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Rohl, Darrell J. (2012) Chorography: History, Theory and Potential for Archaeological Research. TRAC 2011: Proceedings of the Twenty-First Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference. pp. 19-32.

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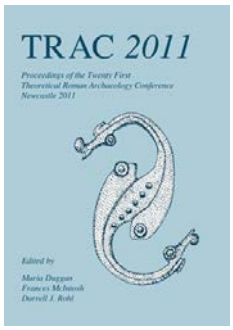

Paper Information:

Title: Chorography: History, Theory and Potential for Archaeological Research
Author(s): Darrell J. Rohl
Pages: 19–32

Persistent URI: http://trac.org.uk/pubs/trac2011/TRAC2011_19-32/

Volume Information:

Duggan, M., McIntosh, F., and Rohl, D.J. (eds.) (2012) *TRAC 2011: Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

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Chorography: History, Theory and Potential for Archaeological Research

Darrell J. Rohl

Introduction

Chorography is a little-known field of theory and practice concerned with the significance of place, regional description/characterization, local history, and representation. A well-established discipline and methodology with demonstrable roots in antiquity and an important role in the development of antiquarian research, regional studies and the establishment of modern archaeology, chorography is useful for understanding the history of scholarship and may continue to provide sound theoretical principles and practical methods for new explorations of archaeological monuments and landscapes. This paper discusses the historical uses of chorography, beginning with practitioners from classical antiquity but emphasizing the uniquely British chorographic tradition of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Attention is also given to more recent efforts at exploring this tradition by literary scholars, historiographers and archaeological theorists. Careful analysis of works of—and about—chorography allows for the explication of key theoretical principles and practical methods, which are presented and elaborated upon. It is argued that chorography offers a coherent, viable and valuable approach to evaluating the long-term significance of landscapes, monuments and regions, crossing conventional disciplinary divides and connecting past and present. The paper concludes with some thoughts on the benefits of chorography for contemporary research and its potential role in modern archaeology.

History of Chorography

Chorography is rooted in classical antiquity. On etymology, the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the Greek χωρογραφία as a combination of χώρα (*chora*, 'country') or χῶρος (*choros*, 'space or place') + γραφια (*graphia*, 'writing') (OED 1989: 'chorography'). The discipline is attested to and described in a variety of classical texts, though few explicitly chorographical works have survived from antiquity. Chorographic thinking can be traced as far back as Homer (see Lukermann 1961: 196–98), can be seen in the works of Hippocrates of Cos, Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, Strabo, Eratosthenes, Polybius, Pliny the Elder, Arrian, and in a variety of fragments of little-known and now-lost works. Strabo (8.3.17) refers to his own work as chorography and several writers including Pomponius Mela and Eusebius of Caesarea authored works entitled *Chorography* (Pomp. Mela *De Chorographia*; Eusebius' *Chorography* is unfortunately lost but mentioned in the preface to his *Onomasticon*). The best-known surviving descriptions are found in the works of Strabo and Ptolemy, emphasizing the distinctions between 'geography,' 'chorography,' and 'topography,' and highlighting chorography's concern with regionality and the production of a 'likeness' of a place. Unfortunately, the tradition and its broad classical importance are largely masked by imprecise modern language

translations wherein both γεωγραφία and χωρογραφία are commonly given as 'geography' (e.g. Strabo 2.4.1, 2.5.17; see also Prontera 2006). Chorography has suffered further erasure from the classical record in a variety of modern English translations; for example, while Diogenes Laertius refers to Archelaus 'the chorographer,' ὁ χωρογράφος, the Loeb Classical Library edition translates this as 'the topographer' (Diog. Laert. 2.4.17). More recently, in what is otherwise an excellent translation and commentary of Ptolemy's theoretical chapters, the translators have largely replaced 'chorography' with the misleading 'regional cartography' (Ptol. *Geog*. 1.1).

