following passage, which concludes Weizman’s introduction to the *Forensis* catalogue, brings out the decisive similarities as well as some rather more ambiguous differences:

It is precisely because the material and media flotsam we have been examining are not the hard evidence of a ‘well-constructed’, peer-reviewed science that they can potentially be in excess of science. Their aesthetic power exists in their potential for refuting state-sponsored mechanisms of denial, obfuscation, and manipulation that were established by those that control not only the depth of space, but also its interpretation.

Unlike science, politics is not driven by a desire for a well-constructed truth, and unlike law it does not seek to render judgment on past events from the vantage point of the present order: rather, it is driven by a desire to change the way things are.

An important component in our ability to respond to political challenges is the capacity of *forensis* to move beyond detecting, calculating, processing, and presenting acts of injustice. Achieving a heightened aesthetic state of material sensitivity, tuned to weak signals, must be enhanced by a sensitivity to the materiality of politics: this entails an appreciation that whether you are a building, a territory, a pixel, or a person, to detect is to transform, and to be transformed is to feel pain.¹⁴⁶

Let us begin with the similarities. While Weizman’s ‘material and media flotsam’ might seem worlds apart from Ginzburg’s ecclesiastical archives, the distance is not all that significant in practice. The important thing here is rather the com-

mon point of departure in what Weizman calls ‘a heightened aesthetic state of material sensitivity’ – a notion that, as far as I can understand, is directly comparable to what Ginzburg, at the very end of his winding argument in “Clues”, described as a ‘lower’ form of intuition.¹⁴⁷ In other words, both approaches are intrinsically ‘tuned to weak signals’ – and whether God is in the detail or the pixel would, again, seem to make little difference. From this common point of departure also follows, *mutatis mutandis*, a common adversary: in Ginzburg’s case, the Galilean paradigm; in Weizman’s case, ‘peer-reviewed science’ with its ‘hard evidence’ (that is, evidence that is taken to speak for itself). While Ginzburg has subsequently devoted careful attention to the general concept, this particular conception of evidence is clearly anathema to him as well.

So far, so good: starting out from closely related premises, both Ginzburg and Weizman go beyond a narrow definition of scientific inquiry. However, when it comes to the extent of their transgression, things do not look quite as clear-cut. Ginzburg’s *paradigma* may contravene the dominant conception of science, but Weizman’s approach is altogether ‘in excess of science’ – at least ‘potentially’. Depending on the exact meaning of the latter caveat, Ginzburg might well claim that Weizman takes it one step too far, while Weizman might equally well protest that Ginzburg fails to follow through. Still, their arguments would seem to be headed in the same overall direction. A similar ambiguity is evident in other regards as well. For instance, Weizman’s invocation of ‘aesthetic power’ must seem highly objectionable from Ginzburg’s perspective – but does not every promising case have something of the *je-ne-sais-quoi* about it?¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, and *pace* his own occasional statements to the opposite, the sensitivity to what Weizman calls ‘the materiality of politics’ – more bluntly, to pain – is definitely present in Ginzburg’s work, as the harrowing torture scene that concludes *The Cheese and the Worms* attests to.¹⁴⁹ As before, this is a difference in degree rather than in kind: more implicit and subdued in one case, more explicit and severe in the other. One could perhaps think of Weizman’s *forensis* as an instantiation of the same *paradigma indiziario*, but unfettered from Ginzburg’s ‘psychological armor’.

Which, then, if any, is the decisive contrast between the two approaches? The ‘desire to change the way things are’ might seem like the watershed here – but, as I have already argued, scientific inquiry should reasonably be seen as another way of doing just that: surely, without publicly testable procedures of telling true from false, the world would be a very different place.¹⁵⁰ To my mind, what really sets Ginzburg and Weizman apart is simply the historical situation. While their aims are virtually identical – to ‘dissolve the ideological clouds [of] fully developed capitalism’ in one case, to disrupt ‘state-sponsored mechanisms of denial, obfuscation, and manipulation’ in the other – it was arguably still reasonable for Ginzburg, writing in the late 70s, to think that he could contribute to this ambitious goal – if ever so slightly – using traditional academic means.¹⁵¹ In contrast, as a result of the continuing structural transformation of the public

sphere throughout the late 20th century, contemporary academic discourse has increasingly ceased to act as a social force in its own right – a fact that could be seen to necessitate the kinds of interventionist tactics proposed by Weizman and associates.

