Virtual Investigations

Transformations of the evidential paradigm between Sherlock Holmes and *Forensic Architecture*[*]

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Through a contrastive comparison between the classic detective Sherlock Holmes and contemporary research agencies such as Forensic Architecture, this paper examines a recent shift in the "evidential paradigm" (Ginzburg). Based on the role that the "evidential paradigm" plays for critical literary and cultural studies, the state-supporting positivism of Sherlock Holmes is distinguished from the state-critical constructivism of Forensic Architecture: Whereas Holmes conceived of the trace as a positive datum, in Forensic Architecture's virtual investigations it becomes an emergent from data. However, this juxtaposition needs to be differentiated when critically examining the "aesthetics of objectivity" (Charlesworth) of the animated videos Forensic Architecture use to present their findings. The essay closes by asking what conclusions can be drawn from the new forms of knowledge generation for the methodology of literary and cultural studies.

Introduction

If Parker, a character in Ricardo Piglia's novel *El camino de Ida* (*The Way Out*, 2013), is to be believed, private detectives have become obsolete in today's digitized world. What classical detectives searched for with their legwork is now found by computers. Parker works with a "circuit" of four computers and a "web crawler":

> The browser connected to the files related to Parker's search, and the information arrived instantaneously. "We never set foot in the streets anymore, us private eyes," he said. "You can find whatever you're looking for on there."[1]

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[1] Ricardo Piglia. *The Way Out*. Trans. Robert Croll. Brooklyn, NY: Restless Books, 2020. P. 20.

In the face of such a digitized reality, the detective no longer needs to collect and interpret traces, but can content himself with bringing together information. Parker could thus be seen as an advocate of those virtual investigations of the recent past that collect, network, and process data exclusively digitally. Nevertheless, Parker's role remains fairly conventional: "Detectives no longer solve cases, but we can tell stories."[2]

This leaves Parker with only a remnant of what Carlo Ginzburg called the "evidential paradigm." In a well-known essay from 1979, the cultural historian argued that the collection and interpretation of circumstantial evidence was so closely related to its narrative contextualization that narration took its origin in the tracking of prehistoric hunter-gatherers.[3] The point was to describe modern trace-reading not only as a detective practice, but also as a practice of the humanities, so that literary detectives would reflect academic scholars. As a consequence, however, insights of the humanities could also be discredited as more or less fictional narratives. Against this "postmodern skepticism" about the reality content of scholarly knowledge, Ginzburg objected that literature in particular is full of traces of the real, and can thus be interpreted historically.[4] This is undoubtedly true of Piglia's novel, which uses a complex autofictional procedure to analyze both the self and American culture and society.[5] For example, he showcases the reading practices prevalent at an elite American university, which conflate critical reading and egomaniacal violence, as Piglia notes in a pointed comparison between a scholar and a serial killer.[6] And more generally, not only with the supporting character Parker, Piglia points out that investigative practices have fundamentally changed in the 21st century.

If one follows this observation, Ginzburg's "evidential paradigm" and the connection he postulates between trace, narration, evidence, and knowledge must also be subjected to a revision. This essay aims to contribute to this by analytically en-

[2] Piglia. *Munk* (as note 1). P. 108.

[3] Carlo Ginzburg. *Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm* (1979). Id. *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP. P. 96–125.

[4] Carlo Ginzburg. *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive*. Berkeley, CA: California UP, 2012.

[5] Leopold Federmair. *Wer war Emilio Renzi? Eine Spurensuche mit Ricardo Piglia*. Wien: Klever, 2020.

[6] The character Ida Brown, a young and successful literary scholar, interrupts a lecture by Paul de Man to subject his theses to an aggressive critique. The narrator comments that Ida voiced her objections "with the precision of a serial killer." In principle, he says, there is nothing "more violent and brutal than the clash between rising figures and established professors: these confrontations have no fixed rules but are always fought to the death." Piglia. *Munk* (as note 1). P. 85.

gaging with Ginzburg's parallelization of detectives and scholars: After an introductory examination of the detective as a figure of reflection in cultural studies, it highlights the current change in investigative practices in a contrastive comparison between the classic detective Sherlock Holmes and today's virtual investigations using the example of the research agency *Forensic Architecture.* This change can be summarized by the keyword 'virtualization': Whereas Holmes examined material objects and physical crime scenes, the objects investigated today often have to be produced digitally first.

The change brought into view here can be seen particularly clearly in the concept of the trace. While for Holmes the trace is an immediate given, a 'datum' that is open to analysis but not to be questioned, virtual investigations are often about producing traces in the first place. Analogous to the "epistemological revolution" that Rheinberger observes in the natural sciences, detective investigation has also "moved from hypothesis-led to data-led research."[7] For what agencies such as *Forensic Architecture* present as a trace has long since ceased to "belong to the world of things" and no longer indicates a clear cause-and-effect relationship, as a fingerprint does.[8] Rather, they work with data that is collected both massively and randomly, but can only be interpreted as traces in the course of a networked analysis and thus "help unknown, new facts to come to light."[9] However, as Rheinberger emphasizes, such "facts" are literally not "given" but "made." In the same vein, Eyal Weizman describes the activity of *Forensic Architecture* as "production of evidence."[10] In contrast to the Holmes' asserted objectivity, this also suggests a productive connection between virtual design and insight, which nevertheless does not detract from a reference to reality.

Investigation Practice and Knowledge

Ginzburg's multi-layered essay analyzed detective trace-reading as a fundamental practice of the humanities. A trace was understood as an inconspicuous detail that,

[7] Hans-Jörg Rheinberger. "Wie werden aus Spuren Daten, und wie verhalten sich Daten zu Fakten?". *Nach Feierabend* 3 (2007). P. 124.

[8] Cf. Sybille Krämer: "Was also ist eine Spur? Und worin besteht ihre epistemologische Rolle? Eine Bestandsaufnahme". *Spur: Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenskunst.* Eds. Sybille Krämer and Werner Kogge. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2007. Pp. 11-33, here p. 15.

[9] Rheinberger. "Wie werden aus Spuren Daten" (as note 7). P. 124.

[10] Eyal Weizman. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2017. P. 64.

when properly interpreted, provided access to "a deeper, otherwise unattainable reality."[11] In this sense, the symptoms in psychoanalysis, the painterly details in Morelli's art historical criticism and the clues in Sherlock Holmes can be understood as traces.[12] The practice of trace-reading constitutes a knowledge that differs in some respects from that of the 'exact' sciences. It begins with the collection of detailed observations that can only prove their relevance in the (narratively constructed) context. This is accomplished through the use of hypotheses and abductive reasoning, which involves forming logical but not definitively conclusive judgments.[13] Moreover, because this approach is case-based, its methods and findings are difficult to generalize and remain empiric. Because this characterization of the humanities seems to call into question their 'hard' scientific nature, Ginzburg's essay was controversial from the outset. In later statements, however, Ginzburg emphasized that he was not at all concerned with such questioning, but rather with positively profiling the specific methods of the humanities concerning knowledge and evidence.[14]

