Chapter Five

5.1. The Twyborn Affair

The Twyborn Affair was in part a modern rendering of the Tiresias myth. The novel was divided into three sections, each a separate narrative. In the first part, an Australian matron travelling in pre-World War I France was sexually attracted to Eudoxia, the beautiful, young wife of an “aged, dissolute, slightly mad Greek”. Part two narrates the return to Australia of Eddie, a decorated veteran, following the war. There, he abandons his parents' comfortable urban life and acquaintances (including the matron in the first section) and seeks his identity as a ranch hand in the Outback. The third part leaps to London just before the beginning of the Second World War where Eadith Trist presides over a sophisticated brothel catering to the most eccentric desires of the British aristocracy.

Many critics were impressed with White’s achievement in finding new expression of a long-time major theme, the infinite possibilities of a single personality. Betty Falkenberg remarked in New Leader: "It is no news that things are seldom what they seem. But White was saying more: Precisely through their disguises shall we come to know them, and they, themselves. Where surfaces blur, the result is not so much confusion as illumination." Reviewing the novel for the Times Literary Supplement, William Walsh wrote, "The novel is impressive in its conception, astonishing in its concreteness, sharp in its sardonic social discriminations, and rich in its use of the resources of language." Falkenberg described The Twyborn Affair as "an extraordinary novel of quest, an odyssey through place, time, and especially gender—all three of which, by virtue of their boundaries delimit and even alienate the individual from his possible selves.” Writing in the New York Times Book Review, Benjamin DeMott characterized the book as "a case study of sexual proteanism and the thematic core as the mystery of
human identity." He modified his enthusiasm, however, and explained that "the problem is the book's too unremitting scorn of human attachment.

From the mystery of Mrs. Roxburgh, White moved daringly to mirror his own predicament in The Twybom Affair. Although White's earlier novels had included sexually ambivalent figures, such as Elyot Standish or Waldo Brown, this work is his first overt, extended portrait of a homosexual's life which is overall unfulfilled and tragic. Twybom is forced to lead a sham existence that leaves him feeling that he is a "mistake trying to correct itself" or, more sweepingly, "the stranger of all time . . . the eternal deserter in search of asylum." In the first part of the novel he masquerades as Eudoxia, young wife of the aging Greek Angelo Valatzes on the Côte d'Azur. Their precarious idyll, however, is constantly threatened by the prying heterosexual world, as well as by jealousy and the charged emotions that draw the two men together. It ends with Angelo's death and the revelation to outsiders of the true, and hence loathsome, nature of their relationship, focused by a squalid bathroom and the grotesquely large enema it contains.

The novel also addresses the cult of Australian masculinity. In search of an identity Eddie Twybom becomes convinced that he has been "born without the requisites for grace." When he ultimately finds a job as a jackeroo, he tries to come "to terms with his body . . . to live in accordance with appearances" in a milieu dominated by an aggressively masculine ethos. Sexual intercourse with the station-owner's wife, however, fails to establish his male identity; and at the same time the supposedly unitary image of Australian masculinity begins to fragment.

Then the reader is introduced to the conqueror of the land, Greg Lushington, who is revealed on nearer acquaintance to be a frustrated poet who periodically disappears overseas "to lose--or find himself." And further on we meet his overseer Don Prowse who is the embodiment of the "inviolable masculinity". Though ostentatiously virile and tirelessly boasting of his conquests among the local women, he returns drunk one night and has sex with Eddie. That this was not a casual incident is later confirmed when he seeks similar treatment from the jackeroo. The matter-of-fact statement, attributed to Marcia Lushington, that "one
isn't the same person every hour of the week" has massive ramifications, which the novel explores. The possibility of ambivalent or multiple identities is thereby admitted, an occurrence that has the potential to destabilize not only relationships but also gender categories and ultimately leaves Eddie/Eudoxia wondering "where civilization ended, and still more, where it began." In part Three of the novel and during his second extended disappearance from Sydney, he reemerges as Eadith Trist, madame of one of the most illustrious brothels of London. The plot is further complicated by parallels between the colonial and the homosexual struggles for acceptance and self-understanding in the face of condemnatory norms. This scene is played out against the backdrop of an impending European catastrophe that menaces individuals as well as society "with extinction by the seas of black unreason on which it floated." Beyond the theatrical roles, mirrors, and fantasies that energize both the brothel and the world at large, Eadith/Eddie/Eudoxia gropes toward final consummation through love. This time, however, the fulfillment is nonsexual. Initially he finds it with an aristocrat who, at her bidding, renounces physical coupling. His unselfish response is offered as convincing "proof" of love of its divine guarantor.

White said that among his novels the three he liked most were The Aunt's Story, The Solid Mandala, and The Twybom Affair. They are certainly among his most idiosyncratic and original works: one cannot imagine their having been written by anybody else. The plot of the Twybom Affair is as extravagantly artificial and improbable as the plot of The Magic Flute in which the hero/heroine, Eddie/Eadith Twybom, scion of a respectable Sydney legal family, is introduced to the reader first as the transvestite companion of a wealthy Greek on the Riviera, arousing unrequited passions in the hearts of a masturbatory French shopkeeper and a sentimental Australian matron on the grand tour. As we read the novel, however, the wildly disparate episodes are rendered with such effortless authority, and the individual characters are imagined and presented with such sympathy and conviction, that the artificialities of the plot and the sleight of hand of the narrator cease to bother us.
A parallel concern in the novel is the relation between sexuality, in all its physical variety, and love. Twybom's last lover is Lord Gravenor, under whose patronage her brothel flourishes. Their love is never physically consummated; but paradoxically this authenticates it—and points to the existence of another and greater love that is all-pervasive and transcendent. A letter Eadith receives from Gravenor affords Eddie a final revelation before his death: "'Love' is an exhausted word, and God has been expelled by those that know better, but I offer you one as proof that the other still exists."

5.2. Eddie/ Eadith - Sex and Identity as the Major Component of the Novel

"Eddie" is somewhat of a hero on his way home to Australia at the end of World War I, and he becomes the center of much interest on board the ship. He is an attractive man, still young enough to excite unattached females. Although willing to be penetrated sexually by him, the women have no chance to reciprocate, for he remains impenetrable both symbolically and literally. At home Eddie renews and quickens into new problems his relationship with his mother and his father. The visit sets the occasion for flashbacks which more or less account for Eudoxia-Eddie's unusual behaviour. For example, Eddie's father, Judge Edward Twybom, was affectionate toward his boy-child only once, during a moment in which the lad was lying in bed, warm and wet with his own spilled urine.

The returned officer decides to leave home again and try roughing it as a jackeroo on a ranch, ostensibly to reinforce his new maleness. Eddie's father uses influence with a friend, Greg Lushington, and in the sequel Eddie is accepted as an apprentice hand and as an assistant to the manager on Lushington's sheep ranch. There Don Prowse becomes Eddie's boss, an attractive red-haired fellow recently deserted by his wife and in his own way as lonely and as unsure as Eddie. The relationship between Prowse and Eddie gradually accelerates into a sexual affair which climaxes just twice, the first time in a contact which is most efficiently described as the rape-with-consent of Eddie by Prowse, the second time as the reciprocal rape-with-consent of Prowse by Eddie. The retribution reverses the crime, and the affair ends.
Meanwhile, Eddie has been having a male-female affair with the boss's wife, Marcia Lushington, a complicated involvement which emotionally affects both Marcia's husband and Don Prowse, who once fathered one of Marcia's children, now deceased. He also moves closer to his boss, Greg Lushington, and comes to love him in one of his several ways of loving. After events reach an impasse, Eddie leaves the ranch, turning up later as the owner and manager of a fashionable brothel in London. He has now become Eadith, a procuress. Eadith remembers, however, having been both Eudoxia and Eddie.

Settled in Chelsea in a good section of London for her business, Eadith Trist has learned to prefer "the hour when dawn takes over from darkness" (The Twyborn Affair 309). She likes to walk through the streets, coming "to terms with reality between the two dawns in the deserted park. Somewhere between the fragrant scent of fresh cowpats and the reek of human excrement" (The Twyborn Affair 310). After her walks she returns to Beckwith Street, to "the house she owned thanks to her patron, into the atmosphere of spent cigarettes, stale cigar, dried semen and again, human shit" (The Twyborn Affair 310). The seasoned Eadith has absorbed the more ingenuous Eddie, who as a hard-muscled fellow in dungarees had tried to stabilize his role as a male. Eadith's goal is to become an efficient "whore-mistress" whose girls give good value to her distinguished and demanding guests. Upon her return to London she has easily exchanged Eddie's accessories and jeans for cosmetics and dresses. Sexual activity for its own sake, however, has been deleted from her life. She is described as "too disgusted with herself and human beings in general, ever to want to dabble in sex again, let alone aspire to that great ambivalence, love. She could only contemplate it as an abstraction, an algebra" (The Twyborn Affair 311). The details of how Eddie became Mrs. Trist are not all supplied but the main facts are eventually filled in. Capable of compassion, if not love, she is grateful for the friendship of her patron, Lord Gravenor. Nevertheless, she no longer takes off her inner layer of clothing before anyone, including her assistant, Ada. Eadith still possesses male genitals, of course, which on occasion still behave autonomously in male ways--the aftermath of sticky thighs and all--yet
she refuses Lord Gravenor’s physical advances to the end of their relationship even though he may have by then suspected, even needed, her male anatomy.

