MICROHISTORIES

Edited by
**Magnus Bärtås
& Andrej Slávik**

MICROHISTORIES

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TO THE VISION MACHINE

Lina
Selander

To the Vision Machine, 2013
HD video, colour, silent and sound
28:48 min
https://vimeo.com/65577258

A regressive perceptual state,
a kind of syncretism from which a few
shapes and sounds accidentally leap out …
but sharply perceived.

We would talk only about the abstract
qualities of images.

PREFACE: TOWARDS A COMMUNITY OF STYLE

Andrej Slávik

Tristo è lo discepolo che non avanza il suo maestro
("Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master")
    – Leonardo da Vinci, ca 1493[1]

"Was this still history? I would say so […]
but labels are of little importance."
    – Carlo Ginzburg, 2007[2]

The book that you have just started reading is perhaps best described as the outcome of an experiment in practical epistemology. Like most other experiments in the long history of scientific inquiry, it started out as little more than a hunch.

Over three days in late February of 2012, the School of Photography (now part of the Valand Academy) at the University of Gothenburg hosted a seminar about artistic research under the heading *Writing with Practice*. It was the fifth of a total of seven similar events organized within the framework of the project *Changing Identities and Contexts in the Arts* (CICA), a collaboration funded by the European Commission's department for Education and Culture that also included two other research institutions, as well as four art institutions in Gothenburg, Helsinki and Leeds.[3] Among the participants at this particular installment was the artist and writer Magnus Bärtås, professor at the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, who took the seminar as an opportunity to develop some aspects of his recently completed dissertation in fine arts.[4] As for myself, I had been invited to provide some comments on his presentation.[5]

Although I came to the seminar as an outsider, I was not entirely unprepared for the task. To begin with, my own dissertation – even more recently completed – dealt with what should reasonably be described as a chapter from the prehistory of artistic research.[6] In addition, I had already followed the local debates in and around that rapidly developing field for a number of years and even made some minor contributions to it.[7] For this particular occasion, I had

taken the time to read up on not only Magnus' thesis, but also some of his previously published work.[8] With all of this in the back of my head, I arrived at the intuition that, as I put it at the time,

> Magnus Bärtås isn't just any kind of storyteller. He is an historian – or, to be even more precise, a *contemporary audiovisual microhistorian*. An ugly duckling if I ever saw one.[9]

A contemporary audiovisual – *what* did he just say? To be honest, I was far from certain myself: at the time, my notion of microhistory was vague at best. Still, what little I knew, in juxtaposition with what I had just learnt about Magnus' work, seemed to make some strange kind of sense. Nor was I the only one to think so, judging from the reactions of the audience (among whom were, in fact, some of the contributors to the present volume).[10] I was not sure why – indeed, I am still far from sure – but the idea did seem to have 'struck a note', as the saying goes. That was at least the way Magnus would describe it when he got back to me by e-mail a few weeks later:

> I appreciated our talk in Gothenburg […] *It really struck a note* when you brought up the term microhistory and then sketched a little genealogy. For a while now, I've been thinking about an application for funding from the Swedish Research Council for a project that would include different people: artists and theoreticians. It will build to some extent on my dissertation and be based in the field of film. But I am also fairly open as far as results and forms are concerned […] Now that I've started outlining the project, the word microhistories has come to the surface and I'm even thinking of naming the project just that: Microhistories (in the plural).[11]

As you will already suspect, it was with growing excitement that I read these lines and the rough draft that followed. The goal of the project, Magnus explained, would be to bring together practitioners from the visual arts, literature and history for a collaborative exploration of whether and how the notion of microhistory as it has been developed in academic historiography could be fruitfully applied in an artistic setting and, in particular, to the so-called essay film or video essay.[12] Drawing on my remarks at the seminar in Gothenburg, he had arrived at his own, tentative definition of the key term: "a concept for how certain historians highlight marginalized phenomena and stories, using them prismatically to reach an understanding of a larger situation." Taking this idea as its point of departure, the project would investigate the narrative practice that makes such a prismatic understanding possible and how that practice relates to other literary genres – for whatever reason, Magnus mentioned the parable as an example – as well as to hybrid forms such as the video essay. Would I by any chance be inter-

ested in contributing to such a joint effort?

Of course I would. The only thing I did not agree with was the initial, run-of-the-mill distinction between 'artists' on the one hand and 'theoreticians' on the other: these categories, it seemed to me, were quite problematic in themselves and, in any case, did not really correspond to what would actually take place within the project as Magnus himself had described it. In hindsight, I am not sure when I first told him about these concerns (surprisingly, there is no mention of the issue in our correspondence), but I do remember that I had no trouble making him see things my way. The project, then, would not be conceived as a meeting between 'practice' and 'theory' – as is all too often the case in the discourse that surrounds artistic research – but rather between different practices, each with its own particular way of 'theorizing' things. The fact that it was mainly situated at the intersection of art and history – rather than, say, philosophy or social theory – made such an approach seem even more plausible. This is at least what received wisdom tells us: that history is as much of an art as it is a science.[13] After all, that has to count for something.

Such, in brief, was the basic setup for our epistemological experiment. Apparently, it was convincing enough for the Swedish Research Council to give us the green light. And as to whether the outcome is also convincing? That is really up to you to decide.

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However, the question still remains. Even if the project started out on nothing but a vague intuition, it must reasonably have resulted in something a little more tangible. A mere hunch might be acceptable as a point of departure – although, in fact, even that is a matter for academic dispute – but it hardly qualifies as a conclusion. What, then, is microhistory?

Well, what does it sound like? A word – twelve letters, five syllables, two elements: a prefix derived from *mikros*, the Greek word for 'small', and a suffix derived from another Greek word which is best translated simply as 'inquiry', 'observation' or 'account'. Microhistory, that is to say, is an inquiry into anything small – a question of, in the words of the American historian Edward Muir, "observing trifles".[14] If nothing else, this is the most straightforward answer I can come up with. It is also accurate in at least one sense: microhistory, whatever it may be, has often been dismissed as little more than a scholarly obsession with the minute and minuscule (hence the irony in Muir's title choice). Starting from very little, we have already learnt something – although nothing much.

If the most straightforward answer to the question of microhistory is "a word", the most common answer is probably "a concept". A word, that is to say, with a quite specific meaning, more or less clearly defined by its place in a particular context – which is, in our case, mainly an academic one. The important thing

to note, however, is really the 'more or less'. True enough, we can think of examples – not least from the promised land of pure mathematics – that are almost entirely well-defined, but the typical concept would seem to fall far short of such lofty standards. Most are quite ambiguous and some – such as 'truth', 'justice', 'democracy' or, by all means, 'art' and 'science' – are disputed almost by definition.

As a concept, microhistory arguably belongs somewhere between both of these extremes: undeniably, it is not entirely clear-cut – unlike, say, the so-called Dedekind cut, a set-theoretical procedure for defining the real numbers, named after the German mathematician Richard Dedekind (1831–1916) – but nor can it be regarded as irredeemably contested. This is not to deny that opinions as to its meaning differ considerably, but among those who would have a say in the matter (professional historians, mostly), the majority would seem to agree on at least some basic features. From this average perspective, microhistory could be defined as a certain way of performing historical research. It is not really a school, and perhaps not even a method in the strict sense, but at least a kind of overarching perspective – not to settle, as one of the perspective's leading proponents once did, for a "community of style"[15] – that attends to small details rather than the big picture, thrives on deviations rather than the rule, sides with 'the little people' rather than 'the system', departs from concrete experiences rather than abstract ideas, works with sharp analyses rather than sweeping syntheses, and last but not least, results in captivating narratives rather than (supposedly) comprehensive explanations.

Such a run-through would, no doubt, seem to take us a lot closer to the answer – but we are not quite there yet. One of the unfortunate things about concepts is that they tend to come two by two, in dichotomies: if nothing else, the implied one between the concept itself and the term by which it is denoted. Indeed, my attempt at an 'average' definition of microhistory has just provided us with a number of examples. At first, such dichotomies may well come across as useful – they are good for cleaving, as the etymology of the term (*dichotomia*, 'a cutting in half') already indicates – but once the hackwork is over and done with, they often turn out to be much too blunt a tool. Worse yet, if we hold on too tightly, they often start working against us. Before we can really get to grips with microhistory, it would seem that we need to distance ourselves even further from it – even to the point, perhaps, of almost leaving it behind?

If the most common answer to our question is probably "a concept", the most reasonable answer – at least to my mind – would rather be "an event". Most reasonable, if nothing else, because it does not exclude the two previous answers, but rather sets them off in a sort of dynamic interplay with each other. Come to think of it, such an approach would even seem to follow from the microhistorical perspective itself.[16]

Considered as an event, then, microhistory becomes a matter of neither of letters and syllables, nor of definitions and dichotomies – at least not in the first

instance. Rather, it takes us back to a certain time and place, to particular scenes and situations: Italy in the mid-1970s, the city and university of Bologna, the journal *Quaderni storici*, the Einaudi publishing house. This provides us with a setting for the word as well as the concept, a background against which both stand out all the more clearly. As it turns out, the concept came first, the word only later: to begin with, the talk was about "micro-analysis" (*micro-analisi*) and, in hindsight, no one would seem to recall precisely when, where and why *microstoria* won the day.[17] Fast-forward to the early 1980s and its triumph was already indisputable – chiefly owing, no doubt, to the spectacular (and, I presume, almost entirely unexpected) success of *Il formaggio e i vermi*, Carlo Ginzburg's extended essay about the unorthodox worldview of a 16th century miller. Within five years of its original publication in 1976, the book had already been translated into German, English, French and Spanish. Many more versions would follow as microhistory became one of Italy's main exports in a rapidly globalizing academic market.

From this brief account, one thing is already quite obvious: the 'event' of microhistory cannot be isolated – at least not in any meaningful way – from the heterogeneous set of processes in which it has been caught up from the very beginning. For the same reason, its original setting stands in an inescapable relation to other settings, its time and place to other times and places. Among these, the French historiographical scene takes pride of place, if only because it provided the Italian microhistorians with both an important source of intellectual imports – Bloch, Febvre, Braudel *et cie* – and a primary export market. In other words, the so-called Annales school, the dominating 'community of style' in French historiography for a large part of the 20th century, acted as both consignor and consignee: it was not only the obvious point of departure for Ginzburg and his colleagues, but also their main audience outside of Italy, not least as a target of criticism.[18] In fact, as Ginzburg himself has demonstrated, if anyone should be credited with coining the word microhistory, it is actually Fernand Braudel, the grand old man of the Annales school in the first couple of decades after 1945.[19] The Italian approach has subsequently been developed in dialogue with French historians such as Roger Chartier, Bernard Lepetit and, last but not least, Jacques Revel.[20]

What neither party to this academic contract of carriage had probably predicted[21] was that microhistory – the word as well as the concept – would find an even more profitable market on the other side of the Atlantic, where it became an attractive piece of contraband in the 'theory wars' of the late 80s and early 90s. Whereas the French reception, quite in keeping with the established outlook of the Annales school, had been mostly oriented towards social and economic history, its American counterpart was rather inclined to cultural and intellectual history.[22] It is the latter brand of microhistory that, in due course, crossed the Atlantic in the opposite direction: to stay with the same metaphor, it was only

after having been processed through US university campuses that microhistory was eventually re-exported, especially to segments of the European market where it had not yet made lasting inroads. Sweden, a country where the academic discussion has become more dependent on American conditions than we would perhaps care to admit, is a case in point. Although there was an earlier, independent reception, not least thanks to the efforts of the leftist journal *Häften för kritiska studier*, the major breakthrough came only later – if, indeed, it has come at all – and then, I suspect, mainly with American rather than French or Italian models in mind.[23]

But, by all means, we should not lose ourselves in mere trivialities. Instead, let us take a step back and try to survey the international trajectory of microhistory from a somewhat greater distance. From such a perspective, what comes into view are not only the doings of a small group of Italian historians, nor the contributions of their forerunners and followers, but the whole expanse of modern historiography as it has taken shape in the force field between art and science, idiographic and nomothetic ideals of knowledge.

If we do not need to situate microhistory in this epistemic panorama, it is only because it situated itself there, and quite consciously at that. In the tug of war between an older, humanist or historicist tradition in historiography and the new, social-scientific approach represented by the Annales school (among many others), what microhistory attempted was clearly not a compromise, but nevertheless a kind of balancing act. As far as I can understand, this was really the fundamental impulse behind the microhistorical current – the one that allowed it to gather, if only for a brief time, diverging and even contradictory interests and tendencies under a single banner.[24] Such, at least, is the main thrust of the paradoxical definition of history in general and microhistory in particular proposed in 1979 by Ginzburg and his colleague Carlo Poni: history as a *scienza del vissuto*, a science of 'lived experience' ("undoubtedly an ambiguous expression"). A definition that, in the authors' own words, "seeks to comprehend the reasoning of both the supporters and the enemies of the integration of history with the social sciences, *and for this, no doubt, it will not be pleasing to either side.*"[25]

As it turned out, their prediction was altogether accurate, and for a fairly obvious reason. In spite of the explicit ambition of striking a balance between the competing demands of modern historiography, microhistory displayed a decisive inclination towards the idiographic end of the spectrum from the very beginning. Others can judge whether this was the result of a genuine theoretical preference, a kind of recoil from the perceived influence of an Annales-style *histoire totale*, the expression of lingering political allegiances – while Ginzburg and Poni gestured rather vaguely towards a "non-elitist perspective", their reference to the British New Left historian E. P. Thompson is all the more telling – or, perhaps most likely, a combination of all of the above.[26] This much seems clear: as the current gained momentum throughout the 80s, this original inclination

(the word *clinamen* comes to mind) would soon throw microhistory off balance, as it were, causing some scholars – in part, perhaps, as a result of the combined attraction exerted by postmodern 'theory' and the new cultural history – to veer in an idiographic ('micro') direction, now conceived in contradiction to the no-mothetic ('macro'). Others, on the contrary, would veer back towards the 'macro' by emphasizing the complementarity of the two perspectives; whether this was due to a recoil from the opposite swerve, the enduring prestige of the Annales tradition, the changing political climate or a combination is, again, difficult to say. Either way, at some point, the vital tension was lost.

By the early 90s, this rivalry between what came to be described as the cultural and social camps of microhistory was officially acknowledged.[27] It led, in its turn, to more or less symbolic attempts at bridging the gap and, in due time, to some of the key figures in the field – Ginzburg among them – denouncing what was increasingly perceived as just another label.[28] And with that, the case of microhistory could well seem to be closed.

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It goes without saying that such a conclusion would leave the present project in quite a quandary. Why bother, one might ask, to take up the term again when even Ginzburg himself has more or less relinquished it?[29]

On the contrary; that is precisely the point.

In asking about not what microhistory *is*, but rather what it *has become* – or, indeed, what has become *of* it – we have achieved something quite remarkable without even noticing. We have created, in an altogether practical fashion, a sort of distance between ourselves and our chosen topic, and that distance also leaves room for an independent stance towards it. After zooming out from the historical development of microhistory as a current in modern historiography, we are now in a position to zoom in again, but this time on the present rather than the past. To be more precise, we are now at liberty to recover the fundamental impulse behind microhistory by situating it in a contemporary academic landscape and, even more specifically, in what I have described elsewhere as the "expanded field" of historiography – with artistic research as a wild card in the scientific *gioco di pazienza*.[30] This, at least, has been the cognitive wager of our epistemological experiment: if we take the possibility of artistic research seriously, we must also acknowledge its ramifications (*de jure*, if not – or, at least, not yet – *de facto*) for neighboring academic disciplines, in the first place within the humanities and social sciences.[31] By shifting the overall balance – if ever so slightly – towards the idiographic end of the transdisciplinary spectrum, artistic research contributes to a leveling of the academic playing field that, in principle, should render the precarious balancing act attempted by microhistory a little easier to maintain. And sometimes, a little goes a long way.

For instance, perhaps this slightest of shifts is what will finally allow us to leave behind the fruitless debates about micro versus macro, the detail versus the big picture – or indeed, art versus science. On my interpretation, the decisive contrast was never really with macrohistory anyway, but rather with what Ginzburg, in conversation with the Norwegian literary critic Trygve Riiser Gundersen, described as *middle history:*

> [T]he kind of history that uncritically accepts the explanatory levels we deem 'natural' in a given context – a nation, an epoch, a period of time, and the like. I wanted to show, if I could, that the scope of study never can be taken for granted. The scale we employ always determines what answers it is possible to arrive at in each case, be it at the micro- or the macro-level.[32]

The quote, which belongs in a discussion of *Ecstasies*, is from the early 2000s – but the same intention was arguably present from the very beginning. On Ginzburg's own account, the common point of departure for Italian microhistory was actually twofold: on the one hand, "a definite awareness that all the phases through which research unfolds are *constructed* and not *given*", and on the other, "an explicit rejection of the skeptical implications (postmodern, if you will) so largely present in European and American historiography of the 1980s and 1990s."[33] It is precisely this Janus-faced quality that the notion of (micro-)history as a *scienza del vissuto* would seem to capture so very accurately: a practice that unabashedly aspires to the proud name of science and, in the very same breath, lays claim to an insight – a limited one, but nevertheless – into the unfathomable depths of human experience.[34]

What seems really significant about Ginzburg's criticism is that it is leveled, not at one particular approach or another, but at *any* kind of historiography that takes its methodological presuppositions for granted. Microhistory, too, could hence end up as 'middle history' – and, we may safely assume, it often has – for the simple reason that, as Ginzburg himself bluntly put it on another occasion, "bad microhistory is bad history."[35] Over against this bad middle – the compromise, the golden mean, the *juste milieu* – the Italian historian implicitly posits another one: not halfway in-between, nor just slightly off center, but operating instead in a wholly different domain; one that is perhaps irrational but certainly not unreasonable.[36] As Italo Calvino has taught us, "the poet of vagueness can only be the poet of exactitude" (*il poeta del vago può essere solo il poeta della precisione*).[37]

Or, to turn the argument on its head, Fernand Braudel was also a microhistorian when he utilized the notion of the *longue durée* as a sort of conceptual crowbar for breaking up the reigning consensus of history as essentially *événementielle*. Who else was it that encouraged his disciples to attend ever more closely to the complexity of historical time? In the words of one of those disciples, the French historian François Hartog, Braudel transformed history into "a dialectic

of *durées*, in which structures, levels, and registers were carefully differentiated, each with its own temporality."[38] The *jeux d'échelles* of microhistory is scarcely conceivable without such a prior differentiation – and, symptomatically, as his own *gros plan* perspective devolved into the new 'middle history', Braudel himself moved on. In Ginzburg's assessment, "he was too intelligent, too impatient to content himself with repeating what had now become for many, because of his own authority, an accepted truth."[39] In the same way, incidentally, as Ginzburg himself would move on, first from the reigning consensus of the Annales and then from microhistory, as it too ran the risk of turning into something like a school.

With the *Microhistories* project, we would like to move on in much the same way, taking the spirit of microhistory – if not always its letter – as our Ariadne's thread. By inviting artistic research into its 'community of style', we hope to resuscitate the vital tension that microhistory seems to have lost as a result of its own unexpected success. "A life chosen at random," Ginzburg claims, "can make concretely visible the attempt to unify the world, as well as some of its implications."[40] If he is right, art – and, by implication, artistic research – should obviously have an important role to play in such an undertaking. To signal this fresh departure, it even occurred to me (*pace* Ginzburg's insistence on their triviality) to propose a slightly modified label as a designation for our approach: μ-history. Luckily, common sense made me decide against it. The question is rather to what extent that approach has allowed us – and, even more importantly, will allow us – to free up the methodological resources of microhistory in order to deploy them, in a partly different setting, to contemporary problems. As we approach these problems, I hope that we will be able to maintain – in spite of everything – that vital tension that Ginzburg discovered for himself in the works of Raymond Queneau, "between the warmth of the narrator's intimate glance and the coldness of the scientist's detached observation."[41]

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In the bibliometric era, research projects are increasingly expected to display not only a rigorous methodology, but also an efficient 'design' – to the point where your hard-earned findings (or 'output') must almost be disclosed to the funding body in advance of their actual discovery. In contrast, as we have already seen, this project started out as little more than a vague intuition. Hopefully, what follows will contribute to making that intuition both clearer and more distinct without entirely surrendering its intuitive quality to the demands of discourse. No doubt, we still have quite some way to go before arriving at our envisaged 'community of style' – but, if nothing else, at least this anthology is a beginning. Let us see how far it will take us.

Gothenburg, February 12, 2016

1. As quoted in Carlo Ginzburg, "Our Words, and Theirs: A Reflection on the Historian's Craft, Today", *Cromohs* 18 (2013), 110. Available for download on http://dx.doi.org/10.13128/Cromohs-14122 (accessed 2015–10–26). Apparently, Ginzburg is quoting from memory; cf. the slightly different wording ("quel" instead of "lo") in *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by Jean Paul Richter (New York: Dover, 1970), I, 205.

2. 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), 37–8, my translation.

3. Cf. the introductory remarks by Jan Kaila and Kimmo Sarje in Mika Hannula, Jan Kaila, Roger Palmer & Kimmo Sarje (ed.), *Artists as Researchers – A New Paradigm for Art Education in Europe* (Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts, 2013).

4. Magnus Bärtås, *You Told Me – Work Stories and Video Essays / Verkberättelser och videoessäer*, Art-Monitor avhandling #19 (Göteborg: Nämnden för konstnärligt utvecklingsarbete vid Konstnärliga fakulteten, Göteborgs universitet, 2010).

5. His presentation, as well as my comments, were subsequently published in the project anthology: Magnus Bärtås, "Work Stories Revisited" and Andrej Slávik, "Who Told Me – and Why? Two or Three Things I Have Reason to Believe about Magnus Bärtås", both in Hannula, Kaila, Palmer & Sarje (ed.), *Artists as Researchers*.

6. Andrej Slávik, *X. Tre etyder över ett tema av Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001)* (Göteborg: Institutionen för litteratur, idéhistoria och religion, Göteborgs universitet, 2011), published in a revised edition as *X. Tre etyder över ett tema av Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001)*, LIR skrifter #3 (Göteborg: Institutionen för litteratur, idéhistoria och religion, Göteborgs universitet, 2013). Regarding Xenakis' work as an early form of artistic research, see esp. p. 77 and cf. Iannis Xenakis, *Arts/Sciences: Alloys. The Thesis Defense of Iannis Xenakis* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1985).

7. See e.g. "The Poetics of History, or Hatching an Ugly Duckling: Research in Mode $\sqrt{2}$", *ArtMonitor* 8 (2010); "Film, historia: konfrontationer", *ArtMonitor* 9 (2010).

8. E.g. Magnus Bärtås & Fredrik Ekman, *Innanför cirkeln. En resa bland yezidier, damanhurianer och swedenborgare* (Stockholm: Bokförlaget DN, 2005).

9. Slávik, "Who Told Me – and Why?", 120. The last sentence is an allusion to Slávik, "The Poetics of History".

10. Besides Magnus and myself, the seminar was also attended by Mika Hannula (who was part of the organizing team), Behzad Khosravi Noori and Michelle Teran. Behzad gives his point of view on the same event on p. 160 below.

11. Magnus Bärtås, private communication (March 10, 2012), my translation and emphasis.

12. Cf. the epilogue.

13. Indeed, this discussion is as old as modern historiography itself, if not older. For a recent (and conveniently brief) discussion, see Henk Wesseling, "History: Science or Art?", *European Review* 6:3 (1998).

14. Edward Muir, "Introduction: Observing Trifles", in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds.), *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

15. Edoardo Grendi, "Repenser la micro-histoire?", in Jacques Revel (ed.), *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), my translation. Grendi's original essay was published in *Quaderni storici* 86 (1994), a source that I have unfortunately not been able to access.

16. Cf. Francesca Trivellato, "Microstoria/microhistoire/microhistory", *French Politics, Culture & Society* 33:1 (2015), 122–3.

17. See Edoardo Grendi, "Micro-analisi e storia sociale", *Quaderni storici* 35 (1977) and cf. Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It", in *Threads and Traces. True, False, Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 197.

18. Cf. e.g. Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, "The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange in the Historiographic Marketplace", in Muir & Ruggiero (eds.), *Microhistory*. As the title of Ginzburg and Poni's essay makes evident, the market metaphor was already employed by the actors themselves: it is an emic, not an etic, category.

19. Ginzburg, "Microhistory", 195–6.

20. Regarding the contribution of latter, see Trivellato, "Microstoria". A useful overview is provided by Tomasz Wi licz, "The 'Annales' School and the Challenge of the Late 20th Century. Criticisms and Tentative Reforms", *Acta Poloniæ Historica* 92 (2005).

21. True enough, one of the main contenders to Braudel's throne spoke already in 1968 of a *défi américain,* but at that point, judging from his argument, the challenge was conceived as technical rather than theoretical: see Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, "The Historian and the Computer", in Jacques Revel & Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Histories. French Constructions of the Past* (New York: New Press, 1995), 332.

22. Trivellato, "Microhistory", 126–9.

23. In fact, it would seem as if the label is still struggling for recognition in a Swedish context; as late as 2014, the annual meeting of the Swedish Historical Society took microhistory as one of its main themes, the subject of no less than five individual sessions – to the bewilderment of quite a few of the participants, who felt that this hardly qualified as the proverbial Next Big Thing. For instance, the economic historian Ylva Hasselberg objected that quite a number of Swedish scholars had already been doing more or less the same thing, only under different names (cultural history, the history of mentalities etc.), since the early 90s. Although I see no reason to doubt her assessment, the question remains of just what should count as 'the same thing': judging from the ensuing discussion, what both Hasselberg and her rivals had in mind was really the same, vaguely delimited perspective 'from below'. In any case, it must clearly be regarded as a milestone that the leading Swedish publisher of higher education textbooks recently put out an introduction to microhistory for undergraduates: see Anna Götlind & Helena Kåks, *Mikrohistoria. En introduktion för uppsatsskrivande studenter* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014).

24. In one of his more recent recollections, Ginzburg writes of "the impulse that generated microhistory" – but what that 'impulse' actually consisted of is not entirely obvious from his argument. See Carlo Ginzburg, "Some Queries Addressed to Myself", in *Carlo Ginzburg. 2010 Balzan Prize for European history* (Milano: Fondazione Internazionale Balzan, 2011). Available for download on http://www.balzan.org/upload/EstrattoGinzburgENG.pdf.

25. Ginzburg & Poni, "The Name and the Game", 8, my emphasis.

26. Ginzburg & Poni, "The Name and the Game", 7.

27. See Simona Cerutti, "Microhistory: Social Relations Versus Cultural Models?", in Anna-Maija Castrén, Markku Lonkila & Matti Peltonen, *Between Sociology and History. Essays on Microhistory, Collective Action, and Nation-Building* (Helsinki: SKS / Finnish Literature Society, 2004). For a different take on the same theme, see François Dosse, *Empire of Meaning. The Humanization of the Social Sciences* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 230–1.

28. Cerutti's essay was itself such an attempt – and the same goes for the conclusion of Carlo Ginzburg, "Latitude, Slaves, and Bible: An Experiment in Microhistory," *Critical Inquiry* 31:3 (2005), 682–3 (cf. Trivellato, "Microstoria", 125). As for the tendency

to denounce the term, the first epigraph to this preface is one example. In addition, see e.g. Ginzburg, "Latitude, Slaves, and Bible", 665 ("One might call this approach microhistory, but labels are ultimately irrelevant.") and cf. the parallel but inverted statement in Ginzburg, "Some Queries Addressed to Myself", 13 ("Labels do not interest me, but the impulse that generated microhistory does.").

29. I say 'more or less' since, in practice, it has obviously proved difficult to disengage from, as evidenced by recent titles such as e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory and World History", in Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam & Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 6, *The Construction of a Global World, 1400-1800 CE*, part 2, *Patterns of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

30. Andrej Slávik, "What is History and Why Do I Write It? Afterthoughts on the Contemporary Past", in Claes Caldenby, Julia Tedroff, Andrej Slávik & Martin Farran-Lee (eds.), *Architecture, Photography and the Contemporary Past* (Stockholm: Art and Theory, 2014), 171. The expression *gioco di pazienza* is an thinly veiled allusion to what should probably be regarded as the original – and, as of yet untranslated – microhistorical manifesto: Carlo Ginzburg & Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza. Un seminario sul Beneficio di Cristo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975).

31. The phrase 'cognitive wager' is another allusion, this time to a key passage in Ginzburg, "Microhistory", 212.

32. Carlo Ginzburg & Trygve Riiser Gundersen, "On the Dark Side of History", *Eurozine* (2003), 7. First published in Norwegian in *Samtiden* 2 (2003). Available for download on http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2003-07-11-ginzburg-en.html.

33. Ginzburg, "Microhistory", 212.

34. Cf. Ginzburg, "Latitude, Slaves, and Bible", 683. In this, I would argue, also lies the tenuous, yet crucial connection between microhistory – at least in Ginzburg's version – and the discipline of aesthetics as it developed from Baumgarten and up to (but not including) Hegel. From a bird's-eye view, both would seem to belong to what used to be called a 'lower gnoseology' (*gnoseologia inferior*). See Niklaus Largier, "The Plasticity of the Soul: Mystical Darkness, Touch, and Aesthetic Experience", *MLN* 125:3 (2010) and cf. the concluding – but, from my perspective, far from conclusive – discussion of 'low intuition' in Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm", in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 125.

35. Ginzburg, "Our Words and Theirs", 110.

36. Here, I take the liberty of paraphrasing myself and, more specifically, my own notion of 'research in mode √2': see Slávik, "The Poetics of History", 109.

37. Italo Calvino, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (Milano: Garzanti, 1988), 61. Translated by Patrick Creagh as *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 60.

38. François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experiences of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 14.

39. Ginzburg, "Microhistory", 195. The Italian economic historian Francesco Boldizzoni makes the same point in more general terms: "In short, the history of the movement does not coincide with that of the paradigm. The former existed before the latter and survives it." Francesco Boldizzoni, *The Poverty of Clio. Resurrecting Economic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 136 – where the passing reference to Ginzburg's work is hardly incidental.

40. Ginzburg, "Latitude, Slaves, and Bible", 682.

41. Ginzburg, "Microhistory", 198.

THE MIRACLE OF TENSTA (THEORIA)

Magnus
Bärtås

In August of 2012, a young girl in Tensta, a northern suburb of Stockholm, borrowed her mother's smartphone and took a photograph of a peculiar cloud in the sky. She showed it to her mom, who interpreted the cloud formation as an apparition of the Virgin Mary. The image began circulating on social media, and a few days later thousands of people gathered in the local Syrian Orthodox church, the Church of St Mary. Here the miracle was witnessed once again, both in the condensation on the windows and in the trees outside the church.

Alexander Kluge once stated in an interview that: "For a single story, three lines are enough. But for the context, one needs encyclopedic concepts."[1] A challenge in the work with my film *The Miracle of Tensta (Theoria)* was to involve at least a shred of this context – with all its layers and conflictual aspects – and allow it to be exposed in polyphonic way – but at the same time avoid repeating the oft-repeated image of Tensta. To just give a few glimpses of the context of the story: Tensta, with around 19 000 residents, consists mainly of a large, late modernist housing area built in 1967–72. It is an ethnically mixed suburb where nearly 90 % have translocal backgrounds, many in the Middle East and North Africa. Mass media images and reports repeatedly fuse segregated areas and criminality and have, over the years, produced a narrative in which the very mention of the name of Tensta has become metaphoric and metonymic. A constant reproduction of derogatory representations has stigmatized the people of Tensta. "Nationally distributed stereotyping images. Graphically hideous images. Dramatically framed images. Alarming, fear-reinforcing images. Sensationalistic, exaggerated images. Images suggested of a public crisis. Images of the segregated suburb and the behaviour of those residing there melted into each other. Images of race and space, of the racialized and spatialized, time and again merged with one another, reinforcing one another, compounding one another", as Allan Pred writes in *Even in Sweden: Racism, Racialized Spaces and the Popular Geographical Imagination*".[2]

The story of the miracle in Tensta was reported in *Dagens Nyheter* (major Swedish national newspaper) by journalist Clas Swahn – an expert reviewer for UFO, science fiction and other related books for the Swedish public library

system, as well as a vice chairman of the Archives of UFO Research in Sweden. Swahn was present in the church when the audience witnessed the apparition of images in the church windows, and gave a respectful report in *Dagens Nyheter*. In it, Swahn also mentioned an important part of the context: the fact that St. Mary's Church had a visitor that day – the Bishop of wartorn Homs (in Syria) – and he had put a religious relic in the cross he carried through the church hall: several threads said to have come from the Girdle of the Virgin Mary. The events were somehow connected to the outbreak of the civil war in Syria.

Swahn's text was the only report in larger mainstream media in Sweden. The story disappeared very quickly, and it seemed that this kind of ecstatic religiosity was impossible to internalize in a public reporting or debate. Nor did reporting about fantastic visions seem to adjust to the overall dominating narratives of Tensta, at least not to the common view of the predominantly Muslim suburb.

My film work was done in collaboration with Tensta Konsthall under the framework of *The New Model*[3] – a project that investigated the heritage of Palle Nielsen's and Gunilla Lundahls[4] legendary exhibition *The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society* (1968), which transformed Stockholm's Moderna Museet into an adventure playground for children. Nielsen's intervention in the museum raised questions concerning city planning, as well as the definition of a humane society, children's creativity, pedagogics, play, and the role of the museum institution. There were a number of motifs and tendencies to discover in the act itself, as well as in the catalogue text: implanted activism within the institution, alternative architecture, alienation, crowded housing, the limitations of bourgeois life and the fragmentation of existence, and the power of collectivism, solidarity, and reciprocity within the learning process. During the exhibition period, children were given the main hall in Moderna Museet, which Nielsen had transformed into a giant playground. Using hidden video cameras, psychologists and sociologists observed the children's activities. Additionally, monitors were placed outside the museum to allow adult visitors to see what was going inside the museum. Nielsen wrote the following in the exhibition text: "There is no exhibition. This is only an art show because the children are playing inside an art museum. This is only an exhibition for those who are not playing."[5]

Influenced by *The Model*, I decided to establish a temporary space for representing the story – both as a workshop space and as a physical center for the narrative. As in my earlier film works, I have been occupied with the idea of storytelling from a particular space – i.e., not only asking: "a story by whom?" But also: "a story from where?"

The key word for the piece became THEORIA, the Greek word for theory, which I would in this context like to reimagine as a discursive concept. Theoria is originally connected to the words theorein - "to consider, speculate", but also "to observe"; theoros - "audience"; horan - "to see" (to regard with the eyes or in

the mind). Initially, the concept theoria was understood according to its concrete implication; it was the report given by people upon returning to the villages after having witnessed certain events (for instance the Olympics). What the messenger related was not of great consequence, but rather the participation in the social situation through which theoria was conveyed. In this situation, the witness' level of presence was of primary importance, the fact that the witness actually shared the reality he depicted.[6] In my work, I wanted to play with this original implication, but at the same time allude to the word GALLERIA (Swedish for "shopping mall"), which has become every city district's physical – and in some respect also ideological – center with regard to its emphasis on commercialism as a community base. One of the rooms of Tensta Konsthall was temporarily transformed to a "Theoria" where seven amateur actors contributed to give voices to the narrative of the miracle in Tensta. It was important to emphasize the narrator's perspective, context and participation. Although the story of the miracle disappeared very quickly from mainstream media, it lived on in social media, and the film's script was entirely composed of discussions from these internet threads. As a gesture of borrowing methodology from historiographic narration, I compiled the material and extracted seven "composite-personalities" from it, representing seven attitudes to the (becoming) historical event. The characters include a skeptical person who is being satirical about the event and a person who attempts to rationalize everything by referring to scientific ideas about visuality and perception. Then there is the witness who speaks from first hand experience, another who was not there but supports the witness, and one who speaks about clairvoyance and clairsentience from a philosophical point of view. There is also one who is very angry about everything and another who recounts facts and figures in a neutral voice, almost like a news reporter. In the film the actors –also local residents – perform a whispering reading of the manuscript.

If the superstructure of politics is composed of actual policy, bills, laws, social and urban planning, then the underlying narratives compose what might be called the "other side" of politics – storytelling, the particular qualities of jokes, how we play, unwritten laws, the small things by which we recognize and allow the existence and presence of others in daily life (*civilité* – the art of living together). A philosophic theorist used to contemplate the stars – it was the activity of *astronomical theoria*, beholding and apprehending "visible gods" in the heavens.[7] But the experience was given a meaning in local civic context. Theoria was a situation in which contemplative wisdom was transformed into practical and (under certain conditions) political activities: the theorist's theoretical wisdom provided the basis for action. In the good city, moreover, the theoretical philosophers will rule the polis: here, Plato places the philosophic theorist at the very center of political life.

In contemporary society, there is no longer any physical public space where one is able to deliver a theoria, of course. In my work, I played with the idea of

reestablishing such a physical space – the room in the art hall – but at the same time "expose" the virtual space as the new space for theoria, given a undefined participatory audience. In the film, the footage of the reading is combined with documentary footage from the church – material filmed by journalist Clas Swahn in August 2012. The textual quality – and the act of reading – is emphasized and contrasted with these "ecstatic" documentary images where viewer actually has to ask herself what she is really seeing. For certain, something is happening on the windows of the church. An image of "something" is appearing in front of our eyes. But can one really see and talk about something that one does not know or recognize and cannot name? Is there any way that we can look beyond our ideology, our notions and our "formed perception"? In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger[8] argued that if we learn something about how we see, we should also learn something about ourselves and the situation in which we are living. The process of seeing is less spontaneous or natural than we tend to believe. Berger speaks about how a large part of seeing depends on habit and convention. The European idea of perspective makes the eye the center of the world. But the human eye can only be at one place at a time; it takes its visible world with it as it moves. With the invention of the camera everything changed. We could see things that were not there in front of us. An image, or an appearance could travel across the world. It was no longer so easy to think of appearances always travelling regularly to a single center. The industrial age – the age of reproduction – displaced, dislocated every object from its original setting. Technology destroyed the distance between the observer and the observed. But it would be a mistake to believe that aura was destroyed by the age of reproduction. A new, contemporized version of aura appeared – an aura that emanates from the very amount of reproductions, and one that is experienced primarily in solitude, in front of the screen. Today only a collective vision or revelation can produce simultaneous collective experience. We return to the idea of the relic – an object or experience that is supposedly unmediated and cannot be transformed to, or approached in, the virtual world. Hence, situated seeing and witnessing become important once again. This means the return of the aura in connection with the ritual.

The unwillingness and inability to internalize the story of the miracle in Tensta in the Swedish context says something about how questions of micro- and macrohistory are bound to perspectives and contexts. In the history writing of the Syrian Orthodox church, the event now belongs to a category of important moments in history. In the history of Sweden, the event is effectively non-existent. This gap, or tension, between the life of narratives points to questions of co-existence in diverse societies; to live in a society where a theoria is deprived of its potential symbolic or metaphoric meaning, but to also be unable to provide any basis for action. It also concerns if or how we can live together holding parallel or conflicting worldviews, and still trying to find common zones of understanding, negotiation, listening to and telling stories.

The Miracle in tensta (*Theoria*) is available at https://vimeo.com/user25154568

1. Joachim Bessing, "Alexander Kluge – Writing Attitude", http://032c.com/2003/writing-attitude-alexander-kluge/
2. P. 134. (University of California Press, 2000).
3. With the curators Maria Lind, Lars Bang-Larsen and the artists Anne Hjort-Guttu, Dave Hullfish Bailey and Hito Steyrl.
4. Often not credited as one of the creators of *The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society.*
5. It may appear as though Nielsen's utopia wishes to ignore children's cruelty, their egotism, destructive lusts, and incapacity for social responsibility (characteristics that are, to be sure, shared with many adults). But in his text, Nielsen writes that he views children's play as a mirroring of adult activities. "They try to comprehend the new world they see, and their information comes from us. After all, the only people they know are us." Children observe us and imitate us, says Nielsen. Nielsen suggests that the problem is that we adults do not understand our world, that we are alienated geographically through our housing conditions and our wage labor, and that we are removed from the contexts and the communities that we have tried to establish. In *A Model for a Qualitative Society*, there was an interesting ambivalence to the notion of freedom, as he let the children's play be both monitored by surveillance cameras and placed it within a role-play scenario that had elements of high politics - the children were given masks representing Nixon and Kissinger, and during a certain period, the play took place in an environment where they were surrounded by red banners and quotes by Mao, André Gorz, and other revolutionaries. It may also be emphasized that it was Nielsen, and not the children themselves, who designed the environment, even though children were given great freedom to use it according to their own impulses and wishes.
6. See the example Henry Cöster, "Tolkning av text och verklighet" in *Res Publica*, "Tema Paul Ricoeur," (1987).
7. See Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy, Theoria in its Cultural Context*, (Cambridge University Press 2004).
8. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (Penguin Books 1990).
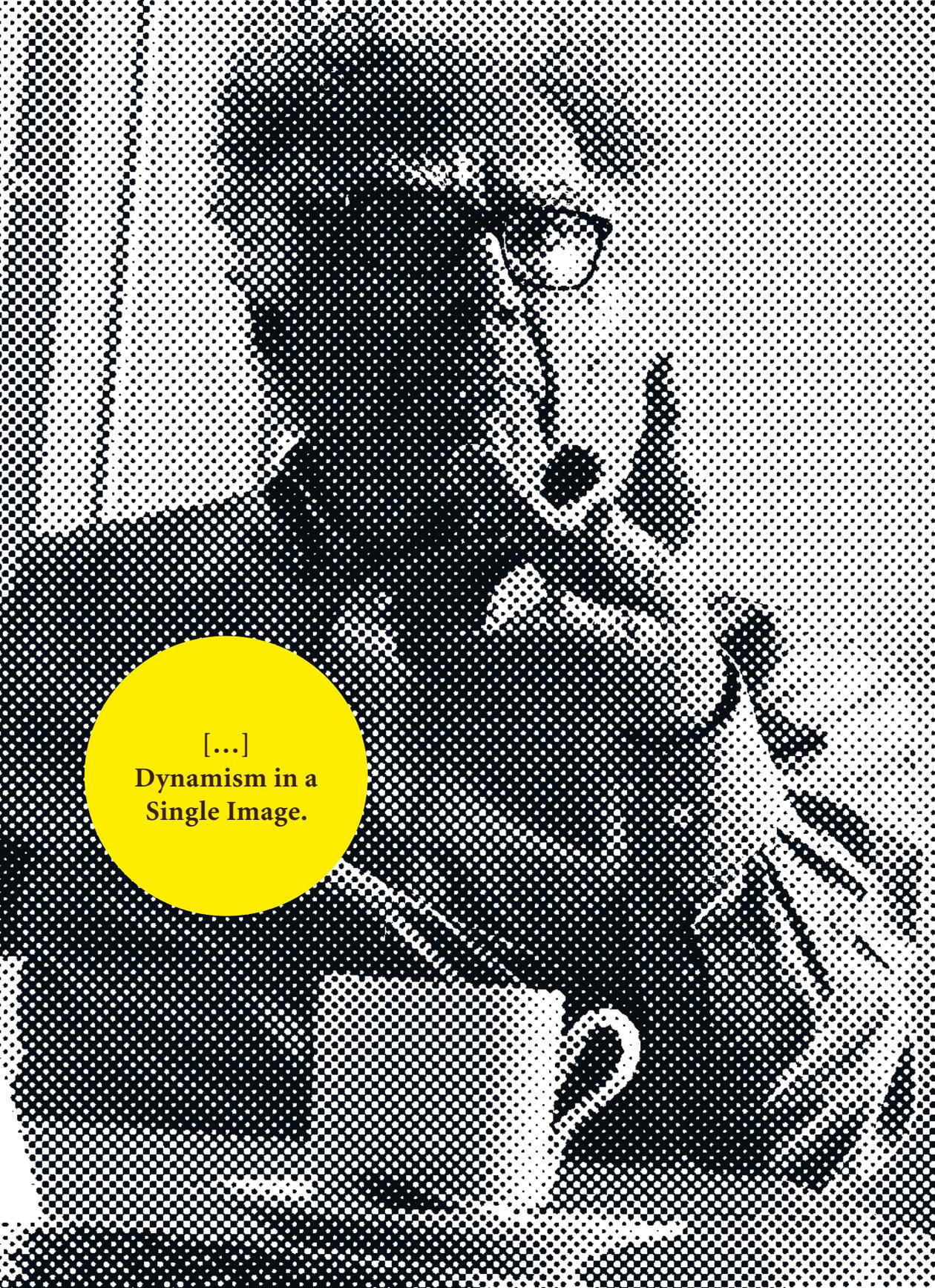
[…]
Dynamism in a
Single Image.

Twelve snapshots from a conversation with Carlo Ginzburg

In late October of 2014, Magnus Bärtås, Andrej Slávik and Michelle Teran travelled to Bologna for a conversation with Carlo Ginzburg. Andrej had already met Carlo about a year before when he gave a guest lecture at Södertörn University, and seized the opportunity to tell him about the particulars of the Microhistories project, asking him if he would be interested in giving an interview.[1]

Indeed, he was. At the summit of a dizzying flight of stairs tucked behind massive front doors, Carlo welcomed us into an apartment where every available surface – shelves, tables, even chairs – was piled high with books, journals and assorted papers. After the introductions and niceties, we settled down in the innermost study and started out on what was to become a long and winding dialogue that lasted for most of the day (with a break for lunch) and reached into the next morning, touching on a broad range of sometimes unexpected topics.

What follows is the first of twelve fragments – or 'snapshots' – from our discussions; the remaining eleven are interspersed throughout the anthology as a kind of counterpoint to the different contributions. We chose this particular mode of presentation, not only to cut the rather unwieldy outcome down to size, but also to retain a sense of in medias res with regard both to the present of our conversation and to the passato prossimo of Carlo's vivid recollections. The original recording has been roughly but faithfully transcribed by Michelle, lightly edited and annotated by Andrej and double-checked by Carlo for accuracy as well as consistency.

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1. "Inner Dialogues – The Jew as Devil's Advocate", November 6, 2013. The lecture was arranged as a joint venture by the research program *Time, Memory and Representation*, the research project *Loss of Grounds as Common Ground* and Södertörn's Centre for Baltic and Eastern European Studies (CBEES).
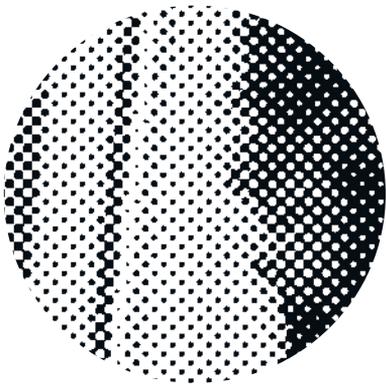
**1.
So, I was in Pisa
as a student
[…]**

[…]

CG: So, I was in Pisa as a student, and the teaching technique employed there was unusual vis-à-vis other Italian university seminars. They were seminars, let's say, in the German style: sitting around a table, working on a text in a very… I mean, I was there as a beginner, in my first year, and after only a few weeks a historian – Delio Cantimori, who later became a sort of mentor to me, although he was not my *Doktorvater* [doctoral advisor] in a formal sense – came and said: we are going to work on Jacob Burckhardt's *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*. There were something like twenty students around the table, and maybe two of them were able to read German. And so, Cantimori said that, well, we were going to compare different translations, different languages and so on. And so, we started. It was a one-week seminar, meeting every day for maybe three hours – and at the end of the week, we had read twenty lines. That was amazing for me.

So, the discovery of slow reading. Much later, I discovered the expression that "philology is the art of slow reading". I came across that quote in an essay by Roman Jakobson, but it actually came from [Friedrich] Nietzsche – from his inaugural lecture in Basel, when he was still a philologist. Philology as the art of slow reading: this was amazing, a real discovery, like entering a new world. But at that point, I had already read in translation [Erich] Auerbach's *Mimesis,* which is based on that technique. In other words, picking up a segment, a fraction of a text, and then reading that small segment in a very intensive way. Retrospectively, I can see how I came to microhistory with this kind of drive. Microhistory has been a joint project and everybody involved in it had a different background, more or less. I mean, all of them were historians, but with *slightly* different backgrounds. Then again, there are some striking convergences as well…

MB: Can I ask you about Auerbach's work, because it is interesting – in terms of memory as well… If I am not mistaken, he wrote that book when he was in exile in Istanbul. And for us today, it is very difficult to understand how he could write something like that without access to all the relevant literature. You would think that he would have had his library, for example.