Following the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth-century, chorography disappears for a millennium, with no known author continuing to use the term until the late fifteenth-century. It is then revived and reformulated during the renaissance, deriving from new readings of rediscovered classical texts, specifically Ptolemy's *Geographia* and Strabo's *Geographica*, each of which had been largely lost to the west since late antiquity. In fact, while copied manuscripts were present in Byzantine libraries, it is probable that they remained obscure in both the east and west. Ptolemy's *Geographia* was probably rediscovered around 1300, when the Byzantine scholar Maximus Planudes credited himself with the discovery and claimed to have created a series of maps based upon the text (Diller 1940). Ptolemy's work was brought to Italy in 1400 by Palla Strozzi, and then translated into Latin by Manuel Chrysolorus and Jacopo Angelus around 1406; its first real publication was at Vicenza in 1475, without maps (Crone 1953: 68), and soon thereafter editions with maps were printed at Bologna and Rome (p. 71). The works of Strabo were brought to Italy in 1423 and only fully published around 1469 (Diller 1975: 102, 117, 132). The originals of both Strabo and Ptolemy were probably written in Greek and, despite the rediscovery of Greek copies, they only became widely influential in Latin translations, leading a variety of scholars to rediscover the lost art/science of chorography and to seek to recreate new chorographies that fit classically inspired humanistic perspectives. Prime examples include Flavio Biondo's (1474) *Italia Illustrata*, and Konrad Celtis' (1502) *Germania Illustra*.

The continental renaissance came late to Britain, but is commonly referred to as 'the Elizabethan era,' 'the age of Shakespeare,' or 'the English Renaissance,' spanning most of the sixteenth-century. More recently, these designations have given way to the supposedly more neutral 'early modern period.' It is here when chorography—at least explicitly referred to as such—most visibly flourished in Britain. In this period, and within the works of the exact same authors, arose the more familiar tradition of British antiquarianism. An examination of these early antiquarian works reveals the close links between antiquarianism and chorography; while I would be relatively comfortable saying that British antiquarianism is largely synonymous with chorography, it is more difficult to dispute that chorography was a primary method of British antiquarian work (Mendyck 1986, 1989). Key chorographer-antiquarians include John Leland (1745), William Lambarde (1576), William Camden (1586), Robert Sibbald (1683, 1684, 1707, 1710), William Dugdale (1656), Alexander Gordon (1726), William Stukeley (1776), Thomas Pennant (1771, 1778), John Wallis (1769), and others too numerous to mention here. Of them all, Camden was the most influential, with his sweeping and much republished/revised *Britannia* setting a model largely followed for more than two centuries.

By the early nineteenth-century, the term had fallen out of use. In fact, while many eighteenth-century antiquarians can fairly definitively be labeled 'chorographers,' they rarely used the term, though their methods, organisational structure, and principle concerns continued to reflect earlier models that more explicitly stated their chorographic status (Rohl 2011). It has been argued that the historical novels of Walter Scott qualify as chorographic (Shanks and

Witmore 2010), as well as the existentialist emplaced literature of the American Henry David Thoreau (Bossing 1999). By and large, though, the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries saw chorography displaced by more narrowly-focused and concertedly empirical forms of topography and spatial analysis. In the same period, antiquarianism gave way to a more formalized discipline of modern archaeology.

More recently, especially since the mid-1980s, chorography has become the topic of renewed scholarship across several disciplines, especially in historical and literary research on early modern Britain. Key figures in this field include Helgerson (1986, 1992), Mendyck (1986, 1989), Cormack (1991), Hall (1995), and Withers (1996, 1999). Bossing (1999) has explored and considered chorography from a specifically American literary perspective, providing good theoretical discussion and retrospectively assigning several works of American emplaced literature to the tradition, while Pettinaroli (2008) has explored chorography and place-making in the early modern Hispanic world. Chorography has also found its way into recent archaeological discussion, with, for example, Hingley examining its role in *The Recovery of Roman Britain* (2008) and using a chorography-inspired model to explore the long-term biography and life of Hadrian's Wall (Forthcoming), and Michael Shanks discussing it in a variety of places, including in collaborations with Witmore (Shanks and Witmore 2010) and Pearson (Pearson and Shanks 2001). The past twenty years has also seen two very different, but conceptually similar, 'exercise[s] in chorography' in Heat-Moon's (1991) *PrairyErth* and Pearson's (2006) *In Comes I*.

