

From Archaeology to Archaeologies: The 'Other' Past

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A LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS: ON THE PORTRAYAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MASS MEDIA

Diane Scherzler

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the question of what typifies the quality of a journalistic representation of archaeology. To this end it compares the respective views of archaeologists and journalists. Can the quality criteria of archaeology be transferred to journalism at all? It explores how journalists understand their role and their task with respect to the relationship between archaeology and the public at large. Why does the journalistic description of archaeology differ from the way the profession portrays itself? Where is the friction between science and journalism? Furthermore, this text suggests that when analysing how it is presented in the media, archaeology should also turn its attention to phenomena which have hardly been considered so far, such as medialisation and monopolistic influences on public opinion.

Keywords: Archaeology, accuracy, communication, mass media, journalism, television, radio, press, medialisation

Introduction

If an archaeologist asks me what I do, and my reply includes the words ‘science communication’ and ‘mass media’, their reaction is usually quite predictable: ‘It’s great that somebody is finally explaining to the media how archaeology works, because the things journalists write about our profession and about the past are often completely wrong!’ They are very surprised when I reply that while journalists should know more about archaeology, archaeologists could also do much to improve the quality of media reporting. Since 2002, I have been gaining experience at the interface between archaeology and the mass media as editor and author at one of Germany’s largest public service media organisations. As a prehistorian I am involved with archaeological topics time and again: I regularly interview archaeologists and report on their research. I am very anxious to improve the collaboration between science (particularly archaeology) and journalism, which is why I teach science communication, provide media training courses for archaeologists who want to improve their interaction with journalists, and advise scientific organisations on their media relations. Between 2003 and 2010, I have thus been able to work and discuss with some 350 archaeologists from different countries and specialist fields. Their views on the media world will be incorporated into this chapter in addition to my experiences as a science journalist.

Many archaeologists do not appreciate how their field and how the past is presented in the media. They often regard archaeological reports on television, on the radio or in the press as odd or annoying (cf. Holtorf 2007a, 105). Some archaeologists who participated in one of my media training courses had previously counted the errors which journalists (actually or supposedly) make or smiled at the simplifications their colleagues use in interviews. They still like to peer suspiciously at the media popularity of a colleague (see Hale 2006, 236).

In this chapter, I would like to focus on a subject which archaeologists like very much to discuss: which representation of the past and of archaeology in the mass media is acceptable, and what is to be rejected? What are the characteristic features of journalistic quality? I will discuss this by comparing the respective views of archaeologists and journalists. The actual journalistic system, with which most archaeologists are not familiar, deserves a closer look. I will therefore also allow a number of experienced science journalists to have their say. It is they who make it possible to produce a professional, practical view of things from the journalistic system. This can put the subject in a completely different light than if archaeologists discuss journalism only with other archaeologists, as is often the case. Cinema films, incidentally, are not included in the journalistic formats; they shall nevertheless be dealt with in passing owing to their impact on the public image of archaeology. I would initially like to briefly deal with the relevance of the issue for archaeology.

Does archaeology really need to rely on the media?

The mass media are the most important factor for the relationship between archaeology and the public: what people see on television and in the cinema, what they read in the newspaper and hear on the radio greatly influence their perception of what archaeology is. A survey carried out for the Society for American Archaeology shows that 56% of adult US Americans learn about archaeology from television, 33% from magazines, 33% from books and 24% from newspapers (Ramos and Duganne 2000, 16). In contrast, archaeologists’ own efforts by means of cultural events or in local archaeological or historical societies, for example, meet with little public interest, however, with 1% each (Ramos and Duganne 2000, 18). Surveys in Sweden, Canada and Great Britain provide very similar results: television is the dominant source of information on archaeology (Holtorf 2007a, 52-54). For many people, the mass media are even the only source of information about the sciences (Luhmann 1996, 9; Schäfer 2007, 14). The mass media are, moreover, the place where, in society, ‘the legitimization of science is

most strongly negotiated' (Schäfer 2007, 18; cf. also Raupp 2008, 389). If scientific organisations or individual researchers are named in the media and are sought after as interview partners, politicians tend to judge this as an indicator for social relevance (Peters *et al.* 2008, 88). Scientific disciplines, institutions and players, therefore, put emphasis on not only appearing in the media, but also exerting a positive influence on the assessments of themselves, where possible. Success here also increases the probability of financial support (Schäfer 2007, 20-21). The same also applies to archaeology and to the long-term survival of quality archaeological research (Brittain and Clack 2007, 26; Ascherson 2004, 156). For these – and, of course, for several other reasons as well – it is absolutely imperative for archaeology to come to terms with the mass media.