Just before the end of the novel, something special happens in the park one day. Resting on a park bench, Eadith’s mother, “Eadie”, notices a familiar-looking lady seated near her. She hands the lady (who is Eadith) a note asking: "Are you my son Eddie?" The answer, pencilled hurriedly by Eadith, is what it must be: "No, but I am your daughter Eadith" (The Twyborn Affair 422). After a short pause the mother adds one more line to the dialogue and quietly replies: "I am so glad. I’ve always wanted a daughter" (The Twyborn Affair 423). Near the very end of the novel, the novelist allows the Twyborn hero to return once again to his male role—at least to a male costume. He happens to be walking through London at the moment that World War II starts to rage. He has forgotten to remove the heavy makeup that he has been using for years as the madam of a fashionable London brothel. He has, however, reverted to men’s clothes and a short haircut. He is, in a word, a hollow and a grotesque figure. It is also important to accept the fact that Eddie’s mother is named "Eadie" who is thus easily confused by name with her offspring. When Eddie changes to Eadith, he is closer to being his mother, and by the same token the mother is also closer to being the son when he is her daughter. To make things even more complicated White named the hero’s father Edward! The first moment of the Twyborn hero’s final passage across London is significant:

As he crossed this seemingly deserted city, a scapegoat again in search of sacrifice, his steely tonsure parried the steely evening light. He glanced sideways through the gathering dusk and saw himself reflected in plate-glass: the distorted shoulders of the shoddy suit, the pointed shoes, the cropped hair. He was disgusted to see he had forgotten to take off Eadith’s make-up. The great magenta mouth was still flowering in a chalk face shaded with violet, the eyes overflowing mascara banks.
those of a distressed woman, professional
whore, or hopeful amateur lover.
(The Twyborn Affair 428)

Eddie notices a "fiery razzle-dazzle" in the east (The Twyborn Affair 428). This "perverse sunset" is a fire set off by a bomb. He also hears "the chuffing of his own heart, a clangour of racing engines, the thump and crump of history becoming unstable, crumbling" (The Twyborn Affair 428). Relieved that at last the war is substantial enough to see and feel, Eddie rejoices in the fact that "they" will now learn that London was never really theirs anyway. As his "share in time" is about to be "snatched away" via a fragment of a bomb, he remembers episodes from his past. Allusions to places and events mentioned earlier in the novel now redefine time, changing it from a line with direction to a kind of Mandala.

In World War I he ran an equally wrong way into the battle and ironically received a medal for bravery: "So he prepared to advance alone into this brick no-man's-land. This time could it be despair running in the wrong direction?" Yes and no, the novelist implies, for he is no longer "able to move from his position on the pavement" (The Twyborn Affair 429). When Eddie at first thinks the detached hand he sees after he is thrown to the ground by the explosion is that of a soldier who was passing by, he checks on reality and finds the soldier's hands are still attached to "bristling wrists" (The Twyborn Affair 429). And then he looks again: "It was his own hand he saw as he ebbed, incredibly, away from it" (The Twyborn Affair 430). What could a hero say then? The true hero must relinquish all claims to heroism to be a true hero. That is, no hero behaves heroically. In this case the hero says something both relevant and flippant. He remembers that Ada, his assistant at the whorehouse, has been stockpiling against the threat of wartime scarcity. Among the things hoarded is a carton of band-aids. And so the hero's last words are: "Fetch me a bandaid, Ada." His ultimate fate is then vaguely specified as "flowing onward, on to wherever the crimson current might carry him" (The Twyborn Affair 430).

The novelist's anguish and irony have peaked in the Twyborn hero. It is not easy, however, to adjust to the switching pronouns, and there is no relief until near
the end of the long novel, when the hero becomes "he" and "him" for the last time. It should be noted emphatically, however, that the hero never alters his physiological identifications of maleness. His orgasms, some of which are detailed as onanism, are always "normal" in location and sensation. His transvestism is exactly that, the mere changing of outer clothing. As a woman, the hero is shy about his feet, which are naturally too big for a woman's shoes. He must also use depilatories and heavy makeup to conceal his body hair. It is thus not a fact, within the novel, that the hero is ever a woman, for his-her basic maleness does not vary much no matter which costume--or band-aid--the hero is wearing. Ideally, the Twyborn hero would not behave perversely, and it follows logically, therefore, that often he does not behave sexually at all as the least perverse way to respond to his lust. Because love is always more or less perverse, however, insofar as it parodies or debases sexuality, the Twyborn hero is forced into certain perversities when in love.

5.3. Use of Satire and Parody in The Twyborn Affairs

The Twyborn Affair is not an easy novel to classify, let alone judge. Nevertheless, Walsh has conscientiously tried: "Not the best nor the worst, not a Voss nor a Riders in the Chariot, perhaps something between The Vivisector and The Eye of the Storm. The Twyborn Affair still has about it a creative glow and a capacity to deal with the depths and the distances of the human psyche"(William Walsh Patrick White's Fiction 123). White shows "the solitariness of the human person . . . and the simultaneous melting of categories, the dissolution of boundaries and edges which the living of life entails" (William Walsh Patrick White's Fiction 90). Walsh believes that The Twyborn Affair is "a case study of sexual proteanism and the thematic core is the mystery of human identity." Yet he concludes that it is not "a wholly satisfying novel. The problem is the book's unremitting scorn of human attachment." Some other critics cry out against the novel, calling it "an imposing dud."

Nicholas Mosley, after sympathetically reviewing The Twyborn Affair, praises White's "consciousness, elegance, and wisdom," and his "wonderfully witty
and allusive style . . . which can describe both disgusting things and transcendental things with empathy and detachment." (Nicholas Mosly, Seeing it Whole 761) Mosley's final judgment: "He has one foot on the earth and the other heaven knows where—which is a good position for any colossus." But it's the "heaven knows where" that remains too elusive for many readers.

In his 1981 "self-portrait, Flaws in the Glass, White says that in his opinion his "three best novels are The Solid Mandala, The Aunt's Story, and The Twybom Affair. He defends the three works unequivocally: "All three say something more than what is sacred to Australian literature. For this reason some of them were ignored in the beginning, some reviled and dismissed as pornography. After years two of them were accepted; it remains to be seen what will become of The Twybom Affair" (Flaws in the Glass, 145). A similar dynamic constitutes The Twybom Affair which most clearly raises the issues of sexuality and identity. The Twybom Affair makes explicit what is implicit in the texts I have hitherto discussed. Eddie Twybom, in the role of Eudoxia Vatatzes, employs "devices like the spangled fan and pomegranate shawl" in order to "appear consecutive, complete" (The Twybom Affair 27), anticipating the "baroque aspects" of Eadith Trist's cross-dressing: "the encrustations of amethysts and diamonds, the swanning plumes, her make-up poetic as opposed to fashionable or naturalistic" (The Twybom Affair 310). Later Gravenor, a would-be lover, thinks of her as a "grotesque totem" (The Twybom Affair 348).

In The Twybom Affair Eddie/Eadith's transvestism is not just an expression of a gay identity that might otherwise remain invisible, it is a recuperation of the "archaic ugliness" (Adorno's phrase) -- the ugliness of the "grotesque totem" or "barbaric idol" -- which embodies the shape displaced by the cult of beauty. Eddie/Eadith's nightmares are, in a sense, about the impossibility of this recuperation. They literalise the connection between sexual vagueness that banishes him from the heterosexual, maternal idyll, in the midst of which he is again stigmatised. These nightmares, in other words, turn on a longing for images that
refer to a particular notion of the suburban and on the revelation of the traumatically controlling potential that such images convey. (The Twybom Affair 4)

5.4. White and the Exaggerated Social Satire in the Twybom Affair

A Fringe of Leaves appears in the chronology of Patrick White’s work immediately after The Eye of the Storm and immediately before the subject of this chapter, The Twybom Affair. I focus upon the latter novel even though there is a fair measure of satire in A Fringe of Leaves. This satire is most evident in the highly irreligious parody of the Eucharist that Ellen Roxburgh enacts when she partakes ‘the flesh of a young girl during her captivity’ and in White’s attack on the establishment at Morton Bay for their piety, passivity, and unblinking acceptance of the convict system of which they are the beneficiaries (A Fringe of Leaves, 346-350). These subversions complement A Fringe of Leaves, adding another dimension to it, but it remains a predominately historical novel. In a letter to Frederick Glover dated 15-9-1967, White reveals that he began A Fringe of Leaves “years ago”, spent “almost a year” on it, then set it aside as “two-thirds of a novel” (David Marr, Patrick White 307). This novel consequently follows upon Voss, its immediate predecessor, both narratively and satirically, so that it is much more akin to Voss than the novels that appear immediately before or after it in the chronology of White’s published works. It is for these reasons that this study does not formally consider A Fringe of Leaves but moves on to The Twybom Affair. White quite radically reforms his satire in this novel and he continues in a very similar mode in his last two prose fictions, The Memoirs of Many in One (1982) and Three Uneasy Pieces (1988).

This chapter investigates how White reforms his satire in The Twybom Affair to demonstrate that the devices, tropes, and strategies that constitute these reforms come to comprise the principal elements and features of his work. In The Twybom Affair, White’s satire becomes increasingly grotesque and degenerative and so he produces a bleak but intelligent, witty, and acidly funny satirical work. This novel reflects his love of literary play and his mordant sense of humor and it does not make even a pretence to correction or cure. These developments have
attracted scant attention from White's critics. I first consider the extraordinary recursive quality of White's work. I elaborate the way this novel revisits and reuses some of the aspects of his earlier novels and the way it refers to other novels and to itself. This novel revisits and invites us to recall, for example, the Romanticism and the rustic comedy of *The Tree of Man*, the mannered comedy of *Voss*, the rather more pointed, exaggerated social satire that we encounter in *Riders in the Chariot*; as well as the literariness and satire by parody that permeates *The Eye of the Storm*. I argue that these revisitations are not to be taken merely as evidence of a tendency on the part of White to engage in self-reflexive literary play. These revisitations do exemplify his love of play but in this novel that play is deliberate and calculated in that it not only challenges us to recognize what are sometimes obscure or elusive signposts, references, and allusions, but also to recognize that these effects are those of an author very much concerned with his own activity, with his role in the creation of fictional worlds, and with the reception of his art. These recursive effects then are not to be understood as evidence of an apparent tendency to mock certain targets again and again but rather as evidence of the author re-viewing, re-considering, and in some instances reconfiguring aspects of his earlier work. This recursive referentiality draws our attention to and complements the contrastive referentiality that is inherent in the vast battery of grotesque tropes that White deploys in this novel.