Chorographic Theory

Despite the many works of and about chorography (only a selection of which have been discussed above), its theoretical depths remain insufficiently plumbed. This may be due to chorography's protean nature. Here I use the term 'protean' in reference to three essential characteristics: chorography is broad in potential scope, variable in form and content, and constantly changing. Nevertheless, it should be possible to outline the dominant concerns and conceptions of chorographic thought, and several scholars have explored particular aspects of chorographic theory from a variety of perspectives. In this section, I summarize some of these previous theorizations and then offer a series of personal observations on theoretical principles that may be extracted from the chorographical corpus. These principles will not necessarily be evident in every work, but will be broadly observable across the spectrum from classical works through more contemporary chorographies.

A useful first step is to examine some of the various definitions and descriptions that have been given. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/32356) defines chorography with three senses:

> 1) The art or practice of describing, or of delineating on a map or chart, particular regions, or districts; as distinguished from *geography*, taken as dealing with the earth in general, and (less distinctly) from *topography*, which deals with particular places, as towns, etc.
> 2) A description or delineation of a particular region or district.
> 3) The natural configuration and features of a region (which form the subject matter of its chorography in sense 2).

John Dee (1570) notes that:

> Chorographie seemeth to be an underling and a twig of *Geographie*: and yet neverthelesse, is in practise manifolde, and in use very ample. This teacheth Analogically to describe a small portion or circuite of ground, with the contentes…in the territory or parcell of ground which it taketh in hand to make description of, it leaveth out… no notable or odde thing, above ground visible. (fol. a4a; also quoted in Cormack 1991: 643)

Fussner (1970) defines chorography as 'the description of an area too large to come under topography and too small to come under geography…any combination of descriptive notes which might define an area and its inhabitants' (p. 278). Mendyck (1989) identifies chorography as a limited subset or 'version of geography…restricted…to impressionistically sketching the nature and identity of an individual region' (p. 38), while elsewhere (1986) referring to it as a 'topographical-historical method.' Cormack (1991) states that:

> Chorography was the most wide ranging of the geographical subdisciplines, since it included an interest in genealogy, chronology, and antiquities, as well as local history and topography…unit[ing] an anecdotal interest in local families and wonders with the mathematically arduous task of genealogical and chronological research. (p. 642)

Entrikin (1991) describes the tradition as 'being located on an intellectual continuum *between* science and art, or as offering a form of understanding that is between description and explanation' (p. 15). Bossing (1999) refers to chorography as 'place-writing' or as a 'literature of place.' Most recently, Shanks and Witmore (2010) refer to chorography as 'the documentation of region,' and, along with topography, as part of a 'charged field of the representation of region and community' (p. 97). These selected descriptions provide some sense of chorography but, unfortunately, may leave it too ambiguous for the uninitiated scholar or student, leading to confusion and misunderstanding of the term.

Before I offer my own observations, let us first examine a couple of attempts at a more complete consideration of chorography's characteristics and theoretical concerns. Specific elements of these attempts at theorization will be included in my own, following, attempt to outline chorography's theoretical bases and implications.

William P. Bossing, in a doctoral dissertation focused on American emplaced literature of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries (1999), outlines several 'essential characteristics' (p.152) of chorographic writing:

1) 'Landscape, both topographic and cultural, is present not merely as setting, but as an essential presence in the text' (p. 152).
2) 'The text…call[s] places into being, not just by naming topographic features but by dramatizing in the process of revealing the landscape how they matter' (p. 153).
3) 'The text represents a "native" knowledge of environment that suggests an awareness shaped by frequent interactions and ethical considerations' (p. 153). Even in cases where the chorography is written by 'outsiders,' they seek to 'reflect[] the dynamic relationships between natives and their place' (p. 154).
4) 'The text goes beyond an anthropocentric sense of "community" to suggest a more inclusive, biocentric orientation…[where] the nonhuman environment plays a role at

> least as significant as a man-made landscape, and the interdependence of human and nonhuman elements of a specific place is often a central concern' (p. 154).

