

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF STONEHENGE?

LET'S JUST LEAVE IT HERE THEY'LL NEVER NOTICE

OI! GERROUT MY WAY!

TUNNEL

SEE IT'S EASY WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT.

HUH! WHAT DO YOU KNOW!

BARSON'S Vinegar STONE

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PICTURES: TONY PICKERING



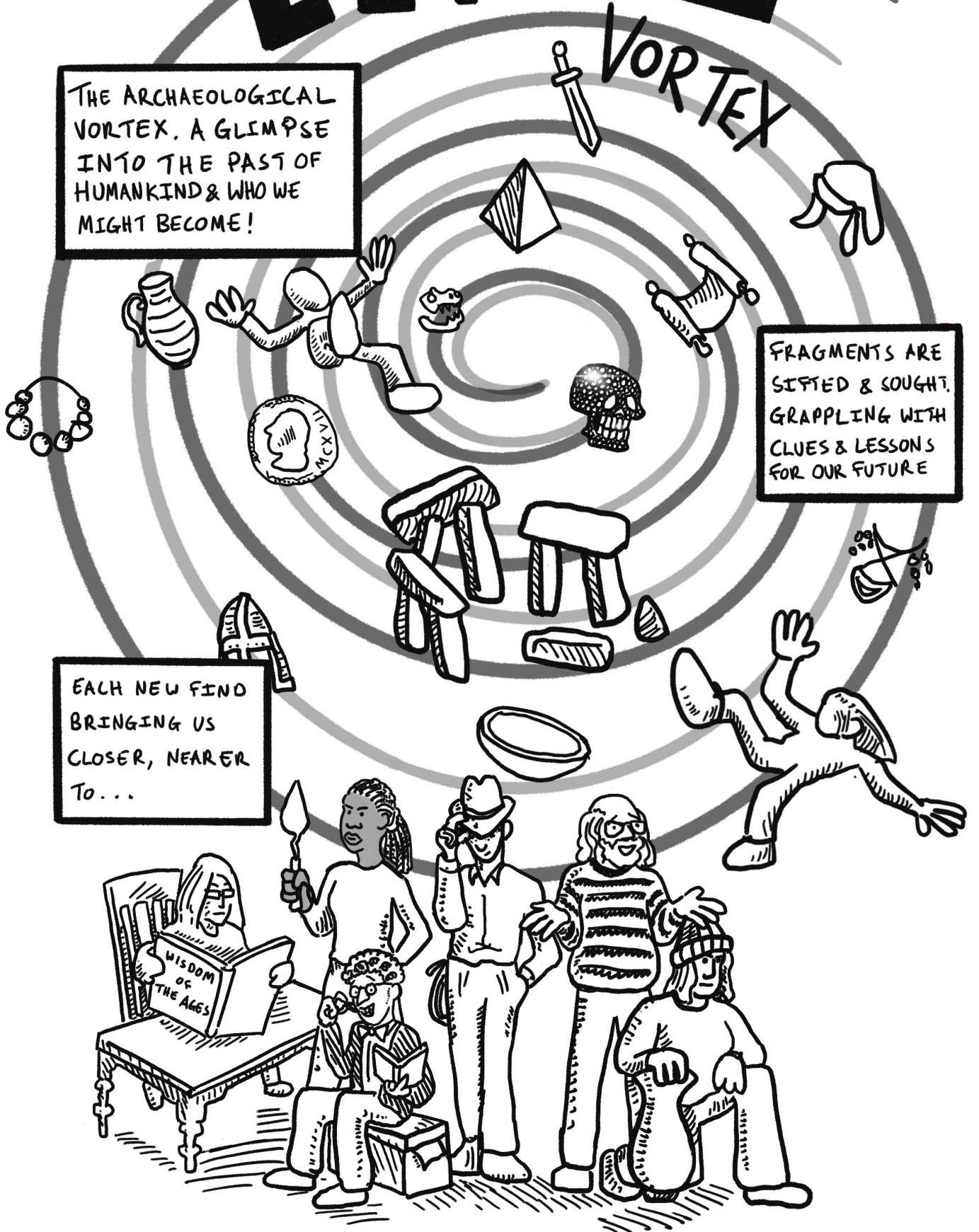
THE TIME

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
VORTEX. A GLIMPSE
INTO THE PAST OF
HUMANKIND & WHO WE
MIGHT BECOME!

VORTEX

FRAGMENTS ARE
SIFTED & SOUGHT,
GRAPPLING WITH
CLUES & LESSONS
FOR OUR FUTURE

EACH NEW FIND
BRINGING US
CLOSER, NEARER
TO...



