

**Between the Witness and the Word, the Duty to Speak: Testimony as the Object of an Anthropology of the Enunciation / *Entre a testemunha e a palavra, o dever falar: o testemunho como objeto de uma Antropologia da Enunciação***

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**ABSTRACT**

This work is about the imbrication between writing and testimony, based on the work *Retrato calado* [Silenced Portrait], by Luiz Roberto Salinas Fortes. Although “evident,” it is a relationship that carries a particularity: the person who writes does so, asking oneself questions about the role of enunciation, about the meanings that the language inscribes about itself and about violence. Based on the principles of the Anthropology of Enunciation, as Flores<sup>1</sup> proposes, the analytical gesture carried out assumes linguistics as knowledge about man in his *loquens* property, specifically at the moment in which one singularizes in/through discourse.

**KEYWORDS:** Witness; Testimony; Torture; Anthropology of Enunciation

**RESUMO**

*Este trabalho versa sobre a imbricação entre escrita e testemunho a partir da obra Retrato Calado, de Luiz Roberto Salinas Fortes. Embora “evidente”, trata-se de uma relação que carrega uma particularidade: aquele que escreve o faz questionando-se sobre o papel de sua enunciação, sobre as significações que a língua inscreve sobre si mesma e sobre a violência. Pautado nos princípios da Antropologia da Enunciação, tal como Flores a propõe, o gesto analítico levado a efeito assume a linguística como um conhecimento sobre o homem em sua propriedade loquens, especificamente no instante em que se singulariza no/pelo discurso.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Testemunha; Testemunho; Tortura; Antropologia da Enunciação

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<sup>1</sup>May this work be a gesture of gratitude and recognition, albeit modest, to Professor Valdir do Nascimento Flores, his work, his teaching and his generosity.

## You Are Welcome to Elsinore

Although *Retrato calado* [Silenced Portrait] mobilizes characters with their own names and dedicates to describing the tortures that the narrator suffered in different institutions during the Civil Military Dictatorship of 1964, Luiz Roberto Salinas Fortes ([1988] 2018) does not write a story of these characters or of his period of incarceration. In the core of the text, this is the surface. Although not said, *Retrato calado* is a language experience. It is worth remembering that, in its ambiguity, “experience” has at least a double meaning: that of knowledge that one prepares on one’s sensitive relationship with the world, and that of a scientific method that, guided by a hypothesis, seeks to categorize a phenomenon from observation under controlled conditions. Understood as such, on the one hand, experience presupposes a subject constrained by the external determinations that constitute it and, on the other, it also presupposes a subject in an active process of rationalization, production of reality. Therefore, we have a disjunction that, far from being refrained by the text, it is the nodal point from which it is articulated. It presupposes a subject subjected by the language while desubjectivizing oneself (Agamben, 1999)<sup>2</sup> to get hold of the language, and of oneself, therefore, as objects of investigation.

In this task, at the end of successive shifts between the orders of word and subject, Salinas reaches something that ends his efforts and names the work: “*Retrato calado*” [Silenced Portrait]. In the field of repressive devices, the term “retrato falado” [Spoken portrait in a direct translation from Portuguese, meaning, in reality, police sketch or composite] refers to techniques that, through the description of phenotypic aspects of an individual, recover their appearance, portraying it in image. It is constituted as the facial reconstruction of someone based on characterizations provided orally by third parties. *Retrato Calado*, in reverse, by opposing the minimal pairs in Portuguese, “/k/alado” [silenced] and “/f/alado” [spoken], it suggests that this reconstitution of the subject’s image does not occur through what is said, but through what is silenced. How would this resemblance take place? From what is still to be said, which should be said but was not? Or from what is impossible to formulate?

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<sup>2</sup> AGAMBEN, G. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 1999.

These questions lead to the dispersion of meanings mobilized by the title and call for a second discussion, specifically on the morphological construction of “spoken” and “silenced,” which make up the name. Once inscribed in their participle form, verbs assume the function of qualifiers and mark “portrait” as something already consummated. If “silenced” is differentially configured as a denial of “spoken,” would the “spoken portrait” be a finished construction and the “silenced portrait” an open process, or the other way around? Does one precede the other? Regardless of the findings, the questions asked in/by *Retrato Calado* summon two unavoidable instances, that of language and that of the subject, necessarily articulated by locution, constituting a reality of discourse (Benveniste, 1971).<sup>3</sup>

History has claimed the first dimension in which *Retrato Calado* is inscribed, giving it a certain chronological linearity, while the discursive instance occupies a second level, in which the text falls into a gap: the further the margins of the utterance distance themselves, the more the gap opens, to the point where it is possible to glimpse the simultaneously perplexed and rational position of a subject who symbolically tries to apprehend torture, terror, the rupture from the symbolic. It is in this “lucid vertigo” (Chauí, 2018) that Salinas composes his testimony, and knowing that “the pain that continues to ache until today and that will end up with killing me does not have an end, it changes into a simple equivocal ‘occurrence,’ susceptible to an infinity of interpretations” (Fortes, 2018, p.42).<sup>4</sup> That is the reason for “the need for a rigorous record of experience, the description, the constitution of the phenomenological material, the literary transcription. Against the fiction of the official Evil Gennie, a meticulous historical account imposes itself, and it is on the direct aim of this target that the rigor of the discourse depends” (Fortes, 2018, p.43).<sup>5</sup>

Bringing together excerpts from personal diaries, epistolary records and autobiographical accounts, Salinas’ testimony dates to (a) numerous arrests and tortures he suffered in the 1970s in institutions such as the DeIC [State Department of Criminal

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<sup>3</sup> BENVENISTE, É. Subjectivity in Language [1958]. In: BENVENISTE, É. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971, pp.223 -230.

<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese: “a dor que continua doendo até hoje e que vai acabar por [matá-lo] se irrealiza, transmuda-se em simples ‘ocorrência’ equívoca, suscetível a uma infinidade de interpretações.”

