

*Fifth Child*. Atwood's *Cat's Eye* ignores the patriarchal codes which would make sense of her story of one girl's oppression by another; *The Handmaid's Tale* rejects the planned society but offers no alternative. Drabble's *The Radiant Way*, although it does offer something new by imagining three women united by shared experience and interests, rather than differentiated by their attitudes to men, and although it relates individual to political, ends with a "crisis of confidence" (218). "I wish that this novel had a different ending and I wish that this book had a different ending" (227), Greene concludes. Her book ends, however, with the openness which she praises in fiction, as she holds out hope that the work of minority women will continue the work of reconstruction.

Demonstrating a thorough familiarity with Anglo-American and Continental criticism and theory, Greene nevertheless is enough of an old New Critic to do close reading and to value complexity, and enough of a pragmatist to view canons as inevitable and to write a study based on distinctions. Readers who share these predilections will find her book rich and stimulating. What they may miss is what her parameters exclude or minimize: consideration, for example, of how the story of women's friendship represents change even when encircled by a main plot which remains closed. But such reservations only prove the success of this engaging and provocative book.

Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock, eds.  
*Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World*  
Jackson: University Presses of Mississippi, 1992. Pp. 312. \$15.95  
Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

The awarding of the 1992 Nobel Prize for Literature to Derek Walcott has indicated once again the increasing significance of literature in English that does not originate in Great Britain or North America. With its decision, the Nobel Committee contributed a significant impulse to the process of canon transformation in favor of texts produced in locations as "exotic" as the Caribbean, India, or Somalia.

This change in the public recognition of international literatures will necessitate a deformation also of the university canons. Unfortunately, few scholars today are qualified to fulfill the new demand. Having grown up in the literary environments of Shakespeare, Hemingway, or Updike, the literature of the postcolonial world is as unknown to them as its geography had been to their own teachers. This gap needs to be filled, but that task is more difficult than appears at first glance. Scholars in the postcolonial countries hardly ever have the opportunity to produce substantial introductions and overviews, and even those Western scholars with a substantial background in postcolonial literature in English only rarely manage to do the subject justice without being influenced by the bias of the traditional canon.

In this situation, letting the authors speak for themselves seems one of the best means of creating a basic store of information from which further inquiry might

proceed. *Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World* is designed specifically as a collection of "archival material to be consulted by those who may wish to develop theoretical/political paradigms as well as those . . . expanding the horizons of literary study" (22).

To this end, the editors have collected interviews with fourteen authors from different geographic regions and with different literary interests and convictions and are thus able to indicate the scope of the postcolonial literature in English. The book is not officially divided into parts, but the interviews are grouped to form geographic units. After a very informed and well-written introduction follow interviews with four African writers—Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nuruddin Farah, Chinua Achebe, and Buchi Emecheta—although the case of Buchi Emecheta indicates the problematic nature of neat geographical dividing since she considers herself more a British than a Nigerian author. This part is followed by interviews with authors from the Indo-Pakistani region (Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Zulfikar Ghose, and Bapsi Sidhwa) and then by interviews with the two Caribbean authors Sam Selvon and Roy Heath. The omission of Derek Walcott is unfortunate but inevitable, as his Nobel fame had obviously not yet begun when the book went to the printers. The final group of interviews is the most intriguing section of the book, because the authors here are Maori (Witi Ihimaera) and Chicano (Rudolfo Anaya, Rolando Hinojosa, and Sandra Cisneros) and therefore members of ethnic minorities in societies which do not understand themselves as postcolonial.

The central question which arises inevitably in all interviews is that of which language an author from a postcolonial country should use. Ngugi prepares the indirect discussion with his categorical statement that "it is very important for African writers to use African languages for their creative expressions" (26). All authors take a position in this debate. The range of responses—from agreement to Ghose's equally categorical opposite statement: "I'm more interested in creating a language that appeals to me than in depicting a particular reality" (183)—indicates the scope of postcolonial literary expression as well as its underlying ideological concerns.

The question of which literary tradition(s) the authors consider themselves belonging to is equally central and the answers are just as diverse, as is inevitable in this group of authors. Bapsi Sidhwa neatly summarizes what she sees as the role of contemporary postcolonial authors: "To express their communities, their countries, in human understandable forms. By the act of writing and telling stories about people in their part of the world, they are turning faceless people and stereotypes into people with faces" (220). *Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World* fulfills this same task by furthering our understanding of postcolonial literary contents and concerns and thus enabling a Western audience to develop the differentiated perspective that this literature deserves. *Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World* is a major step in giving postcolonial literature the place in the canon it deserves.