

in *Battlepieces* is indisputable in thematic similarity, specifically the ambiguity and indignity of technological progress.

It may well be that Ruskin was a more central and influential agent in this intellectual and aesthetic transaction than was Turner and that Ruskin's role in persuading Melville to transform *Mardi* from a Polynesian adventure into a cosmic allegory of moral, philosophical, and political significance was even more important than Ruskin's role in awakening Melville's interest in Turner. Ruskin's *Modern Painters* was a major work of critical irreverence that elevated Turner's achievement to Olympian heights and established a new canon of contemporaries in place of a continuing and unassailable reverence for old masters. Duyckinck aspired to make *Literary World* fulfill a similarly iconoclastic role, and Melville's two-part unconventional and anonymous contribution, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," sharpened Duyckinck's aim and did for Hawthorne what Ruskin had done for Turner. He leveled the literary old masters and their numerous imitators and worshippers, elevated Hawthorne to new eminence, and insouciantly claimed his own place in this select circle. Wallace has convinced me that Melville meant to extend membership to Ruskin and Turner as well, "for genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round."

Rudolf Bader

*The Visitable Past: Images of Europe in Anglo-Australian Literature*

Bern: Peter Lang, 1992. Pp. 345

Reviewed by Derek Wright

The subject of Rudolf Bader's book is the continuous intertextual dialogue between British and Anglo-Australian literatures. Employing "imagological" methodologies taken from comparative literature, Bader explores the cultural tensions between Anglocentric and nationalist attitudes which are inherent in Australian writing and proceeds to analyze the literary images which have grown directly out of these tensions.

It is not possible, Bader argues, for a literature in English to be separated from the properties of the English literary tradition. Rather, it is the bipolarity between acceptance and rejection of the mother country that gives Australian literature its distinctive and definitive character. The Australianness of Anglo-Australian literature, Bader contends, is to be found in the dialogue between derivation and deviation from British models, in the tension between the mere transplantation and the deeper transformation of these models, and in a complex cultural dependency which is finally no more shameful or inferior than Shakespeare's dependence upon the Italian Renaissance. These bipolarities are as evident in Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* (Australian in its subject matter, English in its literary origins) as they are in the paradoxes and "equivocations" of Patrick White's fiction, in which it is often difficult to locate images in contexts that can be defined exclusively as British, European, or Australian. Bader maintains an incisive critical

focus on the various ways in which these cultural ambiguities manifest themselves in Australian literature: for example, in the alternately nostalgic and ironic treatment of the stereotype of Britain as the Australian's Home in the work of Marcus Clarke and in the simultaneously idyllic and dystopian images of London in the work of Henry Handel Richardson, in which a cosy nostalgia for the home country is sometimes concealed behind ostensibly negative images.

Starting from Franz Stanzel's premise that widespread notions of national character result from the stereotypes of literary tradition rather than nations' actual experience of one another, Bader demonstrates how these literary images psychologically predispose the perceiver towards his subject (be it colonial province or imperial metropolis), thus characterizing the people who project them rather than the country they purport to describe. At its simplest, the world elsewhere is a mythical projection of the protagonist's dissatisfaction with the one in which he resides. When the heroes of Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* and Martin Boyd's Guy Langton tetralogy are dissatisfied with Australia they romanticize England (and vice versa), projecting dreams of mellow autumnal pastorals from scorching heat and making the host country the scapegoat for their misfortunes. Thus the image of Britain in the work of these writers shifts from Home, Cultural Centre, and *locus historicus* to that of an arrogant, exploitative imperial power which regards the colony merely as a place in which fortunes are to be made.

Bader's study is massively learned and meticulously researched, covering a broad spectrum of Australian cultural history and literary production which ranges from Clarke's anti-imperial polemics to the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of White's fiction and taking in a mass of minor novels alongside the famous ones. In its fourth section, it opens out, interestingly, beyond British perspectives to include ideas and images of Continental Europe in Australian writing. Bader is particularly insightful on the ambiguous images of Mediterranean countries in the novels of Shirley Hazzard and David Malouf. In his knowledgeable treatment of the German influence, he traces alternative images of Germanness—from the "Grobianic" tradition of rough drunkenness and the "Faustian" one of mystic scholarship—in the work of, respectively, Christopher Brennan (*A Chant of Doom*) and Patrick White (*Voss*).

There is, unfortunately, just one thing seriously wrong with Bader's book: it isn't a book. *The Visitable Past* is a *Habilitation*, or postdoctoral thesis, submitted to a German university. To his credit, Bader makes no attempt to disguise this fact—the "book" is prologued as "a slightly corrected and amended version" of the thesis, and it lacks both index and conventional chapter divisions—but the very fact it is published between covers signals to the reader that he is expected to read it as if it were a book, even though for large stretches he feels more like an examiner than a reviewer. There are two major problems. Firstly, there are the inevitable redundancies and discontinuities that arise from the egalitarian piecemeal approach of the thesis, whereby the author keeps coming back to the same texts under different headings, repetitively using much the same material, albeit angled to slightly different objectives. Thus, the same novels—by Richardson, Stead, Boyd, and White—are mined, in turn, for images of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Greece, and there is a mechanical subdivision of subject matter

which might have been dealt with more fruitfully at a single blow. This artificially dispersed material would have been better gathered into the more continuous and comprehensive discourse and novel-by-novel analysis of the conventional book chapter. The expository elements of the thesis—the repeated signposting, summary review, and tying of arguments back to premises—are too much in evidence here and a heavy price is exacted in the quality of the criticism, which is often pedestrian, descending at times to the lowest-common-denominator level of meteorological clichés. When Bader, mechanically ticking off national images in piecemeal fashion, repeatedly informs us that Richardson and Boyd make "only marginal use of images of Germany," which also "does not assume a prominent place" in Stead's work, and that there is "a scarcity of Italian references" in most of these writers, we seriously begin to wonder why our attention is being drawn to what is absent. And when White's complex, colossal achievements have been emptied of their national image-stereotypes, there remains a sense that very little has been said about the distinctive qualities or even the major themes of these books.

Secondly, there is the problem of language. Bader's English veers erratically from turgid, lugubrious academic jargon ("Comparative Imagology," "dialoguicity," "syncreticity") to barbaric media-cliché ("continuous dialogue situation"), and frequently collapses into tautology ("convincing credibility") and grotesque colloquialism ("everybody makes a big do about him"). One wearies, in an elephantine tract of over 300 pages, of hearing the jargon words "heterostereotypes" and "autostereotypes" over and over again.

Of course, reservations such as I have made call into question the whole business of thesis-publishing on the scale undertaken by some European publishers. Bader's study is no doubt a fine thesis but it makes a drab, dry book. It may prove to be of interest to other *Habilitation* thesis writers working in the same area, but, its laborious research and impressive scholarship notwithstanding, it is unlikely to appeal to either the general or the average academic reader.

David C. Downing

*Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*

Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. Pp. xiii + 186. \$25.00

Reviewed by Charles A. Huttar

One way of confronting a text is to inquire what went into its making: what raw materials, so to speak, in the author's cultural and psychological experiences, what nuances of idiolect, what attitudes and assumptions, what agendas both conscious and unconscious, what artistry. Lewis's Ransom trilogy has long needed such inquiry. Seven years in the making (published 1938-45), in the succeeding half-century it has drawn plenty of description and analysis, much of it from critics pro and con with nonliterary agendas of their own. Now Professor Downing, taking well into account the insights of prior scholars, adds much that is original and gives us a balanced and judicious study of this composite text.