<sup>5</sup> In Portuguese: “a necessidade do registro rigoroso da experiência, da sua descrição, da constituição do material fenomenológico, da sua transcrição literária. Contra a ficção do Gênio Maligno oficial se impõe o minucioso relato histórico e é da boa mira deste alvo que depende o rigor do discurso”

Investigations], the DOPS [Department of Political and Social Order] and OBan [Operation Bandeirantes], in São Paulo. Graduated in Philosophy, Sciences and Literature from USP (University of São Paulo), and Ph.D. in Philosophy at the same institution, he was recognized for his doctoral theses, *Rousseau: da teoria à prática* [Rousseau: from Theory to Practice], and professorship, *Paradoxo do espetáculo: política e poética em Rousseau* [Paradox of the Spectacle: Politics and Poetics in Rousseau]. The first of these was written shortly after leaving the cloister. The “pain that continues to hurt to this day” left its marks: traumatized, the torture affected his speech. This is what Marilena Chauí, a member of his doctoral panel and with whom he maintained a friendly relationship comments, when she recalls that “[the] thesis was considered excellent but needed to be defended by the candidate. We questioned the candidate. And Salinas would not hear us. Each of us knew he did not find himself in that room, but in others. We agreed that he would give us the answers in writing later. Which he did” (Chauí, 2018, p.10).<sup>6</sup> Other situations are retrieved by Chauí, such as “[s]o many times I heard Salinas stumbling over the sentence he started, trying to find words, losing the thread of the sentence and, not being able to reach my ears, trying to reach my eyes, giving me a look, a mixture of astonishment and agony” (2018, p.11);<sup>7</sup> or the countless times that “I asked him to tell me why, for a writer of incomparable clarity, speaking had become so painful. Sometimes he just smiled. At other times, he gave me a stuttering laughter exactly like his speech” (Chauí, 2018, p.11).<sup>8</sup>

The condition of Salinas, therefore, is that of a *superstes* [survivor] from “a peculiar apparatus”<sup>9</sup> of which function is to destroy the subject’s humanity by disintegrating his speech and kidnap his thought (Chauí, 2018). For the witness of this *prodigious machine* to whom speech lacks, writing remains. And it is precisely for this reason that the question “why do I write?” is repeatedly mobilized in the work, and whose

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<sup>6</sup> In Portuguese: “[a] tese fora considerada excelente, mas precisava ser arguida. Argui-se. Arguimos. E Salinas não conseguia ouvir-nos. Cada um de nós sabia que ele não se via naquela sala, mas noutras. Concordamos em que nos entregaria por escrito as respostas, mais tarde. O que fez.”

<sup>7</sup> In Portuguese: “[q]uantas vezes ouvi Salinas tropeçar na frase iniciada, tateando as palavras, perder o fio da meada e, não podendo alcançar meus ouvidos, tentar alcançar-me os olhos, lançando-me um olhar, misto de pasmo e agonia.”

<sup>8</sup> In Portuguese: “pedi que me dissesse por que, escritor de clareza incomparável, falar se lhe tornara tão penoso. Às vezes sorria apenas. Outras vezes, ria um riso tão gaguejante quanto sua fala.”

<sup>9</sup> KAFKA, F. *In the Penal Colony*. Translated by Ian Johnson. University College Press: British Columbia CA, 2003. Here, we go back to the words that open the novel *In the Penal Colony*, by Franz Kafka, published in 1919.

response works according to a pendulum of guilt: to blame the torturers, denouncing them; to forgive the narrator for their denunciations, the cause of his shame, by granting him amnesty.

A second meaning of “silent” emerges from these observations: the one who, despite having survived the intervention, remains interdicted, since the “ferociousness of the intervention continues to act” (Fortes, 2018, p.28).<sup>10</sup> *Retrato Calado* is an attempt to regain the word, linked to an attempt to reconcile with oneself. Ironically, as Antonio Candido (2018, p.18)<sup>11</sup> tells us in the preface of Fortes’ work, “the reward for the long effort to find oneself was death.” Shortly after finishing *Retrato Calado*, the author dies in 1987, at the age of fifty, due to a heart attack.

That said, this work is about the relationship between writing and testimony, which, although “evident,” carries a particularity: the one who writes does so by questioning the role of his enunciation, about the meanings that the language inscribes about itself and about violence. There is, therefore, an *object* structured by metalanguage in at least two levels of enunciation (Benveniste, 1989): a) in the relation of language as interpreter of itself and b) in the relation of language as an interpreter of torture. This relationship shown by *Retrato Calado* underpins the subject’s quest to apprehend torture as a symbolic system, which, at first, seems to fail. The discussion is, therefore, about witness and testimony, primarily, and secondly, about testimony and torture, since this is the (logical) condition that engenders the former.

Our modest exercise adds to the program that seeks a *praxis* that is “more consonant with the understanding of linguistics as an anthropological knowledge” (Flores, 2019a, p.278)<sup>12</sup> that relates to the proposal of a *linguistics of testimony and witness*. We base our observation on Flores (2015, 2019) whose field of investigation is named *Anthropology of Enunciation*. In this field the ontological category is the speaker. That being said, we do not refrain from dealing with the challenge that is arisen “for a linguistic that is dedicated to looking at the *homo loquens* – especially in cases where the speaker is shaken in his condition of speaker –” (Flores, 2019a, p.278),<sup>13</sup> namely, “the

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<sup>10</sup> In Portuguese: a “ferocidade da intervenção permanece atuando.”

<sup>11</sup> In Portuguese: “a recompensa do longo esforço para se encontrar foi a morte.”

<sup>12</sup> In Portuguese: “mais consoante com o entendimento da linguística como um conhecimento antropológico.”

<sup>13</sup> In Portuguese: “para uma linguística que se dedica a olhar para o *homo loquens* – em especial nos casos em que o falante está abalado em sua condição de falante –.”

bond between man and his enunciation in a relationship of uniqueness and singularity” (Flores, 2019a, p.278),<sup>14</sup> one’s own *presence in the language* . According to Flores (2019a), based on Benveniste (1989, 2014), there lies the relevance of the testimonial discourse: either as *testis* [third party], or as *superstes*, “it does not matter, it is always as speaker that man can tell of his feature of *loquens*” (Flores, 2019a, p.300).<sup>15</sup>

In view of what has been exposed so far, we have structured our presentation in two moments, added to these introductory remarks and some closing words. Section 1 *Between us and the Words, the Walled Ones*, in which we discuss the witness and the testimony (Agamben, 1999; <sup>16</sup> Benveniste, 2016)<sup>17</sup> from the *Anthropology of Enunciation* (Flores, 2018, 2019, 2019a) linked to the study of Salinas’ testimony; and section 2 *And Between us and Words, Our Duty to Speak*, in which we reflect on the (attempt to) construction of a second level of enunciation by the speaking subject, in which one seeks to sustain significant purposes about own’s torture.

So, it goes.

