



Narratives in the Anthropocene era

Charles Travis, Vittorio Valentino (Eds.)

Extinction, atavism and inevitability: life after collapse.

A study of The Eternal Adam by Jules Verne and of The Death of the Earth by J.-H. Rosny aîné.

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Abstract

The goal of this chapter is to examine two texts from the early twentieth century addressing problems related to the Anthropocene Era -*The Eternal Adam* by Jules Verne and *The Death of the Earth* by J.-H. Rosny aîné- in order to understand the effects the environmental issues has had on the imagination of writers since the XIXth century. Through a study of these texts I will demonstrate in a dynamic way how these two authors depict collapse from the point of view of one individual, while questioning the destiny of humanity as a whole. I will examine the different characters' perceptions of the cataclysm which is at the heart of each narrative, as well as the depiction of matters related to evolution and regression. I will also comment on the pessimistic tone of these texts and link their common themes together. While I will go back and forth between these novellas throughout three sections, I will also link them with canonical texts about ecology to show how their views on the relationship between man and nature, progress and science, are still very much relevant today. Indeed, we will see that the way they question industrial growth reminds us that since the Industrial Revolution we have always been a society that struggles with its natural habitat. In conclusion, we will understand that these novellas show that the fear of climate change is ancient, but also that the anxiety related to the collapse of our modern world has only increased since the beginning of the XXth century.

Keywords: Jules Verne, Rosny aîné, ecocriticism, collapse, Anthropocene

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