Ideal Identity Arises from Bricolage: Identity Issues in Patrick White’s *The Twyborn Affair*

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**ABSTRACT**
Compared with his other works, *The Twyborn Affair*, as one of the three best novels in contemporary Australian writer Patrick White’s own opinion, has not received its due attention. Searching for the meaning of human existence is the basic theme in *Twyborn*. The protagonist makes the Whitean odyssey from France to Australia and to the UK in order to pursue h/er ideal identity. In the depiction of the protagonist’s journey of pursuing an ideal identity, White deconstructs the binary opposition between male and female via the protagonist’s three gender changes. After deconstructing the traditional identity system, White does not attempt to find a balance between male and female with the help of androgyne, but projects a new method to deal with identity issues—bricolage: abandoning settling all relations comprehensively by a unitary and fixed identity, but taking advantage of the polymorphism and fluidity of identity and using different selves in different situations. In *Twyborn*, White conveys a beyond-humanism-way to deal with identity issues. Ideal identity arises from bricolage and only bricoleur can be twyborn (twice born).

**KEYWORDS**
The Twyborn Affair; gender; fragmented identity; bricolage

**1. Introduction**
“There can be few authors who have received so much attention and yet been so little understood as Patrick White” (Barnes 212). There used to be a boom of White study. But have we completely understood White and his oeuvre? Definitely no. Although there are numerous journal articles and dissertations studying White’s works, among
his 13 novels, some works are always hot, while some are always neglected. Novels, like The Aunt’s Story, The Tree of Man, Voss, Riders in the Chariot, The Eye of the Storm, and A Fringe of Leaves, which bring White world acclaim, have been interpreted again and again, even overexploited, but other novels are less studied, which includes The Twyborn Affair.

Patrick White used to say:

In my opinion my three best novels are The Solid Mandala, The Aunt’s Story, and The Twyborn Affair. All three say something more than what is sacred to Aust. Lit. 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 Twyborn Affair. (Flaws 145)

White is not over-worried; until now, Twyborn still suffers obscurity. Twyborn has long been overlooked and not received its due attention. Compared with White’s other novels, existing studies on Twyborn are so few that they can even hardly constitute the tip of the iceberg in White studies. Instead of being the major subject, at most times Twyborn serves as a foil in studies. Even in the studies taking Twyborn as a central subject, from certain critics, this novel receives undervaluation rather than appreciation. Robert Nye regards Twyborn as the worst novel in White’s writing career (Ramsey 95). Beston thinks that Twyborn is a weak work enclosing White’s major novels, prolonging his literary career, but adding little to his stature; Twyborn can receive attention just because it appears at the end of White’s illustrious career, dealing with eye-catching phenomena, transvestitism and homosexuality (Beston 14).

As one of White’s best three novels, Twyborn has not been fully understood by critics and its value has not been completely acknowledged by academia. Milan Kundera defines a novel as “The great prose form in which an author thoroughly explores, by means of experimental selves (characters), some great themes of existence” (Kundera 94). White’s Twyborn is a proper example illustrating Kundera’s definition, in which the protagonist uses three different identities to experience various lives. “The basic theme in Patrick White is mankind’s search for a meaning for, and a value in, existence” (Björkstén 117). Self-exploration is also the thematic concern of Twyborn, in which White puts his protagonist into a Whitean odyssey. The protagonist makes an odyssey from France to Australia and to the UK in order to pursue an ideal identity.

Since Socrates asserted the notable phrase “know yourself,” we humans have been attempting various self-searches to know ourselves. Identifying oneself is accompanied by observing oneself. How to view oneself plays a crucial role in the process of pinning down one’s identity. In terms of how the world views itself, George Spencer-Brown argues that “it must first cut itself up into at least one state which sees, and at least one other state which is seen. In this severed and mutilated condition, whatever it sees is only partially itself” (Brown 105). In this way, multiple “worlds” appear in this observing process. In order to see itself, the world needs more than oneself. Brown’s words are concerned about observation in general, so his claim can also be applied to the matter of observing and identifying oneself. It means that one needs multiple “selves” to identify him/herself. Twyborn is such a story that the protagonist Eddie tries to see himself clearly with the help of different selves in the process of pursuing an ideal identity.
2. The Eudoxia Vatatzes affair: drag and gender performativity