What constitutes a quality representation of archaeology?

Which media representation of the past can an archaeologist approve of? A film dealing with all the angles which are important to an archaeologist? A radio report which the archaeologist checked when it was finished? How important is the use of specialist terminology? Is the expression 'Iron Age' acceptable in place of 'La Tène A'? Is the phrase 'several thousand years ago' too imprecise and thus to be rejected? What about tabloid newspapers: is it acceptable to have an article on archaeology next to a pin-up girl? What is the minimum length a radio report must have in order to still reasonably present the facts? What should one think about the use of stereotypes: gold, Atlantis, hidden treasure? While there are examples for the presentation of the past in the media which all or no archaeologist finds acceptable, the attitudes of my seminar participants often differ: something which one archaeologist still finds acceptable is already not acceptable to another. Neither is there an all-encompassing and generally valid definition of journalistic quality (Lehmkuhl 2006a, 14), but rather a large number of criteria for this – we will come back to some of them below. One also has to extend the field of vision: after all, it is not only the archaeologist who defines what an appropriate presentation of archaeology in the media is. I therefore now want to compare the quality criteria of archaeologists and journalists.

The perspective of archaeology

Archaeologists regularly discover omissions, mistakes, exaggerations, distortions, stereotypes and sensationalism in the media (see Ascherson 2004, 145 ff., 154; Brittain and Clack 2007, 17, 23). They analyse the mass media from the perspective of the discipline (Benz and Liedmeier 2007, 153) and apply scientific criteria to journalistic reports in order to determine the quality of a film, an article or a radio broadcast: factual correctness, completeness of all scientifically important aspects and the communication of the limitations of data are but some of these criteria. 'After all, it is my own

research the journalist is writing about! And everything should be correct.' is what an archaeologist would perhaps say. Many of the archaeologists I work with are therefore of the opinion that how the past is presented should depend on them in the end. They perceive reputable journalists as being those who produce long television broadcasts or newspaper articles for a well-educated audience or readership and who can prepare themselves for a topic with corresponding thoroughness (I am reminded of those journalists who perceive an archaeologist to be more 'real' the larger the dig, the more valuable the finds and the more impressive the technology used). Neal Ascherson (2004, 155) considers it advantageous for good reporting if the journalist has a degree or some experience in archaeology. William E. Boyd (1995, 52) perceives successful newspaper reports and radio interviews to be those which follow his press release very closely, sometimes even word for word, and take up the issues which he himself considered to be the most important. Archaeologists are more inclined to accept media reporting which presents archaeology in a way which corresponds to their own expectations and perceptions (Holtorf 2007a, 31). Jon C. Lohse (2007, 3) also commented on Mel Gibson's film *Apocalypto* (Gibson 2006) from the perspective of scientific correctness: 'Anyone who cares about the past should be alarmed; if most moviegoers who see the film use it to formulate their understanding of what pre-Columbian life was like, *Apocalypto* will have set back, by several decades at least, archaeologists' efforts to foster a more informed view of earlier cultures.' Kenneth L. Feder (1995, 14) also considers the mass media's 'nonsense about our discipline' as a permanent adversary of his efforts to create an archaeologically informed public.

The power of the media to create a media reality which is so perfect that its effects can make it seem more real than reality, on the one hand, and on the other the power to influence the masses by virtue of their prevalence, is also possibly perceived by some archaeologists as a threat to their authority to interpret the past.

The perspective of journalism

Journalists apply journalistic criteria to journalistic reports to determine the quality of an article. One of my priorities as a journalist is to be understood by my reader, listener or viewer. If this is not the case and the reader thus stops reading, or indifference leads the listeners or viewers to switch to a different station, the report has failed. If an archaeologist who is interviewed by a journalist is therefore not prepared to leave behind the linguistic style of the scientist and explain their work in a way that is interesting and comprehensible to the respective audience, then the journalist has difficulty in using those statements. The television author Christian Frey has for many years been making documentaries on the history of the 20th century which are shown in prime time slots on the public service television channels in Germany. He says: 'The ideal interview partner for me is a scientist who, on the one hand is, of course, preferably

brilliant in their field but who is also prepared to accept the laws of journalism. They should be comprehensible in the interview, maybe even funny and entertaining.’ (pers. comm. 28 Aug 2009). The television writer and producer Friedrich Steinhardt, who is responsible for series of history and science documentaries on German public service television, holds a very similar view. He particularly values interview partners whose ‘enthusiasm and love of the topic’ is evident (pers. comm. 3 March 2010).