If we do choose to adopt such unconventional methods, however, we should take care not to – yet another time – throw out the baby with the bath water. For the brand of artistic-academic activism propounded by Weizman, the epistemological discretion increasingly evident in Ginzburg’s writings is not only a necessary corrective, but also an indispensable tool and even a weapon. A great many things may have changed since “Clues” first saw the light of day, but the opposition between ‘rationalism’ and ‘irrationalism’ remains just as fruitless.

The historical accuracy of this essay has been significantly improved by the meticulous remarks of Carlo Ginzburg. Any remaining errors are my own responsibility.

1. Quoted in Carlo Ginzburg, “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm”, in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96. Henceforth cited as “Clues” (1989). Cf. p. 252 above.
2. Günter Metken, *Spurensicherung. Kunst als Anthropologie und Selbsterforschung. Fiktive Wissenschaften in der heutigen Kunst* (Köln: DuMont 1977), [7], my translation.
3. Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull. The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 20. Also quoted in Thomas Keenan, “Getting the Dead to Tell Me What Happened”, in *Forensic Architecture* (ed.), *Forensis. The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 40.
4. “Rethinking ‘Clues’ ” was the session topic at the annual International Society for Cultural History (ISCH) conference at the University of Bucharest, Romania on 7–10 September 2015, where a draft of this paper was first presented. I am especially grateful for the comments and suggestions provided by Federico Barbierato.
5. My use of this expression is partly inspired by Stefan Nowotny, “The Condition of Becoming Public”, *Transversal* 9 (2003), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1203/nowotny/en> (accessed 2015–10–27).
6. See Sylvie Lindeperg, “Night and Fog: A History of Gazes”, in Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman (eds.), *Concentrationary Cinema. Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais’s Night and Fog* (New York: Berghahn, 2011), 55 and cf. idem, *Night and Fog. A Film in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), xxiv–xxvi.
7. In chronological order, with the year of initial translation in parentheses: German (1980), French (1980), English (1980), Dutch (1981), Spanish (1982), Swedish (1983), Japanese (1986), Danish (1986), Portuguese (1991), Russian (1994), Korean (1994), Finnish (1996), Greek (1996), Hungarian (1998), Slovenian (1998), Polish (2006), Turkish (2007) and Georgian (2011) – eighteen languages in total, counting both stand-alone publications and the various translations (or more accurately, foreign-language versions) of *Miti emblemi spie*. The most complete bibliography of Ginzburg’s writings currently available in print is the appendix to Carlo Ginzburg, *Le fil et les traces. Vrai faux fictif* (Paris: Verdier, 2010).
8. A year later, the same translation of *Miti emblemi spie* also appeared with Hutchinson Radius under the title *Myths, Emblems, Clues*. Although I have no concrete evidence, my impression is that this version is referenced less frequently than the Johns Hopkins one.
9. ‘At least’, since the essay also has a ‘private’ history. However, this would take us back to the very beginning of Ginzburg’s career and, perhaps even beyond it: cf. Carlo Ginzburg, “Réflexions sur une hypothèse vingt-cinq ans après”, in Denis Thouard (ed.), *L’interprétation des indices. Enquête sur le paradigme indiciaire avec Carlo Ginzburg* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires de Septentrion, 2007), 44–5.
10. Carlo Ginzburg, “Spie. Radici di un paradigma scientifico”, *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 7 (1978), 1. Henceforth cited as “Spie” (1978). Cf. idem, “Clues: Roots of a Scientific Paradigm”, *Theory and Society* 7:3 (1979), 288. Henceforth “Clues” (1979).
11. Rockefeller Foundation, *Annual Report 1977* (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, n.d.), 123. Available on <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/Annual-Report-1977.pdf> (accessed 2015–10–28).
12. Ibid. According to Ginzburg (personal communication), the organizers did not participate in the event.
13. In an online document provided by the New York University Archives, Sennett is said to have “chaired a conference on the Humanities and Social Thought in Bellagio, Italy” in the summer of 1976 (rather than 1977): see Lisa Darms, “History of the New York Institute for the Humanities” (2012), <http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/archives/nyih/bioghist.html> (accessed 2015–08–25). Since the Rockefeller Foundation’s annual report for that year does not mention any such conference, I consider it safe to assume that the archivists have got the year wrong. In any case, Ginzburg (personal communication) confirms that the conference he attended was in fact chaired by Sennett. Among the other participants, he recalls the names of Anton Blok, Tim Clark, Clifford Geertz, Anthony Giddens and Carl Schorske as well as, on second thought, Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana.