In the first part of the novel, the protagonist Eddie Twyborn appears under the identity of Eudoxia Vatatzes, living in France with her husband Angelos. From the first time when Mrs. Golson meets Eudoxia, it can be seen that Eddie's original male body is disguised. To Mrs. Golson, standing before her is a “charming young woman”:

The long thin brown arms of this girl, the perfection of her jawline, the grace of her body as she turned smiling to encourage the dispensable (anyway for Joan Golson) man in black. (Yes, write to Eadie, write tonight—who would so much appreciate this graceful creature strolling with unconscious flair through her unkempt garden). (White, Twyborn 14)

For Eddie, the key to establishing the Eudoxia identity lies in his “performing” his gender. According to Judith Butler, “within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (Gender 33). By performing his gender, Eddie constitutes the identity he purports to be—female Eudoxia.

“Drag” is an activity that can embody the performativity of gender: “The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed […] In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency” (Gender 175). Generally speaking, drag refers to behavior like wearing clothes or putting on makeup of the opposite sex; other words with similar a meaning are “cross-dressing” and “transvestite” which all indicate these actions. Drag plays a crucial role in the establishment of the Eudoxia identity. Eudoxia clearly knows the importance of clothes to her, and this can be seen from the dialogue between her and Angelos:

E.: I could hardly forget. I can remember the dress I was wearing.
A.: I can’t.
E.: You can never remember dresses. To me they mean so much. (Gender 124)

It is believed that there is a potential un-brokenness of the continuum among sex, gender, and sexuality: “This conception of gender presupposes not only a causal relation among sex, gender, and desire, but suggests as well that desire reflects or expresses gender and that gender reflects or expresses desire” (Gender 30). That is to say, if one is an anatomical female, then she must reveal the female characteristics, like the feminine behavior, dress, and makeup, and the one she loves must be an anatomical male. This continuum is socially accepted and regarded as reasonable and stable. So after Eddie expresses convincing female characteristics, people take it for granted that Eudoxia is an anatomical female, and Eudoxia and Angelos a normal couple.

But the Eudoxia identity is not perfect. When Eudoxia twists her ankle, Mrs. Golson helps her. She suggests Eudoxia take off her shoes and bathe the ankle, but Eudoxia refuses her immediately:

Mrs. Golson noticed that, although the ankles were shapely enough, the young woman’s feet were on the large side, hands too, for that matter. Madame Vatatzes (Eudoxia) must have been conscious of her feet. She made a move as though to hide them under a skirt which was not long enough. (Gender 52)
Depending on drag, Eddie can make himself incredibly close to, but never become a real female. Without drag, the big feet will make Eudoxia suspicious at any moment. Eddie realizes that “The real E. has not yet been discovered, and perhaps never will be” (Gender 79).

As mentioned above, Judith Butler claims, “gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be.” However, it doesn’t mean that one can perform his/her gender just like an actor putting on a mask. Drag is a kind of reconstruction based on social norms, not an arbitrary play. Butler’s readers often misunderstand this point. That’s why she says, “Matters have been made even worse, if not more remote, by the questions raised by the notion of gender performativity introduced in Gender Trouble (Bodies ix). So she refines her claim: “Such a willful and instrumental subject, one who decides on its gender, is clearly not its gender from the start and fails to realize that its existence is already decided by gender” (Bodies ix). It is not reasonable to assume a subject preexists performance, an actor behind a gender mask. In Butler’s words, “there is no subject who decides on its gender, and if, on the contrary, gender is part of what decides the subject” (Bodies ix).

Eddie thinks that he can perform gender and adopt the Eudoxia identity as easy as putting on a mask, but these are just illusions. In terms of gender performativity, he, and anyone, can never be the ultimate agency with choosing or deciding power.

3. The Eddie Twyborn Affair: anima, animus, and imitation

Since the Eudoxian self fails to help Eddie know and identify himself successfully, in the second part of the story, Eddie changes back to the male identity and goes back to Australia, but he is still troubled by identity issues: “I am a kind of mistake trying to correct itself” (White, Twyborn 143).

Eddie gets a job at his father’s friend Greg’s farm. Eddie thinks that the masculinity shown by the manager Prowse is a necessary characteristic for a man, then he begins to imitate Prowse “to convince himself of an existence which most others seemed to take for granted” (212). Later, Eddie commits adultery with Greg’s wife Marcia. He uses Marcia to establish his own masculine identity. “In whichever sexual role he had been playing,” self-searching is always his aim (223).

