
TRAC Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

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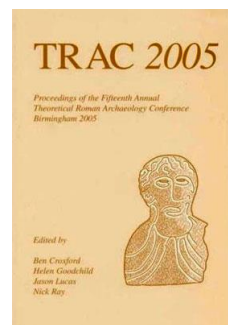
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*21st Century TRAC: is the Roman battery flat?**

Ray Laurence

It is remarkable to think that TRAC has had fifteen annual meetings and has, apart from one year, consistently found a University in which to hold the conference each year. This is a far cry from the original intention of what is now referred to as TRAC 1. It was a one-off event with the intention to address a frustration that Roman archaeology was resistant to theory, in contrast to a theory laden prehistoric archaeology. Fifteen years on, much has changed; TRAC would appear to have moved on from processualism and an emphasis on the grand narratives of Romanisation. No longer do we sit through a fifteen to twenty minute account of why Marx explains the entire process of the thousand-year history of the Roman expansion and contraction across the west with little or no reference to any archaeological evidence. TRAC has continued to meet through a period of change that has led to the incorporation into archaeology of strands from other disciplines, notably the thinking of Michel Foucault, theories of agency developed by Anthony Giddens, and writers on postmodernism and space, such as Ed Soja. More sobering, for those who might be described as the first TRAC generation of fifteen years ago, is that the current TRAC generation were probably less than ten years old, when the first conference was held. For this reason alone, TRAC today is not the same thing as TRAC then and we might see a different role for the academic and archaeologist now than was the experience of fifteen years back under Thatcher. These are issues of context, but what I wish to argue is that TRAC has become an institution within Roman archaeology or a part of the institution we know as Roman archaeology. It has done much to reshape archaeological thought as applied to the temporal and geographical space known as the Roman Empire. Indeed TRAC should not be underestimated, it can deliver an annual conference of more than forty papers over a period of three days (figures from 2004 at Durham) from which a selection of about a dozen are published within twelve months of the conference being held.

TRAC and RAC

To understand why TRAC is different today from when it was founded, we need to investigate some of the changes that have occurred. By far the largest and maybe still for some the most

* A note on composition: the critical discussion was written following the sequential reading of *TRAC 2001–2004*. The views expressed might be seen to be directly related to those reported in the editorial of *TRAC 2000* from a discussion to mark TRAC's tenth anniversary, and an earlier review of TRAC publications published in *Britannia* (1999: 387–90). However, in writing on TRAC today (as requested by the Standing Committee), I chose not to refer to these earlier discussions when formulating my current position. The publications were read sequentially from cover to cover over a brief period of time, in an effort to evaluate developments. Websites from the conferences were also referred to where possible to identify matters that may not have made it into print. I would urge all readers to read the actual publications for themselves – ideally from cover to cover and sequentially. For an overview of TRAC's origins, see review by John Barrett (1995) or Scott (this volume). I would like to thank Ben Croxford, and the rest of the editorial committee, for editing this paper and especially for an enlightening e-mail on the nature of TRAC's editorial process.

controversial was the decision in 1995 for TRAC to meet at the same time and place as the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies' Archaeology Conference – known to all as The Roman Archaeology Conference or RAC (some even pronounced it R-A-C rather than RAC, to avoid association with TRAC). This innovation was a cause of concern and protest at the time, but most realised that it brought TRAC and its participants to the attention of a wider constituency of Roman archaeology. It also took theory directly to those that were thought to be rather conservative or resistant to the use of theory or ideas and methods successfully developed and utilised by prehistorians. Every second year, TRAC meets alongside RAC at the same venue, but attempts to maintain a separate identity. Many find it difficult to see the difference between the sessions organised under the RAC banner and those presented under the TRAC brand – see programme from the Birmingham meetings of the two conferences for confirmation <http://www.iaa.bham.ac.uk/conferences/rac/rac.htm>. It would appear that RAC and TRAC have become the same thing due to their sharing of venue, participants and delegates. There are numerous explanations, or theoretical frameworks, in which to understand the change that TRAC has undergone through its association with its more prestigious partner RAC. One factor might be that those involved originally in the organisation of TRAC, or had presented papers at TRAC, have moved onto organise sessions at RAC. The experience of the early years of TRAC has been effective in shaping the sessions within RAC. For some involved in the early years, this is a sign that TRAC may have simply won. However, the presence of RAC meeting alongside TRAC has caused the latter to be perceived by some as a postgraduate or a 'just-finished-my-doctorate' conference – a far cry from the original conference. Also, the rhetoric of difference as articulated might be to maintain RAC's dominant position as more important or the main event. It needs to be remembered that TRAC has been around rather longer than RAC and it was the success of TRAC to attract participants that may have provided a sense of security to the formation of the Roman Society's biannual conference. We might even say that RAC has become increasingly a version of TRAC, rather than TRAC becoming a version of RAC.

