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Notes on the Photos of Magic-City, Drag Ball of the Inter-War Period

Farid Chenoune

Traduction de Vicki McNulty

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by **Farid Chenoune**
translated from French by Vicki McNulty

Their Ball

Notes on the Photos of Magic-City, Drag Ball of the Inter-War Period

To Michel Cressole

The photos presented here are a sample of a larger collection of over two hundred photos, from the Fréjaville fund of the Performing Arts department of the National Library of France. They were taken in the early 1930s, most likely in 1931, at the most famous drag ball of Paris in the inter-war period, the Magic-City ball. After its disappearance in 1940, the memory of this ball, long deemed scandalous, sank into semi-oblivion or rather a semi-clandestinity that over time made it a small myth.

In 1976, in *Le Paris secret des années 30*, in six photos, Brassai was the first to give post mortem media visibility to the Magic-City[1] ball. Some of his photos thus gained the status of iconic documents or even manifests, worthy of featuring on the stands holding postcards of Gay Paris. Since then, except for some others circulating as singletons, the iconography of the ball has barely been enlarged. The stand-up portraits from the Fréjaville fund, most of which are previously unseen, do not have the vitality of Brassai's photos, which were taken in the physical proximity of the dancers on the floor, but the documentary value of their poses, although poor in their immobility, is priceless. The following notes are a quick summary of ongoing research.

← **Transvestites in front of Magic City in the early 1930s. Right, a gretchen*. © Collection Roger-Viollet/Roger Viollet**

In 1931, the Magic-City dance hall (or the 'Magic', as it was often shortened to) was what remained of an amusement park of the same name, created in 1911 based on an American industrial model. Set up over four hectares near Quai d'Orsay on the left bank, facing Alma bridge and just a stone's throw from the Eiffel Tower, Magic-City had for a time rivalled the other great Parisian amusement park, Luna Park, situated in Porte Maillot. Requisitioned by the military authorities in 1914, Magic-City would only partially re-open after the war and it disappeared in 1926, earmarked for a housing development, with a new street passing through it, specially created for the occasion and called rue Cognacq-Jay. Only the ballroom, or rather the two ballrooms of this dance hall, remained, at 180 Rue de l'Université. Before World War I, tango had taken its first steps there, or almost. After World War II, the site was redeveloped and housed the Cognacq-Jay studios of the pioneers of French television.

The enchanting interlude

The transvestite ball took place twice a year, on the eve of Mardi Gras or Shrove Tuesday, and on the third Thursday in Lent (Mi-Carême). On these evenings, the police prefecture authorised people to dress in drag to attend costume and masked balls, according to the Carnival tradition of the reversal of the hierarchy of classes and gender attribution. It is important to recall that although from 1800 onwards the law still prohibited women from dressing in men's clothes, no text prohibited men from dressing up in drag. However, a prefectural decision dating from the start of the century prohibited them from dancing with each other in public places[2].

In 1939, a note from the Brigade Mondaine (anti-pimping brigade) sums up the golden era of Magic-City ball: "From 1920 to 1934, the special nature of these balls was slowly acknowledged; at the start, a few shy male transvestites, then, the following years, when the reputation had grown, numerous inverts assiduously frequented the Tuesday and Thursday soirées in 'Magic-City'. Finally, when 'select curious onlookers' had come, it became common in the special world of homosexuals to be remarked on those nights in Magic-City. In any case, until Shrove Tuesday of 1934, attention was not otherwise drawn to these balls, which maintained sufficient decorum and did not disturb public order."[3]

The transvestite ball of Magic-City was known as 'the queen ball' or 'the pansy ball', a description often used in the police reports. These names were the most popular and they predominated others such as 'the invert ball', 'the queer ball' or even 'the poof ball'. They are all worth mentioning, just like the discreet 'special', which was the said thing for a long time to describe anything related to homosexuality, as can be seen from its use in the note by the Brigade Mondaine cited above.

Magic-City was not the first transvestite ball in Paris. In the 19th century, there was a 'pansy ball' for Mi-Carême and it wasn't the only one. In the aftermath of the war, that of Wagram Hall set the pace before being dethroned by Magic-City. Also and especially existing at the time, was a network of night clubs, also known as 'special', frequented by homosexuals and transvestite prostitutes; in Montmartre, Isis-Club, Tonton, Le Binocle, La Petite Chaumière, Le Club Liégeois, Mon Jardin and Le Liberty's. In Rue de Lappe, in the Bastille district, Les Trois Colonnes and Noygues, "the permanent ball of young people with a little too much make-up"[4]. In the Latin Quarter, the ball of Montagne Sainte Geneviève, formerly known as Pradal ball, was also photographed by Brassai. All incarnate this period, which, in the immediate post-war period in 1934, was seen in France as the Golden Age of homosexual 'freedom' and 'flamboyancy' finely described in their complexity by Florence Tamagne[5]. In Paris, the Magic-City ball was the most spectacular scene of this flamboyancy. 'Their ball' was the main title of the Parisian weekly *Candide*, published on 10 March 1932.

The turning point of 1934

Like others of its time, the delights of Magic-City were paradoxical, or even misleading. In their great escape, their travesty also masked an existential misery and an oppressive, repressive background, that were recalled in certain articles. In 1934, with the prohibition of the Mi-Carême ball, thus ended the delightful digression of Magic-City. After the anti-parliamentarian riots of the extreme right leagues on 6 February, the Mardi-Gras ball of 13 February had escaped

peacekeeping measures that had struck the majority of Parisian dance halls. But the soirée was not much of a success: 600 admission tickets, 50 of which were bought by transvestites. The management had nevertheless made coaches available for the dancers, who were discouraged by a taxi strike that did nothing to help business. It had also distributed a large number of reduced-rate cards – a common business tactic, especially in the 1930s (15 francs instead of 40 in 1931) to "counter the disadvantages of the crisis and draw in the crowds"[6].

The Mi-Carême ball could not be held. Under the pressure of the extreme right *Action française* and *La Liberté* who campaigned against "the nature of the meeting" and threatened "to demonstrate against the inverts", it was prohibited[7]. The soirée was chaotic. The management had imagined that despite everything they could organise a private ball after midnight. Numerous transvestites arrived at 180 Rue de l'Université, between the police blockades, but the doors were closed by order of the prefecture. They then went to end their night in Montmartre, in the Graff brasserie in Place Blanche, as was customary after leaving the Magic those evenings. In a final attempt, the management envisaged a new date for this lost ball, 24 March, it advertised it and sent letters, but it never took place[8].



↑ Advertising insert published in *Paris-Soir* on 25 March 1935 (above) and in *Le Petit Journal* on 28 March 1935. Photograph by Farid Chenoune.

In 1935, the ball itself was not prohibited, but the management, backing down in the face of the hostility that it continued to spark, and fearing a prefectural measure, decided on its own initiative to refuse access to transvestites and announced it in its advertising inserts, just like here in *Paris-Soir* on 25 March 1935: "To respond to certain criticism, the management of Magic-City wishes to inform its clientele that it will take part in a very gay costume party, but in good taste, in which men dressed as women shall not be admitted." This was a far cry from the insert of 2 March 1926 which proclaimed in the same newspaper: "Transvestites are admitted."