Ginzburg's thesis of the constitution of an "evidential paradigm" around 1800 can be corroborated with various other observations from the history of knowledge. Michel Foucault's discourse-analytic works are particularly worthy of mention here. For Foucault, on the one hand, elaborates the legal-historical rupture produced by the switch from confession or witness report (and the certainty associated with it) to circumstantial evidence and its free assessment by the judge[15]—a rupture that makes the detective as a figure of knowledge possible in the first place.[16] And on the other hand, Foucault embeds this rupture in a broader analysis of the "disciplinary society" that employs a new, namely circumstantial and case-based form of knowledge in anthropology, psychiatry, and other disciplines to control its members.[17] Foucault's thesis that modern individualism is to be under-

[11] Ginzburg. *Clues* (as note 3). P. 101.
[12] Ibid. On the concept of trace see also Sybille Krämer. "Was also ist eine Spur?" (as note 8).
[13] On abduction see Umberto Eco. "Horns, Hooves, Insteps: Some Hypotheses on Three Types of Abduction." *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*. Eds. Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Sebeok. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1983. Pp. 198–220.
[14] Cf. Carlo Ginzburg. "Reflexionen über eine Hypothese, fünfundzwanzig Jahre danach" (2007). *Zeigen und/oder Beweisen? Die Fotografie als Kulturtechnik und Medium des Wissens*. Ed. Herta Wolf and Michael Kempf. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016. Pp. 1-12, here pp. 2–4.
[15] Cf. Michel Foucault. "La vérité et les formes juridiques." *Dits et écrits* (vol. 2, 1974). Ed. Daniel Defert. Repr. Paris: Gallimard, 1994. Pp. 538–646.
[16] Cf. Achim Saupe. *Der Historiker als Detektiv – der Detektiv als Historiker: Historik, Kriminalistik und der Nationalsozialismus als Kriminalroman*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2015.
[17] Cf. Michel Foucault. *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.

stood as a disciplinary effect is also substantiated by Ginzburg, who sees the emergence of individuality in interaction with the possibilities of its identification. He illustrates this with the example of the fingerprint which becomes a means of identification from 1823 onward.[18] Unlike Foucault, however, Ginzburg emphasizes the ambivalent position of the humanities between discipline and critique. For despite their interaction with the disciplinary power, in Ginzburg's view scholarly trackers are also potential critics of ideology, because their detective gaze uncovers the deep structures that can explain surface phenomena and expose them as "ideological clouds."[19] In this respect, the detective can be understood as the embodiment of the "hermeneutics of suspicion" that Paul Ricœur exemplifies in the illusion critique of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.[20]

Ginzburg's investigation of trace-reading, of course, touches on the realm of professional reading that has become institutionalized in literary studies. It is precisely here that the parallelization of detective and scholar has been criticized. Rita Felski, for example, writes that the figuration of literary scholars as detectives manifests a reading that seeks to uncover deep structures "behind" the text, e.g., to highlight complicity with or subversion of power relations in literature, ultimately elevating the "hermeneutics of suspicion" to paranoia.[21] With the distinction between (deceptive) surface and (true) depth, however, this "critique" is based on a misleading ontology, while its initial suspicion starts from a presupposed knowledge: "something, somewhere [...] is always already guilty of some crime."[22] The "postcritical" reading advocated by Felski, on the other hand, does not look for culprits, but rather describes the effects of the text as a "coactor" in the reading process in a "phenomenology of reading."[23] In this sense, Felski emphasizes the role of affect in detective reading in her analysis of the "rhetoric of critique"[24] and later names Emma Bovary as an exemplary postcritical reader: After all, she was willing to accept new ways of perception through literature instead of analyzing it critically; consequently, her affective attachment to literature, which has always

[18] Cf. Ginzburg. *Clues* (as note 3). Pp. 121–3. Cf. also Ronald R. Thomas. *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Ch. 12.
[19] Ginzburg. *Clues* (as note 3). P. 123.
[20] Cf. Paul Ricoeur. *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*. Paris: Seuil, 1965.
[21] Cf. Rita Felski. *The Limits of Critique*. Chicago, IL: Chicago UP, 2015.
[22] Cf. ibid. p. 39.
[23] Cf. ibid. pp. 11–13.
[24] Ibid. p. 107.

been problematized in literary studies, should be reevaluated with regard to her cognitive performance.[25]

However, Felski's book unintentionally shows how present the evidential paradigm remains today. While she profiles "postcritique" against the classical detective story, it would be more plausible to elaborate the multiple transformations of literary trace-reading in the twentieth century together with those of detective fiction—there are, after all, numerous entanglements between (post-)structuralist "critique" and (post-)modern detective story. Thus, binary and hierarchized pairs of opposites such as surface and depth are differentiated not only in Derrida or Deleuze/Guattari, but also in Borges' modernist detective stories. In *La muerta y la brújula* (*Death and the Compass,* 1942/1944), Borges moreover makes the affective dimension of detective reading the basis of his plot. This narrative is at the same time an examination of Poe's *Purloined Letter* (1844), on the basis of which some "critical" thinkers—Lacan, Derrida, Johnson—formulated their understanding of analysis, insight, and critique.[26] The three readings mentioned before, each referring to the other, had to recognize "that they replayed the structure of the tale in a critical register"[27], that is, that they were effects rather than critics of the text. Borges takes up this structure and makes it the basis of his narrative, in which a detective-interpreter falls into the trap of a criminal because he believes he can read his 'text.' As Irwin shows, a meaningful differentiation of critical reading can be achieved precisely through the careful reading of detective stories.

This "affordance" of detective literature can also be demonstrated by other examples. Starting from Ginzburg, Eco has dealt with the semiotic dimension of trace-reading and its logic. In addition to his theoretical writings[28], however, one must also read his novels—first and foremost *Il nome della rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*, 1980)—as semiotic mind games that explore which variations of knowledge the detective genre allows us to think. Thus, even the introductory staging of the reading skills of the detective character William of Baskerville represents a literary exploration of the conceptual history of serendipity or "accidental sagacity" (Wal-

[25] Ibid. p. 178.

[26] Cf. John P. Muller (ed.). *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida & Psychoanalytic Reading*. Baltimore et al: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988.

[27] John T. Irwin. "Mysteries We Reread, Mysteries of Rereading. Poe, Borges and the Analytic Detective Story." *Detecting Texts: The Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*. Eds. Patricia Merivale and Susan Sweeney. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998. Pp. 27–54, here p. 33.

[28] Cf. Eco. "Horns, Hooves, Insteps" (as note 13).

pole), which stands in illuminating contrast to the claimed rationality of detectives.[29] Latour takes a similar approach in his early "innovation studies," which he explicitly compares to "detective stories" and describes as "scientifiction."[30] In works such as *Laboratory Life* (1986) or *Aramis* (1993), Latour aims to overcome the detective approach of sociology—as later also addressed by Luc Boltanski[31]—and emphasizing the fictional construction of logical connections in the laboratory, but also in his own work.[32] With parody and genre mixing, a new sociology is developed "in which there is no metalanguage, no master discourse."[33]

The reference to Latour is not only to remind us that a thinker crucial to Felski's "postcritique" drew on the detective paradigm to develop a new sociology. Latour's actor-network theory is also important to the work of contemporary investigators, as evidenced by the theoretical remarks of Eyal Weizman, director of *Forensic Architecture*, who reads Ginzburg's "evidential paradigm" and, in particular, the notion of trace with a Latourian eye. The entanglement of detective fiction and the humanities is not to be understood in the limited sense that postmodern detective fiction merely engages in epistemological critique. Rather, creative study of the genre can lead to new forms of knowledge that transcend the field of literature. In the following, this thesis will be further elaborated by a comparison between the classical detective story and virtual investigations.

