

Editor:
Jaime Almansa Sánchez



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Online Journal in Public Archaeology

TIME TRAVELS IN ARCHAEOLOGY **Between Hollywood films and historical re-enactment?**

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Abstract

One of the recently most popular ways of experiencing the past is time travelling. It is 'an experience and social practice in the present that evokes a past (or future) reality' (Holtorf 2009: 33). In this article, I mainly discuss the political aspect of time travelling. I focus on cinema as a medium which closely links archaeology with the time travel phenomenon. Two Oscars galas, of 2010 and 2012, are scrutinised as case studies. The text is a political intervention to start dreaming dangerously, to contribute as an archaeologist to the critique of the utopia of capitalism (see also Hernando 2005: 75).

Key words

Time travel, archaeological open-air museums, historical re-enactment, cinema, capitalism, utopia

Over the last three decades, the number of open-air museums (Magelssen 2007; Paardekooper 2012) and historical re-enactment events (Halewood & Hannam 2001) has rapidly grown. This observation applies especially to Western Europe. The process is usually linked to cultural changes and socio-economic transformations (Hewison 1987). Tourism has become a global activity (Goeldner & Brent Ritchie 2009). The same applies to cultural heritage and the public's fascination with the past (Lowenthal 1985, 1996). All of the above fields are of special interest to archaeology (Holtorf 2010a). Archaeology can offer important observations about contemporary relations among tourism, the past, and cultural heritage. This is especially valid when one takes into account that contemporary archaeology is more and more about the present, not the past alone (e.g., Holtorf 2010b).

Lately, time travel is one of the most popular ways of experiencing the past. Time travel should be conceived as a certain experience and social practice which evokes experiences of a past or future reality (Holtorf 2009). Without a doubt, time travel is a fantasy of the contemporary world. But a fantasy is never just a fantasy, so to speak, a 'superstructure' of day-to-day life ('base') of human beings. Fantasy is what structures and gives coordinates of our reality. Accordingly, without fantasy there is no real, 'naked' reality (Žižek 1997).

How the process of time travelling relates to archaeology was closely discussed by the contributors of *Lund Archaeological Review* 15-16 (Åkesson 2010; Holtorf 2010; Narmo 2010; Paardekooper 2010; Petersson 2010; Sandström 2010; see also Westergren 2006). In this article, however, I would like to draw attention to the phenomenon of time travelling in cinema and especially emphasize its political aspect.

The demand for archaeology

Archaeology has become a global brand (Holtorf 2007). According to Cornelius Holtorf, people are more interested in all the clichés that archaeology evokes than in the scientific results of doing archaeology. However, this may not be the problem but a blessing in disguise; such an understanding of archaeology presents an opportunity to actively participate in and shape the present and the future (e.g., González-Ruibal 2006, 2007).

The motivation of this text is based on the fact that during the last three or so decades Western societies have been in transformation. The German sociologist Gerhard Schulze (1993) describes this transformation as the emergence of the Experience Society. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2005) call this process an emergence of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Arguably, the American economists Joseph Pine and James Gilmore write about the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore 2011). In short, businesses and other practices will need to offer experiences to people if they want to be competitive in the market (see also Comendador *in press*). Consider, for example, Starbucks: it is no longer that Starbucks simply delivers the best coffee and muffins in the world. Today, drinking Starbucks coffee means to be part of and – what is so crucial – experience the so-called coffee culture. Fascination with the past, cultural heritage and tourism may work similarly. People want to actively experience the past. Here, the human body is no longer a passive receiver of external experiences,

but rather an active medium through which human beings are, as it is often stated, in a 'direct' contact with the past (e.g., Petersson & Narmo 2011).

The way the emergence of the Experience Economy affects archaeology has been thoroughly discussed (e.g., Holtorf 2010; Petersson 2010). People's fascination with the past, going back to previous epochs and experiencing different ways of living there, has become a widespread social phenomenon. Cornelius Holtorf and Bodil Petersson describe it as time travelling. From an archaeological perspective, such a process is important because archeological open-air museums and different historical re-enactment events are seen as a context which enables a direct travel in time. Taking the above into account, one may claim that the future belongs to the past, to archaeology. People dream about living for a moment in a distant time. Therefore, experiencing the past can bring benefits to both society and archaeology. Going back to the past helps people find meaning in life (Holtorf 2010: 45-46).

