Cinemetamorphosis: Film as *ars Ovidiana*

Changes in shape, Ovid’s epic subject, is the essence of cinema, which projects a series of static photographic images in such a way that they appear to move. In 1914 Gabriele D’Annunzio, Italy’s *il Poeta* and *il Vate*, saw himself as successor to Ovid and wrote an essay “On the Film Camera Considered as Instrument of Liberation and Art of Transformation,” while French film scholar André Bazin in 1946 adduced the Icarus myth as an analogy to the cinema as “an idealistic phenomenon.” Several of the most famous myths in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* have been re-imagined on screen: Orpheus and Eurydice, Pygmalion, Daedalus and Icarus. Given the high level of vividness (*enargeia*) in Ovid’s descriptions (*ecphrases*), most of his stories can serve as blueprints for screenplays. Arachne’s woven image of Jupiter’s abduction of Europa in *Met. 6* is a particularly revealing instance of the inherently visual quality of Ovidian storytelling.

My presentation will examine a few specific connections between Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the cinema. It will focus on the metamorphosis of a human into a bird in Darren Aronofsky’s *Black Swan* and on the labyrinth in Alain Resnais’ art-house classic *Last Year at Marienbad* and Mario Bava’s thriller *The Girl Who Knew Too Much*. We are therefore justified to add, although unmetrically, one word to the opening of Ovid’s epic:

IN NOVA FERT ANIMVS MVTATAS DICERE FORMAS
CORPORA MOVENTIA