14. “[...] in Bologna – going back to your question – we gave that seminar [*Giochi di pazienza*, ca 1973–74] and then, a couple of years later, I gave a seminar on what I was doing on clues. And it was funny because there was this idea of the fingerprints, because everybody was talking about the police and the communist party having its own police [...]” Ginzburg, personal communication.

- There is no way of telling whether “a couple of years later” was before or after Bellagio, but it is highly probable that Ginzburg’s own circle in Bologna also provided the essay with its first audience. Similarly inconclusive is Eco’s recollection in the preface to Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Sebeok (eds.), *The Sign of Three. Dupin, Holmes, Peirce* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), vii.
15. “Storia dal 1861 ad oggi – oltre 150 anni di scuola”, <http://www.loescher.it/storia#4> (accessed 2015–08–25), my translation.
 16. Carlo Ginzburg, “Tekens en symptomen (Morelli, Freud en Conan Doyle)”, *De gids* 2 (1978).
 17. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1979), 282 (cf. “Spie” (1978), 13). I read the archaic spelling of *semeiotico* – instead of the more current *semiotico* – as an allusion to the medical ancestry of semiotics as opposed to its further development in linguistics and related fields.
 18. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1979), 273.
 19. Cf. Ginzburg, “Spie” (1978), 1.
 20. Ginzburg, “Spie” (1978), 14. My translation is partially based on “Clues” (1989), 123.
 21. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1979), 283–4.
 22. Carlo Ginzburg, “Spie. Radici di un paradigma indiziario”, *Ombre rosse* 29 (1979) and idem, “Spie. Radici di un paradigma indiziario”, in Aldo Gargani (ed.), *Crisi della ragione. Nuovi modelli nel rapporto tra sapere e attività umane* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979). The latter is henceforth cited as “Spie” (1979). The *Ombre rosse* version mentions *Crisi della ragione* as “un volume miscelaneo, di imminente pubblicazione” (80). For whatever reason, the favor is not returned: the *Ombre rosse* version is not mentioned in *Crisi della ragione* (cf. the author’s note on p. 58). However, it is acknowledged in one of the translations: see Carlo Ginzburg, “Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method”, *History Workshop Journal* 9:1 (1980), 29. Henceforth cited for the sake of consistency as “Clues” (1980). In a retrospective of the oral history movement in Italy, *Ombre rosse* is characterized as “a journal dedicated primarily to politics, cinema, and literature” that also featured discussions of historical methodology: see Alessandro Portelli, “Oral History in Italy”, in David Dunaway and Willa Baum (eds.), *Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1996) 396. Since the *History Workshop Journal* was part of the same current, it is easy to understand why the reference to *Ombre rosse* should have figured there – although it does not explain why it was dropped in the other cases.
 23. Stefano Rosso, “Postmodern Italy: Notes on the ‘Crisis of Reason’, ‘Weak Thought’, and *The Name of the Rose*”, in Matei Calinescu and Douwe Fokkema (eds.), *Exploring Postmodernism* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1987), 79.
 24. See Silvia Benso & Brian Schroeder, “Italian Philosophy between 1980 and 1995”, in Rosi Braidotti (ed.), *The History of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 7, *After Poststructuralism. Transitions and Transformations* (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 94–5 and cf. Giovanna Borradori, “Recoding Metaphysics: The New Italian Philosophy”, in idem (ed.), *Recoding Metaphysics. The New Italian Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 3. Borradori places Gargani in the same, broadly hermeneutic camp as Gianni Vattimo and Giorgio Agamben.
 25. E.g. in the three works – *Sguardo e destino* (1987), *L’altra storia* (1989) and *Il testo del tempo* (1991) – that have been posthumously collected under the title *La seconda nascita* (2010). None of Gargani’s major works are currently available in English. A short piece, “Friction of Thought”, is translated in Borradori, *Recoding Metaphysics*, 77–91.
 26. Regarding the debates sparked by the book, cf. the bibliographical note in Rosso, “Postmodern Italy”, 90. Rosso actually goes so far as to claim that the very idea of a ‘crisis of reason’ had become “fashionable and inflated” towards the end of the decade (81).
 27. While disciplinary identity is invariably a difficult question, I count Giulio Lepschy primarily as a linguist, Francesco Orlando as a literary critic, Vittorio Strada as a philologist, Nicola Badaloni, Remo Bodei, Franco Rella, and Carlo Augusto Viano as philosophers and, finally, Salvatore Veca as a political theorist.