The transvestite ball survived, nevertheless. In 1936, 1937 and 1938, according to the short historic summary written by the police in 1939 (the document entitled 'Notes'), it did not give rise to "any serious criticism, apart from some tidbits in a certain weekly newspaper, inspired most often, by jealous competitors". During this period, the Brigade Mondaine seemed to have exerted strong pressure on the management of the hall, so that the ball would be as discreet as possible. We can read in a note of 23 February 1939: "In compliance with the instructions received, the management of Magic-City has been informed to give as little importance as possible to the publicity it has planned on the occasion of the Mi-Carême ball, which will be held this year on Thursday 16 March." The ball was henceforth less dazzling, sometimes dull, nostalgic of its sparkle of the past, but still frequented by transvestites, often in smaller numbers. The Mardi-Gras ball of 1939 only hosted 300 guests. But that of Mi-Carême, which was

the last one for Magic-City, was a success, according to the Brigade Mondaine: "At around half past midnight, one could count exactly 2,000 paid admission tickets and out of these, there were 300 fancy dress costumes on display, much to the public's delight, as each one was nicer than the other." During those evenings of crisis at the end of the decade, in that nighttime Paris where everywhere else was often deserted, the transvestite ball remained the last refuge of Parisian gaiety[9].

The ancient Greek chorus of the pavement

Around 10 o'clock on the great evenings of Mardi-Gras and Mi-Carême, there was a crowd in Rue de l'Université, opposite the steps of Magic-City, without anyone knowing who exactly was in it. In 1937, *Candide* mentions "a group of workers from the Exhibition, sewer workers, operators and some caretakers"[10] in the middle of onlookers, some of whom were of the 'third sex'. They commented on and teased the appearance of the transvestites as they got out of their taxis, "made up, feathered and decked in beads". *La Rampe*, a Parisian entertainment review of 1 April 1931 (reproduced here) compares this spontaneous hospitality staff to an "ancient Greek chorus" with suburban cockiness: easy-going and a good audience ("Hey, get a load of that costume, it's bath*!"), mocking and teasing ("Look, she's acting the snob. But, I recognise her, it's the boy hairdresser from Rue Vaugirard. And she's so ugly!").

* Asterisks refer to the glossary and the index on page 147.

Before such an audience, climbing the quite 'steep'[11] steps was a demonstration of showing off, a warm-up lap, an entrance exam not to be failed. In 1931, to win over his audience, Lucien "lifted his train with a vulgar gesture, exhibiting his huge thighs," "crossed the thoroughfare, putting on airs" then, encouraged by his success, "shimmied, blew kisses to the 'ancient chorus', strutted up the stairs and responded to the taunts with a taxi driver's voice"[12]. In light of these descriptions with often clichéd effects, it is not easy to determine how much was part of the transvestite's show before his crowd of onlookers, and how much was part of the columnist's before his group of readers. To pander to the voyeurism of the respective audience, the display of the transvestite tended towards an exhibitionist act and the journalist's stylistic exercise towards a piece of bravery.

Crowds. Flight of the young inverts

There were two dance halls in Magic-City; one on the ground floor, the other, perhaps larger, on the first floor. The transvestite costume parade and contest, which was the high point of the soirée, took place in the latter. It was accessed by a double stairway, which was also a formidable viewpoint to scrutinise the contestants and their finery in the overall bustle. After being judged by the street, time for judgement by the peers. This crowd was a mix of transvestites, homosexuals in suits, sometimes in tuxedos, lesbians in erratic numbers, society people, young male prostitutes and curious anonymous clients, alone, in couples or even with their family, to see, approach, "or even touch these extraordinary 'lady-men'", suggested Charles-Etienne in his novel *Le Bal des Folles* (The Queen Ball) in 1930[13].

The most reliable figures on this attendance come from the criminal police reports of the Brigade Mondaine's inspectors. There were two, in theory, one of whom was sometimes an officer of rank. From 10 o'clock until the end of the

soirée they were "in charge of possibly intervening and reporting"[14]. In the archives of the police headquarters in Paris there are no reports before 1928 and of the 24 transvestite balls held in the 1928-1939 period, ten reports remain, including that of the prohibited ball of 1934.
1928, Mardi-Gras: "At around 1:30 in the morning, about a thousand people were gathered in the two dance halls and we can estimate the number of transvestites at around 500 or 600."
1931, Mardi-Gras: "There was a considerable crowd, a substantial increase on last year, as we estimate the number of people participating at around 2,500." "Very normal" clientele.
1931, Mi-Carême: "Between 11 pm and 1:30 am, there were more than 3,000 people in the two halls, among whom one could remark a large number of foreigners." "The clientele was much more sophisticated than at the Mardi-Gras ball."
1932, Mi-Carême: "Approximately 2,000 people in the two halls… The clientele was much more well-educated and sophisticated than at the Mardi-Gras ball and the costumes were much more opulent."

1933, Mardi-Gras: "Approximately 1,800" people. "300 people exhibited themselves in the most diverse costumes with no originality whatsoever. These clients are almost always the same as the previous years, wearing the same drag. Most of those assisting were homosexuals or sypathisers. The foreign element did not exist, so to speak. A certain number of lesbians were observed. The presence of a large number of young inverts aged 18 to 20 (which did not exist the previous years) was also observed."

Tonton and La Grosse Amédée

The drag parade took place around 1 o'clock in the morning. Given the programme, clients couldn't arrive at just any time, especially if they weren't just anyone or that is what they were claiming. 11 o'clock, it seemed, was the right time, the time for aristocratic drag queens, those who could make a distinction between 'fancy dress' and 'outfit'. These ones scorned "the vulgar carnival costumes", those "ordinary" clothes that were the desolation of the Brigade Mondaine inspectors and that were the reality of all and sundry who had arrived undoubtedly much earlier. The real heroines of the evening made "their entrance, one by one, around 11 o'clock, in outfits with the most exquisite taste and with the most perfect cut", reports *Candide* in 1932. "They were the real stars of the ball."[15]

They alone earned the right to these borrowed nicknames that gave them the rank of people of quality or stars in the parodic worldliness of their parallel society: 'La Pompadour', 'La Moreno'*, 'La Récamier'*, 'La Garbo'*, 'La Marlene'*, 'La Duchesse', etc. Their 'entrance' into the dance hall had the dramatic nature of a ritual, it had to be 'remarked'. 1939, Mardi-Gras, Paris-Midi: "From time to time, applause, approving clucks, small cries: this was a particularly remarked 'entrance'"[16]. This is why people went to the Magic: to 'be admired', noted the inspectors Ruyssen and Lignon with discernment in 1939[17].

The 'professional' transvestites fully belonged to this aristocracy. They often arrived later, often in a group, from 'special' night clubs where they officiated, but always on time to attend the contest, participate in it or even be a member of the judging panel. This was the case for Tonton and Ryls, well-known managers in Montmartre, the first one from the night club with the same name,

Rue de Norvins, the second from the previously mentioned Mon Jardin. They came accompanied by their usual clientele and their staff, like a sequel[18]. Their entrance was always highly remarked.