Forensic Reading

If one reads the archetypal Sherlock Holmes stories with Ginzburg's "evidential paradigm" in mind, the first thing to notice is that Holmes presents his research in a very different light. While Ginzburg elaborates on the narrative constructivism of trace-reading, Holmes emphasizes the almost positivist claim of his "science of deduction"—as Holmes' trace-reading is repeatedly called in the first two novels (*A Study in Scarlet*, 1888, and *The Sign of Four,* 1890) and illustrated by concrete examples of deductive reasoning. Holmes, for example, asserts to be able to deduce the occupation of his counterpart on the basis of close observation, and he communicates this in a newspaper article, whose title significantly reads "The Book of

[29] Reinhard Möller. "Art. Serendipität". *Umberto Eco-Handbuch*. Ed. Erik Schilling. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2021. Pp. 358–61.
[30] Cf. Terry Austrin and John Farnsworth. "Hybrid Genres: Fieldwork, Detection and the Method of Bruno Latour." *Qualitative Research* 5, no. 2 (2005). P. 147.
[31] Cf. Luc Boltanski. *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Polity, 2014.
[32] Cf. Austrin and Farnsworth. "Hybrid Genres" (as note 30). P. 160.
[33] Ibid. p. 161.

Life": Holmes' claim is to be able to read his surroundings like a book and to dispense with any speculation—his conclusions are supposedly based solely on the facts themselves. This is why Watson describes him as "the most perfect reasoning and observing machine."[34]

Holmes' uncritical positivism is reflected in his work in various ways. For example, he is developing a chemical to detect traces of blood, which he believes could decide many a murder trial. His appreciation of "first hand evidence"[35] is similar: While he can solve the usual cases from his armchair, in more difficult ones it is essential to examine the crime scene, the traces of which often already enable Holmes to characterize the perpetrator precisely. Again, the reference to reading is emphasized when, in *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes examines a word written in blood at the crime scene with a magnifying glass and tape measure, and then goes on to determine the perpetrator's height, the condition of his fingernails, and even his complexion and nationality—the latter with reference to the shape of the letters, which suggests that the writer is not a native speaker.[36]

Holmes thus represents a reading that leaves no room for interpretation and immediately discovers facts in the traces. In this, it is similar to the forensic techniques and apparatuses developed at the same time, which were designed to transform the body into a readable text.[37] A particularly obvious example is the polygraph. This instrument, which graphs the body's internal processes during speech, is associated with the promise of a universal language that does without words and therefore without interpretation, and of a science that achieves objectivity through "mechanical virtues" (namely, having no free will, no desire, no ability to interpret).[38] Furthermore, it is relevant for the criminal trial, where, according to its defenders, the polygraph could relieve the judge of the difficult weighing of witness statements—which always includes interpretation and thus inaccuracy. Thus, proponents of a new "science of proof" are working to reduce the share of interpretation in the evaluation of evidence and thus to objectify sentencing to the greatest extent possible.[39] While these reform efforts find an obstacle in the traditionalism of Anglo-American procedure, a detective like Holmes, who can be compared to a

[34] Arthur Conan Doyle. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (vol. 3). Ed. Leslie Klinger. New York, NY: Norton, 2005. P. 161.
[35] Ibid. p. 65.
[36] Ibid. pp. 65 and 69.
[37] Thomas. *Detective Fiction* (as note 18). P. 4.
[38] Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison. "The Image of Objectivity." *Representations* 40, no. 1 (1992). P. 81-128, here p. 115f.
[39] Thomas. *Detective Fiction* (as note 18). Pp. 34-37 with reference to the publications of Bentham (1825) and Wigmore (1913).

machine, almost programmatically displays the prevalence of scientific proof with his claimed "science of deduction." If Holmes had his way, court cases would indeed be decided with the help of scientific test procedures (such as the blood test he developed).[40]

This suggests that the development of the literary detective, forensic technology and even criminology can be traced back to similar configurations of cultural needs and anxieties. As Thomas shows, these aim to make the deviant and the criminal, often identified with the foreign, readable.[41] Thus, by inference, it also serves to construct a homogeneous social body, which is, after all, increasingly defined by nationality in the 19th century. This framework also explores fingerprinting to identify repeat offenders, which was especially important in the colonies because their subjects appeared "quarrelsome, cunning, deceitful, and, in the eyes of a European, indistinguishable."[42] The fingerprint serves to make the foreign and the criminal legible, thus linking the two. Similarly, in the two Holmes novels mentioned above, crime is brought from (former) British colonies (North America, India) to the mother country, where it is tracked down by Holmes. This connection is particularly evident in *The Sign of Four*, where Holmes identifies a perpetrator as an "aborigine of the Andaman Islands" based on his footprint.[43] While his track interpretation at this point explicitly refers to a "geographical encyclopedia" that characterizes these aborigines as "savages," "cannibals," and "terror to shipwrecked crews," one may also think of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), where the colonial subject encounters the track of a menacing stranger in a footprint, who of course can only be a savage cannibal.[44] More than any other, this passage makes clear how closely Holmes' stories are linked to British colonialism and the construction of the nation-state.[45]

This can be corroborated with further observations. Holmes' "science of deduction" is compared elsewhere with Cuvier's inductive method, which was regarded as the paradigm of investigative scientificity par excellence and shaped, among other things, the beginnings of sociology.[46] However, the emergence of a scientific

[40] Conan Doyle. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (as note 34). Pp. 20–3.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ginzburg. *Clues* (as note 3). P. 122.
[43] Conan Doyle. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (as note 34). P. 307.
[44] On the importance of the evidential paradigm for Defoe's novel, see Alexis Tadié. "De la trace au paradigme fictionnel". *L'interprétation des indices.* Ed. Denis Thouard. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2007. Pp. 227–39.
[45] Thomas. *Detective Fiction* (as note 18). P. 238f.
[46] Cf. Dominique Kalifa. "Enquête et 'culture de l'enquête' au XIXe siècle." *Romantisme* 149 (2010). P. 8.

"normal science paradigm" is closely related to the restructuring of the nation-state into a bureaucratic apparatus as it takes place in the 19th century.[47] This is characterized, among other things, by the fact that the diverse and individually lived realities of the citizens are condensed "in an inseparable synthesis" with the state as a reflexive instance of control and steering, as Boltanski explains in detail.[48] In this way, the state closes the gap between individual and instituted reality and, in doing so, also draws on the disciplinary standardizing sciences, in particular, of course, sociology, economics, and statistics. For only "the convergence of state projects and scientific projects is what allowed reality to be established and stabilized as a composite" consisting of "physical laws, technologies, economic and social laws, and on the other hand of laws adopted by parliaments, decrees issued by ministries, measures taken by the police, and, more generally, legal instruments and social technologies of representation and control."[49] In doing so, Boltanski refers directly to Ginzburg's hints about the interaction of detective trace-reading and state administration of identities when he connects identification techniques with "new administrative techniques for totalization through the use of statistics or accounting" that allowed to manage "formally free individuals from a distance" by making their "aggregate behaviour globally calculable and predictable, or by making them individually controllable, that is […] by ensuring their traceability."[50] Holmes also refers to these very techniques when he summarizes a treatise by Winwood Reade (*The Martyrdom of Man*, 1872), according to which man, an unsolvable riddle as an individual, becomes a mathematical certainty in the mass: "You can, for example, never foretell what any one man will do, but you can say with precision what an average number will be up to."[51] This is how detection and the art of government work together.