## 1 Between Us and the Words, the Walled Ones

*O escafandro e a borboleta: ou o testemunho da fala que falta ao falante* [The Diving Bell and the Butterfly: or the Testimony of the Speech That the Speaker Lacks], covered by *Problemas Gerais de Linguística* [Problems in General Linguistics] (Flores, 2019), is one of the texts that support the *Anthropology of Enunciation* and whose resonance and impact have not yet been precisely established. This is due to its recent publication, the complexity of the method it inaugurates (which goes back to Humboldt, Saussure and Benveniste, but goes beyond them) and the questions launched for the epistemological principles of Linguistics. In it, when reflecting on The Diving Bell and the Butterfly,<sup>18</sup> an autobiographical novel by Jean-Dominique Bauby (2009), Flores is faced with a subject who self-witnesses one’s experience in language. At the end of the

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<sup>14</sup> In Portuguese: “o vínculo entre o homem e a sua enunciação numa relação de unicidade e singularidade.”

<sup>15</sup> In Portuguese: “pouco importa, é sempre como falante que o homem pode falar de sua propriedade *loquens*.”

<sup>16</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>17</sup> BENVENISTE, É. [1969]. *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*. Foreword by Giorgio Agamben. Translated by Elizabeth Palmer. Chicago: Hau Books, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> BAUBY, J-D. *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly: A Memoir of Life in Death*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008.

research, the author allows himself to formulate a generalization: in cases of aphasic subjects, such as Bauby's, "the speaker affected by any language disorder is questioned in one's most fundamental right, that of speaking, which is shown in the dissociation between semiotics and semantics" (2019a, p.295).<sup>19</sup>

At the conclusion of the chapter, the expression "linguistics of testimony and witness" is used in quotes (Flores, 2019a, p.299).<sup>20</sup> Even if kept at a distance, Flores gives it the status of "a way of approaching 'pathological forms'" (2019a, p.299) and seems to claim it as the designation of a "theoretical setting proposed for linguistics" (2019a, p.279).<sup>21</sup> In his view, "a linguistics as anthropological knowledge does not look at 'pathology,' but at man's presence in language. This implies considering the relational aspect – the 'I' and the 'other' – of the enunciation" (Flores, 2019a, p.300).<sup>22</sup> In doing so, the author does not deny the need to apprehend the subject in its theoretical-methodological framework and recognizes its differential *status*, which is the *loquens* feature. Although just announced, the *linguistics of testimony and witness* develops in Brazil based on various theories, such as the *Anthropology of Enunciation* itself, which converge on a common axis: the philosophy of language, by Giorgio Agamben – which presupposes its interpretation of *Problems in General Linguistics*, by Émile Benveniste, and the Philosophy of History, by Walter Benjamin.

Among the works by Agamben (1999, p.16)<sup>23</sup> that support the discussion is *Remnants of Auschwitz – The Witness and the Archive*, in whose pages the Italian philosopher analyzes memorial productions of Holocaust survivors, especially those of Primo Levi, whom he considers "a perfect example of the witness." Levi speaks without interruption about his experience in Auschwitz and is recognized for his vast literary production on the subject. This is not enough for him to recognize himself as a writer, but as a chemist (his profession before his arrest); "he becomes a writer so that he can bear witness" (Agamben, 1999, p.16).<sup>24</sup> Although a perfect witness in Agamben's eyes, Levi

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<sup>19</sup> In Portuguese: "o falante atingido por qualquer perturbação de linguagem vê-se questionado no seu mais fundamental direito, que é o de ser falante, o que se mostra na dissociação entre o semiótico e o semântico."

<sup>20</sup> In Portuguese: "linguística do testemunho e da testemunha"

<sup>21</sup> In Portuguese: "via de abordagem das 'formas patológicas'" (...) "um campo teórico proposto para a linguística."

<sup>22</sup> In Portuguese: "uma linguística como conhecimento antropológico não olha para a 'patologia', mas para os termos da presença do homem na língua. Isso implica considerar o aspecto relacional – o 'eu' e o 'outro' – da enunciação."

<sup>23</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>24</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

does not consider himself a real witness. In his words, “[w]e survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute” (Levi, 2014,<sup>25</sup> pp.47-48 *apud* Agamben, 1999, p.33).<sup>26</sup> Levi points to something different from his condition as a witness, being a *survivor*.

Based on these records, Agamben uses the Latin words *testis* (third), *superstes* (survivor) and *auctor* (author) as designations for the different characteristics of the witness (Flores, 2019a). *Testis*, the first word, “etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party (*\*terstis*),” (Agamben, 1999, p.17; author’s emphasis)<sup>27</sup> while the second, *superstes*, “designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it (Agamben, 1999, p.17; author’s emphasis).<sup>28</sup>

As Flores (2019a) points out, these terms are also the object of study by Benveniste (2016)<sup>29</sup> in the *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, specifically in chapter seven, *Religion and Superstition*, of its second volume, *Economy, Kinship and Society*. The linguist’s comparative analyses confirm the etymological notes made for Agamben. According to the author, preserving the meaning of “*super*, which does not solely or properly mean ‘above’ but ‘beyond’ in such a way as to cover and to constitute an advance” (Benveniste, 2016, p.534; author’s emphasis),<sup>30</sup> *superstes* is “the one who can pass as a ‘witness’ because he has been present at some event” (Benveniste, 2016, p.536),<sup>31</sup> meaning the one that “‘sta[yed] beyond’, in fact, beyond an event which has destroyed the rest” (Benveniste, 2016, p.535),<sup>32</sup> “who has passed through danger, or a test, a difficult period, who has survived” (Benveniste, 2016, p.535).<sup>33</sup>

Thus, *superstes* is distinguished from *testis* when considering its etymology, in which

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<sup>25</sup> LEVI, P. If This Is a man. In: LEVI, P. *If This Is a Man/The Truce*. Translated by Stuart Woolf. London: Abacus, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>27</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>28</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>29</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

<sup>30</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

<sup>31</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

<sup>33</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

*testis* means the one who attends as the “third” person (*\*ter-stis*) at an affair in which two persons are interested; and this conception goes back to the Indo-European community. A Sanskrit text has it: “every time two persons are together, Mitra is there as the third person”; thus Mitra is by nature the “witness.” But *superstes* describes the witness as the one “who has his being beyond,” a witness in virtue of his surviving, or as “the one who stands over the matter,” who was present at it (Benveniste, 2016, p.535).<sup>34</sup>

From the exposed vocabulary, Agamben assumes the evidence that Levi is a *superstes*. He tells the story as someone who experienced it and survived despite it. Or, in other words, as Flores (2019a, p.281) observes, “Levi, then, is a witness in the strict sense of *superstes*, the one who lived something and tries to report it, never putting himself in the position of *testis*, of witness in the sense of a third person.” For Flores (2019a, p.281),<sup>35</sup> it is also evident that Bauby is a *superstes*, since his testimony is developed based the *perspective of those who see from within*. Bauby, on the other hand, differs from Levi because he narrates what he lives in the present, while Levi recalls his experience, giving his narratives distinct temporal configurations. “[I]t cannot be ignored that the form of engagement in the act of narrating is what differentiates them: *a posteriori* in relation to the scene, in one case; contemporarily in relation to the scene, in another” (Flores, 2019a, p.282).<sup>36</sup>