In addition, this recursive referentiality in particular, by way of its nature, invites us to reconsider the earlier critical responses to White's work. I also consider the radical change that occurs in the nature of White's satire in this novel. I am thus able to show the extent to which this novel embraces and exhibits the chief features of early American post-modern degenerative satire and, consequently, how and to what extent White transforms his formerly rather conventional, seemingly generative satire into post-modern, degenerative, grotesque satire. I demonstrate that White realizes his mature subversive style in this novel, that it consists of a rich, recursive, but radically transformed medley of literary effects and that the significance of this novel to White's oeuvre is the ultimate expression of his
subversive art. This chapter finally considers the changes in White's aesthetic and philosophic dispositions that this novel manifests as a function of the radical change that occurs in the nature of his satire. I argue that these changes are the product of the consolidation of the kind of ontological concerns that first emerged in The Eye of the Storm. I demonstrate that the vision of humankind behind White's art is secular and bleak, but there is nevertheless much to celebrate in this novel.

5.5. Identity and the Satirical Milieu in The Twyborn Affairs

The Twybom Affair opens in the period immediately prior to WWI in a place called St Mayeul which is a fictitious town on the Cote d'Azur, but in a territory familiar to where White had lived in the South of France at St Jean de Luz for some months during 1938 while he worked on Nightside, a novel that he abandoned on the advice of friends who variously “hated it” or found it “beastly” (David Marr, Patrick White 174). White returned to the region in 1976 in order to visit Edith Wharton's chateau above Hyeres and Katherine Mansfield's villa at Menton (David Marr, Patrick White 567-568). He did not succeed in visiting Wharton's chateau because the local taxi-drivers refused to take him but he did succeed in visiting Katherine Mansfield's villa where he told the resident New Zealand writer, Michael King, that he had come ‘in search of KM (David Marr, Patrick White 180). The novel not only revisits this Old World milieu but in doing so it also recalls the extended Jardin Exotique section of The Aunt's Story, set immediately after the same war and in the same region.

These actual and novelistic revisitations suggest a novel that embraces considerable measures of literariness and recursion. The opening scenes of the novel are rich in satirical subversion. This consists of conventional indirect satire in which the characters make themselves ridiculous by what they say, think, and do or are made ridiculous by White's ironic voice, his observations, and his narrative style. Joanie, through this line of descent, serves to recall the subversive nature of White's earlier writing but more particularly the failure of critics to pay adequate attention to it. White gestures towards this when he satirizes Joanie for he not only ridicules her
foibles, faults, and failings but he presents them as constituting a typically Australian colonial attitude. Thus he generalizes these defects to his Australian reader-critics. Joanie, for example, is not only superficial but she feels 'inferior'. She admires her driver, Teakle, because he is "so English" and "so discreet" even though she suspects 'English servants were given to taking liberties in the service of Colonials' (The Twyborn Affair 11). She is understandably intimidated by Lady Tewkes who is a “formidable personage” with “rings growing out of the bone itself” - but is so captivated by her ladyship and her “casually incorrect version” of English that she accepts her recommendation of the Grand Hotel Splendide des Ligures by assuring her “mentor” that it “sounds charming”. The point is underscored by Eudoxia Vatatzes, another Australian expatriate, when she refers to the hotel as “that pretentious Hotel des Splendeurs et Miseres des Golsons Internationals (The Twyborn Affair 59-60).

Joanie, by suggesting that her characteristics are not hers alone but also those of our colonial antecedents, serves to invite us to reconsider White's earlier subversive work. White, in keeping with Joanie's sense of cultural inferiority, presents her as aspiring to the manners and mores of the expatriate English community of St Mayeul. Brian Kiernan sees this as extending an invitation to us to recognize the mode of the novel in these opening scenes as that of a “comedy of manners of Edith Wharton” (Brian Kiernan, Australian Literary History 173). A number of points need be made in respect to Kiernan's interpretation. White's treatment of Joanie does indeed invoke Wharton's fiction - the novel directly refers to the American novelist - and it does suggest a comedy of manners but in so doing it also invites us to recall the similarly mannered scenes with which White opens Voss. In other words, there is a peculiarly recursive quality about these scenes that seems designed to predispose or at least invite us to reflect more deeply upon White's novels, particularly the links between them. White also ingeniously plays with his references to Wharton to add the bite of satire to what otherwise would have remained an amusing but rather conventional comedy of manners. When Joanie tries to obtain an unspecified book by Wharton from the 'English Tearoom
and Library', Miss Clitheroe, the “assured” Englishwoman who speaks fluent French in the ‘timbre of a struck gong’, tells her that “Edith is out. More probably stolen” and that ‘She means so much to us at St Mayeul’ (The Twybom Affair 46). There follows a reference to Wharton that seems critical of her work but which is directed towards White’s readership, to the kind of faux readers who don’t read novels - let alone comprehend. Instead of Wharton’s book, Joanie accepts Thomas Hardy’s The Hand of Ethelberta “rather glumly” - even though it is a comic novel - while at the same time she tries ‘to console herself with the thought that some considered Mrs Wharton “sarcastic”. Moreover, when Joanie finally obtains the Wharton book, she does not read it for she is “intimidated by what she saw at a glance between its covers”. She simply feels, pitably but ridiculously, that ’she would be proud to sit with it in public places’ (The Twybom Affair 81).

5.6. White’s Literary Art and His Concern about Being Received

White’s references to Wharton are more subversive than Kieman’s reading would suggest for they not only enable him to satirize Joanie Golson and his own readers but also the English expatriate community of St Mayeul through Miss Clitheroe. The expatriate community to which Joanie aspires is ridiculed for the importance they attach to a book written by an American author, Wharton, and one that is, moreover, ironic, comic, and satirical, in the manner characteristic of much of her fiction. These subversions are reinforced by the fact that White omits the name of the Wharton book but not the name of the book Joanie does not want, Hardy’s The Hand of Ethelberta. This “omission” emphatically backlights the subversive nature of these passages. At another level, readers generally are mocked for considering Wharton’s work to be simply “sarcastic” instead of recognizing it as mannered, ironic, more or less subversive social comedy. The misapprehension of literature is one of the targets of White’s satire here and it is the product of his awareness of the way his own subversive fiction had been received throughout his career. The opening scenes of this novel thus invite us to read them as constituting a comedy of manners, as Kieman points out, but what White produces through his
representation of Joanie and his references to Wharton in particular is a playful but pointed satire upon readership generally. White revisits the Cote d’Azur, he invites us to recall his earlier novels, and refers us to Edith Wharton’s fiction to mount a satire that is, ultimately, an expression of his concern about the reception of literary art.

5.7. Recursiveness of His Earlier Works in The Twyborn Affair

White does not restrict satire to the expatriate community but also extends it to the local, French community of St Mayeul. Celeste, the daughter of Madame Reboa, may be ma plus belle fille but she also has a matelot in gaol at Marseille for some offence that is never spoken of (The Twyborn Affair 26) and Josephine, Madame’s other daughter, “may or may not be a whore” (The Twyborn Affair 60). Madame herself is comical but vulgar: she “loves to roll down her stocking” to “her victim” to show her “by no means pretty leg ulcer”. More importantly, Madame, “through a former relationship inspired by lust on either side”, leads us to a certain M. Pelletier (The Twyborn Affair 75). White revisits his own earlier Romantic impulse through Pelletier while at the same time he uses this figure to intensify his attack on the French community of St Mayeul. White’s attack on Pelletier resembles a kind of literary mise en scène that locates Pelletier in what is an exceedingly gross way of life. This stage setting recalls White’s love of theatre, further exemplifying the recursiveness of his work in this novel, while the terms in which it is cast drastically reduce Pelletier from the outset. White introduces Pelletier by describing his beach kiosk at St Mayeul as being cluttered with “damp newspapers and mildewed cigarettes”, a place where he exchanges “the smells of tortured sheets and sleeping bodies, a full pot de chambre and the dregs of a tisane” for “a raison d’être he had never achieved in marriage, parenthood, vice, or any form of civic responsibility” (The Twyborn Affair 71). This satirical attack on the vulgarity of Pelletier’s existence immediately serves to dispel any remaining expectations that European culture will be presented in the ironically comical but rather respectable manner of Edith Wharton. Having set the stage, White sharpens his attack on Pelletier, reducing him to an absurd, grotesque figure. A naked stranger, “a man or a
woman”, disrobes then enters the water in front of the Frenchman's kiosk. This figure captures Pelletier's imagination in the Romantic terms of classical antiquity:

Pelletier sees the naked flesh as white marble, or perhaps ivory overlaid with the palest gold leaf, before the straight figure raised its arms, composed its hands in the shape of a spire or an arrow, and plunged into the disquieted and disquieting sea.