Against this background, the detective's activity takes on a more clearly profiled political dimension. If the nation-state emerges as the guarantor of a "global

[47] Cf. Kuhn, T.S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, IL/London: Chicago UP, 1962; Eric J. Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programs, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP, 1990.

[48] Boltanski. *Mysteries and Conspiracies* (as note 31). P. 16.

[49] Ibid. p. 17.

[50] Ibid. p. 65.

[51] Conan Doyle. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (as note 34). P. 330. On the connection between detective history, sociology, and statistics, see also Rüdiger Campe. "Ereignis der Wirklichkeit. Über Erzählung und Probabilität bei Balzac (Ferragus) und Poe (Marie Rogêt)". *Literatur und Nicht-Wissen. Historische Konstellationen in Literatur und Wissenschaft, 1730-1930*. Ed. Michael Gamper and Michael Bies. Zürich: Diaphanes, 2012. P. 263–88.

political form"[52] of reality, then any moment that unsettles reality must also challenge the state. These moments include important elements of the detective story—and not so much the crime itself as "the *mystery* as an anomaly in relation to reality"[53], which raises questions of attribution and meaning. It is dealt with by Poe in *The Man of the Crowd* (1840), whose narrator is fascinated by the one man who is unreadable to his detective gaze: the criminal is for him a book "[that] does not permit itself to be read."[54] Sherlock Holmes' claim, on the other hand, is to read in the "book of life" and thus to restore coherent reality: There can have been no anomaly if what happened can be read easily and clearly from the clues.

The positivism of such a "science", however, is (contrary to Holmes' newspaper article quoted above) related to an elitism. Just as the introduction of forensic devices in court requires experts to evaluate the data produced, reading the "Book of Life"—as Watson's amazement confirms again and again—is given only to exceptional individuals, which one would look for in vain among policemen. So, if the state survives the challenge lying in the enigma, it remains dependent on the exception "detective." On the one hand, this means that the maintenance of order must resort to an "exception rule."[55] On the other hand, it also means that the apparent regaining of order is rather a reconstitution: the detective does not read what was already reality, but *realizes* what he only pretends to read and later has institutionally confirmed. This is worked out by all those approaches that critically interrogate the logic of Holmes' conclusions and expose his 'science' as knowledge-political propaganda.[56] Doyle's narratives, on the other hand, suppress this aspect of investigative "truth making"[57] and therefore make their detective appear as a forensic reader.

Digital Counterforensics

Against the backdrop of this brief sketch of detective trace-reading, current investigative practices using digital techniques stand out clearly enough. In the following, they will be characterized on the basis of investigations by the London-based

[52] Boltanski. *Mysteries and Conspiracies* (as note 31). P. 20.
[53] Ibid. p. 19.
[54] Edgar Allan Poe. "The Man of the Crowd" (1840). *Poetry and Tales*. Ed. Patrick F. Quinn. Reprint New York, NY: Library of America, 1984. P. 388.
[55] Boltanski. *Rätsel und Komplotte* (as note 49). P. 72.
[56] Uwe Wirth. "'His ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge'. Weiß Sherlock Holmes, was er tut?". *Literatur und Nicht-Wissen. Historische Konstellationen in Literatur und Wissenschaft, 1730-1930*. Ed. Michael Bies and Michael Gamper. Zürich/Berlin: Diaphanes, 2012. Pp. 291–306.
[57] Thomas. *Detective Fiction* (as note 18). P. 6.

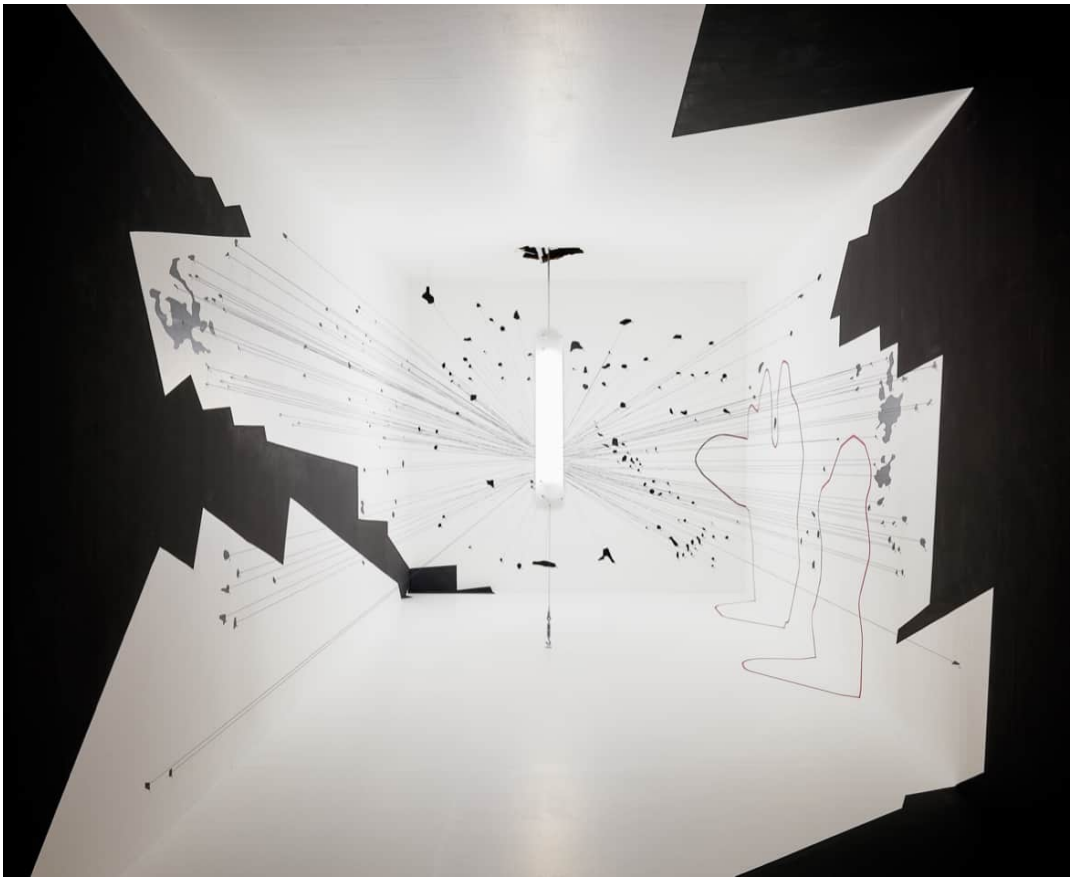

Fig. 1:
For the 2016 exhibition in Mexico City, Forensic Architecture: Hacia una Estética Investigativa, the digital model that described the nature of the blast was realized as an installation. (© Forensic Architecture).

research agency *Forensic Architecture.* Even basic self-descriptions of the group point to the difference: the head of the group, Eyal Weizman, describes their practices as "counter-investigations" or "counter-forensics," among other things, and thus contrasts them with state-commissioned forensic investigations and—indirectly—with the state-supporting detective story examined above. This calls for a critical investigation of "the means of state investigations"[58] and an appropriation of "the means of evidence production."[59]

If one follows this comparison, two striking differences first catch the eye: Where Sherlock Holmes emphasizes the importance of a personal examination of the crime scene, *Forensic Architecture* often works with digitally created reconstructions. In addition to the virtual inspection of a crime scene, these also serve to arrange and, in special cases, even produce traces. While Holmes conceived of the trace as a positive datum, *Forensic Architecture* emphasize the constructivism of the trace.