Although archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events are only a small sector of the world's tourism market, they have already made a significant contribution to Western societies (Magelssen 2007; Paardekooper 2012). However, their contribution is not only in economic terms but also touches social and political issues, which need a closer analysis.

China does not travel in time

The year of 2011 was the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party. In the very same year, SARFT (State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television) banned the production of films and TV dramas based on or related to the time travel motif (Landreth 2011).

The official statement claims that time travel films disrespect history. Of course, the idea behind this ban is clear: time travelling fantasy into the past is dangerous for communism in China. Instead of dreaming and thinking of alternative realities, the Chinese citizens should blandly accept the harsh communist reality. It is worth pointing out that such a presupposition stands in clear contrast to the *spirit* of Karl Marx (e.g., 1990) and Frederick Engels' work (e.g., 1989). If anything, communism was precisely a dream of a better world and *not* acceptance of a harsh reality. Before the ban, there was a very popular

time travel drama called *Myth (ShenHua)*. The plot was about a hero visiting the past and finding a better life there. The lesson of such films and TV dramas is obvious: there are not only different pasts, but also different presents and futures, and the communist world is only one of them. Such reasoning is what SARFT is so worried about. As the official guidance says: "Producers and writers are treating serious history in a frivolous way, which should by no means be encouraged anymore" (Landreth 2011).

As it is known, the Chinese government relies on scientific Marxism and, consequently, Hegelian philosophy cannot be unknown to them. A short reference to Hegel can be of some help to understand the ban of time travel (see also Comendador *in press*). According to Hegel, repetition is one of the basic coordinates of history as such (Hegel 2002; Žižek 2011). If something happened once, it still can be considered as an accident, an irrelevant event. However, when the story goes on, when the very same event happens a second time, repeats itself, there is an underlying historical necessity of it. The German philosopher uses the example of Napoleon and his defeats. The first one, when Napoleon was defeated at Leipzig, could still be considered as an accident. The defeat at the Battle of Waterloo was the sign that he was already dead; his era was over. How does this relate to the event in China?

Jonathan Landreth (2011) highlights in his short article the broader context of time travel films in China. He points out an interesting fact: the last Chinese time travel film which was released in cinemas all around China was *Iceman Comenth* (1989), based on *Highlander* (1986). It was the very same year that the communists violently crushed a pro-democracy spirit of students at Tiananmen Square. Thus, time travel fantasy, dreaming about different presents and futures, is a political act. And the Chinese government was well aware of it. By banning time travel films, communists wanted to avoid a repetition of the event of 1989.

The ban stands in clear opposition to what is happening in the West. Hollywood has been bombarding us over the last few decades with films about time travelling: *Beyond the Time Barrier* (1960), *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971), *Back to the Future* (1985, 1989, 1990), *Terminator* (1984, 1991, 2004, 2009), *12 Monkeys* (1995), *The Butterfly Effect* (2004), *The Time Traveler's Wife* (2009), *Hot Tube Time Machine* (2010), *Lopper* (2012), *Men in Black III* (2012), just to name a few, and TV series such as *Quantum Leap* (1989-1993), *Sliders* (1995-2000), *Lost* (2004-2010), or *Heroes* (2006-2010).

In the same vein, the logic of time travelling is assumed by archaeologists and the cultural heritage industries. One can visit a Stone Age village, become a Viking for a moment (Figure 1), be a fearless Slav, and taste a delicious Early Middle Ages meal. In accordance with such trends, some re-enactment events promote themselves as being literally time machines (e.g., II Historical Picnic organised by the Historical Museum in Gdańsk, 29 October 2012, Poland). Nevertheless, the popularity of time travelling is worrying. Why?



Figure 1. *One of the contemporary Vikings, Grzybowo, Poland 2009*
(Photo by Agnieszka Łukaszyk).

The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek spoke to the Occupy Wall Street protesters on 10 October 2011. His critique of contemporary capitalism was based on, among other things, a reference to the Chinese ban of time travel films. He claimed:

In mid-April 2011, the Chinese government prohibited on TV, films, novels and any stories that contain alternate reality or time travel. This is a good sign for China. These people still dream about alternatives, so you have to prohibit this dreaming. Here, we don't need a prohibition because the ruling system has even oppressed our capacity to dream. Look at the movies that we see all the time. It's easy to imagine the end of the world; an asteroid destroying all life and so on. But you cannot imagine the end of capitalism (Sarahana 2011)¹.

