

Scandalous Past-times of the Parisian Belle Epoque

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La Belle Epoque = the beautiful era 1872-1914

Named in **retrospect** when it began to be considered a "[Golden Age](#)" in contrast to the horrors of World War I.

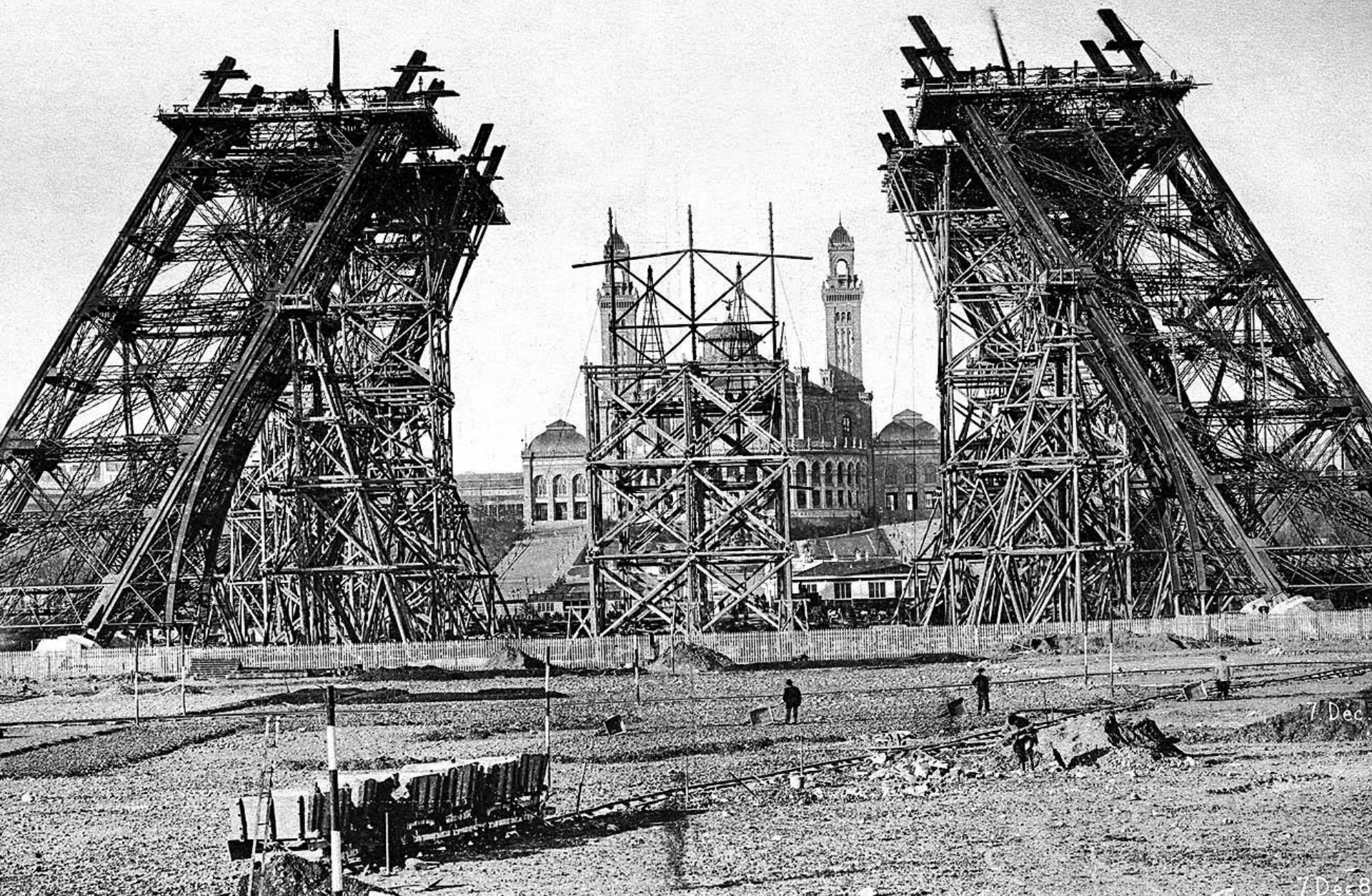
Looking back, this 42 year period was seen as a time of **peace, prosperity, progress and invention--and a flourishing in the arts and sciences**

