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# Edith Wharton's Non-fiction and The Great War

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## Abstract

Edith Wharton loved travelling and France was a favourite travel site for her: she published four French related nonfiction texts between 1908-1919. French cultivated landscapes and the built environment fascinated her as manifestations of historical continuity that her American readers were to learn from. The Great War meant a material and mental threat for the very historical continuity Wharton valued in French fine arts and landscapes, so her wartime reports on France served not so much to educate but rather to alert her American audience. The paper addresses the issue of Wharton's transatlantic border crossing was complicated by the outbreak of the WWI in 1914. Relying on both archival and published materials (letters, *Fighting France*, *French Ways*, *In Morocco*), the paper demonstrates how, in her accounts of the built environment and of objects of fine art, Wharton maintained her adherence to the value of historical continuity at the time both British and US male authors denied the existence of a useable past.

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