

Prologue

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This volume offers a selection of the papers on Christian and Jewish narratives presented at the fourth International Conference on the Ancient Novel (ICAN IV), “Crossroads in the Ancient Novel: Spaces Frontiers, Intersections.” Since 1976, ICAN conferences have been held in July at approximately ten-year intervals. The first ICAN was convened by Bryan Reardon in Bangor, Wales, to commemorate the centenary of Erwin Rohde’s seminal study, *Der Griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*. James Tatum convened ICAN II in Hanover, New Hampshire, in 1989. ICAN 2000, coinciding with the millennium, was convened by Maaike Zimmerman in Groningen, the Netherlands. Marília Futre Pinheiro convened ICAN IV in Lisbon, Portugal, in July 2008.

The importance of the first three international conferences for promoting the study of the ancient novel is well attested.¹ Each inaugurated an important stage of the ancient novels’ trajectory, from neglect and marginalization as salacious and frivolous narratives (especially the Greek novels) to their established position in contemporary Classical studies.

The first ICAN demonstrated and legitimated the importance and relevance of the study of the ancient novels. The second conference explicitly indicated the need for ancient-novel studies to engage with contemporary literary theory and comparative literature studies.² The subtitle of ICAN 2000, “Ancient Novel in Context,” emphasized the conveners’ intention to include “various and comprehensive contexts” for the study of ancient fictions, and one of the areas named specifically was ancient Christian and Jewish prose fiction. Maake Zimmerman indicates that the conveners were somewhat disappointed that more papers on Christian and Jewish narratives

¹ Cf. Morgan 1995, 63.

² Tatum and Vernazza 1990, 24.

were not submitted for presentation,³ but this emphasis did come to fruition at ICAN IV, where six sessions were devoted to papers on Christian and Jewish fictive narratives.

The increased attendance at each conference evidenced the expanding interest in the study of prose fictions. About fifty papers were presented at the first ICAN, ninety at ICAN II, and one hundred at ICAN 2000. ICAN IV featured over two hundred eighty presentations. ICAN IV, as earlier conferences, also opened novel studies in new directions, as its subtitle reads: "Crossroads in the Ancient Novel: Spaces, Frontiers, Intersections." The Lisbon conference provided an ideal environment for the exchange of ideas and innovative approaches for the study of ancient narratives. Professor Futre Pinheiro and her committee deserve enormous credit for ensuring that such a large and complex conference would offer an effective forum for productive and spirited interchanges both at the sessions and throughout the week.

For each of the earlier ICANs, a volume of selected papers was published, but given the scope of ICAN IV, Professor Futre Pinheiro is editing a series of volumes, each devoted to one of the themes addressed at the conference. Richard I. Pervo and I worked with her on this volume, *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: Fictional Intersections*. Although Richard Pervo was unable to attend the conference, he was invited to participate in the volume because of his deep grounding in New Testament and religious studies and his expertise as evidenced by his influential study *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles*, as well as many other studies of the interrelations between and among the Acts of the Apostles, Christian and Jewish fictive narratives, and the ancient novels. It was a great privilege to work on a volume that testifies to the integral interrelationship of the various narrative strands, including Jewish and Christian, that contributed to the fabric of their cultural matrix.

Morgan, J. 1995. "The Ancient Novel at the End of the Century: Scholarship since the Dartmouth Conference." *Classical Philology* 90: 63–73.

Pervo, R. 1987. *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Tatum, J., and G. M. Vernazza. 1990. *The Ancient Novel: Classical Paradigms and Modern Perspectives*. Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College.

Zimmerman, M. 2003. "Preface." In *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, edited by S. Panayotakis, M. Zimmerman, and W. Keulen, Leiden: Brill.

³ Zimmerman 2003, xiv–xv.