Advancements in industry and transport: first Paris metro construction circa 1900



One of the first metro stations (note the art nouveau sign)





7 Dec

7 Dec 8

Engineering and architecture
flourished (Eiffel Tower, opened in
1889)



Statue of Liberty being assembled 1883 in Paris
(built by Eiffel and inaugurated in NYC in 1886)



Universal Exhibitions in 1889 & 1900 drew international crowds and showcased France's cultural dominance (Here: the palace of electricity was the most popular exhibit)



Edison's Moving Boardwalk, Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900



Moving Sidewalk (Trottoir Roulant) at the 1900 World Fair

The fun of getting on and off this electric three-tiered sidewalk (one level stationary, the next moving at four kilometers per hour, the third at nine kilometers per hour) made it one of the fair's greatest amusements. Schmidt and Silsbee were American engineers.



La Belle Epoque saw the birth of the automobile



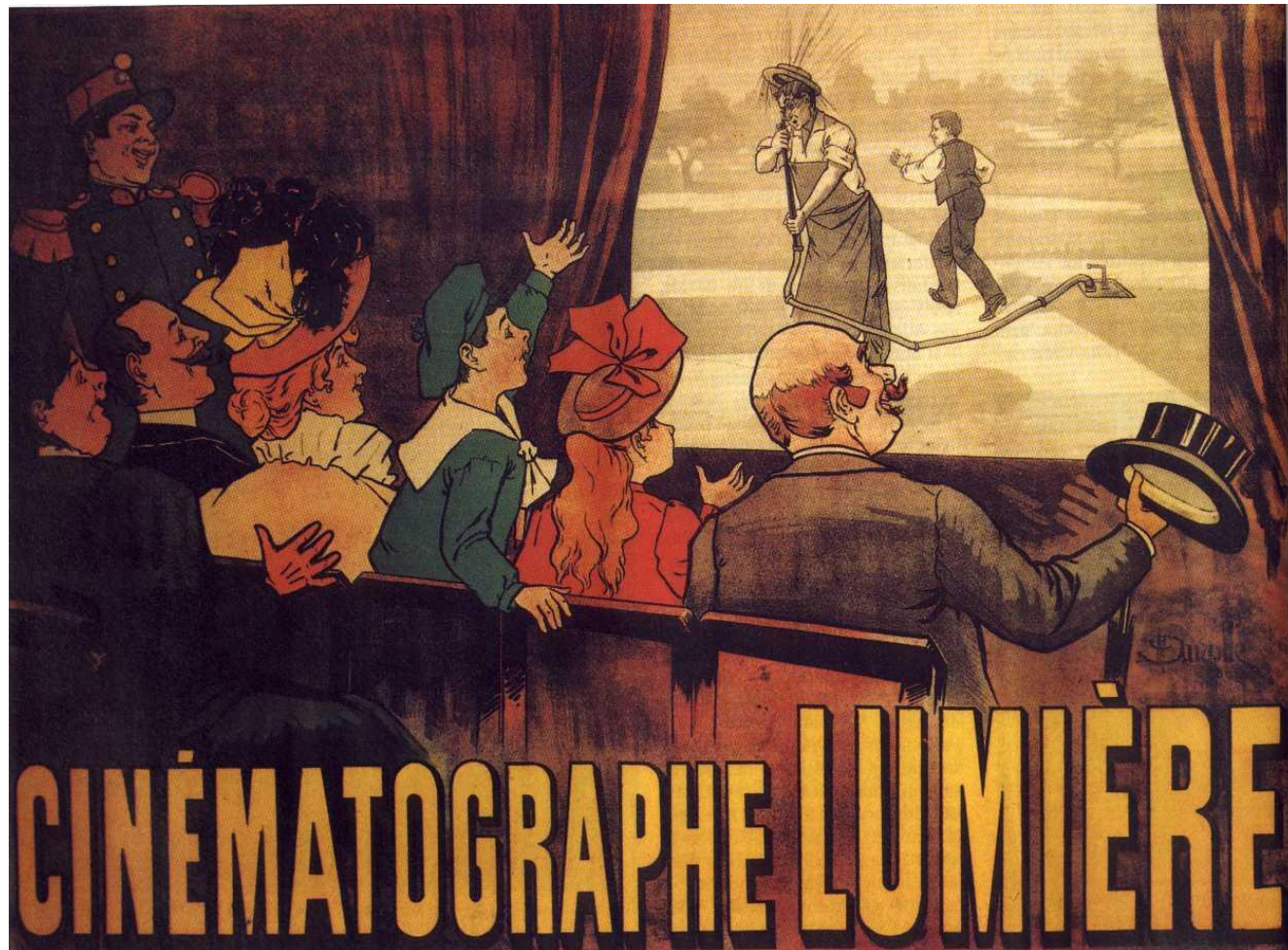
Modern dance (and modern stage lighting) innovator Loie Fuller



