The life and death struggle which Captain Christopher Tietjens wages against the irrational and destructive forces in Parade's End is representative of the destructive aspect of war—destructive because of the changes that it affected in the socio-cultural and human contexts. Walter Allen very aptly summarises these drastic changes:

After the First World War, the age that had ended in July 1914 seemed as remote as the far side of the moon. The War split the landscape of time like an enormous catastrophe obliterating long established boundaries, blowing sky-high landmarks that for years had been taken for granted. It lay like an unbridgeable chasm between the present and the past, so that present and past seemed almost laughably different in kind. It set a gulf between the young who had fought it, and the old who stayed at home. What had seemed certainties, all the assumptions nurtured in Britain by a hundred years of virtual peace...were exposed as illusions. The war had speeded up social change as it, had never been speeded by before... Nothing was as it was before.
Fertility gave way to barrenness, spontaneity to selfishness, purposefulness to meaninglessness, value based life to absolute valulessness. This complete degeneration of the human mind was the result of the devastating effects of the great War. It also signalled the death of the old Victorian order - of the old aristocracy; its marked eccentricities; grace and dignity. This ultimate doom ushered in chaos in the otherwise, ordered lives of the people. Virility gave way to perpetual impotency and there was active inertness all around. Evelyn Waugh, very ruefully, portrays the passing of this old order, where:

...women folks well gowned in rich and durable stuff, their menfolk ablaze with orders, people who had represented their country in foreign places, people of decent and temperate life... unaffected, unembarrassed and unassuming, unambitious people of independent judgement and marked eccentricities... brave... people that fine phalanx of the passing order...

With the passing of the old order, the younger generation of the new order could not arrange its life properly. The two generations, therefore, just could not get along and were always in conflict with each other. While one suppresses, the other in order not to be suppressed, opposes it. And ultimately it is the young who emerge triumphant and powerful, clinging together in full force to overthrow Victorianism. They are hardened by the
inevitable criticism of their incorrigible and uncomprehending elders. Their cohesiveness depends upon inventing new games to outrage taboos. This steep decline in high culture is inevitable and Waugh categorically states that we must be reconciled to living in a culture inferior to the one we received as our heritage and to witnessing its continual decay, because he found the younger generation living in a vacuum, "...there was nothing for the younger generation to rebel against, except the widest conception of more decency... The result in many cases is the perverse and aimless dissipation..."

Aldous Huxley attributes this aimless dissipation or pointlessness of modern life to "mechanomorphic cosmology of the modern science", which regards the universe "as a great machine pointlessly grinding its way towards ultimate stagnation and death". Huxley lays down: 

"...men are tiny offshoots of the universal machine, running down to their own private death... They move through life hollow with pointlessness, trying to fill the void within them by external stimuli, newspaper reading, daydreaming at the films, radio, music and chatter, the playing and above all watching of games, 'good times' of every sort... Disillusion, fatigue and cynicism...the sense of pointlessness became a yawning abyss that demanded to be filled with even better 'good times'. But good times are not a meaning or a
purpose; the void could never be filled by them, because there was no way to go back to good times. It was impossible to go back and retrieve the past glory. Life, therefore, became a hopeless muddle. In order to give meaning to their lives... they sought for diversion and satisfaction in the interests and pleasures of private life. At a popular level their attitude led often to cheap hedonism, a cheap cynicism, an equally cheap sentimentalism.

We find that the deeply ingrained habits of work and leisure erode giving way to violence, freakish behaviour and trendy bohemianism. This gave birth to a relatively less compact society - fluid and drifting, with its people becoming selfishly individualistic and narcissistic.

Because of the violent convulsions of the war period and, "...a great deal of cant in 1920's; cant in particular about freedom (meaning especially freedom of sexual behaviour) about 'youth' and about 'the old men who led us in to the war", the English society sank into a state of complete listlessness. The sense of exhaustion and lassitude, furthered by hedonism, marked the beginning of a dismal phase of stagnation all around. It was hastened by the maltreatment meted out to the "returned heroes" of the Great War. These young people, who had survived the ordeal simple because they were not fated to
die, or be consumed — in war, shrank inwards initially, but later on became a part of this drifting society and its valulessness. In the urban milieu that so emerged in a changed world, there was no permanence of hopes and values, religion and politics both were a farce. In such a demonic world of disorder, the individual not only rebelled against tradition and codes of decency, but also became avowed follower of senseless sensuality. This mindless drift of the younger generations is deprecated in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* by the Prime Minister, who says:

I don't understand them, and I don't want to. They had a chance after the war that no generation has ever had. There was a whole civilization to be saved and remade — all they seem to do is play the fool... its only human nature to run a bit loose when one's young. But there is something wanton about these young people today.

'Wanton' because it became a way of life with these young people, whom Fraser calls "The youth". Frustrated and disillusioned, exhausted and pent up, "the Youth" found it hard to channelise its energies to a constructive end for want of proper direction and leadership. They sought an easy outlet for the same in hedonistic pursuits. If it had cathartic effect on "the youth" is arguable, but it certainly did provide them some relief from the eternal boredom with which they had to put up, in the postwar period. Wyndham Lewis in his novel *The Apes of God* and
in polemical essay 'The Down of Youth', "saw behind it a
cult of immaturity, which... was being encouraged by
sinister interests for their own ends".

This cult of youth is satirised by Wyndham Lewis,
Evelyn Waugh and Aldous Huxley in their novels. The three
novelists present the absolute degradation of man in the
postwar world, wherein, the war-weariness of the age seeks
to amuse itself through heartlessness, blasphemy and sexual
promiscuity. Aldous Huxley, in his novels, endeavours to
expose the meaninglessness of these ephemeral pleasures
that had rocked the postwar world. The subject matter of
his novels, thus became, "...the interior life—the life of
the mind, and the part of life in which moral principle
operates, rather than the external life, where class
clash..."