(The Twyborn Affair 73)

This produces a radical disjunction between the terms in which Pelletier leads his imaginative and actual lives. White underscores this when he shatters the force of this Romantic image - he has a breaking wave comically drench Pelletier so that he stands 'groaning and grinning... all trickling water, grey stubble, mauve gums, and a few prongs of decalcified teeth'. White thus summarily returns Pelletier to his gross condition but he continues to represent him as a committed Romantic, as a man who is able to "recite whole yards of Victor Hugo and Chateaubriand". Pelletier discerns “a certain poetry of movement, a softness of light surrounding the swimmer” and he decides “it could only be a woman”. It is Pelletier himself who creates and continues to create this Romantic imagery – “so strong yet so poetic, so hopeful yet so suicidal” - but the emotional force of it is too much for him. Pelletier is seduced, and satirically reduced, for he is so moved as to masturbate. Susan Lever writes that Pelletier at this point “finds relief from the burden of gender in the landscape”(Susan Lever, Interlude, 102). Perhaps, but is it the landscape or the swimmer or his own Romantic imagination that stimulates Pelletier. Pelletier certainly finds sexual release - he “thrashes at himself”, there is mention of his “cooling sperm”, and a “single gob” that strikes him “cold and disgusting” on his kneecap - but the object of this erotic activity is to satirize by ridicule the Romantic disposition that he embraces and embodies. Pelletier, in serving to mock the Romantic creative impulse in this gross way, suggests that impulse to be self-indulgent and self-centered. That White responded to this impulse in his earlier novels means that there is an element of parodical self-criticism embedded in this
satire. The full extent of White's determination to revisit his earlier work becomes apparent when he appears to ascribe to M. Pelletier one of those epiphanic moments, one of those glimpses of transcendence that many critics identified as being characteristic of his earlier novels:

As the swimmer, as the light, as the color returned, what could have remained a sordid ejaculation became a triumphant leap into the world of light and color such as he craved from the landscape he knew, the poetry he had never written, but silently spoke, the love he had not experienced with Simone or Violette - or Mireille Fernande Zizi Jacques Louise Jeanne Jacques Jeanne - a love he knew by heart and instinct, but might never summon up the courage to express, unless perhaps at the point of death.

(The Twyborn Affair 76)

Yet how seriously can this be taken as an epiphany when the passage is clouded by ambiguity, when ironies encircle Pelletier, and when nothing that can be considered truly transcendental is granted to him? Pelletier's leap is not triumphant but merely a metaphorical leap into the worlds of light and color, poetry, and love. These are the worlds he craves but does not attain.

5.8. Quest for Identity: The Empty, Loveless, and Futile Life of Pelletier

Two points need be made regarding the inclusion of one, thrice-mentioned male name in Pelletier's list of lovers. First, this male name contributes to the ambiguity that swirls around Pelletier - it appears that he is not necessarily heterosexual or homosexual. Second, the inclusion of one male name in the list of lovers of Pelletier as a committed Romantic may very well be a repudiation of the heterosexual imperative of Romantic love as it has developed in the modern era and thus an affirmation of the homosexual imperative of Romantic love in antiquity.

Even if we take Pelletier's epiphanic moment on trust, clearly nothing of a
transcendental nature is granted to him for the worlds he aspires to simply consist of those things that he lacks. They thus 'consist' of absences so nothing is promised to Pelletier other than that which he and we already know: that is, the sad, earthbound knowledge that his life is empty, loveless, and futile. This apparent epiphany is a parody of those earlier epiphanies such as those granted to Stan Parker in *The Tree of Man* or to Elizabeth Hunter in *The Eye of the Storm*. Pelletier's single gob of cooling sperm not only bids forth but also most pointedly mimics and mocks the gob of spittle upon which Stan Parker's final epiphany in *The Tree of Man* turns (*The Tree of Man* 476-479). The critical difference between these events is that no religious or other insight, illumination, or significance is granted to Pelletier, a narrative 'fact' that is, moreover, confirmed by his immediate disappearance from the novel. In satirizing this aspect of his earlier work, White is once again subverting the expectations of his religious minded reader-critics. These expectations, and the orthodox religious reading of White's work from which they spring, are further subverted by his elevation of buggery to the status of theme in *The Twybom Affair*.

5.9. Satirizing the Perversions and References to Bogomilism

He mentions buggery in terms of the historical phenomenon of 'Bogomilism' which is to make most of the references and allusions to the practice of *buggery obscure* since few Australians, it seems reasonable to assume, would have knowledge of this religious sect. The O.E.D derives the term bugger from the Latin 'Bulgarus Bulgarian, a name given to a group of heretics who came from Bulgaria ...to whom abominable practices were ascribed'. Andrew Riemer, in an insightful essay (Andrew Reimer, *Eddie and the Bogomils* 12-29) concerning the role of 'Bogomilism' in *The Twybom Affair*, explains that the heresy arose among the Bulgarian people of eastern Europe, in a sect known as the Bogomils that prospered during the middle ages and who were considered 'to have practiced all manner of sexual perversions' (Reimer, 13). Mark Williams points out that the adherents to this creed were 'sexual libertarians who believed that procreation was evil and their
solution to this dilemma was to practice sodomy' (Williams, 145).

The connection to the Bogomils comes through Angelos Vatatzes, 'consort' to Eudoxia Vatatzes/Eddie Twybom. Angelos believes himself to be descended from and the successor to the Byzantine Emperors who ruled over the Bogomils. Angelos is himself a sodomite - as shown by his concern for his abandoned enema and his certain knowledge of Eudoxia's true gender - so that the antipathy that lies behind his reenactments of the slaughter of the Bogomils and Bulgars is not simply hypocritical but ludicrously ironic. White draws on the myths, legends, and history of the Bogomils and the Byzantines to play what is an elaborate and esoteric joke on buggers, buggery, and his readers. In this process, all three subjects are mocked. It is also typical of White that Bogomilism serves a rather more important function in Part One of The Twybom Affair than this joke would suggest. Riemer writes that the references to the heresy 'reveal a design that includes an elaborate fantasia on dualism', that is, the kind of dualism that is inherent in the sect's belief that matter is evil but that whatever the body does is unimportant because the soul is separate from the body. In addition, the complex of references to Byzantine affairs and the counterpoint account of the more quotidian vices of Sydney such as Joanie Golson and Eadie Twybom's scandalous behaviour at the Australia Hotel are central to this fantasia for they form a succession of 'bewildering mirror images, reflections of the human condition, wherein nothing is but what it is not'. Appearance and reality are thus blurred and Part One offers a world of ambivalences, changing perspectives, and shadows, "while it highlights the absurdity of humankind and its affairs".

The references to the Bogomils become an exploration of the basic tenet of all dualist creeds, of the unbridgeable gulf between the soul and the created matter it must inhabit. What began as a joke burgeons into an account of the initiate's battle with or against the flesh. In this process, dualism assumes the status of theme in Part One. The point I would make in relation to this is that when White elevates the dualism of the Bogomils as another form of religious belief to the level of theme, he elevates the practice of buggery that is central to the creed to the same level. An important effect of this is to direct the levity and irreverence that encompasses such
activity towards deflating the portentousness that are ascribed to such earlier novels as *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* from their consideration of other religious or metaphysical subjects and themes. White's play with buggery and Bogomilism in Part One is, moreover, self-subversive in terms of his oeuvre. At another level, because buggery is a sexual act that absolutely denies the possibility of the renewal of life, White's play with it and with Bogomilism not only serves to highlight the absurdity of humankind and human affairs, as Riemer mentions, but it also rejects the worth of the human body. In these circumstances, White's recourse to an ingenious play with buggery and Bogomilism is a satiric expression of what is his increasingly bleak vision of humanity.

5.10. The Use of Intertextual and Intratextual in *The Twyborn Affair*

White's love of literary play is not restricted to imaginative, subversive play with his historical sources. This emerges in Part Three when we learn of the Bellasis sisters' decision to abandon their intention to launch a petition the "overt immorality" at Eighty-Four, the site of Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith Twyborn's fashionable London brothel. It seems to the sisters that a kindly neighbour, Colonel Bewlay, might be patronising "the house in question", other neighbours like the Creeses are "too common" or, like the Feverels "too much abroad"; and it seems the support of the local shopkeepers is unlikely since "the drink orders alone are too profitable" (*The Twyborn Affair* 306). The ladies and the locals are conventionally ridiculed but the reference to "the Feverels" is rather more complex. This reference is to George Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), a Victorian novel that is supremely ironic and one that reflects Meredith's comic-satiric sense, his social concerns, and psychological insights into his character's states of mind. This is, however, not simply an inter-textual literary reference but an intratextual literary reference for it harks back to Part Two of *The Twyborn Affair* itself where it is revealed that Meredith's satires comprise Don Prowse's favorite reading (*The Twyborn Affair* 206). Prowse's appreciation of Meredith would appear to be a function of the fundamental qualities of his work: the comedy, the psychological
insights, and the social concerns that are embedded and expressed in Meredith's satires give Prowse a sense, an insight into himself and his life at Bogong. Meredith has made Prowse aware of his own predicament as a man irretrievably locked into what is the aggressively male yet sterile world of Bogong but, because his appreciation of Meredith is for his satire and because this insight has in any case come to him through this satire, Prowse also suggests his own subversive role as a figure, as another vehicle for White's satire of Bogong and bush life. Prowse, through the references to Meredith's satire, points to the subversive nature of The Twyborn Affair. White, by this stratagem, invites us to read The Twyborn Affair as Meredith's novel has been read, that is, as a pointedly ironic work, comic, satiric, rich in psychological insights and expressive of its author's social concerns. If we read White's novel in this way, then Don Prowse - the character to whom these references gesture - no longer seems merely a gross, sexually repressed man given to violence, a victim of Bogong, but a more complex man, one who possesses a greater degree of intelligence and self-awareness than appears at first glance. The inter-textual and an intra-textual reference to Meredith's novel not only exemplifies White's love of literary play but it also invites us to reconsider how we understand his work. White's allusions and references are often obscure or esoteric and this suggests that he takes some pleasure in playing with and indeed mocking his readership for their lack of knowledge and understanding. However, these allusions and references, in suggesting the existence of something else, something other, something more, even though they do not refer to bodies of knowledge or texts with which every reader is acquainted, more importantly create a climate of doubt, of uncertainty, in which very little is simply as it seems. The novel thus exceeds its apparent self and when it does so it disturbs its own representational foundations. The grotesque similes and metaphors that White disposes throughout this novel produce a rather similar disturbance. These tropes comprise one of the principal features of grotesque degenerative satire.
5.11. Comic vs. Degenerative Satire in The Twyborn Affair