Perhaps even more popular, although not professional, was Amédée, known as "La Grosse Amédée", manager of the restaurant Julien, 12 Faubourg Saint-Martin. "Amédée is known by every Parisian queen," as Michel du Coglay wrote in his investigative book *Chez les mauvais garçons (Choses vues)*, published in 1937, about this "over fifty-something, with a greedy mouth, who shrieks without being pinched and swoons whenever she's barely touched". He describes Amédée parading twice a year at Magic-City "in rich outfits with feathers or lace" and never paying attention "to cost in order to be a sensation," which systematically earned him, according to the book "one of the three prizes"[19]. In 1939, Amédée received the honours of both press and police. The press for Mardi-Gras. *Paris-Midi*, 22 February: "The arrival of Amédée, one of the stars of this transvestite world, was welcomed by shrieks of joy. It must be said that Amédée had done things well and had not skimped on foundation, eye shadow, powder, lipstick, diamantes, flounces or frills." Then the police, for Mi-Carême. Report of 16 March: "One [costume] in particular, worn by a well-known invert, Amédée, manager of the restaurant Julien, 12 Faubourg Saint-Martin, won all the votes by its sumptuousness. Indeed, it represented the City of Paris and was made up of a blue and black court gown with a superb emblem embroidered on the breast."

The Paris Smart Set

Having one's name in both the newspapers and the police reports was also a privilege of the Paris Smart Set that frequented the Magic. "The Paris Smart Set comes to see," wrote Marcel Montarron in *Voilà*, the news weekly, on 3 March 1933. "There is Raimu*, morose and sulky, Michel Simon*, more bleached than ever, and Josephine Baker*. And Damia* who, for fun, pulls the beard of an old man dressed up in tatty garb. And Jean Weber* at last, powdered and fresh, beset by young and lively admirers." In addition to the screen and stage celebrities, the Paris Smart Set of Magic-City mixed big and small names from the worlds of law, finance, the civil service, journalism, politics, diplomacy, arts, literature, brothels and fashion design.

The survey of these celebrities by the inspectors of the Brigade Mondaine was more systematic than those of the journalists, and sometimes of a precision that was inaccessible in a newspaper. The report of the Mi-Carême ball of 1939 thus indicates the presence of "Count Montgommery, who in Paris is the usual quartermaster of the Menus-Plaisirs of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor," before specifying: "Incidentally, it should be noted that he is a fervent follower of unnatural debauchery." Added to the short list by *Voilà* cited above, in the report of the Mardi-Gras ball of 1933 were Pépito Abatino, "lover and manager" of Josephine Baker, Oscar Dufrêne, city councillor of the 10th arrondissement, Henri Varna and Marcellin, manager and stage manager respectively of the Casino de Paris, the singers Jean Sablon and Pierre Meyer, Géo London, the journalist, Henri Bernstein, 'literary man,' 'the artist' Gisèle Picard, Suzy Surcouf (already in the Mi-Carême 1931 report), "well-known lesbian, ex-girlfriend of the Baroness de Bremond d'Ars*," and the countesses de Boismorand and de Flaméricourt. Finally, the already mentioned Charles-Etienne also features, a sort of great penman of

the transvestite ball, whose novels *Notre-Dame de Lesbos* and *Le Bal des Folles* describe the ball, the first that of the Salle Wagram in 1919 and the second that of Magic-City in 1930. Charles-Etienne would once again feature in the report of the Mardi-Gras ball of 1934.

For the inspectors, these lists were a factual account, without comment. As for the amateur journalists, who were into name dropping, they were on the look-out for well-known people whose names could cause a sensation, excite the enumerative frenzy of revealing "who's one?" to their readers and allow them to take the temperature of the ball. At the Mi-Carême ball of 1932, for example, where the inspector counted the presence of twelve celebrities, Mellor, the journalist of *Candide*, found "apart from Maurice Rostand*, who restricted himself to a brief appearance, no known figures". He even saw in it a sign of society's desertion and downgrading of the ball. Granted, the ball that night had attracted a "huge crowd", but it was, something new, in his opinion, "mainly bourgeois in nature": "Visibly, the Parisian notabilities are blasé about this show, and it is now the middle classes that it is attracting."[20]

Fashion design and professions in relation to 'appearance' played both a central and second role in the Paris Smart Set of Magic-City. It was its world, in every sense of the word. It remains to be documented. At the Mi-Carême ball of 1931, the inspectors of the Brigade Mondaine noted the presence of Madame Charlotte Revyl, "manageress of a major fashion house in Rue Saint-Honoré" and Mr. Jean Rodgers, "manager of the fashion house 'Pax', Avenue Victor-Emmanuel"[21]. But, in this report like in the others, never mentioned are the staff of these numerous Parisian houses, dedicated to "the arts of women" according to the term used at the time. For Brassai, Magic-City was swarming with fashionistas. "They would arrive in small groups, having thieved all the paraphernalia of the fair sex, their dresses and underwear, their hats, lingerie, wigs, jewellery, necklaces, make-up, unguents and perfumes… Most of them were in couture, the fur industry, hairdressing, the guipure lace industry, milliners, makers of ribbons, embroidery, fabric, lace…"[22].

As though to highlight a detail in this painting, the review *La Rampe* captures (unless it made up the scene) two transvestites addressing each other in the stairway of the Magic in 1931:

> "Ah! So it's you, my beauty! You are absolutely ravishing this evening. Did you make your dress?"
>
> "Of course I did, old chap. It's because I've become serious. I had enough of the thing*. Now I'm working in a fashion house."[23]

Just a year earlier, in *Le Bal des Folles*, a queen was being called a "pock-marked seamstress"[24].

The judging panel

The judging panel of the contest was recruited from among the upper layer of the Paris Smart Set. How and by whom? How many members did it have? Who presided it? We don't know, with just a few exceptions. In the newspaper articles and the police reports that were consulted, the actor Michel Simon* (three-time member) and four female French music hall stars stand out: Damia (three times), Marie Dubas* (three times), Mistinguett* (twice) and Josephine Baker (twice). The presence of these figures, idolised by the transvestites in the Magic, was a key advantage in the success of the ball:

after judgement by the peers, the verdict of the stars. In 1932, for Mardi-Gras, Mistinguett, who had been announced, did not turn up, leading to "deep disappointment", noted the inspector[25]. But, one month later, for the Mi-Carême ball, she was "cheered" on her arrival at half past midnight, and she was obliged to sing several of the songs from her revue at the Casino de Paris[26]. In 1937, the Mi-Carême parade nearly foundered, as Josephine Baker had decided not to preside the judging panel, put off by the "gloomy" atmosphere of the hall. "She wanted to leave," reports *Candide*. "But her resistance threw the contestants into a tizzy, they threw themselves on her, crying, kissing her golden arms, her twitchy hands and, with suddenly virile gallantry, a dancer dressed as a Roman matron, led her to the stage. She climbed up on it and was applauded."[27] They came close to disaster but the event allows us to sense the highly strung nature of the implications of recognition and competition that exalted these soirées.