As a result, we donot have any gruesome pictures of
war as a battlefield in his novels, nor are there any
militaristic details of how the war was conducted, as found
in Death of a Hero and Parade's End. Moreover, Huxley
belonged to the group of writers, which had such
illustrious members as E.M.Forster, T.S.Eliot, Edith
Sitwell and Virginia Woolf, who, though did not participate
in the war as such, yet witnessed the catastrophe, and the
resultant change that came with the crumbling of the old
order. They did not merely view it with disgust, but also tried to seek a cure for the society's malaise— the spiritual sickness. Karl and Magalaner point out that:

The ills of the modern world, so consciously dissected by every major novelist, when complemented by Huxley's own disgust with life create an inferno-like atmosphere and meaninglessness unique in the contemporary English novel...

The two critics further observe:

Apparently the key to Huxley's interpretation of the twists and turns of the twentieth century is 'disgust'—disgust for life, for people as individuals, even for ideas, which themselves, he recognises, must eventually fail. Disgust, not love, pity or compassion is central to *Crome Yellow, Antic Hay, Point Counter Point, Brave New World, Eyeless in Gaza*,

This disgust in life made Huxley seek a remedy for the futility, hypocrisy, cynicism, frustration, moral vacuity, disillusionment, and ephemeral pleasures of the narcissistic western man, in the process earning for himself the title of 'A Cynical Salvationist'. The desirable way of living which Huxley attempts to seek, is to be found in the Vedantic Doctrine of Non-attachment. This awareness and understanding of the dilemma of the modern man actively busied Huxley in his pursuit of remedying the ills of the postwar world. The attempt is
lauded by Ifor Evans, when he says:

"Aldous Huxley is the writer most representative of the generations who lived between the wars. Others may have a greater creative power...but no one was so aware of the ultimate problems of the time and approached them with such a wide equipment of knowledge and understanding. His novels and criticism are a mirror in which the age could perceive itself with its shifting hopes and disillusionments, the changes from the harsh gaiety of the twenties to the solemn acceptance of the thirties that tragedy is approaching.

It became possible because Huxley was deeply involved in all that went round him. He reacted to the changing situation of the world, and its problems of unemployment, economic disparities, and last of all the changing position of man in a world that had become thickly populated. This awareness on the part of Aldous Huxley provided him with a vision, which enabled him to express "...with admirable skill the disillusionment with war and with the society that produced it; which characterized the Twenties and ripened through the Depression."

The postwar England is, therefore, bitterly exposed in the novels of Huxley. This bitter disillusionment, with its accompanying moral recklessness in a postwar era, was the direct offshoot of the destructive aspect of the Great
War—by way of having created a void in the lives of the people. It became impossible to bridge this chasm because the past had nothing to offer, the future was obscure and the present absolutely uncertain and chaotic. The resultant uncertainties of life only aggravated the malady, and the younger generation in the postwar world grew skeptical of everything, including its own existence.

Peter Bowering, too, attributes moral degradation, so vehemently revealed by Huxley in his novels, to the destructive role of science in the life of man:

It is no coincidence that... a mounting sense of disillusionment should have overshadowed the writings of at least a few of the sensitive minds of the last hundred and fifty years. To the moralist, concerned with the ideas, the growth of the scientific, non-human attitude to the facts of human experience was always a potential threat to value... by the nineteen twenties a mood of dissatisfaction and futility seemed the only answer to a view of life which had apparently stripped away the last vestiges of moral life.

This eventually resulted in destabilising of the society, and the sense of permanence of things that had dominated the prewar world. Henceforth, the outstanding features of modern life became the bankruptcy, the proven futility, of everything that is sound under the name of western civilization.
The residual meaninglessness stands for the moral vacuity which dominated the human mind in the postwar world. Huxley grows cynical and realizes the futility of all human endeavour, which was bound to usher in yet another era of pain, anxiety and moral predicament. The characters, in his novels, at times, have morbid desire for death. Coleman in _Antic Hay_ voices this cynicism, "The blind leading the blind. Ah, if only there were a ditch, a crevasse, a great hole full of stinging centipedes and dung. How gleefully I should lead you all into it." What other proof one would like to have of this heightened perversity of the postwar life?

The homosapiens in Huxleyan world behave no more as homosapiens, but as satyrs, clowns and demons. Arrogance and impertinence characterize these individuals. They have their own obsessions and beliefs, which they would love to see enforced on others; thereby giving rise to a society which only dwarfs rather than enhances people. Bereft of all spontaneity, they seek shelter in the realm of ideas and derive sadistic pleasure out of it. It is the only natural diet for them. The immediate aim is to save their existence rather than live life. In doing so, the instinct of self preservation leaves them high and dry to the world around— with all its beauty and ugliness. These "blind" not only fail to see the other aspect of the existence but remain mute and totally indifferent to what goes on around them. Coleman's outbursts in the novel are evidence:
Does it occur to you... that at this moment we are walking through the midst of seven million distinct and separate individuals, each with distinct and separate lives and all completely indifferent, to our existence? Seven million people, each one of whom thinks himself quite as important as each one of us does. Millions of them are now sleeping in the empested atmosphere. Hundreds of thousands of couples are at this moment engaged in mutually caressing one another in a manner too hideous to be thought of... Thousands of women are now on the throes of parturition, and of both sexes, thousands are dying of the most diverse and appalling diseases or simply because they have lived too long. Thousands have over-eaten, thousands have not had enough to eat and they are all alive, all unique and separate and sensitive, like you and me. It's horrible thought. (p.61).

In order to avoid the intrusion of reality these characters circumscribe themselves and restrict their movements, actions and interactions to their group only. Thus they shut their eyes to the impending dangers. This distancing from life is ultimately bound to result in absolute failure. Let us not forget that Aldous Huxley has set up the plot of his novel against the variegated backdrop of the London of early 20's. London rather than
the country house is the setting. It is through the portrayal of this urban milieu that Huxley is able to reveal the decadence, the pain and the suffering that had come to characterize the lives of the people in the postwar world.

