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## FILM REVIEW

### *Smart, Free And Female In Paris*

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

Anyone smitten with the written word, and in particular with 20th-century literature, has no doubt harbored a romantic fascination with Paris between the world wars. While biographies and memoirs abound with references to the expatriate writers and artists whose synergistic response to the French capital resonates in their achievements, only the screen can yield up their living images and spoken words.

The Paris of that era and its artistic community — particularly the passionate, creative circle of women who were drawn to the city and energized its ambience — are the subjects of a straightforward, intelligent and revealing documentary that opens today at the Quad Cinema.

"Paris Was a Woman," made by Greta Schiller, focuses on the lives and loves of such women as Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas; Sylvia Beach and her companion and fellow bookseller, Adrienne Monnier; the New Yorker correspondent Janet Flanner, the photographers Berenice Abbott and Gisele Freund, the painters Romaine Brooks and Marie Laurencin and the writer Djuna Barnes.

"For a lost generation, we sure knew where we were headed," says Flanner, one of the many writers and artists whose reminiscences and insights are woven into "Paris Was a Woman."

## PARIS WAS A WOMAN

Directed by Greta Schiller; written by Andrea Weiss; directors of photography, Nurith Aviv, Ms. Schiller, Renato Tonelli and Fawn Yacker; edited by Ms. Schiller; music by Janette Mason; produced by Frances Berrigan, Ms. Schiller and Ms. Weiss; released by Zeitgeist Films. At the Quad Cinema, 34 West 13th Street, Greenwich Village. Running time: 75 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Juliet Stevenson (narrator), Gisele Freund, Berthe Cheyregue and Catharine R. Stimpson.

Here, once again, are Stein as the sole buyer of the works of Picasso; Flanner introducing her readers to Cubism; Monnier establishing the idea of the lending library in France; and Beach opening Shakespeare & Company, ruining herself by championing an ungrateful James Joyce's "Ulysses" and recalling her first meeting with Hemingway (he displayed his scars).

As each woman is introduced, small maps situate her home, adding to the enjoyment of those familiar with the Left Bank. Here, also, are images of such landmarks as La Coupole, La Rotonde, the Brasserie Lipp, Les Deux Magots and Le Dôme. Once more, Josephine Baker performs. It comes as a shock in the midst of the film's celebration of freedom and the avant-garde to learn that the Académie Française barred women from studying and exhibiting art.

Time travel to golden ages doesn't exist, but documentaries like "Paris Was a Woman" — with their interviews, home movies, archival film and photographs — are the next best thing.