Art Nouveau building in Paris



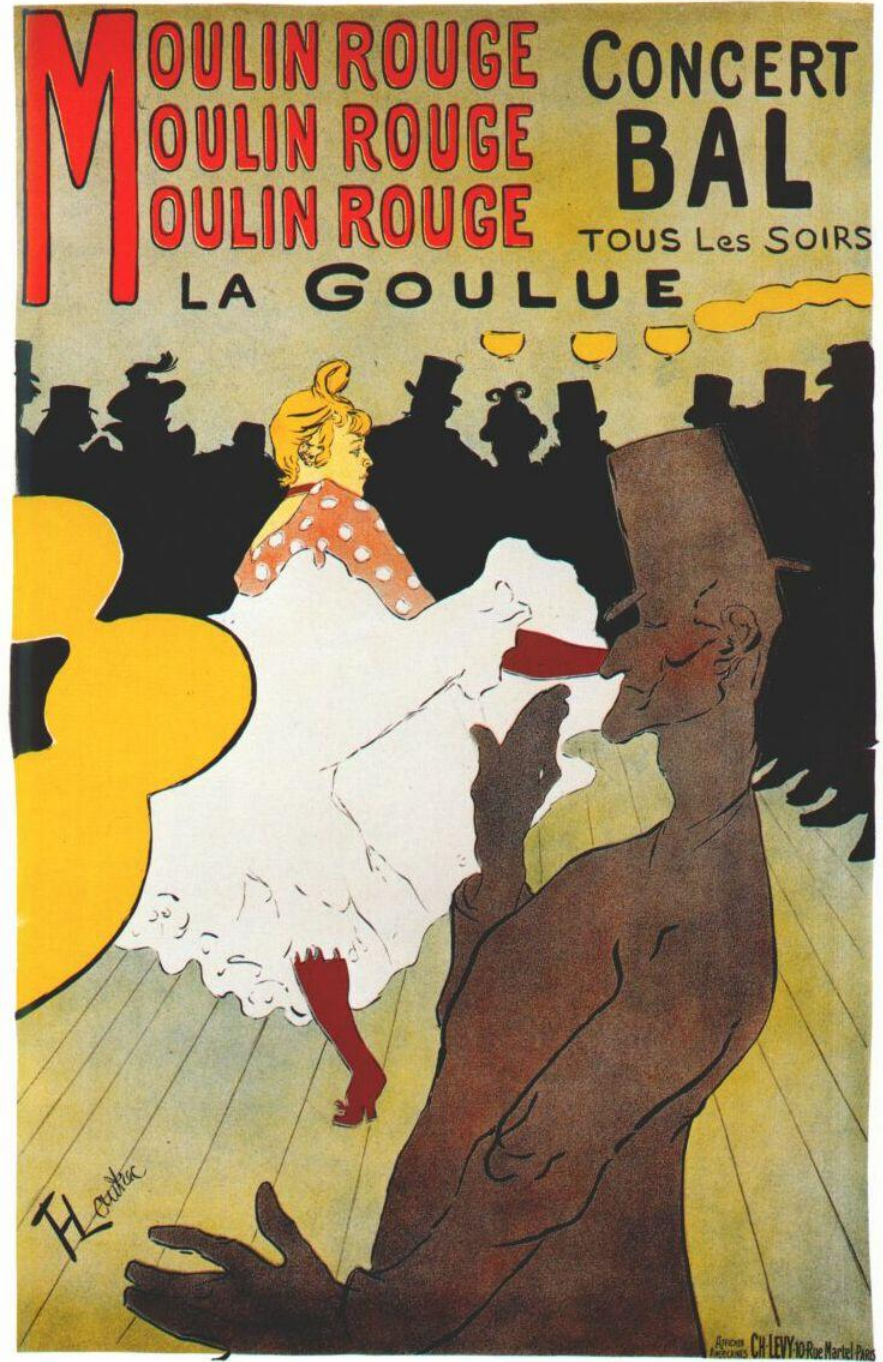
Film and photography flourished



Nightlife during the Belle Epoque

* Cabarets such as Le MOULIN ROUGE where women performed Burlesque or cancan dancing (wearing no Undergarments)

Lautrec, *La Goulue*
At the Moulin Rouge
1891



New restaurants and cafés opened.
Paris became synonymous with fine
dining: Maxim's in 1890



The Belle Époque, *The Bar at Maxim's*
by Pierre-Victor Galland, circa 1890



Topics we'll cover today:

- a. The Salpêtrière mental hospital shows:
Celebrity Hysterics
- b. “Epileptic” dancers of the cafés-concerts
- c. Public nudity and prostitution
- d. Morgue tourism
- e. Macabre nightclubs in Montmartre

***View of Salpêtrière Hospital, with the
River Seine in the foreground.
Lithography by Perelle; 1680.***



Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893)





From left to right top row. Patients of Charcot:
Blanche Wittmann, Augustine Gleizes at rest and « passionate
attitude » Photos by Albert Londe, Iconographie photographique
1878



Augustine Gleizes, a “star” patient of Charcot



ICONOGRAPHIE
PHOTOGRAPHIQUE

DE LA

SALPÊTRIÈRE

SERVICE DE M. CHARCOT

PAR

BOURNEVILLE ET P. REGNARD



PARIS

Aux bureaux du PROGRES MÉDICAL V. ADRIEN DELAHAYE & C^e, Libraires-Éditeurs
6, rue des Écoles, 6. Place de l'École-de-Médecine