CG: Yes, that is a very good point. Actually, he made a remark about this when he said: "in this book, I have been unable to use secondary literature" – although he was able to use primary literature, in other words, the texts of Dante and so forth. That is why you do not have, let's say, detailed footnotes in the book.

But there is an anecdote, something that I learned from a piece by Auerbach himself. He was in Istanbul and wanted to work on [Jacques-Paul] Migne's *Patrologia latina*, the huge collection of ecclesiastical writings, hundreds of thick volumes. In a major European library you would have it – but in Istanbul, that collection of texts was only available, I think, in a Franciscan convent. So, Auerbach met the *nuncio* [papal envoy], Cardinal [Angelo Giuseppe] Roncalli, who later on became Pope John XXIII – an extraordinary meeting! – and asked him: "Would I be able to work here?" And he said yes. Actually, I think there must be a copy of Auerbach's *Mimesis* in German with a hand-written dedication to Roncalli. Maybe it is in the Vatican Library? For some reason, I never checked.

AS: So, would you describe yourself primarily as a historian or a philologist?

CG: Good question. Philology in the sense of Giambattista Vico is a very comprehensive word. There is also a more technical meaning of philology which could not include most of my work – but in the vichian sense, maybe I am an aspiring philologist. Otherwise, professionally, certainly a historian. But again, history… And then, there is the relation between historical writing and an antiquarian perspective – so if we assume that history in a contemporary sense implies antiquarianism as well, I would say yes, a historian. But with history taken as a kind of starting point: not as a fortress, but as an airport. You may proceed from there in different directions.

[…]

MICROHISTORY AND CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE: TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT CARLO GINZBURG

Andrej Slávik

[…] you can look at a piece of a puzzle for three whole days, you can believe that you know all there is to know about its colouring and shape, and be no further on than when you started. The only thing that counts is the ability to link this piece to other pieces, and in that sense the art of the jigsaw puzzle has something in common with the art of go. The pieces are readable, take on a sense, only when assembled; in isolation, a puzzle piece means nothing – just an impossible question, an opaque challenge. But as soon as you have succeeded, after minutes of trial and error, or after a prodigious half-second flash of inspiration, in fitting it into one of its neighbours, the piece disappears, ceases to exist as a piece. The intense difficulty preceding this link-up – which the English word *puzzle* indicates so well – not only loses its *raison d'être*, it seems never to have had any reason, so obvious does the solution appear. The two pieces so miraculously conjoined are henceforth one, which in its turn will be a source of error, hesitation, dismay, and expectation.

    – Georges Perec, 1978[1]

There comes a moment (though not always) in research when all the pieces begin to fall into place, as in a jig-saw puzzle. But unlike the jig-saw puzzle, where all the pieces are near at hand and only one figure can be assembled (and thus the correctness of each move be determined immediately), in research only some of the pieces are available, and theoretically more than one figure can be made from them. In fact, there is always the risk of using, more or less consciously, the pieces of the jig-saw puzzle as blocks in a construction game. For this reason, the fact that everything falls into place is an ambiguous sign: either one is completely right or completely wrong. When wrong, we mistake for objective verification the selection and solicitation (more or less deliberate) of the evidence, which is forced to confirm the presuppositions (more or less explicit) of the research itself. The dog thinks it is biting the bone and is instead biting its own tail.

    – Carlo Ginzburg & Adriano Prosperi, 1975[2]

When speaking of 'cinematic experience', I take my cue from a recent study by the Canadian media scholar Jaimie Baron entitled *The Archive Effect*. Her interest, in brief, lies in the way in which audiovisual media in general and archival footage in particular have reconfigured our relation to the past, beginning at the invention of cinema, if not earlier, and continuing right up to our digital present.[3] In Baron's interpretation, this development has had a profound impact on the prevailing 'regime of historicity', to employ François Hartog's well-known term. Most immediately, it has contributed to broader changes in the conception of what constitutes a historical archive. "The notion of an archive as a particular place and of archival documents as material objects stored at a particular location," Baron argues, "has ceased to reflect the complex apparatus that now constitutes our relation to the past through its photographic, filmic, audio, video, and digital traces."[4] Even more profoundly, the growing pervasiveness of audiovisual media would seem to have affected our very sense of historical experience – the manner in which the past becomes present to us.

On the one hand, there is a widely shared sentiment that archival footage in some way brings us 'closer' to the past than any other historical source. "Indeed," Baron writes, "the past seems to become not only knowable but also *perceptible* in these images. They offer us an *experience* of pastness, an experience that no written word can quite match."[5] Archival footage, one might go so far as to claim, has somehow – in an emotional, but perhaps also ethical sense – received the same charge that religious icons or relics once possessed and that was gradually (and only partially) transmitted to historic monuments and other *lieux de mémoire* over the course of the long nineteenth century.[6]

On the other hand, this feeling of proximity or even intimacy is also suffused with a paradoxical sense of estrangement, as if the very 'reality effect' produced by archival footage inevitably gives rise to a corresponding, but opposed effect of irreality. To a significant extent, this is probably due to the sheer indiscrimination of mechanically produced images, the fact that they capture everything in the camera's sight without regard for its significance. For this reason, as Baron points out, audiovisual sources "pose many problems […] that are absent – or at least easier to repress – in written documents." Here, "issues of excess are even more prominent" in the sense that audiovisual sources seem "especially resistant to full comprehension or interpretation."[7] And since this resistance, in its turn, only contributes to the feeling of closeness to which archival footage gives rise, we are right in suspecting that our appreciation of audiovisual experience and our apprehension of audiovisual excess are really two sides of the same coin, linked into the same hermeneutic feedback circuit.

In this regard, what Baron calls *the audiovisual experience of history* might actually provide a clue to the historical origins of the very condition of *presentism* which Hartog's 'regimes of historicity' were intended to put into perspective: "the sense" – increasingly prominent in the aftermath of the two World Wars and

almost entirely predominant since the fall of the Berlin Wall – "that only the present exists, a present characterized at once by the tyranny of the instant and by the treadmill of an unending now."[8] Could this experience of an "omnipresent present" be related to the current excess – and continual excessiveness – of audio-visual media? And would such a conjecture lead us to conclude that presentism does indeed represent "a new experience of time and a new regime of historicity," constituting "a substantial state" rather than just "a moment of stasis"?[9]

Tantalizing as it may be, I do not intend to pursue this speculative line of reasoning any further at the moment. Nor do I find Baron's discussion convincing in all respects. To my mind, her argument recurrently suffers from a certain lack of semiotic subtlety, which in turn results in a rather predictable contradiction between images and words, micro and macro, 'fragment' and 'grand narrative', and so on. This tendency is further reinforced by her overarching emphasis on expression (rather than content) and reception (rather than conception) – in other words, on the private (rather than public) side of experience, *Erlebnis* as opposed to *Erfahrung*. Such a bias may be understood – and hence, in part, understandable – as a theoretical antidote to received notions of objectivity, for instance in the theory of documentary film, but it seems less useful from a wider, practical perspective.

Nevertheless, I do find Baron's general idea of an 'audiovisual experience of history' useful. Taking this hypothesis as a point of departure, my own thesis could be summarized as follows: If the relation between past and present, history and archive, has indeed been reconfigured under the impact of audiovisual media, as Baron argues, then microhistory – at least as practiced by the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg (* 1939) – can be considered an advance indication of that change; an early response on the methodological seismograph to an imminent tectonic shift in historiography's own historic conditions of possibility. In order to flesh out this assertion, I will first have to touch on two especially salient themes in Ginzburg's own historical and methodological reflections: The relation between history and literature on the one hand, and words and images on the other.

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Fifty years have passed since the original publication of Ginzburg's first work, *I Benandanti* (English title: *The Night Battles*).[10] In the half century spanned by his long career, the relation between history and literature, factual and fictional narratives, has been the subject of intensive and extensive debates in the theory and methodology of history. Ginzburg himself has also intervened in these debates, albeit it from a somewhat oblique angle.[11] I do not intend to focus on this aspect of his work or take up a position in the larger discussion. Instead, I would like to draw attention to how the relation between history and literature comes

into play – not in the form of abstract considerations, but rather, as it were, *in concreto* – in Ginzburg's historiographic practice.

Let us set out on a biographical note. Even disregarding the concurrent (and, to some extent still current) debates around so-called narrativism, the relation between history and literature should doubtless have been of some concern to Ginzburg as a historian by profession. His interest in the topic, however, has proven to go far beyond the scope of mere professional obligation; and on closer consideration, it seems to spring less from his unwavering commitment to fact than from an equally persistent fascination with fiction. Indeed, literature has occupied Ginzburg since well before he decided to pursue the historian's *métier*.

Then again, Carlo Ginzburg had not been born into just any family: his father Leone Ginzburg taught Russian literature at the University of Turin, translating key works by writers such as Pushkin, Gogol and Tolstoy into Italian, and became a founding member of the fabled Einaudi publishing house – all before his untimely death in a Fascist prison infirmary in 1944 – while his mother Natalia (*née* Levi) went on to become one of the most acclaimed authors in postwar Italian literature as well as an influential editor with the same publisher. Thus, Ginzburg *fils* moved in Rome's highest literary circles long before he was admitted to the prestigious Scuola Normale di Pisa and commenced his professional training. "In the mid-1950s," he would recall three decades later, "I was reading fiction; the idea that I might become a historian never crossed my mind."[12]

Growing up in such an environment – "surrounded by books", as he put it in a recent interview – Ginzburg not only became an avid reader, but also a would-be writer: "Predictably," he observes, "as a teenager I toyed with the idea of writing fiction", quickly adding: "But my silly project failed nearly immediately."[13] Predictably, indeed. While it is easy to understand his instinctive desire to follow in his mother's (and, to some extent, his father's) footsteps, it is just as easy to imagine the psychological pressure that Ginzburg would experience as he, more or less consciously, compared his own literary attempts with the examples surrounding him on all sides. No wonder, then, that he eventually moved into a different field. However, it should come as no surprise that he took quite a bit with him for the journey. In fact, if there is one thing on which both fans and critics of his most celebrated work, *The Cheese and the Worms,* should be able to agree, it is this: In the end, it is not entirely clear whether history or literature actually won the day.[14]

And perhaps it was neither? After all, the dual categories of fact and fiction can only be considered rough approximations; as useful as they may be, there are cases to which they may be less readily applicable. One that immediately comes to mind is that of essayism, both in the sense of a particular literary genre and a general intellectual outlook.[15] Indeed, we recognize the intricate exercise of imagination, judgment and understanding that is enacted in a genuine essay precisely by the fact that it is difficult to grasp in such inflexible terms; provided

that the author has hit the mark, it will invariably read as both – and, at the same time, as neither. It would seem that the essayist is most at home in a turbulent, in-between territory where fact and fiction either clash violently or interweave in increasingly elaborate ways.[16]

Essayism also provides me with my first example of how the relation between history and literature comes into play in Ginzburg's historiographic practice – as a kind of conjunction, one might say. Although his approach to the writing of history can hardly be considered experimental (at least not by literary standards), it is nevertheless animated by a kind of essayistic impulse. Furthermore, the same impulse would seem to be at work not only in those of his writings that can be considered essays in a strict sense, but also in his book-length works. To my mind, the best indication of this is that they all share the same loose-knit structure, signaled by one of the Italian historian's most recognizable stylistic devices: his numbered sections.[17] Although it is only in more recent years that Ginzburg has come to devote himself "almost exclusively" to the genre, as he points out in the preface to the collection *No Island is an Island*, he has arguably been an essayist from the very beginning.[18]

I say 'arguably' since there are at least two objections that speak against such an interpretation, both of which concern themselves with the presumed characteristics of the essay as a genre. The first is so obvious that Ginzburg himself feels obliged to raise it. The essay, on this account, calls for a certain levity, a sense of elegance and effortlessness, that does not sit easily with the strictures of academic scholarship. Why, then, would the Italian historian's writings – "these pages that have so little of the light-hearted about them and are weighed down by erudite observation" – deserve such a venerable mark of literary distinction? Needless to say, Ginzburg also offers an answer. To pin down his own approach more accurately, he proceeds to distinguish between two divergent traditions of essayism, one mostly anglophone – "inaugurated by Addison and Lamb" – and the other francophone or Continental, "progressing from Montaigne to Diderot and beyond." Readers accustomed to the latter, he posits with a *clin d'oeil*, "will not be frightened by [foot]notes."[19] Indeed, if the history of the essay attests to anything, it is precisely to the fact that scholarship and literature have not always been conceived – nor practiced – as if they were worlds apart.[20]

At first sight, the second objection is not quite as easy to dismiss. Levity might not be a *differentia specifica* of the essay, but surely brevity qualifies as a distinguishing trait? If this is indeed the case, it is hardly reasonable to regard even Ginzburg's book-length works as essays. Granted, the category of 'book-length work' is not very precise, so there are bound to be a few exceptions from the rule. As so often, *The Cheese and the Worms* is the most obvious example: with its mere 128 pages (not counting the preface), it admittedly reads more like an extended essay than a full-scale monograph, and the impression is accentuated further by the way that its account of Menocchio's fate oscillates between historical narra-

tion and historiographical argumentation, even making the occasional foray into dialogue and epistolary novel.[21] To settle the argument, we should rather turn to Ginzburg's weightiest tome: *Ecstacies*, the Italian historian's definitive attempt to unravel the Witches' Sabbath as a historical phenomenon. How can a work of over three hundred pages possibly be characterized as an essay?

Ginzburg does not address the question explicitly, but has an answer in store for us nonetheless, this time in etymological form. The term 'essay', he reminds his reader with reference to the Swiss literary critic Jean Starobinski, is derived from *exagium*, the Low Latin word for a balance or a pair of scales. From the very outset, then, the genre implies "the need to submit ideas for verification," and at the same time, the insight that "[n]o verification can be considered definitive."[22] It is precisely this fundamental tension that, in turn, gives rise to the essay's peculiar and at times even perplexing form:

> The tortuous, capricious, discontinuous progression of the essay appears to be incompatible with the rigor of the test. But perhaps this flexibility is precisely what succeeds in capturing configurations that tend to elude the grasp of the institutional disciplines.[23]

If we take this particular kind of flexibility – what Ginzburg, in his famous essay on "Clues" describes as a "flexible rigor" (*rigore elastico*) – not only as the hallmark of the genre, but also as a rule of thumb for how to apply the term, it is less difficult to see that even a full-scale monograph such as *Ecstasies* could reasonably be described as a kind of essay.[24] If this still seems too much of a stretch, it can clearly be compared with the so-called novel-essay, a self-consciously modern extension of the by-then classical genre.[25] In any case, what matters from this point of view is not the sheer span of the work – whether thematically, chronologically or even literally – but rather its principle of construction. To remain with the example of *Ecstasies*, we should pay less attention to the number of pages and more to the tripartite structure, held together – if only just barely – by the same system of numbered sections as in the author's shorter writings. Paradoxically, it is the broadly structuralist (or, in Ginzburg's terms, 'morphological') exercise of the central part that contributes most to the essayistic character of the whole.[26] In its entirety, it could be compared to one of Alexander Calder's hanging mobiles: separate elements brought together level after level in a stringent yet dynamic interplay – and everything suspended from one single point.

But perhaps that is taking the idea of equilibrium one step too far. The case of *Ecstasies* seems rather to demonstrate how the balancing act inherent to the essay – between 'rationalism' and 'irrationalism', to allude once more to Ginzburg's piece on "Clues" – is anything but an example of classical counterpoise.[27] On the contrary; under conditions far from the equilibrium, we occasionally need to go to extremes so as not to lose our footing. Instead of Calder's mobiles,

we might envisage the tightrope walker's distinctive pattern of movement, with its sudden shifts from an ever-precarious balance to a variety of drastic postures. But although the means may seem unconventional, the ends remain the same; hence the historian's sustained emphasis on 'the rigor of the test', and not only on its 'tortuous, capricious, discontinuous progression', as some of his critics would no doubt have preferred.[28]

For the same reason, the 'flexibility' propounded in the preface to *No Island is an Island* should not be taken as a wholesale rejection of disciplinary strictures, but rather as an injunction to maintain a certain measure of distance, which in turn allows for a certain degree of freedom from, as well as towards them. This becomes clear when Ginzburg compares academic inquiry to a chess game:

> In the game of chess that is research the majestic literary rooks move implacably in a straight line; the essay as a genre instead moves like the knight in an unforeseeable manner, jumping from one discipline to another, from one textual entity from another.[29]

This passage says a lot, but the metaphor itself is even more telling. The rook and the knight may move in different patterns, but they both share the same board and play by the same basic set of rules (although, in the case of research, the rules themselves must obviously remain an open question). If there were no such thing as 'institutional disciplines', the essay would find no foothold, and hence be unable to enjoy its freedom of movement. In passing, we should also take note of the rather odd choice of words for describing the rooks: 'literary' – rather than, for instance, 'scientific'. It would seem to imply a kind of mirrored symmetry between the fields of literature and historiography, where major ('majestic') genres – say, epic poetry and narrative history – stand in direct correspondence to one another, while minor genres such as the essay might even overlap partly.

Thus, we return to the main line of my argument. If the essay represents a kind of conjunction between history and literature, fact and fiction, my second example could rather be described as a disjunction.[30] Parallel with his manifest turn to essayism, Ginzburg has devoted himself with remarkable persistence to tracking what his former colleague at the University of Bologna Gianna Pomata has evocatively described as a *querelle du roman et de l'histoire*, a conflict extending "from the seventeenth century down to Virginia Woolf."[31] The story, in other words, of consecutive and often highly productive challenges between history and literature that goes back to at least the early modern period, escalates with the joint development of modern historiography on the one hand and the realist novel on the other – say, with Jules Michelet (1798–1874) and Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), and persists well into the 20th century, if not all the way up to our own time.[32]

Indeed, why not all the way up to our own time? Having reviewed – if

ever so briefly – two different, but equally distinctive ways in which the relation between history and literature comes into play in Ginzburg's historiographic practice, I am now in a position to develop my initial thesis into a preliminary question. In the history of mutual challenges outlined by the Italian historian, which would be the literary counterpart of his own historical style – that is, of microhistory?[33]

The most obvious reply would direct our attention to the literary avant-gardes of the early 20th century. There is no doubt much to be said for such an interpretation, although perhaps less for Virginia Woolf than for Berthold Brecht or Marcel Proust.[34] From a biographical perspective, the fact that Natalia Ginzburg translated Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* – "a huge undertaking, crazy, because I didn't know…" – seems especially significant.[35] As you will already have guessed, I have a somewhat different answer in mind. First, however, I must address the second theme in Ginzburg's writings that I have singled out for discussion. We thereby pass from the specific relation between history and literature to another one – which, in more than one sense, includes it.

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Rendered in his usual pointillistic style, Ginzburg's portrayal of the *querelle du roman et de l'histoire* is intricate enough in itself. The relation between words and images presents us with an even more complex picture, and this is no coincidence. Over the course of their long historical co-development, verbal and visual forms of communication have been gradually interwoven, resulting in a mutual implication even more difficult to disentangle than the 'badly joined inlay' of essayistic writing.[36]

On the one hand, there are words that do the work of images: metaphors provide unexpected points of view by stretching or even breaking away from habitual usage, descriptions convey impressions through their measured arrangement of nouns, adjectives, prepositions, and narratives set such momentary impressions in motion, predominantly with the help of verbs and adverbs.[37] This is one side of the mutual implication between the verbal and the visual – most eye-catching in so-called imaginative literature, but just as vital to historiography, as Ginzburg demonstrates in his discussion of the notion of 'vividness' (gr. *enargeia*, lat. *evidentia*) in classical rhetoric.[38] Here, fact and fiction, as well as poetry and prose, find their place within the bounds of literature in the broad, pre-modern sense of 'letters' (lat. *literæ*).

On the other hand is the converse implication of words into images – that is, images doing the work of words. Most, if not all, forms of visual communication are in fact patterned on a verbal or more generally, a discursive conception of the world. This is most obvious in the case of motifs, emblems or symbols, but equally true for many other examples (even, some would claim, for

non-representational art). As it happens, this is precisely the kinds of images to which Ginzburg has devoted his scholarly attention, from his early discussions of early modern emblematics – or, indeed, of the value of iconographic methods for historical research – to his most recently published book, where he applies Warburg's concept of *Pathosformeln* to various forms of political propaganda.[39]

In summary, this interpenetration of words and images provides the foundation for the wide field of verbal and visual rhetoric in which Ginzburg seems to feel most at home, in theory as well as practice. Of course, this is not to say that it is a place of peace and harmony; it is in fact quite the opposite. If the relation between words and images seems more complex than that between literature and history, this is not only due to their mutual implication but also, and perhaps even above all, to what we, by analogy, might describe as their mutual exclusion. If, to some extent, both words and images are able to perform each others' work, it is only because they have been assigned quite different tasks in the grand scheme of human culture. Most simply put: words signify, whereas images express.[40] Both media are pliant enough to serve the opposite end, but they are also sufficiently unyielding to sustain their inherent opposition even under the greatest of pressure.

Indeed, Ginzburg has been acutely aware of this fundamental antagonism from the very beginning. In his youthful study of the Warburg tradition, he observes that compared to a piece of writing "an image is inevitably more ambiguous, open to several interpretations."[41] Precisely this ambiguity, however, is the first thing to be sacrificed in the confrontation between words and images: "rational discourse tends to harden and generalize the subtleties of pictorial language."[42] All in all, if the mutual implication of words and images constitutes a stronger bond than the essayistic conjunction of fact and fiction, their mutual exclusion also creates a much greater tension. The *querelle du roman et de l'histoire* is a storm in a teacup compared with this millennial conflict.

But, come to think of it, let us remain with the essay for just a while longer. Against the background that I have just sketched out, the genre seems to provide (among many other things) a discursive space where the suppressed tension between words and images, reason and imagination, can be played out and, if not resolved entirely, then at least relieved. It might not provide a solution to the conflict, but it does propose a strategy that would allow images and words to enter into a productive exchange without the subjugation of one (almost invariably the former) to the other.[43] In short, the essay provides the 'flexible rigor' characterizing Ginzburg's indicial paradigm with its most congenial form of expression.[44]

Here, we could perhaps speak of a 'content of the form' with regard to the essay, the genre in itself paradoxically providing us with an image of discursive thought – or, in Ginzburg's case, with the specific exercise of discursive thought that constitutes the labor of the historian. Indeed, in *Giochi di pazienza* – an extended essay, co-authored with Adriano Prosperi and never translated, that could

well be regarded as a practical manifesto for his approach – this is precisely what Ginzburg tried to provide: *un'immagine del lavoro dello storico*.[45] Turning to the title page, we discover a quote from Balzac in which his indicial paradigm would already seem to be present in its entirety, albeit in condensed form.[46]

As in the case of history and literature, there is a biographical background to Ginzburg's fascination with images where, in a similar way, the boundary between the personal and the professional is gradated. Parallel to his literary ambitions, the young Ginzburg had painterly aspirations which proved to be somewhat more sustained – and, in hindsight, "perhaps more serious" – than his foray into fiction.[47] (As an aside, the Italian historian should not be confused with his almost-namesake, the Argentinian artist Carlos (sic) Ginzburg (* 1946), who was loosely affiliated with the Italian *arte povera* current at the beginning of his career.[48]) In the end, however, this too came to nothing. In his own recollection:

> I was seventeen when I realised that I would have been a mediocre painter — as well as, probably, an awful novelist. But retrospectively I think that those two early failures shaped my later work as a historian. I enjoy writing; I am fond of narrative experiments; I have been working for twenty years on the competitive relationship between fiction and history. And I have been dealing with images of different kind — from Piero della Francesca's frescoes to Lord Kitchener's famous recruiting poster for the First World War.[49]

In other words, just as Ginzburg was somehow able recast his childhood obsession with literature into a professional dedication to history, his artistic aspirations developed into a long-term interest in the theory and history of art (enriched, no doubt, by his marriage to a museum curator).[50] As a result, throughout the length of his career we can trace a more or less direct engagement with the pictorial which has resulted in one book-length study and well over a dozen essays – not counting the numerous references in works principally dedicated to other subjects.[51] Among the sorts of images that figure in his writings, we find carvings[52], drawings[53], paintings[54], mosaics[55], sculptures and reliefs[56], architectural motifs[57], illuminations[58] and prints[59]. The last two categories are intimately related to literature in the broader sense of the word; in one essay, Ginzburg actually goes so far as to quote – *in extenso*, as it were – merely typographic details.[60]

If this rough inventory of pictorial forms of expression attests to anything, it is above all to the fact that Ginzburg has primarily devoted his research to the early modern period. As the image enters the age of mechanical reproduction, the record becomes more uneven and, at the same time, more equivocal. Although photographs do figure in a few of the Italian historian's most recent essays,[61] they are not always cited as representations, but rather for what they represent – and in one instance, we are even exposed to a threefold mediation: a photograph of

a maquette for a building.[62] All the same, there are examples. Now, what about film? By pursuing the historical development of visual media as documented in Ginzburg's writings to its (chrono)logical conclusion, we have reached the point where, at long last, the two lines of my inquiry converge on a preliminary answer to the question of microhistory's literary counterpart.

Unfortunately, the answer is that the question was misphrased. In fact, if there is a single point that I would like to make, it is precisely that *the counterpart of microhistory is no longer literary* – at least not in the strict sense of the word. Wiping the slate clean, we should rather start looking for it in that specific field of cultural expression where fact and fiction, words and images, are juxtaposed in an altogether particular way: the field of cinema.

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Cinema, then, provides me with my third theme – if, indeed, it can be sufficiently disentangled from the themes that we have already explored to be regarded as a theme of its own. Hence the hesitation in my title: *two or three* things I know about Carlo Ginzburg.[63]

As in our previous two cases, we could spend considerable time sifting through the Italian historian's writings – his afterword to the Italian edition of Natalie Zemon Davis' *The Return of Martin Guerre*, his engagement with Siegfried Kracauer's posthumous theory of history or the German newspaper feature in which he dissects his own "unhappy affair" with cinema – in search of both clues and confessions.[64] And here as well, there is a biographical background to consider. Coming of age in the 1950s, Ginzburg found himself surrounded not only by books, but also by films. In fact, the distinction between books and films would even seem a little artificial, considering that cinema – specifically, Cesare Zavattini's influential style of script-writing – was an immediate point of departure for Ginzburg's early ambitions in the field of literature.[65] Fast-forwarding to his professional career, there have also been more or less advanced plans for screen adaptations of his own writings, *The Cheese and the Worms* in particular – but that is another story.[66]

Instead, let us cut a corner and give the word to Ginzburg himself. In a recent interview with fellow historian Mauro Boarelli, he makes two closely related observations – one general and one personal – immediately relevant to the case at hand. The general observation concerns cinema as a form of expression and its place in the development of contemporary cultural existence. "Cinema", Ginzburg declares,

> has shaped the mode of entering into relation with reality of a major part of humanity throughout the twentieth century and up to this day. I come to think of one of the books that have been decisive for me, Michael Baxan-

dall's *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, where the author speaks of common social experiences in a very wide sense. Cinema too is a common social experience.[67]

If this statement lends implicit credence to the notion of a cinematic counterpart to microhistory, Ginzburg's personal observation would seem to confirm it explicitly. Here, he describes cinema as "an essential point of reference from the moment that I started writing."[68]

Taken together, these two remarks allows us to take another step along our line of inquiry by restating my preliminary answer as a definitive question: what is the cinematic counterpart of microhistory? If cinema did indeed provide Ginzburg with "an essential point of reference", then what specific form of cinema can be said to correspond most closely to his own microhistorical approach, taking us at once further into and beyond the long-standing quarrel between history and literature? Of course, the answer depends almost entirely on what we make of microhistory in the first place. To simplify greatly, we can distinguish between three different takes on the term – or perhaps I should say: three different takes *of* microhistory as a current in historiography? – This slight change of phrase would turn what follows into a description reminiscent of the style of Kurosawa's *Rashomon*.[69]

The first and without a doubt most widespread take on microhistory hinges on what we might call 'the principle of the close-up'. From this perspective, the microhistorical approach comes across as a kind of hyper-empiricism that, against the 'grand narratives' of modern ideologies and their allies among the social-scientific disciplines, would side with the 'little people' and their everyday stories. A particular title from the history of Italian cinema is sometimes invoked to illustrate this principle: Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-up* from 1966, which was loosely based on a short story by Julio Cortázar.[70] It is this occasional analogy from the field of cinema, rather than the sheer pervasiveness of the interpretation, that entitles it to a passing mention – despite sustained objections from Ginzburg and other original proponents of microhistory.[71]

From a methodological point of view, the overriding difficulty with the principle of the close-up can be readily summarized. In a nutshell: just how close is close enough? Indeed, why stop at the everyday – conceived as the level of the individual as a consciously acting agent – when we could just as well proceed, with the philosophers, from the individual to the dividual or, with the artists, from the ordinary to the infra-ordinary?[72] Then again, perhaps the everyday was already one step too far to begin with? If we return, for the sake of argument, to one of Ginzburg's early attempts at calibrating his microhistorical optic, we find that he actually stops just short of the individual, focusing instead on the *name* – that is, on the singular point where individual and 'system' seem to be mutually articulated.[73]

By shifting back and forth in this fashion, we have already demonstrated how the principle of the close-up relies on another and more generally applicable principle, in practice if not in theory. If we are able to get closer to something in the first place, it is only because we are already capable of varying our point of view. This, then, is the postulate from which our second take on microhistory departs. In the words of Jacques Revel: "It is the principle of variation that is important, not the choice of any particular scale."[74] Revel, one of the most eloquent spokesmen for microhistory in France, has condensed this fundamental insight into the evocative image of the *jeu d'échelles* (known in English as the 'game of snakes and ladders').

Speaking of evocative images, this particular aspect of the microhistorical approach is brought out by another and – at first glance, at least – rather more plausible proposal for a cinematic counterpart to microhistory recently suggested by the British historian John Brewer. On his reading, Ginzburg and his fellow microhistorians "take their views first and foremost from the Italian neo-realist movement of the immediate post-Second World War era." He even goes so far as to argue – in part, no doubt, for rhetorical effect – that Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* from 1946 was "one of the first works of Italian microhistory."[75]

There is much to say for Brewer's interpretation in and of itself, and Ginzburg's reaction lends it further credence. "As far as I am concerned," the Italian historian states in a recent interview, "I think he was not far from truth."[76] In an even more recent interview, he returns once again to the thesis of his British colleague, describing Italian cinema as "a foundational experience", and films such as Rossellini's *Paisà* as "fundamental moments of my life as a cinema-goer".[77] In the poetics of neorealism, Ginzburg sees both intimacy and distance at work, but only singles out the relationship between them as truly essential: "This coexistence, this idea of a view from afar that is the other side of the view from up close, are elements that can also be found in the microhistorical project. I recognize myself more in this than in the metaphor of the blow-up."[78]

In fact, it is precisely this double viewpoint that Ginzburg highlights in his most focused reflection on the topic of cinema to date: an essay from the mid-90s, all the more vivid for its brevity, in which Rossellini's *Paisà* once again features as a crucial reference. In this and other films, the Italian historian seems most to admire the very capacity of the medium "to represent in one and the same moment […] simultaneity as well as physical and moral distance" by zooming in and out, but also through the juxtaposition of otherwise unrelated scenes in the same image.[79] The latter effect is achieved by way of the deep focus that, while by no means invented by Italian cinematographers, became a signature of neorealism.[80]

Here, then, is a counterpart to microhistory that even Ginzburg himself would seem to embrace whole-heartedly. It is not based on the principle of the close-up, but rather on a principle of variation which is not only more general, but which can also be realized by a variety of means. As a consequence, the sci-

entific stakes are also considerably higher: to stand a decent chance in Revel's *jeu d'échelles*, the historian would have to master not only the nooks and crannies of an empirical material, but also a dizzying panorama of philosophical and social-scientific concepts and theories; in Ginzburg's own words, not only the humanist's meticulous technique of "handweaving", but also a variety of "power looms" in different makes and models.[81] A daunting task, to say the least.

Case closed? Not quite. Indeed, just as with our previous take, the principle of variation could hardly be put into practice if another principle was not already at work. In order to alternate between different viewpoints, we must first be able to bring them together – whether in time, as in the case of zooming, or in space, as in the juxtaposition of fore- and background. Hence, our third version of microhistory springs from a principle that has been firmly established in film theory since the pioneering efforts of Sergei Eisenstein: the principle of montage.

As it happens, this is the aspect that Ginzburg foregrounds when he speaks of cinema as a foundational experience: "cinema, *and above all montage*, were an essential point of reference from the moment that I started writing."[82] The recollection that follows is worth quoting at length:

> I read Eisenstein's *The Film Sense* when I was ten years old; I didn't understand anything of it, but it made a huge impression. I was imagining films that I had not yet seen. There's that extraordinary passage where Eisenstein transcribes, as if it were a screenplay, the page from Leonardo['s notebooks] about the deluge, which is a description of an imaginary painting, never realized. If literature can be reread in the light of cinema, then history can also be written as if it were a sequence organized through montage, in which there is foreground, background and so on.[83]

The lines of inquiry that we have followed this far – history and literature, word and image, even cinema – all converge in this brief passage, which would also seem to confirm that Revel's *jeu d'échelles* is only one particular instantiation of the even more general principle of montage. Furthermore, it demonstrates how this principle is in no way restricted to sequential juxtaposition, but also includes what Eisenstein called "potential montage" or "conflict within the shot" – as, for instance, in the examples cited by Ginzburg.[84]

Now, if history can indeed be 'organized through montage', then how does this principle of organization come to expression in the historian's writings? Here, we must return to a detail that we have already touched on à propos the characteristically loose-knit structure of Ginzburg's essays. "Ever since I started writing history," he goes on to explain, "I have made use of graphical devices to create montage effects, especially the numbered paragraphs."[85] It would seem that the Italian historian's most eye-catching stylistic signature element is actually modeled on cinematic technique.

In fact, although Ginzburg took his inspiration from elsewhere, the very idea of using numbered paragraphs rather than some other, equivalent device has a direct parallel in Eisenstein.[86] What I have in mind is Eisenstein's essay on "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today" from 1944, later included as a chapter in *Film Form*, the other important collection that – along with *The Film Sense* – introduced the Russian director's ideas to a Western audience. Here, Eisenstein makes the point – less evident in the 1940s than it is today – that cinema is "based on an enormous cultured past" and above all on literature, an antecedent that, in his estimation, "has contributed so much to this apparently unprecedented art."[87] Symptomatically, he demonstrates this thesis by way of a case study, relating the novels of Charles Dickens to the films of D. W. Griffith. In the course of his argument, Eisenstein lays bare nothing less than a "basic montage structure, whose rudiment in Dickens' work was developed into the elements of film composition in Griffith's work" – and, one might add, eventually redeveloped into the principles of his own Soviet cinema.[88]

So where does this leave us? From our perspective, Eisenstein's narrative already seems to bridge the gap between Ginzburg's patient charting of the *querelle du roman et de l'histoire* and the more or less radical departures of the so-called 'seventh art'. More specifically, literature contributes to the nascent form of cinema what the Russian director qualifies as "an embodied viewpoint on phenomena" – a description that resonates profoundly with the notion of microhistory as a *scienza del vissuto*, a 'science of lived experience'.[89]

"[P]owerful, splendid" – this is how Ginzburg, in what is now a somewhat different context, describes Eisenstein's essay.[90] What he seems not to recall on that particular occasion is how Eisenstein actually goes about demonstrating the affinity between Dickens and Griffiths, the novelist and the filmmaker. Zooming in on the example of Oliver Twist, he proceeds by reproducing the opening scene of chapter twenty-one, but in an altogether particular form. "For demonstration purposes", Eisenstein explains in a footnote, "I have broken this beginning of the chapter into smaller pieces than did its author; the numbering is, of course, also mine."[91] Although Eisenstein does take his typographic analysis of certain passages – enumerations, for instance – even further, the result (see the following spread) is surprisingly reminiscent of a page from one of Ginzburg's essays.

As always, much more can be said about Eisenstein's comparison between Dickens and Griffith, as well as about my own comparison of Eisenstein and Ginzburg. Here, I will limit myself to a single observation: The extent to which Eisenstein's discussion of the difference between American and Soviet conceptions of the close-up – "or as we speak of it, the 'large scale' " – anticipates the debate surrounding the American and European (especially French) reception of microhistory is striking.[92] In Griffith's films, "close-ups create atmosphere, outline traits of the characters, alternate in dialogues of the leading characters, and close-ups of the chaser and the chased speed up the tempo of the chase." In other

How many such "cinematic" surprises must be hiding in Dickens's pages!

However, let us turn to the basic montage structure, whose rudiment in Dickens's work was developed into the elements of film composition in Griffith's work. Lifting a corner of the veil over these riches, these hitherto unused experiences, let us look into *Oliver Twist*. Open it at the twenty-first chapter. Let's read its beginning:

Chapter XXI *

1. It was a cheerless morning when they got into the street; blowing and raining hard; and the clouds looking dull and stormy.

The night had been very wet: for large pools of water had collected in the road: and the kennels were overflowing.

There was a faint glimmering of the coming day in the sky; but it rather aggravated than relieved the gloom of the scene: the sombre light only serving to pale that which the street lamps afforded, without shedding any warmer or brighter tints upon the wet housetops, and dreary streets.

There appeared to be nobody stirring in that quarter of the town; for the windows of the houses were all closely shut; and the streets through which they passed, were noiseless and empty.

2. By the time they had turned into the Bethnal Green Road, the day had fairly begun to break. Many of the lamps were already extinguished;

a few country waggons were slowly toiling on, towards London;

and now and then, a stage-coach, covered with mud, rattled briskly by:

the driver bestowing, as he passed, an admonitory lash upon the heavy waggoner who, by keeping on the wrong side of the road, had endangered his arriving at the office, a quarter of a minute after his time.

The public-houses, with gas-lights burning inside, were already open.

By degrees, other shops began to be unclosed; and a few scattered people were met with.

* For demonstration purposes I have broken this beginning of the chapter into smaller pieces than did its author; the numbering is, of course, also mine.

Then, came straggling groups of labourers going to their work;
then, men and women with fish-baskets on their heads:
donkey-carts laden with vegetables;
chaise-carts filled with live-stock or whole carcasses of meat;
milk-women with pails;
and an unbroken concourse of people, trudging out with various
supplies to the eastern suburbs of the town.

3. As they approached the City, the noise and traffic gradually
increased;
and when they threaded the streets between Shoreditch and
Smithfield, it had swelled into a roar of sound and bustle.
It was as light as it was likely to be, till night came on again; and
the busy morning of half the London population had begun. . . .

4. It was market-morning.
The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire;
and a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of
the cattle,
and mingling with the fog,
which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily
above. . . .
Countrymen,
butchers,
drovers,
hawkers,
boys,
thieves,
idlers,
and vagabonds of every low grade,
were mingled together in a dense mass;

5. the whistling of drovers,
the barking of dogs,
the bellowing and plunging of oxen,
the bleating of sheep,
the grunting and squeaking of pigs;
the cries of hawkers,
the shouts, oaths and quarrelling on all sides;
the ringing of bells
and roar of voices, that issued from every public-house;

words, they serve to augment the 'reality effect', promote audience identification, create a pleasant variety and, in general, add to the action. "But," Eisenstein objects, "Griffith at all times remains on a level of *representation and objectivity* and nowhere does he try through the *juxtaposition* of shots to shape *import and image.*" On the whole, then, American cinema is a stranger to Soviet-style "montage construction".[93] The same could clearly not be said about Italian microhistory – but perhaps about some of its American adaptations?[94]

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Returning to the principle of the close-up, my discussion would seem to have come full circle. In fact, we need to take one further step before we can venture a definitive answer to the question of microhistory's cinematic counterpart. Let me begin by revisiting an important point. As we have already seen, the principle of montage should not be reduced to a matter of merely sequential juxtaposition – neither in Eisenstein's case, nor in Ginzburg's. On the contrary, it is at work in many different ways: not only between shots, but also between different scenes in a single shot – as well as, crucially, between the image track and the sound track; the visual and the aural aspects of cinema. This last variation on our theme is commonly denoted as *horizontal montage*, a term that goes back to the French film critic André Bazin.

Among his many credentials, Bazin is remembered for having introduced Italian neorealism to a French audience – in his quite idiosyncratic interpretation, one might add.[95] The notion of horizontal montage, however, is formulated in quite another connection. More specifically, it is in a review of Chris Marker's *Lettre de Sibirie* from 1958 that Bazin first speaks of "an absolutely new notion of montage that I will call 'horizontal'," which he contrasts with a sequential ("traditional") application of the same principle. "Here," he goes on to explain, "a given image doesn't refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said."[96]

As it turns out, Bazin's notion was not nearly as novel as he would have us believe. While the term was new, the same basic concept had already been worked out in Eisenstein's writings – though quite confusingly to a present-day reader, it was referred to as 'vertical' rather than 'horizontal'.[97] It is introduced in a chapter from *The Film Sense* entitled "Synchronization of Senses"; incidentally, the chapter features the discussion of Leonardo's deluge which Ginzburg, in his turn, praises as an 'extraordinary passage'.[98] And in the 'powerful, splendid' essay on Dickens and Griffith, it is even presented as the culmination of all Soviet cinematic efforts. In its vertical variety, as Eisenstein puts it, the principle of montage "removes its last contradictions by abolishing dualist contradictions and mechanical parallelism between the realms of sound and sight."[99]

A kind of fulfillment, then, but nevertheless the same fundamental idea. In

fact, Eisenstein even underscores that "the transition from silent montage to sound-picture, or audio-visual montage, changes nothing *in principle.*"[100] At the same time, he is eager to point out that when defined in this way, the montage principle "seems considerably broader than an understanding of narrowly cinematographic montage; thus understood, it carries much to fertilize and enrich our understanding of art methods in general."[101] Perhaps even the art of historiography? Ginzburg for one clearly thinks so.

On closer inspection, however, Bazin's 'horizontal' montage does actually differ from Eisenstein's 'vertical' one in at least one respect: here, sound explicitly takes precedence over sight, word over image, the filmmaker's commentary over the filmic document. As Bazin puts it, horizontal montage is "forged from ear to eye" rather than the other way around.[102] In contrast, Eisenstein does not institute any such hierarchy between the aural and the visual, but rather highlights their organic unity. Whether or not this shift in emphasis is sufficient for qualifying it as a different principle is a question that we can safely leave for film theorists to ponder. In any case, it would not seem too slight to take note of here.

On the contrary, it might be precisely this slight shift in emphasis that, at long last, would allow us to provide the question of microhistory's cinematic counterpart with something resembling a definitive answer. In fact, without noticing, we have already stumbled over it. From the point of view that we have gradually reached in the course of my argument, the most promising candidate for a counterpart to microhistory seems to be the so-called essay film: a genre of personal documentary that, again, goes back to Eisenstein and a few of his contemporaries – Dziga Vertov and Esfir Shub, among others – but which was really only developed in the postwar period by filmmakers such as Alexander Kluge in Germany, Pier Paolo Pasolini in Italy, Alain Resnais in France – and, most famously, by Chris Marker, a one-time assistant to Resnais and the subject of Bazin's review.

Indeed, in order to test my hypothesis – experimentally, as it were – I will propose a paraphrase of a passage from precisely that review. To begin with, here is André Bazin on Chris Marker:

> Generally, even in politically engaged documentaries or those with a specific point to make, the image (which is to say, the uniquely cinematic element) effectively constitutes the primary material of the film. The orientation of the work is expressed through the choices made by the filmmaker in the montage, with the commentary completing the organization of the sense thus conferred on the document. With Marker it works quite differently. I would say that the primary material is intelligence, that its immediate means of expression is language, and that the image only intervenes in the third position, in reference to this verbal intelligence. The usual process is reversed.[103]

And here is my comparison by paraphrase (alterations are italicized):

> Generally, even in politically engaged *historical accounts* or those with a specific point to make, the *source* (which is to say, the uniquely *historical* element) effectively constitutes the primary material of the *account*. The orientation of the work is expressed through the choices made by the *historian* in the *juxtaposition of sources*, with the commentary completing the organization of the sense thus conferred on the document. With *Ginzburg* it works quite differently. I would say that the primary material is intelligence, that its immediate means of expression is *rhetoric*, and that the *source* only intervenes in the third position, in reference to this *rhetorical* intelligence. The usual process is reversed.

It is precisely such a reversal that would seem to result from that "cognitive wager" which, on Ginzburg's own account, provided the common point of departure for Italian microhistory: "a definitive awareness that all phases through which research unfolds are constructed and not given: the identification of the object and its importance; the elaboration of the categories through which it is analyzed; the criteria of proof; the stylistic and narrative forms by which the results are transmitted to the reader."[104] The profound insight, in other words, that nothing can be taken for granted, least of all the sources; this is of course precisely why they require such meticulous scrutiny. In fact, the only resource still immediately available to such a generalized historiographic constructivism is the historian's own resourcefulness itself.

If indeed both the essay film and microhistory are characterized by a kind of reversal, then what does it entail? To complete his portrait of Chris Marker, Bazin emphasizes how the filmmaker "does not restrict himself to using documentary images filmed on the spot, but uses any kind of filmic material that might help his case."[105] This is directly comparable to the "redefinition of the notion of context" in microhistory, highlighted by Jacques Revel, the historian who has done most to introduce the Italian approach to French scholars.[106] According to Revel, what really sets microhistory apart from other, comparable perspectives is its dogged refusal to take any notion of historical context for granted – "in other words, a refusal to accept that a unified, homogenous context exists within which and in relation to which social actors make their choices." Such an unwillingness should be understood as, on the one hand, "a reminder of the multiplicity of the social experiences and representations, in part contradictory and in any case ambiguous, in terms of which human beings construct the world and their actions" and, on the other hand, "an invitation to reverse the historian's usual approach, which is to situate and interpret his text in relation to a global context."[107]

At this point, we should begin to appreciate how the three competing principles of microhistory that we have just reviewed – close-up, zoom and montage,

in order of appearance – can converge after all. Lacking a ready-made context, the historian is obliged to construct it as much as possible from scratch: hence the primacy of montage. Refusal, though, is not equal to denial. Though such building blocks may be of little use in historiography, they still contribute decisively to the 'lived experience' which the historian seeks to understand: hence the indispensability of zooming, of Revel's *jeux d'échelles*. In the last instance, however, such an understanding can only start out from – and, indeed, must always return to – the detail, the singularity, the specific case: hence the significance of the close-up, on condition that the principle is not misunderstood. As the French literary theorist Nicolas Geneix has noted in the case of Marker: "It is not a question of seeing the object at a larger scale, but rather of seeing *something else* by way of it."[108]

The essay film, then, as exemplified by the works of Chris Marker, would be the best equivalent of Ginzburg's microhistory in the field of cinema. To my mind, this suggestion becomes all the more intriguing once we discover that Ginzburg himself is not really acquainted with the genre at all. In other words, this is not a question of influence – as in Brewer's juxtaposition of microhistory with neorealism – but rather of drawing similar conclusions, in different but nevertheless comparable fields, from the same point of departure; a case of genuinely parallel developments rather than a more or less conscious emulation.[109] To my mind, this seems to fit better with the narrative framework established by the *querelle du roman et de l'histoire* than either of the two analogies that I have already reviewed. If nothing else, it serves to reintroduce an element of tension, perhaps even of conflict, into what might otherwise have ended up as an overly harmonious story.