No doubt, pain and suffering are universal, but these assume gigantic proportions and become more intense among the lowly placed people in the novels of Aldous Huxley. Whereas, it reveals the true nature of the human beings, it also shows how deep rooted is the class hatred. The scene at the all-night coffee stall in Antic Hay, portrays the pathetic plight of the carter "whose face was sallow and there was an air of peculiar listlessness and hopelessness about his misery" (p.68). Because of malaria, the poor carter had developed a trouble where of, lifting jobs could no more be carried on by him. Unemployed, he travels with his wife on foot to Portsmouth to get a job:

I couldn't find a job 'ere and' ving been workin' on my own, my own master like, couldn't get unemployment pay. So when we 'eard of jobs at Portsmouth we thought we'd try to get one, even if it did mean walk in there. (p.70-71).

But the conditions donot warrant any job because "more than two hundred come for three vacancies". Consequently, the carter is left with no option but to walk back again. His plight further worsens, as he narrates," Took us four days it did, this time. She was very bad on the way, very bad.
Being nearly six months gone. Our first it is. Things will be "arder still, when it comes". (p.71). Deeply moved by this sad tale of the carter the people from the lower class show their deep concern and humanity for the couple, pile their earnings to raise five pounds to help carter get back to his place.

Sympathy which is the hallmark of the poor people and stands them in good stead, is found absolutely wanting in the people of affluent class. Instead they develop a very cold malice and contemptible hatred for the poor. Bruin Opps echoes this class hatred and is the spokesman of the group.

I loathe them. I hate every poor, or ill, or old cant's abide them; they make me positively sick.

"Quilk aine biennee", piped Mr. Mercaptan. "And how well and frankly you express what we all feel and lack the courage to say. (p.67).

These people, well insulated by the comforts of money, food and drink, seek refuge in intellectual conversation and grow sick at the very thought of disease and growing old. Unable to accept the stark bitter realities of life, they drift into listlessness. Since they lack the sagacity, vision, moral courage and faith of Lord Buddha - the capacity to see beyond, they are destined to writhe like worms. They seek delight in hedonistic pursuits. This is what is being attempted by Mrs Viveash on Shearwater at the time of the carter episode.
Except for Gumbril, no other member of the group is moved at the sad plight of carter and his wife. When Gumbril says, "It's appalling that human beings should have to live like that worse than dogs," Shearwater simply dismisses this off by saying, "Dogs have nothing to complain of. Nor guinea pigs nor rats. It's these blasted anti-vivisection maniacs who make all the fuses." (p.73).

On his way home afterwards, Gumbril reflects on the infinite variety of human suffering and misery:

...there were the murderers hanged at eight-o'clock, while one was savouring almost with voluptuous consciousness, the final dream-haunted does. There was the phthistical char-woman who used to work at his father's house, until she got too weak and died. There were the lovers who turned on the gas and the ruined shopkeepers jumping in front of trains. (p.74).

It is the appalling social scenario which Aldous Huxley portrays in Antić Hay. The pain, the torture and the agony of the battlefield is carried over into the lives of the individuals in the postwar world, where melancholy prevails all around, with,

All the legless soldiers grinding barrel organs, all the hawkers of toys stamping their leaky boots in the gutters of the strand; at the corner of the Curistor street and Chancery Lane, the old woman with matches, for ever holding to
her left eye a handkerchief as yellow and dirty as the winter fog... (p.74).

The characters in Huxleyan fiction are melancholic because they live in a fractured culture of the postwar European society, which had left them "imbeciles;" "weak silent man" and "morons". With the traditional values of life, love, marriage having lost their meaning and social relevance, the resultant all pervasive spirit of cynicism, plays havoc with everything considered to be sacrosanct. This moral degradation is a continuous source of pain and suffering among human beings especially, "When one individual comes into intimate contact with another, she or he of course, as the case may be- must almost inevitably receive or inflict suffering."

Because it is a diseased world, the absence of a comprehensive philosophy of life results in the destabilising of the social organization and the characters are always leading a life of aimless drift. Lassitude and weariness characterise the individuals, who are fated to suffer innumerable sufferings throughout life. They grow restless and move from one place to another in search of a meaning. Since purposeful living was a distant dream in the postwar world, they resign themselves to utter meaninglessness, which they accept as their fate and seek solace in the gratification of their sensual desires. The spiritual void only furthers their sufferings. C.S. Ferns says:

Nor do pain and suffering merely remain in the
background: they are realities which impinge on even the most theatrically Peacockian of the characters...Suffering is a reality from which no-one, no matter how eccentric or comical their behaviour, is immune...

Discontentment is the natural product of this universal suffering, which had come to stay with the people of a disintegrated postwar world. It becomes a way of life with them and they refrain from thinking about it any more. Disgusted both with themselves and their environment, they become hedonists and busy themselves in materialistic pursuits. This futility of the social activities is echoed by Chelifer, when he questions his own existence, in Those Barren Leaves.

Why am I working here?
In order that Jewish stockbrokers may exchange their Rovers for Armstrong – Siddeleys, buy the latest. Jaaz records and spend the week-end at Brighton.

Why do I go on working here?
In the hope that I too some day be able to spend the week-end at Brighton.

What is Progress?
Progress is stock-brokers, more stockbrokers and still more stockbrokers. On what condition can I live a life of contentment?
On the condition that you don't think.
Huxley very poignantly lays down that the ultimate disaster in human life could only be avoided if the "mechanomorphic man" had not become completely insensitive and immune to the social reality around him. This only hastens his disintegration as he remains in a state of active inertia, wherefore hopes are belied and promises remain to be fulfilled. Consequently, hope gives way to sheer hopelessness, reality to illusion, actuality to artificiality and emotions to heartlessness. This change in the basic nature of human beings does more harm than good to them and is bound to prove fatal in the end. Therefore, the modern world bereft of all its traditional values, could only give to its inhabitants continuous suffering, unhappiness and unending pain.

