

can imitate him and, therefore, extend his legacy without appearing to be merely copying or, worse, parodying.” It doesn’t help matters that his “most characteristic” poems are nearly impossible to read out loud; Cummings himself described his work as “inaudible.”

“He has become the inhabitant of the ghost houses of anthologies and claustrophobic seminar room discussions,” Collins observes ruefully. “His typographical experimentation might be seen to have come alive again in the kind of postmodern experi-

ments practiced by Dave Eggers and Jonathan Safran Foer, not to mention the coded text-messaging of American teenagers. But the eccentric use of the spatial page that accounted for Cummings’s notoriety must be seen in the end as the same reason for the apparent transience of his reputation. No list of major 20th-century poets can do without him, yet his poems spend nearly all of their time in the darkness of closed books, not in the light of the window or the reading lamp.”

## OTHER NATIONS

### *Japan’s Unfinished War*

“Victims or Victimizers? Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Contemporary Japan”  
by Roger B. Jeans, in *The Journal of Military History* (Jan. 2005), George C. Marshall  
Library, Lexington, Va. 24450–1600.

Are the Japanese determined to whitewash their nation’s militarist past and wartime atrocities? Protesters in China this spring were only the latest foreigners to say so. But the perception, widespread outside Japan, is at odds with the reality of a nation divided over its past, says Jeans, who teaches East Asian history at Washington and Lee University. “By the 1990s, it looked as though the long battle to include the truth of Japanese wartime aggression in Asia in textbooks had been won. In 1995, a survey of the 12 most popular textbooks in Japanese schools showed they agreed [that] Japan pursued a ‘war of aggression.’ . . . They also included the [1937] Nanjing Massacre, as well as Japan’s use of poison gas and slave labor.”

Then, in 1996, University of Tokyo professor Nobukatsu Fujioka and others who condemned this “masochistic” and “anti-Japanese” view of history founded the Society for the Creation

of New History Textbooks. A middle-school textbook produced by the society was one of several approved by Japan’s Ministry of Education in 2001 as suitable for use in schools. But when many Japanese groups, including one headed by novelist and Nobel laureate



When Japan’s Ministry of Education published history textbooks that appeared to deny responsibility for Japanese atrocities committed during World War II this past spring, Tokyo demonstrators (above) joined the protests that erupted throughout Asia.

Kenzaburo Oe, joined Chinese and Koreans in attacking the textbook for “watering down” Japan’s wartime past, 98 percent of Japan’s 542 school districts refused to adopt it.

The “culture war” over Japan’s past is also being fought in the country’s museums. On one side are the “war museums,” such as the Yasukuni Shrine War Museum in Tokyo, which glorifies the wartime sacrifice and Japan’s “Greater East Asian War” of “liberation.” Since the early 1990s, however, a more critical Japanese attitude toward World War II has begun to manifest itself in new “aggression” or “peace” museums, such as the Kyoto Museum for World Peace.

Operated privately or by local governments, these museums were built away from the nation’s capital, in Kyoto, Osaka, Kawasaki, Saitama, and Okinawa. “They present Japan as an aggressor in the war and describe its brutal treatment of other Asian peoples. In addition, the atomic bomb museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki added exhibits making it clear the bombings did not take place in a vacuum but were the result of Japan’s wartime aggression.”

Though the debate over the past is bound to continue for years, foreign commentators who claim that “Japan has amnesia” about its wartime past simply aren’t very cognizant about its present.

## *The Dutch Cure*

“A French View of the ‘Dutch Miracle’” by Dominique Schnapper, in *Society* (March–April 2005), Rutgers—The State University, 35 Berrue Cir., Piscataway, N.J. 08854.

Unlike many other countries in Europe, the Netherlands has faced head-on the challenge that slow economic growth and an aging population pose to the welfare state. That the Dutch have achieved significant reform is a “miracle,” says Schnapper, a professor of sociology at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, in Paris, especially when compared with her own country’s failure to do so.

By the early 1990s, the Netherlands had become almost a caricature of a welfare state, sustaining a rapidly growing population of idlers. The number of officially “disabled” persons (who receive a full slate of welfare benefits) had mushroomed from 164,000 in 1968 to 921,000, and many more people were unemployed. More than a quarter of the work force was jobless or officially unfit to work. Early retirement was also on the upswing.

The “Dutch illness” soon elicited a Dutch cure. Legislation enacted in 1993, for example, tightened qualifications for disabled status, discouraged early retirement, and promoted work. As a result, the size of the disabled cohort shrank to the current level of about 500,000, and before long the early-retirement trend was reversed.

Why were the Dutch so successful? One reason is that there were few draconian cuts.

Disability claims, for example, were reduced in part by requiring employers to bear some of the cost of benefits, thus giving them an incentive to rehabilitate their employees. And the Dutch were helped by their consensual traditions—close cooperation among members of a small national elite, a strong political culture of consensus building, and the trade unions’ role as “comanagers” of the economy and society.

Dutch unions got their members to accept wage caps, freezes on the minimum wage, and part-time work and flextime. These concessions in the private sector allowed the government to trim the salaries of unionized government workers in the name of equality—something that would be unthinkable in Schnapper’s homeland.

The Dutch welfare state combines features from the three basic types of welfare states—the *liberal* (Britain, the United States), *continental* (France, Germany, Belgium), and, in particular, *social democratic* (the Scandinavian countries). The continental welfare states, long in place, rigid, and sacrosanct, have been especially resistant to reform. In France, the ideological approaches growing out of a revolutionary tradition work against political cooperation, not only among the state, unions, and the