Training Roman Archaeologists

TRAC has an important role in the training of younger scholars, whilst at the same time giving them an independence that is not experienced in some other subjects in the humanities. The conference continues to provide a venue for a first conference paper that is critical and at the same time supportive. It is organised by postgraduates and/or postdoctoral researchers or newly appointed lecturers. Sessions are proposed and speakers assembled by session organisers, there is also a call for papers from which sessions are assembled. This feature is relatively new and sees TRAC emulating the structure of RAC. The maintenance of the TRAC general session demonstrates a commitment to fairness and inclusiveness of those who submit papers individually. The postgraduate organisers of TRAC quickly pick up the pleasures and frustrations of rapidly editing a volume for publication by Oxbow for the conference in the following year. The result is that those who participate and organise the conference are empowered to take TRAC wherever they choose. This is quite different to the experience for postgraduates in Ancient History, whose annual postgraduate conference is very much run by the supervisors of theses rather than the workers on those theses. What we see in TRAC, in contrast, is the empowerment of postgraduates and the opportunity to participate in the running of a conference and the editing of a volume of papers. A landmark in the growing

professionalism within TRAC came in 2001, when the standing committee was formed with the aim to:

- a) ensure the continuity of the conference
- b) represent the interests of the conference to the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies
- c) promote TRAC to the wider archaeological community and ensure participation of the wider community beyond those in Universities
- d) ensure that papers from the conference were published

The composition of the organising committee was characteristically inclusive: drawn from those who had just organised the conference and those who would organise it in the following year, plus representatives of those working in the field and in museums. In addition, the members of the committee elect a spokesperson that sits on the Roman Society's Archaeology Committee to represent the interests of TRAC.

Where does TRAC stand in relation to the University Departments of Archaeology at which all but one meeting have been held? Conferences tend to be a gamble, you might break even or you might not. For those years in which TRAC is held on its own without RAC, Heads of Departments of Archaeology have been persuaded this gamble is worth taking and postgraduates with no experience of conference organisation will be in charge of running it. It would be difficult to explain this in terms of simple philanthropy, which might in part lie behind the phenomenon. However, there may be much more to this and we need to see any intention to support the conference as a means to demonstrate support of postgraduates at the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). This raises the whole issue of the RAE and TRAC. The key question is: whether participation in and publication of papers in TRAC volumes constitutes research output of international standing, or whether TRAC is a national forum for debate about matters that are of concern to Roman Archaeology studies in Britain at graduate level and beyond?

Publication: Success and Failure?