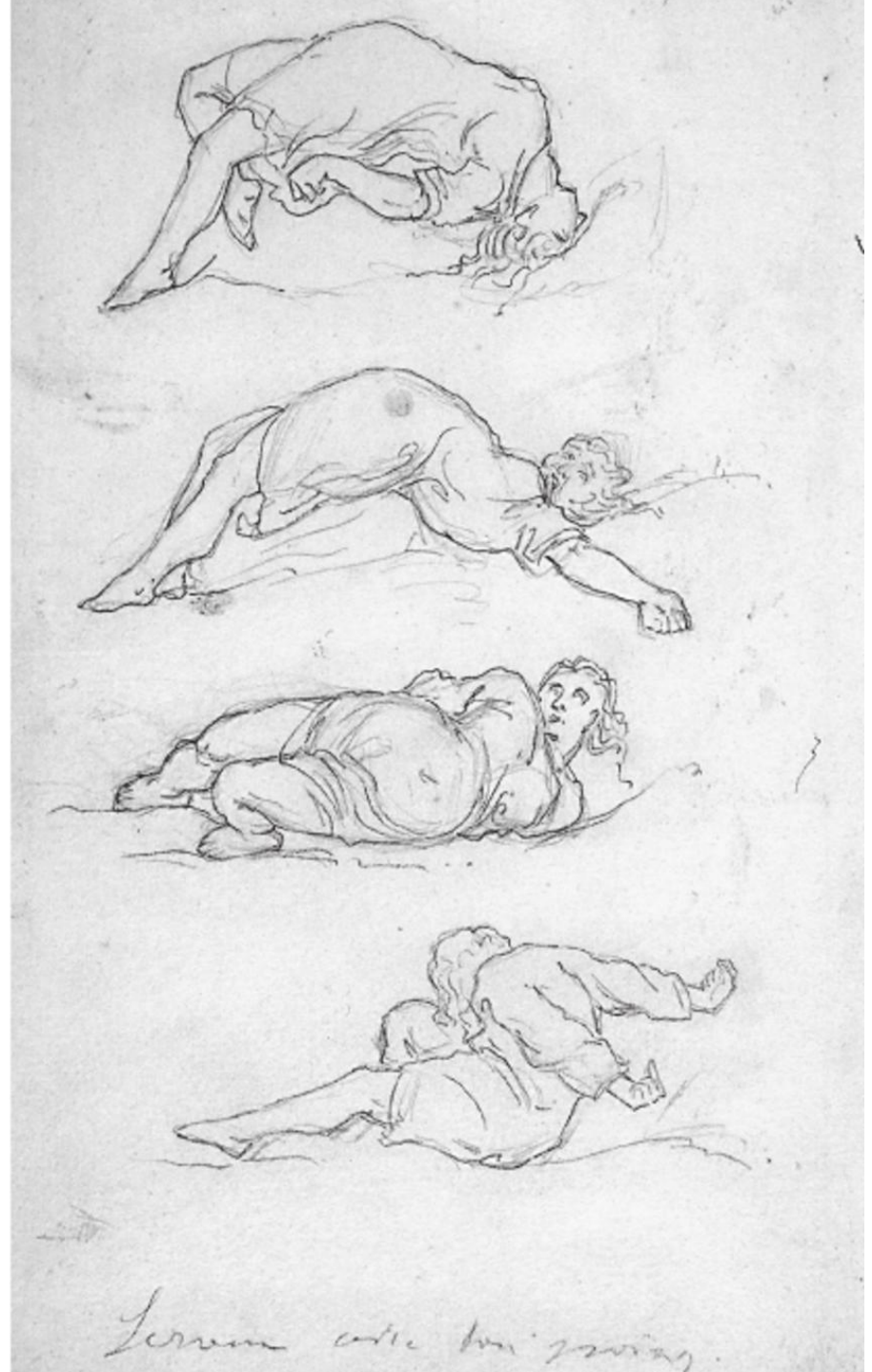
1877

1885 study on hysteria

©BIUSante



Stage three of a
“hysteric”
seizure (which
Charcot
labelled
“attitudes
passionnelles”)