II

The characters in Antic Hay experience the suffering, the pain, the unhappiness and the agony far more intensely than do Denis and Anne in Crome Yellow. The root and cause of this suffering in Antic Hay is the love which each character professes for Myra Viveash, whose game is to play hell and hounds with them. She incites them, excites them, entices them and provokes them to frustration, and finally leaves them to suffer all alone. Her occasional amorous advances and coquettish flirtations with her suitors, delude them into believing that they were
made for each other at one moment and to discover, on the other, how mistaken they had been. George Woodcock says, "All these men delude themselves into imagining that they can stir Myra's love. But it is she who induces in them that, phenomenon of crystallisation". Myra Viveash, according to the above critic, means 'living ash' or burnt out heart. She embodies the inner death which emanates from a disillusionment resulting from the eventual death of her lover Tony Lamb in the war. This leaves her broken and she becomes heartless. She firmly resolves never to fall in love again, "...Never again, never again, she repeated slowly...Never again. Instead of crying, she laughed, laughed aloud." (p.176).

Incapable of love and incapacitated to love, Myra half unwillingly at times, tortures, comforts her suitors to definite frustration, under her circean spell. None can escape her. Infact, she is representative of the complete degeneration that had come to characterize modern life. Love no more remains a soul-stirring experience but becomes a biological need, as important as food. The gratification of sensual desires becomes the only requirement. It keeps human beings busy but ultimately frustrates.

We are introduced to Myra Viveash at a public place, the Hyde Park Corner. She has a "tall tubed hat and a silk-faced overcoat, a cloak of flame-coloured satin and in bright coppery hair a great Spanish comb of carved tortoise shell" (p.62) and is seen moving towards the
members of the group, so well frequented by her. Her appearance is based on artificialities of life and in order to keep herself busy and preoccupied, she has and can afford to have men at her disposal, men who are ever ready to dance to her tune. Huxley very aptly comments on this game of hers when he says, "The Viveash is it? Coleman quickened his rapping along the pavement. "And who is the present incumbent?" (p.62).

The words such as "the present incumbent" hammer hard at the sensibilities of the readers, as these reveal the debasement that had come into the life of the liberated woman—liberated after the war. This also reveals how emotionless human relationship had become wherein, the stress was only on mindless sensuality. In the absence of any commitment to each other, the sincerity of the prewar days gave way to affectation and the individuals sought delight in hedonism, as it would give them a temporary relief from the utter boredom to which they were subjected after the war. The moral vacuity provided them with a sexual licence with which they could commit any immoral deed. Myra Viveash excels in this art. She has the extraordinary knack of having men at her feet and is glad to see them to their final destruction. She is an agent of death, and her affectations only aid in attracting the men, at a speed faster even than light.

Her flirtations with Shearwater, the single minded scientist only testify to this. Coleman, who sarcastically
introduces the scientist to Myra Viveash, as "...a great man. He reads no papers not even those in which our Mercaptan so beautifully writes. He does not know what beaver is. And he lives for nothing but the kidneys" (p.65-66) is shown to be off his hinge, when he is in contact with the great seductress. She smiles "her smile of agony" and says:

"Kidneys? But what a memento mori. There are other portions of the anatomy". She threw back her cloak, revealing an arm, a bare shoulder, a slant pectoral muscle. She was wearing a white dress that, leaving her back and shoulders bare came up, under either arm to a point in front... For example, she said. And twisted her hand several times over and over making the slender arm turn at the elbows, as though to demonstrate the movement of the articulations and the muscular play. (p.66).

This naked exhibitionism by Myra Viveash at a public place is an open invitation to Shearwater to have sex with her. If any relationship was to develop between the two, it would be devoid of all emotions. If one of them took it seriously, as Shearwater does, then it would be difficult for the person to get out of this unscathed and unhurt. The sheer heartlessness of 'the Circe' leaves the scientist broke at the end of the novel and we find Shearwater sitting "on his stationary bicycle, pedalling unceasingly like a man in a nightmare" (p.278). To quote
C.S. Ferns on this state of the scientist would be more appropriate. He so sums up the destructive influence of Myra Viveash on the scientist in these words:

...Shearwater, the single minded scientist whose gradual realisation that he is in love display an unexpected intensity of feeling. His final appearance, pedalling madly on a stationary bicycle in the laboratory as he tries to exorcise his infatuation is more akin to nightmare than comedy. Suffering is a reality from which no one, no matter how eccentric or comical their behaviour is immune...

But, the degree of suffering and pain is more intense in the case of Lypiatt the artist, who suffers hellish privations at the hands of Myra Viveash because of his genuine love for her. His sufferings reach a climax when he contemplates suicide, a stage which no other character in the novel dare reach. Lypiatt portrays Myra Viveash on his canvas and captions it as "Portrait of a Tigress". This only reflects the fearsome nature of the woman that Viveash is. The Circe, therefore, whips each man in her circle into mute submission. That she could do it without any visible protests shows how domineering her influence could be. To attain this private goal of hers, she could go to any extent, or to any place to inflict torture only to see the man die slowly. This is what Lypiatt accuses her of, whom she decides to visit in his
"Piranesi's prisons... flanked on either sides by lowly buildings, having stabling for horses below and, less commodiously stabling for human beings above". (p.77). It is a fallacy that Lypiatt-the artist should call this dingy place as "the best place in the world... for studying aerial perspective", (p.77), and live there to seek inspiration of creativity, in such a repulsive and nauseating environment, with a promise "to draw life out of life". (p.85).

Whether Lypiatt would ever be able to achieve this olympian aim is anybody's guess; yet he has the audacity to proclaim "I have set myself to restore painting and poetry to their rightful position among the great moral forces... and promises of giving my life for that". (p.51). It is ironical that he shuts his eyes to the bitter truth of having failed as an artist and refuses to change himself.