Michael Shanks has articulated ideas about chorography in a variety of places, most completely in lectures, interviews and web publications. In an interview with Douglass W. Bailey (2006), Shanks describes chorography as 'an old genre of descriptive topography that subsumed geography, archaeology, mapping, travel writing, place-name study, and natural history' (p. 9). Shanks' thinking about chorography has been further elaborated in pages of his Stanford-based Metamedia archaeological lab's website (http://metamedia.stanford.edu/). Here, chorography is introduced with an abstract array of terms: 'engagement, description, illustration, ethnography, delineation, cartography.' Shanks notes that he is 'using the term [i.e. chorography] to raise questions again of the way we conceive and how we relate land and inhabitation, critically. And fundamentally to reconnect place and land with the rhetorical features of "memorable places".' For Shanks, chorography has a 'temporal and historiographical character,' which can be further described by the terms 'deep-mapping' and 'temporal topography' (Shanks 'Chorography'). No further detail is given for what he means by 'temporal topography,' but Shanks elucidates the 'deep-map'—a term and concept 'appropriated' from Heat-Moon (1991)—in his collaboration with Mike Pearson:

> Reflecting eighteenth-century antiquarian approaches to place which included history, folklore, natural history and hearsay, the deep map attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual, the conflation of oral testimony, anthology, memoir, biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place. (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 64–65)

Shanks further communicates complex theoretical and practical considerations of the deep map by quoting the late Clifford McLucas from the experimental theatre company Brith Gof (http://brithgof.org/):

> Deep maps will be big…slow…sumptuous…genuinely multimedia…will require the engagement of both the insider and outsider…will bring together the amateur and the professional, the artist and the scientist, the official and the unofficial, the national and the local…they will involve negotiation and contestation over who and what is represented and how…deep maps will be unstable, fragile and temporary. They will be a conversation and not a statement. (Shanks 'deep-mapping')

While the definitions, descriptions and detailed discussions summarized thus far have begun to construct a conceptual map of chorography (presented as a word-cloud in Fig. 1), the image may be too complicated, ambiguous and amorphous, leaving one to wonder where chorography actually stands within a crowded field of competing theoretical discourses. Are the principles and concepts of chorography too abstract for contemporary academic scholarship, or can they be organized into a usable theoretical framework and practical methodology with relevance for current research needs and agendas? The noted ambiguity may be one of chorography's particular strengths and, for Shanks and Witmore, leaving the term open 'provides a handle on a more immanent field of practices' (Christopher Witmore, personal communication; see also Witmore 2009 on the importance of ambiguity and open

Figure 1: Word-cloud Representation of Chorography Descriptions

approaches). While I agree that such flexibility and its relationship to an ontology of immanence (see Deleuze 1963, 1995; Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 1991) is indeed quite powerful, I am also concerned with the need to provide an accessible introduction from which students and scholars can explore further.

Using the notions articulated in the cited works above, along with examples from a range of works, I attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct a more coherent and explicit theoretical framework for chorography. This is in the form of a series of observations: these are not intended to be prescriptive but, rather, are merely a tentative attempt to outline what I see as (relatively) common guiding principles for chorographies past and present. The ordering of the following observations (save the first, which offers my own simplified definition) should not be interpreted as reflecting rank of importance.

Representation of Space/Place. While the term 'chorography' is sometimes said to derive from *chora*, 'country,' I prefer (and am convinced that classical usage supports my position) that it derives rather from *choros*, 'space or place.' Liddell and Scott (1940) define *choros* as 'a definite space, piece of ground, place' (p. 2016). Lukermann (1961) clarifies this further by saying that:

> Choros should never be translated as space (*spatium*) if the connotation of that word is 'empty' or 'absolute' space, i.e. implies extension or duration without the presence of a body or thing. The Greek word for absolute or empty space was *kenos* (void) or *chaos*. *Choros* literally means 'room' and may safely be translated in context as area, region (*regio*), country (*pays*) or space/place—if in the sense of the boundary of an area. *Choros* technically means the boundary of the extension of some thing or things. It is the container or receptacle of a body. (p. 200)

Similarly, while *graphia* is commonly translated as 'writing,' I prefer the more broadly applicable 'representation.' This is better aligned with classical descriptions, including that provided by Ptolemy, who says that chorography 'requires landscape drawing, and no one but a man skilled in drawing would [or should?]' undertake such a discipline (Ptol. *Geog*. 1.1). In the simplest of terms, then, my basic definition of chorography is 'the representation of space or place.'

