

ARTICLE

The First World War: A Turning Point in the History of Death?

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SUMMARY

While historians of Western attitudes toward death note that the First World War marked a transition from conventions that made death highly visible in the nineteenth century to conventions that rendered it increasingly invisible in the twentieth, they have said little about the responsibility of the war for effecting this change. Evidence provided by French soldiers, surgeons, and nurses on the Western Front shows that, although great efforts were made to observe the established social conventions surrounding death, the nature and extent of the killing were such that those conventions increasingly came to be perceived as either impractical or inappropriate. The Great War was therefore a turning point in the history of death.

KEYWORDS: Death, mourning, grief, war, mentalities, doctors, nurses

The extent to which the First World War represented a significant turning point in history remains a controversial question for historians. To contemporaries, the war was a cataclysm of unimaginable proportions: “the first calamity of our century . . . from which all other calamities sprang” (Stern 199; Fromkin 6). Those who fought in the war and returned from it, as well as the “lost generation” of postwar writers and poets, helped to create what Samuel Hynes has referred to as the “myth” of the Great War, the idea that it represented a sharp break not only in their own lives but also in the history of the world. “Men and women after the war,” wrote Hynes, “looked back at their own pasts as one might look across a great chasm to a remote, peaceable place on the other side” (ix). While historians’ views vary, they have tended to become increasingly skeptical of the myth, particularly with respect to the war’s presumed impact on culture and society. “Révolution dans les rapports sociaux, révolution dans les mœurs, révolution dans les cœurs et les esprits,” wrote André Ducasse et al. in 1959, “telles sont encore, pour la France, les conséquences de la guerre” (467). Nearly thirty years later, Jean-Jacques and Annette Becker were more cautious. Despite titling their book *La France en guerre (1914–1918)* “la grande mutation,” they affirmed that “dire que la guerre a bouleversé les structures sociales de la France serait exagéré” (180). Studies of the war’s impact on the lives of women, in France and elsewhere, have shown that despite women’s wartime mobilization as industrial workers, the overall effect of the war was to reinforce traditional gender identities (McMillan, “World War I and Women in France”; McMillan, “The Great War and Gender Relations”). Jay Winter has argued that, in cultural terms, the war was counter-revolutionary rather than revolutionary (Winter, *Legacy* 170; Winter, *Sites of Memory*). This was certainly the case with respect to French family policy after the war, as pro-natalist policies as well as legislation against abortion and contraception reaffirmed traditional roles for women as wives and mothers (Wall and Winter 4; Roberts).

The purpose of this paper is to consider the significance of the First World War, with specific attention to France, as a turning point in the history of death. This is a particularly difficult problem, since the history of death—or at least of attitudes toward death—would seem to belong to the history of mentalities and to the *longue durée*, rather than to that of events, like the First World War. As Philippe Ariès pointed out, mentalities generally change only slowly, largely unaffected by particular events. Nevertheless, Ariès also admitted the possibility of a revolutionary change in mentalities. He noted, for example, that the First World War was “a great revolution in mores” (Ariès, *Western Attitudes* 76). He also argued that in his own time, “in approximately a third of a century, we have witnessed a brutal revolution in traditional ideas and feelings” toward death (*Western Attitudes* 85). In the course of this revolution, he said, “Except for the death of statesmen, society has banished death” (Ariès, *Hour* 560). Prior to the First World War, he wrote, the signs of a death within a community were unmistakable: windows and shutters were closed, bells tolled, processions filled the streets, widows donned the black veils and dress of mourning, visitations occurred. Since then, those signs of death have vanished: “Society no longer observes a pause. . . . Everything in town goes on as if nobody died anymore” (*Hour* 559–60). In Ariès’s history of Western attitudes toward death, this revolution appears particularly brutal, since he shows that the rituals of mourning had been invested with an unprecedented emotional intensity in the nineteenth century and that it was precisely during the hundred years leading up to the Great War that the cult of the dead, which focused on visits to cemeteries and monuments, had flourished (*Western Attitudes* 66–68).