[58] Weizman. *Forensic Architecture* (as note 10). P. 68.
[59] Ibid. p. 64.

What is meant by this will first be illustrated by a simple example. The video *Drone Strike in Miranshah* (2014, see Fig. 1) is dedicated to the reconstruction of a drone attack in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan, to which journalists have no access.[60] This attack was aimed at people who were in an apartment building. Therefore, the bomb was intended to penetrate the roof and detonate only in the living space itself. While such targeted attacks are portrayed as particularly efficient and poor in collateral damage, there is, of course, no way of knowing for certain whether other people might happen to be in the room and be killed unintentionally. *Forensic Architecture*'s investigation now focused on reconstructing the crime scene as a virtual model using a smuggled video showing the destroyed apartment and spatially arranging the impact holes of the bomb fragments within it. The data generated in this way—a three-dimensional, true-to-scale model of the destroyed apartment—then allowed conclusions to be drawn about the bomb and the time of its detonation.

In addition, the impact holes of the splinters were used to create further traces. In the model it became visible that the holes are not evenly distributed over the walls, but that there are areas without splinter traces. It stands to reason that in these places the splinters were absorbed by human bodies. The recesses can then be understood as negative traces of the people who were killed. In the video, they are therefore outlined with a black line, reminiscent of the documentation of corpses at a crime scene. Thus, the investigation here aims to construct a trace of those killed in a digital model, making the corpses visible and counteracting their official invisibility.[61] The trace produced is thus not to be understood in technical terms, but has a representative character: its presence is intended to remind us of the absence of those who left it behind.[62]

However, digital models are also used in many other virtual investigations by *Forensic Architecture.* For example, an event can be reconstructed using photos and videos posted on the web. Such material is in itself site-specific and fragmentary but can be located and synchronized in a spatial model using digital analysis so that the individual shots complement each other. Thanks to self-monitoring by Internet users, such virtual investigations can yield far-reaching insights without ever having to enter a physical-material crime scene. For example, in the case of the *Beirut Port Explosion* (2020), *Forensic Architecture* was able to reconstruct

[60] Forensic Architecture. "Drone Strike in Miranshah" (2014). https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/drone-strike-in-miranshah (12.12.2023).
[61] Cf. Weizman. *Forensic Architecture* (as note 10). P. 40.
[62] Cf. Krämer. "Was also ist eine Spur?" (as note 9). P. 15.

the course of a fire in a warehouse and draw conclusions about the improper storage of explosive goods inside.[63]

SENSING/SENSE-MAKING

However, the digital model does not have the sole task of representing that which cannot be seen with one's own eyes. Rather, the model can also serve as an "image space" in which data and information ("scraps of information", "shards of evidence"[64]) are arranged.

> These models become an optical and interpretive device, because within them one can navigate between and compare multiple perspectives manifested as separate image and video files. These in turn are used to sharpen the model.[65]

The linear-narrative order followed by trace-reading in the analog world[66] is thus contrasted here with spatial navigation, which not only allows a datum to be viewed from multiple perspectives, but also to follow multiple experimental routes of linkage. Moreover, we are not talking about positive traces, but about "shards of evidence", which are by themselves mere indications and only become fully valid when put together in the model. Events in urban space, for example, can be recorded by a wide variety of sensors, among which Weizman includes buildings and plants. But such traces are often indeterminate, so that they only become evidence in the network: "Each of these sensors is indeterminate, and patient investigative labor has to be invested in reading anything from them and then later also in cross-referencing and pulling the data together."[67] While Holmes considers the trace as a material given, in *Forensic Architecture* it is configured as a spatial practice mediated by the model.

In addition, further shifts in the concept of trace can be identified, which link *Forensic Architecture* with actor-network theory. Everything that can record traces—living beings, objects, technical apparatuses and algorithms—is understood by Weizman/Fuller as a "sensor" that is endowed with sensing and may "make sense" when read by a further agent. Even a brick in a wall may sense and

[63] Forensic Architecture. "The Beirut Port Explosion" (2020). https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/beirut-port-explosion (12.12.2023).
[64] Eyal Weizman and Matthew Fuller. *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth*. London: Verso, 2021. P. 5.
[65] Ibid. p. 5f.
[66] Cf. Ginzburg. *Clues* (as note 3). P. 103 and Krämer. "Was also ist eine Spur?" (as note 9). P. 17.
[67] Weizman. *Forensic Architecture* (as note 10). P. 58.