Multi-Media. Following from this simplified definition, it is important to emphasize that representation can come in a variety of forms. Traditionally this has been written prose, cartographic maps and landscape drawings, but place can be represented in a variety of ways and media. There is room for chorographic poetry, drama, painting, 3D digital reconstruction, and more. Theoretically speaking, chorography as 'representation' rather than 'writing' is incredibly liberating. While Olwig (2008) has argued against the view of chorography as 'representation,' his critique largely centers on the heritage of Renaissance readings of Ptolemy which over-emphasized cartographic representation in the form of maps and geography as cosmography and spatiality. Olwig seeks to re-emphasize the classical usage of chorography as a concept used to express the essentially 'nonrepresentational' character of place, while also allowing for partial representation through 'the discourse of a representational [community] assembly' and 'the passages of narrative.' While acknowledging that the *choros* is 'nonrepresentational in the sense of a Platonic ontology, permeating the folds of our maps, that continues to stimulate society's imaginary in general, and the Ptolemaic–geographical imaginary in particular, through the images of the map and the landscape scene' (p. 1859), expanding our methods of representation to include a variety of written, visual and performative media will provide a more authentic and egalitarian image of place. This fits well with the performance-based chorography attempted by Pearson (2006) for Lincolnshire.

Spatio-Historical. Chorography is also spatio-historical or, to say it another way, while it is concerned with time and history, it de-privileges time in preference for place. In the words of Hall (1995), 'history, as a progression through time for which place is incidental, is transformed…becom[ing] instead, temporal depth recognized as a feature of place' (p. 23). Quoting Lippard (1997: 7), Pearson (2006) reveals the importance of this concept in his own performance-centered chorographic work, which is 'enthralled by the "lure of the local", an appreciation of "historical narrative as it is written *in* the landscape or place by the people who live or lived there"' (p. 4). This aspect does not negate the importance of chronology nor create an essential antagonism between chorography and chronicle, as many Elizabethan and Jacobean authors have been shown to draw upon the chronicle tradition within their chorographic works (Helgerson 1992: 132; Hingley Forthcoming). Instead, this principle means that while the chronological aspect of historical events remains important, the location of these events within the *choros* is even more significant. From this perspective, the long-term history and material record embedded within the *choros* may represent what Bailey (2007) has termed 'cumulative' and 'temporal palimpsests' and 'palimpsests of meaning.'

Connecting Past and Present. From the time of Camden, if not before, a key component of chorography has been the bidirectional connection of past and present through the medium of space, land, region or country. This is emphasized by Camden's stated aim: *ut Britanniae antiquitatem et suae antiquitati Britanniam restituerem*, 'to restore Britain to its Antiquity and Antiquity to Britain' (1586: preface). In this context, I argue that 'Britain' should be read as referring both to the physical country (i.e. the land) and to Camden's own present (i.e. point in time). This aim, Camden explains, was influenced by the geographer Abraham Ortelius, who encouraged him; the words appear to be Ortelius'. Camden understood this to mean 'that I

would renew ancientrie, enlighten obscuritie, cleare doubts, and recall home veritie by way of recovery, which the negligence of writers and credulitie of the common sort had in a manner proscribed and utterly banished from amongst us' (Camden 1607: preface). The 'restor[ation]' Camden had in mind, then, was one of enlightenment that characterized much of renaissance discourse: it was an attempt to use the knowledge gained from rediscovered classical texts (including a revival of the chorographic method rooted in antiquity) and recovered physical remains to dispel the shadows of neglect and mythical narratives in order to reveal and present a more authentic national story with relevance for his contemporary context.