as documented



Photographs of
Augustine
published
in the
*Iconographie
Photographique
de la Salpêtrière*







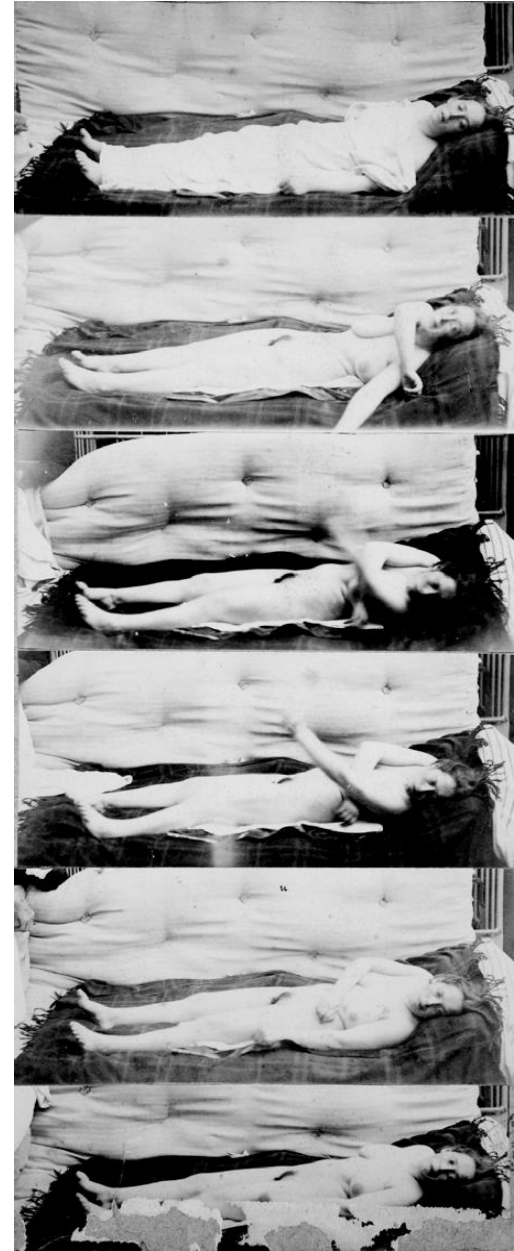
Planche XXIII.