Both film makers therefore consider additional factors, which play only a marginal role in science at most, to be important apart from expertise. The requirements which they place on a media-friendly interview partner have, in my opinion, nothing to do with the frequent complaint of sensationalism of the media: a scientist who talks about their research in a monotonous voice and in technical jargon and thus does not make the crucial point is hardly understood by the audience, who therefore do not want to listen to him/her (which archaeologist would like that?). Moreover, as a science journalist I have repeatedly found that unstructured, long-winded statements are very difficult or impossible to cut to the ever short air time or length of text. It is then down to the journalists to filter out the important parts of the whole statement. This is very time-consuming and also increases the likelihood of mistakes, which editors like to avoid. These archaeologists are therefore only asked for an interview if there is no other option. Comprehensibility is thus a very important (but by no means the only) factor which decides which scientists journalists like to collaborate with and which are therefore publicly visible (cf. Peters 2008, 115).

Moreover, the media also apply criteria to archaeological topics which are fundamentally different from those of the discipline. Judith Rauch, editor of the successful German monthly illustrated print magazine ‘bild der wissenschaft’ says, for example: ‘In a magazine it is important that the issues can be illustrated well. [...]. Our magazine unfortunately has to drop even interesting subjects if there are no ideas at all about illustration’ (pers. comm. 16 Sep 2009). Television, too, places its own particular demands on a topic: ‘The more tangible a story, i.e. the more it is a story with a protagonist and a conflict, with a beginning, a progression and an end, the better it can be represented on television,’ says Christian Frey (pers. comm. 28 Aug 2009). ‘Evidence is sacrificed to story’ is the complaint of Christopher Hale (2006, 238) about television and thus describes a weakness of the medium which manifests itself in the choice of topics: ‘Television is not suited to communicating abstract connections,’ explains Frey (pers. comm. 28 Aug 2009). It follows that these topics or these aspects of a topic have only a slim chance on television. Archaeologists have already noticed that certain activities such as the digging are frequently shown in the press and on television, other tasks – literature research for example – are very rarely shown (Benz and Liedmeier 2007, 170; Holtorf 2007b, 86).

Christian Frey explains why this is so in his medium: ‘Everything that can be shown in pictures, which contains action, can be transported well on television. This is much more interesting for the viewer [...] than a scientist studying literature, for example. Just imagine a film about studying the sources of the New Testament. If you were only to show someone who is bent over the Qumran scrolls all the time, then quite simply nobody would watch it’ (pers. comm. 28 Aug 2009). The television author Tamara Spitzing is herself an archaeologist. She confirms Frey's assessment: ‘How can one visualise literature studies? [...] I also want to make a visually nice film, which pleases the eye. I must therefore show something which is visually attractive.’ (pers. comm. 4 Aug 2009). I think that if television shows archaeologists in stereotype on a dig, it may have something to do with the lack of imagination of some journalists. When assessing the quality of television reports, however, the nature of the medium, as described above, should also be taken into consideration.

Incidentally, the quality criteria which archaeologists and journalists respectively apply to a journalistic report can also directly contradict each other. I would like to illustrate this by using two examples. Firstly, although the complaint of archaeologists regarding the many errors in the media cannot be repudiated, on closer inspection some turn out to be simplifications and omissions. Both are obligatory in journalism and do not automatically cause factual errors. If a journalist has to explain the importance of Hannibal in no more than 500 words, for example, but their readership has at best only heard the name of the general and has not received any formal higher education, then the journalistic challenge is precisely to build information bridges across an enormous number of omissions, which give those who had not previously been interested in the subject a rough idea of it and arouse their curiosity for more. Completeness of information cannot therefore be a criterion for good journalism. Judith Rauch, too, says: ‘We will never be able to be complete. After all, journalism consists in selecting what is important for the reader. Never completeness!’ (pers. comm. 16 Sep 2009). Secondly, if a journalist sticks word for word to a press release of an archaeologist, and additionally relies on a single source - Boyd (1995) describes such a case and considers this to be journalistic quality - then from the perspective of the media this is not a careful way of doing things, but rather evidence of a lack of journalistic quality; if the issue was a political one, journalists would call this ‘announcement journalism’ or ‘obsequious reporting’.

