

**ERT**

**Fabio Condemi**

*Calderón*



# Fabio Condemi

## I want to go back where I started from

Notes on *Calderón*

*"History, said Stephen, is a nightmare  
I try to escape from"*  
James Joyce, *Ulysses*

*Calderón* by Pier Paolo Pasolini is a labyrinthic text where different layers and traces collapse in a never-ending interlocking puzzle: the theatre by Pedro Calderon de la Barca, the performance theory by Bertolt Brecht (as experienced by Roland Barthes); the pro-Franco Spain from '60ies and the student revolutions; the paintings by Velazquez and the ideas on representation and on the relationship between theatre and audience as displayed in *Manifesto per un nuovo Teatro* by Pasolini himself; the polemic resulted against "those responsible of the incoming new era [...] who, with their awareness of the present and of the possibilities of the future, assume as decrepit the experiences from last year: and let's not even discuss about the language they use!" and the platonic dialogues as dramatic source; the Freudian psychoanalysis and the theological studies on body; the dream as prison and as utopia etc...

All these simultaneous tracks transform *Calderón* in a complex text where the audience is obliged to wonder about our immersion in our History, together with our bodies, our works and dreams.

### The parallel narrative

More than a re-writing, *Calderón* by Pasolini is a constant dialogue with the masterpiece from the Seventeenth century and its author; it's a parallel narrative that melts the characters from *La vida es sueño* and transpose them from Poland to Spain in 1967.

Even in other works Pasolini dialogues with classical texts creating a witty counterpoint among these texts and its original oeuvre (as for *Women of Trachis* in *Affabulazione*, or *Oresteia* for *Pilade*); but here, Pasolini faces directly Calderon and his *weltanschauung*. What's the meaning of being the author of a masterpiece? What's the relation among author, his oeuvre, his time, the power and the audience?

The figure of Velazquez is watching us from his *Las Meninas*: he is

emblematic of the complexity of these relations and is a *leitmotiv* in the text. It reminds me of the questioning at the end of *Decameron* by Pasolini: “*why making an artwork when it's enough to dream it?*”

### **A force from the past, in open polemic against “those responsible for the new era”**

Just like Velazquez in *Las Meninas*, Pasolini becomes part of his text through a plot device that allows him to comment and present some parts of his own drama text: his voice arrives from an outside speaker who narrates the story.

The speaker will appear two times more in the text, presenting two “theatre reconstruction” very alike: the re-enactment of the masterpiece *Las Meninas* by Velazquez (3rd Episode) and the re-enactment of the picture of a dorm in a lager (15th Episode).

### **Plato and Pro-Franco Spain**

In a 1973 article that appeared in *‘Il tempo’* with the title *Why do they say my Calderon doesn't have political weight?* Pasolini wrote that a reading of his text in a key of political actualism could only be limiting: for him, the only interpretation is that of a Platonic politics, that of the *Convito* or the *Phaedrus*. The two Platonic texts are extremely significant for understanding Calderon. Pasolini reread the Platonic dialogues in 1966, after a severe ulcer attack that forced him to bed for a long time. The Platonic dialogues provided the poet with many thematic and structural ideas for the drafting of six theatrical works that Pasolini began in '66 (*Porcile, Orgia, Pilade, Beast of style, Calderon, Affabulation*) but this is not the place to deepen these influences. However, I would like to focus on the text that Pasolini quotes in the article cited above: *Phaedrus* and, in particular, on the myth of the winged chariot contained in it (also in this case a game of Chinese boxes, of texts inside the texts as in Calderon). The myth is used in the *Phaedrus* to explain the theory of reminiscence (or *anamnesis*), the awakening of a knowledge already present in our soul, but which had been forgotten at the moment of birth and was unconscious. The first things Rosaura doesn't recognize when she wakes up are objects. She feels that there is an extraneousness between her and those objects. The use of an object allows her to be part of reality again, of her reality. In the first dream the object is a ring to wear, in the second dream it is a basin in which to wash. In the third dream (the bourgeois house) the relationship between words and their meaning is broken and Rosaura, alienated, speaks with *nonsense* phrases.



## Las Meninas and Michel Foucault

*"[...] The painter looks, with his face slightly turned and with his head bowed on his shoulder. He fixes an invisible point, that we, the spectators, can easily identify since this point is ourselves: our body, our face, our eyes. The spectacle that he observes is therefore twice invisible: not being represented in the space of the painting and situating itself exactly in the blind spot, in the essential hiding place where our gaze escapes ourselves when we look. [...]"*

*On the surface, this place is simple; it is pure reciprocity: we look at a painting from which a painter in turn contemplates us. Nothing but a face to face, eyes that are surprised, straight glances that overlap each other. And yet this fine line of visibility envelops backwards a whole complex web of uncertainties, exchanges, feints. The painter directs his eyes towards us only to the extent that we are in the place of his subject. We other spectators, we are too many. [...]"*

Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses*, 1966

The words of Foucault dedicated to the analysis of Velazquez's *Las meninas* are perfect for understanding the importance and centrality of that painting in the Calderon. Although not familiar with Foucault's text (published in 1967, the same year in which Pasolini wrote the first draft of the work) Pasolini included in his Calderon some reflections very similar to those of Foucault. The third episode takes place entirely in a reconstruction of Velazquez's painting. Representation within representation, dream within Rosaura's dream (recently returned from a visit to the Prado museum) who is seen in the guise of the Infanta Margerita while her parents, from the mirror (like Philip IV and Marianne of Habsburg in the painting) try to make her confess her love for Sigismund.

