

Owen Hodkinson, Patricia A. Rosenmeyer and Evelien Bracke (eds.), *Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Literature* (Mnemosyne Supplements 359; Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013); €149.00/\$193.00, xii + 412, ISBN 978-90-04-24960-8.

Once I had the pleasure to review Patricia A. Rosenmeyer's translations of selected letters<sup>1</sup> and before that to read her monograph about the genre "letter" in Greek literature.<sup>2</sup> Now Rosenmeyer is one of the three editors of a collection of essays which had its origin even before a 2008 conference at the Swansea and Lampeter Centre for Research on the Narrative Literatures of the Ancient World (= KYKNOS) on the topic. Consequently, most of the contributions are derived from the conference, albeit – according to the acknowledgments (ix) – some papers had already been published elsewhere or were just not included in the present volume due to other reasons.

The volume offers sixteen essays which are unevenly distributed among the three main parts with six contributions in two subchapters for part one, eight in three subchapters for part two, but only two (and, of course, no subchapters) for part three. As usual for books in the series *Mnemosyne Supplements* the volume comprises acknowledgements, a comprehensive bibliography (titles are given in short form in the footnotes), and only a cumulative and rather short index (407-412). The three main chapters are preceded by an introductory essay.

In their introduction Owen Hodkinson and Patricia A. Rosenmeyer (1-36) provide an overview of the *status quaestionis* of epistolary narratives. They define the aim of the volume as (3) "to give Greek literary letters – as popular and significant contributors to literary history as their Latin counterparts – the attention they are due; and also to bring sharper focus on the role of Greek epistolography as an important narrative form used throughout the ancient world, from Classical to Late Antiquity, and across the spectrum of modes of literature and classes of readers and writers." All in all the contributions in this volume are united and at the same time distinguished by the connection between epistolary writing and narrative (5-10). Thereafter they discuss the different forms and facets of the "narratology of letters", e.g., a letter representing absence, letters highlighting proximity or distance, and letters between internal writer and readers (10-21). The rest of the introduction is dedicated to a "summary of contributions" (21-35).

The first main part has the title "Epistolary Forms: Letters in Narrative, Letters as Narrative" and comprises three subchapters. First, there is "Epistolary Writing in Extended Narratives: Letters in Euripides, Herodotus, Xenophon" with Patricia A. Rosenmeyer writing about "The Appearance of Letters on Stages and Vases" (39-69, very nicely illustrated by seven black-and-white figures with kraters, an amphora, urns, and terracotta bowls) and dealing with *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Hippolytus*, *Palamedes*, Aeneas Tacticus, and, briefly, Lucian and Homer, Angus

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. T.J. Kraus, Review of Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Greek Literary Letters*, in: *BMCR* 2006.11.18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P.A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: the Letter in Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See the review by T. Whitmarsh, Review of Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, in: *BMCR* 2002.06.20.

Bowie addressing “ ‘Baleful Signs’: Letters and Deceit in Herodotus” (71-83), and Deborah Levine Gera tackling “Letters in Xenophon” (85-103). Second, there are “Correspondences of Historical Figures: Authentic and Pseudonymous” with A.D. Morrison’s “Narrative and Epistolarity in the ‘Platonic Epistles’ ” (107-131), Pamela Gordon’s “Epistolary Epicureans” (133-151), and Orlando Poltera’s “The Letters of Euripides” (153-165, referring to five fictitious letters traditionally attributed to Euripides). Then there is the second main part “Innovation and Experimentation in Epistolary Narratives” and subchapter one “Epistolarity and Other Narrative Forms: Generic Hybridity” with Tim Whitmarsh and his “Addressing Power: Fictional Letters between Alexander and Darius” (169-186), Jason König’s “Alciphron and the Sympotic Letter Tradition” (187-206), and Niall W. Slater and his “Lucian’s Saturnalian Epistolarity” (207-218). The second subchapter “Embedded Letters in Longer Fiction” consists of Silvio F. Bär’s “Odysseus’ Letter to Calypso in Lucian’s *Verae Historiae*” (221-236), Ian Repath’s “Yours Truly? Letters in Achilles Tatius” (237-262, focussing on the letters of *Leucippe and Cleitophon* in book five), and Dimitri Kasprzyk’s “Letters in Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*” (263-289, concentrating on around forty passages with letters, exchanges of letters, or correspondences of one person). The third subchapter “Short Stories in Epistolary Form” comprises J.R. Morgan’s “Love from beyond the Grave: The Epistolary Ghost-Story in Phlegon of Tralles” (293-321) and Owen Hodkinson’s “Epistolarity and Narrative in Ps.-Aeschines *Epistle* 10” (323-345). The third main chapter “Jewish and Early Christian Epistolary Narratives” is the shortest consisting of two essays only: Ryan S. Olson deals with “Letters in the War between Rome and Judaea” (349-370), basically about the letters reported by Flavius Josephus in his *Bellum Judaicum*, and Jane McLarty with “The Function of the Letter Form in Christian Martyrdom Accounts: ‘I would like my Community, my Church, my Family, to Remember’ ” (371-385) with a focus on the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the *Martyrs of Lyons*.

Without doubt, such a volume is far from completeness in covering a wide and complex topic as the given one; and it is neither the editors’ nor the contributors’ fault that epistolary narratives in ancient – and also late ancient – Greek literature is not dealt with entirely. In addition, the fact that contributions differ from each other in length and quality comes as no real surprise. With Euripides, Herodotus, Xenophon, the Epicureans, the *Alexander Romance*, Alciphron, Lucian, Achilles Tatius, Philostratus, Phlegon of Tralles, Pseudo-Aeschines, Josephus Flavius, and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the *Martyrs of Lyons* there is a very wide range of authors, texts, and topics covered in this volume. Here and there, some more depth would have been welcome, above all when it comes to coping with Jewish and/or Christian literature. For instance, the *Legend of Abgar*, the *Letter of Peter to Philipp*, and/or (literary) letters in the Old Testament might have furnished additional topics.

Be that as it may, fishing for details of criticism is not fair and reveals a distorted impression of the volume. The editors did a remarkably good job in bringing together highly qualified scholars working on special topics that have unfortunately still not made it into the centre of attention today. The attentive and interested reader, however, will certainly find what he/she is looking for (though more detailed indices would have been of help here to facilitate navigation in the book) and, above all,

benefit from (most of) the specific and concise studies. Let's hope that these studies will receive the reception they deserve and will not be "buried" in a kind of conference volume and suffer the same fate as other contributions to collections of essays in the past.

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