
Reviews of Books

Peter Carey, *Wrong About Japan*. London: Faber & Faber, 2005. 166p. ISBN 0-571-22407-5. Yen 2,541 (hdb)

Wrong About Japan: A Father's Journey with his son is better read not as travel writing. It perhaps operates best under the contemporary and slightly peculiar generic distinction of fictional-autobiography, while also being an examination of Japanese culture by a befuddled outsider akin to similar recent efforts in film such as *Lost in Translation*. Carey is a skilled novelist, who more recently has penned two short “travel books” between winning Booker Prizes. Critics who forget Carey’s skills as a novelist, if not an *illywhacker* in his own right, do themselves and the book a disservice. One of the common complaints about *Wrong About Japan* in reviews has been that a quick visit to Japan hardly qualifies Carey as an authority on a notoriously, if not stereotypically, inscrutable culture. Equally, critics have pointed out that Carey’s perspective on Japan is shaped more by armchair travel than by actual experience. Carey litters his narrative with constant references to a reasonably wide range of works on Japan by foreigners and Japanese, at points quoting from them *in extensa*. He draws repeatedly on some of the classic insider-outsider views of Japan such as Kerr’s *Lost Japan* and Heine’s *With Perry to Japan*, along with references to Tanizaki’s *In Praise of Shadows*, the sarariman-classic *The Way of Bushido*, and Eiko Ikegami’s *The Taming of the Samurai*, along with more obscure texts such as Lawrence Eng’s *The Politics of Otaku* and Yoshihara’s *The Craft of the Japanese Sword*. To some critics, especially it seems longer-term *gaijins*, Carey’s research is more academic than experiential, and lends itself more to old recapitulations than new revelations about Japan. *Wrong About Japan* has received some fairly hostile attention on this point, with some stating that without the Bookers behind him and the consequent fame, Carey’s little book on Japan would never have been published. Carey’s superficial knowledge of Japan is made apparent through his constant retreat into other writers’ insights into Japan and the narration of his own adventures are underwritten by obvious simple errors such as his misinterpretation of “gaijin” as “barbarian”, and his misspelling of “irassyaimase” as “trasshaimase”. But for critics to dismiss the book on these grounds as so much pulp in Japanese pulp faction misses the basic drive and destination of the book. Carey never claims authority as a cultural critic of Japan (even noting with a degree of self-mockery, “I had read enough to imagine that I understood.” (p. 105)), nor aims to write a Japanophile’s digest akin to the ones he draws on. He embraces his lack of authority on Japan and the superficiality of his knowledge in the context of a broader examination of the interstices of cultural experience. It seems strange that critics, so scornful of Carey’s errors in reading and understanding, themselves fail to pay the slightest attention to Carey’s choice of title. Many of the more negative responses to *Wrong About Japan* seem to mix proprietorial feelings toward Japanese culture with a subdued envy of Carey’s ability to flit in and publish a book on Japan.

Wrong About Japan reads on one level as a fable of aging and generational change—the journey along the Sphinx’s riddle from son to father, and father back to son—, and on another as a subtle but very engaged meditation on the Japanese recollection and response to the trauma of World War II, and its development in popular culture (directly in anime such as *Grave of the Fireflies* and more obliquely in manga such as *Mobile Suit Gundam*). The search for the *Real Japan* is one of the running jokes throughout the book. Carey plays with this notion, drawing it into reference with *Lost Japan*, echoing the notion in the

title of the book (*Wrong ... Japan*), and casting it into the tension between the classic “encounters” with Japan from a generation before and his and his son’s brief, celebrity-laden experience.

This slight buddy-tale-*bildungsroman* is primarily played out through exchanges between Carey Snr and Jnr, and their differing abilities to cope with and understand their experiences in Tokyo, experiences which are at turns (as with many *gaijins*’ experiences in Japan) frustrating, revelatory, amusing, deepening, aggravating, and finally, perhaps, life-changing. One of the strengths of this simple tale is the juxtaposition of the father’s initial confidence in his knowledge of Japan, gained through reading, and Charley’s access to Japan through popular culture that is neither simply Japanese or American, but shared beyond national and linguistic boundaries. Carey senior arrives in Tokyo with a book of clippings from a what’s-what list of books on Japan, and at least in the first few moments (and they are brief) appears confident he will be able to introduce Japan to his son. Charley, on the other hand, arrives having already made contact with a young Japanese manga-anime-fan via the internet, who we subsequently discover is not simply imitating the dress sense of the characters of *Mobile Suit Gundam*, but has been in fact drawn into the story by Carey directly from *Gundam* as both a cicerone and an antagonist. Where Carey senior arrives in Tokyo with a sense of the exotic, with the baggage of a “Real Japan” being out there amongst the concrete and wood, Charley arrives with an unencumbered openness to a place that while foreign in many ways, is nevertheless familiar to him in its strangeness from the youth culture he has been bred on. The domination of popular culture over national culture, the ability of popular culture such as manga and anime to transcend national as well as linguistic boundaries is one of the book’s themes and preoccupations. Charley’s nighttime reading habits are a clear example of the integration of Japanese culture into his youth culture as much as the gap between father’s and son’s approaches to Japan:

Each night Charley had his thirty minutes of reading literature, but when the timer rang he instantly put down *To Kill a Mockingbird* and picked up *Akira*. By the time he was into *Akira* #6, I was reading William Heine’s *With Perry to Japan*. (p. 8)

From Charley’s quick absorption into a friendship with Takashi, his recognition of various subcultures such as yakuza, and otaku-transsexuals, and his ability to recognize the nuances of Japanese manners, especially during their various interviews with Japanese manga and anime celebrities, with more alacrity than his increasingly befuddled father, signal that where the father may be engaging with a distinctly foreign if not seemingly exotic culture, in Charley’s admittedly limited experience, cultural differences are neither as apparent nor obstructive. A telling scene that underlines this generational gap is where Charley navigates his clueless father through the Tokyo subway:

I gave him a handful of coins, and by the time Jerry, Etsuko, and I caught up with him, Charley was feeding a very alien-looking ticket dispenser as if it were a Vegas slot machine. Now he was alive, engaged. The machine whirred at his command, spitting tickets out into his waiting hand.

“How do you know how to do that?”

“I’m going to live here,” he said, “after my band fails.”

The Tokyo subway is big and complicated. The lines are owned by different companies, some of who accept each other’s tickets, some of whom don’t. Of course I should take Charley to Akihabara—this was his trip after all—but now I saw that he was somehow taking me.

