

Making & Breaking Patterns: Debating Exemplarity in *Heroides* 5 and 16-17

This paper explores discussions of exemplarity in *Heroides* 5 and 16-17, where Ovid's letter writers not only use *exempla*, but also comment on the functions of exemplarity in their arguments. Paris (*Heroides* 16) evaluates different potential *exempla* and then explains his particular choice of *exempla*; Helen (*Heroides* 17) rejects Paris's use of exemplarity as a persuasive strategy and instead identifies the additional negative patterns his *exempla* establish, contrary to his rhetorical intent; and Oenone (*Heroides* 5) accepts adherence to *exempla*, but tells Paris that he has chosen the wrong *exempla* and seconds Helen's identification of his *exempla*'s unintended patterns.

My examination of *Heroides* 5 and 16-17 builds on the work of previous scholars who have considered connections among these three letters (Bessone 2003, Cucchiarelli 1995, La Bua 2018, Patti 2001). I also contribute to the consideration of *exempla* in Ovid's work, though previous scholars focus on the *Amores* and *Ars* (Davis 1980, Davisson 1983, Davisson 1993, Watson 1983, Whitaker 1983). I focus on the letter writers' discussions of pattern making and breaking in their consideration of exemplarity, analyzing how they frame their individual arguments about the overlapping events of their letters. Additionally, I consider how the letters' discussions of exemplarity align with amatory patterns and *exempla* from Ovid's *Ars*, especially in Paris and Helen's letters.

The first section of my paper examines Paris's use of *exempla*. While his letter comes after Oenone's in the collection, the events of his letter (his attempt to seduce Helen) precede Oenone's (written after watching Paris and Helen arrive in Troy) and mark the start of the debate about exemplarity. Paris discusses exemplarity extensively—evaluating and discarding *exempla*

which do not fit his situation closely enough (16.263-272), and providing *exempla* for both himself and Helen to follow (16.153-162, 16.325-330, 16.345-350). I argue that he does so within the advice of the *Ars*, but does so ineffectively (Drinkwater 2013), as Helen and Oenone's critiques demonstrate.

The next section addresses Helen's response to Paris, specifically in regard to how she responds to his reliance on exemplarity as a persuasive strategy. I argue that Helen, at multiple points in her letter, not only rejects Paris's specific *exempla*, but also rejects the broader idea of exemplarity as a successful persuasive strategy (17.19-34, 17.41-50, 17.213-219). Helen does not find Paris's argument from *exempla* compelling. In her response, she does not provide her own positive *exempla*, but rather calls witnesses (*testes*), women who are both writers from the single *Heroides* and abandoned by the men in Paris's *exempla* (17.193-196, 17.229-234).

My final section moves to Oenone's letter, written with the benefit of additional time and more knowledge about the actual consequences of Paris and Helen's elopement. I argue that Oenone does not express the same general dissatisfaction with exemplarity that Helen does, but Oenone does critique Paris's choice of *exempla* while echoing Helen's concerns about his *exempla* establishing negative patterns (5.99-108, 5.125-134).

In conclusion, this paper evaluates how Ovid's Paris, Helen, and Oenone discuss *exempla* differently, and conflictingly, in their letters. Their evaluations of each other's rhetorical strategies, and most especially Helen and Oenone's responses to Paris's exemplarity, result in an intratextual discourse among the three letters which underscores the significance of exemplarity in elegiac discourse but also questions its efficacy.

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