In The Twyborn Affair, White makes Angelos Vatatzes, husband to Eddie Twyborn/Eudoxia Vatatzes, less important and significant by subjecting him to satire by ridicule. Angelos thinks that he is “Emperor of All Byzantium” and he consequently sees Eudoxia as his consort and Empress (The Twyborn Affair 32). As pretender to the Imperial Throne, he habitually relives the Macedonian and Thracian military campaigns of the Byzantines in which the Bulgars are slaughtered, squealing and bleeding “like pigs” (The Twyborn Affair 65). In addition, the house he rents is “threatened by the press of cavalry returning from the wars”, its “salon filled with the clash of metal, a stench of leather”, and “hairy, black, bloodshot men swaying in their saddles” and it is little wonder that Eudoxia feels she is living a novelette and “growing as mad as Angelos”. The Vatatze’s household resembles a madhouse rather than anything that could be mistaken for a royal court. White reduces Angelos by ridicule in the conventional manner but he most dramatically and mercilessly reduces him by applying to him the kind of grotesque similes and metaphors that are characteristic of grotesque satire. These reduce the Emperor of All Byzantium to the kinds of lower existential orders. White first ascribes to Angelos the view that “men are to women as apples to figs, the clean and the messy among fruits” (The Twyborn Affair 25). This is not only a grossly misogynistic metaphor but one that reduces Angelos, as speaker, to the botanical order. We cannot, however, be sure which of the lower existential orders is most appropriate to Angelos - he smells “of something - fungus? excrement? a dead animal of some kind?” Eudoxia describes him as an animal – “an old Alsatian dog... nosing at the hem of my skirt” (The Twyborn Affair 28-29) and so consigns him to the zoological order. She later describes his “nutshell eyelids” (The Twyborn Affair 31), his feet “like skate on the fishmonger's slab” (The Twyborn Affair 33), and, in what becomes an increasingly ludicrous and discordant combination of animal similes, as “this subtle old Greek lizard” (The Twyborn Affair 64) and, later, his hands as “working like talons” (The Twyborn Affair 104) so reducing him, respectively, to the botanical, ornithological, simian, and piscatorial orders.
These tropes ensure that Angelos appears as an outrageously but deliciously comical figure while they also suggest themselves to be the product of White's increasingly bleak vision of humanity. In addition, they serve to violate the tenor of the narrative for as gross hybridizations they disrupt its material surface and they also trouble the narrative's symbolic foundation. Their appearance more importantly shows the writer become increasingly concerned about his own activity and the world he is describing and creating. Eddie's father, Judge Twybom, glances out from his plate "like some noble beast" but he is still, like an animal, "grazing" so that Eddie cannot fail to notice his "velvet" but nevertheless animal "muzzle". Marcia Lushington is not only a "rich dowdy, or fashionable slattern" but is also comically cast into the realm of the botanical when the monkey fur "straggling down from her Venetian tricorne" gives her head "the look of a hanging basket in a fernery", then into the zoological when she reminds Eddie "somewhat of a raw scallop", and finally into the geological when he notes her "lips of a pale coral" (The Twybom Affair 168-171).

Don Prowse describes his employer, Greg Lushington, as being "full of money like a tick with blood" (The Twybom Affair 177). Prowse, in turn, appears to Eddie as an orangutan with an orange paw (The Twybom Affair 188). Later, Eddie finds Greg Lushington "more than ever pear shaped, even toadlike" (The Twybom Affair 197). This arresting mix of animal and vegetable metaphors draws our attention to the writing, raising the question of what this world is like. Mrs. Peggy Tyrrell, the cook, cackles through the gap between her "two brown, upper fangs" like the "mongrel hens" that sometimes join her "from under her feet" (The Twybom Affair 180). Peggy is not only "bird-eyed" (The Twybom Affair 181) but also appears - shades of Elizabeth Hunter - as if "she might have been a gnarled, half-burnt stump" (The Twybom Affair 187). Marcia Lushington, who sees Don Prowse as "a human animal" (The Twybom Affair 219), is once again cast into two lower orders of being: the biological – "Marcia . . . was not unlike a great downy moth irrationally involved in an obscene but delicious cannibalistic rite" - and, most strikingly, the inanimate realm of the mechanical - her mouth "a blunt, open-spaced
Denny Allen is at once bird-like and beast-like - he has a “plucked cockerel's throat” and a “horse's yawn” that tends to expose his “broad, green teeth” (The Twybom Affair 248) and Dot Norton, before she marries Denny, will “pup along the riverbank” (The Twybom Affair 238).

These reductive similes and metaphors makes White's characters more and more deplorable, but it is Ma Corkill, the extraordinarily awful mother of Peggy Tyrell, who best serves to illustrate his use of them. White describes Ma Corkill as a woman who “wore her hair in the semblance of a hat, a creation such as insects weave out of leaves and twigs, and dead grass, its structure containing a suppressed hum” (The Twybom Affair 286). This description recalls Flannery O'Connor's description, in her novel Wise Blood, of an unnamed woman who shouts at Hazel Motes, her central character, from beneath a coiffure "stacked in sausages around her head" and also that of “the welfare woman” whose hair “was so thin it looked like ham gravy trickling over her skull” (Flannery O'Connor, Wise Blood 47).

White, like O'Connor, attempts to find a likeness by establishing a direct linkage between vehicle and tenor so that the reader is left in no doubt as to how this character is to be taken. Ma is to be understood as an exemplary bizarre figure in the world of Bogong. The process of reducing individual characters to lower existential orders continues in Part Three of the novel. Ursula Untermeyer is cast downwards into the realm of the piscatorial when we are told that she “had been known to crown her own brittle carapace with a lacquered crab shell” (The Twybom Affair 341). The novel similarly sends Eadith downwards to the ornithological by comparing her manicured nails to “brittle, crimson talons” (The Twybom Affair 325), then to the equine when she feels she “looks like a horse” (The Twybom Affair 343), and finally to the completely inanimate when we learn “she looked like an exquisite plank with grain in it, her hair a perfectly incised helmet” (The Twybom Affair 356).

Other reductions are similarly more or less playful or comical but always to a degree grotesque. The novel locates Bobbie in the botanical order when it describes her as a “blemished cottage apple” (The Twybom Affair 316) and Madame
Siderous much more derisively when it draws our attention to her “leathery voracious face with its complexion suggestive of tropical fruits in the early stages of going off” (The Twybom Affair 339). In an apparently literal description that suggests a writer at play with his reader's vocabulary but in effect with his own devices, the novel casts Lord Gravenor into the realm of the zoological order when it describes his skin as “squamous” (The Twybom Affair 322) which means lizard-like, and ultimately into the geological when it notes his ‘stone’ lips. These similes substantially reduce White's characters but in a refinement of his technique he employs a more drastic measure in reducing the clientele of Eadith's brothel by symbolizing men as mice. The brothel is invaded by “a plague” of these creatures one of which is “evidently” - but very pointedly – “crushed” to death by Eadith when she jams “her legs together in her sleep” (The Twybom Affair 314). The novel thus skillfully reduces the brothel's clientele to the order of animals. White's use of these grotesque metaphors and similes against his characters suggests that he is having a good deal of wicked fun with them. The sudden proliferation of grotesque similes and metaphors that disturb both natural category and the foundations of traditional narrative are the proof and product of what are White's growing ontological concerns. Perhaps the greatest refinement to White's technique is an extended metaphor that expands upon the subversive work of his grotesque similes.

Ultimately, these grotesque tropes not only contribute to White's emerging grotesque satiric style but they also pragmatically and semantically unite The Twybom Affair with postmodern fictional satire because of the challenge they issue to conventional signification and to the notion of the linear or progressive narrative. The second feature of grotesque degenerative post-modern satire that White's work exhibits in this novel is the kind of carnivalesque setting that serves as the ground of grotesque figuration.

5.12. Satire and the Manifest Transgressions of Convention

Part Three begins with Lady Maud Bellasis and Lady Kitty Binns of
Beckwith St, London, and their observation of “the goings-on” that reveals number “Eighty-Four” (The Twyborn Affair 305) to be a whorehouse and its owner, the “rather odd Mrs. Eadith Trist”, to be a madam (The Twyborn Affair 311). White immediately subjects these two elderly sisters to ridicule by irony - Kitty's virtue “in her younger days hadn’t been much more than a theory... and an admirable arrangement... till with age and reduced circumstances she suddenly found herself set cold in the aspic of fact” and Maud, “flat and plain from the beginning, had never had the chance to test her virtue... and nobody would have been indiscreet enough to probe”. Both sisters “like to see themselves as modern” but only Kitty goes “the whole hog” in respect of lipstick: she blossoms “like a tuberous begonia” and so attracts the first botanical simile of this final section of the novel. We soon learn of the sisters' real reason for abandoning their opposition to the brothel: they derive “a voluptuous pleasure in associating themselves with the imagined rituals of a sexual nature”. The sisters' imagination transports them inside the brothel where, amid reclining odalisques on satin cushions, gentlemen “with familiar faces, cousins and nephews, their favourite Gravenor, even their father the late duke, unbutton their formal black” (The Twyborn Affair 308). Because their interest is so pleasurably vicarious – “it was preposterous, monstrous, but delicious” when the Ladies settle down to “the humdrum of living”, to life “in which they no longer had a part, except as extras stationed at a window, waiting for the real actors to appear”. A “real actor” soon appears and the Ladies discover that the brothel is patronized by their “favorite Gravenor”, Lord Gravenor, Roderick Bellasis. When “lucky enough”, the ladies catch sight of their “favorite, if elusive nephew” arriving or leaving “the house which played the most considerable part in their withering, insomniac lives”.