ATTITUDES PASSIONNELLES

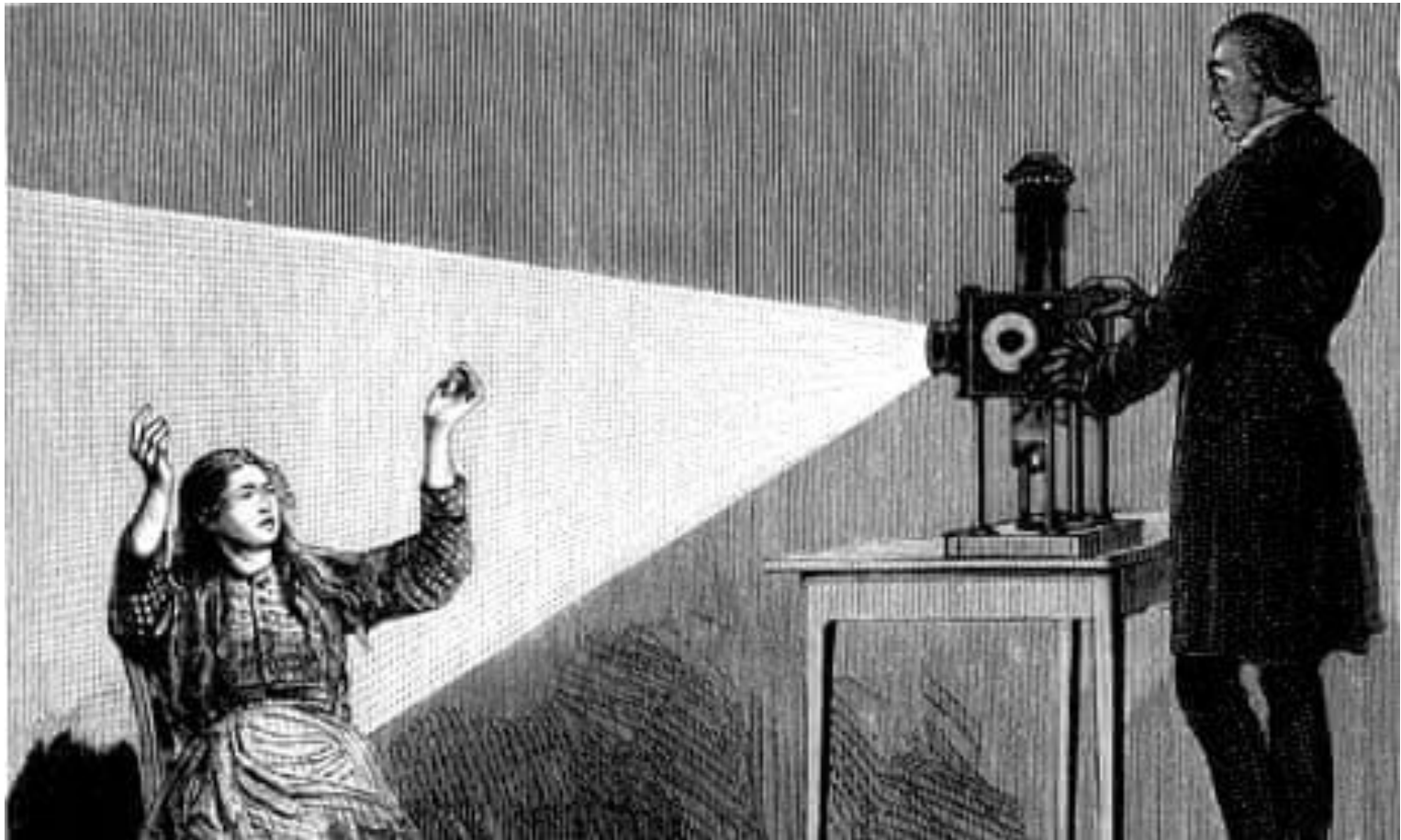
Fall into hysterics,
successive phases by
Albert Londe, 29
october 1882