“Jung called the ‘feminine’ archetype within a man the anima, and the ‘masculine’ within a woman the animus” (Salman 65). Compared with the “aggressively masculine world” around him, the anima in Eddie is extraordinarily obvious. As soon as he arrives at the farm, Mrs. Terrell recognizes his difference from other men: “It’s the girls I miss out ’ere. Never the boys. Not that you isn’t a boy . . . But different. A woman can speak out ’er thoughts” (White, Twyborn 185). Working with Prowse on the farm, he is very “glad of this employment for his hands, and it made him feel more masculine” (186).

Having sexual intercourse like other men makes Eddie feel that his masculinity is strengthened, his anima becomes no longer obvious and he becomes a normal man like Prowse.

But Eddie hasn’t achieved his ideal identity as planned. When he swims in a river nakedly, Prowse sees that and says: “Better watch out, Ed. If you flash yer arse about like that, someone might jump in and bugger yer” (250–251). There is a suspicion in Prowse’s heart and finally he tells Eddie: “I reckon I recognized you, Eddie, the day
you jumped in—into the river—and started flashing yer tail at us. I reckon I recognized a fuckun queen” (284).

Raped by Prowse, “Eddie Twyborn was breathing chaff, sobbing back, not for the indignity to which he was being subjected, but finally for his acceptance of it” (284). What makes Eddie upset is not that Prowse rapes him, but that he accepts Prowse’s rape with no resistance. Whether imitating Prowse or committing adultery with Marcia, Eddie’s aim is to establish a masculine identity, but accepting Prowse’s rape means that he is destroying the identity he tries to establish.

It has been mentioned above that society imposes a continuum among sex, gender and sexuality; another continuum is also enforced between sexual activity and sexuality. There are powerful links between sexual activities and notions of morality: “Hence, if you have genital sexual contact with someone of the same sex, you are not just having homosexual sex, you are a homosexual” (Klages 115–116), and “Homosexuality is included on the list of ‘feminine’ behaviors” (Tyson 88). Having homosexual sex with Prowse, Eddie would be regarded as homosexual and tagged as feminine, and then his attempt to establish a masculine identity is ruined. Eddie cries because of the fact that his acceptance of Prowse’s rape feminizes himself, and he fails to establish an ideal male identity. Like the experience of being Eudoxia, the Eddiean self also does not satisfy the Eddie’s self-search.

4. The Eadith Trist affair: isolation and epiphany

In the last part of the story, putting on women’s clothes again, Eddie drags as Eadith Trist, a bawd in London. Although she runs a whorehouse Eadith never stays in that business: “She was 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” (White, Twyborn 311). Eadith deliberately keeps away from others: “She was very lonely; for a time her only friends were trades-people and servants, who offered her a comforting reality” (311), and all about her mysterious to other people. The only man who has a relatively close relation with Eadith is her patron Gravenor, but, even to Gravenor, Eadith also keeps a distance from “the ignoble lord, her would-be and rejected lover, who might have wrecked the structure of life by overstepping the limits set by fantasy” (322).

Being isolated and keeping away from others make Eddie live an Eadithan fantasy, which is more reliable than being Eudoxia and Eddie: “In his isolation he was free and whole, but only momentarily” (251). When Eadith/Eudoxia/Eddie⁴ recalls all the attempts s/he has made,

She would have had to admit she had not existed in any of her several lives […] Yet whatever form she took, or whatever the illusion temporarily possessing her, the reality of love, which is the core of reality itself, had eluded her, and perhaps always would. (336)

S/he realized that the greatest trouble hindering h/er knowing and identifying h/erself is a matter of love:

She began to wonder whether her life were a collage of fantasies: her profitable whorehouse, her love for Gravenor, the romantic dresses, the elaborate jewels. On the other hand she could still practically feel the calluses got by crowbar and shears, experience the voluptuous ease of entry through the gateway of Marcia Lushington’s thighs, the agonies
of Don Prowse’s thrust, hillocks of chaff crumbling around a salt-stricken mouth, pure contact with the Judge under the honeycomb bedspread of a circuit hotel. (392)

After hearing that her father has passed away and her mother Eadie is in London now, E knows that resolving her romantic troubles with Eadie and Gravenor would be the final opportunity to clearly know and identify herself.