These first few pages of Part Three provide a pointed but intelligent modern satire of these privileged women as individuals or as representatives of a social type. White subverts Maud and Kitty and presents them, through their imaginative responses, their voluptuous pleasures, their vicarious and personal interests, as voyeuristic observers of the “goings on” that centre on the brothel opposite their
residence in Beckwith St. Their level of engagement casts them in the role of spectators to carnival in that it evokes the sexual energy and excitement of carnival. White thus suggests Beckwith St and its brothel to be the site of carnival and thus he provides the ground that grotesque figuration requires. The sisters, in appearing as imaginative participants and thus highly subjective observers of the brothel and its associated activities, loom as if they were members of an audience looking upon a stage through the so-called fourth wall of the theatre.

In Part One, the novel places us, via Joanie Golson, as eavesdroppers at the Vatatze's windows and it sustains us in this role by not revealing the nature of Eudoxia Vatatze's actual sexuality until near the end of Part One. In Part Two, the novel casts us in this role when Eddie Twyborn overhears the conversation between Don Prowse and Marcia Lushington. In Part Three, the novel not only takes our gaze across streets and through windows via the Bellasis sisters but also over parapets (The Twybom Affair 351) and even through “a concealed eye” (The Twybom Affair 329) or a peephole into the private rooms of the brothel. In casting readers in the role of voyeurs, the novel demonstrates that our perspective is not stable but moving and partially obscured or distorted. All of these voyeuristic perspectives create the climate of spectator engagement characteristic of carnival. However, this sense of our perspective being subject to impairment increases when we are asked to engage with the kind of phenomenal content that is always one step removed, so to speak, from the ‘actual’ or the “real”.

These shifting perspectives open up various interpretative possibilities demonstrating many conventional as well as preferred readings of the text. The unexpected changes of these perspectives disable the readers' attempts to reconstruct the narrative in terms of a single, unified authorial point of view, a single, stable “meaning”, or by consistent characterization. White's text thus not only destabilizes itself but in doing so it challenges an important reader reception convention by subverting the aesthetic which asserts that texts ought to be written in such a way that their meaning is clear and thus readily available to readers. It is a further measure of White's desire to destabilize his own work that his text suggests
that his characters sometimes independently create the “reality” of the novel. White attempts to exhibit a healthy skepticism towards the kinds of accepted literary decorums and conventions that preceded on the assumption that fiction could and should accurately represent truth in the world. These manifest transgressions of convention demonstrate the postmodernist turn in this work.

In this masquerade the normal world is “turned upside down or inside out” and various “others” such has the criminal, the fool, the hopelessly dissolute, or, in White's novel, especially Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith, take centre stage, even for a moment. The masquerade as image of disorder is also evident in the cross-dressing masquerades that Joanie Golson and Eadie Twyborn enact at the Australia Hotel (The Twyborn Affair 44-45), in the disturbing mirror refractions that happen on Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith, and in the cross-dressing masquerades that he/she enacts throughout the novel. However, the masquerade as image of disorder most powerfully culminates in the brothel scenes of Part Three because we as readers are made to spy on these scenes and are this way invited to see the brothel as a disorderly, chaotic place of human activity. These images of masquerade as disorder, as well as the images of characters and readers as voyeurs, constitute the carnivalesque setting of The Twyborn Affair. The carnivalesque masquerade that culminates in the brothel as beehive metaphor is central to the celebration of disorder that the novel effects but it is central in a particular way because the novel insists that we as readers create this world through our distorted limited vision.

In The Twyborn Affair, as in grotesque fictions generally, the carnival is anti-representational for, as during carnival, nothing is what it seems, nothing is what it purports itself to be, so that during carnival characters move in a space only of surfaces, a space that has, ironically, no space for the fictions of the internal man. We need only think of the superficial and temporary success with which Eddie Twyborn switches identity to realize that his life moves entirely within a space only of surfaces. As a subject Eddie does not change and appears as the embodiment of his present role and we may think of his ever superficial and always temporary success as a fair measure of the extent to which the fictions of the internal man bear
no significance. It is, moreover, not only Eddie and the three minor characters, M. Pelletier, Ma Corkill and Maisie, who are, as human subjects, most evidently just the simulacra of their roles, but also most of the other characters as well. These characters, in playing their roles, do not “discover” the freedoms of the radical other for themselves, but rather for White’s readers. It must be noted, however, that they do play their roles to a greater or lesser extent in more or less monstrous opposition to a society of rigid stereotypes.

The openness of carnival extends its freedom to language itself in *The Twyborn Affair*, for it encourages a proliferation of discourse types including underworld slang, cant, professional jargon, popular slang, standardized English, obscenities, and versions of ethnic expletives lyric. This clash of linguistic registers opens the field of permissible discourse because “the literary” is counter-posed to “the non-literary”, and the formal to the informal. Carnival, by way of this opening, is instrumental in illustrating the semiotic processes of dismantling and exposure of which satire is a part but more importantly, amid the consequent disorder, we are able to discover otherwise hidden points of view and specific orderings that are suppressed by or are in pointed opposition to authorized representations.

5.13. Satire and the True Identity of the People of Bogong

The use of regressive plotting and the obsession with violence that accompanies it is the third feature of the degenerate grotesque satire identified by Weisenburger in *The Twyborn Affair*. Eddie Twyborn, through his father’s connections, starts working as a jackaroo on “Bogong”, the property of Greg and Marcia Lushington in the Monaro region of southern New South Wales. White’s description of Bogong is cast in terms of a depressingly primordial past in which the landscape is “cold” and “huge”, the rocks “arranged in groups of formal sculpture suggesting prehistoric rites, and the animals are as primitive as the landscape: the sheep seem archaic inside a shell of what could have passed for stone wool and the horses are razor-backed nags with slatternly tails.” Eddie wonders “where civilisation ended, and still more, where it began” as Don Prowse, the manager of
Bogong, shows him to his quarters (The Twyborn Affair 174-179). This is clearly a sterile world, one that does not seem capable of offering Eddie the kind of refuge that he needs. Seemingly in spite of this evidently natural sterility, White depicts the culture of Bogong in terms of an aggressive masculinity. His method is deceptively simple: he has Eddie witness or participate in a number of gross, brutal, or otherwise ugly and violent acts. This violence is directly enacted or revealed through dialogue or authorial interpolation and it defines life at Bogong. It first emerges when Eddie witnesses the casually brutal way Denny Allen and his father treat their dogs: Denny idly cracks his whip at “his own cringing curs” and, when a terrier attempts to rape a kelpie bitch, the father lashes out and “catches the terrier in the balls” (The Twyborn Affair 190). Eddie learns from Mrs. Tyrell, the cook, that “bloody Kevun is pokin the hell out of our poor Else” and that she herself is mother of seventeen – “a football team of boys”. It occurs to Eddie that her womb may have been “kicked to pieces by this football team” (The Twyborn Affair 182-183).

There is also a recursive aspect to this violence - Mrs. Tyrell causes Eddie to envision “a withered dug flexed for action” when she insists on her nursing skills by telling him as he is recovering from his riding accident that she has “taken on worse than this ...a family of seventeen” (The Twyborn Affair 204). This awful image - the term dug usually refers to a cow’s udder - not only symbolizes and satirizes the vulgarity and harshness of Mrs. Tyrrell’s life in the bush but it also invites us to recall Riders in the Chariot and the Lady from Czemowitz in the gas chamber at Friedensdorf Camp who is the only other woman in White’s oeuvre whose breast has attracted this abject term. Violence, as it transpires, is endemic to both Bogong and the Monaro region: we learn that Don’s father “went broke on a place where Mexican thistle took over” before finally shooting himself through the mouth “amongst the bloody thistle” (The Twyborn Affair 202). And Eddie is not immune from this violence: he is lost consciousness by a fall from his horse and is dragged along the road until he grows conscious again of “the pains shooting through his ribs, legs, head” (The Twyborn Affair 202-203). The peculiarly sterile and violent male world of Bogong is made profoundly clear when Eddie recovers from this
accident only to suffer greater violence - Don Prowse anally rapes Eddie (The Twybom Affair 284). Eddie later reciprocates by violently raping Prowse - he plunges “deep into this passive yet quaking carcass” - in an act in which his feminine compassion for this “pitiable man” is subsumed “less by lust than a desire for male revenge” (The Twybom Affair 296).