The Silver Bridge

The parade took place on a wooden bridge, sometimes called the "transvestite bridge" but christened "The Silver Bridge" by the management. It was probably installed during the evening itself, crossing the hall between two platforms. Then began the parade with a speaker as master of ceremonies, and with the nasty taunts of a viper-tongued audience: duchesses in crinoline and maid-servants with aprons, *Merveilleuses* (marvellous ladies) of the French Directory period, Roman matrons, Andalusian Carmens with garish shawls, blonde-braided 'Gretchens', great 'art déco' ladies with long, elegant gloves, flappers in spangled dresses with never-ending chains of pearls, fashionable Belle Époque café-concert goers, but also tough guys with sideburns, small neck scarf and 'Oliver Twist' style cap, accompanied by their young fancy woman with her kiss-curl stuck to her forehead, etc. Most of the transvestites were references to famous female stereotypes and characters, either contemporary or from the past. In 1939, the report on the Mi-Carême ball recorded that most of them were "made up of marquis, marquises, gauchos, Mexicans" and of "traditional humorous costumes that we are used to seeing here almost every year, i.e. Bijoux*, Les Halles, 1900 costumes, Madame Cardinal*".

The ship's boys and sailors from the revues were another of these norms. In 1932, *Candide* noted however that the contingent "of little sailors for whom Jean Cocteau had become the painter and the bard" had significantly decreased: "There were just about half a dozen of them. But despite their freshness, these poor young men were already dated. They seemed to be from 1900, or at least from the time of the Doumergue presidency*. And you can feel that they won't be around for much longer."[28]

In this procession of models, stereotypes and citations, spitting images, copies and doubles of stage celebrities and screen vamps majestically featured: false Dolly Sisters*, false Mary Marquets*, false Marie Dubas*, false Marlene Dietrichs*, false Greta Garbos*, false Jeannette MacDonalds*, false Joan Crawfords*, false Mae Wests*, false Mistinguetts, etc. On the evening when the much-awaited Mistinguett didn't come, the first prize was given "to an invert wearing a costume identical to that" of the star in the very same revue of the Casino de Paris[29].

The judging panel awarded three prizes to the three "most handsome" or 'most original' transvestites. The speaker declared the results. Here again the

sources don't speak volumes. In 1937, the judging panel, presided by Josephine Baker, granted first prize to a 'Marlene', who was preferred to a 'Garbo' who had "gotten up to all sorts of eccentricities to attract attention". *Candide* described the winner: "La Marlene came back again on stage, in his black dress with impeccable taste. He took himself seriously, almost cried with emotion, acknowledged the audience, he was slim with a little sharp head", whereas the bitter 'Mae West' remained "tearful and jealous in the middle of the stage"[30]. In *Le Bal des Folles* by Charles-Etienne in 1930, the prize went to the couple 'Albert and Robert': "The innate elegance of one harmonises with the faithfully copied gestures of the other. Vertiginously adorned with black ostrich feathers, covered in Chantilly lace, letting the snowy gush of undergarments show through, the duo personifies cranes, 1900-style, return of the Drags*. Following "these ladies" comes a chamber maid with a tiny waist, overflowing bosom and a varnished boater hat, carrying a white poodle beribonned in fiery red". As for the second prize, "it goes to 'La Miss', a tall, incredibly thin boy. Fire in his eyes, a tormented mouth, sky-scraper hairstyle, a magical train, with pink silk flounces, carried by three boys wearing the same colour."[31]

The inspectors of the Brigade Mondaine did not have the descriptive lyricism of Charles-Etienne. Difficult, almost indifferent or even blasé observers, they didn't hesitate to highlight the unsurprising nature of the outfits presented, their lack of "charm" if they judged them to be so. 1934, Mardi-Gras, report of 14 February: "There were only 50 people disguised in various costumes, with no taste or originality. They are almost always the same as the previous years, wearing the same drag." If the outfits were successful, the inspectors contented themselves with mentioning it, most of the time without actually describing them. The report for the 13 March 1931 Mi-Carême ball was an exception: "Contrarily to the previous years, there was nothing transcendent about the 'transvestites'. To be noted however, was an invert disguised in a fanciful peace officer outfit, whose kepi had a small electric light bulb in front, and on each buttock he wore two discs, one of which was red with 'No entry' on it, the other was sky blue with 'Parking Reserved' on it. These two motifs were lit by a small electric light bulb. The transvestite also carried a white stick, the end of which was also lit. He was a tremendous success."

Remark: Through his caricatured nature, this comic transvestite illustrates in an unexpected manner the cutting remark made at the same time by Claude Cahun in her *Journal* against the famous ball and its protagonists: "Magic-City. They make such a distinction between 'active' and 'passive' – the fools! that there will soon be a 'feminism' for cinaedi." – when she herself dreamed of being "worker bee" of the "neuter": "Neuter is the only gender that will always suit me."[32]

Preparations

Due to the lack of correspondence and direct accounts, we know very little about the preparations that these performances required for the transvestites. These little preparation ceremonies were of great importance. In his novel *Hôtel du Nord* published in 1929, Eugène Dabit devotes a spry chapter to one of the lodgers of the Hôtel du Canal Saint-Martin, 'Mr. Adrien', a young, elegant and serious man who works in a confectioner's shop, just has one thing on his mind: that of making himself a 'gitana' costume, red dress, shawl and sombrero, to

attend Magic-City. Adrien requisitions the manageress of the hotel, Louise, and Dabit details in just a few lines their tips and tricks in order to succeed, the art of making do with odds and ends, in which many of the readers of the novel must have recognised themselves. "They got to work, time was of the essence. Louise shortened her petticoat and brought it to the dyer. Adrien unearthed a short jacket in the shape of a 'bolero' in a second-hand clothes shop. He is worried about his 'undergarments' as he wants to be dressed as a woman from top to toe. He buys a shirt, a petticoat, silk tights. He shaves his calves and his arms. Impossible to find a decent sombrero. He resigns himself to renting a brunette wig and sews two paper flowers on to it. On the evening of the ball he does a final trying-on session in front of Louise. She advises him to stuff up his chest somewhat and to put red poppies in his wig. She laughs at Adrien's coquetry. "When you're young, you're insane…", she thinks, with indulgence."[33]

Four years later, perhaps inspired by Dabit, the journalist Marcel Montarron opens his article in *Candide* on 4 March 1933 on Magic-City with a long foreword that features the anguish of the young Mr. Lucien, "Lulu for the Gentlemen", just a week before Mardi-Gras. Lucien is a salesman in a fabric shop in the Sentier district. He "uplifts everybody with his punctuality and his good manners." "He is 25 years old. But he still looks like a big kid." He has "delicate" gestures, "fine" hands and his hair "is such a pale blond, it waves with such self-indulgence that it doesn't look real". Like Adrien, he wears figure-hugging jackets and, like Adrien, he dreams of Magic-City.

For two months, just like in a fairy story, Lulu has been preparing "his" dress for his first ball, "his first young girl's ball": a long, mauve-coloured dress, very low cut in the back, as dictated by the fashion at the time, held by thin straps on the shoulders. "He designed the model himself" and "has been saving for weeks, penny by penny on his earnings". Before leaving, he didn't dare put on his make up in front of his mother. "He would put it on in 'Jeannette's'. Jeanette is a bank employee, and although his dress was already used last year, it will still make an impression under the lights." "Jeannette is dark-haired, thinner, more slender. On his naked arms with bulging muscles he wears long, black leather gloves, that further lengthen his skinny silhouette of big girl as flat as a board."