At this point, *Retrato Calado* constitutes a singular complexity. There are more questions to be asked about it than, necessarily, assertions to be made. Comprised of three sections, the narrative does not follow a linear chronology. In the first chapter, *Cena Primitiva* [Primitive Scene], Salinas goes back to his first two arrests in 1974, at OBan/DeIC and DOPS, respectively, each for a period of ten days. In the second chapter, *Suores Noturnos* [Nightly Sweats], he recovers excerpts from diaries dated from 1959, 1960 and 1965. In the final chapter, *Repetição* [Repetition], refers to two other arrests he suffered at OBAN in 1978, this time for a period of two days each. In the interstice of this section, there is a letter written in 1977, sent to a friend from Paris. The reports were compiled *a posteriori*, in the mid-1980s, a fact made known by the author. Would there

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<sup>34</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

<sup>35</sup> In Portuguese: “Levi, então, é uma testemunha no sentido restrito de *superstes*, aquele que viveu algo e tenta relatá-lo, nunca se colocando na posição de *testis*, de testemunha no sentido de terceiro.”

<sup>36</sup> In Portuguese: “[N]ão se pode ignorar que a forma de engajamento no ato de narrar é o que os diferencia: *a posteriori* em relação à cena, em um; contemporaneamente em relação à cena, em outro.”

be two dimensions of the “past,” given the temporal game between the before (1959, 1960, 1965, 1977) and the after (1974, 1978) of the worst advent? Is there a testimony that is projected retrospectively and prospectively on memory?

Salinas provides evidence that *Retrato Calado* had been devised since prison and its production had suffered constant interruptions. In the presence of Colonel Dalmo, the military officer himself “[p]rophetizes, at the end of the interrogation: when you leave this place, you’re going to write a book!” (Fortes, 2018, p.44).<sup>37</sup> On a previous occasion, after a torture session, in front of him, “the captain pulls his belt, pen in hand. Writing everything down and, from time to time, warning me not to omit anything. It, thus, began, in face of the authority, the process of producing the first chapters of my confessions, which was soon interrupted, however, by another military officer” (Fortes, 2018, p.35).<sup>38</sup> A similar situation repeats itself when he says that “[i]n possession of pen and paper, my impetus is to reveal everything. Old stupid intellectual reflex? There it is, I start writing my autobiography. As you can see, the craze has been around since then” (Fortes, 2018, p.53).<sup>39</sup> From the mobilized excerpts, we apprehend two portraits: a first production, reported in military institutions, whose material record does not exist, and which is constantly interrupted; and a second work, written in freedom, whose existence was anticipated by the torturers themselves.

In addition to the inscribed time and space and the material existence, or not, there are intersubjective relationships that mark a cleavage between both works. One is established by the interlocutory relationship between Salinas and his torturers through the mediation of torture itself, leading to an “improved communication scheme” (Fortes, 2018, p.56):<sup>40</sup> it is the “cycle of question-shock-scream-response to which a new addition is soon added” (Fortes, 2018, p.56).<sup>41</sup> Another is given by the relationship between Salinas and his potential readers, to whom his testimony is seen as something capable of giving factual existence to what was experienced, to “not let everything get lost,

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<sup>37</sup> In Portuguese: “[p]rofetiza, já no final do interrogatório: quando sair daqui, você vai escrever um livro!”.

<sup>38</sup> In Portuguese: “o capitão metranca na cinta, caneta na mão. Anotando tudo e, de vez em quando, me advertindo para que eu não omitisse nada. Começava, assim, diante da autoridade, o processo de produção dos primeiros capítulos das minhas confissões, logo interrompido, porém, por outro militar.”

<sup>39</sup> In Portuguese: “[d]e posse de caneta e papel, meu ímpeto é contar tudo. Velho reflexo de intelectual imbecil? Pois é, começo a escrever minha autobiografia. Como vê o senhor, a mania já vinha desde então.”

<sup>40</sup> In Portuguese: “aprimorado esquema de comunicação.”

<sup>41</sup> In Portuguese: “ciclo pergunta-choque-grito-resposta ao qual em breve se acrescenta o novo elo.”

evaporate” (Fortes, 2018, p.94).<sup>42</sup> Added to this is the relationship between Salinas and its projection in the narrative, on trying to “give myself, conceive myself for my own benefit, a ‘broad, general and unrestricted amnesty,’ since no one has granted that to me” (Fortes, 2018, p.93).<sup>43</sup>

What we said in the introduction to this study was reaffirmed: the interjections placed in *Retrato Calado* conjure two unavoidable instances, that of language and that of the subject, necessarily articulated by the locution, constituting a reality of discourse. These notes make us return to the minimal pairs /f/alado as in “spoken portrait” and /k/alado as in “silenced portrait,” which we can now more closely analyze. *Retrato Calado* takes the order of a *double piece of writing* in whose verse the “spoken portrait” is presented, established in the beat between Salinas and himself and between Salinas and his possible reader; that is the “silenced portrait,” a lost speech, interwoven by the short-circuit of violence. The rare thing about this relationship is that the facets guarantee, among themselves, their sustaining effects. “Spoken Portrait” assumes “Silenced Portrait” as the object of its testimony by taking it as a logical condition of its existence; the /k/ in *calado* [silenced] removes the /f/ as in *falado* [spoken] from the field of what “officially never existed” (Fortes, 2018, p.94)<sup>44</sup> by semantically bypassing it.

## 2 And between Us and Words, Our Duty to Speak

Based on what we have said so far, we cannot consider Salinas a *perfect witness* in the ways that Agamben proposes. He speaks little of his experience. In truth, publicly, he said nothing. His *Chercher en gémissant* [Research as a cry] is published posthumously; in life, Salinas stared at Gorgon, went back to speak but came back mute; and so, it remained until death. As for being an *authentic witness*, he hesitates on the idea himself. This is what one reads in the passages in which, conjecturing about the reception of his writings, he predicts that

[the] enemies will look at us with contempt: poor man, they will say, to this day still talking about all this. And the traces of this minor

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<sup>42</sup> In Portuguese: “não deixar que tudo se perca, se evapore.”

<sup>43</sup> In Portuguese: “dar a mim mesmo, conceber-me em benefício próprio, uma ‘anistia ampla, geral e irrestrita’, já que ninguém me concede.”