“You are a different species,” I told him.

“We mutated,” he corrected.

This mutation is both generational and cultural. The “we” suggests his generation, and equally embraces Charley as much as his friend Takashi who they meet not moments later. Takashi is very much a symbol of this mutation. For Charley, there may be a language barrier but cultural barriers are slight, thanks to the way American and Japanese youth (though not simply for the young) cultures inform each other. The hapless father comes to be guided by the blithe son who is at ease in a culture that so frustrates his father. It’s a nice and easy turn, that Carey (the writer, not the “father”) uses to good effect, not simply providing an easy and constant narrative drive but also opening up more difficult territory dealing with the cultural

differences between father, son and the Japanese they encounter. Far from claiming authority over Japan, as many of his source books might, Carey's journey is one of cultural engagement that ends with the inability to know, to define Japan in clear Western terms. Carey's frustration during the various interviews is one of the amusing reoccurrences of the book, coupled as it is with Charley's unerring ability to keep quiet and listen, while being repeatedly either embarrassed or bored by his father's misconceptions. Carey's humor underwrites as much as it ironizes his misconceptions, developing numerous amusing exchanges that are often as equally illustrative of Carey's as the Japanese counterparts' preconceptions:

[When interviewing Yoshihara, a master sword-maker]: "I asked if making a sword felt like a spiritual business to him. Yoshihara-san smiled. 'You've been reading American books?'" (p. 40)

[Interview with Yoshiyuki Tomino, creator of *Mobile Suit Gundam*]: "I had reached the point that can arrive easily in an interpreted interview—locked inside my skin, lost in space, emotionally disconnected from my fellow humans." (p. 101)

[Interview with Yuka Minakawa, expert of *otaku* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*]: "Perhaps it was getting late or perhaps they were just sick and tired of me, but I persisted, asking about the fastidious attention to detail, the perfectionism which seems so distinctively Japanese. But of course Yuka was the wrong person to ask. She lived inside Japan, not outside, Japan, and it seemed she misunderstood my question.

"It would be dull if everyone was the same, wouldn't it?" she said. "Europeans are brought up thinking that if they take their clothes off they'll all turn into werewolves. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I lied. "Thank you." (p. 114)

Tellingly Carey acknowledges: "How much clearer everything had seemed at home. Charley and I could sit on the Brooklyn-bound subway happily developing hypotheses about manga and Japanese history." (p. 109). Throughout the various interviews Carey is politely chided and corrected about his various hypotheses, mostly drawn from his armchair tourism. Through this process he gains a deeper insight not simply into the background of anime and manga, or contemporary sword-making, or outsider culture in Japan, but into the mill and grist of cultural communication understanding and misunderstanding. Being "wrong" about Japan is in many ways something of a triumph, in that the realization that the *real* Japan is neither lost nor an otherworldly future, but exists as a multiple and layered whole that defies reduction to the open-eyed wonder, anxiety or fascination of the West. In part, being wrong about Japan is about respecting cultural difference and not hiding it away as "inscrutable" or "exotic". Where Carey Snr becomes a sign of the failure to approach a culture on its own terms, Carey Jnr becomes a sign of the transcendence of national, ethnic and linguistic barriers by popular culture. Interestingly enough, *Wrong About Japan* draws out the cross-pollination of American and Japanese culture, which on reflection opens up interesting ground on the nature of global popular culture, which might be seen as part and parcel of the *Pax Americana*. While *Wrong About Japan* does not answer it, it does suggest the question, to what degree anime and manga are a form of post-colonial writing back to the Empire.

At the centre of *Wrong About Japan* is one long, uninterrupted interview with one Mr Yazaki who Carey meets through the anime classic *Grave of the Fireflies*. *Grave of the Fireflies*, directed by Isao Takahata, is a powerful anime that tells the story of two children orphaned by the war and who live through the firebombing of Tokyo only to die of hunger during the capitulation of Japan. Carey's interest in Mr Yazaki is not as an animator but as someone who would have been "Charley's age at the time of the firebombing," continuing:

This was really all I knew about the very pleasant, very articulate Mr Yazaki. I never questioned him about his life as an adult, a writer, an intellectual, and never, in fact, understood how he might know my agent Paul Hubert, or exactly what chain of relationships had persuaded him to talk about these few months of childhood to an untidy Australian about whom he, in turn, must have known nothing.

He was a story; I was a writer, and that was our relationship. (p. 75)

After the careful detailing of the other interviewees' histories, the difficulties in organizing interviews and

the then careful depiction of the difficulties of the interviews, Carey's presentation of Mr Yazaki and his story stands out in stark relief, and in many ways forms the centre of the book. Placed in the midst of the other interviews, Yazaki's piece of oral history, recounting his childhood in wartime Japan, the multiple bombing raids and the firebombing of Tokyo, comes to inform each of the other interviews, and Carey's overall preoccupation with the evolution of Japanese culture following the war. The Yazaki interview suggests at least three strains to Carey's tale well worth pursuing in more depth elsewhere. They are: the transformation of militarism and the violence of the war into popular cultural forms through film, anime and manga, from *Godzilla* to *Akira*; the inheritance of wartime notions of citizenship, which Mr Tomino discusses, adopted and transformed into the child soldiers of *Mobile Suit Gundam*; and finally, the meaning of their cicerone Takashi's existence, who at one point invites them to meet his grandmother, who we discover toward the end of the book lives in the working-class district of Shitamachi, which was the most heavily effected area during the Tokyo firebombing. Carey's development of the firebombing of Tokyo through the Yazaki interview, exhibits a sensitivity to Japanese history not always present in readings of Japanese culture and history. As he points out, most Westerners' recollection of the devastation of Japan rests with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and neglect the catastrophic and finally criminal bombing of civilian populations in the major cities of Japan that preceded the use of atomic weapons. In a curious, novelistic turn, at the end of *Wrong About Japan*, Charley and father make a detour to drop a present to their erstwhile manga friend Takashi at his grandmother's house in Shitamachi. The exchange between Charley and the grandmother is curious, an awkward moment of cultural difference mixed with the abandonment of cultural barriers, in a simple moment of grandmotherly affection. What remains unstated is that Takashi's earlier insistence that father and son visit his grandmother in Shitamachi, might have been for them to have the chance to meet a woman who had lived through the horrors of the war and its aftermath, and so might show them, as father and son joke in the final moments of the book, the "Real Japan", a part of the history that informs contemporary Japan, from popular culture to prime-ministerial visits to shrines.