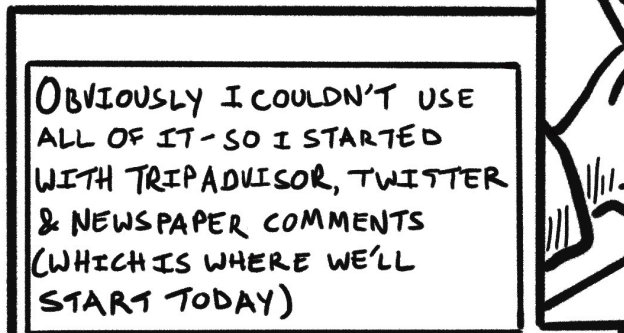
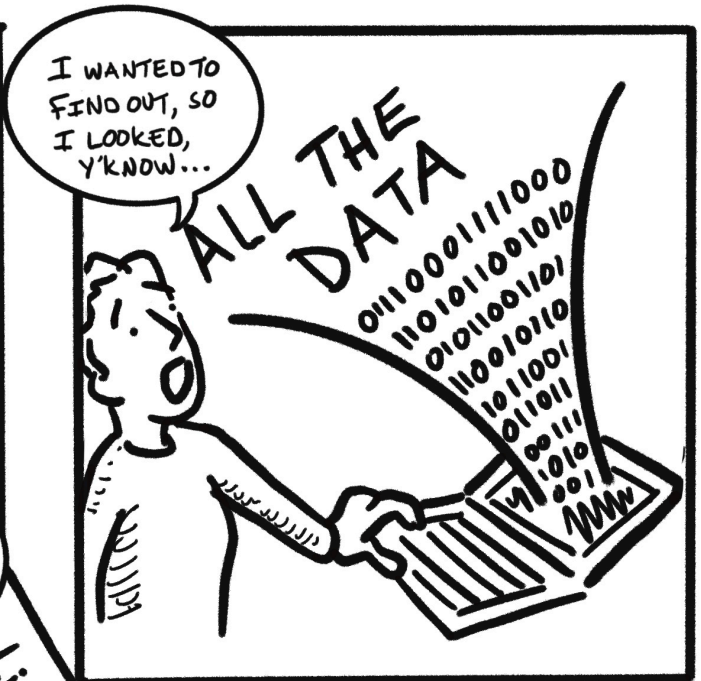
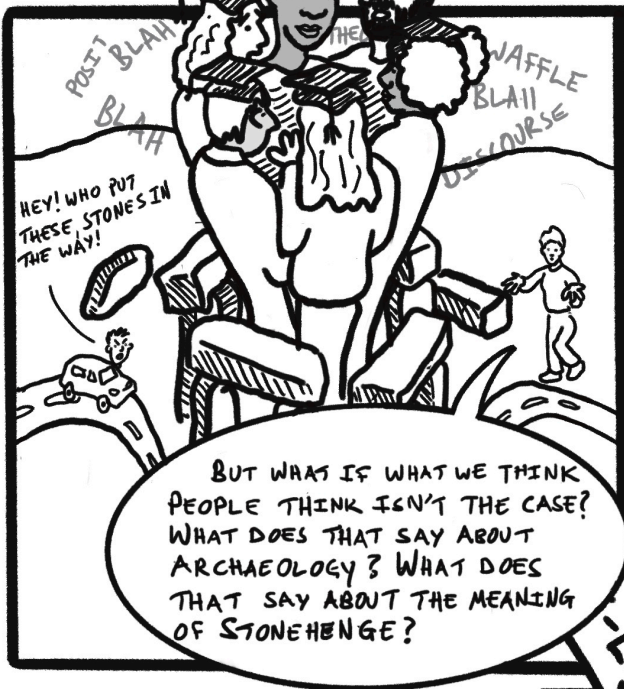
WHAT A LOAD
OF RUBBISH!

HEY!

THE

TURK





WHAT PEOPLE THINK IS...



"COMMON SENSE"
IT'S
OBVIOUS!



SO WHAT
I RECKON
IS...



SO BASED ON
THE ANGLE OF
THE SUN...



PAH!
WHAT
DO THEY
KNOW!



"IT'S REALLY SMALL!"

IS THIS
IT?



How
MUCH!



YOU WERE
EXPECTING
MAYBE THE
BURJ KHALIFA?

WHAT PEOPLE THINK IS... (repeated background text)



YOU SPENT AGES ON THAT!
-HAMPH!

SEE, TOLD YOU - HOLLOW!

TAPTAP

"FAKE"

"ACCESS"

YOU MAY PUT UP FENCES BUT YOU'LL NEVER TAKE MY FREEDOM!

NO ENTRY

ICAN'T LOOK!

THEY KNOW THE STONES CAME FROM WALES RIGHT?