The above quote needs a detailed reading because Žižek condenses in it some simplifications of his otherwise sophisticated reasoning. The first thing to note is the fact that we *can* still imagine the end of capitalism. There are many films which precisely are about it, such as *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *The Day After* (1983), and *Terminator 2* (1991), just to mention a few. Nonetheless, the problem with these films is their spontaneous identification of the end of capitalism with the end of the world itself. The underlying idea is that usually after a nuclear war, few people survive and one can observe what is left of it; dystopia. Nuclear war is a metaphor for the end of capitalism, after which there is no positive vision of the world (see also Comendador 2012). The same metaphor was also seen recently in Hollywood productions such as *In Time* (2011), *Total Recall* (2012), or *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). A telltale example is the Occupy Wall Street protesters themselves. Often asked by journalists 'what is your alternative', the answer was simply 'I don't know'. Thus, it can be said that we dream but we don't know what these dreams are about.

This is how Žižek's words about how the ruling system has oppressed even our capacity to dream should be read. Do politicians not blackmail us when they claim that, although capitalism is not the best, every other system is much worse? The following point of Žižek apropos of China should be understood along these lines. The ban of time travel films is a good sign because it highlights the political edge of time travelling and the fact that it is taken seriously by the communists, as something that can even contribute to the end of – what is so poetically called – capitalism with Asian values in China. However, what one sees in Europe is that a proper political sphere disappears. What was once a domain of passionate politics is now more often than not left to the cold decisions of technocrats.

Žižek often needs to be read against his own reasoning. This is the way to understand his ideas. There is at least one good thing about the financial meltdown of 2008, which is that capitalism becomes once more the problem. The title of the very last book of the Slovenian philosopher illustrates it: *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*. The book is an analysis of the desire to confront capitalism once more, to think/dream of an alternative.

Unfortunately, I don't see such a desire to *dream dangerously* in the context of archaeological time travelling. For example, the sad fact about the historical re-enactment milieu is that it is deeply right-winged and often, at least in Poland where I conducted research on this subject, nationalistic. That is why, the very possibility and popularity of archaeological time travel are a symptom of its opposite; of not being able to *truly* travel or dream about alternative realities (futures). To put it simply, archaeological time travel lacks its critical and political edge. We, in the West, can time travel whenever we dream of it because these dreams are seen as harmless, in contrast to China. This issue should, however, be rediscovered, brought to life once more.

Therefore, the problem of Hollywood and its ideological aspects will be discussed the following pages.

Cinema and archaeology

Jacques Lacan (2006: 376) used to say that "truth has the structure of a fiction". This almost proverb of Lacan's followers has been read in many different ways. One of them refers to Sigmund Freud and his analysis of the slips of the tongue and dreams. What at first sight seems to be simply an error (e.g., a famous president's statement about closing the sitting instead of opening it) is the truth of the unconscious desire (Freud 1999: 3150). A contemporary critique of cinema by Lacanians can be read along these lines:

So when even products of the allegedly "liberal" Hollywood display the most blatant ideological regression, are any further proofs needed that ideology is alive and kicking in our post-ideological world? Consequently, it shouldn't surprise us to discover ideology at its purest in what may appear as Hollywood at its most innocent: the big blockbuster cartoons. "The truth has the structure of a fiction" – is there a better exemplification of this thesis than cartoons in which the truth

about the existing social order is rendered in such a direct way which would never be allowed in the narrative cinema with "real" actors? (Žižek 2010a: 66)

Cinema is no longer conceived as just an imaginary medium which interpolates *naïve* ordinary spectators. Recall the famous, supposedly critical thought of Theodor Adorno from his *Minima Moralia*: "Every visit to the cinema leaves me, against all my vigilance, stupider and worse"(2005: 25). The figure of Adorno is a paradigmatic example of a critic whose job is to not allow the spectator to just enjoy the film. Worth pointing out is the fact that this is the approach taken by those archaeologists interested in how Hollywood misperceives archaeology and its object of study (e.g., Gowlett 1990; Russell 2002a, 2002b; Fowler 2007).