On the face of it, Lypiatt seems to brave the bitter criticism stoically and his heightened optimism reminds us of Browning's Rider in the 'Last Ride Together'. He says: "People mock me, hate me, stone me, deride me. But I go on, I go on. For I know I'm right. And in the end they too will recognise that I've been right". (p.51).

Being so sure of himself, this great crusader of fine arts is a dreamer, therefore, completely cut off from the real world. He refuses to see reason. Instead, he wants to hold the natural process of evolution in check and is bound to meet the fate of Dinosaurs. When faced with the cruder realities of life, Lypiatt is in shackles and
his dreams are blown off like a house of cards. He holds Viveash responsible for his failure and suffering in life. It is a pity that this modern Mount Atlas, who professes to change the world, should be crushed under the weight of his 'vermouth advertisements in the streets of Padua'. He comforts himself by crying before the, 'Circe' who readily "laid her free hand on his bowed head", and she patted it comfortingly as one might pat the head of a large dog that comes and thrusts its muzzle between one's knees". (p.81).

This reduction to the animal level of an artist who always drew life out of life symbolises the futility of living in a distant dreamland. It also demonstrates how wanton people had become in the postwar world.

Unlike Valentine Wannop in Parade's End, who believes in becoming an organic whole by surrendering completely to the other partner in love, Myra Viveash seems to remain contented in a fractured culture sans any moral commitments. Instead she questions such fixations, as would manacle her existence.

Why was it that people always get involved in one's life? If only one could manage things on the principle of railways! Parallel tracks—that was the thing. For a few miles you'd be running the same speed. There'd be delightful conversation out of the windows; ...And when you'd said all there was to say, you'd put on a little more steam, wave your hand, blow a kiss
and away you'd go, forging ahead along the smooth polished rails. (p.88).

The superficial attachments, so fervently desired and practised by Myra Viveash, reveal the flippant nature of the characters in the Huxleyan world. Casual sexual encounters are to be preferred to genuine love and cravings for permanence of a relationship are to be dismissed as offshoots of some mental illness, "as dreadful accidents". Forgetfulness becomes a boon. It enables people like Myra Viveash to carry on with their game of hell and hounds and "forge ahead".

Do such people really forge ahead? This is the question that haunts Huxley. The modern man by preferring to always forge ahead relishes chance acquaintances, chance relationships and in the process destroys every thing and everyone. This inevitably results in ceaseless privations and hardships to the individuals. Whereas Sylvia Tietjens in Parade's End subjects her husband to these incessant sufferings to bring him down to human level, to make a man of him, Myra Viveash perpetrates these hellish sufferings on her prospective suitors with a vengeance to reduce them to an inanimate level, to see them finally submit to her whims mutely. Nobody in the novel from Lytlett to Gumbril Theodore Junior, is able to escape the whip which Viveash occasionally lashes at them to force them into absolute surrender.

This degeneration of the modern man becomes possible because he is a product of moneyed civilization.
As he grows up he develops lust for money and aspires to have all the material comforts at his command. In the absence of all this, he feels frustrated. It makes him work religiously and rigorously for attaining his ideals. In the process he overreaches himself, expands beyond endurance and when the tensile limit is overstretched, he bursts like a balloon.

Gumbril Theodore Junior is a living embodiment of this. He grows sick of the dull and drab routine of marking papers, as a teacher, "This would go on" for ever. It wouldn't do. He, therefore, resolves to go away and live uncomfortably on his three hundred, or no, he would go away and he would make money that was more like it - money on a large scale, easily; he would be free and he would live. For the first time, he would live. Behind his closed eyes, he saw himself living. (p.12).

This raises the question why does he think of living life "Behind his closed eyes"? I feel, it is to the obvious crude reality of life that he shuts his eyes. He deludes himself into believing that his dream of becoming rich easily can only be turned into actuality if he would give up the present job of teacher. It is ironical that a teacher should give up his job because of the uncertainties of the present only to opt for the unseen and unheard uncertainties of an uncertain future. Instead he develops
romantic delusions about himself, of being the modern Casanova, vicariously enjoying sex with beautiful ladies. The narrator records:

When he spoke to women—how easily and insolently he spoke now!—they listened and laughed and looked at him sideways and dropped their eyelids over the admission, the invitation of their glance. With Phyllis once he had sat; for how long? ...Saying nothing, risking no gesture... Phyllis now was with him once again in the summer night; but this time he spoke, now softly, ...he reached out and took her, and she was naked in his arms. All chance encounters, all plotted opportunities recurred; he knew, now, how to live, how to take advantage of them. (p.13-14).

The hidden motive behind Gumbrii Junior's resignation his design to become a conscientious hedonist—a dream, which hitherto had remained unfulfilled because of the stigma of being a teacher. With an artificial beard and a padded overcoat, he manages to look overbearing, thinking it would prove to be a grand highway to the world of romance and adventure. C.S.Ferns very aptly summarises the design behind such transformation of Gumbrii, who:

...determines to do something about his unsatisfactory existence, and attempts self transformation through disguise. Gumbrii's idea is that the adoption of a definite identity will
enable him to forget his usual uncertainties...
The identity he adopts is that of the Rebelaisian 'Complete Man', whom the narrator portrays as, "Great eater, deep drinker, stout fighter, prodigious lover; clear thinker, creator of beauty, seeker of truth and prophet of heroic grandeurs". (p.105).

In Gumbril's attempts to become a "Complete Man", we have the narrator portraying the dilemma of the modern man, who desires perfection and completeness in an incomplete postwar world. This search for his own identity emanates from the fact that he lacks the comforting sense of belonging to a herd, since he is unsure of which herd he belongs to,

Shearwater's herd, Lypiatt's herd, Mr. Mercaptan's herd, Mrs Viveash's herd, the architectural herd of his father... the herd of Mr Bojanus - he belonged to them all a little, to none of them completely. Nobody belonged to his herd. (p.102).