From the ubiquity of Starbucks to polite compliments about his use of chopsticks, from the "breakfasts from hell" to the revolution in Japanese toilet seats since Tanizaki's time, Carey mixes a good deal of humour with a fair degree of pithy insight and self-irony into an enjoyable account of his visit to Japan. *Wrong About Japan* also includes various interesting details about the history of anime and manga, sword-making, contemporary subcultures, and the detail of anime master Miyazaki's films, details that Carey gains in interviews with the pop-cultural stars which his own celebrity granted him access to. Far from being simply a celebrity-fuelled junket for father and son, as some critics might suppose, Carey hones together an engaging meditation on the origins and destination of contemporary Japanese culture, generational difference and transformation of both history and culture, and skillfully plays-out the difficulties of cultural exchange and understanding, between *gaijin* and Japanese, young and old. It is true, Carey is no Donald Richie, but he never claims that sort of authority over Japan. The beauty of *Wrong About Japan*, is that it renounces the idea of authority, as it travels through the numerous and entertaining interviews and instances that write its author.

Michael Brennan

Ian Buruma & Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004. 165p. ISBN I-59420-008-4. US\$ 21.95 (hdb)

For some time I have had the idea to write an article called, “The Inscrutable Occidental”. The article would detail the ways in which, despite six years of compulsory English language education, and access to Western cultures in all its various forms through the media, retail and holidays abroad, a great many Japanese continue to adhere to erroneous preconceptions and outright prejudices about the West and Western—generally white—people.

I’ll give you an example. Recently a Japanese academic colleague told me of the difficulties she was having finding any British people to be interviewed for her research. They had all agreed, she explained, but when she had tried to pin them down to a date and time, they always had some excuse. Eventually she realised that they had no intention of being interviewed; they were simply using *tatemae* (public consensus) and *honne* (private feelings) much as the Japanese do in order to refuse her request indirectly. She hadn’t expected that, she stated, because she had been taught that English was a direct language which one uses to speak honestly and openly. “I never believed Westerners thought so deeply”, she said.

Occidentalism: the West in the Eyes of its Enemies by Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit goes a long way to helping us understand the critical Asian view of the West. And not before time. Views on Orientalism—the Western perception of Asia and Asians—are readily available in the English language, and have been hotly debated since Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in the late 1970’s. But Asian comments on the West in English have been less forthcoming. In light of the current preoccupation with Islamic terrorism the authors are more concerned with the hostile views on Occidentalism emanating from the Middle East but since Buruma is an expert on Japan there is much Japanologists can learn from the book, both on an academic and a personal level.

It is first necessary to clarify our terms. Occidentalism is defined by Buruma and Margalit (2004) as “the dehumanising picture of the West painted by its enemies” (p. 5). It is the flipside of Orientalism; the reductive bigotry which exoticises a people and projects them as consumable products. It is not anti-Americanism, although the United States is often a target of those with Occidentalist views. Some hostile views of Westernisation can be viewed as Occidentalist, but what and where is Western (and equally what and where is the East), is still open to interpretation. To the Japanese, for example, the West is white nations, predominantly the United States and the United Kingdom. But Buruma and Margalit note that many of the ideas behind Occidentalism originated in 18th century Central and Eastern Europe—particularly in Germany—, ideas which the Japanese adopted prior to the Second World War. The book outlines the four main features of Occidentalism as follows: the City, the Bourgeoisie, Rationalism and the emancipation of women.

The first characteristic is the Occidental City, centre of all things sinful: modern capitalism (linked to imperialism), wealth, power, greed, corruption, sexual freedom (especially for women), and mixed races. The sinful city is soulless and godless and has its historical basis in the city of Babylon with its Tower of Babel that reached up into the heavens as a challenge to God, who consequently brought it down. Hence we see the significance of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York, two modern towers of Babel brought down in the centre of global capitalism. From Western cities in the 19th century came rationalism, capitalism, Christianity, scientific advances, and imperialism, new ideas which overcame large parts of Asia and turned them into colonies.

Mao Zedong and later Pol Pot reacted to Western imperialism by destroying the sinful cities within their own countries, punishing their urban intellectuals, purging them of their Western educations and ordering their citizens out of the cities and back to the countryside for reeducation. Where the city is perceived as the centre of greed and corruption, the countryside is the repository of all that is noble, honest, spiritual and self-sacrificing.

Of course cities are not a Western invention. The first cities were Middle Eastern trading centres as well as being religious hubs. In Asian cities today, in Tokyo, Shanghai, Singapore—financial capitals

all—they are building towers which would have dwarfed the World Trade Centre. But the idea remains that simple, honest Asian people, tied together by race and blood, have been corrupted by the West's evil influence. Indeed it is still openly stated in Japan today by academics and politicians that crime and corruption are Western imports.

In the Occidental city the businessman works to amass individual wealth and ensure his own continued comfort in a long and safe, if unremarkable, life. According to the Occidental view, the Westerner seeks only pleasure: to gratify personal comforts and desires. He is a selfish coward who is morally empty, lacking ideals and avoiding conflict. He is a capitalist and a liberal.

The enemy of the Western bourgeoisie is the self-sacrificing hero, Buruma and Margalit's second Occidental characteristic. At the outbreak of the war in Afghanistan, a Taliban soldier was quoted as saying that the Americans would never win because, "they love Pepsi-Cola, but we love death" (p. 49). The hero (rarely heroine, for reasons that will be considered below) has a higher purpose, he is pure and selfless, he welcomes death through fighting in support of lofty ideals and beliefs. He spills his blood willingly for others. He is the Middle Eastern suicide bomber, the Japanese kamikaze pilot, and the Red Guard fighting Mao's constant revolution. Central to the hero's fight is the death cult, a readiness to die for the cause and the belief that one's reward awaits in heaven, be it in the form of 72 virgins or simply freedom from life's suffering.

As Buruma and Margalit (2004) note, "The Occident, as defined by its enemies, is seen as a threat not because it offers an alternative system of values, let alone a different route to Utopia. It is a threat because its promises of material comfort, individual freedom, and the dignity of unexceptional lives deflate all utopian pretensions. The anti-heroic, antiutopian nature of Western liberalism is the greatest enemy of religious radicals, priest-kings, and collective seekers after purity and heroic salvation" (p. 72).