On the other hand, it might still be possible – to some extent, at least – to reconcile my own hypothesis with that of Brewer. To this end, let me conclude by attending briefly to the relation between Italian neorealism and the essay film. Zooming out, as it were, from Brewer's proposal, what my account brings into view is both the roots of Italian neorealism in Soviet cinema (in spite of Bazin's influential contrast between them) and its further redevelopment in the French New Wave, especially of the Left Bank variety.[110] Indeed, if neorealism made its audience aware of the camera, as Brewer underscores, such a narrative strategy had already been deployed by Soviet filmmakers – most emblematically in Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* – and was only taken to its logical conclusion in the essay film.[111] Pasolini, for one, claimed that neorealism had been reinvented by Jean-Luc Godard, another influential representative of the genre.[112]

Did Ginzburg also reinvent neorealism? After all, any genuine reinvention is characterized by continuity and change, fidelity and betrayal in almost equal amounts. Far from presenting us with a simple negation of tradition, what it actually entails is its paradoxical fulfillment. As the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty put it in one of his most suggestive essays: "not a survival, which

is the hypocritical form of forgetfulness, but a new life, which is the noble form of memory."[113] From this point of view, it hardly seems a coincidence that Ginzburg alludes to one of Godard's more essayistic moments, the 1967 feature *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, in the title of his retrospective account of microhistory.[114] Apparently, he is not entirely unacquainted with the genre after all.

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In the preceding pages, I have tried to demonstrate how Baron's idea of an audiovisual experience of history can shed light on certain aspects of Ginzburg's style of historiography – and, inversely, how Ginzburg's case can reinforce Baron's hypothesis by providing it with a greater degree of historical specificity. If the ever-growing pervasiveness of audiovisual media has indeed affected the way in which the past becomes present to us, then microhistory – at least in Ginzburg's version – can be considered an example of how this impact occurred in theory, so to speak, before it came about in practice. It goes without saying that all of this amounts to nothing more than a limited and altogether specific development: Ginzburg's early encounters with cinema, both on screen and in Eisenstein's writings, present us with as many refractions of a particular phase in the development of contemporary image culture. For this reason, I have chosen to speak of 'cinematic' rather than 'audiovisual' experience.

Then again, if our own encounter with microhistory has taught us anything, it is that one particular case can sometimes come to bear wider significance than its apparent limitations would seem to dictate. As the development of audiovisual media has progressed into our digital present, the parallel between microhistory and the essay film has taken on new meanings. Digitization – and, more specifically, the wide availability of digital video editing – has brought a renaissance for the essay film, this time on a global scale.[115] At the same time, it confronts academic historiography with the far from unprecedented, but nevertheless new challenge of utilizing visual documents, not only as sources of information, but also as actual elements in the construction of a historical argument. In this fashion, the advent of digital technology would also seem to have opened a new chapter in Ginzburg's *querelle du roman et de l'histoire* – with his own brand of microhistory as an especially promising point of departure.

This essay has benefited from the generous comments of Carlo Ginzburg. Any remaining errors are my own responsibility.

1. Georges Perec, *La vie mode d'emploi. Romans* (Paris: Hachette, 1978), 15–6. Translated by David Bellos as *Life: A User's Manual* (London: Vintage, 2008), preamble (n.p.).

2. Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza. Un seminario sul "Beneficio di Cristo"* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 84. Translated by Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly in Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1987), 1.

3. If not earlier, since the invention of photography can be regarded as a first stage of the same overarching development. The term 'audiovisual media' should therefore be read as shorthand for any visual or audiovisual representation with a significant indexical component. In practice, then, the period under discussion more or less coincides with Benjamin's 'age of mechanical reproduction'.

4. Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect. Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014), 7.

5. Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 1.

6. A thesis most famously expounded by André Bazin: see "The Ontology of the Photographic Image", in *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) and cf. Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified. Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), ch. 1.

7. Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 3–4.

8. François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experiences of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), xv.

9. Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*, xviii. As passing references to "the glare of the TV cameras" (104), "the live soundbite" (113), "our media age" (114) and "the media boom" (124) indicate, Hartog himself sees the connection – without, it seems, making much of it. His allusions to "information superhighways" (114) and "computer technologies" (202) are even more interesting, because they implicitly raise the question of what kind of historiography would be adapted to the digital age.

10. Carlo Ginzburg, *I Benandanti. Stregoneria e culti agrari tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966). Translated by John and Anne Tedeschi as *The Night Battles. Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

11. See e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, "Just One Witness", "The Extermination of the Jews and the Principle of Reality", in *Threads and Traces. True, False, Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). First published in Saul Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). Oblique, since Ginzburg's methodological reflections have typically been centered on argumentation rather than narration: See e.g. Carlo Ginzburg's *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999).

12. Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), vii.

13. Carlo Ginzburg and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "A Conversation with Carlo Ginzburg", *The Hindu*, November 21 (2007), n.p. Available on http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/a-conversation-with-carlo-ginzburg/article1952547.ece (accessed 2015–10–23).

14. See e.g. Ginzburg's comments on his preferred readership in Carlo Ginzburg, Keith Luria and Romulo Gandolfo, "Carlo Ginzburg: An Interview", *Radical History Review* 35 (1986), 95, 100.

15. Regarding the latter, see e.g. Thomas Harrison, *Essayism. Conrad, Musil and Pirandello* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

16. An in-between territory constituted by what Ginzburg, in a comment on Vico's *Scienza nuova*, describes as "the contiguity between *factum* and *fictum* – in the double sense of *fingere*, 'to forge'." See Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory and World History", in Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 6, *The Construction of a Global World, 1400-1800 CE*; part 2, *Patterns of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 454. Note that Ginzburg speaks of a contiguity rather than a continuity – a crucial difference from his epistemological standpoint.

17. The numbered sections is a device of which Ginzburg already made use in the mid-60s in essays such as "From Warburg to Gombrich" (later included in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*), as well as a book-length study such as *The Night Battles*. He has subsequently applied it with great consistency; most often, the first paragraph of each section commences with Arabic numerals, sometimes separate headings in Roman numerals are employed, and occasionally – e.g. in "Making it Strange" and "Myth", both in *Wooden Eyes* – a combination of the two systems is used, nested in a hierarchical fashion. In one version or another, it features in *The Cheese and the Worms* (here, the sections are supplied with somewhat descriptive headings in the

table of contents, but these are absent from the actual text); in *The Night Battles* and *Ecstasies*, below chapter level; in *The Judge and the Historian*, and in all of the collections – including the introductions, provided they are extensive enough. It does not always figure in the original context of publication for the individual essays – e.g. "Montaigne, Cannibals, and Grottoes" in *Threads and Traces* – but this is probably because it has been suppressed by meticulous journal editors. For some reason or another, the device does not figure in *The Enigma of Piero* (which has ordinary chapter headings and two empty lines – typographically significant – as section markers) or in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method,* except for "From Warburg to Gombrich" and "Clues". In both these cases, according to Ginzburg (personal communication), its absence is due to decisions on behalf of the editors. (For the sake of readability, shortened references are provided in this footnote, even for works that have not previously cited.)

18. Carlo Ginzburg, *No Island is an Island. Four Glances at English Literature in a World Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), xii.

19. Ginzburg, *No Island*, xii. For further leads to the same genealogy in Ginzburg's writings, see e.g. "Montaigne, Cannibals, and Grottoes", in *Threads and Traces*; "The Old World and the New Seen from Nowhere", in *No Island*, 12–13.

20. Cf. my argument about literature in the wide sense, p. 48 above.

21. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (London: Routledge, 1980), sections 26 (dialogue), 44 and 54 (epistolary novel).

22. Ginzburg, *No Island*, xii.

23. Ginzburg, *No Island*, xiii.

24. Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm", in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, 124.

25. For an overview, see Stefano Ercolino, *The Novel-Essay, 1884–1947* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

26. See Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies. Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 11–2, and cf. the subtitle of the Italian edition of *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method:* Carlo Ginzburg, *Miti, emblemi, spie. Morfologia e storia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986).

27. Ginzburg, "Clues", 96.

28. Besides *History, Rhetoric, and Proof*, see e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian. Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth Century Miscarriage of Justice* (London: Verso, 1999). For a particularly qualified example of criticism, see Florike Egmond and Peter Mason, *The Mammoth and the Mouse. Microhistory and Morphology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), esp. 204–5. Symptomatically, Egmond and Mason take their inspiration from Derrida as much as from Ginzburg – a rather unexpected combination, considering that the latter once dismissed the former's work as "trash" (*spazzatura*): see Ginzburg, Luria and Gandolfo, "Carlo Ginzburg: An Interview", 100 and cf. Tony Molho, "Carlo Ginzburg: Reflections on the Intellectual Cosmos of a 20th-Century Historian", *History of European Ideas* 30 (2004), 139.

29. Ginzburg, *No Island*, xiii.

30. As any reader familiar with the theory of logical connectives will no doubt realize, I employ the terms conjunction and disjunction – as well as, further on, implication and exclusion (i.e. exclusive disjunction) – only in a loose sense.

31. Gianna Pomata, "Telling the Truth about Micro-History: A Memoir (and a few reflections)", *Netværk for historieteori & historiografi*, working paper no. 3 (2000), 33. Incidentally, Mona Ozouf has used the same expression in a review of Graham Robb's *Une histoire de Paris par ceux qui l'ont fait*: see "Mais où est passée la Bastille?", *Le Nouvel Observateur*, October 7 (2010). Available on http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/essais/20101012.BIB5765/mais-ou-est-passee-la-bastille.html (accessed 2015–10–23).

32. This theme could no doubt be traced throughout Ginzburg's entire œuvre, but seems to have come to the surface only in the course of the 90s. The most relevant waypoints are: "Aristotle and History, Once More" and "Reflections on a Blank" in *History, Rhetoric, and Proof*; "A Search for Origins: Rereading *Tristram Shandy*" in *No Island is an Island*; "Description and Citation", "Paris, 1647: A Dialogue on Fiction and History", "The Bitter Truth: Stendhal's Challenge to Historians", "Details, Early Plans, Microanalysis: Thoughts on a Book by Siegfried Kracauer" and "Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know About It" in *Threads and Traces*. Considering the proximity of history and anthropology in Ginzburg's work, "Tusitala and His Polish Reader" in *No Island Is an Island* should also be of some interest in this connection. (Most of these essays have previously been published as stand-alone pieces.)

The examples of Michelet and Balzac are borrowed from Auerbach's Mimesis, which Ginzburg quotes approvingly (see "The Bitter Truth", 138). Cf. the interview, p. …, where Auerbach is singled out (along with Bloch and Warburg) as a continuous source of inspiration. For a more recent take

on the same topic, see e.g. Paule Petitier, "1830 ou les métamorphoses du centre (Michelet, Balzac, Hugo)", *Romantisme* 123 (2004) – where Victor Hugo, an author whom (to my knowledge) Ginzburg has not discussed, is added to the mix.

33. Regarding microhistory as a 'community of style', see the preface, p. 14 above.

34. Which is not to say that Woolf's example should be entirely disregarded: see e.g. "The Bitter Truth", 139. Concerning Brecht, see e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, "Some Queries Addressed to Myself", in *Carlo Ginzburg. 2010 Balzan Prize for European History* (Milano: Fondazione Internazionale Balzan, 2011), 9–10. As for Proust, see e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, " 'L'étranger qui n'est pas de la maison' ", in Antoine Compagnon (ed.), *Lire et relire Proust* (Nantes: Éditions nouvelles Cécile Defaut, 2014). This essay is based on a lecture from the previous year, available online: http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/antoine-compagnon/seminar-2013-03-19-17h30.htm (accessed 2015–10–26). The influence of both authors is tacitly combined in Carlo Ginzburg, "Making it Strange: The Prehistory of a Literary Device", in *Wooden Eyes. Nine Reflections on Distance* (London: Verso, 2002), an essay that eloquently omits Brecht while devoting all the more attention to Proust. In addition, Ginzburg's own re-reading of Proust has recently been developed in a most persuasive way by the literary critic Mariolina Bertini: see "Carlo Ginzburg lettore di Proust", http://www.federiconovaro.eu/proust-bertini (accessed 2015–10–26).

35. Natalia Ginzburg, *It's Hard to Talk about Yourself* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 66.

36. An allusion to Montaigne, who described Ginzburg's essays as a *marqueterie mal jointe;* as discussed by Ginzburg in "Montaigne, Cannibals, and Grottoes", in *Threads and Traces*, 45.

37. Leaving aside even more complex cases, e.g. the genre of ekphrasis.

38. Ginzburg, "Description and Citation". As hinted at in the essay's title, the role of description in historiography was complicated with the introduction of modern practices of citation and the new conceptions of evidence accompanying them. This development, however, should not be seen as effacing description, but merely counterbalancing its potentially deceptive vividness. Again, Ginzburg's own writings are a case in point.

39. See "From Aby Warburg to E. H. Gombrich: A Problem of Method" and "The High and the Low: The Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", both in Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method, as well as Paura, reverenza, terrore. Cinque saggi di iconografia

politica (Milano: Adelphi, 2015). Though the latter has yet to be published in English, all but one of the five essays are already available in translation as stand-alone pieces (see note 51 below).

40. My use of these particular terms is inspired by Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 3, *The Phenomenology of Knowledge* (London: Yale University Press, 1996). More precisely: *writing* signifies, whilst spoken language mainly fulfils the intermediate task of what Cassirer calls representation (*Darstellung*).

41. Ginzburg, "From Warburg to Gombich", 32.

42. Ginzburg, "From Warburg to Gombich", 31. Here, Ginzburg appends a footnote (179n64) referring directly to "Cassirer's thoughts on the 'absence of semantics' in figurative art." My own reference to the philosopher, then, might not be quite as misplaced as it might first seem.

43. Cf. Ginzburg, "From Warburg to Gombich", 29–30.

44. Ginzburg, "Clues", 124.

45. Ginzburg & Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza*, back cover.

46. Ginzburg & Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza*, [1]. In the translation by Katharine Prescott Wormeley, the quote – from Balzac's 1833 novel *Ferragus* – reads as follows: "[…] and it is by supposing everything and selecting the most probable of their conjectures that judges, spies, lovers, and observers get at the truth they are looking for." Honoré de Balzac, *Ferragus, Chief of the Dévorants* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1895), 43. Available on https://archive.org/details/ferragus00wormgoog (accessed 2015–10–26).

47. Ginzburg and Subrahmanyam, "A Conversation with Carlo Ginzburg", n.p.

48. According to Fernando Davis, "Las poéticas de la deriva en Carlos Ginzburg", https://www.academia.edu/10132715/Las_poéticas_de_la_deriva_en_Carlos_Ginzburg (accessed 2015–10–26), [1]n1. The parallel between the two is no less suggestive for being altogether fortuitous: after all, could microhistory not be described as a sort of *arte povera* in the field of historiography? What I have in mind here is, to begin with, Ginzburg's characterization of his approach as "a return to handweaving in the age of power looms" (*The Cheese and the Worms*, xx) – no doubt an allusion to the "unequal exchange" he indicated in the landmark essay co-authored with Carlo Poni (see the preface, p. 16 above) – but also the enigmatic epigraph to "Clues" that he borrowed from the American artist Jasper Johns (see "Microhistory Goes Public", p. 252 below). The connections between Johns and *arte povera* are reciprocal; for instance, Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Oggetti in meno*, a landmark installation from the mid-60s, featured a larger-than-life photograph of Johns,

who, in his turn, was a buyer of Pistoletto's earliest works. See the entry for Pistoletto in Ian Chilvers and John Glaves-Smith, *A Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199239665.001.0001/acref-9780199239665-e-2131 (accessed 2015–10–26). In fact, the very same passage that caught Ginzburg's eye might also have provided the inspiration for Pistoletto's title ("minus objects"); it had already featured in a text written by John Cage in 1964 for an exhibition of Johns' work at the Jewish Museum in New York; see John Cage, "Jasper Johns: Stories and Ideas", in *A Year from Monday* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, [1967]), 75.

49. Ginzburg and Subrahmanyam, "A Conversation with Carlo Ginzburg", n.p.

50. Luisa Ciammitti, until recently director of the Pinacoteca Nazionale di Ferrara.

51. See Carlo Ginzburg, *The Enigma of Piero* (London: Verso, 1985) and the following essays: "The High and the Low" and "Titian, Ovid, and Sixteenth-Century Codes for Erotic Illustration" in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*; "Description and Citation" and "Montaigne, Cannibals, and Grottoes" in *Threads and Traces*; "Representation: the Word, the Idea, the Thing", "Ecce: On the Scriptural Roots of Christian Devotional Imagery", "Idols and Likenesses: A Passage in Origen and its Vicissitudes" and "Distance and Perspective: Two Metaphors" in *Wooden Eyes*; as well as "The Sword and the Lightbulb: A Reading of Guernica", in Michael S. Roth and Charles G. Salas (eds.), *Disturbing Remains. Memory, History, and Crisis in the Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2001); "'Your Country Needs You': A Case Study in Political Iconography", *History Workshop Journal* 52 (2001); "Memory and Distance: Learning from a Gilded Silver Vase (Antwerp, c. 1530)", *Diogenes* 51 (2004); "Fear Reverence Terror: Reading Hobbes Today", *EUI Max Weber Lectures* 5 (2008), http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/8711/MWP_LS_2008_05.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 2015–10–26); and "Detail", *Art Bulletin* 94:4 (2012). Of the stand-alone pieces, all but the last are included – along with an essay on Jacques-Louis David not yet been published in English – in the new collection on political iconography (see note 39 above). The images in the English edition of *The Cheese and the Worms*, in contrast, have been added by the publisher (see the note on p. [iv]).

52 *Ecstasies*, fig. 1.

53. "The Sword and the Lightbulb", figs. 8–9, 13–16, 18, 20, 22–25, 29, 34–35, 39, 42–3; "'Your Country

54. *Ecstasies*, fig. 19; *Threads and Traces*, figs. 1, 10; *No Island*, figs. 1.3, 1.5; *Wooden Eyes*, figs. 1–2, 4–5, 8, 13, 15–16, 19; "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It", *Critical Inquiry* 20:1 (1993), figs. 2–3 (two paintings by Umberto Boccioni that, for whatever reason, do not figure in the *Threads and Traces* version); "The Sword and the Lightbulb", figs. 1, 10, 17, 19, 21, 26–28, 30–33, 36–38, 41; "'Your Country Needs You'" figs. 8, 10–13, 15 – and, as pictured by others, "The Sword and the Lightbulb" figs. 45–8.

55. *Ecstasies*, fig. 4; *Wooden Eyes*, fig. 12.

56. *Ecstasies*, figs. 2–3, 7–11, 13–16; *Wooden Eyes*, figs. 6–7, 9–11; "The Sword and the Lightbulb", figs. 6–7; 40; "Detail", figs. 1–2; "Memory and Distance", figs. 1–5 (in the case of fig. 2, the 'cited' is actually the significant *absence* of the picture in question) – and, as pictured by others, *Wooden Eyes*, figs. 23–26.

57. *Threads and Traces*, fig. 4; *Wooden Eyes*, figs. 17–18, and, as pictured by others, *Wooden Eyes*, figs. 20–22; "The Sword and the Lightbulb", figs. 2–4.

58. *Threads and Traces*, fig. 9; "The Sword and the Lightbulb", fig. 44.

59. *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, figs. 1–8; *Ecstasies*, figs. 5–6, 12, 18; *The Night Battles*, figs. 1–4; *No Island*, figs. 1.1, 1.4; *Threads and Traces*, figs. 2–3, 5–8; *Wooden Eyes*, figs. 3, 14; "The Sword and the Lightbulb", fig. 12; "'Your Country Needs You'", figs. 1, 3–7, 9, 16–21; "Fear Reverence Terror", figs. 1–4.

60. *No Island*, figs. 3.1–3.8 (cf. fig. 4.1).

61. "The Sword and the Lightbulb", figs. 2–5; "'Your Country Needs You'", fig. 2.

62. "The Sword and the Lightbulb", fig. 5.

63. The title is also an allusion to Ginzburg's essay "Microhistory: Two or Three Things I Know About It" – which, in turn, is an allusion to one of Jean-Luc Godard's best known films (see note 114 below).

64. See "Proofs and Possibilities: Postscript to Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*" and "Details, Early Plans, Microanalysis", both in *Threads and Traces*; and "Das Leben, das teilnahmslos weitergeht", in Wolfram Schütte (ed.), *Bilder vom Kino. Literarische Kabinettstücke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996). The conversation between Ginzburg and his old friend Adriano Sofri, published in the German edition of *Miti emblemi spie* is also of interest here: see "Geschichte und Geschichten. Über Archive, Marlene Dietrich und die Lust an der Geschichte", in Carlo Ginzburg, *Spurensicherungen. Über verborgene Geschichte, Kunst und soziales Gedächtnis* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1983)

65. Ginzburg and Subrahmanyam, "A Conversation with Carlo Ginzburg", n.p.; Carlo Ginzburg and Marco Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", *Lo straniero* 154 (2013), http://lostraniero.net/storia-e-microstoria (accessed 2015–10–26), n.p.

66. In fact, *The Night Battles*, Ginzburg's first major work, was already considered for adaptation by none other than Pier Paolo Pasolini, a friend of Natalia Ginzburg. This must have taken place in the period between the book's publication in 1966 and 1971, when Pasolini's attention had already turned to Boccaccio's Decameron (see p. 282 below).

   The aborted project with Werner Herzog (p. 281), in turn, probably transpired towards the end of Ginzburg's tenure at UCLA in 2006; a quick search on the Wayback Machine (see https://web.archive.org/web/*/www.cheeseandworms.com) indicates that the film's website was online from at least mid-2007 to late 2011, a period in which Herzog released more than one new film each year. The producer, Jeffrey Abelson of Parallax Productions, started out in the mid-80s with music videos (for instance, Phil Collins' 1984 hit "Against All Odds (Take a Look at Me Now)", according to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Against_All_Odds_(Take_a_Look_at_Me_Now)#Music_video) – before gradually moving into feature films (documentaries included) and apparently ending up as a political activist of sorts (see http://www.songofacitizen.com). This track record unarguably resonates with Abelson's approach to Ginzburg's book, which can be gleaned from its would-be tagline: "One man standing up to oppressive authority, fighting the system with the power of imagination." The entire episode is an extreme example of the American reception of microhistory discussed below (p. 55-6).

67. Ginzburg and Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", n.p. (my translation).

68. Ginzburg and Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", n.p. (my translation).

69. Or else in the style of Arsenio Frugoni, one of Ginzburg's teachers at the Scuola Normale: see *Threads and Traces*, 1, 68–9, 210 and p. 156-7 below.

70. The analogy with *Blow-up* was first proposed by the French historian Jacques Revel: see "Micro-analyse et construction du social", in Jacques Revel (ed.), *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 36. The English translation – "Microanalysis and the Construction of the Social", in Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, *Histories. French Constructions of the Past* (New York: New Press, 1995) – is only an excerpt and does not feature the reference to Antonioni. Cf. "Un exercise de désorientation: *Blow-up*", an interview with Revel in Antoine de Baecque and Christian Delage (eds.), *De l'histoire au cinéma* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1998), as well as the comments in Antoine de Baecque, *Camera Historica. The Century in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 13. Szijártó claims that Antonioni's film is "repeatedly evoked in connection with microhistory" – although he does not point to any specific examples beyond that of Revel: see Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szíjártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 25n6. As for Ginzburg himself, he regards the comparison with some scepticism: "Mi pare che l'osservazione di Revel abbia un valore più metaforico che genetico […]" (Ginzburg and Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", n.p.).

71. In Ginzburg's case, a recent restatement can be found in 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). The same point was made by his colleague Giovanni Levi in "On Microhistory", in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 99–100. The fact that what I call 'the principle of the close-up' has persisted even in the face of such repeated objections probably has something to do with what Francesca Trivellato has described as the "selective transatlantic migration" of microhistory: see "Microstoria/Microhistoire/Microhistory", *French Politics, Culture & Society* 33:1 (2015), 8.

72. An allusion in turn to Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control", *October* 59 (1992) and Georges Perec, "Approaches to What?", in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (London: Penguin, 1997).

73. 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).

74. Revel, "Microanalysis", 496. This was actually the message that Revel's comparison with Antonioni was intended to convey in the first place: "Plus qu'une échelle, c'est à nouveau la variation d'échelle qui parait ici fondamentale." (Revel, "Micro-analyse", 36) To my mind, the main advantage of Revel's approach is that it allows us to conceptualize not only the particular transition from 'small' to 'large', but *all* kinds of scales – for instance, in the pace of narration. Taking his classic essay on "Clues" as an example, Ginzburg has qualified its drastic leap from the 'horizontal' context of Morelli, Freud and

Holmes to the 'vertical' context of Neolithic hunters in precisely such terms, ascribing it explicitly to "le forme littéraire de l'essai" and implicitly – by describing it as "un flash-back brutal" – to cinema. See 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), 37–8.

75. John Brewer, "Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life", *Cultural and Social History* 7:1 (2010), 15.

76. Ginzburg and Subrahmanyam, "A Conversation with Carlo Ginzburg", n.p. As this interview dates from 2007, Brewer's argument must have been familiar to Ginzburg before its was published in its final version – but the circumstances are not clear. "I met him a few times at UCLA, but to my best recollection we never talked about our respective research projects." (Ginzburg, personal communication)

77. Ginzburg and Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", n.p. (my translation).

78. Ginzburg and Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", n.p. (my translation).

79. Ginzburg, "Das Leben, das teilnahmslos weitergeht", 55 (my translation).

80. Ginzburg's own example of the technique is actually American: Jules Dassin's film noir classic *The Naked City* from 1948, inspired by Weegee's visual dissection of New York in a photographic collection of the same title.

81. An allusion to Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xx.

82. See note 68 above (my emphasis).

83. Ginzburg and Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", n.p. (my translation). On second thought, Ginzburg (personal communication) believes that he might have been eleven rather than ten. In fact, both options are possible: *Tecnica del cinema*, the Italian translation of Eisenstein's *The Film Sense*, was published by Einaudi in 1950, the year in which Ginzburg turned eleven. For convenience, I will refer to the English edition: Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948). The passage on Leonardo is in the chapter "Synchronization of the Senses" (p. 61).

84. Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form. Essays in Film Theory* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949), 38 (cf. 236).

85. Ginzburg and Boarelli, "Storia e microstoria", n.p. (my translation).

86. When questioned specifically about his sources of inspiration, Ginzburg (personal communication) spontaneously recalls the names of two Italian scholars: the philologist Giorgio Pasquali and the economist Luigi Einaudi, father of the publisher of the same name.

87. Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today", in *Film Form*, 233.

88. Eisenstein, "Dickens", 214.

89. Eisenstein, "Dickens", 233 (emphasis omitted). Cf. the preface, p. 16 above.

90. See the interview, p. 191 below and cf. the passing reference to Eisenstein's essay in "Details, Early Plans, Microanalysis", 187.

91. Eisenstein, "Dickens", 214n (emphasis mine).

92. Eisenstein, "Dickens", 237.

93. Eisenstein, "Dickens", 240. Eisenstein considers *Intolerance* a partial exception, but ultimately a flawed one (see pp. 240–3).

94. Cf. e.g. Trivellato, "Microstoria", 5–8.

95. For a selection of his writings on the topic, see *André Bazin and Italian Neorealism*, edited by Bert Cardullo (New York: Continuum, 2011).

96. André Bazin, "Letter from Siberia", *Film Comment* 39:4 (2003), 44. While this particular review is most frequently cited, it is not the first time that Bazin directs attention to Marker's highly distinctive style of montage: cf. Sarah Cooper, "Montage, Militancy, Metaphysics: Chris Marker and André Bazin", *Image & Narrative* 11:1 (2010), [4–6]. Available on http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/63 (accessed 2015–10–26).

97. This odd terminological discrepancy would seem to go back to the different system of coordinates implicitly invoked by the two authors: the horizontal direction of Western writing systems – literary as well as musical – in Eisenstein's case (cf. *The Film Sense*, 123), the vertical direction of the film strip through the projector in Bazin's. Regarding the prevalence of the latter's term, see Jennifer Stob, "Cut and Spark: Chris Marker, André Bazin and the Metaphors of Horizontal Montage", *Studies in French Cinema* 12:1 (2012), 36.

98. Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, 61.

99. Eisenstein, "Dickens", 254.

100. Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, 61.

101. Eisenstein, "Dickens", 254

102. Bazin, "Letter from Siberia", 44.

103. Bazin, "Letter from Siberia", 44.

104. Ginzburg, "Microhistory", 212.

105. Bazin, "Letter from Siberia", 45.

106. Cf. the preface, p. 15 above.

107. Revel, "Microanalysis", 500–1.

108. Nicolas Geneix, "Micrologie de Chris Marker", *Image & Narrative* 10:3 (2009), 29 (my translation). Available on http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/34

(accessed 2015–10–26). As the title indicates, Gene-ix takes his cue from Adorno's notion of micrology, an inspiration that is explicit in Ginzburg's case: see e.g. "Microhistory", 208 (with reference to Adorno, Kracauer and Simmel). His way of contrasting Adorno's perspective with that of Walter Benjamin would seem to speak against Tony Molho's interpretation of Ginzburg: see "Reflections", 144–8.

109. In Ginzburg's terms (see p. 70 above), my thesis is neither 'metaphoric' (interpretive) nor 'genetic' (explanatory), but rather genuinely *comparative* – which, of course, implies a little bit of interpretation as well as explanation. Therefore, it is only strengthened by the relative autonomy of the two lines of development.

110. For the relation between Russian and Italian film, see Masha Salazkina, "Soviet-Italian Cinematic Exchanges, 1920s–1950s. From early Soviet film theory to neorealism", in Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar, *Global Neorealism. The Transnational History of a Film Style* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012).

111. Brewer, "Microhistory", 102.

112 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *I dialoghi* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992), 512. Cited in Brancaleone, "The Interventions of Jean-Luc Godard and Chris Marker into Contemporary Visual Art", *Vertigo Magazine* 30 (2012). Available on https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/issue-30-spring-2012-godard-is/the-interventions-of-jean-luc-godard-and-chris-marker (accessed 2015–10–26).

113 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence", in *Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 59.

114 Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It" – an allusion (cf. the interview, p. 292) to Godard's *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*. Then again, it may also be read as a tacit reference to Lepetit, "L'histoire quantitative: deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle" (1989). Translated as "Quantitative History: Another Approach" in Revel & Hunt (eds.), *Histories*.

115. See e.g. T. J. Demos, *The Migrant Image. The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

2.
I came to Bologna in 1970
[…]

[…]

MB: We are also very curious about Bologna – the political climate at the time, the tensions. This was when you started to work actively with the term microhistory, right?

CG: Well, in a sense. I came to Bologna in 1970, and the moment of turmoil was in 1977. And certainly, there is an essay of mine which was published before the emergence of microhistory as a label, or more or less at the same time: "Clues".[1]

In fact, this essay was first given as a seminar. When I started teaching – and this was Cantimori's lesson, in a sense – I said, okay, what I will do is share an unfinished project with the students, a project that I am currently working on. And actually, together with Adriano Prosperi, a fellow historian and a good friend, I published a book called *Giochi di pazienza* – "puzzles" – which was also based on a seminar: the subtitle reads "A Seminar on 'The Benefit of Christ's Death' ".[2] It has never been translated into any language, and at one point we said to each other that it is probably unreadable – because the idea was to give a sort of unclean, unsanitized version of what a piece of research is, describing all the mistakes in detail: false routes, assumptions, biases, disprovals, and so on. And actually, when you get to the end, the last sentence is: *Cominciammo a scrivere*. "We started to write." So, the book is about what we actually *did*. We also published a more conventional essay about the same 16th-century text, but the book was something else. It was about the prehistory of writing – the discussion with the students, and so on.

MB: How was that textually manifested in the book? Through transcriptions of your conversations, or…

CG: No, there were no tapes, no notes. We worked together, Adriano and myself… It's not a detailed record of what took place in the class, but rather a retrospective description of what we did, emphasizing the fact that when one starts with hypothesis – which is a necessary starting point – there are a lot of biases. I have been working more recently on this connection between biases and

hypotheses: I gave a lecture in Zurich about this which will be published soon.[3]

So, anyway, I cannot claim that it is a faithful account. Rather, it is a sort of self-reflection which tries to unveil, let's say, some aspects of historical work that are usually not shared with the readers, simply because only the final result is important – or supposed to be important. I think that we had just one review, in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, which was extremely critical – and that was it! [laughter] But then, more recently, there was a journal – I think it was called *Sixteenth Century Studies* – that made a kind of referendum among scholars in the field on which, according to you, were the best books – and actually, I think a couple of historians mentioned this untranslatable book.

MB: It sounds very contemporary in a sense, the way that you try to create some kind of transparency regarding the process and also leave these things in the text: the mistakes, the ambiguity and all of that.

CG: What is behind it is the 20th century avant-garde, that's for sure. You would have to ask Adriano Prosperi – but as far as I am concerned, I would say Berthold Brecht. The idea of showing the scaffolding, of delivering the text in quotation marks, so to speak – and actually acting or working against emotional identification, which I think is an extremely interesting element. I think that I have been very much under the impact of this.

And then, I would say [Marcel] Proust. I recently published a piece about my reading of Proust: I was invited to a seminar at the Collège de France led by Antoine Compagnon which was called "Lecteur de Proust".[4] There was a personal element there, because my mother translated the first volume of À la recherche [du temps perdu]. So, I spoke about myself as a reader and the ways that Proust has had an impact on my own work – and one way was the idea of *le roman du roman*, of reflecting on one's work as a part of the work. This is the 20th century avant-garde element, which is also evident – well, maybe not evident, but it is there as well – in my book *The Cheese and the Worms*, because it also has a sort of self-reflective aspect.[5]

[…]

1. Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm", in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

2. Carlo Ginzburg & Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza. Un seminario sul Beneficio di Cristo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975). A more literal translation of the title would be "Games of Solitaire".

3. "Schema and Bias: A Historian's Reflection on Double Blind Experiments", October 27, 2011. A flyer for the event is available for download on https://www.collegium.ethz.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/ch_events/1110_flecklecture.pdf (accessed 2016–02–12).

4. "L'étranger qui n'est pas de la maison", March 19, 2013. A video recording of the lecture is available on http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/antoine-compagnon/seminar-2013-03-19-17h30.htm. It has subsequently been published under the same title in Antoine Compagnon (ed.), *Lire et relire Proust* (Nantes: Éditions nouvelles Cécile Defaut, 2014).

5. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (London: Routledge, 1980).

FOLGEN

Michelle
Teran

A woman on a bicycle follows the traces that people have left in the public sphere of the internet, which lead her to different places around the city.

Folgen, a 50-minute lecture performance, draws on the existing narratives of video makers found on YouTube to build a multi-layered media landscape of Berlin. The videos are self-representative acts, performances, and depictions of the everyday, which together form a relation with the city spaces where they transpire. My subjective approach, which weaves together mapping, literature, and live performance, combines fragments of images and sound from YouTube videos with my own narration, using the traces video makers have left in the public sphere of the internet to follow people throughout the city. Through this process, the city becomes a place to be inhabited and experienced through an other's narrative — stepping into somebody else's shoes. The performance is a deliberate mixing between reality and fiction, an interweaving narrative about desire.

One summer morning, after spending far too many hours sitting in my studio in front of my computer, I decided to take out my bicycle and go for a ride. I had spent the last three weeks looking at hundreds of videos that I found online of seven different people living in Berlin. But now I felt the need for some fresh air. As I was riding, I realized that I had arrived at Potsdamer Straße, which was the street where one of the men I had been observing lived: the smoking 40-something club boy. I parked my bike, took a seat at the cafe directly in front of his apartment building, ordered a bitter lemon, pulled a paper notepad out of my rucksack and began to write. I wrote about the apartment, or what I remembered of it: the layout of the rooms, what kinds of objects were inside, what this person looked like, what kinds of actions took place there. I wrote about me sitting at this cafe, looking at the apartment building entrance, observing who entered the building and who exited it. I wrote quickly, making an inventory of things that were visible to me, and things that were not, anything that occurred to me as I sat there, at the cafe. Where was I at this moment? Was I in the apartment? Was I still on YouTube? Who was he? Who was I? Afterwards, I decided that I would use what was left of the summer to make pilgrimages to all the

places where all the videos were made. Each day was a different journey. I did this methodically: I followed one person, then, when I had finished visiting all the places he had marked out, I started with the next person.

I went on these excursions and used them as a method of writing: writing as I was moving, mapping out the stories as I was mapping out the city. But I was not simply making pilgrimages to the places these people had been to before. Each morning, the moment that I crossed the threshold of my apartment building, I tried to enter into the space of that person: through the video, and wherever that video took me to in the city. I was in front of an apartment, I was in an apartment, I was on a playground, I was in a park, I was at a cemetery, in a club, on a subway platform, in front of a railway station, in a large public square or on some empty street, in the early morning. My journeys were to places that these people had been to before. Mirroring their movements and actions were also my attempts to inhabit the space of that person by trying to experience the city through somebody else's eyes. What did it mean to become somebody or something else for a moment? I found myself oscillating between trying to imagine or relive events that had taken place on the video, through that person, while at the same time engaging in a self-reflexive dialogue of what it meant to be going on these journeys. I wasn't quite his "I", but neither was I fully my "I". It was a moment of becoming "I", but several "I"s, which occurred simultaneously.

3.
Allora, 'microhistory' […]

[…]
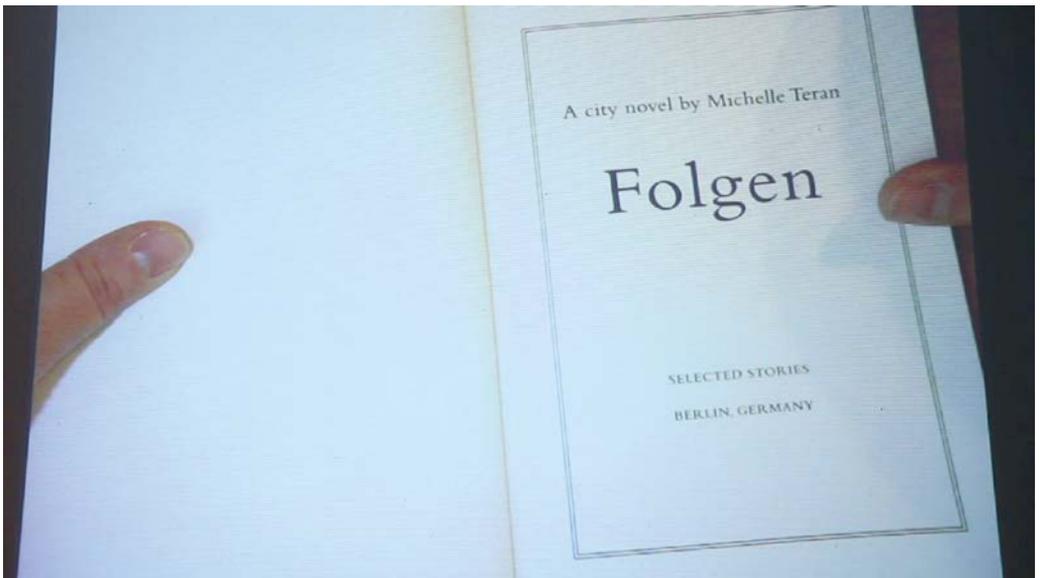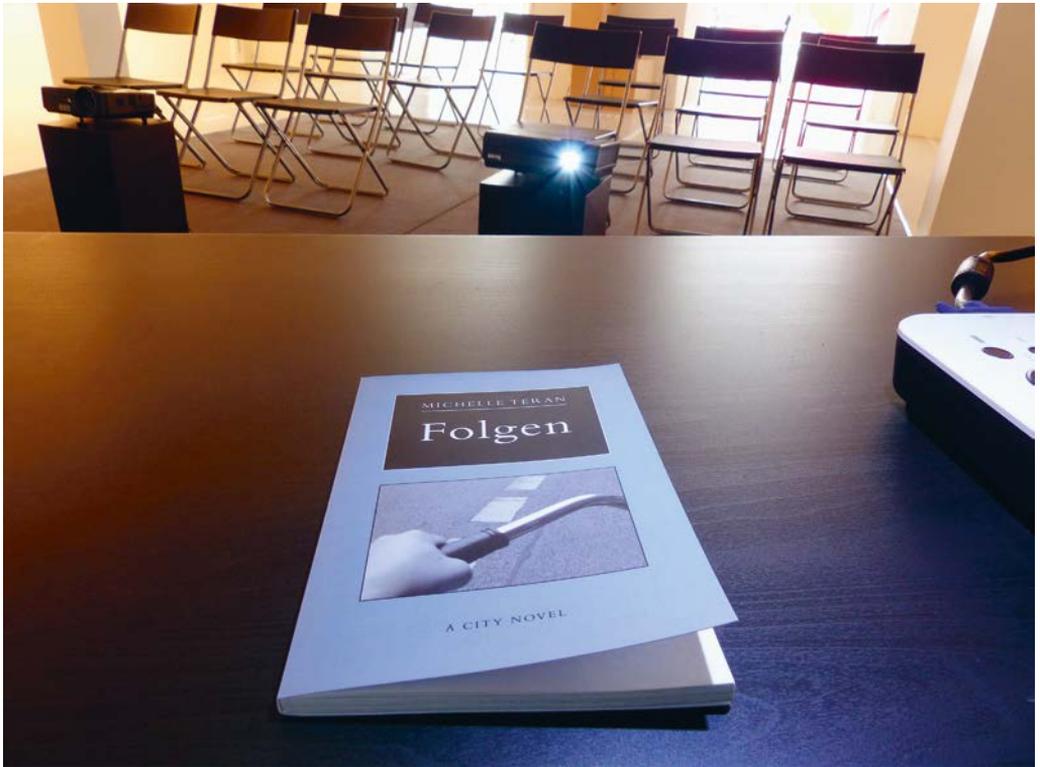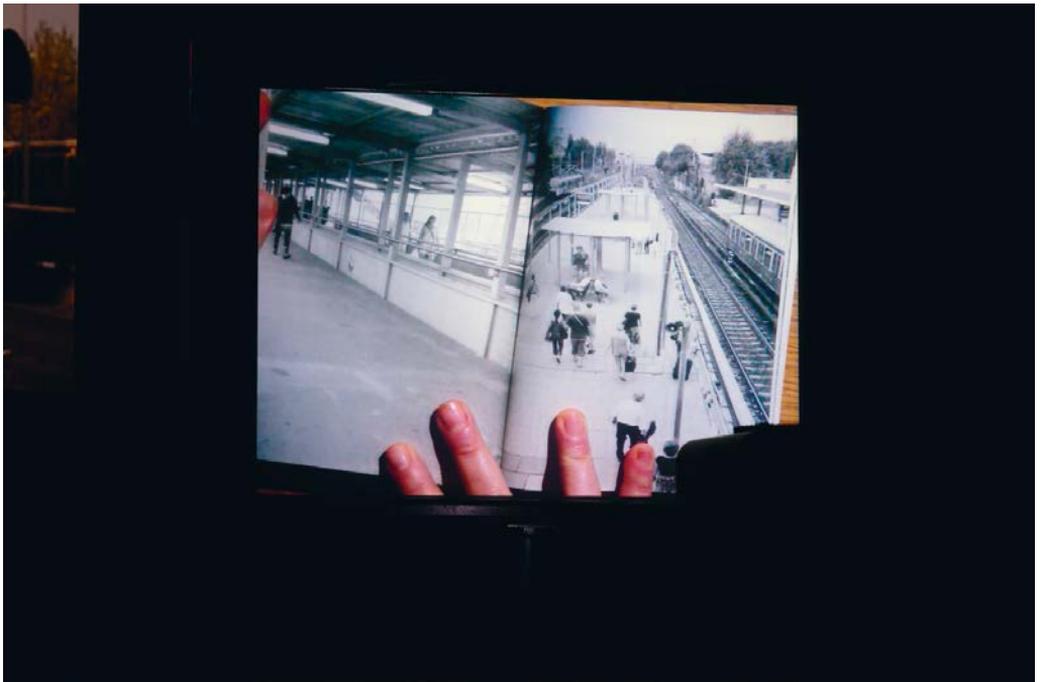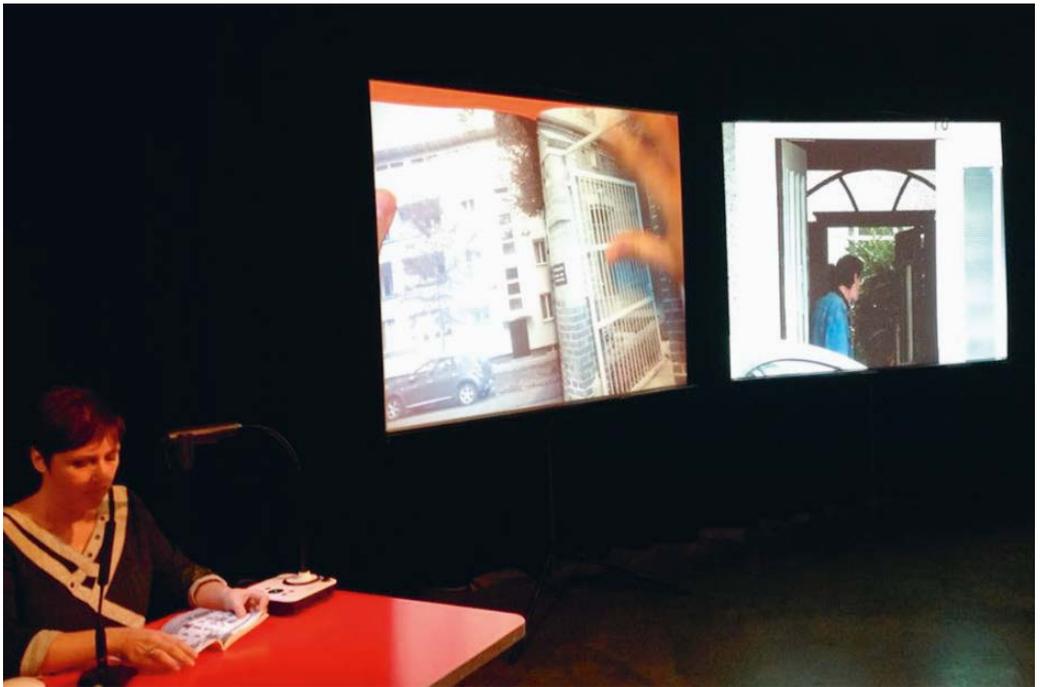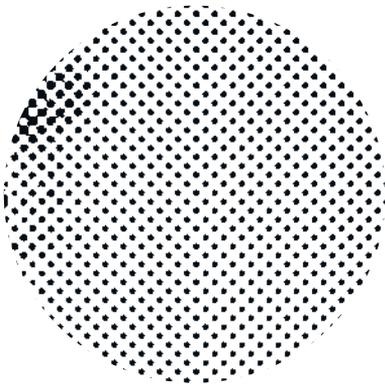
AS: So, the microhistorical method transposed into the field of contemporary history, in a way?

CG: Yes, although… I mean, "the microhistorical method" – one could also say that, well, this is the *historical* method. You know…

AS: … or the philological method?

CG: *Allora*, "microhistory" – what does this mean? There is a possible misunderstanding where "micro" is related to the real or symbolic scale of the object.[1] This is not where I would place the emphasis. For me, "micro" relates to "microscope".[2] In other words, an intensive approach to *any* topic – and then, there is the tricky element, that is, generalization. So, it is not the individual case per se that is important, but rather how you can extract something larger from it. This is really difficult and there are no blueprints for it.

I remember being invited years ago to Cambridge, England, to speak about microhistory and I started out by saying: "Microhistory is about generalization!" An unexpected point, to a certain extent – but I really believe this. Generalization is an undertheorized aspect of the historian's practice. So, if we assume that generalization is something which cannot be taken for granted, which is different from case to case, then we have to reflect upon it.

MB: Can I ask how you conceive of that process: where does generalization come in? If an idea about a generalization is already there from the beginning, that would be very much like a hypothesis. Or is generalization – the moment when the general is extracted from the micro level – something that comes late in the working process?

CG: I would say that there is generalization at every level. Actually, I once made a similar point about the narrative dimension of history: even the hypothesis is presented by way of narrative, in a narrative shape. You may say the same about generalization. In other words, as you said, the hypothesis as a sort of generalizing aspect – but then it is related to a specific case. So there is an interaction: the hypothesis can be disproven. And so we have to start again, looking for an-

other generalization. Then, at the end, or nearly at the end, we can start out with new generalizations about – what? Questions, answers? Who knows? [laughs] This is what I meant when I said that it is an undertheorized aspect.

