fascinating view of the battlefield, both of the infantry, with whom he worked closely and whom he much admired, and the gunners, whose 25-pounders were among the most effective weapons on the Allied side.

Blackburn's keen eyes kept him alive much longer than most, as his gift for detail makes this a great read. His use of the second person and the present tense takes some getting used to, but the style draws the reader into each of the short but powerful vignettes he describes in 75 chapters. One cannot help being moved by the remarkable acts of bravery he recalls. One story passed on to him as a routine example of soldierly courage was of an infantry officer who fainted after he learned of orders that he knew would end in his death. The man recovered immediately, however, and moved off to carry out the operation. Within minutes, he had died, as he knew he would, at the front of his column.

Quiet bravery forged close bonds between officers and men, and Blackburn's many generous descriptions of his drivers, sergeants and gun crews may say something about the Canadian armys junior leadership through these years. Of senior commanders like Guy Simonds, with whom the young officer had an occasional brush, Blackburn is less charitable. A lecture by Simonds after the Scheldt battles that was "larded with endless platitudes" impressed few.(155) Luckily, the divisional commanders agreed that the Canadian army only needed some recreation after weeks of hard fighting, and they opened the city of Antwerp in November as a much-needed haven. When Blackburn returned to the city several weeks later, the city was empty. The soldiers were gone, and the only visitors were the hated V-bombs.

Certainly readers of this journal know how the Dutch people regard the Canadians, and Blackburn provides plenty of detail to explain why. His account of the kindnesses shown to, and by, the Belgian and Dutch civilians with whom he billeted are an important part of this work. Well known are the stories of Canadians providing Christmas parties and extra rations to grateful civilians, but Blackburn tells them again here, and does it very well.

Blackburn also goes to great lengths to describe the mood of the time. Take, for example, his insistence that

> no collection of official documents now being filed away by the great political and military commanders for their memoirs, no scrapbook of newspaper and magazine clippings, nothing now being placed in print and on film that historians one day will claim for posterity to be the true story of the War, will ever capture the spirit and soul of these days in the way popular song lyrics are doing. (159)

This reviewer, who can recall his grandfather with tears in his eyes listening to Vera Lynn singing "Well Meet Again," can only say "Amen."

As memories of the Second World War begin to fade, it will fall more and more to historians and critics to select the proper "memory" of the war. Some may look to poets and the politicians to define the wars meaning. Others may condemn the memoirs of individual soldiers as to narrow, romantic, or self-serving. Nevertheless, George Blackburn's trilogy will form an important collection for anyone who wants to learn about what the Canadian soldiers did, and how they felt, during the Second World War.

GEOFFREY HAYES
University of Waterloo

Cornelia Fuykschot: *Hunger in Holland. Life During the Nazi Occupation.* New York: Prometheus Books, 1995. 165 pages.

Reading Fuykschot's wartime account made me realize that my knowledge of the impact of the Second World War on peoples daily life was fragmented. Soup kitchens, cycling on bikes without tires, eating tulip bulbs, secrecy, yes I have heard about all these aspects that went with the second world war. Reading *Hunger in Holland* put these fragments into perspective. Imagine that you are twelve years old; you get out of bed and find your parents downstairs in the hallway discussing the consequences of the landing of invading parachutists. What to do? Can we send the kids to school? Maybe better not. Can they play outside? Yes, but strictly in front of the house.

And so Fuykschot, through the eyes of a twelve year old, leads us step by step into the utterly disturbing impact war had on the daily life of a young girl. In the beginning you still could cycle to school, but then the bike repairman closed his shop because of lack of tires. So your shoes start to wear down faster but then the shoe repairman closes his shop. You start to repair your own shoes and those of your family, followed by giving in to wearing wooden shoes. Then the school closes down, but you still have to do a lot of walking in order to get food and wood and in the end you find yourself begging at farmhouses.

Life at home followed a similar path. First one had to cover the windows in order not to let light shine out of the window. A pain in the neck. Later that was not necessary any more, because the enemy had shut the electricity off. Hygienic standards dropped severely because of lack of soap, and later even more because the water supply had been shut off. In the end one found oneself burning up parts of the house and pieces of furniture in order to stay warm. Homes turned into dirty camping places, dinner consisted of a bowl of peas. People you knew, a few of your own high school friends included, died of unnecessary diseases and accidents.