I would now like to consider in detail three areas where not only the differences between science and journalism again become apparent, but which also actually cause friction between the two disciplines.

Fields of conflict between journalism and archaeology

Journalistic independence

In my view, what lies behind the above-mentioned expectation of many archaeologists that good science journalism passes on their results to the public in as 'unadulterated' a form as possible, is the perception that journalistic communication works in basically the same way as the inter-specialist one, and the prime concern is to educate an ignorant public. It is also based on the assumption that archaeology is without hidden interests and a neutral provider of scientific truth. Finally, this also demonstrates the view that the journalist is the intermediary, the translator, science's transmission belt into society (see Samida 2006, 157; Brittain and Clack 2007, 30; cf. Kohring 2004, 166-167), an instrument of archaeology, even, to accomplish its objectives (see Ascherson 2004, 156). On closer inspection, however, none of these three points applies: extra-disciplinary communication simply obeys different laws to the ones within the discipline (Peters and Jung 2006, 33-34), and education of the public is by no means the only objective of science journalists. Archaeology does have interests, one only has to think of the desire to point out the lack of research funds in the media, to entice visitors to an exhibition or to show one's own work in a favourable light. And, finally, the journalist is not primarily the intermediary and never the translator who has to (this is implied by the term) accurately stick to the archaeologist's text (Scherzler 2007, 190-191). The public at large quite rightly expects a journalist to provide a sound insight from a point of view which is as neutral as possible, and frequently also an assessment of the facts in order to be able to form its own opinion from this. And therefore the majority of journalists do not see themselves as intermediaries who transport archaeology and its findings into society, not as those who have to ensure the research is accepted by the public at large (Randow 2003), but as representatives, as scouts of the audience in the world of science. The communication scientist Matthias Kohring (2004, 177) writes: 'The trustworthiness of journalism, and this is not a new realisation, depends directly on the distance it keeps from the object of its reporting (this distinguishes it fundamentally from PR).' The desire to keep a distance is also the reason why journalists resolutely reject copy approval of a finished report by the archaeologist in most cases. The editorial statutes of the British newspaper 'The Guardian' state that no-one is accorded the right of copy approval, an interview partner is allowed to look at the text or quotes used only under certain circumstances (Guardian 2007, 2; re. copy approval see also Rögner 2008, 260). Archaeologists often regret this, because they see copy approval as a way of avoiding errors (see Levy 2007, 173). It is also possible to interpret archaeologists' desire to authorise as an attempt to transfer intra-scientific procedures – the proofreading of scientific publications – to extra-scientific communication, where the archaeologist see themselves as the author of the newspaper article, film or radio

broadcast to some extent (Peters 2008, 112-113; Peters *et al.* 2008, 79). Journalists, however, do not consider the source of their information, in this case the archaeologists, as the author of their report at all, but as its subject (Peters and Jung 2006, 33). Journalism research views the close proximity of journalists to science, the presentation of science as a supposed source of superior knowledge and the strong emphasis on scientific success, as deficits of journalism (Lehmkuhl 2006a, 22-23; Schneider and Raue 2003, 13). The observation of science from the viewpoint of other social areas, i.e. according to extra-scientific viewpoints, is the basis of journalistic quality, however. After all, an important function of journalism is to observe the mutual dependencies of a differentiated society, in this case the relationship between archaeology and society (Kohring 2004, 177). This produces a picture of archaeology in the public mind which is slightly independent of its self-portrayal and thus deviates from it. The social scientists Hans Peter Peters and Arlena Jung write on this issue (2006, 28): 'This journalistic procedure must not be misunderstood as a deficit or a quality problem. It is the only strategy which gives a large lay audience access to science.' This is the only way to have a real dialogue between archaeologists and society from which I feel the discipline could also gain valuable views and suggestions. The science researcher Ulrike Felt (2007) even views science communication as a 'space to get involved in collective thought experiments with society.'