The journalist thus sketches two scenarios that are undoubtedly very close to reality: that of Lulu and the dress, first or not, made by hand, with his own funds, and that of Jeannette and the dress worn year after year, hoping that it will make do. To these two modest and pragmatic scenarios he adds a third one, ritzy and corruptible, that of Mado and of his "spiffing outfit with feathers as high as this and diamantes galore." It's the scenario of the well-maintained transvestite. The author of the article makes his characters talk. Jeannette: "What do you believe, with the two guys maintaining her, of course 'she' can afford to buy herself costumes at that price." To which Lulu replies "half-teasing, half-scorning": "Me, you know, I'm not interested in professionals."[34]

A family album

Perhaps this Mado, as fictional as she may seem, was one of the young, well-maintained transvestites who did not wear stereotypical 'costumes' but the feminine outfits of their time, straight out of Parisian designer houses, as evoked by Brassai. "Styled by Antoine*, dressed by Lanvin or by Madeleine Vionnet, the

great couturiers of the time, some of these ephebes on the arms of their rich protectors, were often of a rare beauty. I also saw several enigmatic, vague creatures, floating between the poorly defined borders of the two sexes in a sort of no man's land."[35]

In the presence of certain photos from the Fréjaville fund, we think of these 'women'. These photos remain mysterious. We do not know who took them or whereabouts in Magic-City. In 1932, *Candide* evokes the existence of tribunes whose access was reserved by "tough keepers" "for nice couples who wanted their photograph taken, as a souvenir."[36] The photos from the Fréjavillle fund were all taken in the same place, in front of the small guardrail of a narrow stairway. Did it lead to one of these tribunes, which were perhaps laid out as a makeshift studio? Lastly, these photos all have a family likeness, they seem to have been taken by the same photographer. But why were they taken? 1931 is the only benchmark date: three of them feature, in painted form, in the April 1931 edition of La Rampe reproduced further on. Almost identical duplicates. But no mention of a photographer in the review. Beyond this lead, nothing.

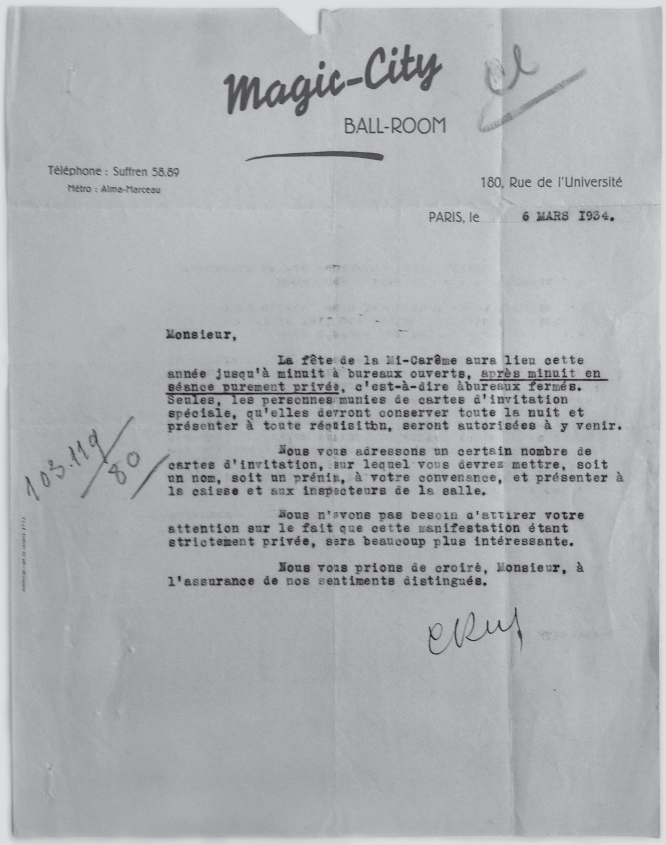


↟ **Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris, série W, dossier n° 103119. Photograph by Farid Chenoune.**

The reports of the Brigade Mondaine inform us that the transvestites were only a small part of the clientele on those evenings, somewhere between 10% and 50% on average: 500 to 600 out of 1,000 in 1928, 200 out of 2,500 in 1931 for Mardi-Gras. They also tell us that these transvestites, from one ball to another, from one year to another, were often the same. This set of photos is the family album of the Parisian transvestites of the 1930s. Amédée, Tonton, La Miss, La Pompadour, La Grunchen, La Garbo, La Marlene, La Dubas, La Mae West, La Cardinal; all of them are certainly there. ■

Notes

1 Brassaï, *Le Paris secret des années 30* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 166-169.
2 Christine Bard, "Le 'DB5' aux Archives de la Préfecture de Police" *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés* 10 (1999).
3 APP (Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris), série W Fonds contemporains, dossier 103119, " Bal "Magic-City". Noël Aldonce", 1.
4 Jean Bouchon, "J'ai visité Paris. Une nuit à Paris en car pour 125 francs", *Candide*, 7 October 1937.
5 Florence Tamagne, *Histoire de l'homosexualité en Europe. Berlin, Londres, Paris. 1919-1939* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).
6 APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Rapport du 1er mars 1933".
7 *Ibid*., "Rapport du 9 mars 1934".
8 *Ibid*, "Rapport du 19 mars 1934".
9 *Ibid*, "Rapport du 22 février 1939"; "Rapport du 19 mars 1939"; Alexandre, "Le bal de Magic-City. La grande parade du 'Décrochez-moi ça'", *Candide*, 11 March 1937; Roger Féral, "Le traditionnel "Bal des travestis" du Mardi Gras a déroulé cette nuit ses fastes joyeux et factices", *Paris-Midi*, 22 February 1939.
10 Alexandre, *op. cit.*
11 Charles-Etienne, *Le Bal des folles*, (Paris: Curio, 1930), 152.
12 Jean Laurent, "Le Bal de Magic... un soir de Mi-Carême", *La Rampe*, 1 April 1931.
13 Charles-Etienne, *op. cit.*, 157.
14 APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Bal 'Magic-City'. Noël Aldonce", 4
15 Mellor, "Leur bal", *Candide*, 10 March 1932.
16 Roger Féral, *op. cit.*
17 APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Bal 'Magic-City'. Noël Aldonce"; "Physionomie de la nuit de la Mi-Carême à Montmartre".
18 APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Rapport du 13 mars 1931".
19 Michel du Coglay, *Chez les mauvais garçons (Choses vues)* (Paris: R. Saillard, 1937), 165.
20 Mellor, *op. cit.*
21 APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Rapport du 13 mars 1931".
22 Brassaï, *op. cit.* ,166.
23 Jean Laurent, *op. cit*.
24 Charles-Etienne, *op. cit.*, 152.
25 APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Rapport du 10 février 1932".
26 *Ibid*. APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Bal Magic-City. Noël Aldonce", "Rapport du 3 mars 1932".
27 Alexandre, *op. cit.*
28 Mellor, *op. cit.*
29 APP, série W, dossier 103119, "Rapport du 10 février 1932".
30 Alexandre, *op. cit.*
31 Charles-Etienne, *op. cit.*, 168.
32 Claude Cahun, *Aveux non avenus*, (Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1930), 45.
33 Eugène Dabit, *Hôtel du Nord*, (Paris: Robert Denoël, 1929), 233-240.
34 Marcel Montarron, "Corydon conduit le bal", *Voilà*, 3 March 1933.
35 Brassaï, *op. cit.*, p. 166-167.
36 Mellor, *op. cit.*



Magic-City
BALL-ROOM

Téléphone : Suffren 58.89
Métro : Alma-Marceau

180, Rue de l'Université

PARIS, le 6 MARS 1934.

