

International Conferences on the Ancient Novel (ICAN): The Intellectual Growth of an Idea, the Explosion of a Movement

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On 12-17 July 1976, at University College of North Wales, Bangor, B.P. Reardon organized ICAN I. After the conference he edited a volume entitled *Erotica Antiqua* (1977), which was a record of the opening session plus dinner and speaker; the names of the speakers and the titles of their papers (49 in number; by country: UK 17, USA 8, Canada 7, Germany 4, France 3, The Netherlands 3, Spain 3, Italy 1, Mexico 1, New Zealand 1, Romania 1); the names and addresses (without email) of the 75 participants; longish abstracts of each paper; detailed menu with wine list, presider, and speaker at the conference dinner. The concluding reception was held at the house of Bryan and Janette Reardon. He notes that “the idea took shape in my mind for holding a meeting of scholars interested in the ancient novel ... and an occasion offered itself in the coming centenary, in 1976, of Rohde’s major study *Der griechische Roman ...*” *The Times* (price 12 pence), 17 July 1976, reported on the conference. The sainted J.P. Sullivan and I made the journey to Bangor from London by train in a second-class car but with a first-class hamper from Fortnum and Mason. Of the 75 participants at least 19 have died, and 15 are still active in novel studies. The organizer of ICAN I died on 6 November 2009; at ICAN III (2000) in Groningen his students and colleagues (those who took part in ICAN I) had held a surprise dinner for him and Janette. Photographic records (35 mm film) of ICAN I were destroyed in the development process, but group photographs of ICAN II (1989), III (2000, in color) and ICAN IV on-line, are precious mementos.

That Reardon chose to hold the conference in July is owing to one or two considerations or to a combination of them: he wanted to wait for the warmth – or at least until the ice melted; he wished to commemorate the oft-

repeated statement made by Ben Edwin Perry, *The Ancient Romances* (Berkeley 1967, 175) that the ancient novel was conceived “on a Tuesday afternoon in July.”

ICAN I accomplished many things: the gathering of so many good scholars gave respectability to the study of the ancient novel and reassured younger scholars that here was a valid field awaiting development; the large number of seminal ideas given voice resonated in the minds of the participants and enriched their research and teaching; the most popular genre in contemporary literature is the novel, and it was shown to have originated like epic, lyric, and drama in the ancient world, and though purveyors of modern literature are reluctant to admit it, the novel first arose in the classical world and not in 17th or 18th century Britain, France, or Spain; the ideas discussed at ICAN I demonstrated to all in attendance that what they were doing was worth a grown man’s time.

Perhaps we might date the beginning of the explosion of interest in the ancient novel to the publication of the influential *The Ancient Romance* (1967) by Ben Edwin Perry, but it seems more likely because of the timing and size of the blossoming that we should date it around the period after 1976 and ICAN I. Because of the effects of ICAN I, the founders of the *Petronian Society Newsletter (PSN)* enlarged its scope beyond Petronius in 1979 (vol. 10.2) to encompass all the Greek and Latin novels, all so-called “fringe” novels (e.g., *The Life of Aesop*), and all fragments of ancient novels. The quality of the research and quantity of publications on the ancient novel has grown dramatically.

The Bangor conference had its light moments. In an after-dinner paper Stephanie West (with a straight face) reported on the discovery of new fragments of a novel on papyri, which, however, she had made out of whole cloth. Some in the audience accepted her imaginings as fact.

It was not until 1989, 13 years after ICAN I, that ICAN II was held at Dartmouth College, under the guidance of James Tatum. Dartmouth is located in the far northeast of the USA, in Hanover, New Hampshire just across the Connecticut River from Vermont. ICAN II promised to be another cold-weather affair, but the Fates were kind (depending on whether one had reserved an air-conditioned room, or just a room), and the conference to the surprise of almost everyone was held in the heat of 23-29 July (again). Many found relief by swimming in the Connecticut River. In 1990 James Tatum and Gail Vernazza edited the conference proceedings entitled *The Ancient Novel: Classical Paradigms and Modern Perspectives* (Hanover), as “A sequel to ICAN, Bangor, Wales, 1976,” and dedicated it to the memory

of Jack Winkler who was too ill to attend. The proceedings contain the record of 92 speakers and abstracts of their papers. The paper of J.P. Sullivan is printed in full together (p. 98) with a delightful and whimsical page of drawings called “A Critical Map” in which Sullivan illustrates his views of the history of theory and interpretation of the ancient novel. There were 117 participants (names and addresses, no email) from 14 countries, and a special exhibition of the papyri of Achilles Tatius, Lollianus, and selected papyri from the University of Michigan. Friendships were renewed among the “Novel Mafia” of the 1976 meeting, and new friends were added. Then in 1994 a new item was added to the ICAN profile, when Tatum edited a volume of 24 papers from the conference and published it as *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press). The scholars who gathered for ICAN were beginning to publish as a group.