Now, I think that, basically, this is what microhistory is about: working on case studies, trying to build up more convincing, more fruitful generalizations. The notion of case studies can be regarded as more or less synonymous with microhistory – more or less. Some years ago, a collection of essays was published in French by Jacques Revel and [Jean Claude] Passeron, a pupil of [Pierre] Bourdieu: *Penser par cas*, "Thinking by cases".[3] And actually, at a certain moment, they mentioned my piece on clues as something that was headed in that direction. I have already mentioned Auerbach's *Mimesis* which, certainly, I read as a book based on case studies. In the same vein, I would say that I also read – I was eighteen or so at the time – [Sigmund] Freud's case studies in translation. One could say that every case is inexhaustible and, at the same time, related to some kind of generalization: this is really part of Freud's approach, it seems to me. So, inexhaustible and deeply individual.

But what does it mean, an individual? This is something that seems obvious to me: that the individual is the point of intersection of multiple sets. Starting with myself, one could say that I am a member of a specific animal species, then of the male moiety, then of another set which is more circumscribed – let's say, retired Italian professors – and so on. And then there is one set in which there is just one member, which is related to my fingerprints. Then again, the idea that an individual is related to his or her fingerprints, *period*, only makes sense to a policeman. But otherwise, there is this interaction between individual and less individual elements – and the result is what we typically call an individual, which is largely not individual. Let's say, what is individual is the interaction… Okay, this is obvious, perhaps.

[…]

1. i.e. that the object under study is 'small' in a literal or metaphorical – e.g. political – sense.
2. i.e. to the subject rather than the object – or, even more accurately, to the *relation* between subject and object, observer and observed.
3. Jean-Claude Passeron & Jacques Revel (eds.), *Penser par cas* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2005).

AGALMA: THE 'OBJET PETIT A,' ALEXANDER THE GREAT, AND OTHER EXCESSES OF SKOPJE 2014

Suzana Milevska

She just goes a little mad sometimes. We all go a little mad sometimes. Haven't you?
　　　– Norman Bates in *Psycho*

This essay is an *ágalma* dedicated to the Macedonian government's project "Skopje 2014," which recently turned Skopje, the capital of the Republic, into a memorial park of "false memories."[1] Over the last five years, a series of unskillfully casted figurative monuments have appeared throughout Skopje, installed over night, as if brought into public space by the animated hand from the opening credits of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.[2] Figures from the national past (some relevant, some marginal), buildings with obvious references to Westernized aesthetic regimes (mere imitations of styles from periods atypical for the local architecture), and sexist public sculptures have transformed the once socialist-modernist city square into a theatrical backdrop.

More than ninety years ago, in a kind of a manifesto of anti-monumental architectural and artistic revolution, Vladimir Tatlin challenged both the "bourgeois" Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty with his unbuilt tower *Monument to the Third International* (1919–25). Since then, discourses on contemporary monuments have flourished elsewhere in Europe ("anti-monuments," "counter-monuments," "low-budget monuments," "invisible monuments," "monument in waiting," "participatory monuments"[3]) but this debate has completely bypassed the Macedonian establishment.

The government's promise that the Skopje 2014 project would attract tourists and journalists to Macedonia has been realized, but for all the wrong reasons—in many articles, Skopje's city center is depicted as a kind of "theme park," and some of the newly built museums are referred to as "chambers of horrors."[4] In short, Skopje 2014 has become a laughing stock for the foreign press. According to critics, the city's abundance of public sculptures, monuments, administrative buildings, and museums has surpassed, in terms of *preposterousness* and pompousness, both Las Vegas and the Neutrality Arch, an oversized monu-

ment built by Turkmenistan's leader Saparmurat Atayevich *Niyazov* from 1985 to 2006.[5]

The citizens of Macedonia became aware of the scope of this large-scale urban project in 2010, only after it was announced, without any public deliberation, by the state-financed promotional video "Macedonia Timeless."[6] When the rudimentary animated video portraying the planned buildings and statues was first broadcast in February 2010, hardly anybody took it seriously because it resembled a kind of stage set (and was even accompanied by dramatic music). In the midst of this adoration for the imaginary national past, there is hardly any space left for a consideration of the present, and none left for future generations' monuments. How was it possible to carry out such a massive building project in one of the smallest and poorest countries in Europe without ever consulting the public? The project, which was funded by taxpayers, cost over €500 million.[7]

The Name Issue: "State of Exception" and "Rogue State"

Official attempts to explain the purpose behind Skopje 2014 were unconvincing, as when the mayor of Skopje stated that the project was meant to serve as a kind of 3D history textbook that could compensate for the city's lack of history books. This is in complete contrast to Viktor Shklovsky's parable about historical monuments in post-revolutionary Russia; he wrote that they functioned "as a strange alibi for not telling the whole truth" or even "a quarter of the truth."[8] Skopje's abundance of monuments and public sculptures can be seen as an attempt to use ultranationalism to compensate for the incomplete and faulty national identity of the "rogue" state, an outlaw nation that does not comply with the international laws accepted by most other states.[9] After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Macedonia—one of the states that was proclaimed independent in 1991—began having problems with its neighbor Greece.

The main source of conflict emerged when the first post-Yugoslav government in Macedonia decided to keep the name of the previously existing "Republic of Macedonia." More fuel was added to the fire when the Macedonian government decided to use symbols, such as a flag with sixteen sun rays, that were associated with Ancient Macedonia, even though Greece claimed to have the sole historic right to these symbols. Then in 1993, under pressure from the Greek government, the UN officially designated Macedonia as "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia." This was later replaced by the unrecognizable acronym "F.Y.R.O.M." Negotiations with internationally appointed mediators ensued. During these negotiations, the Greek government proposed names like "Northern Macedonia" and "New Macedonia" for its neighbor to the north. The territory and culture of Ancient Macedonia, however, does not completely overlap with either contemporary Greece or Macedonia. For more than twenty years, this name dispute put Macedonia in limbo (e.g., waiting to be accessioned into the EU)—an ongoing, normalized "state of exception."[10]

The difference between "rogue states," as discussed by Derrida, and "states of exception," as theorized by Giorgio Agamben, derives from two different interpretations of the "force of law." The concept of a "rogue state" deals with the possibility that one state declares another state unlawful according to international standards and intervenes in its internal affairs. The phenomenon of "states of exception," on the other hand, has more to do with the declaration by a sovereign power that the conditions within that country are so far beyond the possibility of governing according to constitutional law that exceptional rules need to be applied. A "state of exception" must be officially declared.[11]

In the case of the postponement of a resolution of the "name issue," both the "state of exception" and the "rogue state" enabled a long-term vacuum. The rule of law was bypassed, and Skopje 2014 (one of many questionable projects) became possible, first as an exception and excess, but soon as the norm.

According to Derrida, monuments, like tombs, inevitably announce "the death of the tyrant."[12] But what kind of void is filled by *Warrior on a Horse*, the twenty-five-meter tall *ágalma* that has "adorned" the main Skopje square since 2011? What were the real reasons for building a monument so obviously dedicated to Alexander the Great, yet generically titled *Warrior on a Horse*?[13]

Ágalma and Collective Enjoyment in the Void

To build a monument is by definition to attempt to represent the sublime—that which is incomprehensible, bigger than us. Any monument offers a remembrance of a certain unperceivable and unrepresentable sublime. It commemorates incommensurability and incomprehensibility, as stated by the philosophers who contributed most to our understanding of the sublime, Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke.[14] By definition, a monument is something negative—marking absence, the past, death, and above all a certain loss. In Skopje 2014, the celebration of unrecognized and incomplete identities, marginal heroes, and exaggerated victories from the past were used as strategies for inducing collective enjoyment, and ultimately self-delusion.

One of the most obvious historical interventions in Skopje 2014 is the erection of the monument *Gemidžii*, which celebrates the nationalist organization the Boatmen of Thessaloniki, also known as the Assassins of Salonica. This was an anarchist group active in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the twentieth century. It did not shy away from murder or terrorist attacks. But rather than analyze the stylistic and aesthetic aspects of such built objects, more insight might be gained by formulating a psychoanalytical interpretation of the ultranationalist cultural policy of the right-wing neoliberal elites. This policy functions as a kind of ongoing election campaign—unfortunately a very successful one.[15]

Jacques Lacan used the term *ágalma* in his psychoanalytical discussion of the pursuit of truth. The *ágalma* was imagined as a certain unconscious truth that we seek and wish to find in analysis, and as a kind of agency, endowed with

Left page: *Warrior on a Horse*, 2011, by Valentina Stevanovska, Government's project "Skopje 2014," main city square "Macedonia", Skopje.

This page: *Triumphal Arch (Porta Makedonija)*, 2012, by Valentina Stevanovska, Government's project "Skopje 2014," Skopje.

Next page top: *Cleaning of the Warrior on a Horse*, 2011, by Valentina Stevanovska, Government's project "Skopje 2014," main city square "Macedonia", Skopje.

Bottom: *Monument to Vasil akalarov*, 2013, by Darko and Jelena Dukovski, Government's project "Skopje 2014," Skopje.

certain magical powers, intended to please the gods and thus to secure certain favors for its bearer. Lacan used the term *in connection with the object-cause of desire:* "Just as the *ágalma* is a precious object hidden in a worthless box, so the *objet petit a* is the object of desire which we seek in the Other."[16]

Likewise, the monuments of Skopje 2014, although expensive, are creatively and aesthetically worthless objects, yet they stand for something much more important: they become the empty signifiers of the sought-after identity that can complete Macedonia's incomplete contemporary identity. In a compensatory move, they reach back to antiquity, a time when Macedonia was praised and revered.

However, it is important to state that the *objet petit a* in Lacan's writing is the cause of desire, not its aim. For Lacan, what one possesses is not necessarily related to what the other lacks. The phallus emerges as "the only signifier that deserves the role of symbol," sometimes the *ágalma*, and sometimes "an operating libidinal reserve that saves the subject from the fascination of the part object. Hence, the importance granted to symbolic castration, a castration at the origin of the law."[17] Lacan based the concept of the *objet petit a* on Freud's concept of the "object" and on concepts developed by a number of renowned British psychoanalysts, such as Melanie Klein and her "partial object," and Donald Winnicott and his "transitional object."

For Winnicott, the "transitional object" (a term he coined in 1951) denotes any particular object to which an infant becomes attached and attributes a special value. Transitional objects, such as a piece of cloth or a teddy bear, originate when the infant is four to twelve months old—during the phase of the infant's development when the first distinctions between inner and outer reality become evident. According to Winnicott, partial objects come to include the entire sphere of culture because they straddle subjective inner reality and shared external reality.[18] For Lacan, the *objet petit a* is the object-cause of desire, the imaginary part-object that, as a kind of leftover or surplus of meaning, is "the remnant left behind by the introduction of the Symbolic in the Real." It "becomes the ultimate jouissance."[19]

According to Slavoj Žižek, the *objet petit a* relates to the lack, the remainder of the Real that sets in motion the symbolic movement of interpretation, a hole at the centre of the symbolic order, the mere appearance of some secret to be explained, interpreted, etc.[20]

When it comes to Skopje 2014, the introduction of the Symbolic–the identity–in the Real is the secret that needs interpretation through the monuments. This becomes the ultimate truth of the political reason behind the government's populist posturing, as was profoundly discussed by Ernesto Laclau in his *On Populist Reason*: "But the presence of the Real *within* the Symbolic involves unevenness: *objets petit a* presuppose a differential cathexis, and it is this cathexis that we call affect."[21]

The Triumph of Excessive Power and Surplus

When the pro-governmental journalists and other supporters of Skopje 2014 praise the project for quantity of built objects (e.g. by saying: "At least they built a lot") Žižek's explanation of the constitutive role of neoliberal enjoyment comes to mind:

> It is this paradox which defines surplus-enjoyment: it is not a surplus which simply attaches itself to some "normal," fundamental enjoyment, because enjoyment as such emerges only in this surplus, because it is constitutively an "excess." If we subtract the surplus, we lose enjoyment itself, just as capitalism, which can survive only by incessantly revolutionizing its own material conditions, ceases to exist if it "stays the same," if it achieves an internal balance. This, then, is the homology between surplus-value—the "cause" which sets in motion the capitalist process of production—and surplus-enjoyment, the object-cause of desire.[22]

Žižek's conclusion wittily draws the connection between the Lacanian *objet petit a*, lack, and surplus in the context of capitalism's excessive power:

> Is not the paradoxical topology of the movement of capital, the fundamental blockage which resolves and reproduces itself through frenetic activity, excessive power as the very form of appearance of a fundamental impotence—this immediate passage, this coincidence of limit and excess, of lack and surplus—precisely that of the Lacanian *objet petit a*, of the leftover which embodies the fundamental, constitutive lack?[23]

The iconoclastic radicality of such a "void," a desiring machine that doesn't produce anything except the absence or lack behind such an emptied-out representation, is particularly important in the context of Macedonia's inferiority complex. Among many embarrassing diplomatic blunders of late, the most famous was committed by former minister of foreign affairs Antonio Milososki. In a 2010 interview with the *Guardian*, he stated that *Warrior on a Horse* was a way of "saying [up yours] to them!" This statement provoked ridicule from the local press, as well as calls for a new sculpture—of the minister's middle finger.[24]

One of the most symptomatic of all the monuments built as a part of this mega-celebration of failed, impotent diplomacy is the triumphal arch titled "the Gate of Macedonia." Usually, a triumphal arch is intended to both memorialize a past victorious event, and anticipate and enable future victorious events. A triumphal arch is a monument that supposedly has the power to collapse the time before and after the event that it celebrates; in a way, it consists of an open multitude of events—a list that can be endlessly rewritten. But the few events that have been marked by public gatherings at the Gate of Macedonia have not

been so glorious: in 2011, the Macedonian national basketball team celebrated its fourth-place finish in the European Championship under the gate, and in 2012 the organization Aman gathered there to protest high electricity bills.

Recently, the triumphal arch and the other monuments in Skopje have been placed in spatial rivalry with a newly installed merry-go-round in the city's central square. The sculptures on the merry-go-round—of beggars, frivolous women with bare breasts (no female heroes were given monumental representation), bulls, fish, dancers, and trees turned into human beings—sit alongside militaristic historic figures, most of whom are riding horses and holding weapons. As capital investment flows into such problematic projects, art and cultural institutions are deteriorating. Artistic leadership is entirely overridden by the ruling party's taste, which is driven by political interests, ignorance, and an admiration for traditional values (read: figurative and representational art). Such a hypocritical situation is paralleled by frequent claims of a lack of funds—for example, when it comes to Macedonia being represented at international contemporary art events such as the Venice Biennale.[25]

But today's monument is tomorrow's ruin. We have already seen so many neglected and destroyed monuments from the socialist past. While Skopje 2014 claimed to address a lack of Macedonian identity in European cultural history, it has compensated for this lack by building the brand new triumphal arch. By adding ornaments and columns in neoclassicist and Baroque styles to existing socialist-modernist and brutalist architectural objects, Skopje 2014 has erased other memory fragments, such as Macedonia's antifascist past.

The Skopje 2014 project does not bear the signature of one individual artistic or architectural creator or a team. Instead, it feels like it emerged from one of the prime minster's nightmarish fantasies. In his speeches, he even refers to it as *his* project. The government and the prime minister have thus reimagined themselves as chief "curators" in charge of the *object petit a,* but the ugly box is still empty, devoid of the ultimate object-cause of desire.

1. In ancient Greek, *ágalma* means "ornament" or "gift." It refers to images and statues that were used in temples as votive offerings to gods. "False memories," a well-known phenomenon from psychopathology, refers to trauma-driven, imagined events that show as real in the subject's memory.

2. Monty Python's Flying Circus, opening credits series 1-4

3. See, for example, *The Contemporary Art of Trusting Uncertainties and Unfolding Dialogues,* ed. Esther Shalev-Gerz (Stockholm: Art and Theory, 2013); and Katarzyna Murwaska-Muthesius, "Oskar Hansen and the Auschwitz 'Countermemorial,' 1958–59," *ARTMargins Online*, May 20, 2002

4. See, for example, Adelheid Wölfl, "Im mazedonischen Geschichtsgruselkabinett," Der Standard, May 14, 2014

5. The Neutrality Arch is a seventy-five-meter-tall monument topped with a rotating, gold-plated statue of *Niyazov*. It cost anestimated $12 million to build. Recently, it was built even taller. See Richard Orange, "Turkmenistan rebuilds giant rotating golden statue, *The Telegraph,* May 24, 2011

6. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iybmt-iLy-sU

7. The project's finances are far from transparent, so the exact cost is difficult to confirm. But one statue, *Warrior on a Horse*, is estimated to have cost €7.5 million alone. Most of the statues and buildings were claimed to be of local significance, and since it was officially initiated by the municipal government of Skopje, the project could bypass any parliamentary discussion.

8. Viktor Shklovsky, *The Knight's Move* (1919–21), written in Petrograd, Moscow, and Berlin, quoted in Svetlana Boym, "Tatlin, or Ruinophilia," *Cabinet* 28 (Winter 2007–08)

9. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 97. Derrida cites several authors who have examined the use of the expression "rogue state" in foreign policy, including Noam Chomsky, Robert S. Litwak, and William Blum.

10. For a discussion of the theoretical and philosophical interpretations of this dispute, see *The Renaming Machine: The Book,* ed. Suzana Milevska (Ljubljana: P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute,2010). This book is based on a cross-disciplinary curatorial project comprised of ten different events (exhibitions, conferences, and seminars) that took place in Ljubljana, Skopje, Pristina, Zagreb, and Vienna in 2008–2010. The book examines the arbitrariness of names, the problematic issue of equating names with identity, and the implications of the erasure of memory through renaming. In addition, for extensive research into the political arguments involved in the dispute between Macedonia and Greece, see Zlatko Kovach, "Macedonia: Reaching Out To Win L. American Hearts," *Scoop World*, Feb. 26, 2008

11. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception,*trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005), 23. According to Agamben, the emergence of camps in the Nazi period signaled that the state of exception had become the rule, transforming society into an unbounded and dislocated biopolitical space. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998), 166.

12. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy,*trans. Alan Bass (London: Prentice Hall, 1982), 4.

13. See Jasna Koteska, "Troubles with History: Skopje 2014,"*ARTMargins Online*, Dec. 29, 2011

14. In his "Analytic of the Sublime" (1790) from *The Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant locates examples of the sublime not only in nature but also in the human condition. He famously argued that the sublime, unlike the beautiful, "cannot be contained in any sensible form but concerns only ideas of reason." Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Walter S. Pluhar (Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 99.

15. The ruling coalition that has been in power since 2008 (and that was recently reelected in parliamentary and presidential elections in April 2014) is formed by two major right-wing parties, the VMRO-DPMNE (consisting primary of officials of Christian-Macedonian descent) and DUI (consisting primarily of officials from the Muslim-Albanian minority).

16. The concept of *ágalma* was introduced by Lacan in the context of his writing about Socrates's "Symposium" in his Seminar VIII (1960–1961). See Lacan, *Le séminaire, Livre VIII: Le transfert* (Paris: Seuil, 1991) Lacan always insisted that the term *object petit a* should remain untranslated because the "a" in *objet petit a* stands for "*autre*" (other).

17. Lacan, *Le séminaire, Livre X: L'angoisse* [1962–1963] (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

18. Donald W. Winnicott, "Transitional objects and transitional phenomena: A study of the first not-me possession," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 34 (1953): 89–97. See also Winnicott's *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971).

19. Lacan, quoted in Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 2006), 129.

20. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York; Verso, 1989), 54.

21. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 118–119. For a complex discussion of names, empty signifiers, and populist rule, see the chapter entitled "The People and the Production of Emptiness," 67–124.

22. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 54.

23. Ibid.

24. Helena Smith, "Macedonian statue: Alexander the Great or a warrior on a horse?," *The Guardian*, August 14, 2011

25. See Suzana Milevska, "The Internalisation of the Discourse of Institutional Critique and the 'Unhappy Consciousness,'" in *Evaluating and Formative Goals of Art Criticism in Recent (De)territorialized Contexts* (Paris: AICA Press, 2009), 2–6   [PDF]

Next spread: Saso Stanojkoviḱ, *Let them Eat Monuments*, 2014. Participatory project with dark and white chocolate multiples of Warrior on a Horse and Triumphal Arch. Presented in the framework of the workshop Participatory Monuments, with Chto Delat, Face to Face with Monument, Schwarzenbergplatz, Wiener Festwochen, Vienna.

[…]

MT: Could I ask you a question? Going back to the notion of generalization, of approaching a problem with a certain hypothesis – but looking at the particular, at specific cases… Then why would you choose one case over another? Why this case and not that?

CG: This is absolutely crucial. Naturally, you may say: "This is promising!" I was concerned with this question in my teaching, because the point is precisely to teach students why a certain case looks promising. Again, I think there are no blueprints. Maybe, let's say, the possible convergence of different kinds of evidence: this could provide a sort of vague orientation. But sometimes this is not the case. In other words, even though there is such convergence, the result is not particularly interesting.

MB: Isn't there an element of desire as well?

CG: Yes, there is. In fact, we talked about this in *Giochi di pazienza*, using the same word: "desire". And to me, the idea would be to control this: the metaphor that I used several times is "sterilizing the instruments". Because, on the one hand, without desire, without, let's say, a hypothesis, and so on, research would never take place: we would be unable, literally unable, to discover anything. But at the same time, we have to bring this under control. Otherwise, if there would be no element of disproval, our animal species would have not survived: driven by desire, we would have started to eat stones – and that's it! So there is feedback. Now, this is not so obvious because, as we tried to show in our book about the seminar, there are subtle attempts, including unconscious attempts, to prove something against the evidence. My point is that you may go about this in very subtle ways. And so, the idea is to control this process. Actually, a piece of mine that will be published soon – the lecture that I gave in Zurich – is subtitled: "Double-blind experiments from a historical point of view".

MT: In your essay "Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know About It", you talk about the anomalous versus something that is familiar, identifiable.[1] Now, the way something becomes familiar or possible to identify is through

repetition – so there is this tension between something that you cannot immediately put your finger on, something that is out of place and therefore stands out, and then something that is already part of a pattern. I was wondering if you could talk about that a bit more.

CG: Absolutely. I think that, actually, the anomalous cases are more promising – but some cases are more anomalous than others, to paraphrase Orwell. So, there is a kind of flair – I refrain from using the word intuition – but it's something that you can teach. Anyway, it is certainly true that anomalous cases are cognitively more rewarding than normal cases.

But what does it mean, a normal case? Do they even exist? I have been told that in fact, in the States, the average consumer lives in Columbus, Ohio – a place that I have no particular interest in, but still… [laughter] So there is this fiction of what is a normal consumer: somebody living in Columbus, Ohio. It's like a joke. Perhaps one could say that even a so-called normal case would not seem very normal if we looked it from a close distance.

MB: If we look at normality in that way, it becomes very strange.

CG: Yes, the notion of estrangement is something that I have also worked on: making things strange, making a normal case seem abnormal or anomalous.[2] So there are techniques – but it is also true that I can imagine, let's say, twenty witch trials and, looking at them, say: "okay, let's start from this one, this looks more promising". Why? I have tried to work on this, in other words, to make explicit some of the elements that were driving my choices. In the case of the *benandanti*, I immediately realized that this was an extreme anomaly – because, in that case, even the inquisitors were unable to make sense of what the defendants were saying, something that I never came across before or later.[3] So that was extreme luck, and also an extreme case. I must admit that I have a sort of propensity for extreme cases. In principle, the most difficult cases are the most promising.

AS: So we find that anomalous cases are basically everywhere, depending on how closely you look – but at the same time, generalization is already at work on all kinds of levels. And, of course, that would even pertain to the whole notion of a "case". The policeman would tell you that it is all about fingerprints. Then again, if we go back to "The Name and the Game" – another piece that you wrote in the 70s, also co-authored, but this time with Carlo Poni – we find that, in culture at large, the *name* serves as a kind of placeholder that tends to normalize what is actually an entire life's course, full of different events and different circumstances, into a single thing that we think about as a personal identity or something like that.[4]

CG: I agree completely. Actually, my favorite example of this – I mean, of the fact that generalization begins with language – is a chapter in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*: that island, maybe Laputa, where people do not trust words, so they carry objects around on their shoulders.[5] Instead of saying the

word "table", they show a table – *that* table! In other words, to speak about "table" or "a table" or "the table" is already using a generalization. And then there are proper nouns, but that is another issue…

[…]

1. Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It", *Critical Inquiry* 20:1 (1993). Also published in *Threads and Traces. True, False, Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

2. Ginzburg is alluding to his essay "Making Things Strange: The Prehistory of a Literary Device", *Representations* 56 (1996). Also published as "Making it Strange: The Prehistory of a Literary Device", in *Wooden Eyes. Nine Reflections on Distance* (London: Verso, 2002).

3. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles. Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

4. 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).

5. In fact, the episode takes place in Lagado, the capital of the island Balnibarbi – which, however, is subject to the king of Laputa: see *Gulliver's Travels*, part III, ch. 5.

A KIND OF FRIEND

FRIEND

Lars-Henrik Ståhl

"Being alone is hard to bear. I should like to have a friend, a real friend, or else a mistress to whom I could tell all my troubles.

When you wander about all day without speaking to anyone, you feel so tired in your room in the evening.

For a little affection, I should share everything I possess: my pension money, my bed. I should be so considerate of anyone who showed me a friendship. I should never contradict them. All their wishes would be mine. I should follow them everywhere, like a dog. I should laugh at all their jokes; if anyone grieved them, I should cry."

Mes Amis (My Friends) was Emmanuel Bove's first published novel (1923), as well as his major work. The novel's main character, Victor Baton, is a WW1 veteran who leads a depressing life in 1920's Paris, consumed by dreams about real friendship. He spends his days making up strategies to come into contact with people whom he admires or has selected as potential friends. Baton is very sensitive, but also egocentric – a combination of characteristics that always seems to result in repeated failures in his search for friendship.

It is rather an understatement to present friendship (widely understood as everything from juvenile "my very best friend" dealings to sexual relationships) as a central and eternal theme in literature and film. On the other hand, it is unique that an author describes the conditions of human friendship in the stark naked way that Bove does in *Mes Amis*. When reading the novel, one feels sympathy for Victor Baton as one might feel pity for all lonely people everywhere. But the more Baton's self-pity and his ever-returning friend-finding strategies are uncovered, the more the reader is constrained to face an abyssal dilemma that also entails metaphysical questions: What is friendship? What is a friend? What is a human being?

Most people have friends, or at least reflect upon their friendship relations. In general, there is a deep-rooted cultural agreement that real friendship is implicit and non-negotiable. We can talk about friendship, we can describe

friendship, we can sing about friendship, we can intellectualize about friendship, etc., but the only way to really experience friendship is to feel it on uncorrupted emotional grounds. Nevertheless, our lives bear witness to friendship situations that are somehow polluted by tactics or "what's in it for me" attitudes. In my film *A Kind of Friend*, I have collected a couple of microhistories about friendship. In different ways, they all show a dilemma that arises when the ideal view of friendship is confronted with pragmatism or rather cynical values.

Friendship was always considered a genuine human quality. Here, the double bind between the human being and the android, and in a wider perspective, the robot, is evident. The robot is a copy of a human being. Primarily, this specific type of mimesis has to do with strictly physical functions, as the robot was designed to take over work tasks for humans; i.e., the robot became a stand-in, in part or as a whole, for the human body. Another dimension has rather to do with the traditional mimesis, the aesthetic "look-alike" category. In the twentieth century, this became a never-ending source of interest for popular culture when robots were depicted as our future equals, as mechanized human beings. Nevertheless, its material character also negatively defined the robot as a truly inhuman creature. In accordance with a long tradition of defining the human being (who has a soul) against animals (who are assumed to be soulless), the robot was bound to a definition as an unemotional creature, designed by man. At the same time, there was always a simultaneous tendency to push the limit and make the robot more and more humanlike. The teleological goal was to bestow the robot with feelings; i.e., to turn it into a real human being with a soul. Again, this specific theme provided fertile soil for popular culture, especially for the science-fiction genre.

Equipped with a soul, the robot at last could have the capacity to be a friend. Even if this wish never was, or might never be, fulfilled, over the years the mimesis of a human being has been more and more refined in terms of technology. When Junji Matsuo, managing director at the Japanese robot company *tmsuk* declared, "The robot has become a kind of friend", his statement became emblematic and almost a cliché for how the relation between robots and Japanese society is represented in a worldwide flow of images. Nevertheless, in the film *A Kind of Friend*, Matsuo's statement serves as a point of departure for the investigation of microhistories about friendship, and not least of material/pragmatic aspects of specific human relations. When considering a robot as "a kind of friend", questions will simultaneously be raised about the qualities connected to friendship. Are there inhuman blind spots to be found in our emotional flow of friendship?

A Kind of Friend is available at
https://vimeo.com/user49213374.

LIFE A NARRATIVE IN THREE DIMENSIONS

Mika Hannula

When confronting the big issues and major questions of life and narrative, especially how they are constructed and how their respective versions are inextricably intertwined, it is perhaps best to start where it all ends. This is no cause for unnecessary drama or heartache; it is merely a way of stating the rather obvious, but important – even crucial – notion about the inherent quality of the reciprocal relationship between life and narrative.

The statement *where it all ends and begins* again is truly a well-known maxim. While life itself is messy and illogical, full of contradictions and dead-ends and provides hardly any answers, a narrative has to make sense. No matter how non-linear or experimental it claims to be, a narrative simply must make sense. There is a sense of an overall comprehension that is measured in terms of what is just about enough – enough to stand and maintain its inner coherence.

It is not about all and everything. Nothing is nailed to the floor or the wall, but sustained and maintained in ongoing processes. In the words of Ricœur[1], it implicates and brings to the fore the necessary acts of pulling forward and grasping together, how "rather than being predictable, a narrative's conclusion has to be acceptable."

What will be underlined here is an assumption, argued for by many theorists, all of whom will be introduced in due time. The claim is this: as an abstraction, life is a narrative quest, with inherently variable structures and styles that find their content and form in and with the aid of the everyday. As a reality bound to a time and a space, it is always a temporality of an act – an actualization and an articulation of a here and now.

The ways in and the means by which life is a narrative in three dimensions, as stated in the title of the essay, will be addressed through three themes, subjects or, indeed, dimensions. These are 1) time, 2) structure, and finally 3) identity, both as a singular 'I' and a collectively formed version of identity, created and shaped by the acts that take place within the specific and given practice of our choices and professional trajectory.

The strategy used here leans definitively towards the substance and the

style commonly referred to as meta-text. Thus, this essay aims at highlighting and analyzing, reflexively, critically yet constructively, the presuppositions of the above mentioned three dimensions. These dimensions are articulated one by one. We should not pay much attention to their respective order of appearance, but instead emphasize how they all are by need and necessity, even greed and gravity, interdependent, co-habitant, and closely related.

Individually and inter-relationally, they are what they are and become what they can become only in and through their give-and-take processes of creating an effect and being effected by one another. Not once or twice, but in a long-term, committed continuity. Besides analyzing the meta-levels of these narrative dimensions, outlined as a promise, a sort of a definition or at least a direction for the content of a microhistorical strategy is provided at the very end. This definition contains the hermeneutical principle of linking together the part and the whole, and making certain that they bounce off of each other, continually sparring and challenging one another.

The very point of this essay is not to solve the mystery of narrative – if such a mystery is thought to exist – nor to strip down to the bare truths the structures of narrative means and features. Nor is it to offer comprehensive understanding of all of the elements at play, their histories and present manifestations. In an openly acknowledged sense of critical hermeneutics, the aim here is instead to clarify and draw closer to the conditions of conditions within which these localized acts, these things called narratives occur. If anything, the objective is to raise awareness of the actuality of a context, to raise consciousness as to how we are affected by the histories, their anchored and embedded past, present and future variations.[2]

It is a specific consideration and comprehension of how we ceaselessly try to describe and define whatever we do, narrating with and about, and it is also a process. Regarding the process, there is a crucial question: 1) which processes can one take part in and 2) be a significant participant in?

Dimension number one: Time

How about it? We could do a dirty thing and start by paraphrasing all of the ex-isting, incalculably numerous versions of so-called 'pop songs' that try to get to the core of what time is and what it does. However, instead of torturing you with a chorus of trivialities, let us go straight to the point. It is here that one of the main theorists can be introduced: the French philosopher of hermeneutics, Paul Ricœur. Here is our opening quote:

"Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the man-ner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience."[3]

What this short, but very condensed and complex sentence, in the very height of its abilities, is trying to relay and emphasize is the temporal character of human experience. In order to get and remain closer, and to be able to say

something meaningful about the character of temporality and the specific experience of being-in-the-world, we must have a narrative; a narrative that through the choices of editing, omissions and additions, inevitably does a double act. It is at once the means of and platform for how a story is told as well as the means of and the platform for how that story is received, interpreted and taken further.

But, to remain with the main presupposition stated above: what does this implicate? What does it mean? What are the consequences and chances, even challenges set up by Ricœur?

Let us first focus on the concept of time. Perhaps the most persistent of time's characteristics is its continuous simultaneous existence on three levels. These are, not very surprisingly, the senses and tenses of time as its past, present and future versions and manifestations. What is crucial here is to recognize how each stage is interconnected: how their content and versions are dependent on how and why the others are defined and described.

Another central and almost banal notion, yet vital for the comprehension of the perspectives, is the daily fact that our immediate relationship to these three stages of time is not harmonious or symmetrical. We know that the current, present state is always in flux, constantly escaping us, while the future is somewhat flexible and open for projections, either positive or negative, and the past is a completely different matter. Due to the lovely fact that it is already gone, it is there to be molded and made, re-made and re-told. It is much more than flexible; it is elusive and elastic. Or to be precise: it demands and begs to be constructed and choreographed based on the aims and wishes, fears and wants of each present site and situation. Sometimes very consciously and sometimes not, and frankly, sometimes even consciously hidden, altered, colored or led away.

The consequence of this interdependence of past, present and future is the realization of how the recounted version of any given past directly effects the way that the current present and the near or far future is related to and understood; specifically, this regards what has been included or excluded, how and why, and how the whole reflects its parts, etc. At the same time, instantly, we are aware of the embracing necessity to combine all three levels. And as it were, we are in great need of a narrative in order to be able to do so.

But what kind of a narrative are we talking about? In the next part of this essay, we will focus on the structural variations and alternatives of narratives. However, already here, right now, it is important to outline some central elements of a narrative as they are understood and articulated throughout this essay.

These elements of the narrative are 1) its being actively embedded to everyday sites and situations, 2) the constant interplay and push-and-pull of both fictional and factual elements, 3) it being the main means with which we try to make sense of who were are, from where we come, and toward what we might be moving in the act of telling stories that form a sort of unity of a life story; a story that is always a combination of the personal and the social, the private and

the public. A double and everything act; it is the great dual dynamite and mental demolition of description and definition.

All in all, this allows us to make yet another crucial statement: Narrative time *is* not. It *becomes*. It is performed, not presented. It is not natural, nor given, or even taken – for a ride or as a hostage. Nor is it ready-made. It is constructed, and it must be made on the spot, in the given time and space. It is never about what it is, but rather how it is manufactured and manifested, articulated and actualized in the connectedness to its own past, present and future.

Curiously enough, this very inter-linkedness and interdependence is the form and format that gives us a bit of stability and clarity amidst our compromised and contested negotiations and navigations in the present tense of the everyday clashes and collisions. It highlights another aspect of the directions of time, obviously tightly connected to the past, present and future proposition. It enables us to focus on how a narrative is always both known and unknown. There is a certain direction that it takes, depending on what it wants, and the context or genre from which it comes. And, at the same time, its next step, the next turn must be – at least partly – a surprise. We are given hints, sometimes very definite and sometimes rather vague, but nevertheless, we can guess, but cannot exactly know, what will happen next.

Thus, we have a background, a direction and the elements of surprises. The narrative part is how these parts and perceptions are then joined and detached from one another. What's important is here the constant interplay and interaction of the known and the not-yet-known; an interaction that also serves not as a guarantee, but as a means to avoid the danger that a practice, a language game or a story would stifle it, turn it static and stale, make it start taking itself too seriously and seeing itself as fulfilled (Ricœur 2007, 19).[4]

Once again, it is not about what or why, but *how*. Therefore, the narrative time never stops or becomes one. It boils over and freezes under. It is the act of giving content to a concept, symbol or an act; a temporal act that is anchored in its context, which is also on the move and on the make.

Confusing? Frightening? Disappointing or disturbing?

I believe we are ready for another quote by Ricœur: "Symbolic forms are cultural processes that articulate experience."[5]

Here, we get the simultaneousness of something that is temporal and something that bears the burden of continuity. With fancier words, this is the constant interplay between the elements of immanence and transistency. Short time and the long-durée, right here and a long way back and forward. A metaphysical reference of points of beginning and ending that carry with them the seemingly opposite, but interdependent sides at once stressing the acute exactness of that time now, as well as the long-term trajectory of the not-so-much changing tradition. These are then, as mentioned in the above quote, indeed cultural processes. They come from a certain background, with quite clear expectations and

anticipations, and they land, they are made and shaped in that particular site and situation that then – also taken from the quote above – articulates an experience.

In another type of vernacular, this is to say that there are three distinctive but intertwined acts within each narrative act. These are 1) prefiguration, 2) configuration and 3) transfiguration.[6] There is the background, its presuppositions, and there is that moment, the very act that manages the transformation of the background, and then there is shaping of that act into a narrative act. Like this: before, now and after. Something is highlighted, something forgotten, something gets burned, something healed. And then? It begins all over, again and again.

Let's try another quote from Ricœur. "Narrative puts consonance where there was only dissonance. In this way, narrative gives form to what is unformed."[7] This quote draws us remarkably closer to the descriptions of what narrative does or does not do . It certainly takes control of something that seems uncontrollable and messy. It limits, it shapes order, it makes explicit. It makes a difference. The point is that we do not and cannot know, and in fact, we ought to not care about what kind of a difference it makes. It is a productive, temporary move and an act. If it works, it gains our attention and gets a hold on us.

A narrative does everything, and always a little bit more and less. More *and* less, not more *or* less. It makes and breaks, mends and wheels, it soothes and screams, it is hot and cold, it cares and destroys, it is innocent and it is violent. It helps, yes, and it hurts, for sure. Lies, truths and … everything possible or impossible in between. Always, and all the time – that given, particularized time of a version of a story told, a narrative given its time and space.

We are approaching the final quote. It is a unifying quote; it connects the dots, so to speak, between all of the aspects raised thus far. It combines the elements and aspects of the narrative, which by necessity has a direction and surprises, the anticipation and the openness of its temporary version and interpretation. It is all located in the actual, bodily, acted experience, a lived experience where all timelines cross one another, and it becomes for that short moment "a time-based allegorization of an experience, an actualization of its within-time-ness".[8]

Therefore, time is again *both-and*. It is what it all is about, but at the same time, it is a sense of time aware of its moves and movements, or monumental aspects. It describes an event while also influencing the content, the outcome and even presuppositions of itself. Like that imaginary fox chasing its tail and as it happens, really enjoying it – enjoying the act, not concerned with the fulfillment of it, which – should it not prove to be impossible, would at the very least be overrated.

A narrative time must always be one and many. It is that oneness of the actual telling of it, and it is the many ways how and why that very singular act is connected to its own past, present and future. It is a relationship that demands caution. It is about having a stake, but not owning it. We are stakeholders, not shareholders, we influence with, but we are also influenced by, despite, and with

the aid of the narratives we tell and those told about us. A narrative sense of time that is both-and in its being constructed and contested, cared for and careless, taking part while being torn apart.

In one sentence: a certain specific 'thisness', actualized in its historical continuity. A sense of time and a sense of belonging that never, ever breaks even or becomes the solution; it always performs promises and disappointments – turning out versions that are at the same time hit hard below and above. They are anticipated and expected, free-roaming and dependent, breaking bad and breaking good. A time of before and after, never in fact that very illusion of a righteous, real and authentic time; it is lopsided and sleepy, both creeping slowly and accelerating. It is not about unconsciousness, nor about out of time, but the time that is-no-longer and time that is-not-yet, the in-betweenness of the spaces of experience and the horizon of expectations.

To use another kind of metaphor, it is a sense and sensibility of the past, present and future of lived experienced time that looks and definitely feels like a knot. Yes, a knot, sure – a goddamn everyday handy and tactile object that also serves as a metaphor. A knot that is a linear configuration in three dimensions in which every actual move, and every anticipated move guides and decides what's next and how to get closer and further away – from getting tighter or relaxing, holding on and letting go. An act, if one wants, that can be described as the leaning out and getting ready to go and touch all narrative bases, all dimensions and potential diamonds as in the act of remembering forwards.

Dimension number 2: Structures
Those with an extraordinary memory and highly developed ability to register details have already noted the shift from singular to the plural in the naming of this new chapter. In the previous chapter, it was sufficient to talk about time, not in general, no, but as a complex entity within itself. In the present section, we require the plurality, fractions and fragments. We need to focus on and deal with structures, not with one single structure that could then contain all of them.

So far, we have followed the road prepared by the arguments of Paul Ricœur. This time, our guide is called Hayden White, who has incidentally strongly relied on the writings of Ricœur. The main difference is that while Ricœur certainly uses and confronts the content and form of narrative structures, White has made the explanation and understanding of them his main topic. With structures, and with White's examples, we then face, for example, all of the variations embedded in the combination of substance and function of narrative approaches and manifestations, all of which are narratives that need to fulfill the basic requirement of coherence, integrity and fullness – in each of them by their own means and in their own ways.

These, then, are then studies of the master tropes, the mode of emplotment, mode of explaining and ideology. Therefore, please lean back, make yourself

comfortable and enjoy the ride into structures of narrative. It will be presented as a form of lists, each of which contains four variations on the same main topic.

This is then, in very practice, the content of the form as a performative factuality. There is no way back home – but no, that does not mean we are lost and lonely, merely that we must pick and choose, carry the consequences of the choices and then, well, make the very best of them – staying with them, going deeper and deeper. Perhaps the tail wags the dog, or perhaps it is the other way around. But one thing is certain: you must take the responsibility and choose, not necessarily one or the other, but which one is the primary version that is in use, and which ones follow the lead – you know, just like in tango, in tango.

Thus, once again, here we go – with the conditions of conditions of the narrative structures.

a) Master Tropes
1) metaphor
2) metonymy
3) synecdoche
4) irony

Here, as with all the variations of the same main feature and function, what one thing actually is and means depends greatly on that to which it is compared, how and why, meaning that none of these are strict, closed entities, but concepts in the making, on the move – contextualized and contested. It is about how to articulate that given specific version, in comparison, and with a keen sensibility to the nuances of both similarities and differences.

In the case of the master tropes, the explanation, however crude and elementary it may be, starts with the direction and role embedded within them. When this is taken into consideration, the above mentioned line-up of four reads like this:

1) perspective
2) reduction
3) representation
4) dialectic

Clearly, the choice to be made is about the predominant strategy, and holding and developing it – as well as with it.

b) Mode of Emplotment
1) romance
2) comedy
3) tragedy
4) satire

With the category of the type of emplotment, we are still circling at and around rather well known elements of storytelling. These are types of a narrative, or even genres, that we all recognize and remember. We also clearly become aware of the impossibility of the *either-or* style of defining in the cases of structures of narratives. Evidently, in any case of a narrative, for it to be even remotely interesting and to have any weight or worth, it must combine traces and tracts of, let's say, comedy, romance and tragedy – and they must be combined in a way that is not always self-evident. Nevertheless, it is not just the task of the librarian at the local library, dutifully filing comedies and tragedies; it is about what's meant with a central point of view, the leading idea and aim – recalling that by necessity, all of the different elements and features of the structures are indeed deeply interdependent.

When focusing closely on these four versions of how to recount the story's plot, these elements can once again be divided into four categories, which are:

1) diachronic (describes a long-term, large-scale trajectory
of a phenomenon)
2) synecdoche
3) metonymy
4) irony

c) **Mode of Explanation**
1) idiographic
2) organistic
3) mechanistic
4) contextual

It will be emphasized all over again: the question is about the direction a narrative takes, not its actual content or limitations. We get into details that most of us lack the capacity to relate to in our daily use of language games. While the last of these four here is fairly clear, and the middle ones can rather easily be imagined, I doubt that many of us can figure out what idiographic refers to without consulting a proper dictionary. But it is no secret. As the dictionary tells us, it is the focus on singular cases, events and acts, instead of the whole.

d) **Mode of Ideology**
1) anarchist
2) conservative
3) radical
4) liberal

It might go without saying; however, not wanting to take things for granted, the above named ideological directions, implications or preferences do not stand for how a certain person – even the one telling a particular narrative, might vote or be inclined to describe herself in terms of political engagements. This differentiation is only valid within the context of the ideological implication of how a narrative is constructed and choreographed, and yes, of course, also how it is told.

Now we have come out with all of the lists.[9] The question is begging to be answered: what do we do with them? What are they good for?

White tries to determine and articulate not only how any type of a version of a story is contextual, contested and constructed. He makes us painfully aware that we have no way to escape. All language use is contaminated – contaminated with the values, aims and fears, prejudices and preferences of the very site within which that given narrative is actualized and articulated. What's more, we are shown how the act of trying to comprehend what is told to us is strongly dependent on our connections and understandings of the very past, present and future of all of the elements at play – the social, political, historical and the psychological.

Our task is to connect the dots, follow their lead and make those needed interpretations. Make a point, stand up for it and not get caught in the styles of evaporation and distrust. To do so, we must get unstuck from the hype and hallucination of the surface level information flow and dig deeper, get grounded and connected – with the help of imagination, or what Isaiah Berlin[10] has very rightly established as the sense of reality, for which and from which there is no substitute.

Once again, the means we can use are not universal, and they are neither neutral nor given. The need and necessity is to be made and shaped within each site and situation, within each performative act of telling the story; never the full story or the finished one, but a version, an interpretation of and with it. Alone and in abstraction, they are empty.

This notion of awareness of the need to participate, and the lack of any guarantees of success, goes in all directions and touches heavily on all elements at play. It is abstract in form, but never in its function of feeling gravity pulling and taking its toll. This is exactly what White was after when he postulated what a narrative is and what it does: "[A] syntagmatic dispersion of events across a temporal series presented as a prose discourse, in such a way as to display their progressive elaboration as a comprehensible form."[11]

Staying put in the realm of willful abstraction, let us take notice of the ways history has been constructed – not as events, but rather how those events are turned into a written form and content. This is, in fact, where White as a scholar comes from, and where his expertise often leads him. What we are talking about is the rise of the wish to relay a systematic and scientifically sound history of

events. This is very much a phenomenon of the long 19th century: the not so sudden need to figure out how to interpret history – one's own and others' – and also to recognize and realize its rhetoric and poetic elements. What we get is yet another distinction of how different writers and schools of history, e.g. of the philosophy of history, have faced the task.

The list goes like this. With Hegel (1770-1831), we have these variations: universal, pragmatic, critical and conceptual. With Droysen (1808-1884), we are psychological, causal, conditional and ethical. With Nietzsche (1844-1900), we have antiquarian, monumental, critical and superhistorical. Finally, with Croce (1866-1952), we have romantic, positivistic, idealistic and critical.

What remains is always the same, the very same spot of actualized, burning and healing need and necessity. It is never about what these distinctions or directions might mean, but how and why they are implied, used and abused, related to and reflected with – made into a version of a narrative time and space.

Nothing more, nothing less.

Dimension number 3: The I
The third and last in line of the inter-connected dimensions that are deeply embedded into the form and function of a narrative is perhaps the trickiest of them. We focus on the 'I', the one that actually is and does, or at least tries to do what s/he wants to do while doing what s/he is doing.

Here is where we ask: who is this I? To what and to whom is that person, the agent, connected, and how? What are the links, the emotional belongings or betrayals? To paraphrase this honest dilemma of the I: how much are we, in fact, capable of taking part in the act of telling stories and shaping our daily lives? Or, conversely, how much are we indeed determined by forces outside of us, that push and pull us in directions over which we have little or no influence?

What follows is a characterization of this honest dilemma in two parts.

1) The I as the person – as the doer, the agent, and the problem of the romanticization of the I; and

2) the chance and challenge of anchoring, situating the self – the I – within and via the very acts of doing what one is doing within the practice – long-term commitment, repetition and deepening knowledge within and with its help.

