“It was in 1915 the old world ended,” asserted D. H. Lawrence in his 1923 novel, Kangaroo. To him, the old world was iconically represented by London. Therefore, he continued: “In the winter 1915-1916 the spirit of the old London collapsed; the city, in some way, perished, perished from being a heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors” (216). The apocalyptic image of London which Lawrence depicts in the passage reveals his familiarity with the Book of Revelation, which he himself acknowledges in his Introduction to Frederick Carter’s The Dragon of the Apocalypse (1931), remembering the years when he attended the Congregationalist chapel in Eastwood. Lawrence’s description of London during WW I as an apocalyptic place represents not only the devastating effects of the war, but also the destructive effects of industrialization coupled with the collapse of human integrity. Lawrence’s view on the imminent end of the world was not singular. It was shared by Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Woolf, Stein. It was also shared by the Futurists and by Wyndham Lewis in art. It had been prophesied by Dickens, George Eliot, Hardy, Trollope in fiction and by Nietzsche in philosophy.

What made Lawrence pronounce the end of humanity and of the natural

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world which had been so much cherished by the Romantics in the nineteenth century? What triggered the rise of environmental consciousness in most of his fiction and his sharp criticism of the industrialist town in a world facing progress and technological advancement? The celebration of the arts and crafts in an ongoing industrializing world was the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London which not only showed the peak of British industrialism, but also promoted steel and glass as the future building materials meant to replace the traditional wood and brick, much closer in composition to nature than the cold, artificial steel. Moreover, the opening of factories in urban areas, the expansion of the railway throughout the country, the extraction of coal in the collieries led to a permanent change in the oppositional pairs connected with the distinction between nature and culture, such as country versus town, farming versus industry. The shift in focus to the right-slash term of the opposition (culture, town, industry) destabilized the dichotomy and created a paradigm shift in the positive and negative meanings of the traditional pairs mentioned above. Thus, while artists, like the Futurists, celebrated the break with the past, the culture of the machine and the imminence and importance of war, looking at the right-slash terms solely as representing progress and civilization, others (like Nietzsche and the Modernists) foresaw a chaotic world with an apocalyptic ending,foregrounding the negative dimension of the same terms.

The way out with the Futurists, according to Marinetti’s *Futurist Manifesto* (1909) was the complete erasure of the old world through war (“the only cure for the world,” 51) and the creation of a new world with no museums and libraries, morality, feminism, but glorifying