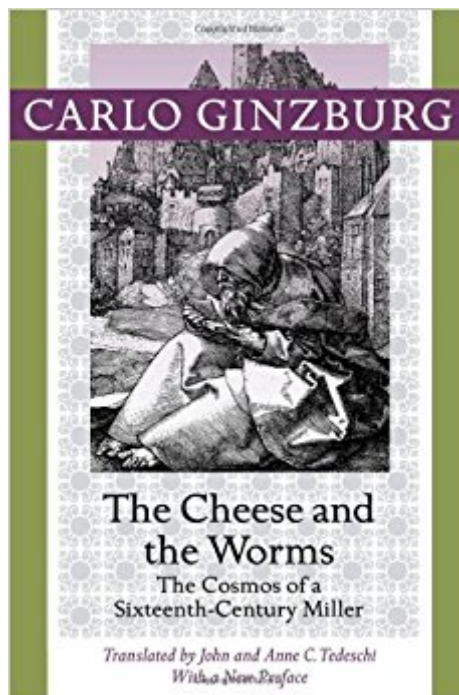




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# The Cheese And The Worms: The Cosmos Of A Sixteenth-Century Miller



## Synopsis

*The Cheese and the Worms* is an incisive study of popular culture in the sixteenth century as seen through the eyes of one man, the miller known as Menocchio, who was accused of heresy during the Inquisition and sentenced to death. Carlo Ginzburg uses the trial records to illustrate the religious and social conflicts of the society Menocchio lived in. For a common miller, Menocchio was surprisingly literate. In his trial testimony he made references to more than a dozen books, including the Bible, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Mandeville's *Travels*, and a "mysterious" book that may have been the Koran. And what he read he recast in terms familiar to him, as in his own version of the creation: "All was chaos, that is earth, air, water, and fire were mixed together; and of that bulk a mass formed—just as cheese is made out of milk—and worms appeared in it, and these were the angels." Ginzburg's influential book has been widely regarded as an early example of the analytic, case-oriented approach known as microhistory. In a thoughtful new preface, Ginzburg offers his own corollary to Menocchio's story as he considers the discrepancy between the intentions of the writer and what gets written. The Italian miller's story and Ginzburg's work continue to resonate with modern readers because they focus on how oral and written culture are inextricably linked. Menocchio's 500-year-old challenge to authority remains evocative and vital today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A wonderful book... Ginzburg is a historian with an insatiable curiosity, who pursues even the faintest of clues with all the zest of a born detective until every fragment of evidence can be fitted

into place. The work of reconstruction is brilliant, the writing superbly readable, and by the end of the book the reader who has followed Dr. Ginzburg in his wanderings through the labyrinthine mind of the miller of the Friuli will take leave of this strange and quirky old man with genuine regret." (J. H. Elliott New York Review of Books)"Ginzburg has excavated a marvelous and melancholy tale. Lay readers know that historical work of this order requires formidable skills and dogged research... Ginzburg's discovery of Menocchio is a dazzling entry into the historical world of popular culture." (Lauro Martines Washington Post)"Why should we reread the story of Menocchio thirty-eight years after its publication? First, this new edition is a timely update. Ginzburg has penned a new preface and bibliographical information has been augmented. Second, because it is a work of rare scholarship that no student should forget, despite the fact that the context in which this book was crafted has significantly changed." (Cristiano Zanetti Sixteenth Century Journal)

Carlo Ginzburg has taught at the University of Bologna, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. The recipient of the 2010 International Balzan Prize, he is author of *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* and *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, also published by Johns Hopkins.

I had to read this for a history class I was taking. I loved the title... which is explained in the book. I have always been interested in the Reformation... I always wondered was it just about religion or was it a social movement. For me the story was more social status, who had power and who didn't. Poor Menocchio was a victim of being too smart for his own good.

An extraordinary story that defies all stereotypes anyone has about everyday medieval life and thought. One of those little cabinets of wonder.

It is a rigorous piece of research interpreted creatively in the late 60's but totally vital today. The writing is vibrant.

Ginzburg writes an excellent microhistory, however it drags a bit when Ginzburg addresses the trials and works that took place. More focus on the ideology of the character than the character himself.

By citing the original written notes of the miller's heresy trial I received a different impression of the inquisition. The proceedings were not based on torture. The protagonist was not a cleric and a

illiterate peasant, but a cleric and a well read peasant. The details of the daily life at the time add to the veracity of the tale

Fun reading and very informative. Used this book a lot during my one history class.

Classic micro historical look at Roman Inquisition through the eyes of court records and testimony of a rural miller in 16th century Italy. Fascinating and true!

This is a most interesting tale, but it is told in a rather dry "academic" style. Perhaps if re-written as Historical Fiction it would be transformed into a more entertaining read.

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