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NAMING OF THE CORRESPONDENTS IN ARISTAENETUS' *EROTIC LETTERS*: TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Abstract

Literary conventions of Greek fictional epistolography impose on its authors certain rules for naming of the correspondents. Three types of naming are allowed: choosing a real person, borrowing a literary character or creating an "artificial", so called descriptive names.

This paper deals with principles of naming the correspondents in the collection *Erotic letters*, written by the late antique epistolographer Aristaenetus. The data obtained are placed into a wider context by comparison with naming of the correspondents in a larger and much more praised Alciphron's collection. Besides some expected similarities, the comparison revealed some significant differences as well: naming in Aristaenetus' collection is far more imaginative and complex, correct identification of the correspondents is in fact an interesting game of hide and seek, and there are carefully concealed clues in the text of the letters that help the reader with the mystery-solving.

The paper points out Aristaenetus' onomastic innovations and offers an evaluation of their contribution to the overall literary merit of his collection.

Key words: Aristaenetus; literary onomastics; descriptive names; Greek fictional epistolography; Alciphron