The selection criteria of journalism

Which archaeological topics attract the attention of journalists and which do not? As has been mentioned above, journalists put an archaeological topic into a broader, non-scientific context which is of relevance and interest to the respective audience. Information which is disseminated by the media must therefore satisfy certain criteria, so called news factors that can be weighted differently depending on the medium and its addressees. Journalists take care that an issue concerns a large number of people, for example, that it is new and that it is set in the spatial or social vicinity of the addressee. There are a few further such factors, which can include the fact that a scientific issue has consequences, that it represents a conflict, that it generates emotions and opinions or that it is entertaining (Ruhmann and Göbbel 2007). The higher the number of news factors a story has, the higher the probability that it is taken up in the media. It thus becomes evident that scientific relevance is only one such news factor, usually not even the most important one (see also Lehmkuhl 2006b, 102). This also explains why journalists often select different topics and stress other aspects of an issue than an archaeologist would. Incidentally, the news factor 'conflict' can, in my opinion, be quite problematic for an appropriate representation of archaeology: academic disputes often receive more attention in the media than consensus. Moreover, the media repeatedly focus their reporting on outsiders, the literary scholar Raoul Schrott on the

subject of Troy, for example (see the film *Der Fall Troja* (The case Troy), ZDF 2010).

The media transform archaeology

Good science journalism must not be equated to the imparting of science, because it does not submit to the vested interests of archaeology (cf. Kohring 2004, 172). The media do not present archaeology on a one-to-one basis, i.e. in the way the discipline sees itself - they do not consider this to be their job in the slightest. Rather one can say that a transformation is achieved via the media (cf. Lehmkuhl 2007, 9). Scientific and journalistic reality can deviate from each other. Journalism also uses other means to represent its 'reality', as already outlined by Weingart (2001, 238; cf. Stollorz 2008, 573).

What leads to friction in these three areas has hopefully become apparent: the mass media do not fulfil the aforementioned expectations which many archaeologists have of them. Moreover, the presentation of archaeology and the past is in the hands of journalists, which is usually difficult for scientists to accept (cf. Peters 2008, 112-114). The reasons for this are correct in my view, however, given journalism's observer function. In practice, scientists do have influence on what and how the mass media report on their discipline. One example is the information for journalists provided in advance by the great journals such as 'Nature' and 'Science' which is tailor-made to the needs of the media and which provides them with a way of influencing the reporting to a significant degree (cf. Stollorz 2008, 575).

Journalism has its own perspective and its own criteria

Quality criteria for journalism can therefore not be derived from how true to detail and how comprehensively it reports on science, nor to what extent the journalistic presentation is 'correct' in the eyes of the researcher. To produce high-quality journalistic work means, for example, to inform truthfully, neutrally and to the best of one's knowledge and belief. Accuracy (but not in the sense of completeness, rather in the sense of correctness), balance and independence are among the fundamental values of good journalism (see Thomson Reuters Corporation 2008, 3). The topicality and relevance of the topic are essential for quality, as is careful research and checking of sources. Journalistic quality is also measured by how well journalism fulfils its social function: can society gain an impression of archaeology from the journalistic report, regardless of how archaeology presents itself (c.f. Kohring 2004, 178)?

From a methodological point of view, I therefore feel it makes no sense at all for archaeologists to judge journalistic reports according to the criteria they apply to academic articles. Many of these criteria have no validity at all in journalism! Archaeologists who lament the many 'inaccuracies' and the 'inappropriate' angles on the topic

taken by journalists have often fundamentally misunderstood the role of the media themselves (Weingart 2001, 238; Holtorf 2007c, 152). The way the media presents the discipline and its protagonists is not a look in the mirror, it is not an accurate self-reflection. Instead of being confronted with their reflection, the media presentation of their research confronts the archaeologist with the view the others have of them. That is possibly not always pleasant.