Fuykschot also reflects on the impact of war on pre- and postwar relations. During the war her mother made phone calls to Roman Catholics and Socialists, people she would otherwise not have contacted. Her father was taken away and locked up for several months in a Seminary in the south of The Netherlands, in St. Michelsgestel.[1] He finds himself peeling potatoes and mopping floors with other important, though Roman Catholic or Socialist people:

> Old chasms and schisms were bridged and new alliances forged. That Holland after the war was able to set up a government in no time at all and get on with the restoration of the country was in large measure due to the comradeship of the camp. Sometimes an enemy can be useful. (p.66).

On the same subject Ganzevoort in *A Bittersweet Land* notes:[2]

> Others resented the return of a full-blown bureaucracy, which once again, as in the pre-war years, re-established its position with myriad forms and bales of papers. Some likened it to a second occupation, only this time the enemy was their own countrymen [...] then (during the war) there had been a unity and cohesiveness in Dutch society [...] now they were divided again. (p. 62)

Both authors seem to agree on the usefulness of a common enemy, but not on the final outcome. Another example of Fuykschot not adjusting to the ideas she had directly after the war is her comment on the future of the war brides. Some of the Canadians who went home took a Dutch girl with them

> to live in unheard places like Kapuskasing and

> Medicine Hat. It was hard to see them go so far away and to have to leave all their friends behind. But we all knew that they were headed for a marvelous life full of cars and automatic washing machines, refrigerators, central heating and air-conditioning [...] A life we knew all about by the films we had seen.

Ganzevoort says about this same marvelous life of first generation female immigrants:

> The wife generally found the adjustment to the new life extremely difficult [...] isolated with the younger children at school and the other family members working in the field, there was plenty of time for thinking and for the pangs of fear and loneliness (p. 81).

Fuykschot intends to help the postwar generation of high school students to gain understanding of war, as she, a teacher in a Canadian high school, found out that her students had no idea why their (grand)fathers had fought in a far-off land and that war-related ceremonies were meaningless for them. *Hunger in Holland*, in the form of many dialogues with parents and friends, makes it clear that the Canadian liberators relieved the country from an unbearable situation.

In passing, Fuykschot also provides a glimpse of Dutch middle-class life and its worries about appearances. That part will perhaps make it difficult for some to identify with Fuykschot's story. In the end the familys soft carpets are pulled out of the cellar, the silver is dug up from the backyard, the windows washed and life goes on, though for many not in Holland.

Postwar life has not been that soft and silvery for many of the grandfather/liberators. They came home, there was nothing for them to pull out or to dig up, and as Fuykschot observes, "fathers do not want [to burden] their offspring with awful war stories." Why didn't they? What kind of understanding did they meet, one wonders.

The Museum of the Regiments in Calgary has the same mission as Fuykschot set for herself. This Museum wants to make high school students understand why their grandfathers went to a foreign country to liberate it from invaders. Therefore the Museum intends to send a few children every year to The Netherlands to see and to learn for themselves.

For me the question why is still not answered, neither by last years trip of six high school students, nor by *Hunger in Holland*. Why not ask these grandfathers/veterans themselves? Still it may be worthwhile to make Fuykschot's book part of the Canadian high school curriculum. Her observations are a valuable contribution towards understanding what a war is all about: for postwar high-schoolers as well for other postwar generations.

NOTES

[1] On May 4, 1942, 449 Dutch men were taken hostage and taken to Seminary Beekvliet in St. Michelsgestel. Among them were the Dutch author Simon Vestdijk, whose sojourn there is described in Hans Vissers *Simon Vestdijk*, Kwadraat, Utrecht, 1987, chapter 18.

The political background of this hostage taking is described in Dr. L. de Jongs *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 5, maart 41-juli 42, tweede helft.* The Hague, Staatsuitgeverij, 1974, p.928-933.

[2] Herman Ganzevoort. *A Bittersweet Land. The Dutch Experience in Canada 1890-1980.* McClelland and Stewart, 1988.

MARY EGGERMONT-MOLENAAR
Calgary