What drives the hero to sacrifice his life? "In 1942", Margalit and Buruma note, "a Japanese professor at Tokyo University argued that a Japanese victory over Anglo-American materialism was assured because the former embodied the 'Spiritual Culture' of the East". Though Westerners might be financially astute and technologically superior, they are without spirit, without a soul, utterly heartless. "Rationalistic cleverness was held to be a Western disease: cleverness without wisdom" (p. 80).

The West is stripped of its spiritualism by both secular and religious Occidentalism. The West is also accused of idolatry, of being barbarians worshipping the false gods of money and power. And there are those who state that the West is the evil tool of Satan, and that Western power and technological superiority are his weapons. This was a popular message to those under Western colonial rule in the 19th century; that foreign powers dominated their countries not because they had a technological edge but because they were either irreligious savages or that they were evil. It remains a key belief today. Osama Bin Laden regularly refers to the holy war against, "Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allied with them" (p. 107). Buruma and Margalit note, "Occidentalism can be seen as the expression of bitter resentment toward an offensive display of superiority by the West, based on the alleged superiority of reason" (p. 95).

If the West has reason, the authors suggest, then the East has spiritualism. Its heroes are driven by their pure and simple spirits. They are faithful to their gods and, in the case of the Japanese, they view themselves as a pure-blooded divine race. In direct opposition to the Western liberal view that we are individuals tied by social contract, they hold a romantic view of a united people bound by national spirit. "The struggle of East and West is a Manichaeian struggle between the idolatrous worshipers of earthly matter and true worshipers of the godly spirit" (p. 109).

One of the greatest threats to the honest, hard-working peasant, to the self-sacrificing hero, to the warm spiritual heart of a nation, is female emancipation, particularly the expression of female sexuality. Female emancipation is also linked to individualism. "Many people think individualism comes from Western countries" notes Jansson Yanagisawa of Japan. "And feminism is the utmost individualistic idea".

Traditionally, Buruma and Margalit note, women have been solely charged with being "the breeders of heroic men". In many Eastern countries today, a woman's worth continues to be judged by the men with whom she associates. Equally, a man's honour is dependent on the women related to him. For this reason it

is in a man's interests to control women's behaviour, for example, by hiding her sexuality—and expressing her spirituality—with the veil. Moreover, in many Eastern countries, human behaviour remains a collective matter, and moral regulation of the public sphere is controlled by the state or by religious authority. In the case of Islam, for instance, public morality is decided by the Sharia which controls all aspects of daily life including sexual behaviour. An emancipated woman therefore is not only a threat to the male-dominated system but also an affront to her religion.

Western men and women too are judged by the Eastern male gaze, say the authors. A man who “allows” a woman to dress in a sexually provocative manner is considered a pimp and the woman a whore, or “temple prostitutes in the service of materialism” (p. 132). But in the West religious worship has become the choice of the individual, and public and private morality is separated. One's dress and one's own behaviour are considered private matters. Western women's behaviour is no longer regulated by the men with whom they associate, nor by the state or church.

An excellent example of how Western power brought female liberation to an Asian society and transformed it is the case of post-war Japan. Whilst the men of Japan returned home in shame at their defeat, its women benefited from the American occupation. Whereas previously women had no individual legal status (they were considered to be the property of men), under the American-written post war constitution they were given the rights to be equal under the law, to vote, to consensual marriage, to divorce, to receive an equal education, to hold property, to inherit, and the right and obligation to work. Female emancipation requires total social change. For this reason, even in Japan today, as Yanagisawa notes, “Feminism is considered a very antitraditional, destructive movement”.

The City, the Bourgeoisie, Rationalism and the Emancipation of Women are the four main features of Buruma and Margalits' Occidentalism. Although I am no expert on the Middle East, the authors seem to make a good case for the existence of Occidentalism in these forms and relate them well to the current conflicts there. But the real test is to what extent it can be applied throughout the myriad countries and cultures which comprise “the East”, especially to countries which are not outright enemies of “the West”. Is it widespread thinking, or merely a convenient theoretical framework on which to hang today's ongoing conflicts? As a test case, can it be applied to Japan?

Overall, I would say yes. Although 44% of the Japanese population live in its three main cities, the spiritual importance of its rural heartland is overwhelming. On the traditional Japanese social scale, the rural peasant farmer ranked highest, above even the samurai, because he represented the warm, spiritual heart of Japan. The trader ranked at the bottom, wealthy yet despised, even by the middle-ranking samurai to whom he often acted as moneylender. The spiritual importance of rice and of the farmer who cultivates it continues to be acknowledged today. Every year Japanese make the pilgrimage from the cities back to their countryside *furusato* (home towns) during the Obon festival to reaffirm their rural roots. Ohnuki-Tierney notes how Japanese rice is both a metaphor and a metonym for the collective Japanese self, symbolizing purity, racial and cultural homogeneity, and the people's link to the land.

The idea of the hero is embodied in the spirit of Bushido, and is best demonstrated through the actions of the Kamikaze and the Tokkotai, soldiers who were ordered to give their lives even when the war was so obviously lost, not because their sacrifice helped the war effort in any way but because, noted Vice Admiral Onishi Takajiro before his suicide, “the noble spirit of the kamikaze attack corps will keep our homeland from ruin. Without this spirit, ruin would certainly follow defeat” (p. 67). Even the modern salaryman is a heroic warrior, sacrificing his life to his company. And more recently, the high rate of Japanese suicides could be viewed as a form of death cult, with young and old sacrificing themselves to absolve their families of their shame, and freeing themselves from life's suffering.

The challenge to native spiritualism by Western rationalism was violently debated in the 19th century. Under the banner, *Wakon Yosai* (Japanese Spirit, Western Learning) we can see the Occidental thinking behind the wholesale adoption of Western industrial technology but rejection of the beliefs and doctrines which produced it. The idea that Japan is spiritually superior to the West persists. Last year, a Japanese swimmer who had registered the fastest time in Japan was not chosen for the national Olympic team

because, it was said, she lacked the proper spirit. (Apparently she had trained abroad and had picked up Western ways.)

