



CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

[WRITER]

“I LISTEN TO WHAT MY FATHER WENT THROUGH AND THINK: MY GOD, IF ALL THAT HAPPENED TO ME, I WOULD BE A BITTER, BITTER PERSON. I’D JUST BE ANGRY WITH THE WORLD, AND I WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO WRITE ANYTHING.”

Three categories of contemporary Nigerians’ reactions to their civil war:
People whose families were Biafran, who are still burning with neo-nationalist zeal
Skeptics who feel strongly that we should talk about it
People who say, “Let’s let the past be the past”

“**T**hings began to fall apart at home,” go the first lines of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s acclaimed first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, “when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère.” The reference to *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe’s masterpiece about colonialism destroying tradition, marks Adichie’s debt to her Igbo forebear but also signals her differing concerns. The sentence could perhaps be read to distill the larger ambitions of Adichie’s work thus far: to engage the themes that long defined African literature—the legacies of colonialism, the cause of nation-building—but to do so in a way expressive of a new generation’s ironic view of these questions, and in a way attuned to the intimate lives of her characters.

Purple Hibiscus, which won the Commonwealth Writ-

ers’ Prize in 2004 for best first book, depicts a teenage narrator and her brother coming to terms with their authoritarian Catholic father as Nigeria begins to fall apart under a military coup. Adichie’s second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, is set during the Biafra war, the horrific 1967–70 conflict begun when south Nigeria’s Igbo citizens declared independence from their new country’s government in its Muslim north. The novel depicts the war through a story about how it is lived by a small coterie of characters—a pair of middle-class sisters (one pretty, one plain) and their respective mates (a revolutionary mathematician, an English ex-pat); a houseboy and a University master. Last year it was awarded the prestigious Orange Prize for fiction.

Adichie was born in 1977 in Enugu, a small village in Anambra state, in southeast Nigeria. She grew up, though, in the university town of Nsukka, where her parents still work, and where she spent her childhood in a house that was once home to Achebe

himself. (Of discovering his work at the age of ten, she has recalled: “I didn’t think it was possible for people like me to be in books.”) She briefly studied medicine (“It’s what educated Nigerians are supposed to do”), but having hoped from a young age to be a writer, she soon quit her course and moved to the United States to finish college. Joining her sister, a doctor living in Connecticut, she completed a B.A. in political science at Eastern Connecticut State University. Since that time Adichie has studied creative writing at Johns Hopkins, spent a year teaching the same at Princeton, and returned to Connecticut two years ago to complete a masters in African studies at Yale. In addition to the two novels, she has written numerous short stories and essays for publications including the *New Yorker*, *Granta*, and the *New York Times*. In September 2008, she was named a MacArthur Fellow.

Adichie speaks in a sonorous voice inflected with the Nigerian-British cadences of home, her precise diction joined to a ready laugh. Our conversation took place on a warm May day in New Haven across the street from the Yale University Art Gallery.

—Joshua Jelly-Schapiro

I. “I HAVE NIGERIAN FRIENDS WHO CAN LIST EVERY MONARCH IN ENGLAND FROM THE NINTH CENTURY, AND KNOW NOTHING ABOUT NIGERIA IN 1954.”

THE BELIEVER: You’re just finishing school, eh? Congratulations! What brought you back? How has it been?

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: Oh, must we? [Laughs] I’m glad to be done. It was an ill-advised decision to come. It’s not that the program is a bad program so much as it is that I’m just not a good fit for it. I don’t like academia, in a way; I find it constricting. I started the program because I wanted to learn about Africa. It’s one thing to be from a country in Africa, but there’s just so much that you don’t know; our education system just doesn’t prepare us for knowing who we are. I have Nigerian friends who can list every monarch in England from the ninth century, and know nothing about Nigeria in 1954. So I wanted to make up for that. I probably would have done better simply continuing my own self-directed reading. Academia is often about academia and not about the real, messy world.

BLVR: Your fiction is overtly engaged with these themes

of history, and politics—the history of Nigeria; the legacies of colonialism; Biafra. What does approaching these questions as a novelist afford that might differ from how a historian does?