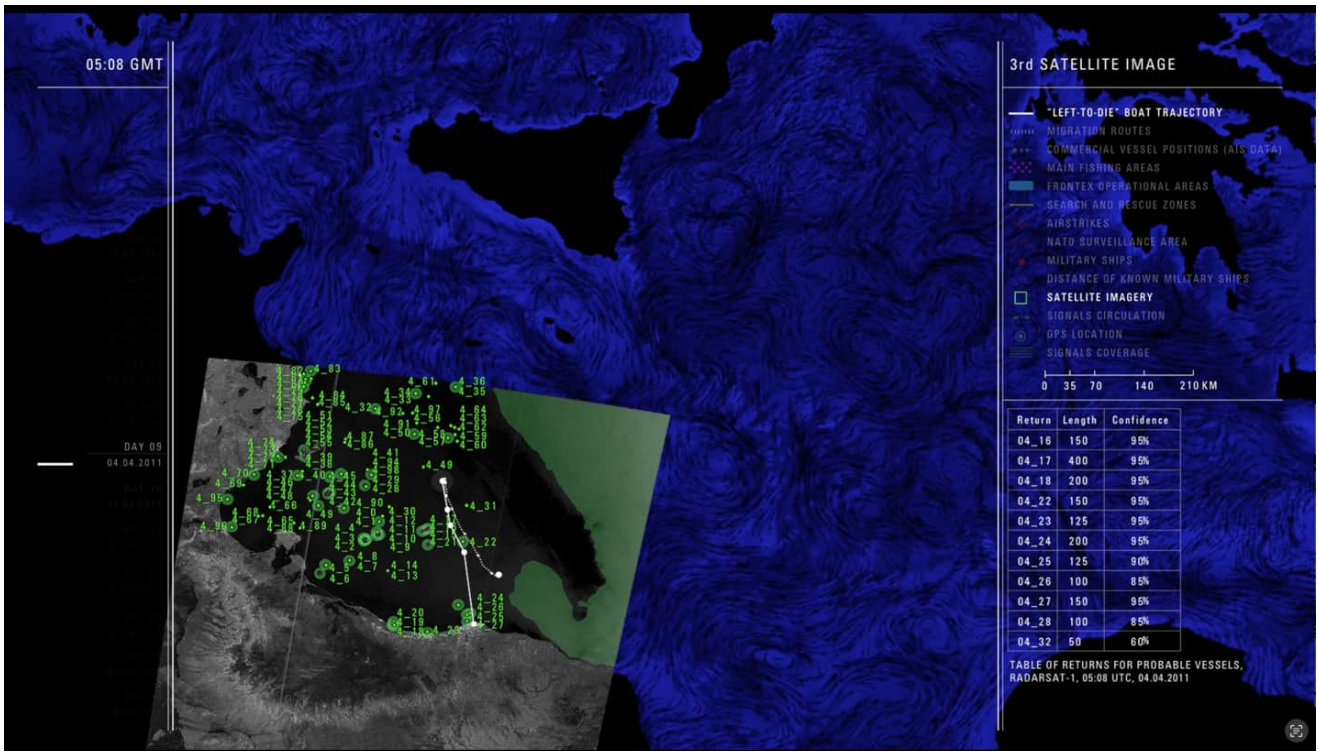

Fig. 2: Screenshot from the video *The Left-to-Die-Boat* (14'11") © Forensic Architecture

record the climatic conditions of its environment, the passing of time and its relation to the other bricks in the change of its texture.[68] Thus, the trace is redefined as something that is "sensed" and loses its seemingly objective character.[69] Instead, the investigation is transferred into the realm of aesthetics:

> Aesthetics is understood here as the sensing capacity of entities, which are themselves momentary concretions emerging out of relational forces inherent to matter in various forms, via the remote, proximate or overlapping presence or action of other entities and forces. Sensing is the internalisation, and hence mediation, of environmental conditions into the organization of an entity. That entity, like most matter and all organisms, is quite likely a composite one, and as something that emerges from and through relations, it is traversed by other entities.[70]

The world thus appears as a complex network of mutually sensing sensors that keep countless—admittedly palimpsest-like and incomplete[71]—logbooks and only

[68] Cf. Weizman and Fuller. *Investigative Aesthetics* (as note 66). Chap. 2.

[69] The transition between "sense" and "trace" is not further articulated by Weizman/Fuller; in ch. 2 they use "sense" and "trace" side by side and speak of "the sensed trace." Ibid. p. 46. This ambiguous relationship can be expressed in German in the paronomasic relation between "Spur" (trace) and "Spüren" (sensing).

[70] Ibid. p. 51.

[71] "No material recording is ever quite pure; it is always an interaction of different forms of recording each partially erasing prior states." (Ibid. p. 46).

in this relationality become objects ("entities") at all. It would then be the task of the investigator to make the variously perceived things readable in their context by means of techniques of amplification, duplication, translation and networking ("hyper-aesthetics") and thus to bring out their reality. Even if Weizman/Fuller do not refer to Latour, it is conceptions like these that make a "Latourian inflexion"[72] of *Forensic Architecture* recognizable.

One example of this practice is the work of *Forensic Oceanography*, a project group that reconstructs the "liquid traces" of migrant boats in the Mediterranean.[73] Since direct traces of a ship in the water are soon lost, the aim of the research is "to augment the sensorial potential of water with secondary sensors that translate fleeting, erasable traces."[74] To do this, data collected by various entities monitoring the sea and its boundary spaces will be networked to calculate the nature of the sea and vessel traffic in a given region and time period.[75] Together with individual data points resulting from, for example, migrants' use of GPS and satellite telephony, the likely route of a ship can be reconstructed. The evidence that can be obtained in this way can be illustrated by the example of the "Left-to-Die-Boat" case.[76] Here, the route of a ship that was unable to maneuver due to lack of fuel and drifted aimlessly in the sea could be reconstructed, thus proving that it encountered numerous other private as well as military vessels that ignored its calls for help. In addition to proving the failure to render assistance, this also means "that traces are indeed left in water, and that by reading them carefully the sea itself can be turned into a witness."[77] Such traces, however, only become readable when they are produced by networking and amplification of initially underdetermined signals.

The animation video documenting the investigation also graphically represents this process.[78] In a presentation form typical for *Forensic Architecture*, the progress of the investigation is paralleled with the reconstructed past: The screen shows a map of the Mediterranean region in which the data points are entered,

[72] Maria Walsh. "*Forensic Architecture*: Counter Investigations." *Art Monthly* 416 (2018). P. 27.
[73] Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani. "Liquid Traces: Investigating the Deaths of Migrants at the EU's Maritime Frontier." *The Borders of "Europe". Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*. Ed. Nicholas De Genova. Durham: Duke UP, 2017. Pp. 95–119.
[74] Weizman and Fuller. *Investigative Aesthetics* (as note 66). P. 69.
[75] Heller and Pezzani. "Liquid Traces" (as note 75). P. 103f.
[76] Forensic Architecture. "The Left-to-Die Boat" (2012). https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-left-to-die-boat (12.12.2023).
[77] Heller and Pezzani. "Liquid Traces" (as note 75). P. 96.
[78] For general information cf. Miren Gutiérrez. "Data and Documentaries: Methodological Hybridizations in Activism." *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (2020). Pp. 315–32.

while while a timeline is located on the left-hand side, which correlates the chronological sequence of the migration with the duration of the video. The screenshot (Fig. 2) focuses on a satellite image documenting maritime traffic in the Mediterranean at a specific point in time (04-04-2011, 05:08 GMT), with the green dots representing ships. During the video, an off-screen voice comments on the analysis of the data and on additional documents that are displayed in a sidebar on the right, while in the main frame of the video the hypothetical route of the ship is continuously drawn on the map, making the calculated "liquid trace" visible.

Weizman's theoretical explanations as well as exemplary investigations of *Forensic Architecture* show that a new, constructivist concept of trace is present here—and indeed Weizman explicitly speaks of "evidence assemblages"[79] as well as "evidence production."[80] From this also follows a demarcation from "detective" criticism, which however—despite the common dependence on Latour—turns out to be more differentiated than Felski's "postcritique." For "critique," or more precisely: discourse analysis has indeed understood itself as an "archaeological" enterprise that sought to unearth truth or reality (discourses, structures, epistemes) hidden beneath a deceptive surface (the "representation").[81] However, the critical insight that truth is *produced* because it depends on authorizing institutions and discourses was not applied to discourse analytic practice, whose constructive character was sidelined. It is precisely this point, however, that Weizman/Fuller emphasize when they justify the truth claim of virtual investigations performatively: "to uncover the real we must make the real."[82] Precisely with this attitude, however, Weizman/Fuller see themselves as further thinkers of critique. Therefore, unlike the "postcritique," they design their practice as an interweaving of critique and investigation. Elsewhere, Weizman describes himself accordingly as "a future archaeologist looking back at the present.[83]

[79] Weizman. *Forensic Architecture* (as note 10). P. 58.
[80] Ibid. p. 64.
[81] Weizman and Fuller. *Investigative Aesthetics* (as note 66). Pp. 107–11.
[82] Ibid. p. 110.
[83] Weizman. *Forensic Architecture* (as note 10). P. 58.