On the subject of gender equality, despite the gains made—or rather given—by the constitution, Japan remains third world in its treatment of women. In business, only 8% of managers are female, and there are only three women in the 431 seats of Japan's top 27 companies, giving it the lowest female representation on the corporate boards of the world's 200 largest companies. Although technically illegal, women are still expected to quit their jobs upon marriage. If they do stay in employment and take Child Care Leave, it may be without pay and they are not guaranteed the same job on their return to work. Such an attitude to women in the workplace helps to explain the current birth rate of 1.29, one of the lowest in the world and declining. Being deemed unsuitable for Japanese women's bodies and out of concern that it would corrupt women's morals, the contraceptive pill was only legalised in Japan in 1999, and then only after an outcry at the instant legalisation of Viagra. In spite of the attempted controls placed on its women, Japan operates the largest and most lucrative sex trade in the world, and remains on a United States "Watch List" for countries who are failing to address the problem of sexual slavery.

In October 2004, the comedian Shinsuke Shimada was arrested for physically assaulting a female colleague. His defence was that she had been disrespectful by speaking to him in an over familiar way and he felt he had to teach her lesson. It was suggested by Shimada and by the media that having lived abroad the woman had gained "a bad attitude" and did not know her place; an apparent case of both Occidentalism and continuing gender discrimination.

I could go on, and if I ever get round to writing "The Inscrutable Occidental", I will. If I had one major criticism of the book it is that it is too short. There is so much more to be said on this topic, and I anticipate that Buruma and Margalit's book will inspire further debate. It is also hoped that the debate could be widened, to cover not only those countries which currently consider themselves to be the West's enemies but those which are its nominal allies. Within these nations the dichotomy between hating the West and attempting to copy it is strongest, and the construction of the white Western Other has a dual nature: desirable superior being and moral threat. Indeed, the commodification of white models in advertising in Asia is just as prevalent as Orientalism's exoticification of the Oriental.

A reconsideration of terminology would also be required. It is now accepted that the words "Oriental" and "Occidental" are discriminatory. But I have been aware whilst writing this review that "Western" and "Eastern" too are problematic, not only because they are vague but because they imply two united cultural and religious movements that do not exist. No-one ever refers to themselves as an Easterner or a Westerner unless they are German. Which other "Eastern" nations Buruma and Margalit are talking about and to what extent those nations hold Occidentalist views is not always clear. As an experiment I can apply it to Japan but do people feel the same way in Burma or Bhutan? Presumably that is why the authors confine themselves largely to the Middle East.

Occidentalism and Orientalism are extreme forms of prejudice created through misconceptions in order to bring about a sense of superiority, and designed to reconcile feelings of fear, and to exploit and destroy the Other. Buruma and Margalit's book is brave and timely because it not only prods at the unhealed wound of white colonial superiority, it dares to point an equally accusing finger right back at the previously colonised.

I once asked a Japanese colleague—an English language teacher—to explain "*wabi sabi*" to me. After demurring for several minutes on the grounds that it was a deeply spiritual Japanese concept that could never be explained in actual words, he gave it a go. "Yes, I think I get that" I said, to which he replied, "In that case, I must not have explained it correctly. Because you are a foreigner and can therefore never understand". I hope this book gets translated into other languages, especially Japanese.

Susan K. Burton

A. Dayal-Gulati & A. Y. Lee (Eds.), *Kellogg on China: Strategies for Success*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004. 254p. ISBN 0-8101-2225-1. US\$ 29.95 (pbk)

China is now among the leading countries hosting international study tours for many western M.B.A. programs. Books on strategies for business success in China have been in circulation which try to explain the opportunities there, and offer the solutions to problems when doing business. Published by the Kellogg School of the Chinese Management, Northwestern University, this book is not an academic treatise but a close examination of economy, and a guide to its business practices. It presents strategic approaches to start-up situations as well as lists of simple but experience-proven “dos” and “don’ts” across a variety of industries.

The book consists of four parts and eleven chapters by forty-one authors who were mostly graduate students at the Kellogg School of Management. They did extensive field research in China as part of Kellogg’s Global Initiatives in Management. So the contents and arguments in the articles are drawn from real people in the real world through a wide range of interviews with Chinese corporate executives, government officials, and representatives of Nongovernment Organizations.

The first part, “WTO Entry and a Changing China,” examines the ramifications of China’s entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 in some key areas. The authors’ view on China’s compliance with WTO commitments is very positive. For example, China has reduced import tariffs on schedule and even lowered tariffs ahead of schedule for certain products. In 2002, the government expanded the number of sectors open for foreign investment from 186 to 262 and increased the proportion of foreign shares in some service areas. Business conditions have improved significantly over the past five years. While China’s exports are growing, its imports from virtually every country in the world at all levels of development are also increasing rapidly. Discussing the common complaint that Chinese business is leading to a loss of jobs in the United States and other developed countries, the authors present different views with facts. The U.S. bilateral trade deficit with China increased from \$75 billion in 1999 to \$124 billion in 2003. However, according to the authors, this may well misrepresent the degree to which China is a threat because of the manner of calculation. For example, sales made to U.S. customers by China-based affiliates of U.S. firms are counted as U.S. imports from China, whereas sales made to Chinese customers by China-based affiliates of U.S. firms are not counted as U.S. exports. Besides, the U.S. trade deficit with China also reflects a reorientation of production and trade within Asia. This argument is supported by two facts. The first one is that China’s overall trade surplus declined in 2003. The second is that the U.S. overall trade balance with Asia has not changed much in recent years.

The second part of the book, “Managing and Maneuvering in the New Chinese Economy,” suggests how western companies should adopt management styles that reflect western values and practices as well as operate business under the cultural context that reflects Chinese values and practices. In the three chapters in this part, the authors outline the opportunities and challenges related to franchising, discuss how businesses move away from a paternalistic style of leadership, and identify managers with western management skills. They also examine the use of relationship building as a strategy to protect intellectual property rights and combat counterfeiting. Among various franchises, the book focuses on multinational casual dining, which enjoys growing acceptance and popularity in China. The authors identify six key attributes and benefits of franchises:

- 1) Ownership: franchisees own and operate the business, and pay fees and royalties to the franchisor.
- 2) A Win-Win Proposition: Chinese franchisees can obtain training, support, operations manuals, and financing to start the business; and foreign franchisors can benefit from the franchisee’s entrepreneurial instincts and experience with local conditions and personal relationships.
- 3) Minimization of Agency Costs: operations can be decentralized, allowing for reduced costs and flexibility in responding to the needs of the local market.
- 4) Rapid Expansion: franchise expansion is financed predominantly by the private funds of the entrepreneur and its creditors with limited capital investment from the franchisor compared with a

company-owned model.

