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# Cosmopolitan Borderlines: Edith Wharton's Representation of Europe in *A Son at the Front* (1923)

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## Abstract

Sensibar and Mary Condé, this paper seeks to explore gender, cosmopolitanism and the representation of the Other in Edith Wharton's *A Son at the Front*. Set in Paris during the First World War, Wharton's novel recreates the cosmopolitan atmosphere behind the trenches offering an array of multinational characters (American, French and Spanish) trapped by the vicissitudes of the conflict. In this paper I would like to highlight the ideological importance of the novel because it represents an original and complex woman's approach to the value of art in wartime and the importance of cultural values. Built upon Edith Wharton's firsthand knowledge of the conflict, I would like to stress the point that the novel challenges the ideological core of isolationism and the values of the American society emerging after the First World War. I would specially stress that, against a national mood marked by an atmosphere of delusion and indifference towards Europe, especially after the failure of President Wilson's politics, *A Son at the Front* embodies the values of cosmopolitanism and the fundamental importance of international cooperation to build a civilized world. More to the point, I would like to show that Wharton's approach to the front fundamental for understanding American culture during War by offering a new perspective on the conflict. In this respect, I would like to argue the importance of Wharton's approach and how her writing on the conflict is substantially different from that of other male writers such as Cummings, Dos Passos and Hemingway.

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