Journalism is anything but perfect

So far we have mainly considered quality journalism. Unfortunately, it is necessary to mention that journalistic ideals are not always realized under the daily pressure to meet deadlines which exists in some editorial offices. As in many other professions there are, of course, also journalists who are always willing to sacrifice the scientific facts and the most probable interpretations of a finding for a sensationalist headline, and editors for whom the same approach to a topic over and over again suffices. This even happens in media concerns which champion journalistic quality, explains Tamara Spitzing: 'I know of television editors who want to have the scientist being portrayed or giving an interview presented as a character, and preferably a character like Indiana Jones. This primarily concerns broadcasts for prime time television. If the archaeologist is nothing like Indiana Jones, but maybe more of a very shy researcher, the author is supposed to 'carve out' an adventurer. As the author, one therefore has to sometimes really protect the protagonists involved in one's broadcast' (pers. comm. 04 Aug 2009). It is a fact that some editors who assign journalists to a topic have stereotypes in their mind - and journalism is also a commodity: magazines need their circulation, broadcasting its ratings. A dig enhanced with adventure, gold and photogenic archaeologists fits perfectly. Factual errors also frequently occur in journalism (Silverman 2007, 11), and it is the task of the editorial offices to work very hard in order to keep the number of errors as low as possible and thus maintain the trust of the public in the mass media. Sometimes journalists simply know too little of science and this can lead to serious errors of judgement. There once was a discussion in my editorial office about one of my articles on a dig in Herxheim in the Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, for example. A colleague asked why I had reported on this excavation when the archaeologists could not present a concluding interpretation of their findings. Would it not have been better to wait until the complete results were available? The journalist (a young reporter who did not specialise in science) had no appreciation whatsoever that research is a process and that scientific discussion is not a sign of perplexity, but serves to provide insight. Individual journalists, e.g. from the 'news' department, are also unfamiliar with the significance of scientific publications as a quality criterion. They believe that something which is still unpublished is the latest research and therefore particularly interesting. The reader is requested not to rashly transfer these examples to the complete media

world! They are intended to show that stereotypes and a lack of knowledge on the part of journalists can really cause science to be poorly presented in individual cases – poorly not only from the viewpoint of archaeology, but also from the perspective of good journalism and also from society's perspective, which then does not really learn anything about archaeology. These cases must be distinguished from those which can simply be attributed to the intrinsic styles and tasks of journalism, however.

Medialisation, overload scenarios and monopolistic influences on public opinion

Let us return to the beginning: if a journalist writes 'Iron Age' instead of 'La Tène A', or if they make an individual researcher the protagonist of a broadcast (instead of acknowledging all 35 team members), or if an attractive, naked blonde is shown next to the article, this is, in my opinion, something archaeology should and simply must come to terms with. It seems to me very important, however, to point out some aspects of the interaction between science and journalism on which archaeologists have so far focused very little or not at all. Under the permanent scrutiny of the media, archaeology may possibly change by reacting to the supposed expectations of the mass media and the public, and by strongly orienting itself towards the logic used by the media to impart information – so-called medialisation (cf. Weingart 2005, 151 ff). An investigation needs to be carried out into the extent to which it already applies to the discipline. One indication of a medialisation of archaeology is provided by a press release (University of Tübingen, 14 May 2009) by Tübingen archaeologists which relates to an article in 'Nature' and whose title is guided quite strongly by the supposed expectations of journalists: 'A Venus figurine from the Swabian Jura rewrites prehistory'. On nature.com (2009) the Venus from the Hohle Fels Cave is even called a 'Prehistoric Pin-Up', whereas the actual academic article is linguistically conservative: 'A female figurine from the basal Aurignacian of Hohle Fels Cave in southwestern Germany' (Conard 2009, 248). One of the dangers of such medialisation is that the selection logic of the media over-shapes the rationality of archaeology at some stage, that the discipline makes itself the 'extra' of media productions (Raupp 2008, 388). If scientists go still one step further and use the media instead of specialist journals to increase their standing, if the press conference becomes more important to them than the specialist publication, if they receive research funds on account of their (media) prominence and not primarily on account of their academic reputation, archaeology must tackle such overdrives. Marcus Brittain and Timothy Clack (2007, 36-37) cite a deception by the Japanese archaeologist Fujimura Shinichi which archaeologists explain by Shinichi's desire for recognition in the media, and for which the media had possibly to be held accountable to some extent. Apportioning blame in this way seems to be too simple in my view, nevertheless the desire for media attention may have triggered the deception. Another example of

