Achilles in Love:
Trojan Heroes in the *Ars Amatoria*

The *Ars Amatoria* is Ovid's most controversial poem. The poet himself tells us that it was this poem (*carmen*), along with a mysterious mistake (*error*), that caused the Roman emperor Augustus to send Ovid into exile (*Tr.* 2.207). In many ways, the *Ars Amatoria* is Ovid's most urban and urbane work, but it is also his most political and poetically complex poem. Chronologically situated between not only Ovid's earlier erotic elegy (*Heroides* and *Amores*) and his "greater" works (*Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*), but also between the genres of erotic elegy and didactic, the *Ars Amatoria* has often been neglected, or worse, dismissed as a "frivolous" poem (Hollis 1977, xviii).

But it is anything but frivolous. This genre-bending *tour de force* is at the same time witty, erotic elegy and deeply learned didactic. Nominally a handbook on finding a boyfriend or a girlfriend in Rome, the *Ars Amatoria*, which is full of mythological references, draws time and time again on a surprising body of work: the Trojan Cycle. From the poem's opening, which compares the skill of love to the technical skill of driving a chariot (with Automedon, Achilles' personal charioteer, mentioned by name), to the extended metaphor that connects Books 2 and 3, in which male lovers are compared to the Greeks at Troy and female lovers to Amazons, Ovid uses epic allusions throughout the poem to make his points, both erotic and didactic. While this is partially Ovid being Ovid and playing with the reader's expectations (for who makes a less likely paramour than military man?), the poet is also blurring the lines between two (or three?) generally distinct genres. This paper contends that Ovid uses the myth of Troy to remind the reader both of the ubiquity of *amor* across genres, but also the flexibility of didactic poetry. I argue that in the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid uses the primary characters of the Trojan War, namely Achilles, Hector,

Agamemnon, and Odysseus as examples of what to do (or not to do) in love as part of his program of repurposing epic and didactic content in an elegiac and erotic context.