Although he located this change in attitudes toward death in relation to the First World War, Ariès said very little about the war’s responsibility for bringing it about. He did acknowledge that the proliferation of images of “The Dirty Death” in war literature and the “impossibility of applying the conventions of the beautiful, patriotic death to the hecatombs of the twentieth century” (*Hour* 569–70) encouraged the tendency to cast death into the shadows. He placed much greater emphasis, however, on cultural changes that occurred initially in the United States and from there passed first to England and then to continental Europe. These changes involved removing the dying person to a hospital, refusing him or her both knowledge of and agency over his or her own death, and denying survivors the right to mourn, in the interest of social happiness (*Western Attitudes* 85–94). To Ariès, attitudes toward death were determined far more by the extent of a society’s economic, social, technological, and urban development than by particular events.¹ All the same, he cited with approval the work of the English sociologist, Geoffrey Gorer, who, in an autobiographical introduction to his study of *Death, Grief and Mourning* in modern Britain, was more precise in attributing the change in mourning practices to the First World War. Gorer, whose father died on the *Lusitania* in 1915, recalled his mother’s meticulous observation of the customs concerning mourning dress: “It would have been unthinkable at that date for a respectable woman to do otherwise” (xx). It was only in 1917 and 1918, he wrote, that the “full panoply of mourning became exceptional, rather than general” (xxi). The reasons for the change he put down to the scale of the loss caused by the war and the impracticality of so many widows behaving as if their sexual and emotional lives had ended. He also cited the need to preserve soldiers’ morale against the potentially depressing sight of so many women in black.

More recent studies, looking specifically at the experiences of death and mourning in the First World War, reveal a more complicated picture than that suggested by either Ariès or Gorer. David Cannadine, rather more skeptical than Ariès of the efficacy of ostentatious rituals

surrounding death to assuage grief, argued that such practices were already beginning to decline in Britain before the war: “The revolution against ostentatious but ineffectual rituals of dying and grieving was already well under way” (Cannadine 193). The effect of the war was simply to accelerate that revolution, as it exposed those rituals as “inadequate, superfluous and irrelevant. What point was there in donning widow’s weeds when the husband lay mutilated, unidentified and unburied on the fields of Flanders? What comfort could crepe or black-edged notepaper bring in the face of bereavement at once so harrowing, so unnatural and so widespread?” (Cannadine 218). Confronted by the inadequacy of traditional observances and of conventional religion to mediate grief, people sought solace in alternatives, most notably through the construction of war memorials and the celebration of Armistice Day, as well as through the practices of spiritualism. Jay Winter, taking into consideration France, Germany, and Britain, has shown how widespread the revival of spiritualism was as a result of the war and how universal the urge to create memorials as a way to express individual and communal grief (*Sites of Memory*, 54–116).

Winter insisted upon the power of traditional beliefs and forms of expression to mediate bereavement at the same time as he acknowledged the ability of particular monuments to transcend those traditions. Certainly, the universal recognition that every soldier who died in the war should have an individual grave, or, if he was one of the many thousands identified only as “missing,” that his name should be engraved upon a stone memorial, was an unprecedented and significant development (Capdevila and Voldman 46–48). This is a point emphasized recently by Thomas Laqueur, who, like Winter, insisted that the urge to memorialize came from below, from the public rather than from governments. Indeed, Laqueur argued that the imperative in the aftermath of the Great War to name the dead reflected the emergence of a new emotional economy in which the stories of ordinary lives, endings included, had come to matter:

The state wandered, as if sleepwalking, into the new regime; great swaths of the elite opposed it; specific plans emerged from a chaos of possibilities. The emotional power of what emerged surprised almost everyone. Of course naming the dead of war and burying them together had political consequences, but this explains little about its causes. The terms might better be reversed: the nation, and local communities as well, discovered themselves in the memorial response to the Great War. (Laqueur 484)

For Laqueur, the commemorative impulse of the Great War marked the beginning of the age of necronominalism. The naming of the dead was at the heart of the commemorative culture that developed out of the war. Given the absence of so many physical bodies from the sites of mourning, commemoration focused on symbolic objects, such as the empty tomb of the Cenotaph in Whitehall or the nameless bodies of the Unknown Soldiers laid to rest in Westminster Abbey and beneath the Arc de Triomphe in November 1920. These represented the vanished bodies of all the missing. André Maginot stated with reference to the choice of France’s Unknown Soldier: “Our main concern is to assure the most complete anonymity, so that families who suffered the misfortune of losing one of their own in the war, eternally unidentified, can always imagine that their dearly beloved is the very object of this supreme tribute” (Le Naour, *Living* 73). The development of commemorative practices in the absence of physical graves and bodies helped to encourage a shift in funerary practices, giving a boost to the cause of cremation, although even in Britain the percentage of bodies disposed of in this way did not reach ten percent until after 1945 (Kazmier 567).

