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Title:	Leading (and Reading) By Example: Exemplarity in Ovid's "Metamorphoses"
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Abstract:	<p>This study identifies and investigates a recurring problem in Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>: the inability or unwillingness of mortal characters to learn from models of behavior (<i>exempla</i>), a tendency which has the frequent consequence of transformation or death. We encounter generations of humanity who, though originally based on the world's most pious man and woman, fall far short of that couple's promise; we meet sons who prove ill-disposed or ill-suited to follow in the paths of their outstanding fathers; and we find listeners who disregard or deride stories about others' offenses against the gods, and repeat the mistakes therein. A full-length critical inquiry into exemplarity in the <i>Metamorphoses</i> has not been undertaken before. But exemplarity is a subject which repays sustained attention, not only because it is a prevalent and perplexing theme in the epic itself, but also because of its long-standing significance in Roman thought and practice, as well as its notable utility for Augustus in defining his role and regime. My project, then, seeks to contribute to two distinct and thriving areas of scholarship: exemplarity in Roman culture and Latin literature at large; and the current trend in Ovidian studies which sees the poet entering into conversation with the emperor, each addressing similar issues from a different perspective. The dissertation's four chapters explore the mechanics of exemplarity in four contexts: ancestral, monumental, paternal, and literary. My close readings indicate that Ovid's interest in the many ways in which the discourse of exemplarity can go wrong is, fundamentally, an interest in the controllability of <i>exempla</i>. It was a preoccupation which the poet shared with the emperor, who was systematizing and synthesizing models for imitation in a more conspicuous manner than ever before at Rome. I argue that Ovid dismantles the rhetoric of exemplarity, openly displaying the difficulties endemic to the process of teaching and learning from exceptional precedents. And yet, elsewhere in his works, he engages in his own poetic version of exemplarity and imitation in a strategic bid to cast himself as a "model" poet. The discourse of exemplarity, in fact, offers a culturally specific way of making sense of Ovid's tireless attempts to secure his literary legacy.</p>
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