A selection of papers is taken from each conference for rapid publication within twelve months by Oxbow Books. The printed volumes are the tangible result of the conference and can be seen as the legacy of each year's efforts by organisers of the sessions held and the editors' actions subsequently. It needs to be recognised that only about a quarter to a third of papers presented reach publication. The volumes seem to be stabilising at a length of about 160 pages containing roughly twelve papers. In writing this overview, I read sequentially all four volumes published from the conferences held in 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 from cover to cover in an effort to understand TRAC and the pre-occupations of participants at the conference who chose or were chosen to write their papers up for publication. There is no single pre-occupation in the pages of any one volume, or across the four volumes. Variety is what characterises these slim volumes, which seek to sample or represent the totality of each annual conference. The editors make this clear, but suggest that TRAC 2001 represents 'the broad range of Roman archaeology today' alongside 'a commitment to a theoretically informed approach to the subject'. There is a sense that TRAC 2002 took a further step towards greater engagement with other fields: philosophy, psychology, history of art, and consumer theory. The editors in the following year make explicit from which sessions the papers were drawn and place an emphasis on the provision of 'an exciting and informal environment for discussion and debate'.

For the 2004 volume, the editors were pleased to highlight the variety of geographical regions represented, the wide selection of subject matter, and a variety of theoretical approaches applied. The editorials may not be revealing the full process of selection, all who spoke at TRAC are invited to submit papers. From these submissions, about fifty percent of the papers given, the editors (after academic refereeing) find it necessary to reject those that simply cannot be rewritten or improved within the tight deadline for publication by the following TRAC. This dependency on what turns up by way of submission causes variation across any single TRAC publication. It makes for an interesting read and is a means to gain a snapshot of those papers sent in for publication, but need not represent what might have been the best papers or all papers from the conference. This might be the greatest weakness of the publications. There is a feeling of being cheated when presented with only two papers from a session on 'Body and Soul: Health, Treatment and Well-being in the Roman World', and wishing to know what else was debated in the session held in Leicester in 2003. There is no indication of who else gave papers in the session, what they were on, or what the session organisers thought that the discussion had achieved or failed to achieve. It is not always possible to gain access to a listing of the original papers or conference abstracts. The TRAC Standing Committee Website (www.romansociety.org/TRAC.htm) does contain links to the websites of Universities that held TRAC in the past, but the survival of the contents is at the hands of local webmasters. The development of the website to include the content of not only the sessions and session abstracts but also the abstracts of papers and e-mail addresses of participants, and reference to the website in the publication would enable a greater understanding of where the papers came from and the context of their delivery.

To understand TRAC, I think we have to look at the way in which a session is constructed, the underlying rhetoric of the session abstract and to see whether a session's ideals are fulfilled by the sample of papers published. I have chosen a session from the meeting in Canterbury in 2002, 'Breaking Ground or Treading Water? Theoretical Agendas for the 21st Century', organised by Andrew Gardner and Stephanie Koerner. The session abstract is worth quoting in full, since it embodies many of the aspirations and concerns of those involved in TRAC:

'It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Roman empire, both as a source and as a paradigmatic example, in the long-term history of western social theory and philosophy. Throughout the Middle Ages, for example, Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* served as the most influential philosophy of human nature and history, while in early modern times, sophisticated translations of the writings of ancient Greek and Roman scholars - together with new theories about contrasts between these two 'classical' civilizations - motivated some of the most influential works of Enlightenment and Romantic movements. All this certainly implies the special importance to Roman archaeology of a highly self-critical perspective on the impact of received theoretical presuppositions. This emphasis has surely contributed in important ways to the impressive current state of research on the previously unimaginable complexity of Roman civilization and the diversity of its impacts on the ancient world. But it should not necessarily imply that the field's now very diverse areas of specialization can make no ground-breaking contributions to key theoretical debates in archaeology, and in the human sciences and philosophy more broadly. To the contrary, specialists in Roman archaeology are likely to be able to make especially important contributions both to awareness of the historicity of current theoretical paradigms, and current efforts to go beyond their limitations. This session, therefore, concerns the future of theoretical Roman archaeology in the broadest sense. TRAC is now a well-established element in