- 5) Brand Consistency: franchised products generally possess consistent quality, however, it can be challenging in China, especially in the casual dining market.
- 6) Alleviation of Legal Oversight: the franchisor may avoid certain restrictions since a Chinese national runs the enterprise.

According to the authors of this book, the key operating strategies for success in China are: selecting the local partner, choosing an initial market, the distribution and supplier network, and financing. Chinese franchisees are looking for foreign franchisors with qualification of PRC: “P” stands for “patience,” “R” represents “relationships”, and “C” stands for “contribution” of time and funds to the local area. The advice given by the book to foreign franchisors is to choose a local partner with qualities of trustworthiness, a successful business record, and government relationships.

Another key operation strategy for success in China is to develop homegrown talents who will provide new leadership with a competitive advantage in China’s rapidly changing market. However, this new leadership will have to be trained with new management approaches, priorities, and skills. The comparisons between the old and new leadership are shown in the following chart:

Leadership Approach	
Authoritative	→ Delegate, Empower
Cultivate Loyalty	→ Cultivate New Leaders
Control Power	→ Trust People
Obey Me	→ Join Me
Leadership Priorities	
Year-to-year Focus	→ Strategic Focus
Quotas	→ Efficiency
Government	→ Customers, Competition
Government Politics	→ Business Savvy
Leadership Skills	
Decision Making: Guanxi, Centralized	→ Rational, Participatory
Dealing with Government	→ Dealing with Market Uncertainty

The third part, “Understanding Marketing in China,” offers a fresh perspective on the adoption of western marketing strategies to the cultural and social preferences of the Chinese market. With a population of 1.3 billion, a liberalizing economy, and a rising middle class, China has emerged as the most exciting market in the world for many foreign products such as western snack foods, multinational advertising agencies, and sports products. All three articles in this part mention the power of a strong brand. American consumers do not assume that brand excellence in one product translates to brand excellence in other categories. In China, however, consumers are willing to accept that a strong brand means quality across product categories. More Chinese consumers are making their purchases on the brand name. Among other factors affecting the Chinese market is one connected with the government’s “one child policy.” When couples are limited to having one child, four grandparents have only a single grandchild upon whom to bestow their attention and affections. Children determine 65–70 percent of household purchases. Another valuable suggestion the book offers is to focus on the emotional connection to the consumer, which, according to the authors, makes product brands powerful for their long-term relationships with users. For example, in order to participate in a community event and national celebration, when the 2008 Olympics were awarded to Beijing, McDonalds announced that a free hamburger would be given to every customer in line. Some outlets stayed open until 4 A.M. to fulfill this promise. The opposite example is that a global cereal manufacturer entered the Chinese market with its cold cereal as a healthy breakfast alternative. The product was short-lived because the company overlooked the cultural and social preferences for breakfast

attributes, which are tasty and warm.

The fourth part, "Looking to the Future," examines two events, the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and SARS, both of which shape the public perception of China. After winning the bid, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the Twenty-ninth Olympiad (BOCOG) released a strategic plan that outlined an ambitious seven-year, U.S. \$34 billion development project featuring new highways, new railways, urban regeneration, and environmental initiatives. The Beijing Olympic preparation plan could be "the world's largest single urban development project since the building of the Pyramids." However, the authors give a warning based on the history of Olympic games that host cities tend to overestimate the positive short-term economic impact of the Olympics fail to account for displacement and substitution factors that offset incoming revenue. The authors of the book also provide valuable advice that Beijing should minimize the construction of Olympic-specific investments that will have only short-term benefits, and instead allocate capital to general infrastructure and other projects that will generate long-term value to the economy and citizens of Beijing. Another big challenge for the Beijing 2008 Olympics is environmental improvement. Although the city has budgeted over \$1.2 billion a year since 2001, an increase of 130 percent is needed to bring a blue sky to the audience of Olympics. Also needed urgently are an updating of environmental regulations, changing business practices, and educating the public. In terms of effect of the SARS on China, the book presents a whole picture, both negative and positive. 8,100 people throughout the world have contracted the disease, including 774 who died. China's service sector, especially tourism and travel-related industries were heavily hit. Airlines suffered huge losses. Retail sales also dropped dramatically during the second quarter of 2003 in affected areas. However, the Chinese economy remained strong overall with some sectors even showing healthy growth trends. Some sectors, such as computers and technology, were relatively unaffected, whereas electronics and information technology experienced a 27 percent growth. Although FDI did fall by 8.8 percent in June and 37 percent in July relative to the same periods in 2002, by November 2003, actual utilization of FDI reached nearly \$48 billion—about the same level as 2002. Most companies in Hong Kong, Singapore, and China took action to combat SARS. The Chinese government, after the initial mistakes, announced tough measures to fight the disease and improve patient care, and to abolish or reduce many taxes and fees for those hard-hit service sectors. On the other hand, SARS helped bring countries together and hastened reforms in China by inducing the government to a degree of openness towards both its own people and the global community. SARS also highlighted the significance and urgency of China's health system reform and brought about much-needed changes in the public health system, especially in rural areas.

Chinese business methods present an entirely new set of challenges for western business managers because the fundamental mismatch between West and East is not economic but cultural. Therefore the strategies and suggestions offered by this book are more cultural than purely economic. China will not adjust to Western capitalism; rather, it will actually adjust Western capitalism. Therefore, it would be wise for capitalist investors to understand China's "socialist market" economy and recognize its differences and strengths before going to China. China will play as nearly an important role in globalization as the U. S. in the near future. As the book quotes, "China is too complex to solve—but too big to ignore." Therefore, this book is a must for MBA students as well as for foreign managers and investors in China.

PingPing Zhu Lincoln

Jan Frodesen & Christine Holten (Eds.), *The Power of Context in Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston: Thomson & Heinle, 2005. 270p. ISBN 1413001319. US\$21.00 (pbk)

This slim volume of 270 pages packs a lot of punch. If anyone liked Marianne Celce-Murcia's work, *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (2001), then they will like this volume as well, because it supports and expands on the first with plenty of praxis and theory. The editors and several authors acknowledge being influenced by Marianne Celce-Murcia's work, *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, released by the same publisher. Celce-Murcia's work is known for privileging the method known as contextual analysis, which, simply put, challenges the ability of teachers of the English language to teach *in vacuo*. This is a now well established, understood and practiced principle in language education around the world. Language and cultural context are interdependent, and cannot really be separated. The acknowledgement of Celce-Murcia is a significant factor, as the volume under review can arguably be seen as a source book which by described practice and theory supports the central task of teaching English as a second or foreign language in the light of this sound and respected approach.