<sup>44</sup> In Portuguese: “oficialmente nunca existiu.”

adventure might have perhaps even been erased from the archives, blurred from the annals and certainly supplanted by thousands of other more exciting stories that repeat, keep repeating themselves on and on, and here I insist on such insignificant events, wanting to pretend important, perhaps seeking compassion from maidens, also full of fury for standing out for showing my wounds, accusatory finger, do not laugh, please, for the pain is serious (Fortes, 2018, p.119).<sup>45</sup>

Antonio Candido (2018) calls *anguished dignity* this subject's hesitation in the face of the legitimacy of his testimony. Every interlocutive scene that this piece of writing establishes dignity and suffering are referents. For example, we mobilized the expression "Mr. Warden, mind the toilet flush..." (Fortes, 2018, p.36),<sup>46</sup> a refrain constantly repeated by Salinas and the other inmates with whom he shares a cell at *OBan* during his first prison term, in 1970. When this is mentioned, the military officer on duty activates the toilet flush, located on the wall of the hall and outside the prison cell. Regarding this "daily" situation, the witness says ironically "[to] lose freedom is to also be deprived of any control over one's own odor and those of others', of the piled-up companions' in the aromatic rooms" (Fortes, 2018, p.36).<sup>47</sup> It was common for the guard to take his time, not listen or be busy with small talk with his accomplices. An experience that Salinas experiences as "[r]uthless infantilization and undesirable intimacy, almost a complicity between victim and executioner, engaged in the same daily reproduction task of celestial mechanics. Infamous promiscuity, an extra element in the crushing process: how to resist this?" (2018, p.36).<sup>48</sup>

After four years of this first situation, and now, imprisoned for the third time, "[i]n the small neighbor cell, next to this new home again imposed on you, in that small cell next door, impossible to peek from here, but just imaginable, someone won't stop

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<sup>45</sup> In Portuguese: "[o]s inimigos nos olharão com desprezo: coitado, dirão, até hoje ainda falando de tudo isso. E os traços da aventura menor já foram talvez até apagados dos arquivos, borrados dos anais e certamente suplantados por milhares de outras histórias mais excitantes que se repetem diuturnamente e eu aqui insistindo sobre tão insignificantes eventos, querendo me fazer de importante, buscando talvez a compaixão das donzelas, enfurecido por distinguir-me na exibição das minhas chagas, dedo em não riste, não riam, por favor, pois a dor é séria."

<sup>46</sup> In Portuguese: "seu guarda, olha a descarga..."

<sup>47</sup> In Portuguese: "[p]erder a liberdade é também ser privado de qualquer controle sobre os odores próprios e alheios, dos companheiros, amontoados nos aromáticos aposentos."

<sup>48</sup> In Portuguese: "[i]nfantilização impiedosa e indesejável intimidade, quase cumplicidade entre vítima e algoz, empenhados na mesma tarefa de reprodução cotidiana da celestial mecânica. Promiscuidade infamante, elemento a mais no processo de trituração: como resistir?"

singing...” (Fortes, 2018, p.87).<sup>49</sup> The chant that echoes through the halls resembles a mysterious ritual.

An ever-lasting moan. Rarely extracted dissonances, mystery of the deep abyss. Among the melodic phrases that are repeated with the monotony of the machine creaking in its articulations, some words suddenly stand out sharply. Whose *primitive mouth* would these archaic bass noises undecidedly in the imitation of some hidden difficult sounds that try to reproduce a lullaby hidden in a corner of a cloistered memory come from? [...] The street organ continues endlessly [...].

— Olê, muié rendera... Lá, lá, rá, ra, ra, ra... grum, grum. Olê, olê, olá... [Brazilian folk song lyrics] (Fortes, 2018, p.88; emphasis added).<sup>50</sup>

The remarks made by the author lead him to the observation that “[b]etween routine and resistance, [a] slow metamorphosis takes place” (Fortes, 2018, p.39).<sup>51</sup> The repeated sounds refer to a *primitive mouth* which echoes the articulations of a monotonous creaking *machine*. The linguistic configuration of Salinas’ comments “create[s] a second level of enunciation, revealing significant purposes over meaning the significance” (Benveniste, 1989, p.66),<sup>52</sup> of which materiality is, firstly, the voice, and, secondly, the writing. Benveniste (1989, 2014) designates this characteristic of language, of returning to itself, as *metalanguage*, affluent of another, broader, semiological property, which is that of *interpretation*: the property of returning to other systems, constituting itself as an interpreter of society (Benveniste, 1989; Rosário, 2018). Flores (2015, p.91), referring to the metalanguage in Benveniste, proposes that, by semantically bypassing the materiality of language, the subject (re)produces knowledge about the economy of its use, whose role is almost ethnographic (in an anthropological sense). Therefore, Salinas’ testimony simultaneously launches an *ethnographic* and *autoethnographic* gesture, in such a way that the subject reconstructs his experience and the experience of the other in language, and, therefore, in culture, making these experiences meaningful. Salinas describes these

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<sup>49</sup> In Portuguese: “[n]a pequena cela ao lado, ao lado deste novo domicílio que te impuseram, de novo, naquela pequena cela ao lado, que não é possível ver daqui, mas só imaginar, alguém não para de cantar...”

<sup>50</sup> In Portuguese: “Lamento-guincho. Dissonâncias raras que se extraem, mistério do profundo abismo. Dentre as frases melódicas que se repetem com a monotonia da máquina rangendo nas suas articulações, algumas palavras, de repente, distinguem-se nitidamente. De que *boca primitiva* partirão os arcaicos ruídos graves que se esforçam, como indecisos na imitação de alguma cantiga que se esconde, difícil de copiar, em um canto da memória enclausurada? [...] O realejo continua, disparado [...]”

— Olê, muié rendera... Lá lá, lá, rá, ra, ra, ra... grum, grum. Olê, olê, olá...

<sup>51</sup> In Portuguese: “[e]ntre a rotina e a resistência, [um]a lenta metamorfose se processa.”

<sup>52</sup> In Portuguese: “cria[m] um segundo nível de enunciação, em que se torna possível sustentar propósitos significantes sobre a significância.”

experiences as an *infantilization* that, among other possibilities, acts as a producer of infamy, leading the subject to a gradual *grinding*. Hence the title of the first chapter: *Cena primitiva* [*Primitive Scene*], of which qualifier reappears in the quote highlighted above to characterize the “mouth”; a signifier that, metonymically, encloses the organ out of which the voice is produced.