The dominant desire in Gumbril is to expand and conquer the world to see people flock to his herd. Confident and doubly sure that the Rebelaisian 'Complete Man' that he now is, he imagines himself to be Alexander the Great and sets out to bring the world to his heels. To be able to achieve this requires the moral courage and the strength of the character which this prophet of heroic
grandeurs positively lacks. That he plans doing it with the paraphernalia of false beards and inflatable trousers, will only make him even more comic than before. Therefore, his efforts to resolve his anxieties and dissatisfaction donot leave him a happy and contented man at the end of the novel. We find him moving headlong into the mortal abyss of suffering and pain. Henderson very admirably summarises this predicament of Gumbril in the following words:

Huxley in the character of Gumbril, glimpses in the distance the beauty, truth and goodness which he desires. But what seems to be the very nature of existence makes him despair of reaching the truth, beauty and goodness, because whenever he gets near, some unforeseen happening 23 whisks him away.

It happens so because this disguise of "Complete Man" is skin deep only and is not able to change the inherent passivity of Gumbril. Moreover, he had, right from the conception of this guise, restricted his field to hedonistic pursuits. Rather than move on the constructive road to life, he cuts himself off from all creativity, by resigning the job of a teacher, identifies himself with the last vestiges of destruction and becomes an agent of doom.

The obvious change that comes in Gumbril after becoming the "Complete Man", is that of debasement and perversion. He becomes mentally sick, dehumanises himself and wastes his energies in wanton hedonistic pursuits.
This is evinced in the relationship that he comes to develop with Rosie Shearwater, whom he meets for the first time "sauntering past Whitley's", (p.107) towards the Park. From here onwards, its a journey of the earlier "Mild and melancholy man", and now the "Complete Man" behind the "Gargantuan mask" right into the bed and body of Rosie Shearwater. The transformation that comes in Gurnbril is so summed up by the narrator: "...in his mild and melancholy day he would have only hopelessly admired women, but... now to the complete man seemed a destined and accessible prey". (p.107).

Ironically, Gurnbril Theodore Junior, an ex-school teacher, ex-lover of Myra Viveash, Myra's "The weak silent man", now transformed as the "Complete Man", the self assured hero is still not able to sort out his problems. He acts only once, confidently and decisively in the novel, when he strikes a business with Mr. Boledero and is seen at the receiving end rest of the times. The relationships that he develops are always dictated by women rather than Gurnbril himself because he lacks the art of decision making, with the result that he is always humbled into submission without any genuine protest ever being raised by him.

If the "Complete Man" has been able to take advantage of Rosie Shearwater physically, then he has had to shed the Rabelaisian image for developing a sane and healthy relationship with Emily. Emily being earthy coaxes him to be his real self, give up false appearances if the
two were to carry on as lovers. In the past, her uncle-cum-husband had tried to rape her. This developed in her a feeling akin to hatred for all men, for she felt, "They're hated most of them. They're brutes" (p.160). If any relationship with a man was to flourish then it had to be without pretensions. In order to please her Gumbril leaves "The complete Man at home in the top right hand drawer... she would prefer, he guessed the Mild and Melancholy one..." (p.162). Emily, straight forward as she is, loses no time in pointing to Gumbril his flaw, wherein, he seems "to take it very much for granted and advises him "Don't be too sure". (p.163).

After initial bickerings, the two reach perfect understanding, develop absolute faith and are prepared to completely surrender to each other. Emily is delighted to have Gumbril as her companion and acknowledges the comfort and the solace which she derives from his company. She confesses: "If I had known you years ago... But I was a silly idiot then, I couldn't have noticed any difference between you and anybody else" (p.171). But the understanding which the two lovers develop, forces Emily to say, "I shall be very jealous... There must never be anybody else, never the shadow of anybody else." (p.171).

No doubt, it does reflect the possessive nature of Emily, of having her man, not at her feet but beside her and this demonstrates that she has grown wise with age. Experience has revealed to her that she needed a man who
could open new vistas of life before her and Gumbril promises to do the same—remain faithful for ever.

They come to realise how horrible the life would be, if one of them was to be removed from the scene. They forget about their physical existence and the reader is pleased to see the transformation that comes in Gumbril in the company of Emily. This reveals the positive trait of Gumbril's personality. The stripping of clothes by the two lovers in darkness after initial hesitation reveals to me their true basic nature.

Emily lifted her knees, slid her feet in under the sheet then stretched herself out beside him, her body, in the narrow bed, touching his. Gumbril felt that she was trembling: trembling a sharp involuntary start, a little shudder, another start... She lay there, pressed against him. Gradually the trembling ceased. Quite still, quite still in the calm of the enchantment. The past is forgotten, the future abolished; there is only this dark and everlasting moment. (p.173).

This "dark and ever lasting moment" makes them forget about their physical existence. They reach a stage where the two "do not desire anything, because to desire would have been to break the enchantment". (p.174).

If inspite of this perfect harmony, Gumbril is not able to avoid the ultimate tragedy in life, the onus lies
on him rather than on Emily. The breach of promise at the behest of Myra Viveash costs him dearly and he loses Emily for ever. His postponing of the meeting with Emily at Viscount Lascelles shows that his is a split personality. He makes a wrong choice of lunching with Myra Viveash at a time when he should have been with Emily, thus falling a victim to the organised destruction represented by Viveash in the novel. The last ride which he has in a taxi with Viveash is a sad commentary on his state of mind. His restlessness emanates from the fact that one slip on his part reveals to him the cruder reality of life, in the wake of a wrong choice. His later visit to Viscount Lascelles is a sort of penance for having betrayed Emily and her faith. But Emily eludes him there and so the relationship ends.

This relationship also reveals that the two lovers were polarities and their union was not possible because of the flippant nature of Gurnbril and the absolute commitment of Emily who admits: "I wanted to give you everything I could and then we should always be together loving one another. And I should have been your slave, I should have been your property and lived inside your life..." (p.209), but Gurnbril's behaviour upsets her. She is disappointed and recalls "...it was the dreadful disappointment. It was like a stab...it hurt so terribly, so reasonably much." (p.209).