The purpose of this book is to inform L2 educators and is focused on the accepted relationship between language and context, as is suggested by the title. There are some 30 contributing authors, most of whom are from West Coast American Universities. While most of these authors are English as L1 speakers, there are a few ESL contributors, but these are also working in the United States. The reason I emphasize this is because the value of this book, although presumably intended for a global audience of language educators, ultimately is relative to the very context that its authors are at pains to inform. Much of the data is from teaching English in America, which, one could safely say, is different from, for example, teaching English in Asia. What I am saying is that the concepts espoused in this book hold value, but by and large do not apply to my working situation, as this context is culturally entirely different from those under discussion.

The balance of *The Power of Context* emphasizes teaching English as a second language in an American context, rather than teaching English as a foreign language in countries which are not English-dominant. This observation is not a criticism, just a realization of the relativity of context of this book to language educators, as many cultural contexts cited in the book as data do not realistically apply in places where English is taught as a foreign language. Thus there is a particular orientation of this book which is interesting in the ways in which it is written and constructed, and this has appeal to any language educator. But the praxis, culture and context is defined and limited, and in that respect the universality of its appeal is more confined.

So how is this volume organized? There are four sections. The first one is about discovering what context reveals about grammatical structures. In this part, the contributing authors discuss how, adopting contextual analysis, they have experienced, identified and backgrounded different linguistic behaviors, such as the difficulty of explaining native speaker intuition, nouns without articles, the distribution and meaning of *any*, *some* and *every* in discourse. This section also includes some useful references for researchers, as well as how using expanded computer-based data corpus can aid the investigator. Action-based research or the teacher-as-researcher in his/her own classroom are also shown as valid methods of documenting contextual analysis.

The second part of the book broadens out into a discussion of varying methods of oral and written discourse analysis. Discourse pragmatic issues dominate these chapters, ranging from a discussion of requests, complaints and apologies to an examination of the coherence of oral and written language between speakers/writers and listeners/readers. An interesting chapter for me here was information structure, or how information is presented, in terms of given and new information. The concept of scaffolding vocabularistic and conceptual expansion of words is an ongoing concern of language educators. I also enjoyed reading Jeanette DeCarrico's essay on questions of form and function in lexical phrases and discourse content.

An exploration of the interface between language skills and discourse make up the third part of this book. The focus is the intersection of language skills, grammar and discourse contexts. Top down and

bottom up models are discussed, as is the role of grammar and context, and the relationship of one to the other. This section has a pragmatic ring to it. Tetsuo Harada from Oregon University has a nice discussion of the effects of CBI (content based instruction) on English as second language learners.

The final part of this book deals with creating contexts for effective language teaching, and is arguably the most appealing part of the book as it deals with how-to questions. In particular, this section emphasizes the trend that reflective classroom researchers who evaluate and rethink their approach as a result of the impact and feedback which they receive from the students are likely to be more successful than teachers who automatically and robotically reach for the textbook and methodically work through it irrespective of the relevance or appropriateness of the material to the learning needs of students. This means that the thinking teacher sensitive to the students' ability to receive and comprehend is ahead of the practitioner who follows a particular method because of his/her belief in its absolute superiority. This means that the language educator remains the focus as operator and facilitator of language learning, content is moulded to the place, needs and aspirations of all participants.

In conclusion, for educators wishing to ground themselves in some of the governing concepts current in teaching English in America, this volume provides an attractive overview. As a multi-lingual person, I found many of the notions discussed as somewhat self-evident and redundant, but that is only because I have empirically absorbed them through some 50 odd years of an examined life working mostly with people learning English as a first or second language outside the United States. What I liked about the book is that it was relatively ideologically unencumbered, in the sense that while it succeeded in showing where current language teaching trends stand, it did not do so polemically, but with a freshness and originality to be commended.

Michael Kindler

Carlos Ghosn and Philippe Riès, *Shift—Inside Nissan's Historic Revival*. Translated from the French by John Cullen. New York: Currency/Doubleday, 2005. 232p. ISBN 0-385-51290-2. \$25.95 (hdb)

In 1999 Nissan, formerly one of the most profitable car manufacturers in the world, was on the verge of bankruptcy. With massive losses over seven consecutive years, which accumulated to the huge automotive debt of more than \$20 billion, Nissan was working at only half of its total capacity. Banks, confronted with their own difficulties, were turning their backs on this unprofitable giant. Hopes of being bailed out by the state in the event of a bankruptcy had to be abandoned after the spectacular fall of Yamaichi Securities. The alliance with Renault, and especially the appointment of Renault man Carlos Ghosn as Chief Operating Officer in 1999, came as a revolutionary shift. "Shift", which is the title of the present book, is also the ambitious tagline of the new, reborn Nissan, and reflects the vision of the *gaijin* who saved Nissan, the versatile and charismatic Carlos Ghosn. It entails a multitude of connotations that define the transformation of Nissan from the underdog of the Japanese automotive industry to the once again redoubtable rival of Toyota and Honda, with the highest return on invested capital (R.O.I.C) in Japan, of 21.3% in 2004. Much has been written about this turnover; journalists have covered it from various perspectives with a zest commensurate with Nissan's rapid comeback. Books, case studies, interviews and articles have presented Ghosn as "the white knight" or as "the *gaijin*" who rescued Nissan. Already a living legend, who leads Nissan and drives a Porsche, he is even a manga hero and TV personality in Japan.

The present book, co-authored with French writer Phillippe Riès, presents the facts from Ghosn's own perspective. An impetuous business executive with a head for figures and a taste for languages, Ghosn depicts himself as an enlightened leader willing to take risks, proud of his origin and achievements but nonetheless disposed to descend from his fifteenth floor office into the factory to speak with the workers and take their problems and concerns seriously. Its largest section is dedicated to his brainchild, Nissan,

whose dramatic comeback has been the most talked-about achievement of his career. The book is written in short, declarative sentences, which mirror the style of its author: sharp, uncompromising and even boisterous at times.