However, before moving towards the question of the I and especially the danger of romanticizing the I (not the eye, to make that one distinctive point with which pronunciation will not help), let us lay down some of the principles and presuppositions of the I.

What we have at hand is the constant interplay, the never-ending give-and-

take of the duality of an identity's both-and system. Whatever we do, we are always both effecting and effected. In other words, we are certainly able to a degree to tell our stories, while at the very same time there are stories told about us. We are not outsiders, but inside-in; we are part of the problem, always stuck in the crossroads of complex sets of contradictory wants and wishes, demands and desires.

The question bounces back to this "very degree"; i.e. how much are we able to participate and feel that we are being meaningful participants – or not. Or, to put it from another angle, it is to ask: what do you do with your loneliness? What is the type and character of the relationship between you and your surroundings, you and society, you and the structure?

In yet another vernacular, this is to focus on the interconnection between spaces of experience and the horizon of expectations – both in an individual, let's say, micro dimension, and also of course simultaneously in the social dimension, macro, as in a structural level. When transformed into the strategies of the actualization of a narrative, this connection comes across as the combination of seduction and suspicion, offering while also withholding.

Taking an imaginary leap into the very end of this part of the essay, the aim is to be able to combine the individual aspect and the focus on the act of maintaining a reflexive and self-critical practice. This comes together as the question of a whole, of a unity. But what kind of unity are we talking about? Firstly, it must be procedural – not only focused on fixing it or finishing it. It comes together as the way we are able to produce unity sufficient to generate a sense of a certain connectedness of a life (W. Dilthey). It is the act of a quest of self-narrative, as in connecting the dots (C. Wright Mills). This, then, is the main claim of this essay: this combination is achieved within the practice, the continuous and committed acts of repetition and digging deeper within that open-ended developing practice of what you do when you do what you do.

a) Romanticizing the I
The histories, the genealogies, the background for the phenomenon of overrating and overplaying the role and importance of the I are well known. The king of the hill phenomenon is a familiar one. We recognize the backdrop, the romantic notions of one's relationship to nature and society – all of the heroic and hedonistic wishing wells that are filled to the brim and present everywhere within our discourse and contexts. We have the fantasy, we have mystical traits and we have magical hopes. In the end, it comes down to this: what is the I made of?

We have obviously chosen sides when addressing this issue through the opening made possible by taking the tackling of the danger of the romanticized I seriously. We are quite convinced that the idea of a genie in a bottle is neither meaningful nor realistic nor functional. Concretely and in the utmost brevity: the romanticized idea of a creative individual with a creative mind whose detach-

ment and independence allows her to achieve the highest forms of both self-invention and overcoming of the self is a fantasy. As a fantasy, even as an aim or an ideal, it is ungrounded, relentlessly unrealistic and ultimately also dangerous in its dream of going beyond and leaving behind the senses and sensibilities of how we act in and through the spatial attachments and situations, the interpreted horizons of being stuck with the past, present and the future.

Why? Whether they come on the scene as a romantic figure or an avant-garde rebel, what the genie model of the I, the sole creator, the genius of the dance floor or the hermit of the bookshelves have in common as a presupposition of the I is this: they are not connected. They are outsiders, and willingly, glorifying so. Or to be precise: they could not achieve what they would achieve if they were part of a community, part of a context, part of continuity. They are exceptional, outstanding and feverishly singular.

Here we have, for example, a variation of the natural mystic that goes back to its presumed roots, back to nature, back to a basic state not yet tainted by the brutal forces of society, industry, mass media, etc. Or we have the high-modernistic version of the very same: the outsider rebel yell that is, of course, free from all bourgeois nonsense, freed from the nasty weight of the capitalistic system. In a word, the individuals in both of these cases are free. Free as birds … or free as, or of … something.

This freedom also means being free of previous restrictions and parameters; not only a given, specific individual's, but what has been going on and been done in the field where which the individual is about to make that big splash, the huge difference. There is no link between then, now, and next. If there is, it is an obstacle that our free I is amazingly capable of finding ways to deal with and overcome.

Surprisingly enough, this version of the disconnected I stands in complete opposition to the view of critical hermeneutics that is presupposed and operational in this essay. Who is right? Who got it together? Does the audience – comprised of those who actually pay for it – have the ultimate right to get it right?

Not wanting to sound too un-dramatic, I would say it is all about the balance – and its constant internal interactions and conflicts. Not in terms of the audience, but bouncing back to the issue of the danger of romanticizing the I. It is this give-and-take, push-and-pull moment where we must have both sides of both sides. We have an expectation of what is going to happen, and then we have the openness of the actual outcome. There is the juxtaposition and the inter-dependence of the subjective urge within a practice-bound framed, collectively determined criterion of excellence.

We have an Ahnung of a direction, and we have the elements of surprises at work. It is embedded and it is detached. Hot and cold, sweet and sour. Something that quickens while it's being delayed, gathering and loosening, winning and losing. Or: careful and careless, delicately dense, condensed and fighting for its release from our very thrownness into the world, and our thingness, that very

thisness within and about it. Stuck, and still able to move.

It is moving from distance and absence and growing ever closer, staying near and getting nearer, and embracing the conflicts, the troubles and the heartbeats.

In terms of the I, s/he is constantly in between. In between the forces and waves, fakes and fractures of temporal and permanent, particular and universal, personal and social. The danger is duly acute when this act of ongoing, never-resolved balance act tips over and freezes – one way or another. Alone and lonely, nothing is enough or adequate.

It is about the balance of things that seek the balance that they will never ever achieve, but nevertheless, or rather, for precisely that reason never cease to strive and search.

This is what Ricœur[12] was writing when addressing the most elementary aspects of the I. It is an I that always has two sides that must be deeply connected and in a strong contest with one another. These, then, are the I as idem and ipse – as sameness and as change, as concordance and discordance, as substances, fixed entities, and as events, as transitory entities. It is about giving and receiving, sending it out in order for something to return, and then making sure it is sent back out again. It is a circle – not a vicious one, but a circle nonetheless. It is an understanding of the ceaseless process of an I that is both secure and unsecure, with a direction, but not knowing what will happen next. An I that through trials and errors might learn to do this: to be able to laugh at oneself.

In the words of Susan Sontag: "The point is not to teach us something in particular. The point is to make us bold, agile, subtle, intelligent, and detached. And to give pleasure."[13]

b) Practice

Let us start with a definition that follows the internal logic of this essay, by an author previously not mentioned. We gain this insight from Alasdair MacIntyre who argues that a practice is "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended."[14]

This definition states that football is a practice while kicking a ball around is not; playing chess is a practice, while shifting the pieces on the board without a plan is not. The definition does not only or even predominantly focus on the certain skills one needs, for example, to play chess with consistency and competitively, and nor is it determined by its institutionalized form, let's say for instance the organization of world chess championships. Instead, it is an alive and kicking daily practice that keeps a moment and momentum going while trying hard not to become a monument.

A practice is any kind of a serious, committed and situated act that tries to do what it seeks to do a bit better and in a more connected way. It is 'more', but does not refer to volume, but instead intensity and integrity.

This type of a practice connects the dots between the I and the structure. Here we have the platform, the daily meeting point between the individual with all of its complexities and anxieties, and society with all of its woes and wonders. It is a point of a struggle, a combined, intertwined act of navigation and negotiation that is never resolved and that never arrives. It must keep on keeping on.

This type of practice is self-reflexive and self-critical. It provides a direction of a continuous act, but not only allows it – it demands and cherishes acts within its frame that are there to take risks, to experiment and open up the processes. It is a continuous set of acts that are linked to their own past, but that make sure not to seek answers from the past or become captivated by the lures of the past. It is truly and duly a process. It admires, maintains and enjoys the internal conflicts and clashes, trying to retain mobility, yet without glorifying or demonizing the inherent and inevitable contests or confusions.

This type of practice is not a world of its own, and must be directly and indirectly part of the everyday, part of the ongoing dents and tensions, being influenced and challenged by other practices and fields of knowledge. In terms introduced by MacIntyre, we are talking about the internal goods and their opposition of external goods of a practice – and we are talking about not what they are, but how they are made and maintained through daily acts. This makes the very act of a practice an act to be and to do what it strives to achieve either better or worse. These are traces and tracts, emotions in motion that are brought together in order to be released and lost again so that they can again and again return to the sender in a reciprocally altered and effected state.

It is important to recall that it is not a sense of practice just as a collection or recollection of skills or techniques. It does not go back to the characteristics of the institutionalized form of a practice, requiring instead the willingness and ability to think differently, to think and act outside of the box, unexpectedly and out of the ordinary.

In other words, a practice, a situated and committed practice, is based on imagination. Without this competence, we cannot bridge the gaps and connect the dots between here and then, now and there. It is also the requirement to open up – for being effected and creating moments of effects.

When postulating that a sense of reality is a necessity, Isaiah Berlin stresses the combination of both-and in the terms of upper and lower levels, or in other words, micro and macro levels of issues and contexts. For Berlin, the task of the imagination is to understand these relations and also to participate in them, "the kind of semi-instinctive integration of the unaccountable infinitesimals of which individual and social life is composed."[15] It is a continuous give-and-take process where some of the initially involved skills are: powers of observation, knowledge

of facts, experience, timing, sensitivity and sensibility, and yes, improvisation. All in all, it is an act not dissimilar to inspired guesswork.

Now is a moment of inspired guesswork, to be sure, at which we are able to provide a sort of a definition for that missing link: the link of the concept of microhistory. It is the act of being aware of the nuances and the push-and-pull of all of the various levels and elements of the game, within itself, and outside of it, too.

The definition is a detour, taking us to a short text written by Italo Calvino (2013, 75) directly after Roland Barthes' death.[16] Calvino was following Barthes' lead and making a wish, or a point, in fact, of a new science that would not bother about the whole, but would be there for each and every individual and meaningful act, item and theme. There was a promise of new science for each object, a *mathesis singularis*, no longer merely *universalis*.

Instead of general rules, one would be able to search and approach those traces and tracts, and yes, well, also reflections and plays of light that rely on details and nuances, some forgotten, some not yet acknowledged, sort of making an event out of the everyday, the great escapes and magic of the mundane. A quest that is attentive to the singular and the unique – not as one-off thing, but in its continuity and interconnectedness to other cases of singularity and uniqueness.

Calvino ends his celebration of this particular promise – the promise Barthes sustained in and with the help of his writings. It is an ability to articulate and actualize a certain 'thisness' that cannot be taught or learned. Calvino concludes his text pointing out in admiration how Barthes "has proved it is possible: or that it is possible to search for it".[17]

But: how and where – and under what conditions and conditions?

To quote Ricœur one final time, linking the timelines of past, present and future together: "We belong to a historical tradition through a relation of distance which oscillates between remoteness and proximity. To interpret is to render near what is far (temporally, geographically, culturally, spiritually)".[18] To be sure, it is vital to emphasize the possible and potential swap of the terms in question – how the concept 'interpret' can very well be replaced, for instance, by that very act, with the concept of 'narrative', and then swapped back again. It is, in the most striking sense, the movement of back and forth, the act of trying to make a site, a concept, and a symbol become a place.

It is, as an intricate combination of the both-and, of here and there, individual and structure, a site and a situation in which, at which, with which, through which the story is told. What's more, it is not only told in and through it, it also becomes it there and then – a place as a version, an interpretation, the articulation and actualization of a narrative within a continuous project called life. A life lived and experienced, and yes, told back and forth, as a narrative. Never ready, never steady, but always on the move, on the make, looking, searching for those small or huge, thin or fat, but always tremendous details that turn the lights on and off, on and off.

1. Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 150.*
2. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), 295, 301.*
3. Ricœur, *Time and Narrative, 3.*
4. Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics II, trans.* K. Blamey and J. B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007).
5. Ricœur, *From Text to Action, 57.*
6. Ricœur, *From Text to Action, 53.*
7. Ricœur, *From Text to Action, 72.*
8. Ricœur, *From Text to Action, 60.*
9. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 70-74.*
10. Isaiah Berlin, *The Sense of Reality. Studies in Ideas and Their History (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 35.*
11. White, *Tropics of Discourse, 96.*
12. Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 83.*
13. Susan Sontag, *Where the Stress Falls (London: Penguin, 2009), 72.*
14. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (London: Duckworth, 1985), 187.*
15. Berlin, *The Sense of Reality, 33.*
16. Italo Calvino, "In Memory of Roland Barthes", in *Collection of Sand: Essays, trans. M. McLaughlin (Boston/New York: Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).*
17. Calvino, "In Memory of Roland Barthes", 76.
18. Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action, 35.*

5.
[…] narration
at every stage […]

[…]

AS: At this point, I think that it would be interesting to go back to a detail from the essay that you wrote together with Carlo Poni. Actually, I am not even sure of how to translate it – I don't remember what solution they chose in the English version – but in Italian the term is *scienza del vissuto*. Whether "micro-history" or not, you speak of the kind of a history that you would like to write as a *scienza del vissuto*. Did you borrow that term from someone? How would you translate it?

CG: I suspect that it was Carlo Poni's suggestion, but I completely agreed with him. I'm not sure. In any case, what I like about this expression is that it has a kind of oxymoronic quality. On the one hand, there is science and so, implicitly, distanciation et cetera. On the other the hand, *le vécu* – because, in a way, I think it is more obvious in French.

AS: And in fact, the essay was partly addressed to a French readership, right? It was about the relation between the French and Italian…

CG: Yes, you are right. We had this dialogue with the Annales group – and I remember that the idea was to turn the tables, in a way, saying…

MT: Sorry, what was the English translation of that?

CG: Probably "of lived experience" or something like that.

MT: The science of lived experience?

AS: … but that would already be spelling it out a little, right?

CG: Well, you're right: one has to unfold the implications of this expression into English, otherwise it will not make sense. *Il vissuto* – in other words, something which is lived experience but still inarticulate, so to speak. This is the oxymoronic quality: a science, but the science of something that is inarticulate, in a way, because it is so close to experience. So there is a tension.

AS: Could literature also be a *scienza del vissuto*?

CG: Well, in a sense, in so far that, as I would say, there is a cognitive quality in literature. This is an idea that I find extremely challenging: my work in the last twenty years, maybe thirty… Let's say, the idea of fighting the neo-skeptics, those

who argued that there is no rigorous boundary between fictional narratives and historical narratives. Now, I think that this is wrong, it has bad consequences, it is untenable – but instead of saying "no, no", I went with a different strategy. Actually, my model was a metaphor used by Antonio Gramsci in the notebooks that he wrote in prison where he spoke about *guerra di posizione* and *guerra di movimento*. Talking about revolution in Europe, he said that there is a "war of position" – think of the First World War – where you dig a trench and you stay there, and then there is a "war of manoeuvre" in which you attack by going into the enemy's field. He was using this as a metaphor for contemporary events, but I took it as a metaphor for different intellectual strategies.

So, for instance, against those neo-skeptics, my first move concerned rhetoric. They said: "History is rhetoric." My counter-argument was: "Yes, but what kind of rhetoric?" Let's look at two different traditions. On the one hand, Aristotle's rhetoric which implied proofs – so the lineage from Aristotle, via Quintilian, to [Lorenzo] Valla. On the other hand, Nietzsche's anti-Aristotelian rhetoric, and then [Michel] Foucault and his epigons: Foucault was already an epigon – of Nietzsche – and then there are epigons of the epigon. That is the real bifurcation. In other words, the idea of, let's say, counteracting the enemy and using his weapons against him.

So much for rhetoric. And then, in a more general sense, maybe literature – saying, okay, you are focusing on literature, claiming that "everything is literature" and so on, implying that everything is fiction. This is very much a Nietzschean argument, in line with his early piece *On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense*. And then I would say, okay, there has been a struggle between fiction and history over how to know and represent reality. In other words, there have been interchanges: I focused very much on the interchanges, talking about, let's say, Stendhal's challenge to historians, Balzac claiming to be "the historian of the 19th century" – and so on and so forth. Following the migration and the reuse of different devices that have a cognitive potential seems crucial to me. This is why I insisted against those neo-skeptics who said… Actually, they were following [Benedetto] Croce: there is a youthful essay by Croce – *La storia ridotta sotto il concetto generale dell'arte*, "History reduced under the general concept of art" – in which he said, well, let's focus on the final product, the final outcome of history, as a literary work. My argument was sort of an ultra-radical argument, saying, okay, but why should we focus only on the final product? We have to look at the procedure and the trajectory as well. And if we do, we will find that there is narration at every stage – but also the possibility of testing your statement. Against the narrative argument of the neo-skeptics, one could say, there is my own "hyper-narrative" argument.

[…]

MODEL OF CONTINUATION

Lina
Selander
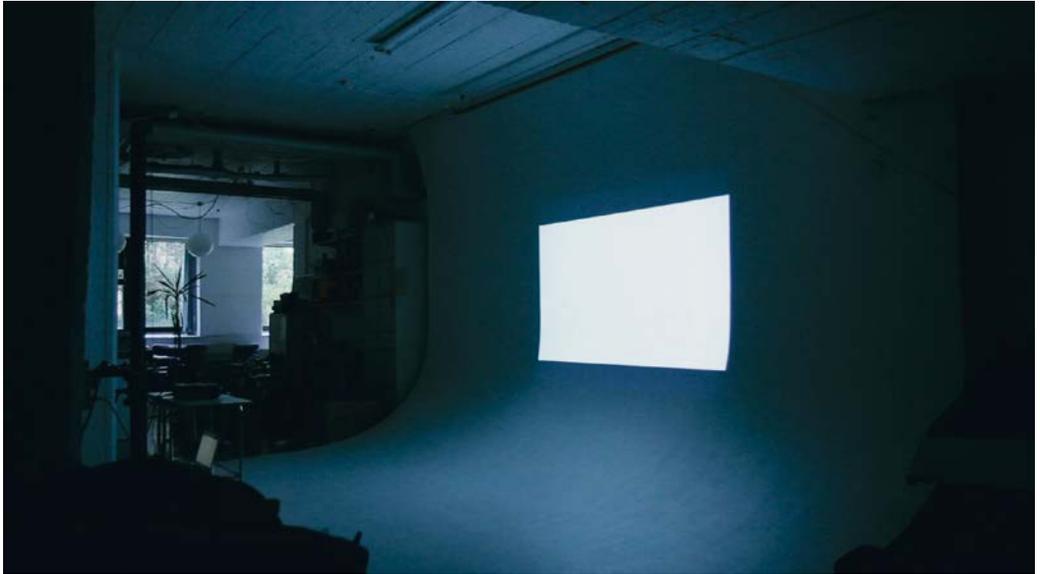
Model of Continuation, 2013
HD video, colour, silent and sound
24:31 min
https://vimeo.com/73997493

[The speed of light will win eventually,

[~~Blind, in a sense.~~ Excluded from anything not our own.

Just like with love.
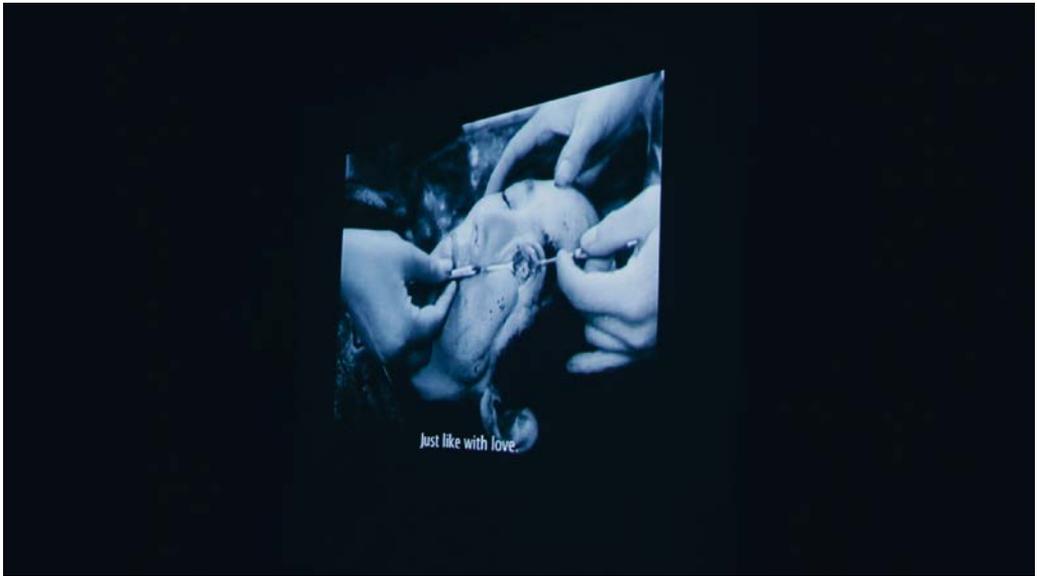
THE TOUCH OF THE REEL: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN LINA SELANDER OSCAR MANGIONE AND AXEL ANDERSSON
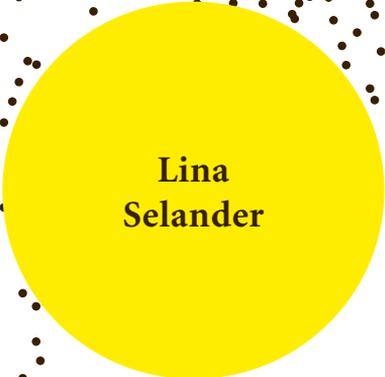
Lina
Selander

Axel Andersson: When asked to participate in this discussion on microhistory and the film essay, I had to return to the historiographical sources for the first time in many years. As I did so, I was also intensely watching some of your works. Reading Carlo Ginzburg's "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It", published in English in *Critical Inquiry* in 1993, something immediately struck me. I realized that Ginzburg repeatedly refers to literature when he wants to define his practice, with examples ranging from Leo Tolstoy to Renato Serra. I then read the description of the larger project of which our conversation is to be part, and there too I noticed that literature is given a privileged position: it states that microhistory is a 'science grounded in literary practice' and that, following Harun Farocki, the essay film 'reclaims text from images'. It also concludes that 'both the essay film and microhistory are grounded in the literary' – and there is a suggestion that the essay film 'resonates strongly with microhistory'. I have noticed a general tendency, in artistic research, to view artistic expression as something that emerges in the end, like epiphenomena of a more general textual or literary development. After watching your works, however, I felt compelled to question this literary premise. When and where did the photographic image, technics and technology disappear from the picture? In this context, it is also relevant that one could argue that the essay film is older than microhistory, and thus more likely to affect microhistory, than vice versa. The photographic image might also have influenced the making of the literary sources that inspired Ginzburg when he formulated his methodology. How, then, would an alternative reading of this history look from the point of view of another medium? These questions led me back to Walter Benjamin's "Little History of Photography" from 1931 and a reading of it in the light of microhistory. When Ginzburg refers to film, via Fernand Braudel and Siegfried Kracauer, he compares microhistory to the cinematic close-up. Benjamin, however, is insistent on something more precise that resonates with your works: the inscription in which reality 'sears' the subject. I am interested in the inscription as the prick of a needle through a material – what Benjamin calls the 'authentic'. But the image created by inscription of the real comes into

being in a context that is, before interpretation, hidden, dream-like and *surreal*, connected to what Benjamin in the same essay calls the 'optical unconscious'. I was considering whether it would be possible to read our subject through the dynamic between this idea of the authentic inscription and an optical unconscious, a relationship bridged, I want to suggest, by way of anamorphosis.

Oscar Mangione: As I understand it, microhistory based on the literary anecdote is perhaps forgetful of its relationship to the photographic inscription, to begin with, before the optical unconscious, and the sudden 1:1 relationship that it establishes between sign and reality. But it is also important to retain the notion that the films we have been doing together, as well as Lina's earlier works, are in no way outside a textual order. They are intensely preoccupied with the relationship between the levels of the photographic and the discursive. Two distinct forces are at play: a love for the image that points towards something outside of itself, and a constant undermining of the relationship between text and image. I imagine that this outside of the image, its context or place within a discursive order, in an archive perhaps, is dependent on text, and our images and sequences of images have an obvious, but vague, connection to this order. At the same time, and maybe even in the very same movement that binds them to a textual order, the works establish or try to establish independence on the level of the photographic or cinematic inscription.

Lina Selander: The films have also become more and more silent, with less text, even though *The Offspring Resembles the Parent* somewhat contradicts this. But one can think of it in terms of a search for some kind of hidden ideogram or pictogram that takes place in the editing process and that guides a gaze that edits. There is something like a text-ghost contained in the visual, a sign-like entity that cannot completely manifest itself. The image lingers in front of the viewer, waiting, creating tension on the surface in an unfolding process of (pseudo)revelation where every image is preceded and is followed by another image.

Axel: So how would you formulate the relationship between image and text? If I understand you correctly, the image obscures the text at the same time as it makes a certain type of reading possible.

Lina: I think that the text/image polarity can be understood through the analogy of rhythm and narrative. In the works, the images represent a rhythm that develops a stronger force than the textual inscription in terms of narrative. But perhaps I am mixing things up more than necessary here. I mean, what is it that 'sears' a subject and creates authenticity? Perhaps it makes more sense to think of a dynamic process of oscillation between the readable and the indecipherable.

Oscar: I can't help but think of that early work of yours, when you were just out of art school. The photograph, the needle, the text…

Lina: Yes! When I was sewing photographs in 1999 in the work *117 of 146 Instamatic* Pictures. I worked through almost my entire family photo album, connecting different parts of the motifs on the photos with each other as a way

to investigate the codification of these images, to understand what they were really about, in an emotional yet strict way.

Oscar: You also meticulously described the scenes in text. A small text; a line or two accompanying every photo. So, first there are the simple images, then the thread doing something to them, highlighting some relations, and then a text describing this engagement.

Lina: Yes, the needlework expressed a strong wish to establish relationships, and then I described, in words, as exactly as possible, what the needle and the thread had done with the photographs. It was a critique, a judgment, but it also added drama to an exquisitely uninteresting family album. In the end they were digitalized and transformed into sound by a computer program. I remember regarding this sound as the detached and merciless truth about these photos, their motifs, the people in them, the relationships… The final and truthful verdict. A sound.

Axel: It is interesting to think of both microhistory and the essay film as also being united in the establishment of a certain dynamic relationship between the singular and the context, the trace and more comprehensive knowledge. I just wanted to suggest that the essay film constantly questions the literary context in which omniscience is possible; it does this by being in conversation with an optical unconscious in which everything is seen somewhat obliquely, like the skull in Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* that you use in *Silphium*. The historian, however quirky his subject matter, has to have faith in context, and exits the discipline if she or he questions it too radically.

Oscar: We – or I should perhaps say I, as there might be a difference between Lina and me here – try to be forgetful of context and focus on the details instead. The meaning, in a hermeneutical sense, is external to this constellation of details that on the surface appear to be contingent on one another. I don't know, I have no predilection for context, other than the one created by the work.

Lina: But at the same time, the context is there whether you want it or not, and it carries something with it. It can, for example, be important that an image is really from Hiroshima.

Oscar: Yes, OK, but it almost appears to be against some law to use images from so many contexts together at once. I still think that there is a strong desire to abandon the context, a wish to save the particular and singular from a unifying totality. In other words, to help the image so that it can escape the expectations placed on it and maybe even create a new context in the work. I can even feel badly sometimes and question myself. There is, after all, an implicit rule that one has to use images responsibly; that one should show respect for the origin of the image, as well as to its commonly understood meaning. From the point of view of the discipline of history, one could say that artists can create *any* kind of histories. At the same time, an artist's disregard for the ethics demanded by the context can seem almost criminal.

Axel: Here I might disagree slightly. At the most abstract level, one could imagine a larger 'optical unconscious' as a Warburgian chain of figurations, but in your works I experience a very strong political context that organizes this unconscious and forcefully wishes to make partly disjointed montages in order to let a narrative emerge that has been left out from so many other discourses and image productions. This is what I am after, in a sense: that there is a relationship between this optical context/unconscious and the detailed conscious inscriptions of the 'authentic' that is dynamic and real at the same time. But the relationship is, no doubt, complicated.

Oscar: Yes, I am probably the victim of some rather big misunderstanding here. I notice that many people react with surprise or restrained disapproval whenever I try to formulate this. What I am trying to say, I guess, might have more to do with the unconscious fear involved in artistic creation – the fear that it, at some deep and uncanny level, is random.

Axel: But in my understanding, the randomness is tempered by a constant conversation with the basic unit of the photographic inscription. In *To the Vision Machine*, *Model of Continuation* and *Silphium*, I see the development of a relationship into a technical story about context/inscription through the optical gaze. They show so well how the room/camera is constitutive of the optical unconscious, how Benjamin's 'authentic' is linked to an optical unconscious in anamorphic ways. Of course, this raises the question of that problematic notion of the 'authentic' that Benjamin uses. Can the 'authentic' only be understood consciously? I was thinking that now maybe we could return to the idea of images speaking, even if they do not speak *text*. Or do they speak through something? Or is it we who make them speak?

Lina: The image speaks, but the question is in what language. This is brought out more in the juxtapositions at the editing stage. Take the hollowed-out tree stump in *Silphium*, which is part of a surveillance machine with a camera inside, but at the same time also an image of the most primitive nature; its two holes make a face, which is the first thing that a baby sees of the world: the human face. In this sense, it is also an ur-image, one that almost defies words. And it is also connected to the tree trunk mask of a shaman on Tierra del Fuego in another shot. For me, this is the most vertiginous part of working with images: not a literary narration, but an articulation all the same. There is something there, even if we know nothing or very little about the context. So yes, I think that images speak. They really do. I have always been interested in bringing a large and heavy political context to a detailed and minute level. It is on this level that I – or we – can control the articulations in an editing context, a context that is not hierarchal in the same manner. A cloud can be as important as an over-determined symbol.

Axel: To turn to the anthropology of Clifford Geertz, which can be linked to the new kinds of historicism of figures such as Ginzburg, Natalie Zemon Davis and Stephen Greenblatt, maybe images even speak *thickly*, with a thickness

that similarly questions hierarchies. Everything is potentially important in this description. It is detail and context at the same time, at least to a certain extent. There is a different kind of causality that has a difficult time, for example, making sense of random clouds in the sky. Here, cinema and literature meet in a better manner than in Ginzburg's text – in the cinematic continuum of modernism. I am thinking of works like *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, where story has a limited timeframe, but everything that happens within it at least gives the illusion of being equally important, down to seemingly irrelevant details.

Oscar: I think that this continuum, detail and context and, as you put it, the thickness, has a lot to do with what Lina said before about how the image lingers in front of the viewer. The image becomes a field of tensions and undetermined power relations.

Axel: Yes, let us talk more about that. It seems to be here that we can locate the intersection between the detail/inscription and the context/montage. The sidelong gaze that I mentioned above, for example, seems to be a key part of your work.

Lina: Since I was a student, I have been interested in the flatness of the image – to what extent it is impenetrable or penetrable, in that there is a gap between reality and image. In *Silphium*, for example, the camera reveals the secret in the Holbein painting. The ambassadors are depicted together with the emblems of wealth, knowledge and superiority of the countries they represent. A contradicting image is hidden until you view the painting from a specific angle, but when you do, a human skull becomes visible: the sign of mortality. In *Silphium* this image oscillates in and out of visibility; the painted image emerges as if a burst of light in the darkness. It is hard to say just what this is or what it means, but along the lines that you, Axel, have sketched here, I think we can understand this scene as an intersection where the problem of authenticity becomes manifest, among other things. This problem is also known as 'voice'… that the image can speak, through the viewers' silence, through the skewed, the glitch, through the gestures of a 'show and tell' where the show and the tell... what shall we say... try to find a rhythm of their own.

Oscar: I just have to mention this image that we have been looking at recently. A photo of a diorama with a stuffed owl...

Lina: ... that is mounted in front of a huge photo of some nature scenery, and the sharp shadow of the owl falls on the photo wall behind it.

Axel: Could one think of three levels here, in abstract terms? On the first one, we have the painterly, where all exists in the flatness of the image. On the second one, we have the photograph, seen through the eyes of someone like Stanley Cavell: in the photograph as opposed to the painting, as it is always possible to imagine what an object in the image conceals, what is behind a photographed building for example. On the third level, we are instead talking about active processes of inscription, and this is about the needle and the surface it will hit, but

in an important way also about the space that the needle has to travel in order to hit its aim. In your works I often experience a feeling of seeing the slanted shadow of that which inscribes. Maybe it is even the shadow of the context, or of the optical unconscious.

Oscar: Yes, like a representation that carries all these different levels within itself. Its flatness is deceptive, and there is a point to that too. There is a beautiful little fragment in Robert Bresson's *Notes on Cinematography* where he writes about the desire to flatten the image as though he was ironing it, but without making it thinner in any way; just to make it all fit the same surface. It is interesting to think about a difference between inscription and image. Inscription carries all these complex layers, but an image can become thick, yet flat. The needle and the surface it perforates are two fundamentally different things, but the cinematic image can achieve a suspension of this difference through the continuum.

Axel: I have also been thinking about this in rather the opposite manner: that your works often achieve a performative figuration of the difference between the inscribing and the inscribed. Even in the step between two works, like the one that links *To the Vision Machine* and *Model of Continuation*. Almost like a wish to take a step away from the inscribed and flat image in order to gain a greater perspective and to see what is going on, and this *going on* is often stipulated by a technical reality. There is not only the optical unconscious, but also a technical consciousness, which is rather concrete.

Lina: I would say that there is an ongoing chain of substitutions., If the gaze at one point takes the position of the needle against the paper; i.e., the screen, then this position can be subtly absorbed into the flow of images. The location of the inscribing act moves around between all possible positions within the optical unconscious. I think of the long shot in *Silphium* from a botanical garden with four different levels of plants; real plants, illustrated, shadows, and mirrors; this is multiplicity at the same time as it is singularity. Or the shot in *The Vision Machine*, later re-filmed in *Model of Continuation*, of the stone staircase with the unintentional shadow of the man who was incinerated by the explosion of the atomic bomb. This image also contains the reflection of a pair of legs belonging to someone looking at the photograph in the Memorial Museum in Hiroshima, where I found it.

Axel: Yes, that is a beautiful example of a non-literary staging of the micro and the macro, and I would say that both the optical and the technical levels of understanding condition it. And it is a good opening to return to politics. I want to speak a little about ghosts: the past, seeing as this is what ultimately forcefully connects these films with the discipline of history. Not merely in terms of the image being a recording of the past, but also in denoting a very specific shift in which socialism has passed from being, for its enemies, a menacing ghost – like the specter that Marx speaks about in *The Communist Manifesto* – to being a ghost for the simple fact that it is dead: out of context, but still dictating the context. Where

is the specter in the image when it is so patently removed from the 'here and now'?

Lina: I am also thinking of the personal context here; this is something I showed in *When the Sun Sets It's All Red, Then It Disappears*, concerning my personal trajectory with my father being a Maoist and my longing for him and a longing for his world, which was so strongly shaped by passion and engagement. The passage from communism to capitalism is very relevant for someone like me, having grown up in a communist family.

Oscar: Is the ghost the general face of nostalgia?

Lina: Not only that. The emotional layers, related to personal history, are not the same as the purely political context.

Oscar: Yes, but one dreams of the workers taking over the factory. And the fantasy is that what one does will have something to do with such an event. An illusion. But [*to Axel*] we cannot give you the answer that contains the artist's total control over the work.

Axel: Totality concerns me much less than the difference in consistency of various contexts.

Lina: I am thinking of the shot in *When the Sun Sets* where a stain on the original film of Mao swimming over the Yangtze River meets the flash from my camera, my gaze. I see that as one kind of ghost, or as a testament of my wish to somehow enter the material, and to enter the world of my father, from which I was excluded.

Axel: Again, the flash in the image underlines this recurrent theme of the room as a technical/optical element of photography, represented in a performative figuration. What is reality, in the end? Greenblatt speaks of the anecdote as 'the touch of the real', in that it gives the reader a feeling for authenticity. But inscription carries its own double nature. The needle is not the same thing as the perforation; there is a room in between where the image takes place. In the light of this, the notion of 'the touch of the real' seems like a rather naïve literary model. Just to return to the starting question of whether one could not see the film essay behind microhistory rather than vice versa, thinking back to early film essays like Alain Resnais' 1956 *All the World's Memory*. Can we talk about 'the touch of the reel' instead?

Oscar: I think that the room naturally belongs to the film essay. It creates a space for reflection. Or rather, it performs this space.

Lina: There is also the further dimension of how the works are installed in a room, an exhibition space.

Oscar: And this also forms a dialogue between the cinematic room and the room for reflection.

Lina: The installations become something like meta-montages between different films where the spectator can merge several films into one totality. In Venice, when the voice in *The Offspring Resembles the Parent* says 'image', it also speaks to all the other screens. The installation is united in one totality, but it is

a specific or qualified totality that is not the same as omniscient narration. The sound creates a presence, and you never experience the same room twice. The sound is un-synced with the whole, and yet together with the images and the objects, it creates the impression of the internal movements in a complicated clockwork measuring some unknown quality. This auditory dimension mirrors the sedimentations of pictorial meanings. The works revolve, in one way or another, around the status of the image – as representation, memory, object, imprint or surface – and our relationships to it. They examine the official representations of historical events, as well as the visual languages and apparatuses that produce them, thereby underlining that history, in many respects, is the history of recording devices and technologies. This focus on the specificity of inscription also stresses the fact that the montage and the meta-montage cannot be seamlessly juxtaposed with metanarratives. In a way, this is also the story of modernity, its desire for totality and its failure to achieve it.

Axel: The *meta*-level is interesting here – thinking about how microhistory and new historicism can be said to be linked to the gradual evaporations of historical metanarratives, *grands récits*, in post-war historiography.

Lina: This is represented on all levels, from installations to the individual films. I also tried to explore the element of performative editing in *Anteroom of the Real*, where I film my hands sorting through images from the ghost town of Pripyat, outside of Chernobyl. Almost like a manual film that explores the difference between the photo and the moving image. The hands also show in a concrete way that the creation of history is actually based on somebody's decisions.

Axel: The mention of Pripyat and this work makes me think that two themes we have spoken about intersect with uncanny precision. The sealed city of Pripyat, contaminated at the very end of the USSR era, is like the room of Communism frozen in time, a spectral ghost-room/camera, in other words. It contains the consistencies of a great number of contexts, including, of course, the meta-narratological one, but expressed here through both the optical unconscious and the technical consciousness. If we allow ourselves yet another pun on real/reel, given the horrific nature of the historic event, this also seems like an 'Anteroom of the Reel'. A sealed room that intermittently opens to give hope that a link can be established between the inscription and the unconscious, for those willing to look from a different angle.

The films by Lina Selander in this book are available at https://vimeo.com/linaselander.

Top: *Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut*, 2011 (projection).

Bottom: *Silphium*, 2014 (projection) and Working Archive, 2015 (vitrine with radiographs, fossils, stone containing uranium, ancient coin with Silphium plant, 140 photographs from the film Anteroom of the Real, video of Anteroom of the Real on an Ipad, publications and documents).
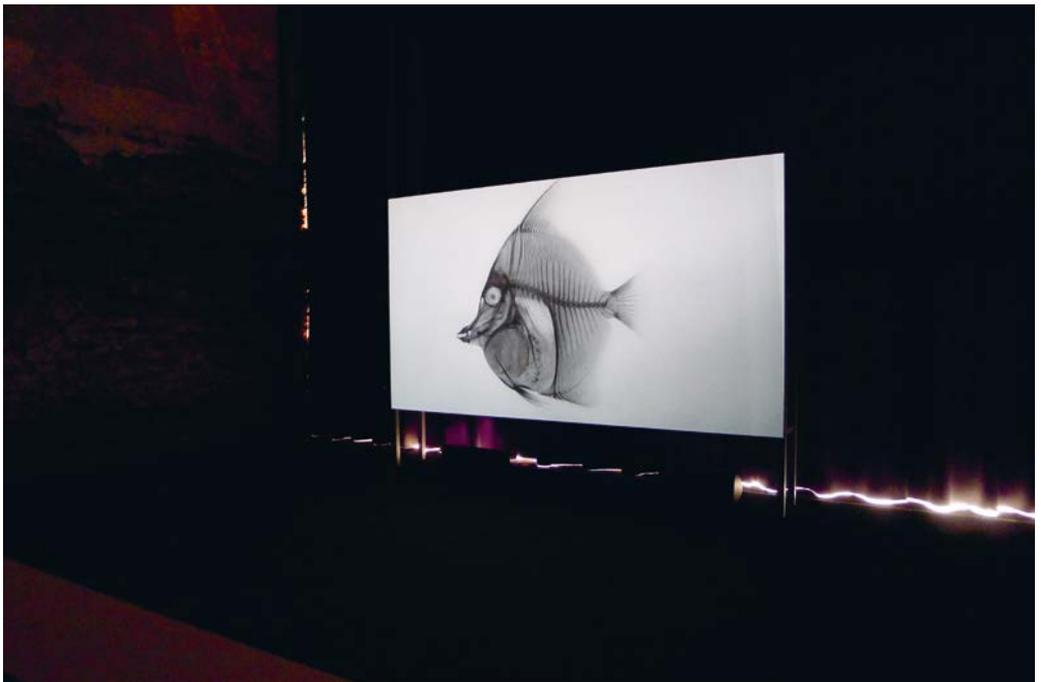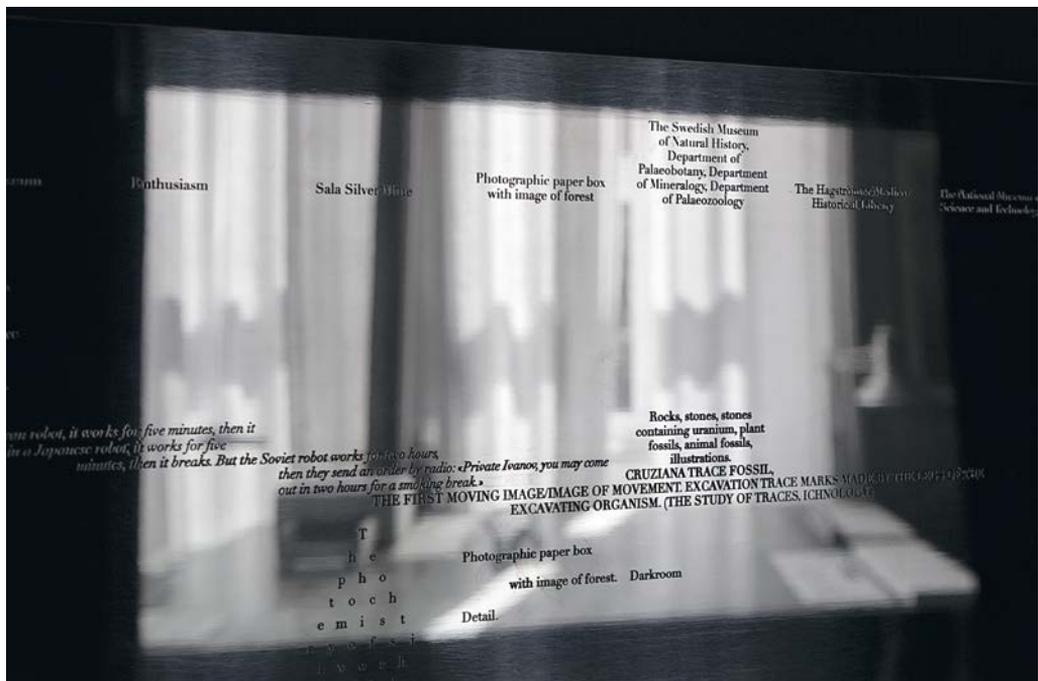
Previous spread: *Silphium*, 2014 (projection).

This page:
Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut, 2011
(Stainless-steel text plaque, 90 x 50 cm)

Installation view, the Swedish Pavilion at the
56th International Art Exhibition of la Biennale
di Venezia: Lina Selander, *Excavation of the Image –
Imprint, shadow, spectre, thought*, 2015.
Commissioned by Moderna Museet.
© Lina Selander. Photo: Andrea Rossetti.

Right page: *Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut*,
2011 (vitrine with 22 radiographs).

Next spreads:
Model of Continuation, 2013 (projection), *Working
Archive*, 2015 (vitrine) and *The Offspring Resembles
the Parent*, 2015 (projection).

The Offspring Resembles the Parent, 2015
(projection).

SILPHIUM

Lina
Selander

A record of my capture, imprisonment and return to what later had become a museum; and the tentative escape.
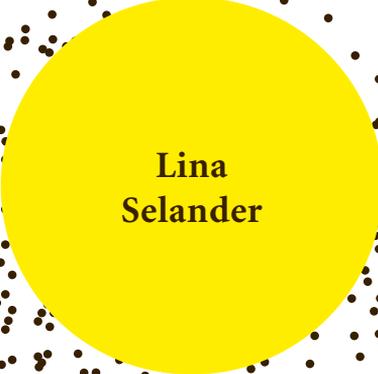
Silphium, 2014
HD video, b/w, mute and sound
With Oscar Mangione
22:00 min
https://vimeo.com/86547164

Fishing boats off the coast of Cyrenaica.

Real children.
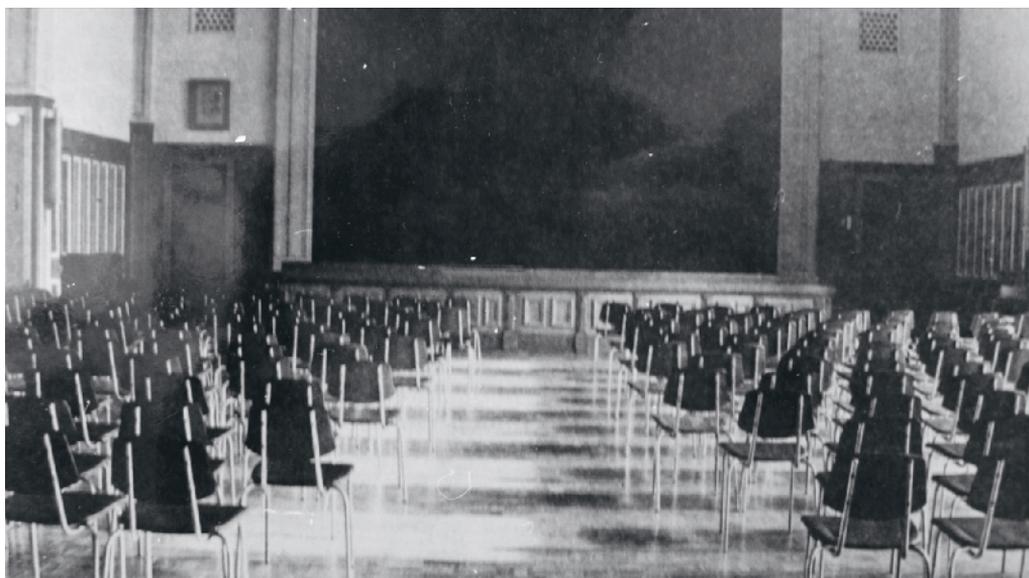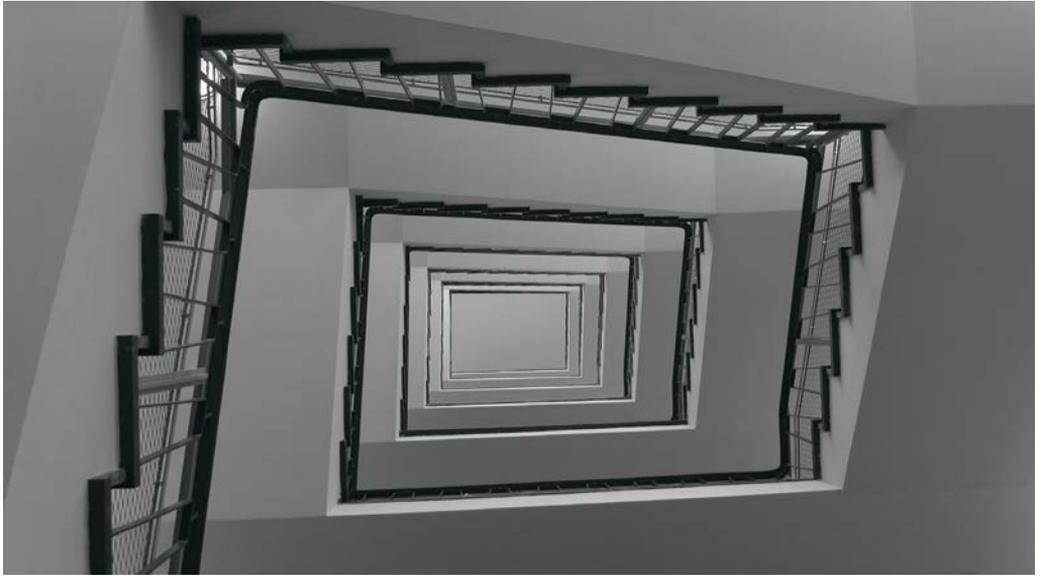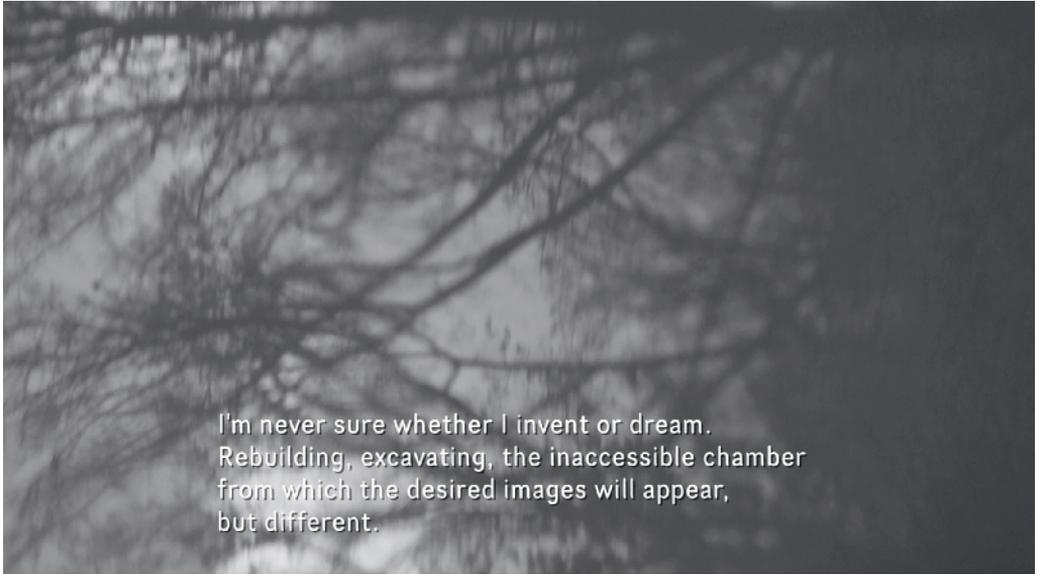
I'm never sure whether I invent or dream.
Rebuilding, excavating, the inaccessible chamber
from which the desired images will appear,
but different.

until they feel – ahead of them – a barrier.
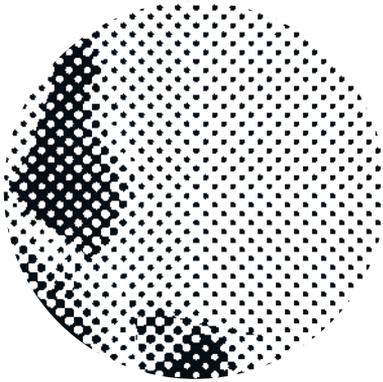
**6.
'So, after all,
you can do this!'**

[…]

MB: But at the beginning of your career, I guess that the idea of the historian as a writer was not entirely accepted.