 28. Rosso, “Postmodern Italy”, 81.
 29. Most famously in Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti (eds.), *Il pensiero debole* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1983). This volume has recently been translated into English by Peter Carravetta as *Weak Thought* (Albany: State University of New York press, 2012). However interesting such an exercise would prove, this is not the place for a discussion of the relation between *microstoria* and *pensiero debole*. Suffice it to say that, from his post-heideggerian perspective, Vattimo would probably regard microhistory as a repercussion in the field of historiography of a “dissolutive” tendency within dialectical philosophy (especially of the “micrological pathos” of Adorno and Benjamin) which, like it, “risks resolving itself into a new metaphysics – humanistic, naturalistic, or vitalistic – going no further than substituting ‘true’ being in place of the one that has been shown to be false”: see Gianni Vattimo, “Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought”, in Vattimo and Rovatti, *Weak Thought*, 42–4. I will abstain from speculating about Ginzburg’s opinion of Vattimo, but it would no doubt be complicated by the accusations of Antisemitism that have recently been leveled at the latter: see e.g. the public debate with his old friend Umberto Eco that Vattimo has compiled on his blog (<http://giannivattimo.blogspot.se/2010/05/uno-scambio-con-eco.html>). From the perspective of a sociology of knowledge, the two trends can rather be seen as parallel attempts by Italian scholars in two different fields – history and philosophy – to transcend their marginal position in the international academic community: see Borradori, “Recoding Metaphysics”, 1–2 and cf. Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, “The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange in the Historiographic Marketplace”, in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds.), *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
 30. Benso & Schroeder, “Italian Philosophy”, 100–1.
 31. Rosso, “Postmodern Italy”, 81.
 32. Ginzburg, “Spie” (1978), 1, my translation.
 33. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1979), 288.
 34. Ginzburg, “Spie” (1979), 58, my translation.
 35. Ginzburg, “Spie” (1979), 84 and “Clues” (1989), 117.
 36. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 105 (70), 106 (71), 107 (72), 113 (80), 114 (80), 115 (82), 116 (82), 117 (83), 118 (85), 122 (90), 123 (91), 124 (92), 125 (93) for “conjunctural”; 96 (57), 106 (71) for “evidential”; 102 (66), 104 (69), 105 (69), 106 (71) for “presumptive”. Here and in the following notes, the numbers in parentheses refer to the corresponding pages in Ginzburg, “Spie” (1979). Davin’s translation (see p. 253–4 below) uses “conjunctural” in most of these cases, but there are also interesting deviations from the rule – e.g. “il metodo indiziario di Morelli” (“Spie” [1979], 61) translated as “Morelli’s methods [sic] of classification” by Davin (“Clues” [1980], 8), as compared to “Morelli’s presumptive method” in the Tedeschi version (“Clues” [1989], 97). Although the latter is probably closer to Ginzburg’s intention, Davin’s choice is not entirely arbitrary, considering that *indice* can also refer to the index of a book.
 37. Remaining within the bounds of Ginzburg’s text, “conjunctural” could perhaps be related to Bernoulli’s *Ars conjectandi*, a work that is mentioned in passing (113 [80]) as an example of the grey zone between the contrasting paradigms. In a single instance (207n52 [99n52]), though, the word translated is actually *congetturale*. “Presumptive”, in its turn, might be borrowed from C. S. Peirce, but only figures in a footnote in the Italian version (97n38).
 38. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 117–8.
 39. For no apparent reason, the reference to Flaubert is omitted in *Clues*, *Myths*, and the *Historical Method*: see Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 96. Still, something is better than nothing: the version in *History Workshop Journal* has no epigraphs at all. Hence, the only translation to mention Flaubert is in *The Sign of Three* (see p. 254–5 above).
 40. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 96. This quote is in turn omitted from both *History Workshop Journal* and *The Sign of Three*: again for no apparent reason.
 41. The original passage, a scribe’s note in one of Johns’ sketchbooks, is worded slightly differently: see *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, edited by Kirk Varnedoe (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 50 (facsimile on p. 27).
 42. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977), 199. Although I have not been able to compare the Italian edition, I suspect that Ettore Capriolo’s translation provides the missing link between Ginzburg’s epigraph and the wording in the original: see Susan Sontag, *Sulla fotografia. Realtà e immagine nella nostra società* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978). When the same passage is quoted in an essay by John Cage (see p. 66n48 above), the word “deluge” is still in place, although not capitalized as in Johns’ sketchbook.
 43. For the rudiments of such a speculation, see note 66n48 above.
 44. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 96 (59).
 45. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 106 (71), 111 (77), 113 (79). To be more exact, what was once an anatomic “paradigm” has now been demoted to a “model” (118 [84]). On the other hand, evidently the difference between these two terms should be regarded as slight (cf. 96 [59]).