These novel commemorative practices were not necessarily efficacious in helping the bereaved to mourn their loss. The absence of a physical body as incontrovertible evidence of death could result in a state of denial and an inability to grieve that became pathological. Jean-Yves Le Naour, in his study of the tragic story of the amnesiac “Living Unknown Soldier” known as Anthelme Mangin, shows that many relatives of the missing would grasp at almost any straw in the hope that their loved one had somehow survived. Mangin became the unfortunate subject of competing claims from various bereaved families and individuals that had still not been finally settled by the courts at the time of his death in an asylum in 1942 (Le Naour, *Living* 107–47). For many, the task of grieving and of coming to terms with their loss was dependent upon having a body over which to mourn, as well as observing the traditional rites of burial. This explains why people did not abandon the old rituals surrounding death without a fight. Indeed, historians Thierry Hardier and François Jagielski affirmed that attitudes toward death remained fundamentally unchanged in spite of the war:

Le retour, tant sur les champs de bataille qu’à l’arrière, d’une mort au quotidien touchant directement ou indirectement l’ensemble des populations en guerre n’enraya pas les processus mentaux de respect de l’individualité des morts, de deuil individuel ou collectif, de culte des morts, de douleur vive mais résignée qui avaient pris naissance au cours des décennies qui précédèrent le conflit. (347)

Indeed, there is plenty of evidence of sometimes heroic and often touching efforts by individuals to observe the conventions relating to death and dying in circumstances that rendered this nigh impossible.

One of those conventions was that death, in the words of Ariès, “was a ritual organized by the dying person himself, who presided over it and knew its protocol” (*Western Attitudes* 11). It was also a public ritual, in which the presence of the family was essential. Insofar as the dying person had abdicated a degree of his or her agency in the nineteenth century, it was by trusting in his or her family to observe his or her most personal and pious wishes. None of these conditions pertained to the experience of death in the First World War. The soldier’s lack of agency in determining his own fate is perhaps the most commented-on aspect of the frontline experience of the First World War. The absence of family goes without saying. But comrades, nurses, chaplains, and doctors did their best to compensate for that absence. Lucia Tichadou was a nurse during the Battle of the Marne. As the hospital in which she worked, inundated with wounded, became a charnel house, she protested against the complaints of a doctor that she was working too slowly. Tichadou insisted that she would assist her patients to the limits of her time and strength, and “que je remplacerais dans la mesure du possible la famille absente” of those who were dying (81). Claudine Bourcier, caring for the wounded in a hospital in the Casino at Biarritz, recounted her determination to assist at the deathbed of an adjutant dying of a gangrenous chest wound, in spite of the opposition of her superiors. On this occasion the soldier himself flouted convention by preferring the presence of the nurse over that of his mother in his last moments, for fear that his mother would not allow him to die in peace: “Elle se jettera sur mon corps et elle m’affligera en m’empêchant de m’écarter de la terre” (Bourcier 34). French chaplains enjoyed immense respect because of their willingness to risk their lives in order to give absolution to dying soldiers at the front. That they also saw themselves—and were seen by those they served—as replacements for absent families is apparent from the memoir of Chanoine Payen:

Ce que représente l'aumônier pour les soldats blessés, c'est le clocher, la famille. L'un d'eux me disait: "Je vois en vous mon père, ma mère, mes frères, mes soeurs." Puis ses yeux se fixèrent sur moi, un sourire passa sur ses lèvres tremblantes, il ajouta: "Pour eux tous, je vous en prie, monsieur l'aumônier, embrassez-moi!" (162)

Often, it was his comrades who gave a dying man a final kiss on behalf of his family. Paul Tuffrau was moved to tears by the gesture of one of his men who, presenting him with a daisy, asked him to send it to his wife. The soldier said that he had sworn "un grand serment" on the flower that should Tuffrau fall in battle, he would endeavor to kiss him on behalf of his wife: "Et, ça, vous savez, rien ni personne ne m'empêchera de le faire, pas même si on me flanque un coup de revolver" (Tuffrau 60–61). Later, Tuffrau recounted how he himself was called upon to perform the same ritual for one of his men. Visiting the dying man in the hospital, Tuffrau promised to write to his family and gave him a farewell kiss. Later, he purchased a wreath, ordered a cross from a funerary shop, and attended the soldier's funeral. At the cemetery, before the body was placed in the coffin, Tuffrau recalled, "Je l'embrasse sur le front, de la part des siens" (65–67).