Today, cinema still works as – to use Luis Althusser's term – a part of the Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser 1971). However, it is exactly because a film tries to hide things, and interpolate the spectators, that it also shows the cracks, holes and inconsistencies of the contemporary world and ideology. In other words, a film by trying to hide things allows them to be discernible. This simple observation is one of the elements of works of film theorists such as Joan Copjec (e.g., 1994, 2002), Žižek (e.g., 2001a, 2001b), and Todd McGowan (2008, 2011). Žižek even goes so far in a documentary entitled *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006) as to claim that:

In order to understand today's world, we need cinema, literally. It's only in cinema that we get that crucial dimension which we are not ready to confront in our reality. If you are looking for what is in reality more real than reality itself, look into the cinematic fiction.

So, it can be said that cinema plays today exactly the same role as dreams for Freud: it is the royal road to the unconscious, a place where social fantasies and desires are projected. That is why cinema is such an important medium to understand today's world, and archaeology too. There are already a few archaeological works which have taken cinema seriously and tried to use it in doing archaeology (e.g., Shanks, Pearson 2001; Holtorf 2007; Marwick 2010; Kobiałka 2011).

At this point, archaeology coincides with time travelling. Both themes are very popular in Hollywood. Cinema and TV are the main media that shape people's understanding of what archaeology is about (e.g., Holtorf 2007). The same applies to time travels, as stated above. This observation is a starting point to approach the relation between Hollywood films and their ideological aspects with regard to time travelling and archaeology. As case studies, the two Oscars galas of 2010 and 2012 will be scrutinised.

Oscars 2010

A film is a medium which does not try to give a truly 'objective' account of reality. Or more precisely, the result of watching a film is an experience of a fictional aspect of reality itself. Let me refer here to one of my favorite examples: *The Matrix* (1999), Wachowski brothers' blockbuster, presents a story in which the world is controlled and dominated by computers and machines. The whole world, the reality experienced by the heroes, is just an illusion. However, let me ask you: what was your first experience/reaction after the film ended? Was it not something like: *Oh my God, what if my day-to-day reality is the same as in the film? What if what I experience is just an illusion created by the computers? The Matrix's* argument can be interpreted more generally too. It also evokes Plato's Cave allegory or a shamanic journey. The protagonist, Neo, is an initiate driven by the shaman, Morpheus, to the underworld. A red pill alters Neo's state of consciousness, so he enters into the domain of metaphysical doubt (trance).

The lesson of the film is that it offers a chance to experience the fiction of reality itself, so to speak (Žižek 1997). And *mutatis mutandis*, the spectator is confronted with the reality of fiction. How can the idea of the reality of fiction (itself) be understood?

Žižek claims that the reality of fiction should not be seen within the duality of commonsensically understood reality and fiction. It is neither reality, nor simply fiction. The reality of fiction is a feature of the art of cinema. It is an idea which is usually invisible in a daily life. Cinema has an ability to exaggerate and project cultural and political phenomena; to show *what is more real than reality itself*.

Let us take into account the Oscars gala of 2010. The most prestigious award category of the Oscars is that for the best film of the year. The favourite film was *Avatar* (2009), directed by James

Cameron. The film is a 3-D production telling the story of a planet called Pandora, where native creatures live and, of course, are to be conquered by the *bad* Americans. Almost everything in the film is the result of computer programmers' work. The cost of the film was, as it is said, 500 million US\$. Surprisingly, *Avatar* won only 3 Oscars, and all of them of less prestigious categories (Best Achievement in Art Direction, Best Achievement in Cinematography and Best Achievement in Visual Effects). The winner of the gala was *The Hurt Locker* (2009), directed by Kathryn Bigelow. This low-cost production about honest and *good* American soldiers who try to help the poor Iraqi people won 6 Oscars, including the AFI (American Film Institute) Movie of the Year. Some of the critics were pleased. The Oscars' jury once more appreciated the real actors, the art of acting, not the computer programmers' illusions. The Academy members saw the values of true actors but not so much those of virtual characters. And this obviousness of the critics' satisfaction should be rendered problematic. Žižek points out in one of his articles the *ideological* aspect of the film in the following words:

Its [The Hurt Locker's – D. K.] depiction of the daily horror and traumatic impact of serving in a war zone seems to put it miles apart from sentimental celebrations of the U.S. Army's humanitarian role, like in John Wayne's infamous Green Berets. However, we should always bear in mind that the terse-realistic presentation of the absurdities of war in The Hurt Locker obfuscates and thus renders acceptable the fact that its heroes are doing exactly the same job as the heroes of Green Berets. In its very invisibility, ideology is here, more than ever: We are there, with our boys, identifying with their fears and anguishes instead of questioning what they are doing at war in the first place. (Žižek 2010b)

Hollywood is not an objective medium to deliver people a particular vision of the world. Every choice, every Oscar, presupposes, consequently, a certain ideological point of view. This observation especially applies to the most prestigious categories of the Oscars: the AFI Movie of the Year and Best Writing, Original Screenplay. Following this insight, an interesting ideological vision is to be found in the Oscars gala of 2012, which will be discussed below.