Interdependence of Man and Environment. Chorography also goes:

> beyond an anthropocentric sense of 'community' to suggest a more inclusive, biocentric orientation…[where] the nonhuman environment plays a role at least as significant as a man-made landscape, and the interdependence of human and nonhuman elements of a specific place is often a central concern. (Bossing 1999: 154)

This is perhaps most visible in the literary genre of nature writing, 'where the tensions of self and environment come together to create place' (Bossing 1999: 103). It is also evident in the writings of many early modern chorographers. A prime example is found in the work of Sir Robert Sibbald, whose polymathic interests were intended to culminate in a sweeping *Atlas*, or 'Description of the *Scotia Antiqua*, & *Scotia Moderna*, and the Natural History of the Products of His [Majesty's] *Ancient Kingdom* of SCOTLAND' (Sibbald 1682). While Sibbald's *Atlas* never materialized, his plans and published queries to potential contributors reveal a concern with both natural and human aspects at national and local levels; some of this material was published in a variety of publications (e.g. Sibbald 1684; 1707; 1710), with 1684's *Scotia Illustrata* primarily focusing on flora and fauna. Withers (1996) has observed that Sibbald, primarily a physician, was deeply concerned with the usefulness of natural knowledge, and that for him 'contemporary survey' served more than the purposes of 'current knowledge but also as a means to the future state of the nation…[and for the benefit of] its health and well-being' (p. 61; for more on the chorographic nature of Sibbald's work, see also Rohl 2011).

De- and Re-Centering. Chorography may also challenge traditional views of centre and periphery, de- and/or re-centering perspective. In a typical core-periphery approach (Wallerstein 1974; Champion 1989), an examination of Roman Britain would seek to understand the province as it related to Rome and the context of Rome's wider empire. A chorographic encounter with Britain, however, makes it the centre and, from this perspective, Rome and the rest of the empire are understood as they relate to Britain. All roads may lead to Rome, but in a chorographic encounter all the relevant roads (including routes, trackways, etc.) lead to or from the *choros*. I must admit that this aspect has not always been evident, especially in early modern Hispanic chorographies of the New World (see Pettinaroli 2008), but this aspect may allow chorography to be used toward furthering the decolonization of landscapes.

Authorial Voice. A particularly common feature in chorographic works is the clearly present and recognizable authorial or narrative voice, usually in the first-person. This is closely related to the following two aspects. While this may be one of the major points for criticism based on a conventional academic desire for objectivity (see Shanks 1992: 12–37 for a now-classic critique of the 'sovereignty of science' in archaeological research), it serves several purposes, including highlighting the personal, immanent, aspect of encounter and engagement with place and establishing a sense of authoritativeness in which the chorographer plays the

role of what Lambarde called the 'xenagogus' (1576: 7), or guide for guests, strangers and foreigners. I would argue that it may also serve the aims of a more reflexive approach.

Experience, Memory and Meaning. Chorography is also about experience, memory and meaning. I have included these together, because I believe that they are intimately connected, with memory and meaning often stemming from personal or shared experience. Bossing (1999) notes that 'one advantage chorography…has over cartography is its ability to represent the inner, subjective landscape within us that is essential to our understanding of place' (p. 87). This is further elaborated when he reflects upon Lawrence, Kansas, where he was writing up his PhD thesis: 'this landscape feels as if it is shaped as much by story as by topography. Like the sediment of a flood plain, layer upon layer of meaning collects around us to form this place: environment, architecture, community, language' (Bossing 1999: 3). Tying this idea to those of chorography's concern with connecting past and present, the spatio-historical perspective and authorial voice, Shanks and Witmore (2010) remark that:

> For Wallis, [Bishop Thomas] Percy and Scott, the intersection of place and event comes primarily through memory. It is what people have done, the events witnessed, stories retold and description made that lie at the heart of memory practices, at the heart of human inhabitation and community. It is precisely the connection between past and present that they foreground in their work; and voice, echoing from past lives, or the presence of the author/editor. (p. 104)

Native Knowledge. Lambarde's notion of a *xenagogus*, or 'guide for foreigners,' suggests that chorography requires and is concerned with a degree of native knowledge. This can be directly related to the concern with experience, memory and meaning, and 'suggests an awareness shaped by frequent interactions and ethical considerations.' Even in cases where chorography is written by 'outsiders,' it requires real emplaced experience and seeks to 'reflect the dynamic relationships between natives and their place' (Bossing 1999: 154). This aspect can be seen as early as Strabo, who, while writing much of his work from second-hand information, references certain chorographers upon whom he draws (Strabo 5.2.7–8, 6.1.11, 6.2.11, 6.3.10) and also remarks on the importance of detailed, local and regional knowledge, saying that it is not remarkable that there should be one chorographer for the Indians, one for Ethiopians and another for the Greeks and Romans (Strabo 1.1.16). Strabo's work illustrates that both 'natives' and 'outsiders' can perform chorographies, but that success depends upon access to inside information based upon real emplaced experience.