Monsieur,

La fête de la Mi-Carême aura lieu cette année jusqu'à minuit à bureaux ouverts, après minuit en séance purement privés, c'est-à-dire àbureaux fermés. Seules, les personnes munies de cartes d'invitation spéciale, qu'elles devront conserver toute la nuit et présenter à toute réquisition, seront autorisées à y venir.

Nous vous adressons un certain nombre de cartes d'invitation, sur lequel vous devrez mettre, soit un nom, soit un prénis, à votre convenance, et présenter à la caisse et aux inspecteurs de la salle.

Nous n'avons pas besoin d'attirer votre attention sur le fait que cette manifestation étant strictement privée, sera beaucoup plus intéressante.

Nous vous prions de croire, Monsieur, à l'assurance de nos sentiments distingués.

103.119/80

Despite the interdiction of the Mi-Carême ball in 1934, the management of Magic-City dance decided to organise a private ball after midnight. It advertized it and sent letters. The ball never took place. Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris, série W, dossier 103119. Photograph by Farid Chenoune.




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The arrival, the ordeal of climbing the steps

Charles-Etienne,
***Le Bal des Folles*, 1930**

Thursday, 27 March. – Rue de l'Université is only lively at the spot where the car stops. The footpath is shining from the recent rain, at the foot of a steep stairway, which is violently lit up… Bizarre, swathed masks climb before us up the steps of the temple where girls from Lesbos and people from Sodom celebrate their twice-yearly Saturnalia.

Under the belted raincoats, billowing trains swell, unbelievable panaches standing erect on wig-adorned heads, with necks protected by a scarf. Part of the opposite footpath where the hostile, heckling crowd is contained by the police agents, a volley of whistles salutes each descent from a car, and each ascension of the steep steps. The show is not just inside, the street is also enjoying a tasty specimen… It's a bit like the display of an exceptional fairground where the indulgent onlookers have given way to a sneering pack, throwing lies and distributing boos. You can hear things like:

"Into the rubbish!" – "The paddy wagon is waiting for you, bunch of dikes!" – "Take him out" – "Off to Saint-Louis, with your gristle!" – "She hasn't croaked yet, that one?" – "Get out!" – "Fuck, you didn't pay for your gladrags!" – "Off to the slammer, you fairies!"

Such gracious outbursts were the baptism of fire. Uproar… A certain 'brazen hussy,' with an oakum headdress, white iron tiara and a green velvet curtain as a coat and a cherry-red wool shawl on her back, confronts a police officer. In the middle of laughs, she yelps: "Come on, let me through! I'm pregnant!"

Marcel Montarron,
"Corydon conduit le bal",
***Voilà*, n° 102, 4 March 1933**

It is only 10 o'clock at night. But the footpath in front of the lit up façade of Magic-City has already had to be cleared. […]

The laughs, the cries intensify and go up to the sky like rockets. You can hear them mingle with the coming and going of the cars, the slamming of car doors, the whistles of the peace officers? The line of cars constantly grows longer. The transvestites arrive in small groups. Each time, their giggles and high-pitched laughs arouse the taunts and the boos of the cap-wearing street urchins.

There is something mischievous and perverse in the air that is hard to describe, that contrasts with the quiet and bourgeois nature of the district.

"You could have shaved to look good, right! Big beanpole."

The 'big beanpole' plays with his lorgnette, puts on airs under his violet and finally, lifting up his skirt, shows two huge fairground wrestler's calves, on which some loose silk stockings are puckered.

"Have you seen that one over there? She's got nice arms but dirty hands. You can see that she did the washing up this evening."

Everybody is bent over laughing and the police agents, overcome by the mirth, forget to direct the cars, the flow of which is growing every minute and threatens to flood the place.










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Alexandre,
"The Magic-City ball. The great display of 'Décrochez-moi ça' ('grab what you can')", ***Candide*****,**
11 March 1937
The young employee distributing the tickets blushed behind the ticket counter because of the way in which these clients who, throwing their silk coats rented from a rag-and-bone shop, handed over their money in their big fist and sighed:
"So, there's no reduction for the female dance partners?"

The entrance hall, the ticket counter, the cloakroom, the stairway, the banister

Charles-Etienne,
Le Bal des Folles**, 1930**
My ravishing cicerone, half-naked fisherman, draped in a transparent net of pearls, turns left and slowly climbs the steps of a blue carpet, between the double row of 'voyeurs'... All along the handrail, like human bunches, scrambling, packed almost to the point of suffocation, piled high to jeer, are two hundred heads with gleaming eyes and invective mouths [...]."
"Hey, Priestess!" "Is it you, my beauty? You've grown since last year..."
"Here are the Queens! Hey! 'La Civa-Rita' disguised as Sorel!... Big pussy, c'mon!... And the two 'Récamier' dressed in white, with green gloves! The maggots are getting down to business! Off to Père-Lachaise cemetery with you, what horrors!... And 'Miss Dolly' who took her bedspread as an imperial train!"
A gale of laughter unfurls:
"Marie-Rose: Bravo!... Here's Marie-Rose!... Side-splitting!... Round of applause for Marie-Rose!"
The lady thus summoned measures 1m 80 and majestically wears two 'Gretchen'* style braids with a flouncy dress...
"Here's 'Shiver' in pink and silver. Hurray for the President!... And 'Toto', with 'Titine', the pock-marked seamstress!... Half a pound of pins on her mop!"
"Get a load of 'Tintin' with her flower train and 'La Pauline', dressed as La Belle Hélène! Hey, 'Marceline', the old antique dealer! Hi there, you nasty pest! My dears, that's the 'ridiculous grime ball'!"










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In the hall, between 11 o'clock and midnight

Charles-Etienne,
***Le Bal des Folles*, 1930**

It is midnight and you can hardly move, the crowd is so dense. The men are dancing with each other. Same thing for the women. For once, you can enjoy this luxury in public.

See, over there, if Lilian is getting in the way of the tall brunette with huge eyes, dressed as a faun?... Nice legs, the stranger...

Despite the make-up and the gladrags, the middle-aged prevail over those whose age is uncertain... Those pot-bellied ones with varicose veins and triple chins win the day! The young and really handsome ones.... arrogantly show off, but they are in the minority. The majority rules in the faction of the pathetic stillborns and losers. Knock-kneed, skinny-legged, with twisted shoulders and stunted faces...