Oscars 2012

It can be said that the Oscars gala of 2012 should be of special interest to archaeology. For the AFI Movie of the Year, 9 films were nominated: *The Descendants* (2011), *Moneyball* (2011), *The Tree of Life* (2011), *The Help* (2011), *War Horse* (2011), *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), *The Artist* (2011), *Hugo* (2011), and *Midnight in Paris* (2011), but only the three latter had a real chance to win.

What needs to be highlighted is the fact that the three front runners for the Movie of the Year are different versions of the same 'problem': time travelling. *The Artist*, which won the Oscar, is the story of a silent film star (George Valentin) who is threatened by a revolution; the arrival of talking pictures in Hollywood in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Similarly, the action of *Hugo* takes place in Paris in the early 1930s. The plot is based on a cinematic revolution and the 'magic' of cinema. By the same token, both films are meta-films; they are films about films. What both of them also share is a vision of the *good old* times of cinema, when cinema was *truly* art. Therefore, one can claim that these films are time travelling into a nostalgic past. And this is the basic weakness of them both: they are nostalgic, reactionary. The underlying message is the following: in an era when films are becoming the work of computer programmers, the only way out of this deadlock is to go back to the past, to show the *good old* times of cinema. To use Marx Weber's old idea (Weber 1971), *The Artist* and *Hugo* are a dream about the 're-enchantment of the world'(e.g., Landy & Saler 2009).

It can be claimed that the same presupposition is at work in archaeological open-air museums, historical re-enactment events and, in short, in all archaeological time travelling. The logic is more or less the same: in the contemporary world, which means capitalism, where *all that is solid melts into air*, in a rootless context, one of the ways to maintain a sense of life is going back to the past, becoming a fearless Slav or a Viking, etc., for a while. After that, one can calmly contribute to the system which causes the very same troubles that one tries to forget for a second, instead of confronting the very system.

There are other points to make apropos an alliance between historical re-enactment events, archaeological open-air museums, and today's capitalism. It is a fact that all of them share a conviction that the *exploited*, the working class, disappeared. During my research, I met and interviewed historical re-enactors. Some of them were craftsmen, warriors, knights, chieftains, monks, etc., but there was not even one

person who was *just* a peasant. When asked why it is so, the re-enactors gave a predictable answer: 'it is boring to be just a peasant. I want to be someone more...'. It is as if archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events were the fulfillment of capitalism's dream: *not* that there is no longer a working class, but rather the opposite; that everyone is an *exploiter without the exploited*.

There is a story that Freud was once visited by a certain man as part of his therapy. The man described a recurring dream in which the unknown woman kept appearing, but he was convinced that, whoever she may have been, she was *not* his mother. How did Freud interpret the case? Of course, his answer was more or less that it was precisely his mother of whom he was dreaming (see also Kobiałka 2013: 17). Is this not precisely the matrix according to which one should interpret the alliance between archaeological open-air museums/historical re-enactment events and capitalism? Is it not a fact that more and more we are all becoming *the exploited* without knowing the names of the *exploiters* (e.g., Zweig 2012)? Archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events present this but in an inverse way.

Now back to Hollywood, the original screenplay of *Midnight in Paris*, which won the Oscar for best writing, is at first sight very similar to those of *The Artist* and *Hugo*. Woody Allen's film tells the story of a screenwriter (Gil Pender) who is thinking about becoming a novel writer. That is why, among other reasons, he visits Paris with his *fiancée* and her parents. Gil tries to write a novel which would take place in Paris in the 1920s. At some point, when he cannot find the way back to the hotel, a stranger asks him to get in the car with him. All this happens at midnight. The car is a metaphor for a time machine. He travels back in time to his beloved Paris of the 1920s. There, he meets such personalities as Ernest Hemingway, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí and Gertrude Stein. He also meets a girl named Adriana, with whom he falls in love. When they take a walk together, all of a sudden a carriage appears and Gil and Adriana are asked to get in. This carriage is a time machine as well. Now they go back to the 1880s, the 'golden era' of Paris according to Adriana. They chat with Paul Gauguin and Edgar Degas². Then, one can hear a long - very typical of Allen's universe - wonderful dialogue between the main characters which hits the nail on the head of time travelling into the past:

- *Let's never go back to the '20s!*
- *What are you talking about?*
- *We should stay here. It's the start of La Belle Époque! It's the greatest, most beautiful era Paris has ever known.*
- *Yeah, but what about the '20s, and the Charleston, and the Fitzgeralds, and the Hemingways? I mean, I love those guys.*
- *But it's the present. It's dull.*
- *Dull? It's not my present. I'm from 2010.*
- *What do you mean?*
- *I dropped in on you the same way we're dropping in on the 1890s.*
- *You did?*
- *I was trying to escape my present the same way you're trying to escape yours, to a golden age.*
- *Surely you don't think the '20s are a golden age!*
- *Well, yeah. To me they are.*
- *But I'm from the '20s, and I'm telling you the golden age is La Belle Époque.*
- *And look at these guys. I mean, to them, their golden age was the Renaissance. You know, they'll trade Belle Époque to be painting alongside Titian and Michelangelo. And those guys probably imagined life was a lot better when Kublai Khan was around. You see, I'm having an insight right now. It's a minor one, but it explains the anxiety in the dream that I had.*
- *What dream?*
- *I had a dream the other night, where it was like a nightmare, where I ran out of Zithromax. And then I went to the dentist, and he didn't have any Novocain. You see what I'm saying? These people don't have any antibiotics.*
- *What are you talking about?*
- *Adriana, if you stay here, and this becomes your present, then, pretty soon, you'll start imagining another time was really your, you know, was really the time. That's what the present is.*

The film ends when Gil returns to 2010.

To put it simply, Allen clearly shows the political dimension of time travelling. The hard thing to do is to travel to our own present and start dreaming about alternative futures, because there is no such thing

like the *golden age*, or *good old times*. Fredric Jameson's book entitled *Archaeologies of the Future* presupposes in a way close relations between archaeology and utopian thinking (Jameson 2005). The idea of utopia is not only a dream of the future. Today, a spontaneous *a priori* identification of the word *capitalism* with the word *world* means no more but *capitalism is the world*. However, this is a true dream; *u-topia*, a belief that things will work forever the way they do now (Žižek 2012).