Roman studies in the United Kingdom, and has certainly had some success in influencing the orientation of 'mainstream' sessions at RAC. Nonetheless, its wider impact is much less visible. Recent reviews and debates at the conference itself demonstrate continued doubts about whether TRAC is really achieving anything, or whether it has become somewhat becalmed. The aim of this session is to pursue this reflexive direction in a much more positive way. Papers are invited which seek to challenge the hegemony of ideas simply borrowed from 10-year old prehistory books, and develop unique contributions from Romanist archaeology to wider debates. The session will provide a context for developing the theoretical agendas required of a philosophically-salient Roman archaeology - one which can bring advances in archaeological research to bear upon key issues being debated today in fields from which so many of our conceptual tools have been hitherto drawn. To put this another way, instead of rehearsing arguments over what 'X' social theory or philosophy can do for us, the session seeks to focus attention on what Roman archaeology can contribute to social theory and to the changes currently taking place in relations between human studies and philosophy.'

Four papers from this session appear in the final publication from the six presented. Andrew Gardner opens the volume with a self-critique of TRAC and the formula of social theory plus Roman archaeology equals a TRAC paper. He advocates the writing of papers to influence social theorists beyond our own field and to understand the complex relationships between the past and the present today. The intersection with his original abstract is all embracing. When we look at the papers by Iain Ferris and Dominic Perring published from the session, the linkage to the original abstract becomes more tenuous. Ferris sets out to demonstrate the problem of dealing with the fragmentary nature of Roman sculpture. The paper is theoretically informed and stimulating, but I cannot see how it moved the agenda set out above further along. In contrast, Perring investigates the presence of the trialectics of space in the Frampton Pavements to demonstrate the intersection of the idea systems that produced this work and those of interpretation based on a lineage of Hegel, Marx, Engels through to Lefebvre and ultimately Soja's post-modern geographies. He highlights the shared language of neo-Platonism, but whether that means that the language is understood in the same way across some 2000 years is unclear. The fourth published paper was by the other session organiser, Stephanie Koerner, who in her conclusion states that she attempted 'to present something of the historical and philosophical background of the concerns that motivated the 2002 TRAC session "Breaking Ground or Treading Water? Theoretical Agendas for the 21st Century"'. The paper is background and does not manage to address a single example of the materiality of the Roman Empire at any point. There is much reference to human thought, but much less in terms of application than the paper by Gardner. Such a paper is a hostage to fortune and it is surprising to see it published, given that Gardner covers the similar territory. The four papers are distributed across the volume and in effect decontextualised from their point of production – the session abstract and the presentation of the papers at the conference. What we see here is a successful session delivering papers the majority of which are published, although many would question how Koerner's 'kind of', 'something of', and a paper that is for the most part a general overview of a familiar literature, really contributes to the development of Roman Archaeology. What we lose in the published form is a sense that TRAC is being moved on by the papers in the session itself or by the desires of the organisers expressed via the original abstract.

Not all TRAC sessions can see this much success with four out of six papers published and distributed across the publication. At the same conference, Patricia Baker proposed a session on 'Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Women in the Roman Empire', which failed in that it simply did not produce speakers willing to discuss the topic or meet the aims of the session. The organiser published a comment on this in the publication (Baker 2003). The reason is clear, the study of women let alone gender remains under-developed not just within TRAC, but within Roman Archaeology as a whole. However, the session is also a victim of the TRAC format in which session organisers propose the session and await a response to the call for papers. This egalitarian format and a resistance to structures that place the session organiser in total control of who is in and not in a session might prevent the shaping of TRAC in directions that are hoped for. TRAC could be a vehicle for the promotion of the study of gender (rather than just women) in Roman Archaeology. However, TRAC holds to an inherent ideology that is suspicious of the promotion of agendas or the establishment of individuals in 'control' beyond a common understanding that theoretically informed positions are desirable. Baker's published paper highlights an area of fundamental weakness in Roman Archaeology, which TRAC has done little to compensate for or successfully redress.

