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THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

The present text is the result of the group study and analysis of eight documents about the rite of the Unknown Soldier in Great Britain. First of all, you have to understand who was the Unknown Warrior: he is a metonymy of all fallen soldiers of World War I, whatever their origin or role. The idea of a commemoration whose function was preserving the memory of the fighters came from David Railton, a British chaplain who was impressed by a make-shift grave on which was written “An Unknown British Soldier”. This is why in 1920 he wrote to the Dean of Westminster to suggest a commemoration of this sight. The body was chosen by the general l. J. Wyatt, the commander of the British troops in France, from the bodies of four (or six) unknown British servicemen who lost their life fighting in the Western Front. The body of the Unknown Soldier was brought to the St Pol’s chapel, in northern France; later, it was escorted under a French honour guard to Boulogne, to finally arrive in Great Britain at London’s Victoria railway station. The celebration took place on the 11th November 1920. The cortege started at the station and eight bearers who belonged to the Grenadier Guards entered the carriage and draped the casket with the union flag. After that the Unknown Soldier started his last trip through the streets of London, pulled by six black horses; the cortege stopped at the Cenotaph where King George placed a wreath on the coffin. Finally, the gun-carriage moved toward Westminster Abbey, where the Unknown Soldier was buried. The burial included two minutes of silence, the first one to commemorate those who fought and returned home, the second one to remember who did not. As regards the language used in the documents, it is informal and simply, in order to make the reader better understand the meaning and the content of each text. The prevalence of parataxis makes the reading of the documents as easy as possible. They are all descriptive informative texts, organized into paragraphs. This is the reason why they rarely present rhetorical figures of speech, but de most used are metaphors, alliterations and similitudes. The ideal reader is everyone, from the child to the adults, because the texts are very accessible. All the texts convey the reader the same message: the idea of celebration of a single person as metonymy for all the soldiers who died for the birth place. In addition, the documents underline the value of patriotism, in the name of which thousands people lost their life.