Eleven years later in 2000, ICAN was again held in July, 25-30, in Groningen, under the leadership of Maaïke Zimmerman, ably assisted by Stelios Panayotakis and Wytse Keulen. The weather was perfect and the group photograph was in color. The proceedings of ICAN III, *The Ancient Novel in Context*, published and distributed among all participants at the opening of the conference, provides the record of 99 speakers and the abstracts of their papers plus names and addresses (and email) of the 152 participants from 25 countries. S. Panayotakis, M. Zimmerman, W. Keulen edited a collection of 30 papers from the conference and entitled it *The Ancient Novel and Beyond* (Leiden 2003). The Novel Mafia of 1976 again renewed old friendships and added more friends; the position of the ancient novel in classical studies was strengthened.

But ICAN III made a huge leap forward, when some of the participants, who stayed on after the conference was over, approved an idea, developed by Roelf Barkhuis, Maaïke Zimmerman, and Gareth Schmeling, that the loosely affiliated scholars interested in the ancient novel should start a new journal to be called *Ancient Narrative (AN)*. Maaïke Zimmerman, co-editor with Heinz Hofmann of *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel (GCN)*, which had been published from 1 (1988) to 9 (1998) and succeeded by RICAN, would assume the position of Leading Editor, a position she then held for *AN* 1-6 and many supplementary volumes. Gareth Schmeling became Leading Editor for *AN* 7-; he had been editor of *The Petronian Society Newsletter (PSN)* since 1970, and in 2001, the *PSN* became an electronic sub-section of *AN* [The Petronian Society – Munich Section directed by Niklas Holzberg continues the tradition of wild Petronian parties]. To date *AN* has published 9 annual volumes and 16 supplementary volumes; the supplementary vol-

umes also contain the papers of the Rethymno International Conference on the Ancient Novel (RICAN) produced first (2001) by Michael Paschalis and Stavros Frangoulidis, and since 2009 by Michael Paschalis and Stelios Panayotakis. These 11 years (2001-2012) have been exciting and profitable for the ancient novel community. A large share of the credit goes to the publisher of *AN*, Roelf Barkhuis. The web site of *AN*, www.ancientnarrative.com, is maintained by him, and he regularly sends out alerts and publishes electronic notices about novel conferences and other bits of timely information. The *AN* web site has become the “clearing house” for information about the ancient novel.

In 2008 the muscle that ancient novel studies had acquired became apparent at ICAN IV, organized by Marília Futre Pinheiro, held in Lisbon, 21-26 July (again), and called *Crossroads in the Ancient Novel: Spaces, Frontiers, Intersections*. An attractive and useful interactive web site had been set up many months in advance of the conference, and participants on arrival in Lisbon were given a program (large book) which included all the standard materials about speakers and their talks, but also a CD-ROM which held the text of every speaker’s paper. The muscle referred to above showed itself in the 270 speakers including 14 plenary session speakers, from 28 countries. There is no printed list or record of all the participants or attendees, but there were many. Simultaneous translations via earphones for those not knowing the speaker’s language was a nice addition. All sessions were held in the beautiful headquarters of the Gulbenkian Foundation. There are arrangements to publish many papers from the conference.

A special addition to ICAN IV was the 30 minute BBC program, produced and narrated by the novelist, scholar, and BBC program director, Tibor Fischer, about the conference and the ancient novels themselves. Fischer brought to the conference the bit of information that Henry Fielding, one of the earliest English novelists, was buried in Lisbon. The program aired on BBC 4 on 28 August 2008 at 10:30 am.

Where (and when?) might we expect to find ICAN V? Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Switzerland? The “when” should probably be 2015.

Gratuitous Guide for Would-be Organizers (previous organizers are willing to advise on the specifics of how things were done at earlier ICANs – would-be organizers will neglect the help of earlier organizers at their peril).

(1) Work on the conference should begin about 2 years before the date of the conference.

- (2) ICAN has always been held in July, but in southern or hot climates, organizers might consider (e.g.) October or November.
- (3) Most important: the organizers should determine ahead of time the number of papers to be presented (how many in parallel sessions and how many in plenary sessions). In other words the organizers should fix the size of the conference before they do anything else.
- (4) When abstracts are solicited, those wishing to read papers should be aware of the whole process of evaluation including dates at which abstracts are due and then accepted/rejected. The whole process should be transparent. In the original call for papers the names of the Panel of Advisors should be made known.
- (5) A good web-site should be prepared by a (almost) professional and contain all information about the program. This web-site could be coordinated with *Ancient Narrative*, announced in *AN*, in the APA Newsletter, in the CAMWS Newsletter, in the CA Newsletter, in the Leeds Classics List, on the web sites of Classics Departments, etc.
- (6) The organizers should make sure that they have enough suitable rooms for all sessions.
- (7) Hotels (and college rooms) of various prices should be contacted and listed on the web site, and should be within easy walking distance of the conference.
- (8) The organizers should calculate all costs in setting the registration fee (e.g., should lunches and the conference dinner be included or optional?), so that participants can calculate at least roughly the total costs of airfare, hotels, taxis, meals, registration.
- (9) Some people will want to participate in the conference but not read a paper: how will they be dealt with?

After reading the 9 items above is there any person willing to organize ICAN V?