White skillfully presents Eddie as the antithesis of the aggressive male world. Eddie, for example, not only surrenders to the temptation to try on Marcia clothes - he is “seduced by the empty garments” (The Twybom Affair 282) - and when he overhears Prowse telling Marcia that he, her lover, is “nothun' more than a bloody queen”, he is so distressed as to go home, shed his clothes, and to begin “automatically masturbating” (The Twybom Affair 287-290). Eddie also has an unkind attitude toward Marcia that is typified in his insensitive and misogynistic or brutally funny remark to her. White’s obsession with violence is most profoundly demonstrated in his portrayal of Ma Corkill, a very minor, comically vulgar, gross character whose sole purpose is to serve as a vehicle for his dark wit so as to underscore the primitive horror of Bogong. Ma Corkhill - this “completely toothless she-ancient of she-ancients” occupies her daughter’s bed where “the women's voices would entwine in a duet embellished by roulades and trills worthy of a more rococo age”. Ma not only drinks from a medicine bottle that makes her vocabulary “serviceable” but she does so while she sits on the “double dunny” with her daughter. Ma’s inexplicable flinging of a kettle of boiling water at her daughter not only brings to an end her brief visit to Bogong but also completes the shift in her behavior from the realm of the eccentric but amusing to the realm of the downright horrific (The Twybom Affair 286-287). This violent act is, of course, a device to get rid of Ma after she has made her limited but notable contribution to White’s satire upon the male world of Bogong - Ma is even more coarse and more genuinely and mindlessly aggressive than any of the male characters who stupidly dominate Bogong. The station owners, Greg and Marcia Lushington, are by no means as gross or as grotesque, as abject or as absurd, as the other inhabitants of Bogong. However, an aura of powerless and self-indulgent degeneracy engulfs them. Greg is “a slow
old bastard more interested in the travel life" (The Twybom Affair 186) and in writing “disgraceful poetry” (The Twybom Affair 232) than in his wife or his property. Greg is an idle “crypto-poet who comically confuses the words placebo and purulence” in his poem about “unfulfilled love” (The Twybom Affair 238). This confusion suggests that at Bogong, love, at best, may appease or reassure its recipient even though it has no intrinsic remedial value and love, at worst, is only a superfluous excess. Such is Greg's nature that when he inspects his property, he issues peremptory orders to his “acquiescent” manager and, ludicrously, tends to “embrace the panorama with a Napoleonic gesture” (The Twybom Affair 194). And on the other hand, the neglected and childless Marcia has no hesitation in sharing her bed with Eddie because of the elegance that she detects in him (The Twybom Affair 221). As it transpires (The Twybom Affair 287), and as the third headstone in the Lushington's private cemetery - that of Gregory Donald Prowse Lushington (The Twybom Affair 230) - suggests, Marcia has also taken Don Prowse to her bed in pursuit of the child that has twice previously eluded her. Marcia eventually falls pregnant to Eddie (The Twybom Affair 293) but, at the end of Part Two after he has abandoned her and Bogong, we learn that this child too has died (The Twybom Affair 300).

White's description of Bogong and its degenerate inhabitants represents a highly subjective view of Australian bush life but it is almost certainly one influenced by his own unhappy experience of working as a jackeroo on Bolaro, a sheep station owned by a friend of his father's in the late 1920’s. White’s antipathy towards bush life produces a pointed and strong satire upon the male world of Bogong. An important facet of this satire is the parody that White mounts on the bush realist tradition of Australian Literature established by such writers as Joseph Furphy and Henry Lawson. This attack formally satirizes the ideals of the tradition by recalling and parodying Joseph Furphy's account of the proper relations between workers and bosses in Such is Life. At Bogong, Greg Lushington's stockmen rush to meet his every need, as Susan Lever points out and they “in the Twentieth Century did the sort of thing that has always been expected of serfs” (The Twybom Affair
The novel undermines the tradition by suggesting that the egalitarian ideals of Australian democracy are more honored in the breach than in the observance and that all that unites employer and worker is a shared delight in gross behavior. Gross behavior is central to White’s mockery of Bogong, its inhabitants, and his parody of the bush tradition in a number of ways.

Don Prowse habitually relieves himself by pissing off the back steps of the staff quarters at Bogong (The Twyborn Affair 188) and when he does so he also abandons the egalitarian friendship offered by way of the quarters “two seater dunny” (The Twyborn Affair 190). This sense that sterility is the hallmark of human relationships and of life at Bogong is deeply underscored when Eddie Twybom visits Denny Allen and his family in their “huggermugger shack.” Eddie is to “have a beer” and meet Denny’s wife Dot, the daughter of Dick Norton, Bogong’s resident rabbiter, and their new baby (The Twyborn Affair 274). The passages concerning this visit are recursive in two ways and they invite us to recall the earlier rustic comedy that revolves around the O’Dowds in The Tree of Man even though this comedy is consistently darker - if not totally black - and they recall the much discussed epiphanies that occur in the earlier novels. It is not surprising that Eddie’s visit to the Allen’s is not auspicious for we know that Dot is “a miserable stunted female, of lashless, red-rimmed eyes, and nostrils pinched so close together the gristle could barely have allowed the passage of air - in short, a kind of runt” (The Twyborn Affair 208). Her answer to Eddie is certainly less than enthusiastic and she dismisses him “to the limbo of foreigners and amateurs” and shouts that she “has no time for swillin’ beer”. She vanishes into “the eternal smells of boiling mutton and burnt cabbage” and when the baby starts to cry, it is “in tongue to split the shack’s buckled boards” (The Twyborn Affair 276) and she blames Denny for bringing “bringing back mates” and shouts that he has “no consideration”. Quite on the contrary, Denny gathers up the baby even though it has become by now “the screaming, congested infant” and sits down on the edge of the veranda coddling and cooing “Choo choo choo” at it. Even though Denny’s love, unfortunately, “dribbles down from his lips in a slender thread of saliva” while the baby thrashes around,
revealing that her nappy was out to dry”. Dot reemerges “preparing some fresh outburst but finds the baby laughing, her tender, gummy smile related at the other end of time to Peggy Tyrell’s toughened grin”. While the novel insists here that the prospects for the renewal and growth of humanity at Bogong are grey if not grim, Dot is more hopeful and she concedes that Denny is “good with the baby” and murmurs that “Denny’s good”. It seems in keeping with Dot’s change of heart that she is impressed by “a moment of revelation”. But there is little comfort in this for those of White’s readers accustomed to and expecting such a moment of revelation or a glimpse of transcendence. Instead, there is an “immediate and active violation of grace” in the form of Dot’s father, Dick, on his “skeletal nag with the rabble of his mongrel pack at heel” (The Twybom Affair 277). Dick is promptly told to “Fuck off” by Dot and then to “fuck orf - fuckun old Dick!” by Denny who is paradoxically “very dignified” despite “the spittle flying in all directions”. As his son-in-law drives him off with gunshots, Dick’s final words are “Oo’d want a social visit with a bunch of bastards like youse?” While the irony of Dick’s question may not be lost on readers - he is, after all, the father of Dot’s baby - it appears to elude both Denny and Dot: he is “exhilarated by his masterful initiative” while she merely wonders “What will Mr. Twybom think?” What Eddie thinks when he leaves is not how disgraceful family life at Bogong is, as Dot’s question presupposes, but instead he wonders, in a moment of seeming revelation if he “wasn’t leaving the best of all possible worlds” (The Twybom Affair 278).

This suggests that even though social arrangements are terrible and exceedingly bad at Bogong, this life may be as good as life ever can be. Since the life Eddie has just witnessed has so little to commend it as good, let alone best, his “revelation” is pointedly ironic so that, like M. Pelletier’s false epiphany, it mockingly rehearses those frequently discussed epiphanies, moments of revelation, and glimpses of transcendence in White’s earlier novels. White’s world of Bogong is peopled by an ensemble of characters who are variably but sufficiently base, gross, violent, absurd or grotesque in their attitudes and behavior to not only prevent the development of the relationship Eddie seeks but also to effect what Kiernan calls
"satiric changes on the conventions of the Australian novel of rural life" (Kieman, 176). This involves, in broad terms, an almost total denial of value to rural life and these characters do not overcome natural disasters like the characters in traditional Australian bush stories or demonstrate the value of mateship, or for that matter, gain glimpses of transcendence in the manner of White's own Stan Parker but remain victims not only of a bleak and unremittingly harsh world but also of their own ignorance or self-interest. Ma Corkill, Denny Allen, Dot Allen, Don Prowse, and Jim Norton deny, through their violations of decorum, the possibility of a natural order and, despite their wealth and privilege, the Lushingtons, in confusing the boundaries between normal and non-normal behaviour, contribute to this denial. The net effect of this sustained attack on bush life is to produce a grotesque if not absurd world that is almost completely value-free and not redemptive. White's Bogong consequently resembles the brutal bush world that Barbara Baynton presents in such short stories as Squeaker's Mate and in her novel Human Toll (Baynton, Bush Stories) and so it is rather different to the worlds depicted by Henry Lawson or the other writers of the bush-realist school. White satirizes the bush but he also refrains from parodifying Baynton's work and this suggests that she may have influenced him, at least in terms of the tenor and tone of his attack. White's satire serves to confirm Baynton's work while at the same time it provides a counterpoint, if not an antidote, to such values as mateship and the ideal of the common man as they are represented in work of Lawson and the other bush realists.

At first glance, Part Three of The Twyborn Affair reads like another modernist indictment of modern life for the lives of characters unfold in a 1930s London that is painted in terms that consistently reflect the kind of doubt, disillusion, and despair evident in The Living and The Dead or T. S. Eliot's The Wasteland. White's Beckwith St:

is permanently on the relapse. Empty milk bottles once put out seemed to stand indefinitely, unless falling like hollow skittles in the night. On sunny mornings there
were the skeins of cats entangled on the short tessellated walk between pavement and front doors. In the house where the vanishing race of servants was still to be found, whether the sad putupon variety, or those doing an enormous favor before twisting the knife by giving notice, either sort would rise out of the areas, and from behind iron bars glance up and down the street as though in search of something they might never find - unless at Eighty-Four.

(The Twyborn Affair 359)

And Mrs. Trist had taken to walking, not only at dawn, the hour of forgiveness, but also by broad daylight, and farther afield, through scorching or soaking afternoons, in which newspapers blew in her face, or wrapped themselves in wet wads, like compresses, round her ankles and shins, as she shambled low-heeled over bottle-tops and broken glass, through dead kittens and vegetables, endlessly marching, round Islington, Stepney, Bethnal Green. What she hoped to escape or discover was not clear even to herself. (The Twyborn Affair 392).