Tuffrau's concern that his comrade's body be respectfully buried in an individual grave and appropriately marked reflected a prevailing attitude among soldiers. Marcel Papillon took great pains to ensure that the grave of Raymond Simon, a soldier from his hometown, was provided with a wreath, holding back just enough money to hire a photographer so that he could send home photographs of the appropriately adorned grave (Bosshard and Bosshard 229–40, 251). Later, with the help of his sister, Marthe, he would fulfill the same task for his own brother, Joseph, who died in a gas attack shortly after arriving at the front in 1916. "Il paraîtra moins abandonné," wrote Marthe (272). Gabriel Balique helped to do even more for the remains of his brother, Francis, which were exhumed and reburied in a location where they could be visited by his parents. He wrote: "Ils paraissent satisfaits du garde du cimetière et de sa femme qui soignent très bien la tombe de Francis" (183–86). Germain Cuzacq, a peasant soldier from Gascony, in counseling his wife, Anna, on how to cope with the death of his sister Eugénie's husband, must have been painfully aware as he wrote to her from Verdun in August 1916 that he was providing a script for her to follow in the event of his own death. Referring to his mother and sister, he wrote:

Il ne faut pas qu'elles se laissent aller au désespoir. Je m'attendais bien à quelque nouvelle de ce genre. Partage avec elles leur douleur. Malgré tout, il faut qu'elles réagissent se disant qu'elles ne sont pas les seules familles en deuil et qu'il y en aura bien d'autres avant que des combats acharnés de cette sorte soient terminés. Tu me diras si Eugénie a fait écrire au Commandant de la compagnie dont faisait partie Augustin pour lui demander des explications au sujet de son décès ou disparition, s'il a été identifié, transporté et enterré par les soins du Service de Santé. Autant que possible, on improvise des cimetières tout près des premières lignes, on fait des croix neuves et plus tard on fera quelque monument. D'habitude, les commandants de compagnie accueillent très favorablement ces demandes et mentionnent aussi le nom de l'endroit où ils ont été inhumés. Elle aura sûrement vite la réponse. (Cuzacq 122–23)

As gently and as matter-of-factly as he instructed Anna in slaughtering pigs, raising their infant daughter, or coping with drunken relatives, Germain gave his wife practical advice on what to do if he were killed as well as a summary of his own post-mortem expectations. It was not long before

Anna would be called upon to follow that advice. Germain Cuzacq was killed at Verdun on 3 September 1916 (142).

The preoccupation with providing appropriate burial places for the dead, marking them with wreaths and crosses, and making them a site of pilgrimage was certainly a continuation of the nineteenth-century cult of the dead. The extraordinary efforts of families to recover the remains of their loved ones and to build shrines to their memory, such as those undertaken by Jane Catulle-Mendès on behalf of her son, or by the parents of Maurice Gallé, which have been described by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, bear witness to the determination of families to pay the necessary tribute to the dead, whatever the obstacles. It took Catulle-Mendès six months and three separate trips to the front, plus considerable trading on her status as the wife of a famous poet, to arrange the exhumation of her son's body (Audoin-Rouzeau 203–51). Other families would have to wait until at least the beginning of 1921. Nevertheless, the fact that, in the face of a government commission that resisted the idea, between 250,000 and 300,000 bodies—25–30% of the total—were eventually exhumed and returned to their families bears ample witness to the strength and persistence of the belief that the dead should be brought home for burial (Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 246; Pau 287).