CG: It was not – and actually, I still remember the incredible excitement I felt when I wrote the first sentence of what became my first book, *I benandanti:* "So, after all, you can do this!" [laughs] In fact, one of my teachers in Pisa, Arsenio Frugoni, had written an extremely challenging book a couple of years before. He was a medievalist, and the book was about a 12th century heretic named Arnaldo da Brescia – we know very little about this man – with each chapter relating to a different source, usually a narrative source. The idea is to look at this man, this heretic, as if in a prism: you look at Arnaldo from the point of view of this or that piece of evidence, trying to reconstruct what the evidence says in terms of biases, literary models, and so on. So you have, let's say, five Arnaldi, five different portraits. And then, there is an introduction in which Frugoni put on a sort of sarcastic, dismissive attitude vis-à-vis the naïve, positivist assumption that there is a sort of epi-convergence between different kinds of evidence. In Pisa, I attended the seminar with him and was very impressed. Later on, I read the book and, actually, I was unable to ask him something that I would have liked to ask him – he died unexpectedly in a car accident – but I am pretty sure about the answer: what inspired him to write that kind of book was [Akira] Kurosawa's *Rashōmon*. It is the Rashomon technique, but without the skeptical implications. In fact, this is not the case with Kurosawa either, but…

Anyway, the book was published in 1954[1]. I succeeded in having it translated into French, drawing attention to the extreme novelty of Frugoni's approach. The point was to have – I think there is a similar metaphor in the introduction – a sculpture with a lot of additions, later additions. By removing the additions, you would produce a torso that was mutilated, but more genuine. Actually, I mentioned Frugoni in the introduction of a book of mine, saying that at that moment – let's say, in the late 50s or early 60s – he was the only one addressing the issue of historical writing as such, even if only indirectly.[2] I remember that

my first seminar with him was about Machiavelli's *Prince*. So, it was not directly about writing, but writing was a part of it.

AS: But I imagine that, considering your family background – both your parents were writers and your mother went on to become, I believe, one of the most celebrated writers of post-war literature in Italy… With such an intimate acquaintance with literature from an early age, for you, personally, it could hardly have come as a shock that historians write books. Of course historians write books! While, at least in the theory of history, the position that you describe as "neo-skeptical" is actually entirely predicated on positivist assumptions: it starts out from a kind of expectation about history that history cannot fulfill, and then jumps to the exact opposite conclusion. In fact, the truth is somewhere in between.

CG: Yes, in between – although I always remember Arnold Schoenberg's motto: "All roads lead to Rome, except the middle road." [laughs] No, I am joking, I am joking… Yes, there is something in the middle, but it is, let's say, unpredictable, a sort of tortuous road.

AS: Not a golden mean, but…

CG: Exactly, exactly. I think that what I felt as I wrote that first sentence was that even writing cannot be taken for granted. In other words, there are always several possibilities. Again, this is the avant-garde element: Proust. Or [Raymond] Queneau – rediscovering, through Queneau, something that is basically avant-garde. But then again… I mean, think of, let's say, [Leo] Tolstoy. Or think of the incredible experiments made by [Fyodor] Dostoyevsky, which I have unfortunately only read in translation: for instance, the idea of a narrator who is unable to fully understand what is going on and what he is telling. On that level, I believe that there are incredible possibilities. I have been deeply influenced by literature, that's for sure. By the movies as well – although later on, I lost interest in cinema.

[…]

1. i.e. four years after Kurosawa's film, which appeared in 1950.

2. Cf. Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces*, 1.

THE FLUID NARRATIVE OF MARGINOGRAPHY: THE NECESSITY OF MICROHISTORY IN THE HYPER-POLITICIZED TIME/PLACE/BODY IN PIROOZ KALANTARI'S FILMS

Behzad Khosravi Noori

In the following text, I endeavor to argue for microhistory in artistic practice in relation to politics from three perspectives: individual, structural and artistic. In the third and final part of the text, I bring together parts one and two and discuss how they play out in the filmmaker, photographer and writer Pirooz Kalantari's films.

The first section begins with how I first encountered the concept of microhistory – a combination of words that caught my interest. It presents microhistory from the perspective of the individual in accordance with the microhistorical method of investigation[1]. In other words, I aim to argue from my individual political and social agency and explain the understanding of the concept of microhistory from the perspective of an Iranian artist from Tehran who works in Stockholm.

In the second part of the text I will present my individualized understanding of microhistory in relation to the theories of microhistory as formulated by Carlo Ginzburg[2], as a vital aspect of microhistorical narrativity in relation to macrohistory. I challenge and reject the notion that microhistory should be regarded as the branches of the macrohistorical tree trunk. Instead, I perceive it as "elseness" and attempt to explain the invisibility and hiddenness of the macrohistory as a doxa, or a part of habitual everyday life that eludes identification.

The third part of my text approaches microhistory in an Iranian context and elaborates this relationship and the necessity of microhistorical narrativity in the hyper-politicized time, place and body in Pirooz Kalantari's films.

Expectation and Imagination
I begin the first part of my text not with an academic argument for the theory of microhistory and what the term or its discourse mean, but rather with an explanation of an individual's relationship to the new discourse. In the realm of academia, at various conferences and panel discussions, or even when reading an article or listening to a lecture, I unintentionally start to think about a term or philosopheme. While thinking about this new term, I apply my individual knowledge to it – again, this does not precisely follow an academic approach, but is

more a result of an unconfined and fluid way of thinking. It is a mixture of imagination and expectation; imagining the term's capability and my expectations of what it actually is.

The first time I heard about the concept of microhistory was in 2012 at the School of Photography at the University of Gothenburg, at a presentation by Magnus Bärtås, professor at the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm; I assume it was part of a conference. After Magnus' talk, Andrej Slávik, who was a respondent/commenter, offered his point of view on the relation between Magnus' films and Microhistory. I don't remember Slavik's exact phrase, but it was along these lines: Magnus' stories are related to microhistory or possible to define according to microhistorical approaches.[3]

As I remember it, this was Andrej's only mention of the concept of microhistory, yet the term was strong enough to stir my imagination, though I knew nothing of microhistory or Carlo Ginzburg at that time. What were the elements of this philosopheme that provoked such a strong desire for knowledge in me? 'Micro' and 'history' became two pieces of a puzzle, and I had to fit them together. Andrej's comment that day was what later motivated my research into microhistory.

Perhaps what made it so enticing was the potentiality of the microhistorical concept to allow for an argument about "something else". Or perhaps my expectations for this term were about that something else itself; the stories that we neither know nor don't know that we don't know. For me, microhistory has not come to represent a theoretical discipline, but rather an expository practice, with a shared aesthetic and a common interest between arts and science in fine-grained detail and dense connections.[4]

Micro and 'Elseness': The Quality of Being Something Else

Microhistory is typically regarded as a way of seeking knowledge that focuses on minutiae. It might seem that this definition is sufficient and that enjoyment can be found in making such minor comparisons, but there is also a certain freedom at the heart of microhistory and its narratives. In addition to paying attention to and surveying events at close range, this freedom works towards infusing a new curiosity into grand historical narratives as well; it represents an effortless plan to bring forth a new narration into history. The tendency of the term itself is curious: 'micro' hints at a deep understanding of events or at least gestures in that general direction.

In the absence of Macro, Micro does not exist. As soon as we talk about Micro, we bring comparative logic into our argument, but claiming Micro reminds us of the possibilities of critical approaches in relation to Macro. In fact, the notion of Micro has a critical potentiality in its tendency. Micro is a reminder of other possibilities of history. In fact, microhistory challenges the existence of the macro level of historical narration that had presented itself as the sole narrator of history. Micro is a promise of "something else"; a something else that we could

even call the elseness of microhistory.

Macro, on the other hand, is not genuinely visible, and derives its power from this notion of invisibility.

Macro-narration has become part of an unconscious 'where and how'. Moving from the notion of historical unconsciousness to consciousness is the first step of microhistory.

Macro-narration has a paradoxical character: from hyper-visibility it has become invisible and indiscernible, not unlike the state of un-questionability of natural phenomena. It exists as the sky or a tree, without arousing any critical thought. The invisibility and hiddenness of the macrohistory have made it a doxa, which is part of habitual everyday life and hard to identify. To understand how this occurs, we can turn to the way that Pierre Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created, and constantly re-legitimized through an interplay of agency and structure. This happens primarily through what he calls 'habitus', or socialized norms or tendencies that guide behavior and thinking. Habitus is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them'.[5]

This habituality presents itself when it comes to the time, place or body. Habitus is not a result of free will, and nor is it determined by structures, but instead created over time by a kind of interplay between the two: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures and that shape current practices and structures, and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of them[6]. In this sense, habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence… without any conscious concentration'[7]. In fact, macrohistory owes its existence to the paradoxical relationship between a hyper-visibility and invisibility that creates invisibility and indiscernibility.

In contrast, micro has a capacity of activating the otherness. It presents, or claims to present, "the others"; the other that, in this context, could be understood as life that has been permanently marginalized or hidden under powerful narratives. By weaving tales about obscure individuals about whom has never before been written, microhistory has a capacity to use various levels of evidence to fill in the story of how the past was lived. Microhistory and other studies in the recent past reached heights of sophistication in the constrained inspection of experience; many practitioners were masters in the use of multiple kinds of data.[8]

Microhistory is not really a method, but rather a malleable form of practice that is open to further transformations. It is a transformation that brings 'the other' into the narrative. Its aim is not to kill historical relevance, but rather to question it by telling an untold story.

The Finnish historian Matti Peltonen claims: "To me, the most interesting aspect of the new microhistory is methodological."[9] In my opinion however, speaking methodologically is the most unfortunate aspect of microhistorical

Pirooz Kalantari in *Reading Salinger in City Park*, 2011

theorizing. A generation ago, microhistory looked very promising – and its experimental character was the main source for the high hopes. This experimental character was ascribed to microhistory as a practice long before methodological articles started to appear.[10]

If microhistory becomes what microhistorians make it out to be at every moment, it will lack the rigor of methodology.

Microhistory is the connection drawn between life and history; in which life experiences engender shock and irresolution. Microhistory brings to light the uncertainties inherent in the grand narrative of history, although perhaps not to the point of creating totally contradictory narratives, but instead proposing a fresh approach to history.

Microhistory is an investigation on a small scale. However, if it just becomes a subdivision of macrohistory, it will lose the potentiality of "elseness". In my view, the quality of "being something else" could be an appealing potential in the core of microhistory.

Micro is always in an active relationship with macro, creating an intersection with it. This intersectional point creates a space for a radical rethinking of the common norm. In my understanding, microhistory is a form of research that goes beyond the normal characteristics of history and transforms it into a new phenomenon. This new phenomenon is not necessarily strange or bizarre, but simply a different way of seeing the characteristics of common objectives. This difference can appear to be contradictory at times. Nevertheless, this distinction is the intertwined relationship between the individual and a section of society.

Cool vs. Really: Hyper-Politicized
Time, Place and Body

As I have already argued, historical narrations are typically perceived as unquestionable facts, not unlike natural phenomena. Yet, the grand narration narrative of the history of a given time and a given place is always, to some extent, the result of a political agenda. History must serve a sense of historical justice, whereby the past – however selective our memory may be – is acknowledged and truth is finally served; the grand narration of history that repeats itself over and over within the continuity of time. There is some kind of interconnection between repetition events, a succession of social systems, the gradual development of social conditions, and so on – in other words, in some way, it is able to *make sense of* history (or more specifically, when pronounced with a sneer – as it usually is – of the "grand narrative").

Although grand historical narration claims factuality according to historical evidence, it creates an abstract idea that is supposed to be a comprehensive explanation of historical experience or knowledge. According to John Stephens,[11] it "is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience".

In geo-political locations with a long history of conflict and paradoxes, the relation between the individual and such a general notion of history takes on unique characteristics. Historical and political identity of the current period is branded by the past; the current period itself identified according to the grand narration of the historical past. The question of 'who one is' has a strong link to the social and political positionality that one claims.

History is a form of narration, which, in its ritualistic habitus, has become an absolute entity. History in this condition presents itself in an ostensive characteristic. Sometimes the political conflict derives its identity from the distinction between 1400 (referring to Islamic history) or 2500 years ago, back to nationalistic history of Pars Empire. For example, in Iran the government claims the Islamic Shia history as a political identity, and many people have embraced characters from pre- Islamic history in order to make an oppositional statement toward the government and the power structure. Hence, Iranian nationalist discourse often focuses on Iran's pre-Islamic history.[12] In the 20th century, different aspects of this romantic nationalism would be referenced by both the Pahlavi monarchy, which employed titles such as 'Aryamehr' ('Light of the Aryans'), and by some leaders of the Islamic Republic that followed it.[13]

In short, for these historicized social and political claimants, history has become a quarry from which we cut stones to hurl at each other.

Let me tell you a story in order to clarify my point:

About those 5 seconds

Imagine a party. A typical, simple, friendly and informal party, like a birthday party, yet there are no signs of a birthday's attributes; it is just an excuse to invite friends who don't have any direct relationship to one another. You know the host, but none of the other guests. You are the new arrival. Holding a beer and trying to communicate with the others, you say who you are, what you are doing there and talk about your interests and knowledge. Nobody asks the very obvious question: where are you from? Perhaps this crucial question is postponed because of their appreciation of a person's individuality and identification regardless of his or her geopolitical context. But there is no possibility of ignoring or escaping the question: "Where are you from, by the way?"

Let's imagine that the response is "Iran" (or Syria, or Palestine, or perhaps one of the Balkan countries during the war in the 90s, or Iraq.)

Five seconds of silence.

From personal experience, in this situation there is almost always, without fail, a five second silence. I would like to call it 'active silence'. Your new acquaintance looks you directly in the eyes and in their eyes you can see REM (rapid eye movement). You can sense the activity in their brain, reviewing archives and memories and trying to match the unrecognizable phenomenon in front of them. After that five-second active silence there is always the same response:

"Cool!" (Although my female friends from Iran somehow get a slightly different response: "Really?" – which perhaps warrants its own article.)

Usually, over the next few hours you must answer very specific questions about sweeping political agendas from deep in the past to the present. You must carefully position yourself with regard to any conflict or political agenda on a macro level, from west to east, and through this positioning purify yourself in the new political context. There is no escape from not being political according to the agreed-upon conventions. In this context, politics are an instrument for recognizing individual agency, and most of the time it follows the grand narration.

But why the surprise?

The psychological response to the question "Where are you from?" and the five seconds of silence that follow reveal the hegemony of macrohistorical narrativity, which conquers everything; a single story that doesn't allow any other storyline to present itself. What images and stories are going through the backs of their minds? And where do they come from?

I believe that this active five seconds of silence is the key element to understanding the invisibility and hiddenness of macro; the hyper visibility that creates the invisibility and indiscernibility of the micro.

I would like to call it 'hyper-politicized'. Hyper-politicized character is not only linked to a time and place, but also to an individual body.

The 'hyper-politicized space' (hyper-politicized social climate) is where any action or motion is immediately associated with either side of a previous conflict. In these conditions, we are mostly witnessing the grand antagonistic narration of historical events and their direct results on society.

This notion of uncertainty has been relationally shifted between state power and the politics of everyday life. It is a hyper-politicized instability that has not only become part of the geo-political identity in its social and political guises, but which also presents itself as a characteristic of everyday life outside the state borders. This paradoxical personality includes the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, and of the dispersed.

The hyper-politicized character can be defined as a temperament that interferes with the whole realm of individuality and its fragmented public presence. It is characterized by multiplicity of both marginal lives and omnipresent power. The character of this society itself presents forms of spatial, transversal and virtual characteristics that produce paradoxical conditions. The 'hyper-politicized' is the condition of permanent marginal life in relation to the political context. In its essence, the hyper-political is politics in practice in everyday life. This means that everyday life is colonized by political narration, and politics itself has become an instrument that gives rise to a specific attitude. In this condition, an individual is expected to position herself with regard to the recognition of the political and historical narrativity, whether or not the individual is a political activist. To live in a hyper-politicized condition is to connect every

other issue to the grand narration and to the generally recognized political and historical stories. In short, hyper-politicized time, place or body is colonized by the grand narration of political and historical narration.

But what holds weight here is the fact that a hyper-politicized society is not a passive one. Rather, it is always pregnant with probable incidents, actions, reactions and resistance.

Everyone from the hyper-politicized realm always carries the hyper-politicized characteristic at his or her side. This is true not only within one's own society, but also within a multicultural social environment. The fundamental question that one must answer in everyday life is not only about one's political position, but also about one's personal life, in order to present oneself clearly in a Western context. The hyper-politicized does not necessarily deal with the power structure directly in an absolute space or place. In my terminology, it is the role and the agency of one individual in relation to society. This relationship is enacted at the intersection between grand and marginal, and macro and micro multiple narrations. In this specific situation, the cultural translation of representation into images of political regimes often occurs to conflate and blur the vectors of different power structures and movements. It is important to route all of these issues through the delicate landscapes of intercultural environments and contexts.

Microhistory is macrohistory's agonism. And through its narration, it brings a state of elseness and negotiation by creating a brief pause in the accepted historical narration.

The Fluidity of Narration of Marginography in Pirooz Kalantari's Films
Iran and its capitol Tehran – the city where I was born and schooled – is a clear example of a hyper-politicized environment. I believe that the political practice in this environment derives its identity from the interactions between people. The denial of politics is a constant struggle for those in some way active in the production of concepts, art and culture. Perhaps the main reason for frequent claims of "I am not political" and "This is not a political article" is the obvious extensive denigratory portrayal of political art and political artists by multiple actors: by the Iranian government and the powers that be and, in another form, by the Western media in today's geopolitics. In fact, the purpose of statements such as "I am not political" or "This is not a political article" is mostly to create a secure corner for oneself, thus preparing a temporary possibility for growth in a calmer environment. "I am not political" is in reality a description of the obvious large numbers of apolitical members in Iranian society today. Anyone living within the confines of this geopolitical arena is well aware that such statements are completely devoid of meaning, and their macro political narrative has taken over every aspect of our individual and social lives. Due to this complex definition of socio-politics, the documentary filmmaking and the position of a documentary filmmaker have become more difficult and involved. Documentary

Film stills from *Reading Salinger in City Park*, 2011

film and documentary journalism typically claim a direct relationship with reality and its representation. The possibility for a critical presentation lies with the government/powers that be, causing difficulties for documentary filmmakers in Iran and giving the films themselves a contrary character.

Documentary cinema constitutes a circular connection between individuals and society through the lens of the documentary filmmaker. The important point to understand this relationship between individual and society is to concern ourselves with what the reality is, and to have faith in what is represented as the reality.

From this perspective, Iranian documentary cinema has a paradoxical character. Films are made, and in general the content is of a personal narrative or testament in which a type of relationship between the individual and society is portrayed. The finished film is first shown a few times to groups of friends or at small public gatherings. Limited gatherings of a constructive-critical nature are held with the director, and afterward the DVD becomes an object in the director's bag, and the distribution phase, presided over by the director himself, goes forward without any prospect of financial gain. The filmmaker is turned into a traveling salesman, giving his wares away to his would-be customers. With this charity and adaptability, he goes on with his life; a life based on a passion to document. Upon examination, the reasons for the existence of such an operation include the difficulties of obtaining permission to make the film, the difficulties of distribution, and the lack of an organization or administrative association to assist in the screening, archiving and distribution of the films. Yet the important point in this style of presentation, regardless of the type of film, is how it presents its attitude toward society. Iranian documentary cinema, with its fluid nature, carries on its flexible life. According to unofficial count, there are 500 to 600 documentary films made in Iran annually, without the backing of any sort of association (or financial support) – this is a phenomenon that calls for our attention, asking us to observe not merely aspects of Iran today, but a specific socio-political cross-section of today's variable Iranian society. These films portray a lifestyle transformed into another life, shifting from one shape to another, whose existence is unhindered by socio-political difficulties. They portray an identity based on the basic elements of life that attempts to persevere in the life flow. This form of narration is a cinema that is at times difficult, at times poetic and gentle. Yet regardless of its multiple forms of narrations, it tries to address the complexity of co-existence within the current social and political situation.

Pirooz Kalantari is one of the most experienced practitioners of this style of filmmaking. He is a 61-year-old Iranian filmmaker, photographer and writer with a degree in film studies, and he has been writing and directing films for 30 years. In general, the subject matter of Kalantari's films is directly related to familiar post-revolution socio-political events and conditions, such as the war, the revolution itself, poverty, and other, similar narratives that relate macro-narratives to individual lives. His films and their narrative style have a distinct Ira-

nian socio-political post-revolution macro-narrative, which also presents a micro-narrative of everyday life in this hyper-politicized concept.

Kalantari calls his films documentaries without attempting to explicitly define the term 'documentary'. His films are not a mere reflection of reality; because Kalantari does not consider the camera neutral, he chooses to always emphasize it as a challenging connection between the filmmaker (I) and the surrounding environment (reality). The grafting of reality and "I" is the nucleus of his filmmaking. Such films bring into question the foundation of documentary filmmaking as an act of observation, and the presence of the filmmaker becomes both definite and crucial. According to this detailed view, everyday life and its micro-narration comprise the main elements of his films. The intersection of reality and "I" is an example of the relationship between aesthetics and the social presence of the artistic filmmaker. This social presence in Kalantari's films is represented through varied faces. In his film *Parseh* (Stroll), he sits in the front seat of a communal taxi and films the different passengers in the backseat. *Parseh* was filmed in 2001, during the second presidential election for Khatami. It fits into the above definition by not ignoring politics in the flow of Iranian society. Because it is filmed in the semi-public/semi- private space of the taxi, it brings to mind a lifestyle buried under the political macro-narrative through the images of a young girl and boy (seemingly lovers); a grumpy old man; a middle-aged man who has found an opportunity to talk about his ideas and beliefs; a youth who idolizes Khatami and wishes to meet his political idol. The camera shows us the crowded streets before the election. After the war, in the time frame surrounding the presidential elections, the atmosphere of the city is changed. At times, this transformation is apparent as a celebration in the street, and at other times it is a protest. This exercise in politics manifests itself in its own western democratic form, and both government and grassroots campaigns, officially and unofficially change the face of the city. The election becomes an excuse to take to the streets. Kalantari defines Iran's post-revolution atmosphere in all the ways it is connected to an oppressed society and the political, social and economic pressures, conveying it as an unpredictable melting pot that gives birth to a new story each day. *Parseh* takes this celebration in the streets and turns it into a single personality. The individual enters this half-public space from the hustle and bustle of the streets. Kalantari records this short time between the two actions, watching with childlike curiosity from the front seat of the taxi. In *Parseh*, Kalantari does not tell a strange story that is unheard of in Tehran, yet he is curious to find a narrative that he knows and enjoys hearing again himself, and then sharing his pleasure with his audience. Even though *Parseh* establishes a direct connection with its audience, the presence of the curious filmmaker nullifies any neutral perspective of a simple spectator. As a result, the film becomes a dialogue between the filmmaker and the passenger in the backseat.

This brief description of Kalantari's style of filmmaking resonates pro-

foundly with microhistory as characterized by Ginzburg:

> Microhistorical analysis therefore has two fronts. On one side, by moving on a reduced scale, it permits in many cases a reconstruction of "real life" unthinkable in other kinds of historiography. On the other side, it proposes to investigate the invisible structures within which that lived experience is articulated.[14]

But whose life is Kalantari trying to reconstruct? I would argue that Tehran is the main subject of Kalantari's films. The city is either the subject itself (e.g. in *Tehran in Poetry*; *Reading Salinger in City Park*; *Tehran; What Richter?* and *Four Views of Kahrizak)* or the center of action (such as in *Alone in Tehran*; *This is Life* and in *The Endless Streets)*.

Kalantari does not seem to be a political filmmaker in the sense of the acknowledged form of political work, which tries to define the political situation pedagogically, and even ostensively. The quiet logic of his point of view creates an obvious distance from what is called 'Middle-Eastern political art'. This form of art and narration leaves a clear dialectic imprint in the audience's thoughts and follows the basic fundamentals which, according in its own historical logic, have been over-repeated. Kalantari does not describe politics as an artistic manifestation in order to clearly show or embody the society and, without claiming to be politically active, he challenges his audience. *Reading Salinger in City Park* seems to be a self-narrative in relation to Tehran's City Park. He walks in the park, sitting on benches and, taking in their social standing, watching people: the passers-by, the men, the women and even the crows. Kalantari brings 'the other' into the heart of his micro-narrative, such as the day he was reading J.D. Salinger in City Park and a young boy and girl were sitting on either side of him and passed a note over the book in his hands.[15] This is the anecdote which gave the film its title. Instead of ignoring the critical politics and social aspects, Kalantari knowingly refrains from using a critical point of view. He does not create from the critical positions of criticism or from the policies of political art. In *This is Life*, Kalantari focuses on the first generation of the university student movement and, without using macro-narrative to address the demonstrations, opposition and imprisonment, he lets the story be told through the everyday issues of the students active in the uprising, focusing on their relationships and their financial and family problems. In this other narrative, he creates a metaphor that falls between narrative and image as well as between micro and macro narration. His films are the meeting place of the two narrations. Kalantari's storytelling demonstrates the fluidity between them. This crossroads of hyper-politics in today's Iran results in a collage-like narrative. Through this type of sequencing, he is able to recount a micro-narrative that has been buried beneath the macro-narration.

The relationship of Kalantari's films to microhistory lies not only in his view of the subject matter, but follows the necessity of the logic of microhistory.

His films contain an individual voice. In fact, they can be watched without video, that is to say, they can be read, and the voice of the narrator imagined. The imagery in his films is also watchable without narration. The different parts of Kalantari's films are connected: sound, narrative, script, and meaningful images allow conclusions to be drawn and create a micro-narrative that scrutinizes the amazement of everyday life and is able to express the action of political logic without putting on airs. He enters the heart of narration and blends historical narrative with storytelling. Kalantari's history *from below*, to borrow the term used by historians such as Peter Burke, occurs beneath the foundation of everyday living history; it is a narrative which must be told in all of its complexity in order for us to understand hyper-politicized time, place and body.

In his slow narrations, Kalantari is far more skilled than most political historians at the subtle reading of evidence. He squeezes his material from the experience of everyday life. By paying scrupulous attention to nuance and language, he is able to crawl into, and even behind, his sources. An appreciation for nuance, a strong sense of ambiguity and a healthy skepticism are central to his practice; these are all good models for intelligent reading and investigation and for understanding banality in all its complexity.

He takes the storyteller's art to heart. In this, he is not altogether alone, through he remains nevertheless somewhat lonely.

Kalantari is eager to assemble, as far as he is able, the entirety of past moments. He somehow manages to aim for totality -- every human sense, every quality, every tone, every source -- within his finite scope and his eager grasp.

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THE GRAVITY OF
THE EYE

Lena
Séraphin

In place of an ego that displays its real or presumed identity like an immutable brand, I found myself faced with a mobile, plural ego, the point of intersection of different and sometimes contradictory senses of belonging. What am I talking about, an exception or the rule?
– Carlo Ginzburg

We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world, we know because we are *of* the world.
– Karen Barad

Just about four years ago I visited the Finnish Defense Forces' image archive in Helsinki, wanting to contemplate and reflect on archive material from the Second World War. In particular, I was interested in military ceremonies and their potential as images. The objective of my visit to the archive was to explore the distance that military parades instigate between civilians, soldiers and officers. As an observational method, I chose to leaf through a large number of photographs, letting the sequence of military expression flicker past. In one worn brown envelope, I found a photograph taken on June 2nd, 1943 in Hangö, a city far out on the coast of southwestern Finland. Besides the categorization, "march-past", there was no additional information about the military survey before me. In spite of this, the photograph and the rapture it conveyed spoke to me. Within a fraction of a second or in a microsecond, I had dissolved into the depiction, becoming not only subordinate, but also subservient. The distance between observer and actor which I intended to outline shrunk, leaving me instead feeling remote within myself, as though seen through inverted binoculars. Carlo Ginzburg writes about finding himself with a plural ego as the point of intersection of different and contradictory feelings of belonging. I confronted that plural ego as I was attracted to but also repulsed by the parade. To recall the moment in which I became someone other to myself, and to maintain contact with that ambiguous instant, I will attempt to establish a link between microhistory and time in the following text.

My investigations showed that the photograph most probably depicts the German *Gebirgsjäger* band; as the band is mentioned in a letter that *Untersturm-führer* Unto Parvilahti (Boman) wrote to the Rector of the University of Helsinki Rolf Nevanlinna when the parade was being planned.[1] Arms are raised in the *heil Hitler*, and gazes are lifted up towards the superiors, who stand on a podium along the street. Though the officers are out of sight in the photo, they are critical for its countenance. Trees obscure the civilian audience; they are the concealed outsiders at a military procession, although it is the audience who publicizes and delineates the parade with its very presence. As part of the writing process, I traveled to Hangö to retake the photograph from June 1943. The parade was held on Appelgrensvägen, a street that runs northeast from Bulevarden to Sandövägen and later becomes Highway 25. South of Appelgrensvägen is the sea, the mouth of the Gulf of Finland; to the north is a park, and adjacent to it is the sand-covered sports field where the military forces were surveyed upon return. I revisited the site of the photograph to produce a temporal stretch and inscribe myself into it. The experimental work I conduct come under the heading of an operational understanding of microhistories; incidents that take place and are incited in specific locations at specified times. My question is whether an incident such as this one can trigger or alter a chain of events.

I have put the photograph of the march-past on display and exhibited it as part of an artistic practice. Presenting the photograph beyond its historical context has been a matter of importance for me as my objective is to circumvent the possibility that the act of display itself promotes the photograph or validates its subject matter in a bygone era, thus failing to link the past to the present moment. To make the photo relevant to the present-day and inject it into personal spheres, I repurpose it in a fictional frame tale entitled *The Don Quixote Complex*. In brief, the frame narrative is about justice gone awry, and I employ the narrative as if it were factual and actually took place. Miguel Cervantes' novel from the 1600s is celebrated as a foundational work for modern literature, but rarely is the subject of how the hidalgo Alonso Quijano became *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* broached. What appeals to me about the novel are not so much the inane impulses, but rather that Alonso Quijano demands *more.* In other words, an indisputable reality is not enough for him. There are two additional characters in my frame narrative, and so it is entitled *Lena Séraphin, Andrea Meinin Buck & the Don Quixote Complex.* The work thematizes fictionality and diverse identity, such as doppelgängers. In folkloristics, doppelgängers appear as (physical) copies resulting from reduplication or the splitting of the ego. Alter-ego and doppelgänger differ in that the latter refers to a reciprocal relationship, whilst the alter-ego often corresponds to the repressed. The character Andrea Meinin Bück is my doppelgänger, and as the work progresses, I am assimilated into the role of the fictional artist Lena Séraphin.

The Don Quixote Complex is an outspoken rebus. The work is percepti-

ble, like the conspicuous and therefore concealed letter in Edgar Allen Poe's renowned short story *The Purloined Letter*. In *The Don Quixote Complex*, I am me, and I am also a someone. The discussion of the plural and diverse self can be connected to the terms *sameness* and *selfhood*. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur allows confrontation of the two in conjunction with the problem of permanence in time. Ricoeur asks the question "Is there a form of permanence in time which can be connected to the question "who?" inasmuch as it is irreducible to any question of "what?" Is there a form of permanence in time that is a reply to the question "Who am I?" [2] In my practice, I rely on the question of the self – not to seek permanence, but rather to expand and experiment with the ego's mutable forms. By positioning the photograph of the National Socialist marching band in the work *Lena Séraphin, Andrea Meinin Buck & the Don Quixote Complex*, I place a historical document in an artistic dictum. This referral is the direct result of my visit to the archive and the painful point of intersection where the ego and the self meet without mutual assimilation. As far as time is concerned, the intersection lasts a microsecond of Lena Séraphin's life and yet lays the foundation for an artistic practice. The formative points of intersection in *The Don Quixote Complex* are the moment at which the original photograph was taken on June 2nd, 1943, and the moment it was retaken in Hangö on October 18th, 2015. The parade marks a turning point in the Finnish-German cooperation, and as such can be seen as a beginning to the continuing debate whether it should be defined as an alliance or a brotherhood of arms. I repeat and amend: On June 1st, 1943, some 800 Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers returned from the so-called Eastern Front. Afterward, a parade was organized in Hangö. The arriving Waffen-SS volunteers were on leave and unaware that they would not return to the Eastern Front, but instead be assimilated into the Finnish army. Representative of this shift in military and foreign politics is the fact that the Finnish army's Commander-in-Chief C.G.E. Mannerheim did not participate in the parade, although *Führer* Adolf Hitler had personally congratulated him on his 75th birthday and appointment to Marshal of Finland the previous year.[3] The political scientist and historical researcher Markku Jokisipilä maintains that whilst few in Finland were ideologically attracted to National Socialism, "sizeable groups of citizens hoped that German forces would be successful at least on the Eastern Front." [4] Jokisipilä continues "the Germany that presented itself in Finland was completely different from what prisoners in concentration camps and inhabitants of the western parts of Soviet Union had to look in the eyes."[5] Jokisipilä uses the Finnish expression "katsoa silmästä silmään", or "to look from one eye to another", to refer to something entirely different from what was witnessed in Finland. Perhaps parades and football matches expressed National Socialism in Finland, but the question is what people knew, of what they were aware, what they did and what they didn't do – and what role does that play today?

Carlo Ginzburg writes about the plural ego as a point where different and

This page: June 2, 1943,
Hangö (Appelgrensvägen), Finland
Finnish Defence Forces image archive

Left: October 18, 2015,
Hangö (Appelgrensvägen), Finland

sometimes contradictory feelings of belonging intersect. When I juxtapose the ambiguous experience in the archive with Ginzburg's statement, I arrive at something uncomfortable, perhaps even critical. Ginzburg asks: "What am I talking about, an exception or the rule?" His point of departure is the plural ego with regard to the poles of exception and norm, which opens for me a vast space and potential to form *more*, as the double party Alonso Quijano/Don Quixote might put it. To navigate the space presented by Ginzburg's question, I turn to the feminist theorist Karen Barad and her description of the world as an open process.

The world is an open process of mattering through which mattering itself acquires meaning and form through the realization of different agential possibilities. Temporality and spatiality emerge in this processual historicity. Relations of exteriority, connectivity, and exclusion are reconfigured. […] the primary ontological units are not "things" but phenomena—dynamic topological reconfigurings / entanglements / relationalities / (re)articulations of the world. [6]

What happens when I move rearward, back into history and reconstitute myself in a double role of spectator at and photographer of the march-past in Hangö, can be likened to what Barad calls reconfiguration, a rearrangement and reconnection that complicates historiography, making it an act in progress. Reconfiguration doubles me, as a plural and mobile ego. It manifests a prismatic view and kaleidoscopic angles, but above all, it pries itself free from congealed and inaccessible historiography. Seeing as the primary components not things but phenomena; they are without predetermined objectives, they lead forward and advance as subversive repetitions. Ginzburg's rhetorical question is an invitation to consider how the subject can be delineated and articulated using what he calls "contradictory senses of belonging". The character Andrea Meinin Bück is my doppelgänger, and I therefore also become a doppelgänger in the work, thus reviving the somewhat uncomfortable or confusing thought that the self is not fixed. The researcher Sebastian Dieguez writes about neurocognitive mechanisms with the capacity to develop what he calls a phantom companion:

[t]he motif of the double arises from the action of specific neurocognitive mechanisms involved with bodily awareness, spatial cognition, multisensory integration, and self-other discrimination. All these capacities of the human mind, indeed, seem to converge to provide our species with a phantom companion onto which our actions, beliefs, desires, emotions, and needs can be safely projected and which can serve as a sophisticated simulation device for planning, anticipating, comparing, and fantasizing.[7]

Dieguez revises experiences of dissociation or alienation as a faculty, de-emphasizing the doppelgänger as a diagnosis of autoscopy (or the perception of oneself outside of one's own body). Instead, he believes that imagination is a constitutive flux: "[w]e suggest that the double is not necessarily a pathological and thoroughly abnormal experience, but quite a natural emanation of our normal cognitive architecture and sense of bodily self." [8] In my artistic practice, the

phantom companion links me to the work inversely; the more concrete and defined Andrea Meinin Bück becomes, the more I am fictionalized into a role in the piece. The artist Andrea Meinin Bück has her very own message. She believes that one single phenomenon can possess disparate qualities that are not manifested in unison, but irregularly, in phases and in separate scenarios. Thus put, it is no longer possible for one eye to look into another eye by penetrating a depth; from now on, one eye sees what the other regards.

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7.
[…] a sort of counter-poison […]

[…]
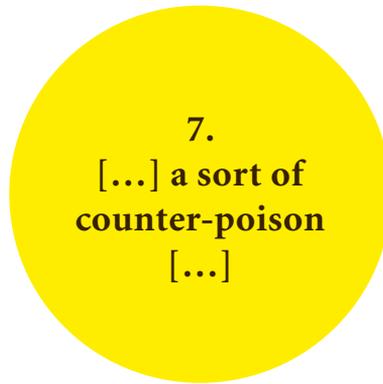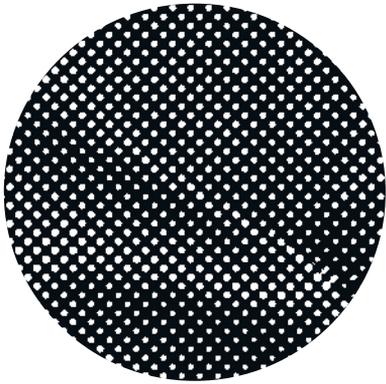
CG: Somebody recently asked me to name a historian whom I am in constant dialogue with, and I answered: Marc Bloch. One could say, "Bloch died a long time ago!" – but I still have countless questions. Obviously, I sometimes read more recent works, but this kind of intensive dialogue… If I were to single out – I was about to use a non-Foucauldian word, "author", but let's say writers – two writers in the humanities whom I am constantly having a dialogue with, I would say Marc Bloch and Erich Auerbach.

AS: Your elective affinities?

CG: Elective… [sighs] I don't know. Certainly, I was impressed by their work very early in my trajectory, when I was still under twenty. But I am surprised that I have always been able, it seems to me, to ask them new questions – or maybe they were asking the questions and I was trying to answer? And then, although perhaps to a lesser extent, Aby Warburg. I have been working recently on Warburg, and there is certainly an enormous challenge in his work.

So, in a way, I selected a couple of interlocutors – and then I found a topic which had a lot of implications. All of this took place very early on. I think that, unconsciously, in order to counteract the risks involved in this – I mean, a sort of early fixation – I went on and on and kept changing topics. It is a sort of counter-poison: working on a wide range of topics, trying to learn again and again, always starting over from scratch – more or less. This is something that went on and on, and I am still involved in it. Of course, sometimes I go back and try to reflect on the implications of my choices, my work, and so on, but most of the time I am working on new topics. As I said, it is a kind of counter-poison. Because otherwise, it would have been the same obsession over and over.

So, the idea is to be challenged on different grounds, to look at different disciplines, and… I am not saying that it was planned, but it worked that way. And certainly, the idea of learning from people who are doing something different is very strong – or of being challenged by a document that I came across by chance: what can I do with this? In one case, I waited maybe ten years or even

more before working on that document, which seemed to be so promising.

AS: Is this why you became a historian rather than a writer of fiction? Because you considered that for a while when you were young…

CG: Yes, but as a child. Then I dreamt about becoming a painter and started to paint for some years – but I was no good, to put it simply. Well, I was tempted… When I began my university studies in Pisa, I was deeply attracted by linguistics, but even earlier by art history. However, I was disappointed by the local art historian, so I did not become one myself – but I am still working on visual evidence. Actually, in the latest book that I published, the running thread is political iconography and also Aby Warburg's notion of *Pathosformeln*.[1] It is about five artifacts, where the most recent one is Picasso's *Guernica*. And then, going backwards, there is an essay on that poster of Lord [Herbert] Kitchener with his moustache, looking at you and pointing his finger: "Your country needs you!" It has been parodied as well. Then there is [Jacques-Louis] David's *Death of Marat*, and then [Thomas] Hobbes, the frontispiece of *Leviathan* – and then the first essay, which is on a gilded vase with American scenes from the early 16th century. An incredible object! I remember I was walking through the Kunstkammer in Munich with my wife… It is incredible how many things one can see in a fraction of a second. I spent one year working on this object, which is really incredible. So, I am still dealing with visual evidence.

AS: So, from the very beginning, you have surrounded yourself with words, on the one hand, and images, on the other hand.

CG: Yes – and then, there is the really challenging relationship between these two worlds. This is something that I am still working on. Actually, I have an unpublished piece on ekphrasis, a genre which began in ancient Greece: descriptions of artworks and other objects, either real ones or, more often, imagined. The shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* is the earliest example. My essay is about the cognitive implications of this device: to describe a painting or a drawing. I am fascinated by translation as a phenomenon, and I like to say that translation is the most powerful argument against extreme relativism. Because translation is possible, but it always limps. [laughs] There is no mirror correspondence, there is always a gap – the inadequacy of all translations, in a sense. Still, translation is possible: you can translate from one language into another and also, perhaps, from words into images, from images into words. But it is a sort of challenge.

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1. Carlo Ginzburg, *Paura, reverenza, terrore. Cinque saggi di iconografia politica* (Milano: Adelphi, 2015).

RUPTURE
SESSIONS

Michelle
Teran

The Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) is a right-to-housing, citizen-led movement operating throughout Spain. It was established to fill a gap in insufficient measures within government for dealing with the housing crisis and an unfair mortgage system, and to make visible the abuses of power by the financial systems. Currently, there are over 200 nodes located in different cities throughout the country. The PAH utilizes different methods – direct action, assemblies, workshops, mutual support groups, and how-to manuals: which help build up models for living in the face of social and economic crisis. It is, perhaps, interesting to note how these models become manifest through storytelling. People who come to the PAH, come with many personal experiences and stories about the everyday realities of contemporary crisis. Sharing these stories within a supportive group situation helps produce public knowledge: turning an individual problem into a social issue.

In 2013, a multidisciplinary team of professionals and researchers from various fields – social work, psychology, and political science – came together to investigate the psychosocial impacts of eviction. The team consisted of members and people affiliated around PAH Madrid, together who formed the Grupo de Impacto Psicosocial de la Comisión de la Verdad, PAH Madrid (Psychosocial Impact Group of the Truth Commission, PAH Madrid). The Psychosocial Impact Group proposed a pilot project: four group discussions carried out between a psychologist working within the PAH and four participants– one each week for one hour–in which the psychologist leading the discussion would introduce a different topic for each session. The four women participating in the pilot project were politically involved in the PAH. After coming to the PAH with their housing problems, they became activists themselves and now dedicated much of their time and energy helping others. The themes for discussion covered the following areas: who were you before, how are you living with eviction, how did you arrive at the PAH, how do you see yourself in the future. The Psychosocial Impact Group used the pilot project to test out certain methods, to build up a set of methodologies for future research, and with future participants.

As an artist, I participated in the pilot project, by filming the four sessions. Afterwards, I translated the original recordings from the sessions from Spanish to English. *Rupture Sessions* is a staged reading of the translated texts, performed by participants living in other locations (and perhaps other situations) than where the conversations initially took place. The audience plays witness to a reading of real dialogues, which are not theatrically staged, but performed by non-actors and re-situated in a different reality. The translation, displacement, and revisiting of these transcripts function as a testimony to the everyday realities of living in a contemporary crisis, bringing personal experiences into the universal issues around social rupture and the disintegration of the home.

8.
'That's frivolous, no, I can't do that!'

[…]
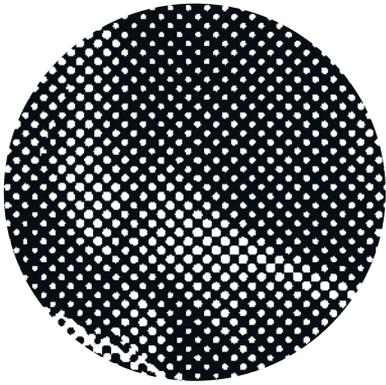
AS: Going back to your early experiences of literature and your early sources of inspiration, I am especially curious about your relation to Italo Calvino, who worked with your mother in the Einaudi publishing house. I recently came across a story that I was not aware of before: that, sometime toward the end of the 60s, you were even involved with Calvino in some kind of project for a new journal?

CG: Yes, there is a book about this project – I think it's over here…[1] [reaches towards the bookshelf]

AS: Yes, this is what I was not able to find in any Swedish library. And the whole idea came to nothing: there never was a journal.

CG: Italo Calvino was a close friend of my mother, so I remember him from my childhood. He was younger than my mother but they worked together, they were very close. Then, the two of us became friends, despite the age difference. And so, at one point, he set out on a project with Gianni Celati, another friend who was also much younger than him but who had already published a novel. They had the idea of starting a review called *Alì Babà* – although, actually, I do not recall that name… Anyway, that was the project. And then, there was this idea of staging a dialogue with Foucault, with… [hesitates] I remember having conversations, here in Bologna, with Calvino and Celati. Also, there was a very interesting philosopher who died years ago, [Enzo] Melandri, who wrote a book about analogy.