Against the background of this modification of the concept of trace, it is interesting that Weizman/Fuller repeatedly speak affirmatively of Ginzburg and his "evidential paradigm."[84] After all, they argue, Ginzburg made it his mission to reconstruct the lives of "little people" who leave no traces in historical documents, thus necessitating a reading "against the grain" that connects significant details in associative linkage to reconstruct a past. Such an approach quickly faces accusations of constructivism, so much so that Ginzburg repeatedly defended himself against the criticism that his historiography was rather storytelling and lacked scientific proof. One of Ginzburg's lines of defense ran through rhetoric: for the rhetoricity of evidentiary procedures did not mean their fictionality, but rather—according to the ancient understanding of rhetoric as public speech—their anchoring in a communal negotiation.[85] Weizman also returns to this point when he links the "production of evidence" of *Forensic Architecture* with various forums—judicial as well as artistic—in which truth is established. After all, the name of the research agency itself refers to the court speech in the forum, in which, thanks to the performance of the rhetor, the objects themselves would come to the fore.[86] Similarly, Ginzburg thinks that the historian has to discover the traces of the past in his documents and make them talk.[87]

The reference to rhetoric, however, also underlines that proof is to be situated in the—strictly speaking paradoxical—field of "probable truth"[88]. The rhetorical concept of probability combines the claim to persuade with the strategy of making it visible and vivid—and so the Greek vocabulary of proof is largely oriented towards showing and looking: The speaker has to present the case in such a way that the jury can *see* its truth—and thus the verdict to be rendered.[89] This accentuation of seeing links courtroom speech to the drama which the criminal trial has resembled in structure since antiquity[90], just as rhetorical manuals repeatedly compare

[84] Weizman and Fuller. *Investigative Aesthetics* (as note 66). Ch. 10.
[85] Carlo Ginzburg. *History, Rhetoric, and Proof: The Menachem Stern Jerusalem Lectures*. London, Hanover: New England UP, 1999. Pp. 2–4.
[86] Weizman. *Forensic Architecture* (as note 10). P. 65–8.
[87] Ginzburg. *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (as note 87). P. 23.
[88] Ibid. p. 24.
[89] Cf. Joachim Harst. "Aristoteles und 'Papinian'. Rhetorik und Theatralität des 'rechten Rechts'". *Literatur und Recht*. Ed. Bernhard Greiner/Barbara Thums/Wolfgang Graf Vitzthum. Heidelberg: Winter, 2010. Pp. 125–51, here p. 125–30.
[90] Cf. Cornelia Vismann. *Medien der Rechtssprechung*. Ed. Alexandra Kemmerer and Markus Krajewski. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011, who writes of a "theatrical dispositif" of jurisprudence.

the speaker to an actor. If the name *Forensic Architecture* itself refers to rhetoric, one might ask how their works relate to this dimension of rhetorical spectacle.

The first thing that stands out is that a central medium of presentation in *Forensic Architecture* is the animated video, which is freely accessible on their website. These videos, each dedicated to a specific case, are designed as hybrids between investigation and documentation: They present the investigative process and its results, while at the same time recalling the past reconstructed in the investigation.[91] While a strikingly matter-of-fact voice comments in voiceover, the pictures show the evidence (often photos and videos) and its analysis, e.g. its spatiotemporal embedding in a virtual model or the determination of the place and time of a shot. Often, a map or a model of a crime scene serves as a reference point that organizes the arrangement of the material. In this way, the recipient is given the impression of participating in the investigation itself and of being able to comprehend and examine its results—very similar, in other words, to the classic detective story.

Unlike the detective story, however, the narrative form of the videos is not designed to build tension. Even though the counter-forensic investigations start from a clear political point of view, the off-screen voice conveys emotional neutrality, just as the visuals give the impression of showing pure facts. It is remarkable that the visual media used are associated with different styles of objectivity: The often crowd-based photo and video material is used unquestioningly as a document of the real in the sense of "mechanical objectivity," while its digital processing by the research group is marked as an intervention by expert ("trained judgment") that achieves a "digital objectivity" due to its algorithmic basis.[92]

In the present context, the use of digital models and simulations deserves special attention, because in the videos they have a function comparable to that of the speaker in court: they are "vivid because they *show* what they explain.[93] Contrary to Weizman's theoretical explanations, their staging emphasizes the representational character of the models by using, for example, cross-fades of photo documents and digital replicas. The fact that models are also tools that suggest interpretations and exclude others, emphasize or conceal differences, and limit "which

[91] Cf. Gutiérrez. "Data and Documentaries" (as note 80).

[92] Vesna Schierbaum. *Diskursanalyse zu "Forensic Architecture*." Unpublished master's thesis. University of Cologne, 2021. Pp. 46–50. The terms "mechanical objectivity" and "trained judgment" go back to Daston/Galison. "The Image of Objectivity" (as note 38).

[93] Achim Spelten. "Visuelle Aspekte von Modellen". *Visuelle Modelle*. Eds. Ingeborg Reichle/Steffen Siegel/Achim Spelten. Paderborn: Fink, 2008. P. 41. My emphasis.

statements about the object are meaningful at all"[94], is thereby sidelined. The interchangeability of reality and model is rather underlined when the model takes the place of reality: This is obviously the case in the virtual crime scenes, which concern buildings destroyed or inaccessible today. But it is also true in the "simulation of analog media materiality" (perspective, camera movements, montage) in the digital animation, which, with reference to corresponding conventions, takes on a documentary character and makes the model appear as a "fictitious pre-film reality."[95] Thus, when the image documents are arranged in a digital spatial model, thereby being related to each other and receiving their expressiveness, one can say that "objectivity is produced by the circular referentiality between the two instances": "The spatial model produces a reality that is based on seemingly objective findings from photo and video material, while these owe their status as objective to the specific discursivization and arrangement in the context of the spatial model as a surrogate object."[96]

Hence, if there is a contrast, perhaps even a contradiction, between Weizman's emphasis on constructivism and the documentary staging of *Forensic Architecture*'s videos, it must find its justification in the object itself. Here, the aesthetic character of the videos must be brought into view, which are striking for their uniform and self-contained design. The transformation of reality into a digital model, which suggests a comprehensive overview and unlimited predictability, corresponds here to the choice of a recognizable design and a linear, teleological narrative. At the same time, the unifying detective narrative does not seem to allow for trace, source, or image criticism: Although the sources of photographic material are given in individual investigations, "the 'truth' of the images used is not itself subjected to the search for truth."[97] And the elaborate visualization of complex data material—from a simple timeline to the calculated spread of a cloud of smoke—can, precisely by virtue of its aesthetic character, make one forget that it is more than the illustration of (supposedly) 'raw' data, because it simultaneously conceals data and algorithms. This is accompanied by an exclusion of infrastructural questions: How and on the basis of which selection mechanisms the image material was obtained is just as little addressed as the question of which alternative