## Give me my body back!

Whose body is Rosaura's? Who does it belong to? In the first dream Rosaura has the sensation that her body has been stolen from her, that it is not really hers and the episodes set in the painting by Velazquez and in the HOUSE OF THE DIVINE BODY make this sensation perfectly. In the second dream Rosaura is a prostitute who sells her body. In the third dream, a split between body and language is created in Rosaura that leads to aphasia (similar to Wernicke's aphasia). Finally, Rosaura

remembers her dream and realizes that her life, in reality, takes place in a concentration camp.

This part recalls the use that the power of the new fascism in the consumer society makes of bodies. Here, Calderon's ending recalls the ending in *120 days of Sodom*.

## Calderon de la Barca, Pasolini and Philip K. Dick

The world as a representation, as a set, as a simulation.

In 'time out of sixth' by P.k Dick, the protagonist realizes that something in his everyday life is strange and a little out of place detail causes him a real anamnesis.

Philip K. Dick meets Gongora and Calderon de la Barca. Pasolini reread Plato for his theatre and here the myth of the cave is constantly present.



# Biography

Born in Ferrara in 1988 and raised in Marche region.

2015: degree in theatre direction in Accademia Nazionale d'arte drammatica Silvio d'Amico, Rome, with a studio su *Bestia da Stile* by Pierpaolo Pasolini.

Awarded with UBU Prize 2021 for best direction with *La philosophie dans le boudoir*.

Two of his projects, *Lingua Madre* and *Radio India*, are awarded with UBU Prize 2021 for best special projects.

Various collaborations with Giorgio Barberio Corsetti as assistant in theatre, opera productions, educational projects:

- *Cinderella* by Rossini in Teatro Massimo, Palermo
- *Witches of Venice* by Philip Glass in Teatro Massimo, Palermo
- *La pietra del Paragone* by Rossini in teatro lirico, Cagliari
- *The frogs* by Aristofane in Teatro Greco, Siracusa,
- *La Sonnambula* by Bellini in Teatro dell'Opera, Roma
- *Fra Diavolo ou l'Hôtellerie de Terracine* by Daniel Auber in Teatro dell'Opera, Roma
- *La Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni for 'Matera capitale della cultura 2019'
- *Palla de mozzi* by Gino Marinuzzi in Teatro Lirico, Cagliari
- *Tiranno Edipo!* Recital in acting class within Accademia Silvio d'amico

Assistant of Giorgio Barberio Corsetti for the lessons in acting class in Accademia Silvio D'Amico, on the following authors: Heinrich von Kleist, Heiner Müller, Eugene Labiche, Anton Chechov, Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Assistant for theatre shows for Fabio Cherstich in the following shows:

*Turandot* by Puccini in teatro Massimo, Palermo

*Il barbiere di Siviglia* by Gioacchino Rossini in Teatro Valli di Reggio Emilia (2021)

2017: *Il sonno del calligrafo*, taken by the roman *Jakob von Gunten* by Robert Walser, College Section in Biennale di Venezia. Awarded with Special Mention.

2018: *Jakob von Gunten* production presented in Biennale di Venezia (Antonio Latella).

2019: *Questo è il tempo in cui attendo la grazia*, production presented in Teatro India, Roma and Teatro Verdi, Pordenone.

Takes part of the production projects for Teatro di Roma "*Oceano Indiano*"

2020: broadcasting of a radio program in 10 episodes *Specie di spazi* inspired by *Espèces d'espaces* by Georges Perec.

2020: *La philosophie dans le boudoir* production presented in 48° edition of Biennale Teatro, Venezia.

Works as teacher in the school of Piccolo Teatro, Milano, directed by Carmelo Rifici, and directs a studio on opera and poetics on Georges Perec.

2021: within *Lingua Madre project* in LAC Lugano, presents the short film *Analisi logica. Parte I: Soggetto* from the text by Riccardo Favaro (direction, set and costumes).

Attends to Summer School in Centro Teatrale Santa Cristina and writes a booklet on the experience (published by Doppiozero).

Leads a workshop for *IF, new era*, in Teatro India. Produces a final essay titled *Dear Google please solve death* based on the texts "To be a machine" by Mark O'Connell and "The religious experience of P.k. Dick" by Robert Crumb.

Lately he produces journals, booklets, and video material, born around his travels, drawings, sketches and notes.