CNA: I think it’s probably that I’m interested in the exceptions. One of the things about historical work—some of it, not all—is that it’s very much interested in generalities: that this is what people in general did. Sometimes historians refer to countries as though they were people—they’ll say: Britain did this. As a novelist, I’m more interested in that particular human being living in a particular part of Britain, and how they felt, and what they understood, and how they approached their realities. I remember when I was researching *Half of a Yellow Sun*, I was reading this book about the war, written by an American, and there was this section about how people were being unreasonable—about how they weren’t eating the food brought by the Red Cross. And the writer couldn’t understand why the Biafrans did not want to eat the food; they were starving, and they just wouldn’t. And talking to people who were there, I realized it was because there was a myth that the Nigerians [the other side in the war] had poisoned the milk. People believed this—it wasn’t true, but people believed it. And it deeply affected how they approached their reality, why they chose not to eat the food. It’s easy, you know, to sit in your academic chair and say you know, that was quite irrational. But it’s what I’m interested in, the little stories, less the generalities than those details.

BLVR: *Half of a Yellow Sun*, though, is at least as much about memory as history—less about the history of Biafra than about how Biafra is remembered (or perhaps not remembered). One of the ways you do that is in the structure: the narrative moves back and forth in time—it reads like we remember things, not necessarily in the order they happened.

CNA: I think so, too. Though you know, it’s interesting—I spoke at the University of Ife, in Nigeria. And usually when I do these events in Nigeria, I tend to divide the questions in categories. There are those people whose family were Biafran, who are still burning with this kind of neo-nationalist zeal. And there are those who are like me,

who are sort of skeptical of things, but who feel strongly that we should talk about it. And there are those who are just furious with me for writing this book, because “let’s let the past be the past”—and it was one of these people who was saying: “Why do you insist on bringing up the past, that is gone?” And I remember thinking: For you it’s past, but for so many people I know it’s living memory. And I think that’s the approach I brought to the book.

Talking to my parents, their friends, my relatives, it’s still very present. They don’t talk about it unless you bring it up. But then you do, and you realize, my God—there’s so many things that haven’t been dealt with. You know my uncle, he’s a farmer, in my village. Things aren’t going very well for him, he’s poor—and he feels very strongly that this would not have happened if Biafra had won; he wants Biafra to come back. He’s projected his hopes on this phantom Biafra, and it’s moving, and also funny. But he fiercely believes this. And he’ll tell me: well, look, I’m very poor, my farm is not going well, and if Biafra had won this wouldn’t happen. And my aunt, his wife, who’s also a farmer—she’s told me that about two years ago, she went to till the farm, and did so in the field, and dug up these bullets from the war. I wish I’d had that story before I wrote the book.

BLVR: The book reminds me in some ways of those books by the kids of Holocaust survivors: Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, for example—stories that deal with “remembering” traumatic events your parents lived through, with the ways in which their memories become yours, in a way.

CNA: I think those of us who didn’t experience the trauma, but have somehow inherited it—I think we’re fortunate to have that. I think one of the reasons that writing about the Holocaust is still coming out, for example, is that the people who experienced it just couldn’t write about it. People ask: Why hasn’t Chinua Achebe written a novel about Biafra? He was in the thick of it. And I think, Well that’s why he couldn’t—he was in the thick of it. I listen to what my father went through and think: My God, if all that happened to me, I would be a bitter, bitter person. I’d just be angry with the world, and I wouldn’t be able to write anything.

BLVR: I heard Amos Oz say recently that he’s tried to write of his experience as a soldier, but that he never

could; that whatever language he’s tried to give those experiences in analogy to everyday life, it doesn’t accord with what he remembers—the smell, noise, everything.

CNA: Right, and I understand that.

BLVR: People tend to talk about the “historical novel” like it’s a unitary form, but of course there are a million ways to tell a story related to a historical event or era. Was it immediately apparent to you how you had to approach Biafra, how you had to write it as an intimate story about sentiment and relationships?

CNA: It’s so difficult to have proper answers to questions like that, because when you’re doing it, you’re not really very consciously analytical, or justifying the choices you make. But the idea of a historical novel—I don’t really like the label. Because it evokes for me books I read when I was growing up, about Renaissance Florence, and it was usually really bad romance, with the women in really tight dresses. They were these books called *Historical Romance*, it was a series. And there’s always been something about the label “historical novel” that just puts things in my mind.