Generative (Creative). Chorography is also generative, or creative, by 'calling places into being, not just by naming topographic features, but by dramatizing in the process of revealing the landscape how they matter' (Bossing 1999:153). This may also be understood as a 'social production of space,' in which chorographers partake in 'the practice of place-making, a codification of space with a particular meaning,' thereby 'interlink[ing] spatial and temporal dialectics in their representations, forming and reforming geographical and historical landscapes, imposing a prescribed logic upon the world' (Pettinaroli 2008: 17). The writing, or presentation in an alternative medium, of chorographic representation, thus serves to generate or create new conceptions of a place's character, meaning and significance.

Transdisciplinary. Chorography is highly inter- or trans-disciplinary. In this case I prefer the term 'transdisciplinary' because chorography offers a coherent body of thought and practice that melds concerns and techniques from a variety of disciplines, rather than merely bringing different disciplinary approaches to bear on the exploration, evaluation and

description of place. As I have already discussed, the chorographic approach also pre-dates the formulation of most contemporary disciplines, and there is no contradiction in someone being both an archaeologist and a chorographer, an environmental scientist and a chorographer, or a poet and a chorographer. Differing departmental or professional affiliations may very well colour an individual's chorographic work, but chorography can almost always be identified as such.

Qualitatively and Quantitatively Empirical. Finally, chorography is both qualitatively and quantitatively empirical and critical. It is not usually empirical in a positivistic hypothesis-testing manner, but follows from my observation regarding experience, emphasizing chorography's concern with authentic knowledge gained from personal observation and examination; in this regard, chorography's empiricism may also relate to Deleuze's empiricist philosophy of immanence. As will be seen below, methods of chorographic research also rely upon detailed collection and assessment of minute, quantitative, and qualitative data, as well as a critical reception and consideration of previous accounts. While I have heard some scholars label chorography as 'nonacademic,' this view is based on misinformation and a failure to adequately explore the tradition. It is hoped that this paper will provide an impetus for further examination by skeptical scholars.

Chorographic Practice

Briefly, chorographic practice can be said to operate through the application of ten key methods. Again, each of these is not necessarily present in every work, but they are broadly represented within the long-term chorographic corpus.

1) *Regional Field Survey* – provides both the opportunity for physical inspection and a useful organizational structure. Early British chorographies used the term 'perambulation,' translated as 'a walk around.' This involves both experience and examination of the *choros* during the research phase, and also provides a typical organizing scheme for final presentation, in which readers can vicariously journey through the place themselves. This method originates from chorography's theoretical emphases on place and experience.
2) *Inquiry* – using a variety of sources, including documents, maps, personal interviews and, now, digital databases and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
3) *Collection* – of facts, stories and objects collected during the perambulation or inquiry.
4) *Detailed Description and/or Measurement* – of specific sites, features, structures, people and objects encountered.
5) *Listing* – of notable features, specific sites, natural resources, artefacts, and historical events.
6) *Analysis* – specific and detailed examination of place names, sites, objects, or anything that may have been described or listed. This does not necessarily have to be exhaustive, but should be broadly representative.
7) *Visualization* – in the form of vivid textual description, drawings, photos, reconstructions, maps, performance, or a variety of new media visual capabilities.
8) *Historiography* – examination and tracing of previous accounts, changing perspectives and interpretations.
9) *Critical Thinking* – a more general critical eye on all evidences collected and personal experiences, preferably in line with the twelve theoretical principles observed above.

10) *Presentation and/or Publication* – communication of results to a specialized audience or, even better, to the broader public, within and without the bounds of the *choros*, usually in print, but possibly through any combination of appropriate communicative methods.

I will not go into these in any further detail, as they are all familiar and well-practiced methods employed by those engaged in archaeological fieldwork or interpretation.

New Chorography and Archaeology?