There is a problem for TRAC that is one shared by many organisations or institutions that seek to represent and empower those who do not feel fulfilled by other more formal structures of representation. How do you push ahead with an agenda of change, whilst continuing to represent all parties who have expressed an interest? The latter seems to be represented to a greater degree in the final, seemingly random, selection of papers published; whereas the former has a stronger representation in the actual conference. A session at the conference can achieve a coherent aim, whereas the publication of a selection of papers from the session, especially if dispersed randomly across a volume, fails to maintain the coherence of the agenda set. TRAC 2003 compensates for this by making clear the relationship between the published papers and the sessions from which they were drawn. However, there is a contrast with the publications arising from RAC that tend to be formulated around a session at that conference and published in the supplementary series of the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* as a single volume with or without the addition of papers by others who were not at the conference. TRAC has resisted such a format for its volumes on the grounds that it seeks to represent the scope or variety of papers given. As a result, there is an appearance of incoherence or randomness of selection. This would suggest that the publication does not succeed in representing what took place at the conference in sessions focussed on the discussion of a specific aspect of theoretical Roman archaeology. This could be seen as an inherent weakness to the institution that is TRAC: it has grown in stature but maintains the structure that delivered the early conferences that is egalitarian. The Standing Committee creates a sense of coherence and continuity, but does not allow for the actual development of the institution and limits the development of the aims expressed by participants at the conference itself. The result is a format for publication similar to a journal, but without the benefit of a longer period of time for the editorial process of an established journal, such as *Britannia*, or *The Journal of Roman Archaeology*. The emphasis on the speed of submission, editorial and publication within a year causes papers to vary in quality from the excellent to the under-developed hypothesis in need of research and development or even the stating of what is already known. In combination, this reduces the publication of the conference in status to that of a report or a basic collection of papers, with some that are complete whilst others are work in progress. This makes for an interesting read, but does not fulfil the agenda that sets TRAC the task of altering and directly influencing Roman archaeology.

Representation, Identity and conservatism

A key aspect that has been discussed and continues to be a pre-occupation is the role of TRAC in representing diverse interests. Looking at the last five years of publications, we can see that scholars from the UK form the vast majority of contributors to the volumes, with colleagues from Europe represented and exceptionally a stray scholar from North America is to be found in TRAC 2003. What is much stronger is the connection between TRAC and Roman archaeologists based in the Netherlands. Many, now, see that it is only a question of time before the conference is held in Amsterdam rather than in the UK. TRAC has become an international forum for academic debate. At the same time, there is a continuing representation of those working in Roman Archaeology beyond the bounds of Universities. The overall emphasis of certainly the published volumes remains fixed on Roman Britain and North-West Europe with a consistent representative number of papers on evidence and phenomena from the Mediterranean and Southern Europe. In terms of the academic standing of contributors to TRAC, Kevin Greene (2005) has demonstrated that it is not professors, readers or senior lecturers who are published in the volumes, but mostly those at the lectureship stage of their careers with the addition of postgraduate students and those working in museums, field units and other areas outside the University milieu. More senior academics would appear to be developing and publishing their ideas via RAC and more established journals such as *Britannia* or *Journal of Roman Archaeology*. This is not a new development, but one that is different from what became to be known as TRAC 1 fifteen years ago. TRAC has not drawn in or colonised the older generation of scholars. In fact, it would seem that each TRAC generation grows out of its TRACness and each new TRAC generation is inherently in a state of becoming the next generation at RAC. The impression – for better or worse, true or untrue – that TRAC is for the young sets a limit to what TRAC can achieve in the longer term. This impression is in part caused by the emphasis on rapid publication. Academics in mid or peak career, who are accumulating commitments and juggling deadlines, may well allow their TRAC paper to remain in the filing cabinet for later reworking, once time allows. Numerous well-established academics have spoken at TRAC, but few have been published in the actual volumes.