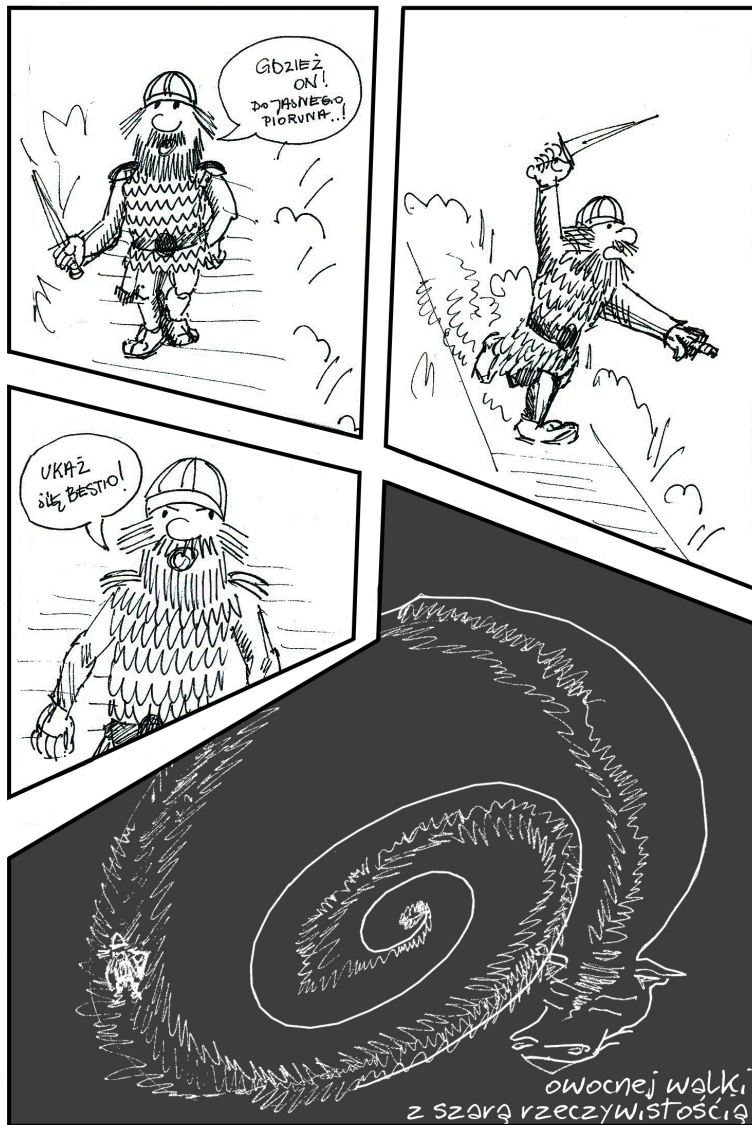


Figure 2. One of the many cartoons presenting a historical re-enactor who dares to confront his grey reality symbolised as a dragon (Drawn by Anna Frąszczak).

One of the crucial lessons of the Freudian psychoanalysis is an observation according to which dreams and fantasies are never just that and are dangerous. They give coordinates to human life. Dreams disturb reality. And here archaeologists have a lot to do and should rethink archaeology in the context of time travelling. Archaeologists should start *dreaming dangerously* about the future too, and their dreams should affect the public. Archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events could be a good context in which this idea could be applied. Even more, perhaps the contemporary context is a good one to start thinking about the archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events of the future beyond capitalism (Figure 2)?

Conclusion

To sum up, there are some issues worthy of closer analysis concerning archaeological open-air museums, historical re-enactment events, and in general the public's time travelling into the past. The predicament is not that they simplify, play in the past, but rather that they do not see the *magic* of the contemporary world, unfamiliar aspects of their familiar (e.g., Buchli & Lucas 2001).

It is often stated that historical re-enactors dream about the past. However, the problem is the opposite: these dreams are a symptom of not being able to truly think of the future, to *think dangerously*. Instead of time travelling into the past (Holtorf 2010), the public needs to address the problem of their very present, of capitalism itself. It is the day-to-day reality which is deeply problematic and unobvious. The recent political and economic events (e.g., Greece, Spain and the USA) call for alternative dreams, new futures.

As it is well-known, it is much easier to play, to act as another person rather than oneself. Let me exemplify this claim with a reference to Polish politics. 2010 was a year of presidential elections. The right-wing candidate (Jarosław Kaczyński) was criticised for using actors in a TV spot, instead of ordinary people and his voters. However, Kaczyński was, unfortunately, right. You cannot directly present reality as it is. Ordinary people appear to be *fictional, unreal*. There is always a need for actors who, due to their skills, show *the reality of a fiction, what is more real than reality itself*. And this can be the crucial lesson to be drawn from the time travelling phenomenon. The responsibility of archaeologists is to show and participate in these fields of fascination

with the past, which can help say something as much about the past as about the present and the future. Nonetheless, by taking part in historical re-enactment events and by visiting archaeological open-air museums, it can be equally argued that time travelling is a profound need in the present. It offers an embodied and human world rather than an alienated life with mind-body split and therefore lets people experience a utopian society in a much more profound sense than the Chinese communists' narrow-mindedness.

People usually know very well that the experienced past is a utopian vision (Comendador 2013). What they do not know is that, actually, capitalism is exactly the same dream, utopia. They are ready to *dream* about the past. The time has come to *dream but dangerously* of the present and the future.

Acknowledgements

This publication is part of my research work at Linnaeus University, thanks to a Swedish Institute scholarship.

Notes

- 1 Worth mentioning is the fact that the Slovenian philosopher is not quite right here. Literature based on the time travel motif is still not prohibited by the communists (Landreth 2011). Communist leaders see most likely literature as harmless *petit bourgeoisie* practice.
- 2 Of course, the story goes on: the great Gaugin also believes that the Paris of his time is in decay and dreams about the *true* golden age, the Renaissance.

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AP: Online Journal in Public Archaeology

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Cover Image: *Noche en el templo de Debod* (J. Almansa)

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ISSN: 2171-6315

Quotation:

Kobiałka, D. 2013. Time travels in archaeology. Between Hollywood films and historical re-enactment? *AP Journal* Vol. 3, 110-130.

AP Journal is a peer-reviewed journal devoted exclusively to Public Archaeology. It is freely distributed online on the Website:

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