Dressed as a butcher's wife: white apron, bursting bosom and wine corks swaying at her cheeks, an enormous man tries to drag her away: "She's an idiot."

"Watch yourself, 'Césarine'; he'll drive you wild!"

"My God, my god! exclaimed one, putting on airs in a brown taffeta dress, very 1865-ish, carrying a genuine fringed parasol above a high-rise hairstyle.

Another one, older, elegantly dressed from the time of Sadi-Carnot, jostles her. Adorned with yellowing, dangling feathers, accumulated over the years, her beret-style hat is poetry in motion.

"Hey you tart, could you be more careful?!"

"Has the Gyraldose antiseptic and blackcurrant gone to your head, you vulgar cow? Good-for-nothing, did I ask you if your mother gave birth to a monkey?"

"Flouncy bitch, was it in the public urinals that you picked the watercress that's growing on your trap?"

Mellor,
"Leur bal", *Candide*, 10 March 1932

The stars of today are obviously these solid and lusty men of five feet six inches who, scorning the vulgar carnival costumes, make their entrance, one by one, around 11 o'clock, in outfits with the most exquisite taste and the most perfect cut.

Long skirts, very fitted at the hips, in pale-coloured satin, with a bodice that is high in front and very low-cut at the back, as appropriate, white gloves up to the elbow, a small bunch of bright flowers pinned to the left breast, in the most select cabarets and the private rooms of the high society rarely will you meet more distinguished and more elegant female figures.

Of course with this came the end of hideous, glaring and totally off-the-mark wigs that would just about do the job for theatre. Natural hair, cut with such art, worthy of an Antoine or his emulators! Some of these lady-men, to accentuate the illusion, are styled not with a boy-cut but like boys, tightly cropped and with such a masculine air, to say the least, one might wonder if the conquests they have in their sights do not belong to the fair sex.

Most of them, when all is said and done, are very pretty. This one looks strikingly like Madame Geneviève Vix, that one looks like one of the Dolly Sisters, and that one like Mademoiselle Marquet.

... on the threshold I pass the last one to arrive, a tall, seductive brunette with a delectable pink outfit, altogether in the style of Marie Dubas...


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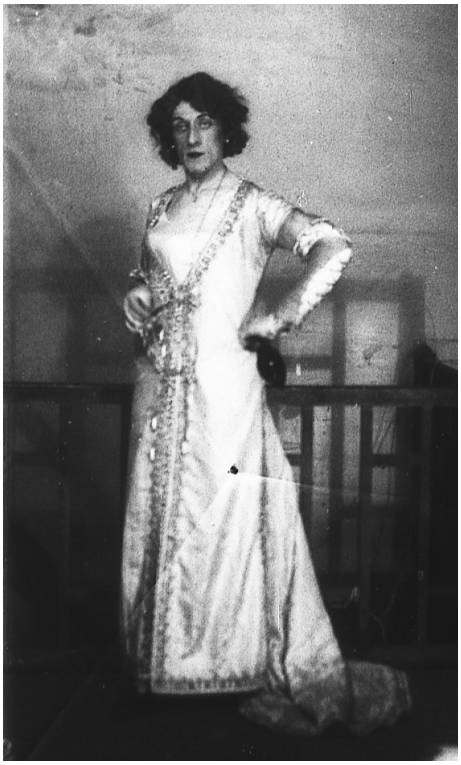









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The transvestite bridge

Marcel Montarron,
"Corydon conduit le bal",
***Voilà*, no. 102, 4 March 1933**

The costume parade begins, however. On the rostrum and around the walkway where they parade under a shower of roses, the crowd is so dense that you couldn't bend down to pick up a brassiere.
The Paris Smart Set has come to see. Over there is Raimu, morose and sulky, Michel Simon, more bleached than ever, and Josephine Baker. And Damia who, for fun, pulls the beard of an old man dressed up in tatty garb. And Jean Weber at last, powdered and fresh, beset by young and lively admirers."

Charles-Etienne,
***Le Bal des Folles*, 1930**

Among the ovations of an upright crowd, nudging hands outstretched, all along the walkway that had just been endured, the parade of the asexual and the androgynous, of all the defenders of outlawed love, begins… Emaciated, frantic fervor, Mortuary pallor with swooning grimaces, cemetery and ultra-revue beauties, sparkling and made up poofter-ghosts, here is crime and finery, the Vice of Paris goes by!




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Awards and prizes

Charles-Etienne,
***Le Bal des Folles*, 1930**
The award goes to the couple 'Albert' and 'Robert'. The innate elegance of one harmonises with the faithfully copied gestures of the other. Vertiginously adorned with black ostrich feathers, covered in Chantilly lace, letting the snowy gush of undergarments show through, the duo personifies cranes, 1900-style, return of the Drags*. Following "these ladies" comes a chamber maid with a tiny waist, overflowing bosom and a varnished boater hat, carrying a white poodle beribonned in fiery red." As for the second prize, it goes to "La Miss", a tall, incredibly thin boy. Fire in his eyes, a tormented mouth, sky-scraper hairstyle, a magical train, with pink silk flounces, carried by three boys wearing the same colour.

Alexandre, "The Magic-City ball. The great parade of "Décrochez-moi ça" ('grab what you can')", *Candide*, 11 March 1937
The speaker declared 'La Marlene' had won first prize. It appears that in certain establishments today, they give the name of cinema celebrities to the strange regulars. 'La Greta Garbo', even though she had gotten up to all sorts of eccentricities to attract attention, only received second prize; 'La Marlene' came back again on stage, in his black dress with impeccable taste. He took himself seriously, almost cried with emotion, acknowledged the audience, he was slim with a little sharp head, whereas the bitter 'Mae West' remained tearful and jealous in the middle of the stage.














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End of the ball

Marcel Montarron, "Corydon conduit le bal", *Voilà*, no. 102, 4 March 1933

Two o'clock in the morning… Soon the only ones left in the hall will be the real amateurs… "Alone at last, my kid." said Lulu. "Come on, let's have a dance."

On the empty dance floor, the dancers, tightly embraced, move around with ease…

The last transvestites leave the ball. The over-excitement has died down. It's time for memories, the insidious time of regrets.

Two taxi drivers insult each other and come to blows. One gets up, blood on his face and finally turns his anger to the last clients of Magic-City.

"What do you believe," says Lulu, "we sleep in our mother's." Then, melancholic at the thought of having to fold up his dress and put on his business suit once again and take his place behind a counter, he says:

"You see, I told you that the ball is a pleasure that starts well and ends badly."

Marcel Montarron, "Bal de folles", *Marianne*, 29 March 1933

Five o'clock in the morning.

The last transvestites have left the ball. They all head up now towards Montmartre, third-rate extras from special clubs, professionals of impure love, unbalanced persons of all types… Place Blanche, where the lights are growing dim, is still holding on to them in its bars.

Alexandre, "The Magic-City ball. The great parade of 'Décrochez-moi ça' ('grab what you can')", *Candide*, 11 March 1937

Chased by the distress of the place, the transvestites leave the hall one by one. Some of them rush into cars, with a forceful rustle and some cries, but other head off alone, on foot, with clumsy and painful steps, shivering under their thin silk coat in the rainy night, to the taunts of some passers-by, to whom they no longer have the courage to smile or reply.