I suppose the thing I was most certain about, though, with that book was that I wanted it to be about human beings. There is quite a bit written about the war, of course, but usually it is sort of about battalions and things of that sort. And I don’t much care who won this town or commanded this battalion and took that town. I wanted to write about people. And I think there’s something always contemporary in that—there are people who have written to me and said, these people seem like they could be in the year 2000. And I say, well, you know people don’t really change; people’s motivations don’t really change. The circumstances change, but people don’t really change. People have the same motivations.

II. “I DON’T THINK IT’S SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT SEX ORGANS WE HAVE AS IT IS ABOUT WHAT WE WRITE.”

BLVR: How do you feel about the distinction that’s often made between “female novels” and “male novels”? Both your novels seem in many ways to collapse the way those

labels are applied. And you write some very empathetic and fully realized males in *Half of a Yellow Sun*—Ugwu, the houseboy, but also Richard the Englishman.

CNA: Well, you know, I do think *Purple Hibiscus* was sort of a girl book—and *Half of a Yellow Sun* sort of crossed over. [Laughs] My friend Binyavanga [Wainaina] said the problem with *Purple Hibiscus* was the cover of the book. That he'd be so embarrassed to have this on the train—that he can't read a book with a flower on the cover. And I thought, Well, you know I understand that. I hated that cover, too.

But the male-female dichotomy is all quite silly when you think about it seriously—though there are writers, both male and female, who are less engaged with emotion. And I'm sort of old-fashioned in my taste—I like emotion, and I like the story, I like humanness. And there are people like Cynthia Ozick, for example, who's a writer I really respect, but I don't really want to curl up and read Cynthia Ozick. It's like I often don't remember Cynthia Ozick after I've read her—you sort of read it, and think, Oh! She's brilliant. But then at the end, or weeks later, I just really don't remember. But then Michael Ondaatje, who's male, I think has that human thing. I read him, and I'm just in love....

BLVR: He writes good women, too.

CNA: Yes! And I read him and I'm crying. I remember I was crying when I read *Anil's Ghost*. So, I don't think it's so much about what sex organs we have as it is about what we write.

BLVR: Your characters' physical selves play an important part in how we come to know them, their interactions with each other. I wonder if you could talk about the place of bodies in your work.

CNA: I think it's a key part of the way I understand the world. I think peo-

ple are very physical beings. I was doing a reading in Lagos, and someone said, "You know, for an African book, so much sex in it!" And I said to him, "So Africans don't have sex?" And he said, "No, they do—but for an African book, so much sex!" I suppose it's an expectation that we're supposed to be restrained. But it's just not my vision. And I think particularly, when I was writing *Half of a Yellow Sun*, I remember listening to my parents—who lost everything, had to run from town to town, much like the characters in the book—and realizing that my brother was born during that war. And my parents speak of going to weddings during that time, of laughing. I really loved that, and I hoped that I could show it in the book—the ways in which people can be running for their lives but also laughing. And I was thinking as well about how the way in which you relate to the person you love changes, the way you have sex changes, the way you look at sexuality changes. I don't know, I guess it must be that girl thing, that I'm such a girly girl....

BLVR: But it matters! How do you approach the challenge of writing about bodies—be it sex, or also violence—in a subtle way? How do you approach it in a way that doesn't feel pornographic?

CNA: I think I actually struggled more with the violence.

ROBERT ALTER MICRO-INTERVIEW, PART III

THE BELIEVER: Do we have any idea who wrote the Bible? Or the first five books?

ROBERT ALTER: The Bible is of course not a book but an anthology of books and poems that spans almost nine centuries, so there are many authors. The same is true of the first five books, which scholarship long ago agreed are stitched together out of several different sources. Fierce debates rage among scholars about the dating of many of the books and their constituent sources. Since biblical authors, except for the Prophets, remained anonymous, we know nothing about their personal identity, and even in the prophetic books there is an abundance of later material and interpolations attached to the book of the named prophet. ★

Because I wanted it to be stark. I didn't want to be euphemistic about it; but at the same time I didn't want to be pornographic about it. You don't want your reader—or you—to feel like you're taking advantage somehow. You're writing about this killing that makes no sense, and you just don't want a reader to feel manipulated. And really, the violent scenes—the massacre scene, the rape scene—were so hard. I rewrote them so many times; I was obsessive about them. I was going crazy.

