

eign languages” than vice versa. Almost “inconceivable,” in Sontag’s view, is the possibility that a serious novel originally published in a non-English language could make it to the *New York Times* bestseller list, as Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* did in 1948.

This is literature’s loss. Citing 19th-century German philosopher, theologian, and translator Friedrich Schleiermacher, Sontag notes that there is “a value in connecting with something that is different from what we know, with foreignness itself.” Such an approach renders the translator’s task immensely more difficult than mere transference of meaning; unless the translation sticks closely to the original, the reader “will be deprived of the knowledge of otherness that comes from reading something that actually does sound foreign.”

“The prestige of the nation-state in the 19th century was fueled by the consciousness of having produced great ‘national’ writers,” says Sontag, and, taking a cue from Goethe’s pro-

gressive dream of *Weltliteratur* (world literature), she proposes that we should have seen “the natural development of literature from ‘provincial’ to ‘national’ to ‘international.’” What has occurred instead, she asserts, is that language has become an insurmountable barrier to the spread of ideas. While English and its immediate cousins occupy the coveted upper floors of literature, “other languages and their literary products are confined to lower floors, low ceilings, blocked views.”

But in Sontag’s view, “every language is part of Language, which is larger than any single language. Every individual literary work is a part of Literature, which is larger than the literature of any single language.” To her, literary translation ultimately “is preeminently an ethical task, and one which mirrors and duplicates the role of literature itself”: to “educate the heart and mind; to create inwardness; to secure and deepen the awareness (with all its consequences) that other people, people different from us, really do exist.”

OTHER NATIONS

Reforming Japan

“Koizumi’s Top-Down Leadership in the Anti-Terrorism Legislation: The Impact of Political Institutional Changes” by Tomohito Shinoda, in *SAIS Review* (Winter–Spring 2003), 1619 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

When Japan finally acted during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, its contribution of \$13 billion to help underwrite the war effort was widely derided as “too little, too late.” But 10 years later, in response to 9/11, Japan moved swiftly to back U.S. reprisals against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, rapidly enacted antiterrorism legislation, and, under it, dispatched—for the first time since World War II—part of its armed forces on a military mission overseas, providing rear support for a U.S. deployment in the Indian Ocean. The different responses, explains Shinoda, a professor at the International University of Japan, show how much progress has been made in removing factional and bureaucratic shackles and strengthening the office of prime minister.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which controlled the Diet from 1955 to 1993, was divided into large factions. Faction lead-

ers chose the party chief, who became prime minister, and they influenced his cabinet selections. And the cabinet was reshuffled almost every year, enhancing the power of the government bureaucracies. All this, notes Shinoda, made for a weak prime minister.

In 1994, however, a new government formed by eight opposition parties began altering Japan’s political foundations. Under the old system, each legislative district had three to five seats in the Diet’s lower house, which encouraged fierce factional fights among LDP candidates competing for the same bases of support. The 1994 reform introduced 300 single-seat districts and 200 other seats filled by proportional representation. That helped undermine the factions.

The government’s poor performance in a series of crises—the 1995 Great Hanshin (Kobe) earthquake, the 1996–97 hostage crisis in Peru, and a 1997 oil spill disaster in the

Sea of Japan—highlighted the need for stronger central authority. Further reforms strengthened the prime minister, streamlined the cabinet, and curbed bureaucrats' influence over Diet politicians.

The current prime minister, the LDP's Junichiro Koizumi, elected in a landslide in April 2001, was the first "to be selected outside of the traditional factional power struggles," says Shinoda. He had the support of younger party members in the Diet and local party members outside Tokyo, and he was able to pick his cabinet without

consulting faction leaders. When the terrorists struck America on 9/11, Koizumi's government was ready to act decisively. Though he failed to win legislation providing for a strong response to any future military attack, he won a hard-fought parliamentary vote last July to send a military force to Iraq. While Koizumi—who's likely to win reelection this fall—has been unable thus far to lead Japan out of its economic morass, Shinoda believes that the stage at least has been set for a revitalized politics and effective national leadership.

Asia's Economic Tortoise

"Can India Overtake China?" by Yasheng Huang and Tarun Khanna, in *Foreign Policy* (July–Aug. 2003), 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Though India, like China, has more than one billion inhabitants, it is no match for its fellow Asian giant in terms of gross domestic product (\$477 billion in 2001, compared with China's \$1.2 trillion) and other high-profile economic indicators. Even so, argue the authors, in the long run of economic development, India may have the last laugh.

"China's export-led manufacturing boom is largely a creation of foreign direct investment" (\$44.2 billion in 2001), with much of that money coming from the 55 million Chinese living abroad, note Huang and Khanna, professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management and Harvard Business School, respectively. But Beijing has imposed restrictions on indigenous private firms to keep them from challenging its state-owned enterprises. Though the Chinese

economy has taken off in recent decades, "few local firms have followed."

In India, by contrast, foreign direct investment has been paltry (only \$3.4 billion in



To overtake China, India needs more home-grown entrepreneurs like Infosys founder Narayana Murthy, here greeting Microsoft's Bill Gates.