Stabbing, with a pen knife characterizes the life
of Zoe and Coleman. It also reflects the bestial nature of the two characters. It shows the degradation that had come to stay in the human lives. The narrator says: "Zoe ended the discussion by driving half an inch of pen knife into Coleman's arm and running out of the flat slamming the door behind her". (p.243). Further, "Coleman was used to this sort of thing; this sort of thing, indeed, was what he was there for." (A.H., p.243). It becomes a way of life for them and the two are always seen inflicting injuries at each other. This lust for blood dominates their lives, for it gives them some perverse sadistic pleasure. It comes to light, when Coleman tells Rosie Shearwater, "When I call my lover a nymphomaniacal dog, she runs the pen knife into my arm". (p.249).

They give vent to their frustration physically assaulting each other and anybody else in the vicinity. Instead of thanking Rosie Shearwater for providing the necessary first-aid to his injury, Coleman jumps at her with a ferocity meant to tear her asunder. Thanklessness is in his blood and all the tearful pleadings of Rosie have no effect on this creature as he advances to devour her. The narrator says:

She was trembling; fear made her sick. There was a rattling at the door behind her. There was a whoop of laughter, and then the Cossack's hands were on her arms, his face came peering over her shoulder and the blond beard dabbled
with blood prickled against her neck and face. 

'Oh, don't, don't, don't she implored. (p.250).

But he did not.

Infact, Mrs Rosie Shearwater, after the initial shock, by the crude trampling of her body by Coleman, begins to enjoy the violent sex exercised by this supreme extrovert. Throughout her life, she has lived in a void and her sexual encounters are attempts to free herself from this eternal vacuity. Married to an imbecile scientist, who always pretended that he wasn't interested in women, Rosie is left to rot in the fourwalls of the house of her husband. It is a tragedy that Shearwater the single track minded scientist "had married her as a measure of intimate hygiene...and a little for amusement, as one might, buy a puppy". (p.232). Consequently, he ignores her. She feels alienated and seeks means and ways of fulfilling her fantasies of being a "fastidious lady". (p.117). For a moment, she is able to turn her day dreams into actualities when she meets "Toto- the Complete Man", but as she passes through the voluprury hands of Mercaptan and finally reaches Coleman, she learns the difference between day dreams and reality.

Shearwater is an epitome of dereliction of duty. He fails to attend to his familial obligations and Rosie is left to suffer both physically and mentally. Sick of him, she seeks gratification of her sensibilities practising the law of substitute gratification. It is a positive need for her if she was not to break under the tremendous pressures
of the new postwar world. By the time, her husband decides "to begin again, more satisfactorily this time, with knowledge and understanding; wise from their experience" (p.233) with Rosie again, he is shellshocked by Rosie's resoluteness which enables her to strictly lay down: "You've your life and I've mine. We don't get in another's way," (p.235) and the two drift apart for ever on the principle of Railway tracks as espoused by Myra Viveash.

III

Commenting on the pattern of the relationship that emanates in his novels, Huxley in Saturday Review of Literature of 1930, recalled:

I have a literary theory that I must have a two angled vision of all my characters...or else I try to give them rather similar characters who throw light on each other, two characters who share the same element, but in one it is made grotesque.

We, therefore, have Lypiatt both as tragic and comic at the same time in the novel. Gumbril Junior's attempt to be the "Complete Man", is a latent desire to break open the manacles of Myra viveash, which describe him as "My silent-weak man", which always made him "remember the cold damp spots on his pillow in the darkness. Those hopeless angry tears" (p.75).
This reveals the basic flaw in the Huxleyan characters—the split in human personality, which reflects the chasm between man's thought and actions and hence becomes the cause of all pain and suffering in the novel. Huxley states the aim of writing *Antic Hay*, to his father, in a letter dated 26 November, 1923:

...it is intended to reflect—fantastically, of course, but none the less faithfully—the life and opinions of an age which has seen the violent disruption of almost all the standards and values current in the previous epoch.

Huxley reveals this disintegration by constantly contrasting moods and styles. It helps him in not only presenting the sharply divergent aspects of social life, but also in portraying comically one character against the other, representing opposite values. The depraved nature of love in the modern world is depicted by portraying Emily against Myra Viveash. While Emily is a symbol of pure love, tenderness and sensitivity, Myra is shown up as a traditional seductress. Therefore, the relationship between Emily and Gumbril is emotional and chaste, while the one he practises with Myra is monotonous and wearisome. No doubt he realises the futility of such mechanical relationship in the end, yet he is not able to find himself a way out of the eternal suffering, and consequently writhes in pain. C.S.Ferns rightly calls this Huxleyan technique of portraying the pleasure and the pain at the same time comically, a "distinctive feature" of the novel. He says,
The frivolity of hedonistic pursuits of the various characters is continually underlined by the insistence on the most unsavoury aspect of urban civilization; ludicrous though the misunderstanding between the characters are, the comedy is given an added edge by the facts that puppets can also feel pain.

But these "Puppets" are never spurred to action, they only vegetate. Devoid of any moral or intellectual growth, they are fossils rather than a part of the evolutionary change. Their dynamism is confined to their remaining actively inert and static. They don't feel ill at ease with the prevailing state of affairs. Conditions are accepted as they are, without any effort to change them and the challenge implicit in them is deliberately ignored. They refuse to come out of their shell and Gumbril Senior is content to immerse himself in the impersonal greatness of classical literature rather than live in the present. His refusal to design houses for the poor shows that he is a victim of self delusion. Who as an architect, dreams of building palatial buildings, but can only make models for them. Even though Gumbril Senior is sympathetically portrayed by the narrator yet he fails to grow. His failure lies in not succeeding to make passion cohere with reason. This enables Malcolm Bradbury to decipher two kinds of characters in the Huxleyan world:

Two basic types recur: the sensitives who...
sympathetically presented usually fail, and the arrogantly insensitive who frequently succeed, in those areas of love and self fulfilment with which most of the actions are concerned. Because Huxley is primarily concerned with the prevailing social, moral and emotional void in the postwar world, his characters become mouthpieces to highlight the boredoms, discomforts and animal passions that had come to characterize the life of the modern man. Consequently, all action is restricted in a Huxleyan novel and the characters take delight in shallow ideas.