The atmosphere of despair evoked by these and similar passages provides a backdrop appropriate to a world made degenerate, violent, and chaotic by its inhabitants' own behaviors. The novel proposes this violence as typical of a world that it describes as “determined on its own downfall” (The Twyborn Affair 321). Annabel abandons “the solid architecture of her noble origins to run out into the labyrinth of lapsed values” (The Twyborn Affair 311) where she becomes “a born harlot and mid-morning alcoholic” before she dies horrifically by being “crushed by a train - at Clapham Junction” (The Twyborn Affair 320). Lydia, who attends mass as well as confession and who has been feeling “fucked out... and thinking of giving the game away” (The Twyborn Affair 330), confesses her sins and is killed for them - her body is found floating in a canal and her confessor, moreover, “arrested for her murder” (The Twyborn Affair 331). Dulcie has “a go at herself with the knitting-needle” (The Twyborn Affair 350) and Eddie/Eadith bleeds to
death in the street after an exploding German bomb severs her hand as she is making her way across London to meet her mother, Eadie (The Twyborn Affair 429-431). Because the characters insistently and consistently enact these kinds of behaviors, the world of Part Three far exceeds the worlds of Parts One and Two in terms of moral decline, violence, and chaos. This world suggests White's philosophic disposition is becoming increasingly despairing. Even those passages that are comically energized by White's dark wit also forcefully evoke a degenerate, chaotic, violent world. These passages serve as notably incandescent markers of eccentricity of appearance, attitude, or behavior, irrespective of whether or not a character serves an active or passive role as agent or victim, or even as both. Only a few examples can be given here but there are many others distributed throughout Part Three. Where The Duke, the father of Lord Rodney, dies from a “drawn-out bout with unconfessed syph” (The Twyborn Affair 347), Brigadier Blenkinsop dies “astride the negress from Sierra Leone” (The Twyborn Affair 361). Cecily Snape is “an insipid girl” and one who is forced to leave the country because she manages to have an affair with “an entire negro band”. When she eventually returns she does so only to live alone, to go for endless walks in the rain, and to curl up in bed with her fifteen dogs “without even taking her gumboots off (The Twyborn Affair 337-338). Lord Roderick himself is not deterred by Bobbie, one of Eadith's girls, or her mismatched breasts, but rather prefers her because sleeping with “even a distant cousin is a little bit incestuous” (The Twyborn Affair 313-314).

In all of these passages both ends of the spectrum of supply and demand, as it were, attract White's scorn so that it appears that the targets of his satire are not these characters as individuals but the milieu, the society, and the world of decline and random chaos in which they are located. The violence that permeates The Twyborn Affair is inextricably bound up with the third feature of grotesque satire, regression as the principle of its action, its plot. Grotesque satire requires for its plots a kind of double action, that is, a regress in the form of a progress. The life of Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith in particular reflects regress in the form of progress. Eudoxia Vatatzen, in returning to Australia and in going to Bogong as Eddie Twyborn seems
to be making progress - as Eddie Twybom she seems about to regain “her” birth identity. But circumstances, not least the violence he/she encounters and perpetrates at Bogong, conspire against her so that this apparent progress is a regress. Eudoxia geo-physically goes back in a painful and unsuccessful attempt to recover - as much as to discover - her former self. At the same time this move back is progressive because to go back to make such an attempt represents progress in the light of her difficulties as Eudoxia Vatatzes. Similarly, Eddie's return to Europe to emerge as Mrs. Eadith Trist is a regress because she again goes back in another attempt to discover a former self while at the same time it represents progress in light of the difficulties he experiences at Bogong as Eddie Twybom. That Eddie as Eadith Trist the transvestite London madam does recover something of his/her former self as Eudoxia the transvestite lover of Angelos Vatatzes, confirms that his/her life and thus the plot of the novel effects regress in the form progress. Eddie finally “progresses” to London but this too is a regress for her life there is far from satisfactory - the violence that permeates the novel eventually kills her there. White’s story of Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith's life exemplifies regressive plotting: she/he seems to progress by making major moves to other worlds but this movement is a regress not only because she/he invariably goes back to discover/recover her self but also because she/he never recovers her/him self because her/his engagement with these worlds is only bound up with their surfaces - with clothes, make-up, appearances and with ephemeral phenomena such as mirror refractions, dreams, self-perceptions, and impossible relationships. Even in the “real” Australian world of Bogong- real because harsh, bitter, and seemingly native to Eddie - we may recall his concern as to whether he will “ever succeed in making credible to others the moleskins and elastic sides” (The Twybom Affair 183) and the occasion when he is “seduced” (The Twybom Affair 282) into dressing himself in the clothes of his absent lover, Marcia. This failure to discover/recover self suggests that there is no self to recover, that identity too, is a masquerade, an endless series of performances without a consistent entity behind the masks. This regress to various shadowy, reflective, insubstantial worlds that fail to produce any sense of identity for Eddie
constitutes a satire on the much discussed “quest for identity” theme that was originally identified in The Tree of Man.

The obsession with violence in grotesque degenerative satire, as Weisenburger points out, has produced strong plots and thus a structural counterpointing “so articulated as to seem an intensely reasoned hysteria”. This argument is largely borne out by The Twyborn Affair for violence interpenetrates White's satire as an insistent trope - in Angelos Vatatzes' perfervid imagination, in the harsh reality of Bogong, in the brothel scenes, in London itself, in the fates of so many minor characters, and in Eddie's death. Violence in this novel does produce an overdetermined plot for it rules the lives and determines the fates of many of the characters - the sexual violence to which Don Prowse subjects Eddie, for example, not only produces reciprocal violence but this in turn drives him away from Bogong and eventually to his fate in Europe. And Ma Corkill, a minor character, disappears from the narrative altogether on account of her violent behavior. This plot thus violently imposes order on disorder so that it constitutes something of an intensely reasoned hysteria against violence itself. This violence, moreover, is atavistic and thus it suggests itself, as Weisenburger describes it, to be “the only stop humanity creates for incompleteness” (The Twyborn Affair 27).

As Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith makes his/her regressive progress through all manner of more or less violent dislocations, guises, mirrorings, digressions and regressions she/he provides an exemplary model of this kind of incompleteness. The recurrent, atavistic violence of another war kills Eddie for her essential incompleteness and so violence looms as an obsession in this novel. However, violence, despite its pervasiveness and its atavism, does not quite restore order to the novel for White ensures that it ends on an ambiguous note. Ultimately, White's grotesque style and his regressive plotting, the topos of carnival, enable him to produce a novel that defies the processes of reading that conventionally seek to integrate the text with social and aesthetic norms or with consensus building. This chapter initially focused on the notably recursive quality of White's work in The Twyborn Affair to show how this novel evinces a number of the characteristics and
features of the four earlier novels that concern this study. *The Twyborn Affair* opens after Edith Wharton in the first instance for the same reason *Voss* opens in the manner of Jane Austen - to mock affectedly pretentious social behavior - but in the second and more important instance, it opens in Wharton’s comic mode to draw our attention to the tendency of critics to read literature in terms of established, clearly delineated genres.

The later novel not only subverts the reading of Part One as a comedy of manners by satirically undercutting the relevance of Wharton’s work, but it also calls our attention to some of the earlier criticism of White’s work. We may recall Geoffrey Dutton’s observation regarding “the traditionally ironic comedy of Jane Austen ... as in the society episodes in *Voss* and Brian Kieran’s description of the opening scenes of that novel as introducing an “ironically poised comedy of manners that is sustained throughout” (Kieran, *Patrick White* 50). What *The Twyborn Affair* suggests is not that these critical responses have no grounds but that they are limited insofar as they overlook, obfuscate, and ultimately deny White’s subversive purposes. This chapter also discussed the gross but self-critical parody of his own earlier Romantic impulse that White enacts through M. Pelletier. It argued that this is a recursive parody in that it recalls the self-parodies enacted by Basil Hunter in *The Eye of the Storm* but also that it is satirical because it is self-reflexively ironic.

The novel in this aspect deftly demonstrates White’s oeuvre while at the same time it locates itself in relation to the wider Romantic literary tradition. It does so by subverting aspects of its own earlier internal antecedents and influences. In this chapter I also considered the extent to which *The Twyborn Affair* embraces and exhibits the features of grotesque satire. I showed how White’s grotesque similes and metaphors, by collectively or individually encircling his characters, effect a bizarre intermixing of categories of being and how they blur the boundaries between character and scene and eventually how they seem to celebrate disorder. In their disposition, however, these grotesque figures also radically disturb the representational foundations of the narrative through the violations of tenor and
consequent disruption of material surface that they effect between the subject and
the object of comparison. This chapter also demonstrated that the carnivalesque
setting required for grotesque figuration takes the form of a vast carnivalesque
masquerade in this novel that extends throughout it as an image of disorder. I
argued that this masquerade as image of disorder is particularly evident in the
various cross-dressing guises that Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith adopts through which the
normal world is inverted. This chapter also elaborated the essentially regressive
nature of the novel's plot by showing how it is impacted by violence and how
White's story of Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith's life is, essentially, a story of regression.

This chapter demonstrates that White's recourse to the devices, tropes, and
strategies of grotesque satire in The Twyborn Affair should not be underestimated.
His drawing on the features of this form and his mixing of them with those of
conventional modern satire in the manner identified by Greenblatt, but also with
those of parody, self-parody, and meta-fiction, as well as his recourse to some of the
other earlier features of his work such as a marked literariness and the playful use of
literary references, allusions, and signposts, enhance the combination or mélange
quality that is the chief characteristic of satire. That the novel comprises the
features, devices, tropes, and effects of these various forms means that this mélange
quality is its chief characteristic, a characteristic that demonstrates White's
willingness to experiment with form in order to push out the boundaries of creative
writing while at the same time it ensures that White's work is never static but ever-
changing, ever responding to the problems and issues thrown up by life and literary
art in new ways. The grotesque style, the carnivalesque topos, and the regressive
plot that White develops not only enhance the medley quality of this novel but also
operate in their own right.

Firstly, these devices, tropes and strategies, by way of figural reduction of
the characters, the terrestrial chaos that this creates, the intermixing of categories of
being, and the consequences of this for traditional signification, effect a radical
change in the nature of White's style. Secondly, they challenge the tradition of
reading that seeks to integrate the text with social and aesthetic norms and with