Now, when my essay on clues was eventually published, it was reviewed by Calvino – he was very much interested in that essay – and Celati once wrote that the essay, in a way, was indirectly connected to our exchanges about the journal, which is a possibility. Certainly, in a more direct way, when I started working on *The Cheese and the Worms* just a few years later, I remember having this idea of reading Queneau's *Exercises de style*. I think it came from Celati, although Calvino had already translated – and this is a fantastic translation – *Les fleurs bleues*. This is really his masterpiece, Calvino's translation of Queneau! And actually, Calvino became very close with Queneau and the Oulipo group when he was in Paris.

So, when I started to write *The Cheese and the Worms*… You see, I had come

across the document related to Menocchio and the two trials a long time before, when I was working on the *benandanti*. I remember coming across a hand-written catalogue of the first thousand inquisitional trials in Udine which, actually, was itself produced by an inquisitor in the 18th century. This was before I was able to access the actual trials, because the ecclesiastical archive was closed and unavailable to scholars. It was by chance that I was able to find this volume in the Biblioteca Comunale in Udine, because it had been stolen from the archive a long time before and then purchased by the library. This was like a book of dreams – actually, it was about dreaming people… And so, I was looking through this list and stumbled over a reference to a peasant who said that the world had emerged *della putredine*, "out of putrefied matter". I remember being extremely impressed and taking note of the number assigned to the trials in the catalogue. Then, seven years went by before I came to think about this reference and checked the trials again – because, in the meantime, I had been able to work in the ecclesiastical archive, and so on.

And then, when I started to write, I thought that maybe I would make an experiment like Queneau's *Exercises de style*, with each paragraph in a different style: one as a parody of some kind of history, another as… I do not know whether I started, because then I told myself: "That's frivolous, no, I can't do that!" It would have been unethical, so I forgot about it – although I think that some of that is still there in the book, the idea of having those sections with clear-cut or sudden transitions. For instance, there is a paragraph called "Dialogue" in which there are only questions and answers, no commentary.

So, this is an echo of Queneau, in a way… But, even more directly, I think that it is an echo of a book that I read as a kid – I was eleven or so – and, in a sense, I was unable to understand what the book was about, because it was talking about movies that I had not seen: that is, [Sergei] Eisenstein's book on film as a form, his theoretical writings, which had been translated by Einaudi. I mean, my mother was bringing home books published by them, so I read all kinds of things… The idea of montage emerged slowly, I think, from that early reading. Then from seeing Eisenstein's films, of course – and then from reading the powerful, splendid essay on montage, on Dickens, Griffith, and so on. I believe that this is something that marked me deeply. Last month, we visited Riga and were able to see the incredible art nouveau façade built by Eisenstein's father [Mikhail]. This is very important for understanding some aspects of Eisenstein's visual style. I am thinking especially about the scene in *Ivan [the Terrible]* where there is a sort of a twisted image and then, in the background, a kind of procession that goes on slowly, slowly… This, I think, is typical art nouveau, a response to the art nouveau style of his father.

[…]

1. *Alì Babà. Progetto di una rivista 1968–1972*, ed. Mario Barenghi and Marco Belpoliti, *Riga* 14 (1998).

MICROHISTORIES AND THE INTERNALIZATION OF MACRO-HISTORIES

Suzana Milevska

In order to address the somehow rhetorical and redundant questions of when and whether individual stories become microhistories could be thought and told without taking their macrohistories into account – and vice versa – I want to embark immediately on an analysis of the complex, continuously interweaving relations between microhistory and macrohistory. Particularly relevant are the processes of intertwining and intersection of micropolitics and macropolitics in the context of the recent discussions about identity politics, subject construction and subjectivity. In order to extrapolate how various artists have dealt with the various ways in which micro and macrohistories[1] are mutually entangled and reciprocally affected by each other, I take into account several projects, such as the group project *The Little Big Stories* from 1998, presented in Stockholm and Skopje. The main assumption behind this exhibition was that even most trivial individual stories are interwoven in the fabric of macrohistory, parallel with the grand narratives of the heroic past, but that these threads were rarely researched and traced with the same attention, particularly in over-politicized cultural contexts.

The individual projects of the artists all dealt with the transposition of the biographies and "small" stories of some people from reality in the virtual space of the art and literature world (the National and University Library in Skopje) and in the historic archival space (the old Riksarkivet in Stockholm).[2] Two individual projects by Magnus Bärtås – "Who Is Johnnie Walker" and "The Disappointed and the Offended" – were shown in the two different exhibitions under the same title *Little Big Stories*. In addition to Bärtås' projects, the works of five other artists from Skopje and Stockholm were exhibited: "The Supplement to the Biography of Blaga Fidanoska Popovska (1914-1997)" by Zdenko Bužek; "The Greetings from Stockholm" and "The Four Collectors" by Annika Eriksson; "The Earpiece/Earpeace" by Oliver Musoviḱ; "How the Minister of Culture of Republic of Macedonia Slobodan Unkovski explains to Zila the vegetarian principles of the King Gustav from Sweden", and "Small Talk" by Žaneta Vangeli and "A Portrait of Mr. Weimar – The Man Who Every Thursday at Seven Makes a Meal

for Himself and Mr. Matzner in the Kitchen at Kallermanstrasse 87", and "The Conka Story" by Elin Wikström.

In the second part of the essay, I will also build up the argument that points to the distinction between the "spectacular" macrohistory and self-reflective, self-constructive and "performative" microhistory throughout the analysis of the intertwining of the historic and artistic research in the project *Woman's Book* by Liljana Gjuzelova.[3]

Biographies as microstories and microhistories

To be a story, a story must be *told*. There are specific generic structures that are detachable from the narrative "stuff" of a story. Each of these forms follows a distinct transformational structure of crisis and resolution that we come to recognize as the genre of the story it tells, or more significantly, the kind of argument it makes about the nature of the world.

To be a microhistory, a microhistory has to be recorded, written, told, depicted, etc. In the telling, a story also has to be *told* from a particular perspective: a point of view, which can, of course, change from a chapter to chapter as well as in the sequence of events. Similarly, the point of view in microhistories does not rely on objectivity in the strictly limited sense, but instead acknowledges the narrator's profound implication. According to Daniel C. Dennett, by controlling the story the narrator also controls the process of self-construction:

> Our human environment contains not just food and shelter, enemies to fight or flee and conspecifics with whom to mate, but words, words, words. These words are potent elements of our environment that we readily incorporate, ingesting and extruding them, weaving them like spider webs into self-protective strings of narrative. Our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition is not building dams or spinning webs, but telling stories - and more particularly concocting and controlling the story we tell others - and ourselves - about who we are."[4]

However, different and opposite processes of narration of history from certain political positions affect and even determine the subject construction in historic context. Construction of truth and history is always already contaminated by the position of the narrator. Although it contributes to the construction of subjectivity, this flow in the opposite direction is highly unpredictable and susceptible to modifications and shifts in different directions. Microhistories and macrohistories are inextricably intertwined and hence play a major role in identity and subjectivity construction that cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by separating 'intrinsic' from 'extrinsic' attributes.

For example, the internalization of macrohistory on the individual level and, in an opposite direction, the striving towards self-insertion and self-fab-

ulation in official history are only some of the procedures that challenge linear history and any historic account of events from the past in the realm of artistic production. If national and state history, in contrast to microhistory, does not necessarily take interest in a certain microscopic pondering of individual accounts of various destinies and biographies, the result is a fragmentary, ideologized and irrelevant narrative; the artist as a microhistorian, on the other hand, does not hesitate to emphasize exactly this position.

The need for narrative structure and content as some of the missing layers within the visual models of artistic representation was one of the main targets within the postmodern criticism of the modernist emphasis of the sublime that circumvents the attempt to represent the literal and figurative as the base for narration.

When Walter Benjamin stated:

> Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly. More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to to exchange experiences.[5]

He pinpointed this frustration of being ashamed of one's own attachment to the storytelling that was drafted by the modernists' will to reveal the intrinsic truths without any relation and reference to the outer world. Additionally, although the storytelling tradition is well known, it differs from culture to culture and from one artist to another.

The content of the stories, the ethical questions raised by the presumption that even one's *self* is constructed as a story, and the conflict between the modernistic deprivation of narrativity in the visual arts vs. the proliferation of self-insertion in historic texts are only few issues that one might address in the development of this text. However, the direct relation between oral history and microhistory and the historic relevance of microhistory are not central topics of this essay.

While searching for a method that can extrapolate a reality and transform it into a consequent list of details and events or – other way around, searching for the best way of simulating the "reality" of the nonexistent person while collecting invented facts, self-fabulation becomes a phenomenon that resembles multiple personality syndrome.[6] The presumed linear structure of life as a development of successive events is therefore circumvented, and only fragments of the whole remain as witnesses of the past and as symptoms – not as persons. Summarizing a person's biography is one of the most explicit performative acts; it is a speech about actual life that ultimately becomes reality itself. Artists exploring the possible varieties and aspects of treating the biographical details of the subject's life

through art are also committed to certain episodes where events in one's own life have a historic value.

The most important issue that arises here is that of the autobiography. Do we have a privilege over our own biography and destiny, and how much of it belongs to macrohistory – regardless of whether it really desires and includes it? To put it more precisely: macrohistory is based on the very existence of micro-histories and their internalization, even when it does not acknowledge this. Do historians really know and understand our lives better than other people do; i.e. can we see the truth about our own lives more easily than we see the truth about the lives of others? If there is anything really incorrigible in our understanding of ourselves, and if there is no way in which to convey how we feel and think, how can we communicate at all?

Macrohistory: the symbolic and the ideological patterns

Macrohistory and macro-narratives cannot be extricated from the symbolic. They are made possible by one's acceptance of the Name-of-the-Father; those laws and restrictions that control both one's own desire and the rules of communication. By acknowledging the Name-of-the-Father, one is able to enter into a community of others and the collective historical context. The symbolic, through language, that is "the pact which links... subjects together in one action. The human action *par excellence* is originally founded on the existence of the world of the symbol, namely on laws and contracts". According to Althusser's take on Lenin's famous statement "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects", the main purpose of ideology lies in "'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects". Remaining in Louis Althusser's conception of the constitution of identity, this is the process by which agents (individuals) acquire their self-awareness as subjects and the skills and attributes necessary for their social placement. So pervasive is ideology in its constitution of subjects that it forms our very reality and thus appears to us as "true" or "obvious".[7]

The very fact that we do not recognize this interaction as ideological attests to the power of ideology. According to Althusser, "ideology never says, 'I am ideological'" and "individuals are always-already subjects".[8] Therefore, it becomes obvious that one must accept that even microhistory is always already ideologized, and that there is an intertwined relation between macrohistory and microhistory, both of which are – directly or indirectly – ideologically tainted.

Although Althusser presents his example of interpellation in a temporal form (I am interpellated and thus I become a subject; I enter ideology), he makes it clear that the "becoming-subject" happens even before birth. Even before the child is born, "it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived".

But if the moment in which the authoritarian voice utters your name is the ultimate condition for constructing one's own identity (according the concept first coined by Louis Althusser), the question is whether this necessarily implies that the subject undergoes a re-construction of identity each time that the authority enforces a new name on him/her? Moreover, is such re-invention necessarily negative, and is the eventual complete erasure of the earlier layers really possible? Relevant questions here are how the storytelling experience is crafted and turned into history; how does one recognize the meaning when it is not composed of beginning, middle, and end?

The narrative form holds promise for understanding and theorizing visual narrative as an interweaving of micro- and macronarratives through self-historization.[9] There are different models of self-historization, though; e.g. the *mise en abyme* method, the intersection of parallel times, and the intersection of historical narratives.[10]

A Case Study: Liljana Gjuzelova's projects *Eternal Recurrence* and *Woman's Book* at the Intersection between Microhistories and Macrohistories

Today, there is not much dilemma left that a research project can culminate into a work of art, except as a scientifically elaborated analysis and factography. There is still, however, a dilemma as to how to distinguish academic from artistic research, and how the artistic presentation of a research project differs and enhances (or suppresses) the rigorous results of meticulous historic research. To clarify, the question of distinguishing an artistic from a scientific humanist approach to research is not whether the former is less rigorous, systemic and pedantic than the latter. Assuming that the artistic project can also be thorough and rigorous in a methodological sense (according to a specifically designed artistic methodology), it is often expected that artists offer a "performative" turn only in terms of the visual presentation of the results. Throughout this essay, I'd like to argue that there is still a slight difference to be made between the "performative" and the "spectacular", and that this difference is actually at the core of the research-based art projects such as the project *Woman's Book* by Liljana Gjuzelova, which combined historic research with performative artistic strategies and self-fabulation (the work has never been exhibited without the performative reading of the *Woman's Book* by the artist herself).

This essay is also envisioned as an attempt to deconstruct the understanding of photography archives as supposed spaces for guarding of the authenticity of and truth about certain events.[11] I want to address the process of "unveiling of the truth" through the researching of photography archives and to question the possibility of such unveiling. I will focus on the difference between the state (or public) archives and personal archives, while stressing the importance of the gendered perspective of dealing with family photographs

for the deconstructing of state archives in various art projects. My interest in the deconstructing – "an-archiving" – of the archives stems from the need for a gendered interpretation of performing archival photographs during artistic research.

Woman's Book is an artist book (46 pages, 70x70 cm, cardboard, ink-jet photographs, texts, documents, embroidery, drawings) presented as an installation that consists of the object, which lies on a table and is accompanied by recorded sound. The book's narrative was performed by appointment by the artist (who received help flipping of the heavy pages from various appointed assistants) on different occasions in front of different audiences.

The project was a result of a two-year art research project based on the newly discovered details about MTZO, one of the first socialist women's associations in Macedonia. MTZO, or the Macedonian Secret Women's Organization, was not a feminist organization, since it aimed for the liberation of Macedonia from the pre-WWII Serbian occupation. The organization was established in 1927 and existed until 1941, and its manifesto and announcements were published in contemporary Swiss, French and Italian newspapers. The artist's mother Donka Ivanova (later Gjuzelova) was a member of the group MTZO, so the documents found were discovered in the forgotten family archive and among ignored documents in the national archives, owing to the problematic aims of the group against the pro-Serbian government of the time.

This is the lesser known (macro)history of this remote and small southern corner of Europe and its obscure past of women's movements, in the weaving of which many other members of the MTZO besides the artist's mother participated. The organization was active while Macedonia was within the borders of the Kingdom of SHS (Slovenes, Croatians and Serbs), and it operated as an activist support group for the Macedonian Youth Secret Revolutionary Organization (MMTRO), which declared its main aim as resistance against Serbian assimilatory politics. MTZO members were very young female students (according the organization's Constitution, they were virgins) who vowed to support the activities of their male colleagues from the better-known male organization. The most exciting part of the project was the newly written letter from the artist, dedicated and addressed to her late mother and encoded using the codification system that her mother and other members of the group used for distributing messages to imprisoned members.

Historians in Macedonia have yet to advance as far as the artist herself in researching this particular organization, owing to controversy surrounding the claimed ethnicity of its members – Bulgarian historiographers assert the organization's Bulgarian origin, despite the fact that Macedonia was under occupation by Serbia during pre-WWII Yugoslavia during the organization's period of activity. For the artist, however, this controversy was not an obstacle for the precise uncovering of the "underground" history of one of the least-known women's

movements of the 1920s and 1930s and the group whose three hundred known members were active in what is now Macedonia.

The itinerary that the artist pursued throughout her "journey" started from one single photograph that was subjected to an exhaustive and comprehensive cross-disciplinary research and used additional documents, testimonials and other materials traced in different ways. For example, the most extraordinary and rare details discovered during the project were results of two-year "excavations", as were the old letters and photographs from family albums, the organization's Constitution, information received via consultations with local archives and archivists, interviews with direct descendants of the main protagonists of the rarer photographs and other knowledgeable individuals of the period, and even via digging in and jogging the artist's own memory.

The artist had no pretension to interpret this early women's group as feminist. It was clear that the group operated under the auspices of the "Name-of-the-Father" and that it defended the grand narrative of national identity. However this "woman's book" supplements the spectacular history of known heroes and facts with yet another "page", or rather, a new and unwritten chapter about the women's movements that have yet to find space, not even on the margins of the main historiography books (at least in the Balkan region). Facts about the life stories of the forgotten MTZO movement's main protagonists are accompanied by modified photographs and photo-collages with subtle digital or drawing interventions. In this parallel history, the heroines have strange secret weapons at their disposal: songs, poems, staged excursions as cover-ups for conspiracy meetings, embroidered silk, codified letters inscribed with dots over the printed letters in philosophy books, etc.

Squeezed in between two patriarchal powers and regimes of identity construction – the dominant power of the colonizers with assimilatory tendencies towards the subaltern Macedonian citizens and the dominance of their fathers, brothers and lovers, these women construed their unique political subjectivity, which somehow raised above the patriarchal hierarchy. Through commonality and solidarity and the collaboration with the male organization with which they shared their political views, women's subjectivity manifests itself as a kind of necessary supplement that has always already been present and complemented the cracked wholeness of historic truth that was once perceived as solid.

In the beginning, the selected photograph of Liljana's mother and her companions – five other young women – remained mute, without no promise to relay intriguing information; it was only a segment of the abandoned and purloined photographic archive. Six anonymous young women in their twenties, dressed modestly and unpretentiously, and yet dignified, in a unified austere style of the 1920s and 1930s. Among them, the artist recognized only her own mother Donka; that was all she had to go on at the beginning. The hypothesis that the women were bound together by something more than their friendship later led to the

revelation that they also had their membership in the MTZO (Macedonian Secret Women's Organization) in common.

The *Woman's Book* is actually a unique collage of the author's essayistic texts about Gjuzelova, personal letters from her father, her mother and her father's previous girlfriend; letters and political pamphlets; the organization's Constitution (1926) and the Appeal (1930) signed by Gena Veleva; original documents accompanied by the responses to the Appeal from the European media; photographs and documents from the Gjuzelov family archives and copies of visual and textual materials found in different institutional archives and libraries. Precisely this intertwining of the literary essayistic texts inspired by the photograph on the one side and the incomplete historic facts on the other provoke the viewers to an exciting performative experience of this singularized reading of historic events by each viewer/reader of this book project. Even each elevation and flipping of the heavy board pages points to the personal venture by the viewers, who also participate in the construction of this parallel history by participating in the informal performances of partial revelations of different delicate questions and facts about little-known events and personalities of this alternative local history.

These personal moments of encountering the parallel history are emphasized by the utterance of thirty meticulously selected words and names that fill the space with the artist's voice and with the expectation of each subsequent event-word. Thus, the voice/speech/text and the image become interwoven in a grid of meanings, enabling the viewers to become "accomplices" in the unraveling of fragments of this "queer", intimate and clandestine history. The unevenly paced reading, the breaking and chocking pre-recorded voice and the live performance were unrepeatable; the combination and relation of sound and image was never the same for any viewer, and there was no overlap in the words and photo-representations of sadness, pain and male and female history.

The project was actually also an attempt at an-archiving of the notion of archives in the Balkans that "store" only the macrostories from the past – usually those concerning the male national heroes. The aim of this presentation and of the collated visual material challenged and deconstructed the problematic understanding of institutional archives as places dedicated to safeguarding and preserving the truth of written documents and visual imagery. Instead of focusing on the political use of the archive as the repository of some absolute truth (e.g., about national identity), the artist "performed" an archive in a personal quest for truth as a way of producing, rather than acquiring knowledge.

The previous project that dealt with the unveiling/revealing/re-veiling of truth by Liljana Gjuzelova actually comprised a series of four projects, *Eternal Recurrence (1-4),* that were developed from 1996 to 2006. All four installations of Eternal Recurrence (1-4) were dedicated to the extremely sensitive and complex historic case of the artist's father's prosecution and execution at the end

of World War II. [12] Eternal Recurrence was presented as slide, video, sculpture, or text installations in various spaces whilst the artist was trying to unravel the details surrounding her father's fate, not only in the context of the Macedonian national history, but also with regard to the importance of the historic events for her family's history.

The process of investigating and discovering some of the circumstances still enveloping the tragic execution of her father, with different interpretations – a process later instigated by the opening of political dossiers in the year 2000 – led to Gjuzelova producing art projects on the topic and presenting them at exhibitions. She began as early as 1995, when the archives were still inaccessible to the families of those who had been prosecuted or held as political prisoners.

While unfolding the old files, the artist created new folds. The folds/events thus enable rhizomatic relations and convergences to occur between different files, like multiple openings of a silkworm cocoon that "reveal and veil the unveiling of truth."[13] To an-archive the archive in the Balkans is to base the interpretation of various archives of images on assumptions different from those explored in archiving in scientific/historic, political, and social terms. Although it would be an overstatement to claim that it is a-scientific, an-archiving does aim to deconstruct the scientific belief in truth, facts, chronology, and evidence.

The archive *saves* and *preserves* its contents: documents, images, letters, "*traces*" are saved for future research and distribution. This effort assumes that this "investment" can protect the memory, and ultimately the truth.[14] But the archive, being simultaneously an "introduction" into both the past and the future, does not itself have one single introduction, because there is no one single *arch*ē, or true beginning, to the archive. One must negotiate multiple and erratic beginnings in a temporal or spatial way while suspecting that the archive might have already been contaminated by some political and historic agenda from the outset.

On the one hand, even an organized and vigilant researcher who has made all sorts of necessary preparations may overlook an important piece of evidence because of the vastness and the idiosyncratic order of an archive, whether official or private. The desired event – the encounter between the researcher and the sought document/image – might never occur. However, an important *event* may take place unexpectedly; an image or document may appear by accident. The multiple *entrances* to the archive make contingent the *event* of its entering. An archive is always a labyrinth with many dead ends and no shortcut exits, which both confuses and seduces. The photograph of the six women was the single entrance with many exits that enabled the Liljana Gjuzelova's erratic and painful, yet profound and exhaustive research of her personal family history, and also of the delicate and not so "spectacular" national history.

Most of the national archives in the Balkans allow entrance to their well-kept premises, but only the most valued contents of the Balkan archives (the "big historic truths" from "macrohistory" about the origins of nation, national

identity, nation-state, territory, national heroes, or ethnic minorities) are treated as relevant. Regardless of the relevance of the issue of representation of gender difference from a linguistic, anthropological, cultural, psychoanalytical, or feminist academic perspective, the Balkan archives' authorities treat this issue as if it was of no scientific value. It is important to stress that bureaucratic rigidity in historic, national, library, and museum archives in the Balkans is the result of strong political influence and of strict control over the management and leadership of archives. Although the directors are given responsibility and power to lead these institutions ostensibly in the name of some "inherent" idea of the "national interest", in practice these appointments are often an extension of governmental politics.

The regime of representation is still controlled by the authorities, and it turns out to be unstable and always marked by a certain crisis. I propose looking at the representation of gender difference in the Balkans as if it were a "*dangerous supplement*" to, and a source of, this crisis.[15]

The complex rhizomatic structure of the an-archived archive defies linear classification in terms of the selection, gathering, historical periodization, and systematization of the images and their authors. The existing correspondences and contradictory relations among all these images and, most importantly, certain additional relations among all of these different images and concepts emerge during the research itself and the process of an-archiving. On the one hand, this archive seems to include everybody. However, the deconstructed *archive* does not employ the simple method of adding and including neglected or excluded images. It is actually an attempt to apply simultaneously the same two movements of deterritorialization – one through which the subjects would have to be isolated from the majority, and another through which they needed to rise up from their minority status.[16] It is clear that the majority of images portrayed men, and not all representations of women were relevant for discussing gender difference.

The case of the six women who acted together in solidarity with their male companions, but also among themselves (interestingly enough: unlike the male organization, they were never captured and imprisoned) questions even the notion of historic spectacle. The images of women and images created by women, either historic or contemporary, are created in different contexts: documentary, ethnographic, anthropological, or artistic. The grand narrative about the "big" heroes begins to intertwine itself with stories about "less" important ones. The "grand" truths begin to intertwine themselves with the "small" ones; this raises the question of whether there can be such thing as a "small truth," and if the discourse on gender difference can be qualified as a kind of *truth*.

The hierarchical and political notion of a national historic archive claims to protect the origin and authenticity of identity. Therefore it is important to explore the possibilities for a restructuring of the hierarchical archive into an archive of difference and to relate them to the crisis of representation through

a discussion of photographic representation. It deals with the intrinsic "*crack within the truth of sign*" that affects any representation of truth, since this crisis inevitably affects the signification of the archive.17 18

One of the most important questions is, how are the highly appreciated and concealed "macro" truths about the origins of nation, state, or language related to the problematic nature of gender difference? In other words, have these "big truths, or rather *spectacles of truth,* not *always* been marked by gender difference as a kind of "supplement"? Gender difference understood as a "supplement" to difference and national and cultural identity does not merely supplement what is present, but marks the emptiness of these structures.19 Gender difference destabilizes the "fixed" and "pure" structure of identity from the outset.

All of Gjuzelova's series Eternal Recurrence 1-4, in fact, talks about a constant revealing of truth that has no body: the differing versions of her father's last day and his execution on Zajchev Rid, a hill on Skopje's northern outskirts, no signage of her father's grave, are some of the *lacks* that led Gjuzelova to draw a slightly open circle on the supposed resting place of the body; that is how her video Eternal Recurrence 4 begins. The process of marking the unknown grave in red paint with a slightly open circle emphasizes the impossibility of bringing this story to closure – the impossibility of closing a dossier that still abounds with unanswered questions, confusing data, and absurdities. The emptiness; the uncertainty and despair in the long years of re-examination, prosecution, and exile that led to serious human rights violations, as well as the burden of "inherited guilt" left to the whole family have been, from the very beginning, the recurrent motifs in these projects. The video consisted of photographs, the personal letters, Dimitar Gjuzelov's manuscripts, and the newly found documents – such as the last letter Gjuzelov wrote to his daughter – and the documentation from the other three projects.

The unraveling of new layers and veils might appear to be approaching the final truth, but in a rather aporetic way. It is no more than an uncovering of further layers, as a result of the skeptical belief that there is no single "big" truth, and that the different versions emphasize its contingency. However, even though the eternal return is never a return to the same, and does not imply repetition of the same *event*, even though with every repetition certain variations occur which confirm the possibility of movement, this story should be seen as a warning that any chance of a return to any even remotely similar microstories should be prevented.

1. In 1998, I was not yet aware of the concept of micro-history as coined by Carlo Ginzburg, but in this period was influenced by the critique of grand narratives in Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* (Minnesota and Manchester, 1984), and and the French history school *Annales.*

2. "The using of different media as installations, photos, sound, video and the idea to place the works in the spaces that already contain stories (The National University Library "St. Clement Ohridski" in Skopje and Riksarkivet in Stockholm) make this project a kind of intertwining zone of the *little* stories of the common people that the artists were dealing with and the *big* stories, "grand narratives" (J. F. Lyotard) from the history, science and literature. Thus, the result is the problematizing of the border between the real and fictious, the common and unusual, the historic and present etc." (Excerpt from the catalogue's essay, Suzana Milevska, "Once upon a Time", in *Little Big Stories* (Skopje: Skopje Summer Festival, 1998). The catalogue included a short introductory text by the curator Maria Lind as well as the text "Texts, Minds and Other Stories" written by Georgi Stojanov, a professor of cognitive sciences.

3. In June 2010 at the Cultural Centre CK, Skopje, Macedonia

4. Daniel C. Dennett, "The Origins of Selves", *Cogito* (Autumn, 1989), 163-4, 163-73.

5. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller", *Illuminations* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1973), 83-109.

6. This cognitive theory of self-construing through self-fabulation was the starting point behind the project *Little Big Stories* (Stockholm, Skopje, 1998). Daniel C. Dennett, "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity" (1983), in *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives,* eds. F. Kessel, P. Cole and D. Johnson (Hillsdale: Department of Psychology at the University of Houston, 1992).

7. Louis Althusser, "From 'Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses' " in *Art in Theory 1900-1990,* ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Oxford UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1992), 928-936.

8. Althusser, "From 'Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses'", 930.

9 . Here I refer to Hélène Cixous's memorable statement "Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement", in Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975), in *Feminism: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, trans. Leith Cohen and Paula Cohen (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1997), 347.

10. "*Mise en abyme*" ("hologram" or fractal model) is a formal technique in which an image contains a smaller copy of itself, the sequence appearing to recur infinitely. Fractals are typically self-similar patterns, where self-similar means they are "the same from near as from far". Fractals may be exactly the same at every scale, or, they may be nearly the same at different scales. The definition of fractal goes beyond self-similarity *per se* to exclude trivial self-similarity and include the idea of a detailed pattern repeating itself. The intersection of parallel times is more applicable to science-fiction novels, but the intersection of different historical narratives is more relevant for the following case study.

11. For example, on the one hand, the tedious procedures for accessing neighbouring countries' archives for the Macedonian historians and other researchers, including art historians, are associated with the assumed danger from sensitive revelations of such truths. Artists, on the other hand, often use the advantage of the tolerance towards their professional research projects, since art is often interpreted as less "scientific" and thus less "dangerous" in such contexts.

12. The artist's father Dimitar Hristov Gjuzelov was one of the first educated philosophers and renowned intellectuals in Macedonia. He defended his doctoral thesis "Schopenhauer's Pragmatic Critique of Reason" at Zagreb University in 1943. In 1927, he was imprisoned after the "Skopje Student Trial" as a member of the nationalist separationist youth group MMTRO (Youth Macedonian Secret Revolutionary Organisation) since he participated the early national struggle movements against the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1945, he was executed by the Communists as a Bulgarian Fascists' collaborator. His rushed trial and execution are still questioned by the Macedonian historians.

13. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2005), 131.

14. Jacques Derrida, "Différance", in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Prentice Hall, 1982), 18.

15. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 144–157.

16. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 291.

17. Derrida, *Margins,* 10. The crisis of representation as conceived in Jacques Derrida's deconstruction is an outcome of the crisis within the arbitrary structure of the sign and the troubled relation between the signifier and signified.

18. Derrida, *Margins,* 11. If the word "history" did not in and of itself convey the motif of a final repression of difference, one could say that only differences can be "historical" from the outset and in each of their aspects.

19. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 145.

This page: Liljana Gjuzelova, *Eternal Recurrence IV*,
2006, video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Right: Installation view, video projection over
a coffin. Photo credit: Hristina Ivanoska.
Courtesy of the artist.

Left top: Liljana Gjuzelova, *Woman's Book*, 2010, artist's book, 70 x 70 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Lecture-performance and artist's book. Photo credit: Elizabeta Avramovska.

This page: Liljana Gjuzelova, *Eternal Recurrence II*, 2001, installation view. Photo credit: Robert Jankuloski. Courtesy of the artist.

9.
[…] and then…
let's fight!

[…]

AS: I would like to pick up from the reference that you made to Antonio Gramsci: this morning, you referred to his notion of a *guerra di posizione* and… Well, I was very surprised when I read the interview that you did with Maria Pallares-Burke – some fifteen years ago, perhaps – and towards the end, you referred to another, more famous dictum of Gramsci's: the notion of a "pessimism of intelligence, optimism of will" – which, actually, is not Gramsci's to begin with, it is [Romain] Rolland's. Now, the reason why I was surprised was because I had already seen the same dictum applied to your work – or at least to microhistory – in a book by Florike Egmond and Peter Mason, I don't know if you read it…

CG: Yes, I remember: *The Mammoth* and something…

AS: That's right, *The Mammoth and the Mouse*. It is about microhistory and morphology, which is also the subtitle. And when I saw it there, I thought: "This isn't Ginzburg at all!"

CG: It's not?

AS: No! [laughs] At least, that was my reaction – but then I found it in the interview with Pallares-Burke, where it came directly from you. Well, you can imagine that I was a little disappointed. [laughs]

CG: But I mean, "from me"… What we have is a chain of quotations: first Romain Rolland, and then Gramsci reinterpreting Rolland, and then myself – like many other people – reinterpreting Gramsci. So, okay, what does it mean? First of all, we could put Gramsci's quotation in a context. Maybe he even used it before he was put in jail? – Yes, I suspect so. But certainly, we have to reinterpret that dictum in light of Gramsci's own experience. There has been a major defeat: this was the context in which I thought about that motto. A major defeat – that is, fascism. And then, we have to fight anyway – but we also need to look at reality as it is, which is difficult. Today, I think that I would have rather mentioned another quotation that I used in a different context. It is from Walter Benjamin when he was playing chess with Brecht in Denmark – so, two exiles – and Brecht said: "We have to start, not from the good old things, but from the bad new things."

I think that this is a magnificent motto! The context is more or less the same, if you think about: let's say, Gramsci rethinking Rolland's motto, possibly quoting it in a letter – I have to check… So, there has been a defeat, but we cannot hang on to the good old things. Looking at the past in that way does not make sense.

AS: Yes, but the reason why I was so surprised to find that reference in the interview is really… I mean, if you take Gramsci's motto part for part, I can definitely see how this notion of a pessimism of intelligence goes along with your ambition of "painting from nature", if you like – and I can also see how the optimism of the will fits with your insistence on the speculative element in historical knowledge, on the fact that knowledge is possible, that translation is possible, after all. So it does make sense – but still, taken as a whole, there is a crucial part missing. Because what you have here is, in effect, a sort of Kantian dualism – and what is missing is a kind of dynamic between these two poles, something that Kant himself discussed in his third critique on the "power of judgment". To my mind, there are many things throughout your work that point in this intermediate direction. I mean, this entire idea, which you formulate early on, of finding some kind of passage between rationalism, on the one hand, and irrationalism on the other hand… A way, if you like, of making the intellect and the will influence one another.

CG: I would say that I follow you completely, but there is a "but". Yes, I think that a solution must be found – but not too quickly, not too early. It must be postponed as much as possible. So, the idea is to have a clash, a kind of "unsolvable solution" – and then we have to find a way. That is why I am fascinated by this tension between pessimism and optimism, because it seems unsolvable. Again, you could say that this is a kind of avant-garde element. For instance, my emphasis on montage: what fascinates me about montage is the sudden transition – the juxtaposition, in this case – which obviously has cognitive elements. Then, a solution must be found – but as late as possible, because a quick solution could easily become a compromise. What I love about contradiction is its explosive nature: it must be there, unsolvable, unsolvable, and then… let's fight! This would be the optimism. But I think that, after all, the idea of a pessimism of intelligence – if we look at the world we live in, it is not so absurd.

AS: So there is good reason to be pessimistic – even if you are not in prison, like Gramsci was.

CG: Exactly. So you can rephrase that motto, applying it to a different kind of reality. But it still works.

[…]

THE STRANGEST STRANGER

STRANGER

Magnus
Bärtås

The Strangest Stranger
72 min. HD video 2016
Magnus Bärtås
With Joni Waka, Eli David, Nogi Sumiko and Kafka

Joni
Often, I make a joke around when I call people.
When they say hello I say:
"This is the strangest stranger in Japan".
Immediately they say: "Oh, Johnnie! How are you?".
In part because I'm the only one who talks like that,
and in part because of voice- recognition..
In Japan, there is a tradition of voice- recognition,
from way long before computers were invented.

Nogi
He has always featured in other's stories.
People would say he's an albino.
Someone would claim he's American,
others that he's French or Dutch.
In the early 1990s novel 'Under the Kimono'
"he featured as 'Doctor Morrison".
He speaks many languages, maybe 8,
and he can insult people in 12 languages
He never sets the false rumors about him straight.

Joni
People think even the dog might be important,
they're confused about who we really are,
people can't get over Jews with Japanese passports,

Is there a big Jewish community here?
Old, but small.
All the Jews from Kochin are Sephardic; Portuguese and Spanish
There's been a Sephardic synagogue in Japan for 400 years.
We came here only about 100 years ago, we left Kochin 300 years ago.
To Burma then Shanghai…
We have 500 year-old traditions.
We're business people, so we do puja to Ganesh,
I still have a huge silver Ganesh
that my family has passed down for 500 years.
One time some Jews were visiting from New York,
and they saw my father doing puja to Ganesh
and they said: "Isn't that sacrilegious?"
My father said: "Just look at his nose – he has to be Jewish."

Eli
The Japanese government made the "The Fugu Plan" in 1938.
Tokayer, the rabbi of Tokyo has been writing about this.
The Fugu fish is very poisonous, you know,
but delicious if you cook it the right way,
you need a license to cook that fish.
In "The Fugu Plan" Japanese officials secretly approached the American Jews
to ask for financial help to create an Israel in Manchuria.
They hoped that Jewish bankers and industrialist would finance it.
But it didn't succeed.

Nogi
Johnnie Walker's family moved to Osaka,
and then he was sent to a boarding school in India.
non-ethnic Japanese people
could not attend Japanese schools at that time;
the child would have been bullied to death.

Joni
Most people don't know that Kochin had three synagogues.
The Sephardic Babylonian synagogue – we call that the "White Synagogue".
Across the river, you had two others: the "Brown Synagogue" and
the "Black Synagogue".
The Babylonian Jews brought Arab slaves with them.
And it's against Jewish law to proselytize people.
But Babylonian Jews strongly encouraged their slaves to convert.
They weren't allowed to go to the same synagogue though.

And so, they built their own synagogue, the "Brown Synagogue".
And today there are still descendants of Arab slaves in Kochin
from 2500 years ago who are Jews.
Many of them went to Israel.
Of course Southern Indians are very dark, almost black.
A lot of Hindus were fascinated by this new religion and converted,
but they weren't allowed to go to the same synagogue, so they had their own,
that is the "Black Synagogue".
In Kochin you have the "White Synagogue", "Brown Synagogue"
and "Black Synagogue".
And after independence, a Jewish doctor in Kochin – a member of
"The Black Synagogue" – sued to make the point that now India belonged
to the Indians.
He sued in the State Supreme Court of Kerala
for the right to be buried in the cemetery of the white synagogue
just to make the point that India now belongs to the Indians.
And he lost the case in Kerala, because the Supreme Court said:
"It's contrary to local custom".
Then he took the case to Delhi, where no one knows what's going on in Kerala,
and he won the case in Delhi.
He's the only black Jew buried in the cemetery for white Jews.

Nogi
In Japan we have the legend of Tengu, who lives in the mountains
and looks like a yamabushi.
He has a large nose and supernatural powers.
When a ninja – who was an agent or spy in the olden days –
goes to Tengu on the mountain
to get supernatural powers
the Tengu gives him a tora-no-maki
a scroll of the "Torah".

Joni and Eli
How did we meet? Oh, at Bonnie's.
Who met?
You and I.
We met at Bonnie's.
Morris is a well-known Israeli architect,
and he was working here as an architect with his wife Bonnie,
a Jewish girl from New York,
whose family business was America's steel wool king.
They had the biggest steel wool production in the US.

She immigrated to Israel,
became the assistant to the mayor of Tel-Aviv?
No, Jerusalem.
What was his name?
Teddy Kollek.
Yeah, she was Teddy Kollek's assistant
met Morris, fell in love,
they lived here for a long time
and they were, like us, not very religious Jews,
more secular Jews, but they still liked to keep traditions alive.
Every Friday night we would have Jewish dinner at their house
and that's how we met.

Eli
The propaganda book *The Protocols* of the Elders of Zion
– fabricated by the secret Russian police in the early 1900s
– was interpreted very differently in Japan than in Nazi Germany.
In Germany it was just another argument to kill the Jews,
but in Japan it was read as a guide about the usefulness of Jews
– cunning but skilled merchants with global networks.

Johnnie Walker went to a boarding school in Darjeeling,
close to the Nepalese border.
At the age of 14 he drove a Volkswagen bus
in Nepal and Tibet.
He had a dog and a servant.
He received certain supernatural abilities at an early age.
He had premonitions and energetic powers.
He studied psychology at a university in Mexico City.
Erich Fromm had founded the Mexican Institute of Psychoanalysis.
Everything was very experimental.
Gestalt therapy was the big thing.
Some of the patients were survivors from Nazi camps
and their children.
The children were often more damaged than their parents.
Johnnie Walker was very irritated by the survivors' refusal
to speak about their experiences.
Only now does he understand why they didn't want to talk.

There was a time in the 1990s
when he had red eyeglass frames,
a shaved head, except for two stripes of black hair

that ran down the back of his skull,
and joined to make a "V".
He had a house southwest of Shinjuku.
One of Tokyo's few mosques is close by.
He worked as a money broker for many years.
Here he is at Dresdner Bank.

Nogi
The house had two terraces.
His dog Elton, a bulldog terrier named after Elton John,
jumped off the roof terrace
trying to catch a cat, and died.

The upper story was chaotic,
with piles of things covering every surface and cranny:
laundry, newspapers, invitations, catalogues,
unopened packages, letters and bills…
Johnnie Walker rarely opens his mail.
He once opened a package containing a book
that he had been asked to give his friend Eli David.
Eli David got his book ten years late.

Eli
Usually there is a randomly assembled group
that he is guiding around Tokyo –
not only in the art world,
but also other places of significance.
Westerners that are impressed by everything,
but may not always fully understand
the world of culture and history,
that Johnnie Walker invites them to.

He might take them to this place:
a Shinto shrine, one of the oldest in Tokyo
where Yukio Mishima used to meditate.

Nogi
To be "the strangest stranger"
also has some advantages.
It gives a certain freedom.
If a Japanese person behaved like Johnnie
he would be ostracized.

It's difficult to follow his erratic rhythm
if you are not used to it.
Sometimes you barely have time to get in and turn around
before it is time to move on,
at other times he lingers on for a long time,
perhaps waiting for something or someone.

He likes dirty jokes; he's loud and domineering.
He drags around guests that he doesn't know;
an audience for whom he performs small dramas.
He often shocks the reserved guests at restaurants
with loud sexual innuendos, usually homoerotic,
then he manages to make people laugh,
and when he leaves people sometimes bow.

Joni
I speak the Kansai dialect.
I'm not so familiar with the standard.
Have you been living here about 50 years?
Yes something like that.
When I was a kid I used to come home during the summer holidays,
since graduating from the university I've been living in Japan.
This man is always mysterious.
Well, my nationality is Japanese.
Are you a Japanese citizen?
Did you choose your nationality as Japanese?
At the time only white Manchurians could get Japanese citizenship.
Because of discrimination, Koreans and Taiwanese
could only get permanent residence permits.
Only white Manchurians.
For example the white baker Morozoff , an old-timer in Kobe.
But, as in the case of the Koreans, our legally registered name is in Japanese.
Today, Koreans are allowed to use their Korean names in Japan.
But in my time, everyone had to use their Japanese name.
My real name is Waka Joni,
the same Waka as Wakayama-prefecture.
So does Johnnie Walker exist?
It's my English nickname.
My real name is Waka Joni.
Waka like haiku.
My last name means savior.

Eli
Johnnie Walker introduces people
with the most exaggerated declarations of these people's importance.
You are asked to greet "one of the leading",
 "one of the most important",
"the legendary", and so on.
Often, once these people are out of earshot,
he tells you what hopeless losers they are:
stuck up, incompetent, inept,
helpless, or simply idiots.

Nogi
He knows all the artists.
He knows the people in the hotels:
the doormen, the bellboys, the chefs.
He has a key to the suite
of the Sultan of Brunei at the Hyatt Park Hotel.
But he himself…
Is he an outcast ?
I don't know…

Eli
After Elton died, he got himself an Irish wolfhound,
a gigantic creature that he named Bacon.
Once when he was travelling
he asked a friend, an artist named Nogi Sumiko,
to take care of the dog.
When she opened the door to the house
she was immediately attacked by the beast.
The dog bit her quite seriously on the arm.
Nogi just closed the door,
wrapped a scarf around the arm
and drove her motorcycle to the hospital.
When they had given her 20 stitches in her arm
she drove back to house,
to the dog and asked:
 "Are we friends now?"
Then they went for a walk in Kumozawa Park.

Nogi
Irish wolfhounds are considered the world's largest dogs.
Johnnie Walker bought two puppies in Budapest,

took them to Tokyo, and sold one.
In that way he financed his own puppy.
He called it Bacon, after Francis Bacon.
The animal was tremendously strong
Its jaws were big enough to catch a soccer ball.
Walking on the streets became a great spectacle.
The beast caused a commotion everywhere.
People laughed, pointed, got frightened, took detours or
– in the case of a few over-confident ones –
tried to approach and pet it.
But that was forbidden.
Bacon would bite people who touched his head.
This happened several times.

Eli
One day two policemen knocked on Johnnie Walker's door.
They excused themselves and said
that he, as a stranger,
was probably not familiar with Japanese laws.
He could know that it's not allowed
to keep a bear within the city-limits of Tokyo.

Nogi
His friend Eli usually drove Bacon to a French restaurant.
Bacon got a beer and a feast .

Pets represent the possibility
of contact with another level of reality.
We live close to pets, and we feel connected to them,
but the pets also inhabit another world that we don't know.
They are faithful, but they keep their secrets.
Sometimes they function as mirrors.

Eli
When Bacon died he founded the Bacon prize
in honor of the dog.
Every year at Tokyo Artfair,
the winner is announced.

Johnnie sold his house at Yoyogiuehara
and moved to Shibuya.
Joseph Kosuth, who was very close to Bacon,

designed the new house, called The Doghouse.

The name Bacon is a part of the the aura of names
in which he is constantly engaging,
and where his own name
forms an elusive center.
The biography that is linked to such name is unusable changeable.
I guess there is a logic to this.
Someone who gives up or dissolves his name
has no clear past,
but creates an opportunity for mythology…
…and you can invent yourself every day.

Nogi
Many people believe he is an American
because of his accent
and his American slang.
But he is like a parrot, constantly imitating.
If he stays somewhere for a few days,
he can act like he has lived there half of his life.

Eli
If you are different –
you usually try to adapt to the social environment.
But he took another path: confrontation.
Every day there are confrontations.
Sometimes people call the police,
because they are annoyed or afraid of him.
When he gets into trouble with the police,
which happens now and then
– partly because of his temper
– he has his ways of getting by.

Nogi
Japan is an insular country.
You often hear statements here like:
"We are a homogeneous race."
 "Japan is a mono-racial society."

Eli
He always speaks about the ranking of foreigners in Japan.
The order is as follows:

Jews
whites
blacks
Koreans
Burakumin

Nogi
This one of the questions to which he consistently returns:
the Japanese form of racism
that includes oppression of the Korean minority;
the expulsion of the group of people called burakumin,
who are still considered "untouchable";
the hatred of all kinds of foreigners,
– just barely concealed by stiff politeness;
his own position as an eternal gaijin (outsider),
despite being born as a Japanese citizen
and that his family had been Japanese citizens
for several generations.

Johnnie
This was given to me
by the king of Mustang
when he made me his envoy for life to Japan.
My official title is "The Royal Envoy of the King of Mustang
to the emperor of Japan."
Mustang is so high up in the mountains,
by the border of Tibet in Nepal,
that it's not rare for meteorites to fall there.
The locals believe that the meteorites come from heaven,
Lokalbefolkningen tror att meteoriterna kommer från himlen,
so they melt them down and make amulets,
usually in the likeness of a Buddhist guardian god.
The same type of guardian god that you would see
at the entrance of a Buddhist temple,
holding a sword to keep away the evil spirits.
The centerpiece is made from meteorite.
The other pieces are lucky charms in the local animistic beliefs.
This particular necklace has a dog story to it.
Once I left it on a low table,
and Elton, the big white English bull terrier
was home alone and got a hold of the necklace
and started chewing and eating it.

I had to take him for a very long walk and collect all his shit,
and wash and separate it from the necklace.
Then I took it to The Yellow Brothers,
two Japanese brothers who have an unusual boutique,
making accessories and clothes out of rare leathers and hides.
Usually one-off pieces, unique pieces.
And because they are two Japanese brothers
their brand is – satirically – "The Yellow Brothers".
And they reassembled the necklace.
And as they were doing it
they were inspired by this particular charm,
a silver four-leaf clover with turquoise on one side
and a garnet on the other side.
And they borrowed that design and started to make chains,
or mobile phone decorations.
So now they sell them, inspired by this necklace.

Nogi
To live Johnnie Walker's biography,
one has to live many lives.

Here he is in his royal version,
in a hat and coat made of Bacon's fur.