This results in crumbling of the traditional novel—novel as an edifice of character and action. The narration, therefore, slides into "an essay or a pedagogic monologue" in Huxleyan fiction. Since the writer is basically preoccupied with a thorough exposition of his ideas, no situations, events are allowed to develop to allow the characters a meaningful action. Characters in Huxleyan novel remain independent of each other and come to bear the fruits of their own actions. They donot affect each other, for they never stand in an organic relationship.

In the absence of integrated characters and events, the idea of a well knit plot in the traditional novel form becomes redundant and there is deliberate indifference to the story element. On the face of it, Antic Hay may seem to embody the theme of Gumbril Theodore Junior's "Pneumatic Trousers", but as the action in the novel advances, we find
the narrator delving into other subjects such as mindless sensuality.

There is no logical progression of the story, as Huxley desired to present life in totality through scenes conversations, sermons and extracts. Malcolm Bradbury says:

Huxley is obsessively concerned, as is his character Gumbril Senior, in Antic Hay, with the problem of the 'wretched human scale', which limits thought and action and holds the body to itself; and this unease is of course a familiar basis for satire...ends up focusing most of his satire at the point of balance where humanism and aspiration, body and soul split.

The excessive concern of Huxley with the problem of the "wretched human scale" emanated from the fact that the social responsibility of the writers increased after the shattering impact of the Great war which was seen everywhere. Henceforth, no restricted range of social portrayal was possible, as the writer had to be truthful to the sordid and repellent aspects of the social environment in which he lived. Therefore, the cast in Antic Hay is usually large enough "for Huxley to follow out a multiplicity of stories, sometimes supplemented by stories within the stories that recall the past".

To present a total picture of modern chaos no traditional form would do. Hence new methods are devised which permit the use of poetry, painting, drama, symbols to
get a complete impression of the horrors of the Great War, Chapter XVI of Antic Hay serves as an epitome of modern life in all its diverse aspects. Peter Bowering comments on the symbolic meaning of the play within the play, which no doubt, comes as a comic relief, in the following words.

'The monster of the play within the play' is the symbolic child of this huge town (London) whose domes and spires are hidden from the sun; conceived in 'Lust and darkness' the product of phthisis and rickets, he is destined to live out his life loveless in dirt and impurity. Symbolically, the monster is a caricature of the modern man, who is as diseased and incapacitated as the monster is. The "Crebillon sofa" of Mercaptan and the false beard of Gumbril Junior are the symbols of a shallow and cynical love, based on hypocrisy and heartlessness.

The recollections of Coleman about "eviscerating frogs crucified with pins" is suggestive of the utter meaninglessness of religion in the modern world. To see life in retrospect in Antic Hay means to recollect the pain and suffering, which one had to undergo in the past.

Gumbril Theodore Junior, too, reclines on his memory to rebuild two very moving images of his past. The first image on page 10 of the novel makes him "lean back in his chair" and think of "his own character" with dates. This introspection becomes a device with Huxley enabling him to portray the real self of Gumbril. The narrator records:
In 1898 or 1899 - oh these dates! he had made a pact with his little cousin, Molly, she should let him see her with no clothes on, if he would do the same by her. She had fulfilled her part of the bargain, but he overwhelmed at the last moment by a passion of modesty, had broken his promise. (p.11).

Memory makes him realise that by postponing the promised visit to Emily, Gumbril once again had faltered and failed to keep his word. This becomes a way of life with him and he is left to suffer all alone.

Even Mrs. Viveash is seen lost in a reverie thinking about her lover who was killed in the war. As she goes walking in the market, she builds up the "pathos of her attempts to regain the intensity of feelings which she has lost". Her forlorn murmur "never again" is heard by an old military gentleman, the melancholy and nostalgia about her tragedy disappear and pathos gives way to farce. The subsequent reactions of the old man underline this:

Talking to herself must be cracked, must be off her head or perhaps she took drugs. ...Most of them did now a days. Vicious young women. Lesbians, drug-fiends, nymphomaniacs, dipsos-thoroughly vicious... (p.176).

This sense of dislocation enables Huxley "to stress not so much the comic possibilities of the clash between conflicting obsessions, as the way in which each reality
becomes unreal, as soon as its is seen in the context of the other. It enables the readers to interpret the same events differently, thereby resulting in ...that tragedy is simply farce," in a Huxleyan novel, if seen from another angle. Jocelyn Brooke, while summarising the effect of this art of Aldous Huxley admits that it was "agreeably shocking", yet

...was intoxicating: like the great knockespotch that imaginary genius described in Grome Yellow - Huxley had delivered us from the dreary tyranny of the realistic novel, ...he preferred to study the human mind, not bogged in a social plenum...

Therefore, Huxley gives this "new kind of experience, a new kind of treatment". In his letter (already referred to) he lays down the artistic importance of such stylistic devices because he says:

'Artistically, too, it has a certain novelty being a work in which all the ordinarily separated categories - tragic, comic, fantastic realistic - are combined so to say chemically into a single entity, whose unfamiliar character makes it appear at first sight rather repulsive.

Huxley deliberately portrays this repulsion in Antic Hay, with a design to hammer home his point of meaninglessness of life in his time. He warns the modern man of the eternal danger underlying the moral vacuity and shocks the reader
to sensitivity, in the absence of which, 'Tomorrow... will be as awful as today.' (p.283).

Eventually, with the outbreak of the second world war, didn't this prophecy of Aldous Huxley turn out to be true and wasn't the world left to lick its wounds of disaster, destruction and annihilation for decades to come? 

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NOTES AND REFERENCES