

competition in the interdependent international economy, it looks as though we are in for equally fierce literary competition.

The story is a good read, centering on the two protagonists Matsudaira Sadayori, scion of the Tokugawa-loyalist Matsudaira family, and Jinsuke, a harpooner from the famous whaling village of Taiji. Set in the 1860s and '70s, *Harpoon* gives its two main characters a splendid backdrop of political intrigue to function in. Their adventures are enhanced by the way the author weaves in his wealth of knowledge about 19th-century Japanese life in Tokyo, Kyoto and even rural villages.

It is clear from this novel that Nicol sees the antiwhaling movement as extremely intolerant, and this is undeniably part of the story's appeal, yet *Harpoon* also reminded me of such Japanese historical adventure novels as *Jinju-no Umi* and *Satsuma Hina-yasha*, both of which are set in the mid-19th century, by the very prolific and very popular Yo Tsumoto. It is only natural that *Harpoon* should resemble *Jinju-no Umi*, since they are both set in the same period and both draw on the widely documented disaster that befell the whalers of Taiji in 1869, but *Harpoon* has additional interest for the way Nicol weaves in the tale of Matsudaira Sadayori as he evolved from a *bakufu* loyalist to a staunch ally of the rebel forces seeking to overthrow 250 years of Tokugawa rule and the way he depicts Jinsuke's transformation from a rustic whaler to an international trader.

Harpoon also represents a reversal of the usual literary positions. In the past, Japanese novelists sought to emulate Western styles and motifs. Yet in preparing to write *Harpoon*, Nicol read numerous works by Yo Tsumoto and drew on their spirit to create a new line in English. He has created a new genre in Japanese fiction—the Japanese historical novel written by a non-Japanese with a Japanese perspective. At the same time, this development is indicative of the great intermingling taking place among literary styles and subjects worldwide.

While I can understand his affection for Japan and his publisher's desire to want to put the work into Japanese, I am afraid that many Japanese readers will have trouble with parts of the book. The depiction of the revolutionary thinker Yoshida Shoin as a mere rabble-rouser, for example, will probably draw fire from more than Japan's right wing. There are also problems with the way the nobility and samurai classes are presented, since this seems to lean too heavily on the similarities with European chivalry. As such *Harpoon* is good on the action, but a little weak in social background fabric.

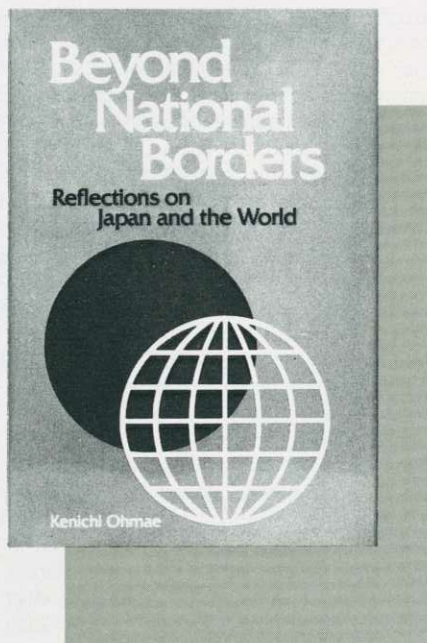
Even so, *Harpoon* ranks right along with *Satsuma Hina-yasha*, and it is well worth reading their differing versions of the great battles. The contrast is striking, and will likely be grist for dozens of dissertations.

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Beyond National Borders: Reflections on Japan and the World

By Kenichi Ohmae
Published by Dow Jones-Irwin
1987, Homewood, Illinois
128 pages; \$16.95

We have come to expect fresh, provocative interpretations from Kenichi Ohmae. As managing director of the Tokyo office of McKinsey & Company, Inc., the management consulting firm, he is perfectly situated to observe and report on the dynamic Japanese economy.



Our hopes are disappointed in this book, however, because many of the themes are drawn from Ohmae's fascinating *Triad Power* (1985) or his articles in the Western business press. Indeed, the repetition would be Bidesque if the author were not reprising himself. Other topics are the oft-heard litany of popular pundits in Japan.

Beyond National Borders is a translation by the author of a book he wrote in Japanese which was published in 1986. The adage about lawyers who represent themselves also holds true for authors who render their own writing into a foreign language. Errors of English usage abound; there are more stylistic howlers than boutiques in Harajuku. That a book so carelessly edited was produced in the United States suggests that the blight of indifference to quality has spread from the manufacturing sector to publishing.

Readers unfamiliar with Ohmae's earlier work and willing to overlook the countless infelicitous expressions will find that he writes with authority about how the international market-

place works. Ohmae explains the importance of common lifestyles and consumer preferences in the advanced industrial nations—a market of 630 million persons—to corporate marketing strategies. Here the outsider gets a free sample of the expensive advice McKinsey & Company provides its clients: They are urged to get inside protectionist walls.

Ohmae rejects humbug from Tokyo or Washington. He deftly demolishes Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's campaign to get each Japanese to buy \$100 worth or more of U.S. imports. And the author's artful analysis of sales by U.S. subsidiaries producing in Japan to the Japanese market punctures the strident claims of American politicians that this market is closed. He also shows that the monthly announcements of merchandise trade statistics, usually showing huge U.S. deficits and Japanese surpluses, are more a media event than a reliable indicator of bilateral imbalance.

A short section on the limitations of Keynesian economics opened the eyes of this fugitive from Economics 1. The conventional model no longer works—because the world economy is now a “system of interdependent units” and increasing unemployment is virtually inevitable—and ad hoc quick fixes are doomed to failure.

As a rational internationalist, Ohmae deplores knee-jerk nationalism and hectors his Japanese audience about the danger of emotional, groupist ripostes to U.S. trade pressures. He attacks the collective excuse-mongering that characterized Japan's response to Hitachi and Mitsubishi spying on IBM. Perhaps Ohmae's message and that of others has had some effect. Reactions to Toshiba Machine's illegal sale of high technology to the Soviet Union were notably less paranoid than in the IBM affair.

Yet Ohmae brews some near-beer nationalism of his own. He believes that U.S. scholars have misled the American public about the causes of Japan's massive trade surpluses. These allegations against unnamed (mostly) rascals contribute to Japan's search for scapegoats—“We are misunderstood and somebody else is to blame.” To say, as Ohmae does, that “the theories of the Peter Druckers and Ezra Vogels . . . have created Japan, Inc.” is flip but not fair. Most people would acknowledge that the Ministry of International Trade and Industry had *something* to do with that image. This charge follows another extraordinary statement about “the biggest barrier to U.S.-Japan communications—the idea of ‘Japan, Inc.’” Oh? Everybody is entitled to their hit list, I suppose, but mine starts with this kind of reductionism.

One of Ohmae's comments deserves a spirited response from U.S. labor: That average American employees are less enthusiastic and “gifted” than Japanese. Ironically, the multitude of English errors in this U.S. book are perverse proof of his charge.

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