None of these efforts to preserve death's dignity could prevail in the face of the vast scale of the slaughter. Alice King's analysis of nurses' narratives demonstrates that it was impossible for the nurses to provide the individualized attention conventionally required by a dying patient while also attending to the needs of other patients as well as a myriad of other duties. Against their will, writes King, "the moment of death has moved from being the sacred movement into another realm, which the nineteenth-century narrative depicted in extended, sentimentalized sequences, to being one so commonplace that it does not even qualify interrupting others from their work" (in Kelly 338). Georges Duhamel said something very similar. Death, he said, was like the monarch who allowed himself to be seen at his toilet: "Toujours puissante, mais familière et un peu avilie" (173–74). Duhamel's correspondence with his wife, Blanche, indicates the efforts of the ambulance to which he was attached to pay the necessary respects to the dead. On 7 December 1914, Duhamel described in detail the funeral held the previous day for two twenty-year-olds who had died within an hour of one another:

Le petit curé du pays marche devant, avec un gosse en sabots qui fait l'enfant de chœur et porte la croix. Nous prenons, comme officiers, *rang de famille*, derrière le corps; nos hommes viennent presque toujours quand ils sont libres, plus quelques femmes et le maire du pays. . . . Je manque le moins souvent possible ces cérémonies indispensables. (Duhamel and Duhamel I: 119–20)

Such references occurred frequently in Duhamel's correspondence during the first year of the war, but they disappeared completely after September 1915. We cannot know why. It is possible that he continued to attend funerals but simply ceased to report them to Blanche. Nevertheless, it does not seem coincidental that at about the same time changes also occurred in the functioning of the ambulance that deprived Duhamel of the long-term care of his patients that he had previously enjoyed. At Verdun in 1916, he felt himself to be on a surgical production line:

Je n'ai jamais vu pareil enfer. Ce n'est plus la belle chirurgie reposée du château de S[apicourt]. C'est une espèce de chirurgie hâtive du champ de bataille. Nous les opérons, nous les gardons quelques heures ou quelques jours, et nous les expédions. (806–10)

Duhamel resorted to industrial metaphors to describe his work, referring to himself as “un bon ouvrier en chair humaine” (Duhamel and Duhamel II: 414). On one occasion, responding to an inquiry from Blanche about the fate of a soldier whom he had transfused, he wrote: “Hélas, il n'a survécu que deux jours. Il est mort pendant l'offensif et cela nous a moins impressionnés parce que nous avons beaucoup de soucis et qu'à ce moment-là, il en mourait beaucoup d'autres” (668). Death and ceremonies to honor the dead had become too commonplace to mention, even for a surgeon as humane as Georges Duhamel.

Blanche Duhamel's letters to her husband also provide insight into the ways mass death eroded traditional practices of mourning. On 16 July 1916, Blanche gave Georges the news that the husband of her childhood friend and fellow actress, Sylvette Filacier, had been killed in action. Her letter described at length the emotional trauma of Sylvette as she vacillated between hope and despair as successive letters arrived providing more or less accurate information about her husband's fate. Blanche spent the night with Sylvette, who, in her words, “a souffert mortellement” from her grief: “C'était si triste de voir son beau petit corps se tordre. C'était la troisième fois qu'elle recevait le coup et ça a été plus dur chaque fois, disait-elle” (Duhamel and Duhamel I : 1098–99). Yet, less than a year later, on 2 April 1917, Blanche wrote to Georges to say that Sylvette was “toute nouvelle, toute différente, toute rafraîchie,” having cast off “cette figure désolée et même ses habits de deuil.” She had no alternative, said Blanche, since theatre directors were not keen to hire actresses who were not pretty and smiling. “Elle doit vivre,” concluded Blanche (Duhamel and Duhamel II: 247).

Not everybody was as charitable as Blanche Duhamel toward war widows. As Peggy Bette has demonstrated, social expectations of widows were intensified because of the war. Widows were presumed to owe a duty of fidelity to their dead husbands that was commensurate with the heroic status accorded to the latter by virtue of their sacrifice (102–7). An article by Maurice Barrès published in *L'Echo de Paris* in June 1915 insisted that the sole duty of women whose husbands had been killed was toward their children, whom they would serve primarily by keeping the memory of their fathers alive. Barrès imagined the thoughts of these war widows: “Il ne faut plus penser au bonheur pour nous, c'est fini, cela n'existera plus; il faut penser aux petits, leurs petits” (1). There was, however, considerable social anxiety that war widows might not live up to such ideals of piety and self-sacrifice. This anxiety manifested itself in wartime culture in the form of plays and stories that reprised Balzac's 1832 novel, *Colonel Chabert*, which told the story of a Napoleonic soldier who went missing, was presumed dead, and eventually returned home only to find his wife had remarried. These stories were a reflection of social preoccupation with the particular situation of wives of the missing, caught in legal limbo because of uncertainty about their husbands' fates, but also of a more generalized guilt on the part of those who had survived the war (Le Naour, *Living* 80–106). This guilt, projected in particular onto war wives, reflected a concern expressed by soldiers themselves. Poterloo, in Henri Barbusse's novel *Le Feu*, having secretly spied on his home village behind enemy lines, expresses his fury at the sight of his wife and a comrade's widow, the latter still in the black of mourning, consorting with German NCOs: “Tell me, wasn't that as good a reason as any to jump into that room, give her [his wife, Clotilde]