 46. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 123 (91).
 47. Ginzburg, “Réflexions”, 37, my translation.
 48. Ginzburg, “Spie” (1978), 13n47.
 49. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1980), 7.
 50. The most irredeemable among them will also note that the Tedeschi version only has 130 footnotes: n. 86 in *Crisi della ragione* has been subdivided into n. 86 and 87 in *Clues*, *Myths*, and the *Historical Method* – but, to compensate, n. 116–118 have been combined into a single entry, n. 117. Neither of these changes affect the content.
 51. Regarding the latter, see Davin’s account on pp. 192–194 of the same issue. Davin, in her turn, gives due credit to an earlier, partial translation by Susanna Graham-Jones.
 52. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1980), 5.
 53. While Davin is not credited for the translation – and, indeed, its previous appearance in the *History Workshop Journal* is not even mentioned (cf.

- 111n1), a comparison shows that the two versions are identical (although it now features a mere 75 footnotes).
54. Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes", in Eco and Sebeok (eds.), *The Sign of Three*.
55. "Advances in Semiotics" was the name of the series at Indiana University Press – also edited by Sebeok – in which the book was included.
56. The interested reader may consult the remainder of Hintikka's so-called semantic tableau on p. 175–6.
57. Eco gives his version of the story in the editors' preface (vii–ix) in the form of a numbered list. Ginzburg (personal communication) provides the missing details: Eco first read "Spie" as it was published in *Crisi della ragione* and participated in a public debate about the essay that took place in Milan "a few months later". This debate – including Eco's intervention and Ginzburg's own comment – were subsequently published in *Quaderni di storia* 12 (1980) under the heading "Paradigma indiziario e conoscenza storica. Dibattito su 'Spie' di Carlo Ginzburg". Cf. Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 39–40.
58. Ginzburg, "Clues" (1980), 5–6.
59. Thomas Sebeok, "One, Two, Three Spells UBERTY (in lieu of an introduction)", in Eco and Sebeok, *The Sign of Three*, 1–10.
60. An allusion to Isaiah Berlin's *The Hedgehog and the Fox. An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, first published in 1953. Ginzburg comments on the relation between theory and history and, more specifically, between "implicit" and "explicit" theory – in "Réflexions", 43.
61. Ginzburg, "Clues" (1983), 111n1.
62. See note 7 above.
63. The former group includes the other Romance languages (French, Portuguese, Spanish), where the subtitle is also retained, as well as the Japanese and, to varying degrees, the two English editions. In addition to the German editions, the latter group also includes the Nordic languages (Danish, Finnish, Swedish).
64. In fact, the latter phrase already figured in the first German edition and, more specifically, in its significantly extended subtitle for "Clues": see Carlo Ginzburg, "Spurensicherung. Der Jäger entziffert die Fahrte, Sherlock Holmes nimmt die Lupe, Freud liest Morelli – die Wissenschaft auf der Suche nach sich Selbst", in idem, *Spurensicherungen. Über verborgene Geschichte, Kunst und soziales Gedächtnis* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1983).
65. Carlo Ginzburg, *Miti, emblemi, spie. Morfologia e storia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), 209. Quoted from "Clues" (1989), 213–14.
66. "Del saggio di Carlo Ginzburg si è già parlato e si parlerà ancora, sia per il gran numero di idee che vi sono intessute come fili di un tappeto (in un ordito ancora provvisorio – ci avverte l'autore – che probabilmente vedremo ancora infittirsi), sia per la dichiarata intenzione di rappresentare un paradigma epistemologico, contrapposto a quello della scienza detta galileiana, basata sulla generalizzazione, la quantificazione e la ripetibilità dei fenomeni. [...] Ma sarà poi del tutto pertinente questa contrapposizione? Proprio il nome di Galileo ci avverte che le cose non sono così semplici." Italo Calvino, "L'orecchio, il cacciatore, il pettegolo", *La Repubblica*, January 20–21, 1980. Quoted from *Saggi 1945–1985*, vol. 2 (Milano: Mondadori, 1995), 2032. Translated by Justina Bartoli.
67. The impression is further reinforced as Calvino's review is cited again in Carlo Ginzburg, *No Island is an Island. Four Glances at English Literature in a World Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 89n7 and yet again in Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 39. Along with the author Gianni Celati and others, Calvino and Ginzburg were involved in the unrealized project for a journal where history, anthropology and literature would have come together: see the documents collected in *Ali Babà. Progetto di una rivista 1968–1972*, edited by Mario Barenghi and Marco Belpoliti, *Riga* 14 (1998) and cf. Pierpaolo Antonello, "The Myth of Science or the Science of Myth? Italo Calvino and the 'Hard Core of Being'", *Italian Culture* 22 (2004). According to Ginzburg (personal communication), "Clues" has often been considered "a belated product of the debates we had at that time".
68. Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1987), 1. Originally published in 1980. Here, however, the reference is not to "Clues" but rather to *Giochi di pazienza* (cf. the preface, p. ... above). The favor was returned three years later when a study co-authored by Tafuri was included in the *Microstorie* book series edited by Ginzburg and his colleague Giovanni Levi: see Antonio Foscari and Manfredo Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti. La chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna nella Venezia del '500* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983).
69. Giorgio Agamben, "Theory of Signatures", in *The Signature of All Things. On Method* (New York: Zone, 2009). Originally published in 2008. Agamben describes "Clues" as "an essay that does not have to be described in depth here since it is so well-known" (68), and then proceeds to summarize Ginzburg's argument over three full pages.
70. Carlo Ginzburg, "Preface to the Italian Edition", in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, ix.
71. Ginzburg, "Preface", x. Cf. Carlo Ginzburg, "Our Words, and Theirs: A Reflection on the Historian's Craft, Today", *Cromohs* 18 (2013), 109. Available for download on <http://dx.doi.org/10.13128/Cromohs-14122> (accessed 2015–10–26). Here, the essay is said to employ "the device known as *mise en abyme*: since clues, as a topic, are analyzed by means of an approach based on clues, the details replicate the whole."
72. Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 44, my translation (also henceforth).
73. Ginzburg, "Clues" (1989), 124 (Adorno), 213n123 (Spitzer and Bloch). To these, the author would later add – Benedetto Croce and Antonio Gramsci – two names that he deems even more important, although on a more subconscious level: see Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 45. To be fair, one should add that Auerbach's disappearance is only temporary: Ginzburg has subsequently devoted a number of essays to his work, e.g. "Auerbach und Dante – eine Verlaubbahn", in *Erich Auerbach. Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen*, edited by Karlheinz Barck and Martin Tremel (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2007).
74. Ginzburg, *No Island*, xiii–xiv.
75. The title also resonates with Siegfried Kracauer's conviction that historical research entails a "productive absent-mindedness": see Siegfried Kracauer, *History. The last things before the last* (Princeton: Wiener, 1995), 92. Although this posthumous work, first published in 1969, had no direct influence on his own intellectual trajectory, Ginzburg nevertheless considers it "the best introduction to microhistory" ("Microhistory", 208) and has devoted an entire essay to it: see Carlo Ginzburg, "Details, Early Plans, Microanalysis. Thoughts on a Book by Siegfried Kracauer", in *Threads and Traces. True, False, Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
76. This, I would argue, reflects an ambivalence actually symptomatic of microhistory in general: does it constitute a mere subspecialty within the wider field of historical research, or does it lay claim to being paradigmatic for all forms of history? Cf. the preface, p. 16, 18–19.
77. The colloquium *A la trace. Enquête sur le paradigme indiciario*, organized by Denis Thouard, took place on October 13–15, 2005: see Thouard (ed.), *L'interprétation des indices*.
78. Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 38–9.
79. Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 38. In this context, I have chosen to employ the established translation of Ginzburg's *paradigma* precisely to emphasize its conventional character.
80. Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 38.
81. Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 40.
82. See above, p. 250.
83. Ginzburg, "Réflexions", 42.
84. Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Sofri, "Geschichte und Geschichten. Über Archive, Marlene Dietrich und die Lust an der Geschichte", in Ginzburg, *Spurensicherungen*, 20, my translation. The lion's share of this quote also appears, as if to emphasize its significance, on the front flap of the German edition. I have been unable to access the original version, which was published in *Lotta continua*, February 17, 1982 (see the bibliographic note on p. 7).
85. Cf. Ginzburg and Sofri, "Geschichte und Geschichten", 11–12.
86. Ginzburg, "Clues" (1989), 124. The notion of *rigore elastico* is spelled out only towards the end of "Clues", but already stealthily introduced earlier in the essay ("the flexible and rigorous insight of a lover or a horse trader or a card shark", 115).
87. For a step in the right direction, see e.g. Slavko Splichal, "University in the Age of a Transnational Public Sphere", in Barbie Zelizer (ed.), *Making the University Matter* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011) or the closely corresponding passages in idem, *Transnationalization of the Public Sphere and the Fate of the Public* (New York: Hampton, 2011), 117–26.