Agamben comes to a very close conclusion. Based on Levi’s narratives, the philosopher (1999)<sup>53</sup> identifies at least two subjects engendered by the testimonial process. The first of them is the *superstes*, the one that survived despite the experience, he can talk about it, *but he has nothing relevant to say*; the second is the one who, in Levi’s terms, *looked at the Gorgon*, reached the *bottom*, and who therefore has much to say, but can say nothing because he has succumbed. Faced with this disjunction, Agamben wonders: “which of the two bears witness? *Who is the subject of testimony?*” (1999, p.120; author’s emphasis).<sup>54</sup> To which he replies:

At first it appears that it is the human, the survivor, who bears witness to the inhuman, the *Muselmann*. But if the survivor bears witness for the *Muselmann* – in the technical sense of “behalf of” or “by proxy” (“we speak in their stead, by proxy”) – then, according to the legal principle by which the acts of the delegated are imputed to the delegant, it is in some way the *Muselmann* who bear witness. But this means that the who truly bears witness in the human is the inhuman; it means that the human is nothing other than the agent of the inhuman the one who lends the inhuman a voice. Or, rather, that there is no one who claims the title of “witness” by right. To speak, to be witness, is thus enter into a vertiginous movement in which something sinks to the bottom, wholly desubjectified and silenced, and something subjectified speaks without truly having to say of its own [...] (Agamben, 1999, p.120; author’s emphasis).<sup>55</sup>

The testimony, for Agamben (1999),<sup>56</sup> is constituted as an order in which the one who is destitute of speech lets the survivor speak. This is marked by a constitutive absence that is the impossibility of speaking in the place of the one who has looked into the eyes of the *monstrum* [monster]. Regarding this interdiction “the silenced and the speaking, the inhuman and the human enter into a zone of indistinction in which it is impossible to establish the position of the subject, to identify the ‘imagined substance’ of the ‘I’ and,

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<sup>53</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>54</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>55</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>56</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

along with it, the true witness” (Agamben, 1999, p.120).<sup>57</sup> In *Retrato Calado*, the *vertiginous movement* to which Agamben refers is materially based in the way the subject is inscribed in discourse based on the category of person. It is common for Salinas to be *him*, an objective reference (Benveniste, 1971a),<sup>58</sup> alternately enunciating himself as speaker, *I*, subjecting himself as *I* in the exercise of language. We can see this, representatively, in the following quote:

Naked, completely naked. They force *the patient* to sit on the floor. They tie *my* hands, on which they cover with a cloth for protection, one hand tied against the other. They force *him* to keep *his* knees together, bent and tucked to the chest and wrapped by the tied hands. In the gap between the arms and the knee, they place an iron bar and hang it – they hang *me* – on two trestles. Fast, efficient, well-trained (Fortes, 2018, p.23; emphasis added).<sup>59</sup>

Benveniste points out that “it is literally true that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. If one really thinks about it, one will see that there is no other objective testimony to the identity of the subject except that which he himself thus gives about himself” (Benveniste, 1971, p.226).<sup>60</sup> Salinas, in turn, proposes a shift: the foundation of subjectivity is in the exercise of language, and this is attested by the testimony that the subject prepares about himself – there is no doubt; in the same way, it is from this testimony that the subject gives evidence of his desubjectification, of his *infantilization*. From this perspective, borrowing the Bakhtinian metaphor, the testimony resembles a two-faced Janus who faces two opposite and relationally necessary directions. These directions related to the subjectivation that emerges from a desubjectification and, by way of return from a desubjectification that engenders subjectivity. Translating this in Agamben’s terms, “*the subject of testimony is the one who bears witness to a desubjectification*” (1999, p.120; author's emphasis).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>58</sup> BENVENISTE, É. The Nature of Pronouns. In: BENVENISTE, É. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971a, pp.217-222.

<sup>59</sup> In Portuguese: “Nu, completamente nu. Obrigam *o paciente* a sentar no chão. Amarram-*me* as mãos, que protegem com uma cobertura de pano, uma contra a outra. Forçam-*no* a manter os joelhos unidos, dobrados contra o peito e envolvidos pelos braços amarrados. No vão entre os braços e o joelho enfiam uma barra de ferro e penduram-na – penduram-*me* – em dois cavaletes. Rápidos, eficientes, bem treinados.”

<sup>60</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>61</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

The philosopher's seminal thesis on witness and testimony is elaborated: "human beings are human insofar as they bear witness to the inhuman" (Agamben, 1999, p.121).<sup>62</sup> By his irreducible counterpoint, *the no-man is no-man because men testify that so*. The two pieces of writing, "*retrato /k/alado*" [silenced portrait] and "*retrato /f/alado*" [spoken portrait], articulate the conciliation between man and no-man, at the same time as "[that] which suffocates [him] now, [...] makes [him] refrain from silence and find writing again" (Fortes, 2018, p.118).<sup>63</sup> This is what makes Salinas different from Bauby and Levi. What *remains* in Levi's testimony is the Muslim (Agamben, 1999),<sup>64</sup> that constitutes him and gives authenticity to what is said. What *remains* of Bauby's testimony is the absence of a *speaking position*, which he himself inaugurates (Flores, 2019a). What remains of Salinas' testimony is the loss of himself, marked by/in the muting of his voice, recovered by writing. Hence our initial estrangement when faced with the testimony of a subject who speaks about writing as something that is part of him in parallel with the experience of torture that deprives him of speech. *Is This a Man?*<sup>65</sup> The "turns of the handle [of the electrocution device now bring him to the] new condition of hanging" (Fortes, 2018, p.35)?<sup>66</sup>

Finally, let us return to the third Latin word that Agamben uses to designate the characteristics of the witness. *Autor*. Etymologically, the philosopher seeks the legal meaning of the term, referring to it as the intervention of a tutor who grants authority to someone unable to perform a legally valid act. In this sense, Agamben can relate *testis*, *superstes* and *auctor*:

the three terms that, in Latin, express the idea of testimony all acquire their characteristic physiognomy. If *testis* designates the witness insofar as he intervenes as a third in a suit between two subjects, and if *superstes* indicates the one who has fully lived through an experience and can therefore relate it to others, *auctor* signifies the witness insofar as his testimony always presupposes something – a fact, a thing or a word – that preexists him and whose reality and force must be validated or certified (Agamben, 1999, pp.149-150; author's emphasis).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>63</sup> In Portuguese: "[o] que [o] sufoca agora, [...] faz[-lhe] perder o silêncio e reencontrar a escrita."

<sup>64</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>65</sup> Allusion to the title of the *masterpiece* by Primo Levi, *Is This a Man?*

<sup>66</sup> In Portuguese: As "voltas da manivela [do aparelho de eletrocussão trazem-no agora para a] nova condição de pendurado."

