

## ABSTRACT

*The crisis of the idea of progress in contemporary Portuguese literature - in the works of selected writers at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. Between Philosophy and Literature*

The aim of this dissertation is to try to solve the problem of the crisis of the idea of technological progress and, consequently, of the inseparable representation of modernity in the Portuguese literature of the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. This theme is inseparable from the broader question of (post)modernity and its forms.

At the same time, these time frames make it possible to trace the main sources for questioning the idea of progress and the various attempts to deal with it in Portuguese literature in novels such as those of Vergílio Ferreira's Vergílio Ferreira's (1906 – 1996) *Aparição* (1959), *Estrela Polar* (1962), *Alegria Breve* (1965), *Nítido Nulo* (1971), noble prize winner José Saramago's (1922 – 2010) *Ensaio Sobre a Cegueira* (1995), *A Caverna* (2000), *O Homem Duplicado* (2002), *Ensaio Sobre a Lucidez* (2004) and Gonçalo M. Tavares's *Um Homem: Klaus Klump* (2003), *A Máquina de Joseph Walser* (2004), *Jerusalém* (2004) e *Aprender a Rezar na Era da Técnica* (2007) Gonçalo M. Tavares (born 1970) which form the corpus of the present work.

The methodology of describing selected works by the cited authors that relate to the problem of the collapse of the idea of progress and the optimism associated with it in Portuguese (post) modernist literature is based on conceptual tools in the field of the philosophy of technology used by thinkers such as Lewis Mumford, Ernst Jünger, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, Theodore W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Zygmunt Bauman.

We are particularly interested in how these Portuguese writers gradually question the positive aspect of progress, heralding the end of grand narratives while seeking new ones that might answer their troubling questions about the forms modernity has taken.

The first chapter, entitled *A (pós) modernidade como história literária (Postmodernism as Literary History)*, is methodological. It focuses on presenting issues related to the chosen methodology in the field of philosophy of technology and introduces its basic themes such as the machine and its typology, instrumental rationality and efficiency. At the same time, it outlines the theoretical and temporal framework for the novels analysed in the thesis, pointing

to their historical roots in the processes that Portuguese culture and society underwent from the second half of the twentieth century onwards.

The second *O romance português revisitado - o fim das utopias do futuro (A Portuguese Novel Re-read - the Dawn of Future Utopias)* focuses on the critical reception of the works of Vergílio Ferreira, José Saramago and Gonçalo M. Tavares as identified by Polish and Portuguese researchers. At the same time, the general theme of the novels belonging to this body of work is presented, with particular attention paid to the literary method and philosophical issues in these novels.

In the third chapter, entitled *Os desafios da racionalidade no terceiro milénio (Challenges of Rationality in the Third Millennium)*, the methodological tools developed in the first part of the dissertation are used to analyse issues related to the critical treatment of the idea of technological progress in the novels of Ferreira, Saramago and Tavares. Both the internal organisation of the text and the issues raised are examined, distinguishing four basic questions related to the fictional literary space, the machine typology, the problem of instrumental rationality and the strategies proposed to overcome "machine domination" in the analysed diegesis.

The last part of the dissertation, entitled *Conclusões finais (Final Conclusions)*, is a synthesis of the themes developed regarding the critical concepts of the idea of technological progress made by Portuguese writers. It refers to the narrative processes and transformations that problematise the presence of technology in (post-)modern culture and society, as well as to their fictional connections within the selected corpus and the novelities of Portuguese literature *in statu nascendi*.