[94] Ingeborg Reichle/Steffen Siegel/Achim Spelten. "Die Realität visueller Modelle." *Visuelle Modelle*. Ed. id. Paderborn: Fink, 2008. P. 11.
[95] Schierbaum. *Diskursanalyse* (as note 95). P. 52f.
[96] Ibid. p. 56.
[97] Monika Dommann. "80 Sekunden, 2 Angriffe, 6 Tote. CAD als forensische Zeitkapsel. Ein Kommentar zu Forensic Architecture". *Nach Feierabend* 11 (2015). P. 173.

paths of the search for knowledge were taken and possibly abandoned.[98] Thus, images, models, and simulations postulate an uncritical evidential character whose rhetorical potential Latour characterized as follows: "You doubt of what I say? I'll show you!"[99]

The "aesthetics of objectivity"[100] elaborated by the videos therefore does not serve the purpose of retracing an investigation, but is rhetorical apodeixis—although in this case a media artifact takes over the advocacy rather than a human speaker. To be sure, this fundamentally modifies the character of the forum in which truth is negotiated in comparison to the courtroom speech. In fact, the theatrical logic of the court is based on the principle of presence, which ensures the participation of all the parties and thus makes it possible, first of all, to establish the truth in the agonal process, that is, in the confrontation of biased testimonies.[101] In contrast, the forums emphasized by *Forensic Architecture*, the presentation of investigations on the website and in public museums, evade this principle and leave the trial to a future court proceeding or a subsequent discussion. In both cases, however, the videos should be seen as only one source of knowledge among several if a productive negotiation is to be possible. For as one reviewer of the exhibition at London's Institute of Contemporary Art (March 7–May 6, 2018) notes, the presentation of the videos, based solely on the characteristics discussed here, can trigger a "panicked doubt" that is detrimental to any discussion: "I could not tell. I had to believe."[102]

However, *Forensic Architecture* also use other forms of presentation. In some cases, for example, the models made serviceable to a linear narrative in the animation video are offered online for review and experimentation. In others, satellite images, maps, and written reports are provided. Because this material is not subjected to an overarching narrative and extensive remediation, the critical dimension of the modeled artifacts comes into play more clearly here thanks to their "network-like context."

> Because one form of representation rarely encompasses all aspects of a project, many individual representations are produced, which only develop their meanings and effects in context. The production of knowledge and meaning thus takes place

[98] Schierbaum. *Diskursanalyse* (as note 95). P. 59f.
[99] Bruno Latour. "Visualization and Cognition. Thinking with Eyes and Hands." *Knowledge and Society* 6, no. 6 (1986). Pp. 1–40, here p. 14.
[100] J. J. Charlesworth. "*Forensic Architecture* at ICA, London." *ArtReview* (2018). https://artreview.com/ar-may-2018-review-forensic-architecture/ (12.12.2023).
[101] Vismann. *Medien der Rechtssprechung* (as note 92). P. 374f.
[102] Walsh. "Counter Investigations" (as note 74). P. 27.

> as a translation that moves between things and their representations. [...] Representation in this sense does not mean a simple reproduction, but a comprehensive compilation and transformation of information in the form of analogies, models and traces.[103]

Conclusion

The contrastive comparison of classical detective history and digital investigative practice points to a current transformation of the evidential paradigm: While the 'forensic' detective is presented as a reader of positive traces, thanks to which he can secure official reality, the counter-forensic investigation aims at the formation of traces that indicate a hidden reality. However, this clear contrast is leveled in the case of *Forensic Architecture* by the presentation in the animated video, which, although with different means, constructs an objectivity comparable to the detective story: Thus, one can speak of an "aesthetics of objectivity, which, ironically, has the goal of persuading us of its objectivity."[104] Conversely, this parallellization suggests that the detective story also allows for a reading "against the grain" that questions the persuasive techniques of detective conclusions and thus the state's production of truth or reality.[105] For, of course, even the spectacular conclusions of Holmes have gaps that can only be concealed by the astonished reaction of Watson. When Holmes, for example, at his first encounter with Watson, concludes from Watson's appearance that he must have served in Afghanistan, every critical reader must notice that this logic is by no means as conclusive as Watson's reaction would lead one to believe.[106] A more clearly counter-forensic tendency is brought to the fore in contemporary variations of the genre, for which Piglia's *El camino de Ida* was cited in the introduction. Here, official reality has itself become a mystery that cannot be solved by traditional detective means. Thus the novel ends with the encounter of the aging narrator and detective figure with a young hacker, in whom the transformation of the evidential paradigm is embodied.

The transformation of the evidential paradigm pursued by *Forensic Architecture* can furthermore be related back to the debate about "critique" and "postcritique" and thus to a fundamental methodological question of the philologies. For the research agency shows that critical reading is possible without absolutizing the

[103] Carolin Höfler. "'The Imaginary Gaze of a Future Archaeologist'. Medienarchitekturen des Dokumentarischen." *Navigationen* 21, no. 2 (2021). Pp. 106.
[104] Charlesworth. "*Forensic Architecture* at ICA, London" (as note 101).
[105] Cf. Thomas. *Detective Fiction* (as note 18). P. 6.
[106] Cf. Conan Doyle. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (as note 34). P. 42.

"hermeneutics of suspicion." Just as Latour used the genre of the detective story to question fundamental sociological assumptions, *Forensic Architecture*'s investigations reveal a "Latourian inflexion,"[107] as recalled here in the connection between sensing and sense-making. The critical potential of these investigations, however, unfolds less in the animated videos than in the elaboration of their underlying material—the transformative process of "gathering and remodeling information in the form of analogies, models, and traces."[108] Diagrammatic forms of representation are thus brought into the proximity of hypothesis and abduction, the creative potential of which has already been highlighted in the context of detective inference.

For comparative literature and cultural studies, one should draw the conclusion that working with "graphs, maps, trees"[109] should no longer be understood solely as an expression of a purely quantifying "distant reading," but should be re-read as a form of critical design. Likewise, the visualization of large amounts of cultural data, as developed by the *Cultural Analytics Lab* around Lev Manovich, would have to be examined against this background. Manovich uses algorithms to arrange photographic material posted on social media into diagrams according to formal criteria, producing patterns that can be interpreted as traces.[110] Work in this direction also involves the analysis and visualization of large amounts of text, such as posts on social media, but also extensive literary correspondence.[111] The models and patterns created in the process show that the transformation of the evidential paradigm described here is also driving methodological reflection in literary and cultural studies.

Illustrations

"Drone Strike in Miranshah." Installation at the Exhibition *Forensic Architecture: Hacia una Estética Investigativa* (Mexico City). URL: https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/drone-strike-in-miranshah (11.03.2024). © Forensic Architecture. Retrieved on 12.12.2023.

"The Left-to-Die-Boat." Screenshot (14'11"). URL: https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-left-to-die-boat (11.04.2012). © Forensic Architecture. Retrieved on 12.12.2023.

[107] Walsh. "Counter Investigations" (as note 74). P. 27.
[108] Höfler. "Medienarchitekturen des Dokumentarischen" (as note 106). P. 106.
[109] Cf. Franco Moretti. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*. London: Verso, 2005.
[110] Cf. Lev Manovich. *Cultural Analytics*. Cambridge: MIT press, 2020.
[111] Cf. the project "Dehmel digital" led by Julia Nantke, which digitally analyzes and visualizes the extensive correspondence network of Ida and Richard Dehmel: www.dehmel-digital.de