"ANCESTORS"
"CRY GOD FOR HARRY, ENGLAND & ST GEORGE!"

FILTHY BUGGERS!

"NEW AGE"

TAKE US TO YOUR LEADER.

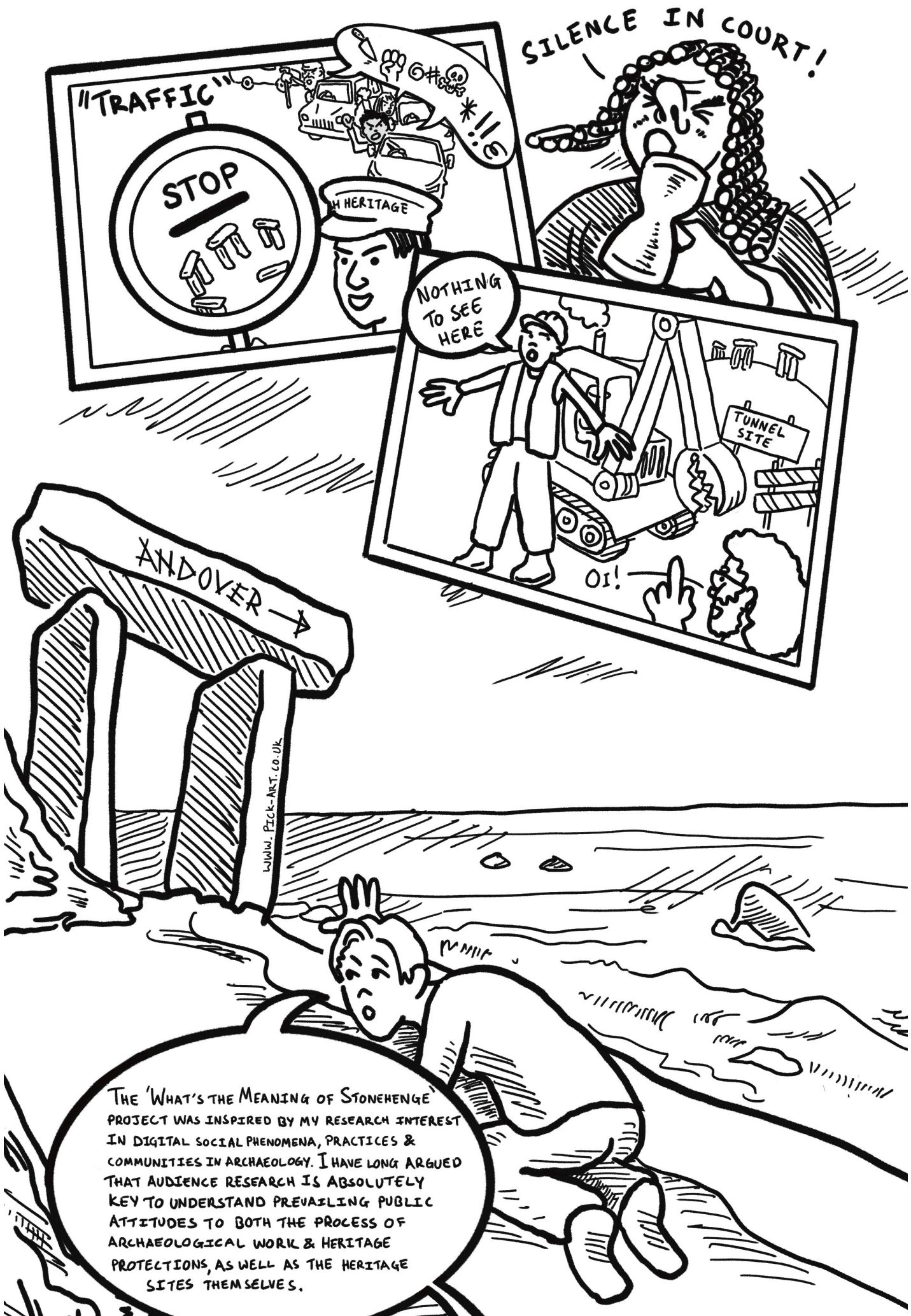
WE EXIST IN A NON-HIERARCHICAL COMMUNITY ACTUALLY DO WE?

"ALIENS"

"HUMOUR"

I THINK YOU'RE MAKING TOO BIG A THING ABOUT IT?

MAKING A BIG THING OF IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA.