Before meeting her mother, s/he makes a dream: she is in a windowless room; there are also children in it, who are “too many and too unearthly, also too frightening, in particular the eyes and mouths, which were those of flesh-and-blood children, probing, accusing the room’s focal point, herself” (413–414). S/he gradually understands that the children want to get out of this windowless room and s/he is responsible for this imprisonment. S/he stops them getting out, because, in h/er eyes, they will be safe in this room. S/he tells them “Safe—as you’ll never be outside” (414), but the children elude h/er and keep trying to get out of the prison-like room.

E’s dream has its symbolic meaning. The windowless room symbolizes the Eadith identity; living in this identity, s/he feels safe. The children represent h/er other identities; being forced to hide under Eadith identity, they feel uncomfortable and that is why they insist on getting out of there. This is the problem of fragmented identity. From the perspective of humanism, identity is something fixed, unchangeable and stable. With the rise of deconstruction, new ideas about identity begin to prevail. Deconstructionists regard human identity “as a fluid, fragmented, dynamic collectivity of possible ‘selves’” (Tyson 335). From the perspective of deconstruction,

The self-image of a stable identity that many of us have is really just a comforting self-delusion […] in reality it is highly unstable and fragmented. We don’t really have an identity because the word identity implies that we consist of one, singular self, but in fact we are multiple and fragmented […] (Tyson 257).

E’s identity is always fragmented and each of the children represents a fragment of his identity.

But what E always pursues is a unitary and fixed one: “Because the soul is progressive, it never quite repeats itself, but in every act attempts the production of a new and fairer whole” (Emerson 295). E changes h/er identity continuously; whether being Eudoxia, Eddie or Eadith, s/he is substituting one fragment, a partial self, for the whole identity, a complete self, and now the Eadithan self is the strengthened fragment. E creates a windowless room named Eadith, confines other fragments to the room and wants to substitute Eadith for the whole. But this is impossible and s/he cannot repress other fragments without making negative effects. The repressed fragments want to break the confine of Eadith, because Eadith cannot represent them all: “Fragmented body […] usually manifests itself in dreams […]” (Lacan 4). So through dream, E realizes h/er fragmented identity problem and that the Eadithan self alone can hardly be h/er ideal identity.

“In certain circumstances lust can become an epiphany […]” (White, Twyborn 417). E’s mind becomes clearer and s/he knows that this is “a world of fragmentation and despair in which even the perversities of vice can offer regeneration of a kind” (420). S/he used to suffer from the pursuit of an ideal identity, but now s/he holds a new perspective on identity issues. When s/he finally finds h/er mother,
Eadith was offered this tremulous scribble, and read, “Are you my son Eddie?”

Eadie Twyborn read when the book was handed back, “No, but I am your daughter Eadith.”

The two women continued sitting together in the gathering shadow.

Presently Eadie said, “I am so glad. I’ve always wanted a daughter.” (422-423)

Echoing her name Eadith (the pronunciation of Eadith is similar to that of Eadie’s), E becomes Eadie’s daughter and finally they accept each other: “Their harmony by now was a perfect one” (423). E knows “[…] no matter which fragment of my self which I lost is now returned where it belongs” (431-432).

After solving the problem with her mother, E has another issue to deal with, which is her love with Gravenor. She receives a letter from Gravenor, in which he writes:

[…] we might have loved each other, completely and humanly, if we had found the courage. Men and women are not the sole members of the human hierarchy to which you and I can also claim to belong.

[…] If I can’t persuade you, I shall continue to accept you in whatever form your puritan decides you should appear […] (426)

Gravenor’s words touch E and help her make the final epiphany. Just as Gravenor says, men and women are not the sole members of the human hierarchy to which s/he can claim to belong; s/he can find her ideal identity: “I’ve decided to make the break tonight […] My frivolous self will now go in search of some occupation in keeping with the times” (427). Putting on male clothes, “he prepared to advance alone into this brick no-man’s-land” (429). E decides to be Gravenor’s male lover.

5. Ideal identity: bricolage and Twyborn (twice born)

In terms of the result of E’s self-exploration, some critics regard it as a failure. But interpreting from another perspective, it is reasonable to say that E’s self-exploration is successful. E’s aim is to know her self and find the ideal identity, by which s/he can love both her self and others. At last, the only people for whom cares s/he are her mother Eadie and Gravenor. The final decision s/he makes is to be Eadie’s daughter in the identity of Eadith and to be Gravenor’s lover in the identity of Eddie. In this way, s/he establishes satisfying relations with Eadie and Gravenor, respectively. Thus, E’s self-exploration is successful and s/he has known what her ideal identity is.