Now that we have looked at the history of chorography, a variety of theoretical considerations, and some of the key methods involved with putting chorography into practice, let us conclude with some thoughts on the potential for new, contemporary, chorography and its possible relationship with archaeology. As we have seen, chorography has played a significant role in the development of the archaeological discipline, particularly in Britain. Because of this, old chorographies require continued consideration in order to better understand the history of archaeology. But what about new chorography? Can it be done, should it be done, and how would it relate to site-specific or landscape archaeology?

I argue that new chorographies certainly can and should continue to be created. For me, archaeology is fundamentally concerned with connecting what I call the 'Four P's:' the past, the present, people and place. Traditionally, archaeological work has primarily emphasized the past and peoples, though the last few decades have seen an increasing emphasis on the present context of archaeological work and interpretation (see especially Shanks 1992), while the advent of landscape archaeology has helped to bring place into clearer and wider focus. I argue that chorography, too, is fundamentally concerned with connecting the Four P's, but with place specifically serving as the fulcrum on which the others rest and pivot. Landscape archaeology, then, may be the most similar to chorography, sharing a concern focused on place and quite-often diachronic, multi-period, assessment that covers a variety of human and natural aspects. Landscape archaeology is not, however, necessarily chorographic in nature, though it can always inform chorography, as could any form of specific or localized analysis.

What I would like to see is the creation of new chorographies informed by recent archaeological discoveries, and for a broader application of chorographic thinking in the ways in which archaeologists approach our sites and their landscapes. Just one area of potential (of many for which I do not have space here) for new chorographic research lies at the intersection of archaeology and heritage management. Here a newer agenda of 'characterisation' has had currency since the mid-1990s, seeing significant work in the form of English Heritage's Characterisation team, its Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) programme, the Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA) project of Historic Scotland and RCAHMS, and Natural England's Landscape Character Network (LCN, formerly Countryside Character Network). This work ties in with the broader European Landscape Convention, to which the UK became a signatory in 2006. While the term 'chorography' and reference to the tradition is largely absent from the 'characterisation' dialogue, this new agenda shares much with the chorographic tradition. This is strikingly evident in the introduction to the winter 2004–5 characterisation-themed edition of *Conservation Bulletin*, where Grenville and Fairclough (2004) explain that, '"Character" is our attempt to bring together as many aspects of a place as possible, in order to appreciate and understand it better, and to understand the experience of being in it.' Elaboration further reveals this movement's affinity with chorographic theory:

> Characterisation is a shorthand word. What underlies it is a desire to capture our overall feeling for the totality of a place—not just to collect facts about who built that building, what style it is, whether it is rare, what an archaeological site can tell us about our predecessors or how a designed park reflects 18th-century taste, but about what the place as a whole means to us. (p. 2)

This programme has already made significant contributions in the form of a variety of published county characterisations, impact on heritage management and planning decisions, and through the availability of generated GIS data that offer detailed characterisations and descriptions of human land-use and natural qualities with time-depth. While the projects in both England and Scotland have been around for some time, with both nearing initial completion, the datasets remain underutilized by researchers, especially among Roman archaeologists.

One outcome of Scotland's HLA project is the creation of a detailed GIS dataset, currently covering 72% of the country at a scale of 1:25,000 (http://hla.rcahms.gov.uk/). Among the areas currently completed is the Forth-Clyde isthmus, along which lies the Roman Antonine Wall. To date, this data has not factored into any major study of this Roman frontier landscape. I aim, in my current PhD research, to integrate this data into my own new chorographic account of the Antonine Wall, which will also go beyond the specific aims of the HLA project to provide a more complete deep-map representation of this monument and its role/significance in the landscape, past and present, as outlined in this paper. I encourage other archaeologists and those concerned with our historic and present environments to also consider adopting a chorographic approach toward providing our own new chorographies of memorable and meaningful places.

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Acknowledgements

This work forms part of my PhD thesis in progress at Durham University and I am grateful to Professor Richard Hingley and Dr. Rob Witcher for their supervision, insightful comments and encouragement. I must also thank the organizers of the 2011 TRAC at Newcastle University for an excellent conference and for the opportunity to present this research both in session and publication. Thanks are also due to the anonymous reviewer for comments on the original submitted draft of this paper, and to Professors Michael Shanks and Christopher Witmore for their feedback. Any errors or omissions in this paper remain my own. Finally, the deepest gratitude goes to my family: I could not have done this without you!

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