A series of six
photographs, albumen
prints

© *Paris, Ecole des
Beaux-Arts.*



Jean Charcot lecturing on hysteria with a patient he first hypnotises



Jane Avril by Toulouse Lautrec. Avril was a patient of Charcot's and went on to become a celebrated performer



"A Clinical Lesson at the Salpêtrière" by Pierre Aristide
André Brouillet. This painting shows Charcot
demonstrating hypnosis on a "hysterical" Salpêtrière
patient, "Blanche"





Grande attaque hystérique.
Épisode du spasme : chute des membres (Après le réveil).

Philippe Pinel (1745-1826) releasing the lunatics from their chains at the Salpêtrière Hospital in 1795.



A patient of Charcot's in a religious posture to prove that so-called witches were really just hysterics







Bernini's
Ecstasy of St Theresa
in Rome
depicting
Theresa's
supposed
encounter
with an
angel



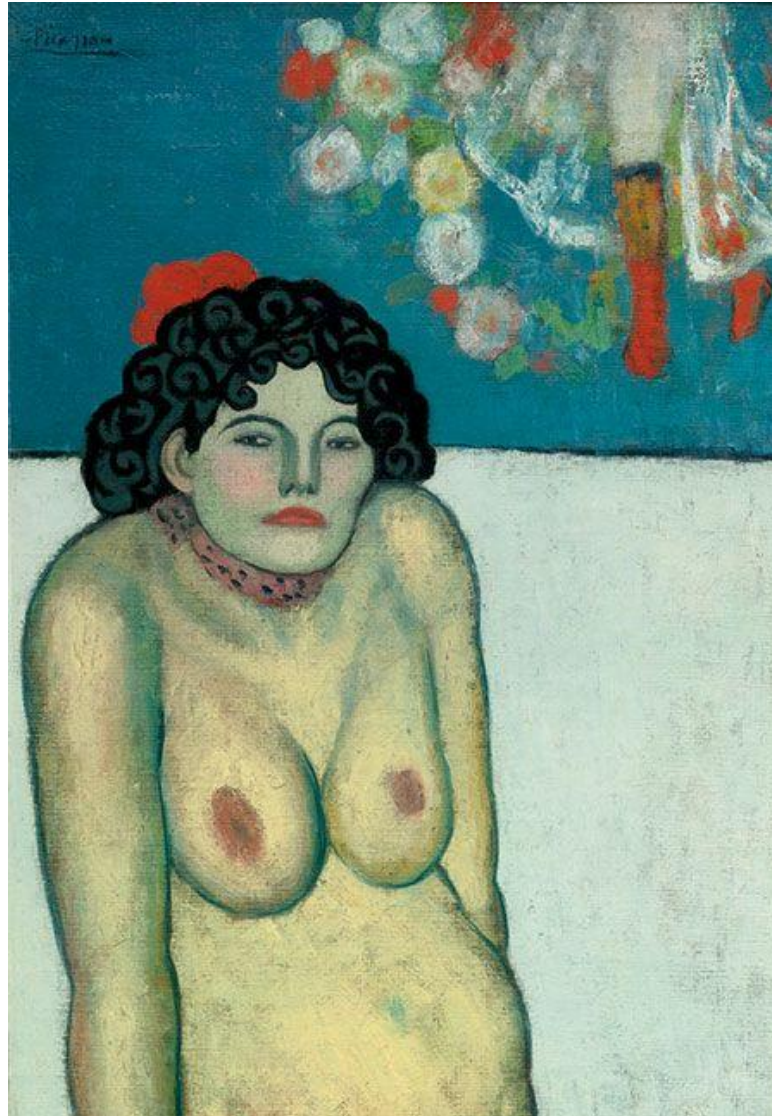
The gommeuse's association with the cocotte (woman of "easy virtue") is reinforced here, with the décolleté red dress on the cover capturing the gommeuse's sexual allure.



