

From Perry to Groningen

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Modern work on ancient fiction, brought to life by Rohde in 1876, was hamstrung by Rohde for almost a hundred years. Good work was done, but there was no broad current running that way. There was, however, a scholar who went his own way: Ben Edwin Perry, who in 1967 published *The Ancient Romances*, a turning-point in the field. But Perry's book, like Rohde's, was at the same time massively right and massively wrong. This is the background to the work of Maaïke Zimmerman. In her scholarly life she has played a major part in putting all this to rights, in the most unassuming and practical way imaginable.

Perry's earliest work in ancient fiction, from 1919, was on Apuleius; Maaïke's own work has been largely on the same author. Perry broadened his vision beyond Apuleius; so has Maaïke. Her part in *Cupid and Psyche*, and her magisterial commentary on *Metamorphoses X*, remain in the mainstream of philological scholarship (as is very fitting for a Dutch scholar), while at the same time taking cognizance of modern approaches to their subject; and these books, together with her contribution to other volumes of *GCA* over twenty years, and her projected Oxford Classical Text of the *Metamorphoses*, will remain as her principal visible scholarly work. But she has done more than write commentary on Apuleius. She has been active in the field for many years, and for over a decade has herself been the engine behind a considerable movement in scholarly work on the novel in general, Greek as well as Latin. Not alone – she would be the first to say that; but she has long been, and remains, at the centre of these studies.

Perry's book, like Rohde's, cast a long shadow; but unlike *Der griechische Roman*, it stimulated rather than discouraged serious work on the novel. Books and articles began to multiply, to the point where, a quarter of a century later, it could be said (with pardonable exaggeration!) that “the

ancient novel has become one of the hottest properties in town". Work had begun long before this. The Groningen Apuleius group had already been constituted in 1973, and was to provide the kernel of the very considerable contribution that Groningen has made to the study of the novel. Apuleius spawned offspring, and the first Groningen Colloquium on the Novel – not on Apuleius, but on ‘the novel’ – took place in 1986, by which time Maaïke had entered the scene and joined the Apuleius group. The guiding spirit of the GCN meetings was Heinz Hofmann, but after his translation to Tübingen, Maaïke took over the organisation in 1994. The GCN grew, as many of us will recall, from a couple of relatively simple one-day meetings per year to one quite elaborate two-day meeting – two-plus, in fact, with latterly a considerable audience; it became in fact the focal point of novel studies. The burden of organisation grew accordingly; and though she had devoted assistance, the responsibility for it fell largely on Maaïke’s shoulders. For some years she followed the pattern that had arisen. Until 1998; but by then, given the success of the series of meetings, the idea had established itself in her mind that it was time for another of the series of International Conferences on the Ancient Novel – Bangor 1976, organised by myself, Dartmouth 1989, organised by James Tatum – that had disseminated interest in the genre since Perry’s book had appeared. ICAN 2000 was a jumbo affair, as the group photograph, expertly taken by Maaïke’s husband, shows: more than double the number of 1976 papers, many more participants than that. And all of it run by Maaïke, without a hitch; at least, no-one noticed any.

But that was not the end of it. In a sense, it was rather the beginning. There was by now an evident need for a regular professional journal devoted to the topic of ancient fiction; and Maaïke had thought of that too. There had already been, for thirty years, the invaluable *Petronian Society Newsletter*, an ‘in-house journal’, as it were, run very largely by Gareth Schmeling personally, on a shoestring and with great devotion, from the University of Florida. But by 2000 *PSN* was bursting its shoestrings. It had long outgrown its apparently restrictive name, and had come to handle the whole novel field, to the considerable assistance of scholars. The series of published *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* had also now come to an end, after a decade of enthusiastic support from its publisher, Egbert Forsten. Maaïke talked to his equally supportive successor, Roelf Barkhuis; and there was born of this contact *Ancient Narrative*, of which she is the principal editor, assisted by Gareth, Heinz, and other colleagues. *AN* and *PSN* now live amicably, and

usefully for ‘novelists’, side by side on the web; that is due to all parties involved, but, like so much that has been happening in the field, is assuredly based on the unspectacular, patient work of Maaïke. Furthermore, the work of the GCN meetings is being carried on by other regular conferences, notably at Rethymnon; that too is to be set to her credit.

The study of ancient fiction has arrived, and Maaïke’s dedication to scholarship in the field is recognized in the present volume. No-one better deserves such recognition.