a good hiding and ring the neck of that other bird in her black dress!” (106). Bette noted that in the eyes of Poterloo, his wife’s infidelity was much less significant than that of the widow, which he affirmed merited a death sentence (106). Criticism of “widows in a hurry,” who remarried with what was perceived to be indecent haste, was a manifestation of society’s collective guilt at the prospect of moving on and forgetting about the war and its victims (Le Naour, *Living* 86). In the face of society’s strictures, it is little wonder that a majority of widows who remarried waited until the war was over to do so (Bette 104).

While the commemorative culture that developed around the war memorials and the cults of the Unknown Soldier can be seen as a potent and imaginative reworking of the traditional cult of the dead that helped to mediate a nearly universal grief, the war otherwise undermined the traditional rituals surrounding death and dying. The traditional rituals proved to be both impractical to observe, as Gorer suggested, and inadequate to the task, as Cannadine argued. Despite the sanitization of the soldiers’ death in the representations of the commemorative culture, soldiers’ writings and wartime photography had exposed the indignity and horror of its reality (Beurier). Furthermore, the unnaturalness of that death was underlined by the fact that the brunt of the sacrifice was borne by the young, above all by those reaching the age of twenty in 1914, and that this hecatomb had come on the heels of a period when improvements in hygiene had resulted in a massive and unprecedented decline in child mortality (Dupaquier 297).² Unacceptable by virtue of its scale, its horror, its denial of agency to the sufferer and his family, and its unnaturalness, death in the Great War could not be contained by the established conventions. Indeed, the full panoply of nineteenth-century mourning acquired a certain indecency as bereavement became the common lot. Soldiers encouraged their relatives to accept the news of their deaths with calm stoicism—that is, without ostentation (Bette 101, 113–14). Widows continued to wear black, but their wartime occupations discouraged them from secluding themselves; their mourning dress acquired a new simplicity, practicality, and even elegance (Le Naour, *Misères* 81; Taylor 227–30). Soldiers themselves, who tried so hard to uphold the established conventions, also commented on the inadequacy of the conventions: “Ce n’est pas la peine de m’envoyer du papier bordé de noir,” wrote Germain Cuzacq to his wife, before moving on to more useful things, such as whether she had sold the cattle for a good price (Cuzacq 123). Paul Tuffrau, observing two women visiting a soldier’s grave, described the scene as “horriblement douloureux” and the grave as “petite et mesquine, et, hélas! vulgaire?” (Tuffrau 93). It would have been better, he suggested, had the widow not visited at all. The Great War was a turning point in the history of death, marking in some ways a culmination of the traditional rites of death and in others the beginning of their decline.

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Notes

¹ In this respect, the views of Ariès were not unlike those of his great rival as an authority on the history of death, Michel Vovelle. Vovelle emphasized the importance of urbanization, commercialization, and medicalization, as well as the effects of an aging population and changing family structures as factors that helped to generate the twentieth-century taboo concerning death. The nature and chronology of this change, according to Vovelle, varied considerably. Concerning France, Vovelle emphasized the decline after 1930 of the “grands monuments familiaux” that had proliferated in nineteenth-century cemeteries. Death ceased to be a family affair in the twentieth century, as the classic death-bed scene of the dying person surrounded by family disappeared from both life and literature; the last literary examples he cites of such scenes date from before 1914. Vovelle’s judgement of the significance of the Great War in relation to the history of death was nuanced. In the proliferation of monuments to the dead, which reached its peak in 1920–21, he saw the culmination of the nineteenth-century model of civic commemoration. At the same time, the war gave rise to literary and artistic works—most notably those associated with Expressionism and Surrealism—that provided a new language capable of conveying realities and understandings of death appropriate to the new century (Vovelle 687–709, 727–31). On the differences between Ariès and Vovelle, see the work of Patrick H. Hutton (Hutton).

² Between 1881 and 1911, mortality for infants aged one to five years declined by a massive 54%.