overdrive comes from palaeontology: in May 2009, the Norwegian palaeontologist Jørn Hurum caused a worldwide stir with the 47-million year old fossil called 'Ida'. The attention was not only focused on the primeval primate from the Messel pit in Germany, but also on the manner in which Hurum approached the public: in collaboration with the History Channel he organised a very professionally orchestrated media event. This comprised a very lavish film documentation with the slogan 'This changes everything', the book 'The Link: Uncovering Our Earliest Ancestor', the 'Revealing the Link' website and an exclusive deal with ABC News. The British BBC and the German ZDF were also subsequently involved with the marketing of the fossil (Arango 2009). The participating scientists compared the significance of the find to the moon landing and Kennedy's assassination (Arango 2009). The German palaeontologist Jens Franzen, who participated in the investigation of the fossil, called it 'the Eighth Wonder of the World' in the film and equated the significance of the specialist publication to the impact of an asteroid on Earth (*sic!*). In the specialist publication at PLoS ONE the tone is significantly more moderate, however; it states, for example: 'Note that *Darwinius masillae* [i.e. 'Ida'] [...] could represent a stem group from which later anthropoid primates evolved, but we are not advocating this here [...]' (Franzen *et al.* 2009). The main thing that makes one wonder is the fact that Hurum had already sold the rights to the media reporting for a lot of money before the find had undergone any sort of peer review process at all (Arango 2009). Tim Arango, a reporter for the New York Times, queried this critically (incidentally a nice example of the observer function of the media). Hurum replied: 'Any pop band is doing the same thing. Any athlete is doing the same thing. We have to start thinking the same way in science' (Arango 2009). Hurum proudly told the science journalism researcher Markus Lehmkuhl (2009, 11): 'We have made "Ida" an icon of evolution with less than two weeks of press work.' He freely admitted that the deliberately chosen slogan 'The Link' was suitable for generating the association with the 'missing link' in the public mind, something which the fossil by no means is (Lehmkuhl 2009, 13). So we can see how the strong orientation towards the mass media can lead to very questionable self-presentations of science. The case of 'Ida' is still an exception. Much more frequent is the following phenomenon, which possibly also applies to archaeology: since many journalists prefer to interview scientists who they already know can express themselves well and go into the questions posed, it is always the same experts who appear in the press and on radio and television. It is often the case that not more than a handful of scientists dominate one topic in the media. Such monopolistic influences on public opinion endanger a balanced presentation of scientific topics and also their quality, i.e. there could also be inexperienced or very controversial scientists among the media stars, because there is hardly any connection between media prominence and scientific reputation (Salzmann 2005, 6). The problem of the monopolistic influence on public

opinion is caused, on the one hand, by the journalist, since it is so much easier to interview scientists who are known to be media compatible than to put a lot of effort into looking for different interview partners. On the other hand, it is also the fault of archaeology, where, as I see things, too few researchers want to deal with journalists at all or are prepared to abide by the rules of the media. One reason why incorrect statements of individual archaeologists, faulty presentations by journalists and especially films such as the *Indiana Jones* series (Spielberg 1981, 1984, 1989, 2008), *Apocalypto* (Gibson 2006) or *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (West 2001) make such a large impact is because they are scarcely accompanied or countered by archaeology. A few angry articles in archaeological journals do not reach the public at any rate. Tamara Spitzing would also like to see archaeologists more on the offensive: 'On the one hand, German archaeologists say about the media: 'Oh, they always get everything wrong. They don't understand me, either.' On the other, something can be mega-wrong in the media, but no scientist says anything about it in public. And this is why scientists also make a significant contribution to the fact that a few things are left wrong' (pers. comm. 4 Aug 2009; cf. also Schadla-Hall 2004, 263).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to explain three things: firstly, the method of assessing journalistic reports in accordance with the intra-disciplinary criteria of archaeology can scarcely lead to sound results; journalistic criteria are needed instead. Secondly, it is right and proper from the viewpoint of the theory of journalism that the presentation of archaeology in mass media differs from its self-portrayal. Thirdly, when turning its attention to the media, archaeology should also look at so far neglected phenomena such as medialisation, overdrive scenarios and monopolistic influences on public opinion. Most important for me, however, is to encourage archaeologists to get involved with journalists. A qualitatively demanding presentation of archaeology and the past in the mass media is a goal which means a lot to good journalists as well as to archaeologists. This is why I think it is important that archaeologists do get involved when journalists are looking for an interview partner or have a question. And finally, archaeology itself can also profit enormously from contact with the sections of the public to whom the mass media have ready access.

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*Scherzler: A Look In The Mirror And The Perspective Of Others:
On The Portrayal Of Archaeology In The Mass Media*

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