

---

# Janet Flanner's Dislocating Geographies of Paris, Europe, and War World II

Mary Chinery\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Georgian Court University – United States

## Abstract

The New Yorker's "Letter from Paris" by Janet Flanner as Genêt documented Paris culture for fifty years, beginning in from the 1920s. Flanner's unique perspective showed her American audience the fashions and art of Paris twice a month, from Josephine Baker's Negro Revue to dress sizes and hair styles. Flanner became the cultural translator for Americans who knew little of European customs and manners. She carefully negotiated a lesbian identity, openly in the Left bank of Paris with her friends, and privately as a journalist and professional writer. Flanner's observations were more than a fashion. Trained as a journalist, she used her keen observational skills to document the growing menace in Nazi Germany and the rise of fascism in Italy. She travelled to Europe and wrote articles that were arguably the first interpretations of this growing concern in Europe. His culminated in her series of portraits on Hitler himself, as a character, as a master of the visual, as Annalisa Zox-Weaver has explored. Her depictions culminated in her article, "Paris, Germany," in which she reports the transformation of Paris after the Germans moved in. Flanner visited Germany several times and was able to see, not at first so clearly, but over time, the transformation of Europe in the age of Fascism and Hitlerism. Shari Benstock writes, "the shuttles between Paris and London had allowed her a double perspective on the two major forces in democratic Europe" (135). She cabled letters from the moment war was declared until she left on October 4, 1939 (Benstock 138). She witnessed the transformation of Paris from a location of artistic and personal freedom to one of terror in its Nazi transformation.

---

\*Speaker