<sup>67</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

It is from this differentiation that Agamben (1999)<sup>68</sup> can conclude that witnessing implies *an act of authorship* and presupposes an essential duality, establishing a necessary relationship and assuming an insufficient or incapable character value. Flores (2019a, p.284; emphasis added)<sup>69</sup> understanding of the philosopher's thesis is that "if the *auctor*'s act completes that of the incapable, it is right to consider that this incapability (represented by the 'Muslim') pre-exists the *auctor*'s act, therefore, it integrates such an act, giving meaning to the act of a *witness auctor*."

Agamben (1999)<sup>70</sup> sees in Levi's accounts a testimony that, paradoxically, articulates the impossibility of saying everything, since the survivor is not the *authentic witness*, with the possibility of saying something about his own experience. About Bauby's experience, in turn, Flores tells us (2019a, p.285)<sup>71</sup> that "it cannot be referred to as a 'Muslim'," which would lead him to understand *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* as a narrative deprived of an *auctor*. Disagreeing with this reading, the linguist returns to the *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society* and retrieves some terms from *Book V – Law*, entitled *The Censor and the Auctoritas*, in which Benveniste explores the meanings of terms relating to political and religious institutions. This is the case of *censor*, a Roman authority whose role was fundamentally normative, and of *auctor*, name of agent of *augeo*, "to increase, to add" (Benveniste, 2016).<sup>72</sup> About *auctor*, specifically, says Benveniste:

[t]he term *auctor* is applied to the person who in all walks of life "promotes," takes an initiative, who is the first to start some activity, who founds, who guarantees, and finally who is the "author." The notion expressed by *auctor* is diversified according to the different contexts in which it is used, but they all go clearly back to the primary sense "cause to appear, promote." This is how the abstract *auctoritas* acquired its full force: it is the act of production or the quality with which a high magistrate is endowed, or the validity of a testimony or the power of initiative, etc., each of these special applications being connected with one of the semantic functions of *auctor* (Agamben, 2016, p.429; author's emphasis).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>69</sup> In Portuguese: "se o ato de auctor completa o do incapaz, pode-se também considerar que essa incapacidade (representada pelo 'muçulmano') preexiste ao ato de auctor, logo, o integra, dando sentido ao ato de um auctor testemunha."

<sup>70</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>71</sup> In Portuguese: "não pode ser referida a um 'muçulmano'."

<sup>72</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

<sup>73</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

In view of the meanings reconstructed by the *Dictionary*, Flores (2019a) has enough support to state that Bauby is an *auctor*: the witness promotes a position of speech that did not precede him. “A primordial aspect is added to this: Bauby’s testimony does not concern a collectivity; on the contrary, it finds a place in the solitude of an experience that is his and no one else’s” (Flores, 2019a, p.286).<sup>74</sup>

What about Salinas’ testimony, is there an *auctor*? The first issue to be observed is that *Retrato Calado* has a constitutive impossibility, but it, too, is not related to a Muslim, as in Levi’s accounts. We could obliterate the piece of writing without a doubt, like the countless people who disappeared or were murdered during the Entrepreneurial-Military Dictatorship, but it is a textually marginal element. Unlike Bauby, Salinas does not “inaugurate,” he does not promote a place of singular speech. On the other hand, like Levi, his testimony concerns a collectivity (all those understood as subversive to the dictatorial political system), and this differs from Bauby’s in the solitude. Is this an *auctor*? Let’s see the words of Salinas:

[the] chief of police conducts the operations as the conductor of an orchestra. If he does not properly appreciate the dubious content of a distressed response and, irritated, he raises his voice a little higher, the executioners around him and sensitive to the slightest oscillations of his voice converted into a baton, put their vigorous instruments into action. The slightly higher tone demands a stronger slap on the face as if it were a syllogistic consequence. It’s easy to imagine what happens when a man gets angry, how it might happen, honestly speaking, rarely in my case, when the conductor gets excited, when he’s really angry and enraged, he expresses his feelings with a melodious “you, son of a bitch.” For example (Fortes, 2018, p.50).<sup>75</sup>

In this passage, as well as in others that we have already seen, the witness refers to the torture sessions he went through as a “machine,” a “process” and now, as an

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<sup>74</sup> In Portuguese: “A isso se acresce um aspecto primordial: o testemunho de Bauby não diz respeito a uma coletividade; ao contrário disso, ele encontra lugar na solidão de uma experiência que é sua e de mais ninguém.”

<sup>75</sup> In Portuguese: “[o] delegado rege as operações como o chefe de orquestra. Se não aprecia devidamente o conteúdo dúbio de uma aflita resposta e, irritado, eleva um pouco mais a voz, os executantes, dispostos à sua volta e sensíveis às menores oscilações da voz convertida em batuta, põem em ação seus vigorosos instrumentos. O tom um pouco mais elevado reclama sonora bofetada como se se tratasse de uma consequência silogística. É fácil imaginar o que acontece quando o homem se zanga, como ocorreria, verdade seja dita, poucas vezes no meu caso, quando o regente se exalta, quando fica mesmo bravo pra valer e encolerizado exprime seus sentimentos com um melodioso “seu filho da puta”. Por exemplo.”

“orchestra.” Among the three metaphors, an effect of collectiveness is common, or, better, of “depersonalization”: the “orchestra” is not the effect of the chief of police’s “baton,” but a harmonic whole articulated by “vigorous instruments.” Unlike a common orchestra, whose goal is to produce melody, the *orchestra* described by Salinas has the duty to enhance responses. “But the abyss between literature and the electric shock, between argument and beating, is immense, in reality; and what to respond to the beating, how to counter-argument the [electric] discharge if not by screaming or shitting in bulks?” (Fortes, 2018, p.29).<sup>76</sup>

In the vertigo of one’s testimony, the subject seeks to apprehend the “argument” of the electrocution, the beating, the slapping. It seems to us that this is the project that aligned all his work: to support significant purposes about torture. For this, if we take Benveniste as it is (1989), torture should be a symbolic system, be it semiotic (to be recognized) or semantic (to be understood), so that the language could interpret it. Even Salinas seems to reach a limit, whose basis is in the “question-shock-scream-answer cycle to which another connection soon is added” (Fortes, 2018, p.56).<sup>77</sup> The only reason for torture is to make people talk, even if it is necessary to *grind* the subject until nothing, but a *primitive, infantilized* mouth remains, and therefore more subject to *auctoritas* (authority).