Also known as “the ice-breaker” or “the cost cutter”, Ghosn is a man who has little in common with his Japanese business partners. A multilingual businessman born in Brazil to Lebanese parents, with degrees from the elite *École Polytechnique* and *École des Mines*, Ghosn has all the attributes and lineage of a 21st century managerial visionary. His Lebanese grandfather immigrated to Brazil with no money, and was an entrepreneurial genius who, several years after arriving in this remote and completely unknown land, whose language he did not speak, managed to own several companies while leading a completely respectable life. His grandson climbed up the corporate ladder faster than his years and aimed high. His impressive C. V. lists executive positions with subsidiaries of Michelin and Renault in France, Brazil and the US. After he led Michelin’s Brazilian subsidiary through the rough times of rampant inflation and achieved a merger with Uniroyal Goodrich as the CEO of Michelin North America, he realized that he would never be able to become the president of the family-run Michelin. In 1996, he resigned after eighteen years and became Renault’s Executive Vice President of Advanced Research and Development, Manufacturing and Purchasing. His unflinching determination to cut costs and improve profit margins earned him the moniker “Le Cost-Killer”. But the jewel in his crown was Nissan, which he landed almost against all odds. He explains his love affair with the automobile industry as a twofold combination of mathematics and aesthetics:

What’s fascinating about the automobile industry is that it doesn’t produce an ordinary product. An automobile is the object of both reason and emotion. You choose a car according to certain standards—having to do with quality, of course, and price, and availability—but also according to its image, its design, the sensation it produces. [...] It is a love affair that goes well beyond a simple means of conveyance.

His vision for Nissan was to restore the delicate balance between mathematics and art by producing successful cars which appealed equally to reason and emotion. In 1999, turned down by DaimlerChrysler and Ford, which it had assiduously courted, Nissan had to look elsewhere for a car manufacturer willing to enter an alliance which was equivalent to throwing billions of dollars into what seemed to be a bottomless pit. In stepped Renault, which compared to its rivals was neither extremely well sold in Japan, nor in particularly good shape. The alliance between Nissan and Renault was inked in 1999, with Renault paying \$5 billion to acquire 36.8% of Nissan’s capital stock, and Ghosn went to Japan as Chief Operating Officer, later to become president and CEO.

He and his team embarked upon the difficult task of “analyzing the patient”. At a closer inspection, despite its internationally acclaimed record as the manufacturer of four of the world’s top ten cars, Nissan appeared like a body without a head. The management strategy was unclear and there was no sense of goal or urgency. Moreover, the lack of genuine communication between departments and between management and the rest of the company was detrimental to marketability. Although it had excellent technology, productivity and quality management, out of its forty-three models only four turned profit, because of the faulty preconception that customers cared more about quality than about style and innovation. Moreover, dealers were not motivated to sell more cars because of a lack of appealing models. Ghosn and his team came up with the so-called Nissan Revival Plan and swore that in three years they would bring Nissan back in the black or resign in block. The plan consisted of three major commitments: return to profitability, a profit margin in excess of 4.5% of sales by fiscal year 2002 and a 50% reduction in the level of debt. The achievement of these goals required draconian measures, which came like an ice-cold shower upon the lukewarm harmony his Japanese partners had been used to. Severe measures such as dismantling the company’s *keiretsu* investments, and forcing the closure of five factories, which resulted in the reduction of 21,000 jobs (14% of Nissan’s workforce) were unheard of, and even taboo in the complex and highly interdependent Japanese business network. However, these drastic steps were no surprise for those involved, who for several years had been living with the Damocles’ sword of bankruptcy dangling

above their necks. In an attempt to introduce revitalizing measures from the inside, Ghosn organized the Nissan managers into cross-functional teams (CFT's), which offered recommendations for returning to profitability, insisting on the accountability and accuracy of every report they presented. Moreover, he introduced an incentive system by offering promotions, cash incentives and stock options to the better performing employees, a practice which greatly contradicted the Japanese bonus and promotion system based solely on seniority.

The result: Ghosn won his bet with Nissan one year ahead of schedule and set off to remodel the company into a new and profit-driven car maker to match his vision. Figures are relevant, but what catches the eye are such hit models as the sleek 30ZX and the homely March, which have brought Nissan back in the limelight as number two producer in 2004 in Japan.

In line with his strategy of setting precise goals to be accomplished within well-determined time spans, Ghosn continues to astonish his public and competitors alike with new and more grandiose plans for Nissan. One of them is the Nissan 180 Plan, which is to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2005. Its commitments are 1 million units sold in Japan, an 8% operating margin (11.1% in 2004) and total elimination of debt. From 2005 a new three-year plan called Nissan Value-Up will take off, aiming to reach annual global sales of 4.2 million units by the end of fiscal 2007, maintain the top-level operating profit margin in car manufacturing, and maintain return on invested capital at or above 20%.

These achievements are impressive considering the fierce conservatism and nationalism of Japanese businesses. On the other hand, as Ghosn himself points out, he was fortunate to arrive at a time when the Japanese economy was starting to flag, and, what is more, came to the helm of a company which was desperate enough not to mind a foreign chief operations officer. At the same time his position as outsider did allow him to get away with the extreme measures which no Japanese would have dared take, like factory closures, selling off *keiretsu* investments, and changing a communist corporate system based on seniority rather than performance.

Although the book looks more like a fact sheet complete with figures and statistics, which may be rather disappointing for those who seek to understand what made Ghosn succeed where Commodore Perry and General MacArthur have failed, the book is the fascinating success story of a foreigner who undermined Japanese corporate culture. He owes his success partly to his multi-national education, his instinct for communication and for accepting differences between cultures.

The alliance between Nissan and Renault turned out to be the only successful one of its kind in history. In an ironic twist, Nissan, which owns its success partly to Renault and its iron man, reciprocated by indirectly helping boost Renault profit. The outcome of this alliance stands proof of what people with completely different cultural backgrounds can achieve through commitment, mutual understanding and respect:

Management is an art, not a science; it is especially not an exact science. You have to have a feel for the company and for its customers. That's what you base your decisions on. Having a feel for the company is as important as understanding it. [...] Japan's reservoir of human resources is exceptional. Japan's an island, with no resources, threatened on all sides, subject to natural disasters, to earthquakes, typhoons, and so forth, which has nevertheless managed to become the world's second-greatest economic power. The only resource this country has [...] is the Japanese people. Nissan's successful rebirth is a life-size illustration of what this country is capable of. My team and I act as the catalyst. Without a catalyst, the chemical reaction can't take place.

Niculina Nae