

“Who will not admire the advances of this century?”

Eça de Queirós, in “Civilização”

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Abstract

The text starts by discussing the concept of progress by anchoring it to the concept of linear, chronological and historical time, due to alphabetic writing, as opposed to circular, smooth-running, repetitive time, characteristic of illiterate societies. In a second phase, it analyses the moment when linear time goes into crisis and, with it, also the idea of progress. This situation, that late 19th century and early 20th century European modernity faces, evokes, to illustrate it, two texts by some other Portuguese writers: Eça de Queirós' and its tale “Civilização” and Fernando Pessoa and its poem “Ode Triunfal”. At last, it examines the still persisting effects of that crisis on contemporaneity, that speed and acceleration are the most visible manifestations.

Key words: Linear time, crisis, progress, modernity, speed