Eli
I have never seen
a convincing historical argument
proven by something written
or something that has been excavated
that proves that the Japanese are the descendents
of the ten tribes.

They don't make Japan their home.
That is the custom.
So, nowadays when you talk about families in Kobe,
from before the war,
you will not find anybody.
Even 30–40 years ago,
you will not find anybody.
This is really an exception.
Most unusual that this happens.
Johnnie is an exception,

who has stayed in Japan for several generations.
It would be extremely difficult to find people like Johnnie,
there is only one Johnnie.

There are two Japanese sects,
both about 70 years old.
They are both Christian sects.
They have very strong links to Israel.
They go to Israel frequently.
They have a beautiful choir,
which sings in Hebrew very well.
They study in Israel,
and some of them speak excellent Hebrew.

Nogi
In Haruki Murakami's novel Kafka on the Shore from 2002
 "Johnnie Walker" is one of the main characters.
Johnnie Walker is portrayed as a cynical sculptor
who devotes himself to killing cats in his spare time.
A person dressed like the figure on the whisky bottle
who uses his large dog to help catch his victims.
In the novel, "Johnnie Walker" explains that he is famous the world over,
an icon of sorts,
but that he has taken a name without any particular engagement:
 "After all, a person has to have an appearance and a name."

I don't know what Murakami did to Joni,
but when he became "Johnnie Walker"
in Murakami's novel
the bad things started.
Things that almost took his life.

He was in Northern Africa
and he took a detour to Dakar.
This was in 2005.
He was interested in the venues of the Dakar Biennial
and had been promised a guided tour by a professor.
For some reason the professor couldn't come.
A young man was sent instead.
After a while they sat down at a café and ordered coffee.

Eli

For four months he was in a cell
that was so overcrowded it was impossible to lie down.
It was the infamous Reubeuss-prison from French colonial times.
If he managed to fall asleep for a moment,
he might wake up with someone's hands in his mouth,
another prisoner who was trying to pull out his gold teeth.
He regularly witnessed torture,
prisoners being killed by the guards –
something that could happen in sudden eruptions of violence,
as if by chance.
The young man turned out to be a Guinean,
from the Sousou tribe.
He was living in Senegal illegally without a passport.
He had been bribed to testify against Johnnie Walker.
But instead he was testifying on Johnnie Walker's behalf.
And Johnnie Walker had never touched him at all, he testified.

Nogi

So Johnnie Walker was able to leave Senegal.
He survived all this.
But there are moments when he says
that he really isn't alive anymore.

Eli

This was at about the same time
that he appeared as "Johnnie Walker"
in Murakami's novel.

Nogi

Johnnie Walker says
that he holds no grudges against Murakami.
That what he experienced in Senegal
almost killed him,
but that he went through that
as if he was fictional character,
as if in a story that he was experiencing
with his body
but at the same time watching.

Johnnie

As a child, coming back from boarding school for summer holidays

I would be sent to summer day camps,
to study Japanese arts and crafts.
One time we were studying kirigami.
In Japan you have two kinds of paper art
– one is origami,
where you fold paper and make a design.
Or kirigami,
where you cut or tear paper and make a design.
With kirigami, you usually tell a story
as you cut or tear the paper.
It's used by storytellers, or comedians.
You don't say the end of the story, or the punchline;
you just show the paper figure.

Eli
Half a year after the events, he got a call from Senegal.
It was a Protestant missionary, an American,
who used to visit the prison.
The missionary explained that a young man had taken refuge in the church.
He had escaped from his village and his family.

Nogi
They could now speak to each other on the phone
and Johnnie Walker gave him a nickname: Kafka.

Kafka
I met Johnnie in 2005. Nine years ago.
We had some problems there, in Senegal.
A friend introduced Johnnie.
We talked. I didn't know he was gay.
And he didn't know I was gay.
We had an appointment in a restaurant.
Senegal is a Muslim country, and unlike any other country.
To be gay there is taboo.
Most people believe
that if you are with a white man you must be gay.
We went to the restaurant and people started to laugh at us.
Johnnie got angry and started to make a scene.
So a guy there called the police,
and reported that they had two gay people there,
and they were flirting, which was not true.
So they took Johnnie, locked him up,

and me as well.
But I was released and Johnnie had to stay.
My relatives tried to force me to confess that Johnnie had been flirting.
They wanted me to tell that that to the lawyer.
But I refused. I said…

Johnnie
He comes, and he heard
that one of the last surviving members
of these Japanese Jews, is this shaman,
who lives in the mountains
and still mixes Animism with Judaism.
There is this mythical guy
who's supposedly the last living Japanese Jew,
which in fact I am.
So, he comes to find me.
He comes over the volcano,
into the forest,
comes into a clearing
where this old Mitsubishu house is.
But in the story we call it "the last ancient synagogue";
 "The secret temple" or whatever you want to call it;
"The Last Original Synagogue", which was designed 85 years ago,
by Frank Lloyd Wright's chief architect.
And this shaman, the last Japanese Jew,
lives there and still practices ancient rituals.

Johnnie and the restaurant owner
Johnnie-san, how is the soba?
Has he been in Japan for long time?
Ah….yes.
Since he is eating the soba so neatly.
Right.
Your soba is the best in Japan, or well, best in the world.
I've been coming to your railway restaurant since I was kid…

Kafka
Once a Japanese pinched his nose closed like this when he saw me.
I wondered: Why? What is he doing?
I had just had a shower, I got in the elevator, and he goes like this.
Sometimes it happens when I enter a shop.
I've just showered and a Japanese does this.

He goes like this with the towel.
As if I wasn't like other people.
And then, if you enter a shop, the Japanese…
…no, they will go like this…
as if the Japanese cannot accept me as a human being.
That's why I have no interested in the Japanese people.
To tell you the truth,
I'm only here for you, because the Japanese are not good people.

A lot has happened to me
since my and Johnnie's tragedy in Senegal.
In the last nine years I lost my father and mother to ebola.
You know, it's not easy to be gay in Senegal.
Being gay is taboo.
The mothers, fathers, your brothers, all your friends
stop talking to you because you are gay.

Johnnie
Before my mother died,
she was the keeper of all the family's relics.
Whether they were rings from Egypt, or stars of David from Spain,
they were all passed down …
or the keys to the house in Spain.
When she found out about Kafka,
she said to me: "You are a Jewish mother's nightmare."
I said: "What are you talking about?
She said: "A gay boyfriend, who is black, and a Muslim, forget it!"
I said: "Okay, we'll forget it, we're not talking to each other anymore."
She said: "Wait, there is a solution".
And she pulls out this little bag of uncut rubies
that's been in the family for maybe 200 years.
And she says: "Take these rubies,
and make a copy of the family star of David,
– which is here –
and put these rubies in a star of David for him,
and make him wear it every day.
In that way I can die happy."

The couple giving out invitations to their wedding
We are getting married.
If you have time, please join the party.
Getting married? Wow, is it true?

On Wednesday?
At the Konnou Hachiman shrine.
Oh I see.
Please come, and bring your friends.
There will be a butoh dance performance too.
Please gather everyone and join us.

Next Wednesday night, we are getting married.
Please come to the party.
Ok.
It will be the first time in the history of Japan there is a same sex marrage
in a shito shrine.
Yea, first time in history.

Kafka
Gay people see something that nobody else sees.
Do you follow me? Do you understand?
That's why gay people are always very intelligent.
Because they have two memories;
the memory of a woman and the memory of a man.
That's why they are able to see far.
As for myself – it's the first time I can do this.
Gay people are not ordinary people.
It's always like this, for all gays.
You are gay, the other is not, you are not the same.
There is something… a difference.
…it's not the same, it's different.
God created gay people like this.

The wedding ceremony at the Shinto shrine.

The Shinto priest is reading Norito (celebration words).

The Shinto priest
As I told you before, Johnnie-san and Kafka-san,
I heard that you couldn't see each other for a long time for many reasons.
You have been cherishing each other over the phone.
Today, in the guests' presence,
I would like to pray for and toast to your prosperity and the guests' good health.
Please repeat after me:
the word is *Omedeto-Gozaimasu* (congratulations).
Are you ready?

Omedeto-Gozaimasu (congratulations).

Nogi
The great Sousou warrior and explorer Kafka,
and his loyal Rhodesian Ridgeback Bogie
went to Japan in search of the lost tribe of Israel,
and fell in love with a Japanese Jew.
They were having the first same sex marriage in a Shinto shrine
in the history of Japan.
At Konnou Hachiman Shinto Shrine in Shibuya, Tokyo
where for 900 years most of the samurais of Tokyo
prayed before going to battle.
Hachiman, the Shinto God of same sex relations,
is the Shinto shrine where Yukio Mishima worshipped.

And Kafka went back to Senegal.
As the eldest brother and with both of his parents dead
he is the head of the family and feels the need and responsibility
to also spend time with his family in Senegal.
He created the "The Imperial Japanese West African Company",
importing Asian and Australian fashion to Senegal
and African textiles to Asia and Australia.

Johnnie Walker says that he's considering stopping being Johnnie Walker.

When a man's best friend is his dog, that dog has a problem. *Edward Abbey*
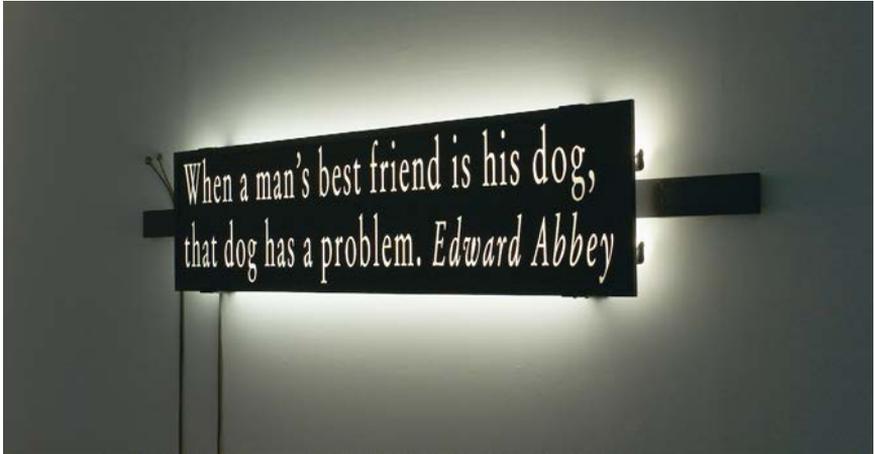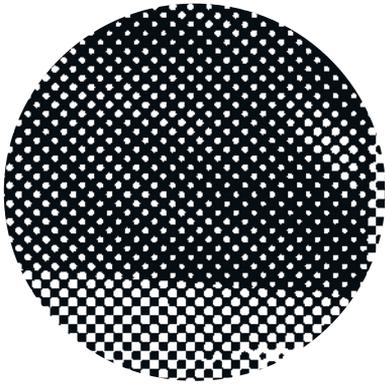
10.
[...] different pieces in different colors [...]

[...]

AS: I also think that your interest in a figure like Montaigne, or in a figure of thought such as the grotesque, can be related to this discussion about pessimism and optimism, about retaining the tension and at the same time striving for a solution. I mean, the grotesque is also... You have this combination of... It is a kind of balancing act, just like when Montaigne turns his attention to himself. He wants to paint according to nature, he does not want to embellish or leave anything out – but there is also an element of respect for the public. So he is not out to shock, he does not want to épater la bourgeoisie [scandalize the middle classes] or anything like that.

CG: Yes – but, first of all, the disjunction or juxtaposition: this is very much in Montaigne's spirit, I would say. Actually, he makes reference to the art of *marqueterie*, a sort of mosaic of different pieces in different colors – just the opposite of a continuum. Against seamless integration, he stresses the transitions. To my mind, this is very much part of the essay as a form, which opens up the possibility of sudden transitions as well as of having a compression of different topics in a limited space. This is something that I suddenly discovered when I wrote that piece on clues.

I think that I have had different reasons for writing essays – also because there were, let's say, pressures from outside. I could have been able to resist them, so perhaps they were not real pressures – but I was tempted to have a dialogue, like the one we are having here today. So, short essays, in response to being invited to such and such a place: this was a sort of social pressure, and one that I accepted. Especially because I try to work on different topics, every time if possible, starting out a new topic and then sharing it with a new audience. So there is this element of discontinuity in my work – it is a *marqueterie mal jointe*, a "badly joined inlay", as Montaigne would say.

And then the grotesque, which I also referred to in my essay on Montaigne.[1] I think that there was a kind of *coquetterie* in this on Montaigne's part. It is as if he was saying: "Some readers will be shocked by the fact that I am talking about

myself, writing in this strange genre." Actually, there *were* precedents, more or less… I think he mentioned one himself: the *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius. And then there is Pascal reacting to Montaigne, saying something like: *quelle sote idée de parler de lui-même!*[2] That is to say, the idea of talking about oneself in this way was simply stupid. This is a fascinating remark because Pascal was literally obsessed by Montaigne: to him, Montaigne was a kind of devil's advocate, that's for sure. So there is this ambivalence at work here: Pascal is having an endless conversation with Montaigne, but at the same time saying that "this is absurd, what is he doing".

As for myself, I have slowly been realizing how crucial ambivalence is and how important it is to deal with it – because, psychologically, I have this tendency to see things in black and white as a first reaction. And then, again, trying to find a way. And then, there is a third problem, which is ambivalence as such. This is certainly something that I learned about from Freud.

MT: But this endless conversation is also driven by questions. This is an important aspect of the essay as well: that it is driven by questions while, perhaps, the answers are never arrived at – just an endless questioning.

CG: Yes, there is this questioning attitude, that is true. I think this is absolutely crucial for all aspects of Montaigne's work.

AS: So, it is not only that you write essays yourself – and perhaps increasingly so – but a fair share of your essays are also dedicated to exploring the essayistic tradition: not only Montaigne, but other Renaissance figures as well, such as Thomas More or Erasmus.[3] Maybe they are not essayists in the strict sense of the word – but it is very much the same mentality, the same kind of worldview.

CG: Yes, and my recent work on casuistry, Pascal and so on, is also related to this. In other words, cases or case studies as a literary form that is extremely close to the essay.

[…]

1. Carlo Ginzburg, "Montaigne, Cannibals, and Grottoes", *History and Anthropology* 6 (1993). Also published in *Threads and Traces*.
2. Ginzburg is quoting freely and from memory. The actual passage reads: "Le sot projet qu'il a de se peindre […]" Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. n, edited by Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, nn), … (no. 653).
3. Carlo Ginzburg, *No Island is an Island. Four Glances at English Literature in a World Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

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

Andrej
Slávik

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. 1960[1]

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), 1976[2]

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, 2012[3]

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 so-
cial thought and cultural criticism."[11] Unfortunately, the document only names
the organizers – the historian Joel Colton, the Foundation's director of human-
ities, 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 undertak-
ing 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 prob-
lems 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 En-
glish 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 "system-
atic" 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 postmodernism 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 theorists[27] – 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 Tedeschis, 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 subspecialities – 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)(∃x)(W(x) & S(x))
(2)(y)(x)[(W(x) & S (x)) ⊃ ~B(x,y)]
(3)(x)[(W(x) & S (x)) ⊃ ~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 emblemi spie* 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 emblemi spie* 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 emblemi spie*, 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 emblemi spie*, 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 agree[85] – 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 populistic, 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, if 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 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 indispensible 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 miscellaneo, 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 "conjectural"; 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 "conjectural" 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, "conjectural" 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 scribble 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 Fährte, 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 gia 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 galileana, basata sulla generalizzazione, la quantificatione 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 *Alì 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 subconcious 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 Verlaufbahn", in *Erich Auerbach. Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen,* edited by Karlheinz Barck and Martin Treml (Berlin: Kulterverlag 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 indiciaire*, 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 postmodernism (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 postwar 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.

11.
Invariably?
We'll see!

[…]
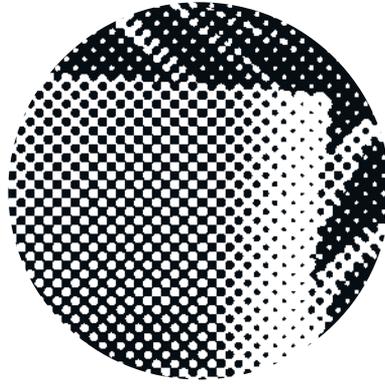
CG: Certainly, the essay as a form is fascinating. When you mentioned your experiments with film essays [looks at MB], I thought about Eisenstein who, as you know, had the project of turning [Karl] Marx's *Das Kapital* into a film. [laughs] When you think of it, how is it possible…

AS: But are you aware that his project has been realized? [laughs] Yes, by the German filmmaker Alexander Kluge, just recently. I don't know if he was very successful, but he did it.

MB: Yes, it is a very long film, eight hours or something.

AS: It is a very thick book, so it makes sense. [laughs]

MB: It is a very boring film.

MT: Did you see it?

MB: I saw part of it.

CG: But the idea of turning *Das Kapital* into an essay, a compressed essay… Well, anyway.

MB: Did you have a relation to any of these essayistic filmmakers – from the 60s and 70s, that is?

CG: You mean, I don't know, Chris Marker?

MB: For instance.

CG: No, no, no personal relation – and actually, no, I am probably not familiar with their work at all. But I was once involved in making a script, with two friends, based on my book *The Cheese and the Worms*. It didn't work out, but in a funny kind of way. You see, it was going to be a production for the Italian television network, which, at that time, was more or less controlled by the socialist party. So, they read the script and said: "It's too anti-clerical." [everyone laughs] A story about the Inquisition!

AS: When was this – in the 80s?

CG: No, it was… Well, around 1980. I was working with a close friend, Cesare Garboli, a critic who died ten years ago, and then a Hungarian-born director, Giorgio Pressburger, who has worked especially in the theater. I learned a lot. And

then, there have been other people that were interested in that book. I remember meeting a producer, a small producer, in the States who asked me: "Would you be interested in having a movie based on your book? And who would be a good director, who would you would be happy with?" I said: "Werner Herzog!" And actually, he became interested, so we had a couple of meetings – but then the producer ran out of money.

MB: So there was sort of an advanced plan?

CG: There was – and actually, I had a conversation with Herzog, explaining to him that I had seen *Kaspar Hauser* and that I was very much interested in the visual aspect of that movie, which I find very compelling. So there are recurrent…

MB: Yes, I can imagine the main character in *The Cheese and the Worms* as a Herzog character.

CG: But you know, when we started out, he asked me: "Which kind of actor would you imagine?" And I said: "Gunnar Björnstrand!" Because I was in love with Ingmar Bergman – until he started making color movies, then I was not into him anymore – but, for years, there was a real passion, so I immediately thought about…

AS: Interestingly, both the projects that you mention – the one with Herzog and the earlier one in Italy – would have been drama productions. In other words, they would have been "based on a true story", as they say in Hollywood – but the real historical element would invariably be lost.

CG: Invariably? We'll see! That would have been the challenge. In other words, one has to fight in order to put history into that kind of more or less fictionalized sequence. I found it interesting. I mean, we were actually thinking about… But, as you immediately grasped, I saw this as a real problem.

And then, there is, let's say, the essay as a form, which is something else. In the case of *The Cheese and the Worms*, there is a strong narrative element – but the idea of making a movie based on an argument, to translate an argument into images…

AS: Exactly! If you imagine someone like Chris Marker or perhaps Alain Resnais making a film based on *The Cheese and the Worms*, it would not have been in dramatic form, but rather based on… For instance, do you remember seeing Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard*?

CG: Yes, yes…

AS: In other words, you compile archival materials and footage from the same locations… Of course, with Menocchio, it would be more difficult!

CG: Yes, more difficult.

AS: … but you could actually use all kinds of sources to compile a sort of visual narrative that would not be dramatized in the way it would have been if we left it to Herzog.

CG: Which is the main obstacle! I mean, in my book, there is a hero, a

name, a person. It would be difficult to dilute this into a presentation like the one in *Nuit et brouillard*. If we take *I benandanti* – well, that is something else. And actually, there was somebody who was interested in making a movie from it, but I learned about it only after his death…

AS: Based on *I benandanti*?

CG: Yes – Pier Paolo Pasolini.

AS: No! [laughs]

CG: I heard this from Elsa Morante, a prominent writer who was a close friend of Pasolini's – and I can understand it in so far as he received his early education in Friuli, Friulian was his first language as a writer, he wrote poems in Friulian. So I can imagine that, as he read the book, he would have thought about it. He also knew my mother, they were friends, and so on. Anyway, then he changed his mind and made that movie from [Giovanni] Boccaccio's *Decameron*. [laughter]

[…]

THE OFFSPRING RESEMBLES THE PARENT
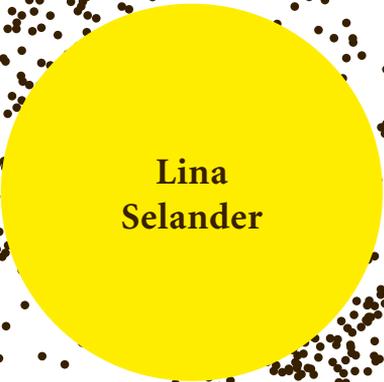
Lina Selander

The Offspring Resembles the Parent, 2015
HD video, colour, sound
With Oscar Mangione
13:44 min
https://vimeo.com/122303434

Gutschein über 50 Pfg. — Gutschein über 50 Pfg.

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Gültig bis 1-1-1921

Magistrat der Stadt Aschaffenburg

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Who do you cradle, restless mother?
- Boys. So that they grow big in the hatred
That we carry glowing deep in our hearts.
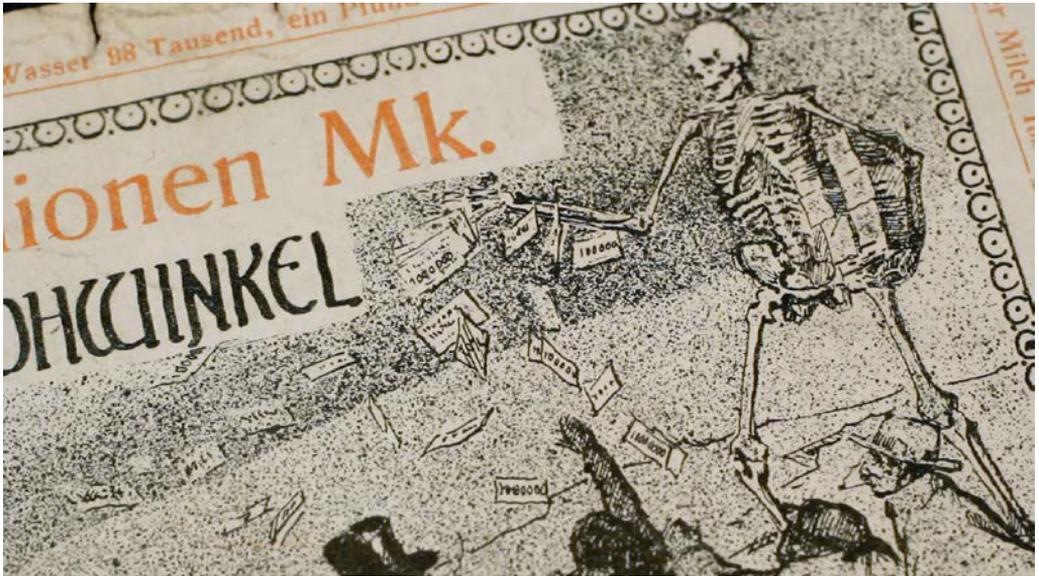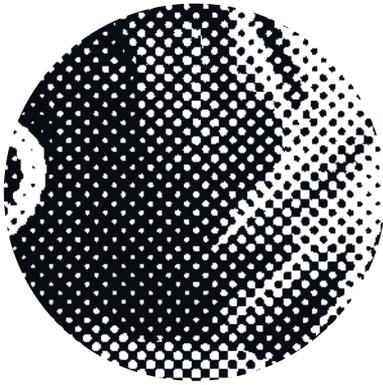
12.
[…] dynamism
in a single image.

[…]

AS: Speaking of cinema and the relation between cinema and history: there might even be a reference in that essay on "Microhistory: Two or Three Things…" – which, by the way, is an obvious reference to Godard…

CG: Oh yes, sure.

AS: … but anyway, you refer to [Sigfried] Kracauer's posthumous work about history, and somewhere – whether it is there or in your essay on Kracauer[1] – you write that his book is actually the best introduction to the microhistorical perspective, even though you did not know about it in the 70s. So when did you first read Kracauer?

CG: I am trying to remember… Perhaps in the late 80s? I was especially fascinated by his comparison with montage. Sometimes one does not have direct access to somebody's work, but then it comes from a different chain of events. This is an idea that I developed in other contexts without reference to Kracauer. It interests me for two reasons, one subjective and the other objective. Subjectively, because I realized that, in this case, for instance, I had been affected by Kracauer through [Theodor] Adorno, one more writer that I read when I was twenty – so another early fixation.[2] And again, retrospectively, I would say that his *Minima Moralia* already points to something like microhistory: the aphoristic element…

AS: … with numbered sections as well, just like in your essays – although in *Minima Moralia,* they also have brief, descriptive headlines.

CG: Yes. And then objectively, because one could say… Okay, I am unable to demonstrate that this affected that – but maybe there were intermediate chains, or different chains, which could have had such-and-such an effect.

AS: So, the notion of montage is already present in Kracauer's work. Then, you also have this idea of the close-up and the big picture – the *jeu d'échelles*, as Jacques Revel would have it – as well as of the depth of field.

CG: Indeed, yes… Come to think of it, my earliest encounter with all of this on the screen was in the last episode of [Roberto] Rossellini's *Paisà*. At the very end, there is a long shot: people in battle, firing their guns – and the most cruel

passages of the battle are seen in long-shot. I remember that I mentioned this in a long interview with Adriano Sofri that was translated into German as well. This was in the early 80s, I think.[3] Anyway, I made a comparison between this episode, this moment, in Rossellini's *Paisà* and a marvelous painting by Pieter Breugel [the Elder] in Vienna called *The Gloomy Day* where you are confronted with… How should I put it – with a crosscut of the world? There is a man urinating against a wall, then somebody fighting, and then you go on and on: there are woods, a dark sky, then a seascape – but only a fragment – and then a ship that is overthrown by the storm. The idea of having everything at once: a kind of synchronic translation of something that would typically be conceived in sequence, which implies a generalization. So instead of having, let's say, a case study resulting in a generalization, you have a crosscut or section in which everything is there.

AS: History as a kind of eternal present?

CG: I would not put it like that. Actually, I should mention a crazy idea that I had when I started writing *The Cheese and the Worms*. I said to myself: "I would like to write it on one gigantic sheet of paper where everything would be looked at synchronically." In other words, you have this tension between the synchronic and the diachronic elements. There is an essay by [Roman] Jakobson in which he says: "But if we look at a photogram in a movie, we can see that there is both synchrony and diachrony." So, the same two elements – and the photogram as a way of overcoming Saussure's distinction between synchrony and diachrony. That is, we have to look for diachrony within synchrony. I have returned to this passage many times, but it was only a few seconds ago that I thought to myself for the first time: "Well, this is futurism in Jakobson!" Let's say, from [Umberto] Boccioni via [Vladimir] Mayakovsky – because, in Boccioni's work, you find this…

AS: The dynamism…

CG: Exactly. So, let's say, dynamism in a single image. You can see how Boccioni traveled through Mayakovsky to Jakobson – or so I would claim. Can I prove it? Maybe… Certainly not right now, but it would be a very interesting idea! Anyway, in Boccioni's work, there is this notion of providing a kind of field of conflicting forces – but as a still image. For the historian, I would say that this is a real challenge. On the other hand, there is the diachrony of narrative. And so, I had the idea of overcoming it by way of a gigantic… Well, it is absurd.

MT: You can also think of this in terms of linearity. Speaking of *The Cheese and the Worms* and your gigantic sheet of paper, would it be arranged in the same way as it was laid out in the book? In that case, you would impose a linearity. Or else in terms of how close things are to one another, as a question of proximity…

CG: Well, one could say that, okay, time is always involved – even in a synchronic image. We have to look around, focus on one thing after the other, and so on – so time is there, just like in music or poetry. But I still believe that the tension between images and words should be retained. In other words, to me, saying that time is always involved seems like too easy a solution. Time is always

involved because we are decaying animals – but still, the idea of keeping those two poles in tension…

MT: For me, it is an artistic challenge. I would really like to do that. [laughs]

CG: Yes, I see… But actually, one could also look at movies – that is, stills or nearly still images in movies – from this point of view. For instance, after thirty years or more, I recently saw Antonioni's *The Eclipse* again: especially the last section, which is really powerful. I think that Antonioni is a really interesting case because, I mean, the plot is uninteresting, the words exchanged between the actors are uninteresting, the characters are uninteresting – but the visual power is… Again, in the black and white movies. I think that, with some exceptions, I have a kind of prejudice against color movies.

AS: So you do not like [Antonioni's] *Deserto rosso*?

CG: [lowers his voice, as if to avoid being heard by someone eavesdropping] No. [laughs] But the color section in Eisenstein's *Ivan* is magnificent – the explosion of color!

[…]

1. Carlo Ginzburg, "Minutiae, Close-up, Microanalysis", *Critical Inquiry* 34 (2007). Also published as "Details, Early Plans, Microanalysis: Thoughts on a Book by Siegfried Kracauer" in *Threads and Traces*.
2. See fragment 7, p. … above.
3. Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Sofri, "Geschichte und Geschichten. Über Archive, Marlene Dietrich und die Lust an der Geschichte", in Carlo Ginzburg, *Spurensicherungen. Über verborgene Geschichte, Kunst und soziales Gedächtnis* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1983).

EPILOGUE: BIG SHIPS AND SMALL BOATS

Magnus
Bärtås

In an e-mail conversation with the Indian artist Jitish Kallat, in 2013, some of the aspects of the Microhistories- project were brought forward. We were discussing methodologies of approaching history through personal memory, anecdotes, bio-sketching and narration, and by addressing smaller units of information as a means to reach possibly even deeper recesses of history. Jitish wrote that he was just sitting by the water-front in Kochin, in Kerala, thinking of how a sailor needs to disembark from the big ship and enter a smaller boat to be able to penetrate water-bodies that run deep inland.

Jitish offered a beautiful image of microhistorical attempts that has stayed with me over the course of this project. In a curated screening that we arranged within the framework of Microhistories at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, we showed Alain Resnais' *Toute la mémoire du monde*. The film was shot in 1956, at Bibliothèque nationale, 58 Rue de Richelieu in Paris, France, and the camera scrutinizes every level and function of the imposing building, where officials move with the exactness and timing of ants in an anthill. The building is a fantastic construction, a machinery of memory aids, where everything printed on paper in France becomes a treasure. Indeed, Bibliothèque nationale is no small boat; it's a gigantic ship where "all the world's memory" (i.e. the memory of France) is collected and organized – Resnais compares it with Captain Nemo's ship, where "the air is monitored, the atmosphere is adjusted". A chain of well-choreographed actions are performed in this gigantic organism, which is forever a work in progress; in the reading room where "most of the world's" newspapers can be consulted; in the engravings room where "every picture" is stored; in the medal room; and in the map department where all "stars, satellites, meteors, capitals and their suburbs" can be found. Consequently, to host all these memory objects, the building expands constantly, moving deeper underground and higher into the skies. And to make it possible to consult this gigantic memory, an army of officials employ a strict order of methodical measures that have over time become law: to sort, analyze, inventory, classify, number, stamp, file, microfilm, tag with keywords, verify, store, preserve, protect… The collection

has to be complete – that is the law – and there is a constant fear that something will escape the organism and that the fragile entities will disintegrate. Rimbaud's first writings were found in these collections, "published in an obscure journal in the Ardennes". Who knows what other illuminating works are embedded in this memory machine? "Who knows what will testify most cogently to our civilization tomorrow", asks Resnais' voice-over.

The Bibliothèque nationale as a model, micro-cosmos or metaphor of all the world's memory is of course most problematic, it goes without saying , in its literally Eurocentric fundament. Nevertheless, it's a mesmerizing place. One does not have to fetishize analogue archives to long to spend a substantial amount of time in this building, or to feel a sense of happiness from mere the knowledge of its very existence. If we agree that such characters as "microhistorians" do indeed exist – be they scholars or artists, or both – we could easily imagine how these characters would dig in to these archives and collections and make findings among the obscure journals and the other overlooked and neglected documents (both God and the Devil are in the detail, as we have learned). The microhistorian might also ask – in accordance with Carlo Ginzburg's quote of Jasper Johns: what sort of loss, destruction and disappearance does this found object or document speak of? (see Andrej Slávik's "Microhistory Goes Public" in this anthology). And not at least: the microhistorian would be interested in the question of what has *not* been included, or *not* captured by the arms of the organism; what has never been stamped and classified, internalized and protected by the body of the building.

This book gathers the contributions of a group of artists/scholars/curators made within the framework of a project funded by Vetenskapsrådet (the Swedish National Research Foundation). The aim was to gather knowledge from artistic practice/artistic research and the field of history and practically as well as theoretically investigate of how a mutual exchange can come about between a historiographical approach used in microhistory, and visual art – especially the video essay genre.

Andrej Slávik has been interested in the relationship between artistic and humanistic research in general, and in the relationship between film and history in particular. These investigations have led him towards the field of microhistory, and in the foreword he describes how the approach to the term came about in this project. Behzad Khosravi Noori tells in his essay how the term stirred his imagination at first encounter, inspiring fantasies and projections. As a term, microhistory is productive and imaginative – this anthology bears witness to that – although quite a more orthodox view or relation to the term would perhaps call for a less wild-grown attitude.

When I worked with the theorist and curator Suzana Milevska on the exhibition *Little Big Stories* in 1998, we already talked about small narratives and

grand narratives and the meaning of mundane, everyday stories in the context of Scandinavia and the Balkans. It was very natural to invite Suzana Milevska to this project, and one of our sessions was held in the town where she lives and has worked a large part of her life: Skopje – a city where the government has placed a gigantic fake ship in the river of Vardar in the city center. This object, which resembles a oversized toy pirate ship, is one of the many large-scale monuments in the city that violently forces grand memories and narratives on the citizens, as Suzana discusses in her essay "Ágalma: The 'Objet Petit a,' Alexander the Great, and Other Excesses of Skopje 2014". Our visit to the artist Liljana Gjuzelova was almost an antidote to the view of the big fake ship. Liljana generously received us in her combined home and studio in the outskirts of Skopje, and showed us her artist's book *Woman's Book*. This is a very large book (70x70 cm) made in one copy and based on her research of a seemingly "small sequence" in history: the history of MTZO, Macedonian Secret Women's Organization, one of the first socialist women's associations in Macedonia. Everything started with her own family history – or rather, with a single photo among her family photos – "that was subjected to an exhaustive and comprehensive cross-disciplinary research…", as Suzana Milevska writes in her second contribution to this anthology.

As in Khosravi Noori's description of Iran as a hyperpolitized society, the life of individuals in Macedonia and the Balkans in general are subject to the heavy pressure of politically charged history to the extent that almost all microhistorical aspects become invisible or non-existent, both in history writing and in media reports totally dominated by ethnical conflicts, violence and war. Conversely, some of the violent moments in history are forgotten, suppressed or erased in the Nordic countries, replaced with narratives of exceptionalism in relation to the rest of the world. But proof of violence doesn't necessarily have to be found in violent imagery. The photograph of the Nazi military parade that Lena Séraphin treats with an act she calls "reconfiguration" was found in the Finnish Defense Forces' image archive. Encountering the photograph, which was taken on June 2nd, 1943 in a small city on the coast of southwestern Finland, Séraphin describes how she "dissolved into the depiction, becoming not only subordinate, but also subservient. The distance between observer and actor which I intended to outline shrunk, leaving me instead feeling remote within myself, as though seen through inverted binoculars."

Séraphin's words point to a situation when an artist/researcher chooses to work with a material, not from the conviction of a possibility to rationally reveal or uncover "the larger picture" or the detail as a means for understanding a macrohistorical situation, but rather from a point of desire, as if obtaining a material that offers rare inklings or presages – a precarious situation that creates what Oscar Mangione in his conversation with Lina Selander and Axel Andersson describes as "the unconscious fear involved in artistic creation – the fear that it, at some deep and uncanny level, is random." The both quiet, insisting

and affective attitude to the material is prominent in Lina Selander's essayistic film works, made in collaboration with Oscar Mangione. But I believe Selander and Mangione have also "sterilized their instruments", as Carlo Ginzburg put it in Bologna in 2014, when we discussed desire as a driving force in relation to a material. Their works have an amazing exactness of form; of rhythm in editing in relation to the materiality of images. Selander/Mangione have made four works during the course of the project, which are represented in this anthology and all bear witness to this exactness: *To the Vision Machine* (2013), *Model of Continuation* (2013), *Silphium* (2014) and *The Offspring Resembles the Parent* (2015).

As a practiced-based research project, it has been of great importance to fund, discuss and promote the making of the artworks within the project. I have made two works, also presented in this book: The *Miracle in Tensta* (Theoria), 2014, and *The Strangest Stranger* (2016). The latter is a biography of Joni Waka (Johnnie Walker) – a person to which my relation goes back almost twenty years, to when I first met him in Tokyo in 1996. At this time, I had begun to use a kind of mnemonic observation technique whenever I had met people for short periods of time. After spending some time with a person, I would write down a kind of statement comprised of short sentences. The resulting epigrammatical texts had the form of a refrain or repetition, where the particular stands alongside the general, like a mix of "information" and narrative. The idea was to create a biography out of a conversation according to a certain writing method; to latch onto a few details and let them be repeated and let them accrete. I imagined that this mode of writing offered a consistent pattern or a mode of writing thematically that anyone could adopt and try for themselves. With simple fragments, the writer may create a number of diachronic themes that were layered and repeated. "Who is Johnnie Walker?" was the first work in this series. The biography was presented in a text installation for the exhibition mentioned earlier: *Little Big Stories,* curated by Suzana Milevska, at the old National Archive in Stockholm, in 1998. By making *The Strangest Stranger*, I partly reenact elements from this time.

Another work funded by and created within Microhistories – and also partly filmed in Japan – is the video essay *A Kind of Friend* (2016) by Lars-Henrik Ståhl. Here, he focuses on another slippery point in the making of history: the elusive and amorphous nature, and yet powerful impact of friendship. The "soft data" of friendship exists in an intersection between love, affection, trust, pragmatism and cynical values. On one hand, it is crucial for us as social beings, and on the other hand contaminated with aspects as corruption and nepotism. Ståhl has earlier directed artistic research projects such *as Los Angeles Islands* and *Placebo*, and he is an interesting example of a theoretician who works with narratives and storytelling (for instance by the use of comics, film and performance). Mika Hannula, another member of the research group, is somewhat of a pioneer in the writing about and theorizing of artistic research. In his essay "Life: a Narrative in Three Dimensions", the sense-making nature of narratives is confronted with the

messiness of life. Life and narratives – their paradoxical, yet reciprocal relation-ship – is testing the limits of the inner coherence of an "acceptable" narrative and the "psychotic" state of life. Crucial self-reflective questions occur when we ask ourselves about the stories of which we are a part and in which we participate.

The research group including myself, Mika Hannula, Suzana Milevska, Lina Selander, Andrej Slávik and Lars-Henrik Ståhl arranged both closed and open seminars, and came to expand naturally with the presence and contributions of Lena Séraphin, Behzad Khosravi Noori and Michelle Teran. For me, Michelle Teran's lecture performance *Folgen* is an emblematic piece of this overlapping terrain between historiography and art practice that we have tried to map within Microhistories. Her usage of self-narration by "unknown" people on Youtube is revealing of a field of relations between digital mapping, social media, the urban landscape of Berlin and the people living there. While she collects and combines these stories, almost acting as a stalker, she performs a version of Chris Mark-er's method in *Sans soleil*, called *pilgrimage* – travelling in the footsteps of texts and film. But she goes further. She carefully watches every video published by her protagonists. She prepares herself in detail before travelling in the footsteps of a video published by the elderly man "Manne", a clip where he visits the cemetery where his father is buried: "I carefully scrutinized each video, repeat-ing segments, replaying them over and over again until I had memorized every gesture, every comment, every feature." When she finally finds the cemetery, she is able to walk with the laptop in front of her, using it as a visual guide at the spot, and creating a strange and wonderful sense of belongingness and connection with this anonymous pensioner in Berlin for viewers of the performance.

Axel Andersson is a writer and critic living in Stockholm. He received his PhD in History from the European University Institute in Florence 2007 and is the author of *A Hero for the Atomic Age: Thor Heyerdahl and the Kon-Tiki Expedition* (Peter Lang, 2010) and *Den koloniala simskolan* [*The Colonial School of Swimming*] (Glänta produktion, 2016).

Magnus Bärtås is an artist, writer and professor of fine arts at Konstfack, Stockholm, working mainly with text, video and installations. His dissertation in artistic research, *You Told Me – Work stories and video essays*, was presented in 2010 at the University of Gothenburg. The same year, he won the Grand Prize at Oberhausen International Filmfestival with the video essay *Madame & Little Boy* (2009) in which he collaborated with musician and actor Will Oldham (aka Bonnie 'Prince' Billy). In 2016, a larger retrospective exhibition of Bärtås' work is on show in Göteborgs Konsthall, Gothenburg.

Carlo Ginzburg is an Italian historian of international reputation. He was Franklin D. Murphy Professor of Italian Renaissance Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1988–2006 and Professor of the History of European Culture at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, in 2006–2010. His books and articles, which range over a wide variety of topics in modern and early modern history, have been translated into all major languages. Ginzburg holds honorary degrees from universities worldwide, serves on the advisory boards of several journals and is a member of numerous academies, including the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the British Academy and the Academia Europaea.

Mika Hannula is a writer, curator, teacher and art critic who lives and works in Berlin. Hannula holds a PhD in Political Science and is the author of numerous articles and books on contemporary art. He was a professor for artistic research at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden in 2005–2012. Among many other exhibitions, he was the curator for the Estonian Pavilion at Venice Biennial in 2007.

Behzad Khosravi Noori is an artist and writer based in Stockholm and Tehran. He holds a master's in Animated Film Production from the Tarbiat Modares University in Tehran and a Master in Art in the Public Realm from Konstfack University College of Art and Design in Stockholm, where he is currently a PhD candidate. Khosravi-Noori's research-based work investigates cultural phenomena and political representation in hyper-politicized contexts.

Oscar Mangione works with Lina Selander and has participated with her in several exhibitions. From 2006 to 2012, he edited and wrote for the magazine and art project *Geist* and took part in numerous exhibitions, performances and projects in venues such as the Reykjavík Arts Festival, the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm and the Venice Biennale.

Suzana Milevska is a curator and theorist of visual art and culture. She holds a PhD in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths and was the first Endowed Professor for Central and South Eastern European Art Histories at the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna. In 2012, Milevska received the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory.

Lina Selander is a visual artist who lives and works in Stockholm. Her works revolve around images as memories, imprints and representations, often dealing with junctures in history where a system or physical place collapses and something new begins to emerge; for example the narrative of mechanical cinema giving way to that of digital video, or a political or economic system plummeting into a new one. In 2015, Selander represented Sweden at the Venice Biennial with the exhibition *Excavation of the Image – Imprint, Shadow, Spectre*.

Lena Séraphin is a visual artist based in Helsinki. Her work consists of writings and visual works that place emphasis on display as a dramaturgic event. Séraphin graduated from Goldsmiths in 1998 and is currently completing her PhD thesis *The Don Quixote Complex – Laborations in Fictionality* at the Aalto University. The forthcoming dissertation is based on observations of the artist herself as a varying assembly of roles, analyzing the double or doppelgänger as a figuration and an artistic device.

Andrej Slávik is a historian. He earned his PhD in History of Ideas with a dissertation on the aesthetic theories of the Greek-French composer Iannis Xenakis (1922–2001). Among his research interests are post-war intellectual culture, the theory of historical practice, and aesthetics in the broadest possible sense. During 2014, Slávik was a working member of Humtank, a newly founded think tank for the humanities resulting from a collaboration between twelve Swedish universities (a three-year engagement that he terminated after one year due to creative differences).

Lars-Henrik Ståhl is professor in Theoretical and Applied Aesthetics at Lund University. After his PhD in Architecture, his scientific/artistic production has mainly contributed to two different fields: architectural theory and the role of aesthetics in contemporary society. Ståhl has also been active in the development of artistic research in the field of art, architecture and design, directing research projects such as *Los Angeles Islands* and *Placebo*.

Michelle Teran is an artist, born in Canada and currently residing in Berlin, who claims a hybrid practice that links political and social involvement to contemporary art actions. Her multidisciplinary works span film, text, performance, installation, online works, participatory events and interventions in public space. In 2010–2014, she was research fellow at the Bergen Academy of Art and Design (KHIB) where she carried out her research within the Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme.

Public Microhistories Events:

Konstfack, 2013: Contributions by Magnus Bärtås, Suzana Milevska, Michelle Teran, Behzad Khosravi Noori, Lena Séraphin and Lina Selander.

Moderna Museet (in collaboration with IASPIS), 2014: Introductions and discussions: Magnus Bärtås, Andrej Slávik, Suzana Milevska, Behzad Khosravi Noori, Cecilia Nygren and Pirooz Kalantari.

Films by Cecilia Nygren, Pirooz Kalantari, Filipa César, Aykan Safoğlu, John Smith and Alain Resnais.

Tensta Konsthall, 2014: Contributions by Suzana Milevska, Michelle Teran and Lena Séraphin/Blaue Frau.

Microhistories has been represented at following conferences:

15th International Bakhtin Conference, Stockholm, July 23–27, 2014

Agera Digital, October 16–17, 2014

History of Twentieth-Century Historiography International Conference, University of Athens, Greece, June 18–20, 2015

2015th ISCH Annual Conference on Cultural History, University of Bucharest, Romania, September 7–10, 2015

The works (partly) funded by and created within the framework of the project have been presented at the following exhibitions and screenings:

Magnus Bärtås: Tensta Konsthall, The 1st Research Pavilion at the Venice Biennial 2014; Les Rencontres Internationales / New Cinema and Contemporary Art, Gaite Lyrique, Paris; Haus der Kulturen der Welt; "Rainbow in the Dark", Malmö Konstmuseum, Göteborgs Konsthall

Lina Selander: Solo presentations: "Moment", Moderna Museet, Stockholm; "A Series of Images About You", VOX – Centre de l'image contemporaine, Montréal (QC); "Lina Selander", Galleria Tiziana Di

Caro, Naples; "Excavation of the Image – Imprint, shadow, spectre, thought. Representing Sweden", Arsenale, The 56th Venice Biennale 2015; "Open system – Silphium and other works", Iniva, Institute of International Visual Arts, London; "A Continuous Shift of Perspective", Örebro Konsthall, Örebro; "A Series of Images About You", Kalmar Konstmuseum, Kalmar; "Model of Continuation", La Mirage, Montréal, QC; Silphium, Kunsthall Trondheim;"Model of Continuation", OEI Colour Project, Stockholm.

Group shows: "La Nuit de l'Instant, Les Ateliers de l'Image", Marseille; "Screens and mirrors", Borås konstmuseum; "Quem conta um conto acrescenta um ponto / If you tell a story you add more", Casa do Infante, Porto, Binz 39, Zurich and Galerie der Künstler, Munich; The Kiev Biennale, The School of Kiev, Kiev; "The Vanishing Point of History", L'Été photographique de Lectoure, Les Gers; "Strangeness of Banality – Memory and Materiality, The Limited Access," Parking Gallery 5, Tehran; Open House, Iaspis, Konstnärsnämnden, Stockholm; "I de lange naetter", Galleri Festiviteten and Galleri Stallgården, Eidsvoll.

Screenings: Les Rencontres Internationales / New Cinema and Contemporary Art, Paris/Berlin/Madrid; Gaîté Lyrique, Paris; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Reina Sofia National Museum, Madrid; Porto/Post/Doc, Teatro Rivoli, Porto; "Art Cinema OFFoff", Gent, Solo screening and conversation between Lina Selander, Trond Lundemo and Oscar Mangione. Bio Victor, Filmhuset, Stockholm; "V for Vestige, Moving Image, A Contemporary ABC", Gaîté Lyrique, Paris.

Konstfack

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