III. “I THINK: LET’S JUST TELL OUR BLOODY STORIES.”

BLVR: You use bits of Igbo dialogue in your fiction. But most often when your characters are speaking in Igbo, you render their speech in English, with some Igbo words thrown in. I wonder if you could talk about how you've thought about language. There was a time when debates around writing in a “colonial language” were a big deal in Africa—the whole polemic around Ngũgĩ's *Decolonizing the Mind*.

CNA: Well, the first thing for me is that I belong to a generation of Africans, really, who no longer speak only one language—I go back to Nigeria, and I'm speaking Igbo, and I can't speak two sentences in Igbo without throwing English words in there. And that's become the norm for my generation. I'm very sympathetic to Ngũgĩ's argument, but I think it's impractical. And I think it's limiting. The idea that only Gikuyu, for example, can capture the Kenyan experience is just no longer true.

BLVR: Language itself is always changing; it's living.

CNA: Right. And you have a great many people, urban Africans, who don't even speak those languages, who speak only English. But again—it's an English, I've often argued, that's ours. It's not British English. It may have come from there, but we've done things with it. I went out recently in Nigeria with a friend of mine who's an Englishman, and we went out with friends, and afterward we got in an argument—not an argument, but Nigerians are very good at shouting at each other more than necessary—and I hadn't realized that we had lapsed into this kind of

very Nigerian English. And my friend said to me, “What's going on?” I said, “We're speaking English.” And he said, “I don't understand a thing.” And I thought, Ohhh, you don't understand. And I felt very pleased at that moment. Ahh, you don't understand, fantastic....

In writing, I just always want to capture that—that living in two languages, the negotiating back and forth. And of course I can't do it as much as I might; I have to think about my readers who don't speak Igbo, which is why I'm constantly doing a back-and-forth with my editors, who say, “Take a little more out.” It is always a balancing act, but I can't ever see not doing it.

BLVR: Achebe has that line about how it's the price English pays for being a global language—people make it their own.

CNA: Yes—and it's why academics these days talk about “Englishes” rather than English. In Achebe's fiction, I think what Achebe does that I find interesting is that he really uses that Nigerian English—he writes these constructions that are deliberately awkward; and you realize, Oh, he's doing the Nigerian English. I think his generation spoke it more. I think my generation is more likely to actually use Igbo words, or Yoruba, or whatever, in the English itself. So Achebe actually doesn't have so many Igbo words in his work, and I have more—but I think that does reflect a generational change. We're freer in a way; we're fortunate, we don't feel the need to divide them.

BLVR: One of those other longstanding debates in African literature is around the place of the novel in so-called “oral cultures.” There was that idea that an authentic African novel had to be an “oral novel” in some sense—people speak of Amos Tutuola, for example, that way: that in using pidgin, he wrote the *Palm Wine Drinkard* in spoken language. One thing I never quite understood about that debate is that good prose is always about writing sentences that sound good—whether we read them aloud or not—wouldn't you say?

CNA: Absolutely. That's exactly my feeling. When people start to talk about the Novel, and the Origin of the Novel... I think: Look, it's just storytelling. And just be-

cause it's written down, or somebody's saying it, it's just bloody storytelling. You know, my friend Binyavanga says, "Anything an African makes is African." And there is still this stupid thing, that people argue: "Is this authentically African?" And Binyavanga, you know, he has a friend in Nairobi—a street artist, who paints only white people. And someone's asking him, why do you do this? It's not really African. And the painter says, I'm Kenyan, this is what I paint, it's Kenyan. And Binyavanga says: Exactly. Why should we be prescriptive? This African authenticity becomes this really contested thing, and I think: Let's just tell our bloody stories.

BLVR: It seems that's in some ways a real generational change.

CNA: I think so, too. But I think of course it's also easy for me to sit here and say that. Because there are people who fought the fights before.

BLVR: Are there particular books you go back and read again and again—novels or anything else, before you write or anytime?

CNA: I often go back to *Arrow of God*, Chinua Achebe's book. That's really a book I love. I like Jamaica Kincaid—so I've read *Autobiography of My Mother* a few times. I like her sentences. I like the rhythm of them. I like Philip Roth. I've read *The Counterlife* a few times. I quite like how he deals with... the sociological? [Laughs] I just feel that he's very engaged with the world. Sometimes I think there are a lot of writers who hide, in a way, behind the idea of the aesthetic, and art, and don't really grapple with things, and the world. And I think he does. And he's also just a really good writer. I like his sentences.