As we saw in the *Dictionary*, *auctoritas* is the abstract noun for the agent *auctor* which, in turn, does not derive from the attested sense of *augeo*, e.g.: “increase, make something *which existed before* bigger” (Benveniste, 2016, p.327; author’s emphasis),<sup>78</sup> but from an older one, e.g.: “the act of producing from within itself; a creative act which causes something to arise from a nutrient medium and which is the privilege of the gods or the great natural forces, but not of men” (Benveniste, 2016, p.429).<sup>79</sup> It is from this first sense of *augeo* that *auctor* and *auctoritas* derive. According to Benveniste, the word spoken with *auctoritas* brings about a change in the world, creates something, makes it exist. The *auctor*, thus, only engenders a speaking position if invested with *authority*.

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<sup>76</sup> In Portuguese: “Mas o abismo, na realidade, é imenso entre a literatura e o choque, entre o argumento e a porrada; e o que responder à porrada, como contra-argumentar à descarga [elétrica] se não pelo grito ou pela rajada de fezes?”

<sup>77</sup> In Portuguese: “ciclo pergunta-choque-grito-resposta ao qual em breve se acrescenta o novo elo.”

<sup>78</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

<sup>79</sup> For reference, see footnote 17.

Salinas is not an *auctor*, but he is invested with authority. Let us explain that: Agamben (1999)<sup>80</sup> sustains that testimony is an act of authorship that inaugurates a unity-difference between man and non-man; Flores (2019a) understands that testimony is engendered by the inauguration of a speaking position. We agree with both, in a way, but *Retrato Calado* demands a reformulation of the problem: an authority, an *external* thing, “promotes” the living individual into a subject by placing one in a position where one’s obliged to speak. By logical precedence, the *thing* precedes the subject and, therefore, the subject does not inaugurate a position, it occupies the one that the thing turns to existence. Hence the restlessness of Salinas: “has repeated coincidence robbed me of the word, ate up my speech, cut off my tongue? And now, it summons my oar-fingers, my anchor pen, my vision of wonder to sail in the Sea of Coincidences” (2018, p.118).<sup>81</sup> Paradoxically, the experience that deprives him of his voice is the same that urges him to write.

#### 4 ██████████: The Testimony and What’s Left (to Tell)

At the end of this text, it is time to go back to the titles of its sections. The reader has certainly noticed that these are Mario Cesariny’s verses, precursor of the Portuguese surrealist movement, who in *Pena Capital* [Capital Penalty] (1957) welcomes us to Elsinore. According to Cuadrado (2002), there is an allusion to act II, scene II of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, in which the protagonist welcomes his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in his castle with the words *You Are Welcome to Elsinore*. Summoned by the King due to the “madness” of the prince, they would be destined for the role of executioners, but, in the end, they become but victims, without any awareness of that. It does not surprise us that “[the] aforementioned work by the English dramatist was in fact repeatedly invoked to obliquely signal the misery of Portugal’s Salazarist prison” (Cuadrado, 2002, p.282).<sup>82</sup>

Elsinore, taken by Cesariny as an aestheticization of a Portugal considered as a dungeon by totalitarianism, marks a fundamental cleavage in discourse, a gap between *us*

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<sup>80</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>81</sup> In Portuguese: “a coincidência repetida me roubou a palavra, comeu a fala, cortou a língua? E agora, convoca os meus dedos-remos, minha caneta âncora, minha visão de espanto para navegarem no Mar das Coincidências.”

<sup>82</sup> In Portuguese: “[a] referida obra do dramaturgo inglês foi aliás reiteradamente invocada para assinalar obliquamente a miséria da ‘prisão’ do Portugal salazarista.”

and *words*. This space, where something is not yet, but could become, is occupied by the “walled” ones, the ones turned mute, “who keep their secret and their position,” and “the children sitting down and waiting for their time and their precipice”,<sup>83</sup> who are left with the “duty to speak.” Even though in very different realities, Cesariny and Salinas, like no one else, perceive and apprehend the split between man and word. Therefore, the authors help us justify the reason we have to simultaneously characterize *Retrato Calado* as a testimony and as an experience of language. In the words of Agamben (1993, p.6),<sup>84</sup> to carry out “the *experimentum linguae*, however, is to venture into a perfectly empty dimension (the *reader Raum* of the Kantian concept-limit) in which one can encounter only the pure exteriority of language, which ‘etalement du langage dans son et brut’ of which Foucault speaks.”

About the gesture we have undertaken, we agree with Flores: “a linguistics as anthropological knowledge does not look at ‘pathology’ [trauma], but at the terms of man’s presence in language” (2019a, p.300).<sup>85</sup> Faced with the exercise of relating the witness, testimony and experience in the production of subjectivity, we come to the consideration that the subject is the process of production of an enunciative position, and not a closed category. Or, in the words of Agamben (1999, p.112; author’s emphasis),<sup>86</sup> “the *self* is what is produced as a remainder in the double movement – active and passive – of auto-affection. This is why subjectivity constitutively has the form of subjectification and desubjectification.”

The logic that structures *Retrato Calado* points to a new reading of the Agambenian thesis that the *subject of testimony is the one who testifies to a desubjectivation*: Levi constitutes himself as a subject when he testifies to the Muslim’s desubjectivation; Salinas constitutes himself as a subject when he testifies to his own desubjectivation. This idea reminds us of the preface to the work, in which Candido (2018) points to a process of reconciliation between Salinas and the past. It is just the

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<sup>83</sup> In Portuguese: “que guardam o seu segredo e a sua posição” and “as crianças sentadas à espera do seu tempo e do seu precipício.”

<sup>84</sup> AGAMBEN, G. *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*. Translated by Liz Heron. London/New York: Verso, 1993.

<sup>85</sup> In Portuguese: “uma linguística como conhecimento antropológico não olha para a ‘patologia’ [o trauma], mas para os termos da presença do homem na língua.”

<sup>86</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

opposite to us. Salinas seeks to guarantee, through the *repetition/recovery* of memory in writing, the documents of his own presence to an experience that manifestly escapes him.

[T]hey had almost managed to break me, with me being the only resource, as a last antidote and anti-poison, the machine gun of the writing, the alignment of the words, the plow on the white sheet of paper, the inscription as an answer. It is here, at this very moment, that the fight takes place (Fortes, 2018, p.116).<sup>87</sup>

Far from a reconciliation, Salinas' testimony reflects an unavoidable non-coincidence with himself. Here are the bases for an *exorcism* of writing that is renewed at every moment.

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<sup>87</sup> In Portuguese: “[E]les quase tinham conseguido me quebrar, restando-me agora, como único recurso, como último antídoto e contraveneno, a metralhadora de escrever, o alinhamento das palavras, o arado sobre a folha branca, a inscrição como resposta. É aqui, neste exato momento, que se trava a luta.”

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