88. Again, see note 7 above.
89. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (London: Routledge, 1980), xii.
90. Carlo Ginzburg, Keith Luria and Romulo Gandolfo, "Carlo Ginzburg: An Interview", *Radical History Review* 35 (1986), 95.
91. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xii.
92. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xxvi.
93. Clearly, the message is still implicit enough (cf. note 60 above) to allow for quite different readings: for contrast, see e.g. David D. Roberts, *Historicism and Fascism in Modern Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 241 – where, symptomatically, the remark on 'foolish fascination' is suppressed. In part, the difference in perspective can probably be explained by Roberts' insistence on treating microhistory as, all things considered, a variety of post-modernism (see ch. 10, esp. 228–9).
94. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xxvi. The translation by Harry Zohn has a slightly different wording: cf. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 254.
95. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 128.

96. Here, I partly take my cue from Nicoletta Simborowski who, in her study of “the unsaid” in post-war Italian literature, uncovers what she describes as a “poetics of omission” in the works of (among others) Natalia Ginzburg – especially in the quasi-autobiographical *Lessico famigliare*, first published in 1963; see Nicoletta Simborowski, *Secrets and Puzzles. Silence and the Unsaid in Contemporary Italian Writing* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 2002), 1. Although Simborowski’s term is not strictly applicable to Carlo’s writings – as a historian, he cannot allow himself to actually create his omissions (something that the term ‘poetics’ would seem to imply) – he is nonetheless highly sensitive to their presence in the historical sources: hence, an *aesthetics* of omission. Simborowski’s notion of “negative testimony” (13–4) is also relevant here.
97. Carlo Ginzburg, “Just One Witness”, in Saul Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the “Final Solution”* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). Reprinted with only minor changes – e.g. the addition of paragraph numbers – in *Threads and Traces*. For contributions to such a case study, see Paul, *Hayden White*, 121–4, 168n34; Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 254–61; and Roberts, *Historicism and Fascism*, ch. 11 (but cf. note 93 above).
98. Cf. the afterword to Carlo Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian. Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth-Century Miscarriage of Justice* (London: Verso, 1999), esp. 185–6.
99. Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian*, 119.
100. Ginzburg, “Réflexions”, 40.
101. Carlo Ginzburg, personal communication. The essay “The Inquisitor as Anthropologist” was first published in Swedish translation in 1988, and included in the English edition of *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* the following year. Although I have not yet been able to ascertain when Ginzburg’s first encounter with Memorial took place, it has since developed into a standing relationship: Memorial has been a host to Ginzburg on later occasions (see e.g. <http://www.memo.ru/eng/news/2004/06/1610062004.htm>), and Ginzburg presided over the jury when Memorial was awarded the *Premio speciale Vittorio Foa* in 2014.
102. See http://www.portikus.de/en/exhibitions/175_mengele_s_skull_the_advent_of_a_forensic_aesthetics (accessed 2015–10–29).
103. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, front flap.
104. According to Keenan’s profile on the Bard website; (see <http://www.bard.edu/academics/faculty/details/?action=details&id=462>), Weizman’s profile on the Goldsmiths website (see <http://www.gold.ac.uk/visual-cultures/w-eizman>) and the booklet *Research Architecture at Goldsmiths* from 2006 (available through the Wayback Machine: see <https://web.archive.org/web/20060925134738/http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/booklets/resarch-pg.pdf>). Cf. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 83–4.
105. Hito Steyerl and Marvin Jordan, “Politics of Post-Representation”, *DIS Magazine* (n.d.), <http://dismagazine.com/disillusioned-2/62143/hito-steyerl-politics-of-post-representation> (accessed 2015–10–27). An overview of Steyerl’s work is available on <http://canadianart.ca/features/hito-steyerl-a-primer> (accessed 2015–10–27). Her writings for e-flux magazine have been published as Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).
106. According to the Portikus website (see note 102 above).
107. Anselm Franke (ed.), *Territories. Islands, Camps and Other States of Utopia* (Köln: König, 2003)
108. See the project website on <http://www.forensic-architecture.org> and cf. the official information on http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/97850_en.html (accessed 2015–10–29).
109. Forensic architecture (ed.), *Forensis*.
110. Not counting features in and theme issues of journals such as *AD*, *Abitare*, *Cabinet*, *Log*, *Photoworks* and *Radical Philosophy* from the preceding couple of years (for a complete listing and references, see <http://www.forensic-architecture.org/publications>).
111. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 68.
112. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 11.
113. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 12.
114. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 12–3.
115. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 13 (cf. 68).
116. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 58.
117. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 55–6.
118. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 60–1.
119. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 110 (“disciplinary matrix”), 117 (“common epistemological model”).
120. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 65.
121. Cf. p. 248 above.
122. Cf. p. 60 above.
123. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 18.
124. See Ginzburg and Poni, “The Name and the Game”, 8 and cf. p. 16 above.
125. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 20.
126. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 25 (cf. 61).
127. Ginzburg, “Clues” (1989), 106.
128. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 24. Cf. p. 261 above.
129. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 26–7. Cf. e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, Charles Illouz and Laurent Vidal, “L’historien et l’avocat du diable”, *Genèses* 53 (2003) / 54 (2004). Available on <http://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2003-4-page-113.htm> / <http://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2004-1-page-112.htm> (accessed 2015–12–17).
130. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 27. Cf. p. 45–6, 54 above.
131. E.g. the series on pp. 39–52.
132. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 58.
133. Weizman, “Introduction: Forensis”, in Forensic Architecture (ed.), *Forensis*, 31n5 (cf. 10).
134. In this connection, we should also take note of prior suggestions to the same effect. For instance, in a review of two recent studies on the politics of humanitarianism, Nicolas Guilhot supplements his sympathetic discussion of Ginzburg’s work – which, symptomatically, centers on the essays “Just One Witness” and “The Inquisitor as Anthropologist” – with a reference to Weizman: see “The Anthropologist as Witness: Humanitarianism between Ethnography and Critique”, *Humanity* 3:1 (2014), 94. Although Guilhot does not raise the question of the relationship between Weizman and Ginzburg, his observation attests to the overarching compatibility of their perspectives.
135. Carlo Ginzburg, “Ekphrasis and Quotation”, *Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 20 (1988). The same theme is also touched on in Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian*, 12.
136. At least to some extent, apparently: when questioned about his interest in Ginzburg, Weizman (personal communication) recalls the essay “Just One Witness”.
137. Later published as Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian* (cf. note 98 above).
138. See e.g. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 29. Although this is not the place for an in-depth discussion of the striking similarities between Ginzburg and Latour, here are some leads to work from: in *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Latour commends the Italian historian for his method – describing *The Cheese and the Worms* as a “stunning example” (108) – but chastizes him for his methodology. As far as he is concerned, the crucial difference “is not between those who know for certain and those who write texts, between ‘scientific’ and ‘literary’ minds, between ‘esprit de géométrie’ and ‘esprit de finesse’, but between those who write *bad* texts and those who write *good* ones.” (124) In *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* – “an otherwise fascinating book” – Ginzburg
- is, in Latour’s opinion, “still trying to reconcile the two opposites of rhetoric and reference without realizing this other crucial difference.” (124n174) As every reader of “Clues” will no doubt agree, this criticism is at least partly unfounded, since what Ginzburg tried to do there was precisely to establish an intermediate position between a Galilean *esprit de géométrie* and the connoisseur’s *esprit de finesse*. Whether Latour’s critical remark also entails a disagreement on principle depends on exactly how he would draw the distinction between ‘bad’ and ‘good’. In any case, the fact that he singles out Ginzburg’s work for discussion is telling in itself. Although the favor is not returned, there is at least a favorable mention of Latour – “a historian of science with an anthropological background” – in one of Ginzburg’s essays: see “Witches and Shamans”, in *Threads and Traces*, 215.
139. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 27. Their statement can be compared with the following brief summary of Ginzburg’s argument: “Law and history, it seems, have different rules and different epistemological foundations which do not always coincide.” Ginzburg, “Just One Witness”, in *Threads and Traces*, 168.
140. Ibid.
141. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 28.
142. Keenan and Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 29.
143. Anselm Franke, Gal Kirn, Niloufar Tajeri and Eyal Weizman, “Forensis is Forensics Where There is No Law”, *Mute*, December 16 (2014). Available on <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/forensis-forensics-where-there-no-law> (accessed 2015–11–01).
144. Ginzburg, Luria and Gandolfo, “Carlo Ginzburg: An Interview”, 105. At first sight, since Ginzburg’s statement was polemical in intention.
145. Cf. Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian*, 18.
146. Weizman, “Introduction: Forensis”, 30.
147. See Ginzburg, “Clues”, 125 and cf. the preface, p. 21n34.
148. Of course, this depends on whether the term ‘aesthetic’ is related to ‘high’ or ‘low’ intuition, to a Romantic notion of the artist as seer or a proto-Enlightenment sensitivity to sensible experience (see the preceding note for references).
149. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 111.
150. See p. 261 above.
151. Cf. p. 253 above.