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0521800048 - Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature

Patricia A. Rosenmeyer

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ANCIENT EPISTOLARY FICTIONS

This book offers the first comprehensive look at fictive letters in Greek literature from Homer to Philostratus. It includes both embedded epistolary narratives in a variety of genres (epic, historiography, tragedy, the novel), and works consisting solely of letters, such as the pseudonymous letter collections and the invented letters of the Second Sophistic. The book challenges the notion that Ovid “invented” the fictional letter form in his *Heroides*, and considers a wealth of Greek antecedents for the later European epistolary novel tradition. Epistolary technique always problematizes the boundaries between fictionality and reality. Based on a process of selection and self-censorship, the letter is a construction, not a reflection, of reality. Thus the author bypasses the slippery question of sincerity for a close look at epistolary self-representation, the function of the letter form, and the nature of the relationship between writer and reader in a wide range of ancient Greek texts.

PATRICIA A. ROSENMEYER is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She is the author of *The Poetics of Imitation: Anacreon and the Anacreontic Tradition* (1992).

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For Peter and Daniel

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