

**Peggy Bette, “French Widows of the First World War: Status, Itineraries and Fights”, Ph. D. thesis of contemporary history directed by Sylvie Schweitzer, University of Lyon 2, 2012, 700 p.**

This thesis recounts the history of the widows of French soldiers during the First World War, following these women individually and collectively from the beginning of their widowhood up until their death. It is based on manuscript sources (pension files, personnel files, fiscal and legal files...), printed sources (laws and decrees, press related to organizations, legal theses) and oral sources (interviews of their descendants). The themes presented within this thesis place it at the junction of three historiographical fields: the field of societies at war and after the war, the field of women and gender, as well as the field of the history of the State and social welfare. The structural debate of the thesis is organized around three chrono-thematic parts.

The first part, which corresponds to the war period and to the period immediately following the war, presents the first reactions of the widows facing the loss of their spouse addressing the issue of their mourning, their professional opportunities, as well as public and private aid to which they were entitled.

The second part dwells on the legal status of the war widows concerning their pension, guardianship and employment policy, three areas that directly affect these women and that were the object of profound reforms following the war.

The third part deals with the affirmation of the widows' identities, illustrating the various organizations they led and recounting the many legal fights they led between the wars.

The thesis ends with the issue of their social and legal invisibility as a consequence of the damaged political and social context in France during the 1930s and 1940s, and their aging.