THE 'WHAT'S THE MEANING OF STONEHENGE' PROJECT WAS INSPIRED BY MY RESEARCH INTEREST IN DIGITAL SOCIAL PHENOMENA, PRACTICES & COMMUNITIES IN ARCHAEOLOGY. I HAVE LONG ARGUED THAT AUDIENCE RESEARCH IS ABSOLUTELY KEY TO UNDERSTAND PREVAILING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO BOTH THE PROCESS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK & HERITAGE PROTECTIONS, AS WELL AS THE HERITAGE SITES THEMSELVES.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MEDIA, OF WHATEVER TYPE, IS A "FIELD SITE FOR THE EXAMINATION OF HERITAGE- FOCUSED SOCIAL & ECONOMIC POWER STRUCTURES, OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY, & THE SOURCE OF SYMBOLIC RESOURCES FOR NATIONHOOD & IDENTITY" (RICHARDSON 2019). I WANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPERTISE MEANS TO PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SECTOR, ESPECIALLY TO PEOPLE WHO RARELY ENCOUNTER THE FORMALITIES OF ACADEMIC ARCHAEOLOGY. IT'S RELATIVELY STRAIGHTFORWARD FOR A PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGIST TO UNDERSTAND THE LATEST INTERPRETATIONS OF STONEHENGE (OR ELSEWHERE) BY OTHER ACADEMICS. BUT THERE HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FEW ATTEMPTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE PROCESS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK, THE FINDS & THE MANY NARRATIVES PRESENTED IN THE MEDIA MIGHT MEAN, IF ANYTHING, TO MOST EVERYDAY REGULAR PEOPLE. THIS HAS ALWAYS SEEMED TO ME TO BE A HUGE OVERSIGHT FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE PUBLIC UNDERSTAND ABOUT ARCHAEOLOGY MEANS WE CAN SUPPORT MORE RESPONSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, IMPROVE ACCESS & STORYTELLING, & HAVE A BETTER VIEW OF THE ROLE THAT ARCHAEOLOGY PLAYS IN FORMING OUR NATIONAL & INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES.

PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATIONS OFTEN LEGITIMIZE EXISTING WORLDVIEWS & PANDER TO A PENCHANT FOR MYSTERY, WHEREAS THE PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGIST'S EXPLANATIONS OF LENGTHY SOCIAL, CULTURAL & RESOURCE-BASED ENGAGEMENTS ARE MESSILY HUMAN & COMPLEX. THIS IS INTERESTING WHEN WE CONSIDER WHAT JEB J CARD DESCRIBES AS THE "PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS' TACTIC OF IGNORING THE ESOTERIC UNDEPINNINGS OF POPULAR UNDERSTANDINGS OF ARCHAEOLOGY" AS "BASED ON A FATALLY FLAWED ASSUMPTION: THAT PEOPLE RESPECT THE AUTHORITY OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS" (CARD 2019, 9). THERE IS A SENSE IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA DATA THAT STONEHENGE REFLECTS A DEEP NEED FOR ENTERTAINMENT & MYSTERY, FOR A DESIRE FOR RE-ENCHANTMENT & MILD REBELLION AGAINST THE AUTHORITY OF WESTERN SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE. THIS IS CONSTRAINED BY AN EQUAL FORCE OF A REQUIREMENT FOR COMMON SENSE THAT SITS OUTSIDE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF BUMBLING, WASTEFUL ACADEMICS IN THEIR IVORY TOWERS. IS THIS A SYMPTOM OF DISENCHANTMENT WITH PREVAILING WESTERN SCIENCE, RATHER THAN A GENERAL BELIEF IN MYSTERIOUS FORCES? THE HISTORIAN OF RELIGION MIRCEA ÉLIADÉ SAW THIS AS A TYPE OF NOSTALGIA FOR A SACRED PERIOD OF HUMAN HISTORY THAT EXISTED BEFORE WHAT HE CALLED THE "DEAD TIME- THE TIME THAT CRUSHES & KILLS" (ÉLIADÉ 1963, 192) - DOES THIS YEARNING FOR THE UNKNOWNABLE REFLECT THE PRESSURES OF THE MODERN WORLD OF MAINSTREAM WESTERN CULTURE &, DARE I SAY IT, LATE CAPITALISM?

THESE CONCEPTS I'VE OUTLINED IN THIS SHORT COMIC ARE IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF ANY ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROTECTIONS, SITES, DISCOVERIES, EVEN THE VALUE OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR THE WIDER PUBLIC. WE SHOULD KNOW WHAT ARCHAEOLOGY & ARCHAEOLOGISTS MIGHT REPRESENTS TO THE AVERAGE PERSON OUTSIDE OUR OWN ECHO CHAMBERS. THERE IS GREAT POTENTIAL IN THESE DATA, & THE FIELD SITE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN GENERAL, & THERE IS SPACE FOR US TO EXPLORE HOW TO BETTER RESPOND TO WHAT PEOPLE NEED FROM THE PAST ITSELF - IF INDEED THERE IS ANYTHING NEEDED AT ALL.

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