This kind of identity is in contrast to the identity in common sense. As mentioned above, the most wildly accepted identity is the kind within humanism, which is unitary and fixed. The humanist idea of identity states that one’s identity is unique to himself and is determined by some unchangeable aspects which include sex, gender, sexuality, religious beliefs, nationality, etc: “Within humanist thought, these core aspects of identity are considered to be ‘essence,’ things that are unchangeable and unchanging, things that make you who you are under all circumstances, no matter what happens to you” (Klages 112). That is to say, one’s identity must be the same one all along in his life. But E’s ideal identity is polymorphic and fluid; the most obvious characteristic is that sometimes s/he is female (in the relation with Eadie), and sometime s/he is male (in the relation with Gravenor). By depicting E,
White conveys an identity concept, which is beyond traditional humanism but belongs to postmodernism.

White professes,

I have the same idea with all my books: an attempt to come close to the core of reality, the structure of reality, as opposed to the merely superficial […] A novel should heighten life, should give one an illuminating experience; it shouldn’t set out what you know already. *(Speaks 21)*

In *Twyborn*, White also attempts to be close to the core and structure of reality, conveying new ideas and enlightening people. White’s concern with reality, in *Twyborn*, is focused on identity issues; he wants to be close to the core and structure of human identity and transmit his thoughts on identity to those who do not know.

Structuralists argue that people always perceive and recognize things in a dichotomy, including how to treat identity issues. Under this dichotomous view, human gender is limited to just male and female: “There is no in-between: you’re either masculine or feminine because you’re either male or female, and if you’re not one or the other of these two genders, then there must be something wrong with you” *(Tyson 110)*. Obviously, White does not stand on this side. By describing E changes between male and female identity, White deconstructs the seemingly stable binary opposition between male and female.

Critics who have been concerned gender changes in *Twyborn* are inclined to appeal to the concept of androgyny. Androgyny is usually regarded as the balance state of gender, which deconstructs the traditional binary opposition of male/female. To say someone is androgynous means that he or she has the balance of male and female characteristics. However, “In the ancient world, androgyny was not the blending of female and male with an equal mix of the two,” but means male combined with female; in fact, androgyny is the subsuming of weaker female into stronger male, the masculinization of female *(Conway 79–80)*. In this sense, androgyny “does not imply equality, but the elevation of men and women into a restored form of masculinity” *(Thatcher 150)*. Thus, androgyny is less a solution to the binary opposition of identity issues than a clarification of this problem *(Glover and Kaplan 48)*.

Androgyny is not what White suggests to solve the identity problem in *Twyborn*. First, as mentioned above, androgyny does not really imply male and female equality, but emphasizes the male. Second, with the change of context, the concept of androgyny may be conferred with new meanings and imply the balance between male and female. However, from E’s attitude towards h/er appearance before death, it is clear that what E pursues is definitely not androgyny or male and female equality: E puts on male clothes and decides to be Gravenor’s male lover, but “He was disgusted to see he had forgotten to take off Eadith’s make-up” *(White, Twyborn 428)*. The word White writes here is “disgusted”; if what E wants is androgyny, then s/he must feel happy because male clothes combined with female make-up is just a good illustration of androgyny. But, instead of being glad to achieve androgyny, s/he feels disgusted, because at that time E just wanted to be a male, thus the female make-up is inappropriate and can only destroy the male identity.

What White conveys through E’s story is a postmodern way to deal with the identity issue: “bricolage.” Bricolage is a French word and the person who does it is called
“bricoleur.” Lévi-Strauss uses bricolage to describe the characteristic of mythical thought which,

Expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however, whatever the task in hand because it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual “bricolage” […] (Lévi-Strauss 17)

Based on Lévi-Strauss’s thought, Derrida further extends the meaning of bricolage and promotes it to all discourses: “If one calls bricolage the necessity of borrowing one’s concepts from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is bricoleur” (Derrida 360). Deleuze and Guattari argue that bricolage implies “the ability to rearrange fragments continually in new and different patterns or configurations” and regard bricolage as a characteristic of the schizophrenic (Deleuze and Guattari 7).