The representation of women has been particularly successful within TRAC, far higher than in other publications on Roman Archaeology. However, the failure to develop an archaeology of gender at TRAC or as part of a general trend in Roman Archaeology to consider what is normative to be male in both the past and present (see Scott 1998) points to the limits of the possible within the existing institutional format. I am uncertain whether the greater presence of women in TRAC points to a difference in the institution as Kevin Greene (2005) has suggested. TRAC is as much part of the institutional or academic structure that created inequalities documented by Eleanor Scott at TRAC 97 as RAC is. The reason why TRAC has failed to develop an archaeology of gender might be that TRAC emulates the academic structures around it – a conference and a paper publication. This may be seen as an attempt to work within the existing frameworks of academia, rather than be dismissed as irrelevant. Just as papers at the conference do not break away from the institutional interests of mainstream Roman archaeology to build an archaeology of gender in the Roman Empire, TRAC has not embraced either publishing via the Internet or e-publishing. The website continues to contain the most basic information and there is no place for active discussion, that could continue over twelve months of the year rather than being intensively concentrated into just three days in the formal setting of the lecture room and temporality of an academic conference. The conference

replays itself each year within this structural frame with a new generation of participants attending and speaking. Papers are published in the set format and set time frame of twelve months and so the cycle of conferences and publications goes on within a set format. Change is resisted, because there is a suspicion that it might be bad or wrong, or even a betrayal of TRAC's principles. These principles, it should be noted, need not be the same as the ideas and frustrations that led Eleanor Scott to organise a one-off conference on Theoretical Roman Archaeology in 1991 and published in 1993.

In reading the four most recent volumes of TRAC from cover to cover within a period of a week, I was struck by the sheer conservatism of the topics covered. TRAC's favourite discussion – Romanisation – would appear to have mutated under the influence of the development of creolisation or pidginisation, as Gillian Carr (2003) argues. A further development from the Romanisation debates of the 1990s, via a theory of structure and agency alongside consumer theory, is a focus on the inhabitants of Roman Britain as consumers, see in particular Chris Martins *TRAC 2002*. This was implicit in debates over Romanisation, but now has been led to the fore by a conception of discrepant consumerism that need not emphasise Romanness as much as the bowlness of pottery forms, as is argued by Martin Pitts (2004; 2005). Viewpoints developed in part with a focus on particular forms of material culture by Gwladys Monteil and H.E.M. Cool in *TRAC 2003*. The issues are made even more apparent by Ellen Swift in *TRAC 2002* to highlight the use of amber and glass across frontier regions. Resistance has been abandoned by Gillian Hawkes (2002) in favour of a complex discussion of cultural conservatism and an argument that the Roman conquest of Britain had little or no effect on rural inhabitants and, in particular, the lives of women (a concept familiar from undergraduate lectures I attended in relation to the 'Norman Conquest' of 1066, some twenty years ago!). For her, 'we need to look at material culture in terms of how people used it and forget about the Roman Empire' (Hawkes 2002: 48) and to move on from the politics of the male vision of Roman Archaeology. Yet, Alfredo Gonzalez-Ruibal (2003) can at the same time via the changing nature of *dasein* postulate a fundamental change or a greater complication to living under Rome in a Roman Province than living in the orbit of Rome within an Iron Age culture. I am not certain whether there is an implicit expectation within Heidegger-based thinking that *dasein* is something shared by men with women, or in which women are assumed to participate. Today, we still have a concept of culture change based on a Roman invasion, it crops up under neutral headings such as 'culture change' in innocent places such as south-west Britain. The papers on social memory from *TRAC 2003* open up a new field within the realm of agency and *mentalité* of the individual. This is a major departure from what has gone before, the papers by Hella Eckardt and Howard Williams encapsulate new ways into the Roman past, which are also reflected in Judy Meade's approach to the prehistoric and Roman landscapes of the Ouse Valley – but notice the implicit before and after Roman that can be built into the very idea of social memory. The intersection of theory derived from the humanities with methodologies from the sciences are represented by Rebecca Redfern's (2003) and Rebecca Gowland (2004) analysis of human remains from Roman Britain in relationship to health, gender and social identity. These papers open up the dialectic between health and culture for future discussion. There is also a sense in numerous papers of the biography or life cycle of buildings, landscapes and objects, most clearly postulated by Adrian Chadwick (2004). The recycling of material is a case in point as Daniel Keller (2005) documents in a study of the reuse of glass across the Empire and Adam Rogers (2005) highlights the role of metal production in the cultures of Britain within the Roman Empire. There is not room here to refer to every paper published or all discrepant voices, but above I have given an overview of what