BLVR: One doesn't often hear Kincaid and Roth mentioned together. I suppose there are common themes—memory, family, fictional autobiography. But Kincaid's style is so much more about literary effect—those poetic, visual sentences; Roth is more about character and story, libido—getting the sentences to move. What is it that's important about those two for you? How do they shape your aims as a stylist?

CNA: I like the energy of Roth, the use of repetition, the sense of story without undue self-indulgence. It's a little amusing that his characters speak in improbable blocks of text though. Kincaid is more self-consciously interested in language and I admire that unabashed lyricism because it's done really well.

IV. "I'VE NEVER CONSIDERED MYSELF AN IMMIGRANT."

BLVR: You've been going back and forth between Nigeria and the United States for a while. How do you think that's impacted your work? Is it easier to write about a place when you're not there?

CNA: I think that one of the advantages of coming here when I did—I was nineteen, I came for university—was that I had the opportunity to see Nigeria in a way that I never would have. And it had to be America. It had to be this really strange country of extremes, and also this country that gives you space. I mean, if I had gone to England, it would have been so different; England would have been so close, in so many ways. And the U.S. just gives me space. I quite appreciated that, and still do—that I suddenly was looking at Nigeria and could write about things. I think if I hadn't left Nigeria, *Purple Hibiscus* wouldn't have been the book that it is. There's something about it that is both consciously sentimental—and also, it's just the kind of book that one writes looking from the outside. If I'd been in Nigeria, I don't know that I would have been able to have the measure of... love?

BLVR: Distance is important.

CNA: Yes, I think so.

BLVR: You've written about the actual migrating, the travel back and forth, both in your fiction and non-fiction. You did that op-ed in the *Times* about waiting in line for a visa at the American Embassy in Nigeria; showing up at 4 a.m., the way everyone is treated....

CNA: Yes—you know, I was terrified when I went back. I was convinced I'd be blacklisted and no one was going

to give me a visa!

BLVR: But it's such a universal experience—at U.S. embassies all over the world.

CNA: In Nigeria now they have special Pentecostal church services entirely for dealing with American visas. But I should say too that in my case, I've never considered myself an immigrant. Because I'm not, you know—I have temporary visas, I go back very often. So I do see myself as sort of a bridge between those real immigrants in America—people like my sister, for example, who moved here fifteen years ago, who made lives here, her kids are American—and people at home. And I'm just fascinated by things like my sister celebrating Thanksgiving; she doesn't even know what Thanksgiving is. She'll go through the thing, she'll cook the turkey—she doesn't even like turkey—and she'll do cranberry sauce. And it's fascinating to watch. And she'll turn to her kids, like immigrants everywhere, to explain the reality of this place to her. And a lot of these immigrants have this vision of: we're going home someday—although I really don't think they will.

BLVR: It's interesting, this difference between generations, around going back—whether or not one does return, there is that idea that one could. And that's so different from a couple generations ago, when to emigrate was to emigrate—you went and that was it. The old country was the old country—past.

CNA: I think we were also quite lucky in that way—there isn't that same pressure on my sister and newer immigrants, that pressure many once felt to assimilate immediately—to speak English right away, all that. Now you can speak the older language with your children, you can build communities. You do have that choice, which is good.

V. "I HAPPEN TO LOVE THIS BLOODY COUNTRY I COME FROM."

BLVR: You're one of a number of younger African writers who have gained some wonderful visibility in the U.S. recently—Dinaw Mengestu with his book on Washington D.C.'s immigrants; Ishmael Beah and his memoir from Si-

erra Leone; Chris Abani and his fantastic novels on Lagos and Los Angeles. These seem to be writers who aren't doing stuff overdetermined by the national drama, who are engaging a really wide range of themes and problems.