Bricolage is not a comprehensive method; instead of paying attention to all the related matters, bricoleur just focuses on the problem at hand: “Bricolage produces a new way to talk about, and think about, systems and structures without falling into the trap of trying to build a new stable system out of the ruins of a deconstructed one” (Klages 61). In Twyborn, White deconstructs the original system of gender. In front of the deconstructed binary opposition of male/female, White doesn’t intend to build a new stable gender system, but finds a new way to treat the gender issue within the deconstructed one.

6. Conclusion

Since bricolage inspires new possible ways of putting things together, White invents a new way of dealing with fragmented identity. E deals with the fragments of h/er identity in a bricolage way; as a bricoleur, E’s problem is to know h/erself and pin down h/er identity. E realizes that, depending on only one identity, whether the Eudoxian self, Eddiean self or Eadithan self, s/he cannot establish ideal relations with both Eadie and Gravenor, so s/he gives up solving all problems comprehensively but deals with them, respectively. In the relation between h/er and Eadie, s/he chooses to be Eadie’s daughter Eadith; in the relation between h/er and Gravenor, s/he chooses to be Gravenor’s lover Eddie.

“The bricoleur, says Lévi-Strauss, is someone who uses ‘the means at hand,’ that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there” (Derrida 360). For bricoleur E, “the means at hand” are the female identity Eadith and the male identity Eddie. Using these two instruments at his disposition, E establishes a bricolage identity. Exposing different identities to different situations, E makes h/er identity provisional and fluid rather than permanent and fixed. Bricoleur E is a typical schizophrenic according to Deleuze and Guattari’s definition:

The schizo has his own system of co-ordinates for situating himself at his disposal, because, first of all, he has at his disposal his very own recording code, which does not coincide with the social code, or coincides with it only in order to parody it. The code of delirium or of desire proves to have an extraordinary fluidity. It might be said that the schizophrenic passes from one code to the other, that he deliberately scrambles all the codes, by quickly shifting from one to another […] (Deleuze and Guattari 15)
E has at her disposal her “very own recording code”—her various selves. Obviously, the Eudoxian self and Eadithan self do not “coincide with the social code,” because Eudoxia and Eadith are abnormal in going against the social norm. The Eddiean self may coincide with the social code, but it is no more than a parody. From Eudoxia to Eddie, then to Eadith, E transfers identity from one to another. After scrambling “all the codes,” E knows who s/he is and what her identity is. Lacan claims that “the truth arises from misrecognition” (Žižek 190). One can hardly reach the truth directly without additional detours. It is through these continuous attempts, with the help of these multiple selves, that E eventually bricolers her identity in the gender spectrum and gets twyborn (twice born).

Notes

1. As a prolific writer, White’s works cover various genres, including novel, short story, play, and poetry. But as White himself acknowledges, his short stories cannot stand up to his novels; his plays are also not as impressive as his novels; “similarly, his poetry is comparatively constricted in scope […] The poems are certainly not bad enough […] , but they should not be taken as representative of his mature effort” (Bliss xii). Thus, among his multitude of works, White’s 13 novels (including his unfinished and posthumous work The Hanging Garden) become the focus of evaluation and criticism.

2. In his article “A Critical Survey of Chinese Journal Articles on Australian Literature in China 1979–2016” published on Westerly 62.6, Zhou Xiaojin has defined “some of the ‘Chinese characteristics’” of Australian literature study in China (250). According to his research, Patrick White is the most studied Australian writer in China from 1979 to 2016; Voss, The Tree of Man and The Eye of the Storm are the most studied works of White (255). Based on Zhou’s research, using the same database and method, I find that, from 1979 to 2018, there are only five articles addressing Twyborn. Searching via AustLit (austlit.edu.au), excluding reviews, there are 29 results concerning Twyborn. Existing researches on Twyborn only compose a very small part of White study.

3. The following quotations from The Twyborn Affair will simply be marked with page number(s).

4. For convenience, Eadith/Eudoxia/Eddie will be written as E thereafter.

5. Björkstén, in Patrick White: A General Introduction, claims that “Failure is one of many themes in Patrick White’s treatment of the sufferings […]” (40); Bliss makes a systematic study of failure in his Patrick White’s Fiction: The Paradox of Fortunate Failure, including the failure in Twyborn.

6. Xu Kai argues that “Androgyny is the ideal state of being for Patrick White as a man and as a writer” (57); similarly, Chen Hong states that “The androgynous Eddie Twybom […] represents the new, integrated mode of human sexuality” (139).

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