Carmencita (Monsieur Mourice B.)

Lorsque ces Messieurs «dames» sont « de sortie »

Le Bal de Magic ...un soir de Mi-Carême

par Jean Laurent

Depuis dix heures, le chœur antique est à son poste, en face du grand escalier de Magic-City. Les agents l'ont parqué sur le trottoir. Ils le surveillent d'un air soupçonneux, tandis qu'ils sourient avec indulgence aux « folles », qui leur envoient des baisers. Le chœur antique ne semble pas s'en apercevoir. Il sait que demain rétablira les choses, et que ces jolis garçons maquillés, emplumés et emperlousés, qu'il applaudit aujourd'hui, seront bientôt poursuivis, traqués, ridiculisés par une foule vulgaire, cruelle et ignorante.

Pour l'instant le chœur antique ne fait pas un mouvement. Il attend dans le froid et le noir la descente des voitures.

Un taxi s'arrête. La portière s'ouvre...

Le chœur antique. — Hou ! Hou ! Oh celle-là !... Et l'autre donc ! Regarde celle-ci qui fait sa dédaigneuse... Mais je la reconnais, c'est le garçon coiffeur de la rue de Vaugirard. Et ce qu'elle est laide !

Deux, trois taxis stoppent...

Le chœur antique. — Mon Dieu celle-ci qui ne peut plus sortir ses plumes du taxi !... Eh ! pige-moi le costume s'il est bath ! Et les paradis ! Et les strass ! ...Mais celle de



Un qui se souvient d'une Venise de Music-hall

soir par un maître de maison invisible, heureux de retrouver, ici, tant d'êtres pareils à eux-mêmes, rayonnants cette nuit dans le déploiement merveilleux de leur instinct déchaîné.

Immoral, dites-vous ? Mais vous en trouverez, soyez-en persuadés, pour soutenir qu'un tel spectacle est pur comme un vers de Virgile, comme un ange de Fra Angélico, comme un livre de Jean Desbordes, que par sa nudité même ce spectacle est chaste, que cette parade de foire, ces costumes horribles de music-hall de province, cet orchestre de bal musette révèlent par leur naïveté même une fraîcheur singulière et une absence de vice qui purifient cette salle de toute sa laideur et de toute sa vulgarité ! ! !

Cette nuit, tous les petits-fils de Sodome clairsemés dans le monde, toutes ces « ombres errantes » aux amours stériles semblent avoir reconstruit pour un soir leur ville maudite. La présence d'un si grand nombre de leurs pareils leur fait oublier leur anormalité. Pour un peu ils trouveraient les amours de Roméo et Juliette monstrueuses. Ou bien il vous raconteraient que du temps de Shakespeare



Cette marquise qui se souvient de Trianon. *que fait-il dans le civil?*







Trois jeunes garçons travestis tels qu'on les a vus au bal de Magic

Glossary and index

Glossary

Bath. Good, pretty, pleasant.
Bijoux. See La Môme Bijou, further down.
Drags. Initiated in 1883, 'drag day' consisted of a parade in horse-drawn carriages, from Place de la Concorde to the racetrack in Auteuil where they then took part in the races. This 'drag parade', a great society event of the season, was the occasion of sumptuous demonstrations of haute couture elegance.
Gretchen. Like Greta, short for Margarete. In German culture, the pure, young girl. In France, in the anti-Germanic context of the 1870s to 1920s, the ungainly German girl, a little bit stupid and lacking in elegance, the female version of the 'Boche'.
Truc (Thing). Prostitution.

Index of proper names

Characters

La Baker, Joséphine (1906-1975). Music-hall artist, revealed in Paris in *La Revue nègre* in 1925.
La Cardinal, Madame. Character from the Parisian petty bourgeoisie, pretentious and insular, created and ridiculed by Ludovic Halévy in his book *Madame Cardinal* in 1870, and represented by Degas in his painting *Pendant la classe de danse*.
La Crawford, Joan. American actress (1905-1977). From 1929 onwards, on screen and in town she was dressed by the Hollywood couturier Adrian, who contributed to her aura of a glamorous and sexy actress.
La Damia, Maryse. Realist actress and singer, nicknamed "the Tragedian of French Song," she gave her iconic class to the black stage dress (1889-1978).
La Dubas, Marie. Popular singer with an extensive repertoire, talented for the stage, "an actress of song" (1894-1972).
La Garbo, Greta. Swedish actress, 1905-1990. One of the most influential Hollywood stars for women during the inter-war period. In April 1933, *Vogue* devoted an article to the imitation phenomenon that she caused, know as 'Garbo-ism'.
La MacDonald, Jeannette. American singer and actress, famous for her roles in musicals, in particular *The Merry Widow*, d'Ernst Lubitsh, with Maurice Chevalier (1903-1965).
La Mae West. American actress, famous for her generous bosom and her saucy humour (1893-1980).
La Marlene, Marlène Dietrich. Along with Greta Garbo, the other great female model of Hollywood glamour, just as prevalent (1901-1992).
La Marquet, Marie. Actress with a strong personality, devoted to theatre in *L'Aiglon* by Edmond Rostand, then cinema in *Sappho* by Léonce Perret, 1895-1979.
La Môme Bijou. Mythical character of Montmartre night life, survivor of the Belle époque, legendary for her rags from another century and her abundance of make up, rings, diamantes, false pearls and false gemstones. Brassai devoted a chapter of his book *Le Paris secret des années 30* to her.
La Moreno, Marguerite. Actress, known for her lack of beauty, recognised for her abundance of talent (1871-1948).
La Récamier, Juliette, known as Madame Récamier. Famous woman from Parisian society of the early 19th century (1777-1849). Her portrait by David around 1800 has become one of the reference illustrations of fashion under the French Directory period and the First Empire.
The Dolly Sisters. Twin sisters, stars of the American music hall in the 1920s.

People

Antoine. Hair stylist for the Paris Smart Set (1884-1976).
de Bremond d'Ars, Yvonne. Famous antique dealer and verbose diarist, figure of Parisian lesbian society (1894-1976).
Doumergue, Gaston. French politician, President of the Council from 1913 to 1914 and President of the French Republic from 1924 to 1931 (1863-1937). Here, synonym of unfashionable, outdated.
Raimu. Actor, famous for his roles in Marseille-based and Provençal films by Marcel Pagnol: *Marius*, *Fanny*, *César* and *La Femme du boulanger* (1883-1946).
Rostand, Maurice. Journalist, writer and poet, known for his homosexuality (1891-1968).
Simon, Michel. French actor, one of the most popular of the inter-war period, collector of pornography and connoisseur of night-time Paris (1895-1975).
Weber, Jean. Actor and member of the Comédie-Française (1906-1995).

← The three portraits of transvestites, in painted form, are almost identical duplicates of three photos belonging to the Fréjaville fund. *La Rampe*, 1 April 1931. Bibliothèque d'Etude et du Patrimoine de Toulouse de Toulouse (P 3069).