CNA: I think it's very exciting. And when I talk about this sort of thing with my friend Binyavanga—we're quite close, we have these conversations where we disagree fiercely about these things—I often say to him that I feel that I am one of the younger people in this generation, but also in some ways I'm the most old-fashioned—I'm still very keen on history, on the state of this bloody country I love. But much to my excitement, people like Chris [Abani], he'll do this marvelous book about L.A. And I love that. Or Helen Oyeyemi, she writes of mythology, about Cuba. And I think, Well done! I love that we have this diversity, that African literature no longer means everyone is simply fighting colonialism. Which isn't to say fighting colonialism is still not very legitimate. The idea that we gained independence in 1960 in Nigeria, for example—all you have to do is go there and look at the school curriculum, or watch the Senate, and realize that the whole thing is just deeply messed up. But I really like that—I love the diversity, of approaches, of subjects....

BLVR: There seems to be less of that pressure that's existed for "ethnic" or "third-world writers"—the idea that every time out you're meant to write allegory about one's people. But still there's that sense that you don't always have the same license to write "universal" stories, to write of places or cultures not one's own; a pressure that "nonethnic"—white—writers don't necessarily have.

CNA: I think it has to do simply with the fact that white American remains the norm, so it's never questioned. And then everything else is "ethnic," which is hilarious to me. It becomes the one story that becomes the every story. We can read a white American and not be expected to see it as their white American story. It's sort of like James Baldwin, writing for the race—where some of his work becomes "the African American story," not a story about these characters. And even though I really resent it at times, I think that more and more, as I'm increasingly aware of having an audience, I find myself thinking about

things I don't want to be thinking about. Such as: My vision is dark. I like to write about violence; for some reason I'm drawn to horrible things people have done. And then I realize: Am I somehow adding to the stereotype of my continent? Because I'm angry about the stereotype. But on the other hand, I'm also horrified by people killing each other in Lagos, and I want to write about—but if I do... And it's that kind of thing that I wish I didn't have to consider. Like everyone, I want just to be allowed to follow my artistic vision. On the other hand, you do think: I happen to love this bloody country I come from, and I don't want to contribute to it being seen only in horrible ways.

BLVR: Biafra's important in this respect too, isn't it—that sense in which Biafra isn't just an Igbo story, or a Nigerian story, but also inaugurated the way Westerners have seen "Africa" since. It was the first time that those images were on TV everywhere—of starving children, of black people from the same country killing each other for no apparent reason.

CNA: It started it all. Part of me wishes someone had kept those photographers and TV cameras away from Biafra! The image of Africa would be different. Because it is the image—it's been modified in some ways, but the thinking behind it has been passed down to the coverage today. It's still Biafra when CNN is covering the Congo. And it's this sort of coverage that doesn't deal with African actors. Which is why I get so depressed when I'm outside Nigeria. I think, My God, we're finished. And then I go back home—and yes, things are messed up. But you see people doing things, and making an effort, and pushing back, which you never see in the way that it's covered outside Nigeria. It's frustrating.

BLVR: One of the clichéd questions asked of African writers—in part, I sup-

pose, because so many African writers have felt moved to write on it—is that question about "the future of the African novel." So I won't ask it.

CNA: Good. [*Laughs*]

BLVR: But I wanted to mention that essay of Nadine Gordimer's from a few years back where she engages that old concern around having more African readers to read African books. She wrote that "African literature will either make history... or be history."

CNA: Again, it's that discourse of the "future of the novel"; and I'm just not that concerned—we'll always tell stories. People will find ways. If it's not through novels in two hundred years—if it's PowerPoint or whatever—well, well and good. But the point is that people will tell stories. When people call me a novelist, I say, well, yes. But really I think of myself as a storyteller. ★

ROBERT ALTER MICRO-INTERVIEW, PART IV

THE BELIEVER: How do you explain the continuing mystery and fascination of the Bible? Is it a case of literary power, or is there something else?

ROBERT ALTER: The literary power in itself is extraordinary and surely has a lot to do with why these texts are still riveting. There is surely no greater poetry that has come down to us from anywhere in the ancient world than the Book of Job, or the finest of the Psalms, and no more brilliant and probing narratives than the stories of Jacob and Joseph and of David. This is great literature, but also literature that (like Tolstoy or Kafka) asks us to examine our lives and reconsider what our vision of reality is. Also, I would emphasize that there is no such thing as a biblical world-view but, in this far-reaching historical anthology, a whole spectrum of different and, at times, competing views. The priestly writers had a different sense of the world from that of the writer-scholars designated as J, and both Job and Ecclesiastes in very different ways challenge the assumptions of both. It's this variety that makes reading the Bible so rewarding. ★