struck me as significant trends displayed at TRAC within the last five years. What we are not seeing is a mighty paradigm shift from what went before. Instead, we see an on-going development within TRAC of tried and trusted themes re-thought and re-branded or re-invented, as seen in the session at TRAC 2005 session - 'The Romanisation of the Countryside: the contribution of regional surveys'. What this very brief survey demonstrates is that TRAC continues to display innovation towards more tried and trusted themes that leaves to one side a vast array of material that could constitute the world of the Roman Empire. In effect, TRAC has become an institution that is developing at a slow rather than rapid speed of change.

Recharging the Roman Battery - Where TRAC could be?

I have argued that TRAC is a conservative institution that continues to re-present itself via each new generation of scholars in a similar form. What it has not done is develop alternative forms for representation of theoretical issues. There is a website, but no place for debate or the posting of articles that are more ephemeral than those that appear in print each year. A case in point would be a commentary on the debate in conference sessions by the organisers, were their desires and aims achieved, was there disappointment or fulfilment by the level of debate? The web might be the means to tackling the knotty series of problems associated with how the 'theoretical' debates at TRAC can be represented to a wider audience (than the conference, academics, professionals in museums and the field) to influence the public perception of Roman archaeology. Can theory cross over and be popularised by television? The current state of play with Romans on TV is one that is traditional with the dominance of emperors, the mass killing of humans and other animals by the eruption of Vesuvius, the military, sex, and the marvels of technology. TRAC has not to date concerned itself with the analysis of the actions of TV production companies and TV networks in the commissioning, making and transmission of programmes that are generically similar in form. Equally, the future TRAC generation is currently consuming *The Rotten and Ruthless Romans (Horrible Histories)* and a school curriculum that may feature Greeks and Romans – what is the relationship between practice in education within Britain and elsewhere and TRAC's concerns with theoretical debate? There is also an engagement with Roman archaeology via tourism, leisure, and University Departments of Lifelong Learning, and the University of the Third Age. Such structures lie at the edges of the academic debate that TRAC has involved itself with. Little has been said at TRAC about the presentation of the 'Romans' in museums (but see Clarke and Hunter 2001), or in relation to heritage sites or via the glossy brochures advertising the cultural merits of holidays in the Mediterranean and by those guiding groups in 'archaeological' tours round major sites. At TRAC, a call for engagement with other academic disciplines and the production of social theory has been made. However, should TRAC take its ideas to a wider audience beyond the academy? More importantly, do we actually know or understand what that wider audience thinks of the Romans – what is it that attracts people to Roman archaeology? In short, unless TRAC grows beyond its conference and publication in paper format, it cannot address these issues or develop an engagement with how Roman archaeology is perceived outside the existing forum for debate. There is a passion at TRAC for change and debate; a website that reflected and promoted that passion to a wider group of consumers would be a first step in the dissemination of TRAC's preoccupations to a wider public, and enter into a dialogue beyond the academy. The web may also be a means for greater experimentation over the ways of presentation of ideas and information, as has been demonstrated by archaeologists generally

(see Michael Shanks' Stanford based site <http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/~mshanks/>). Finally, the conference has grown, for *TRAC 98* sixteen of the twenty-seven papers delivered were published, whereas thirteen of forty-four papers were published from *TRAC 2004*. It might be time to consider again: whether publication should be made along thematic lines rather than a representation of diversity and variety of papers from the conference. The impact of a thematic volume might be greater than the current format. However, I would hate to dictate an agenda for the future and offer these comments by way of critique and analysis of the present state of play as requested by the TRAC Standing Committee – lets hope in five years time for the 20th anniversary they will ask someone else to comment.

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