Toulouse Lautrec, Polaire, 1895

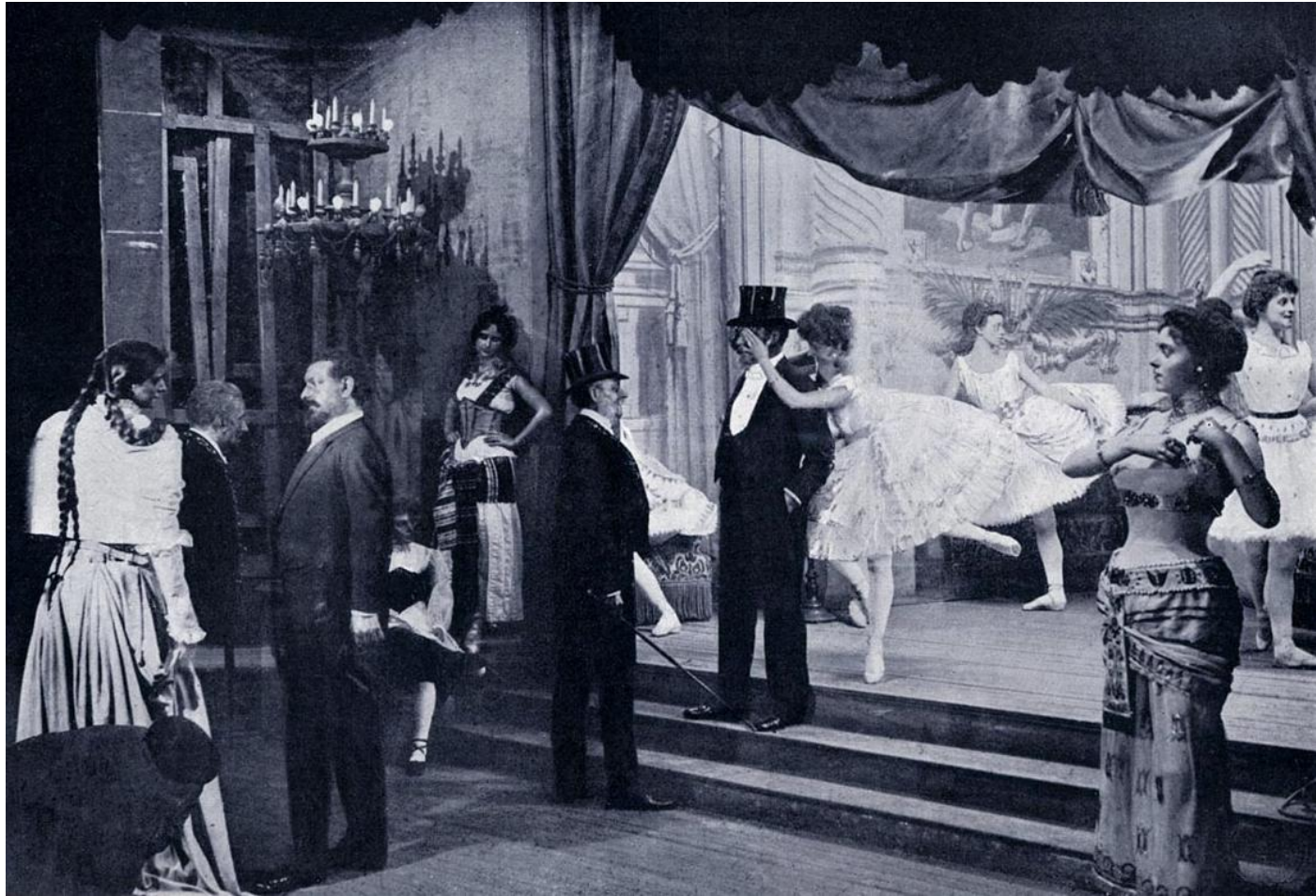


Picasso, La Gommeuse (epileptic dancer), 1901



Picasso (signed Ruiz, before he changed his surname to Picasso)





Popular ball at the Moulin Rouge

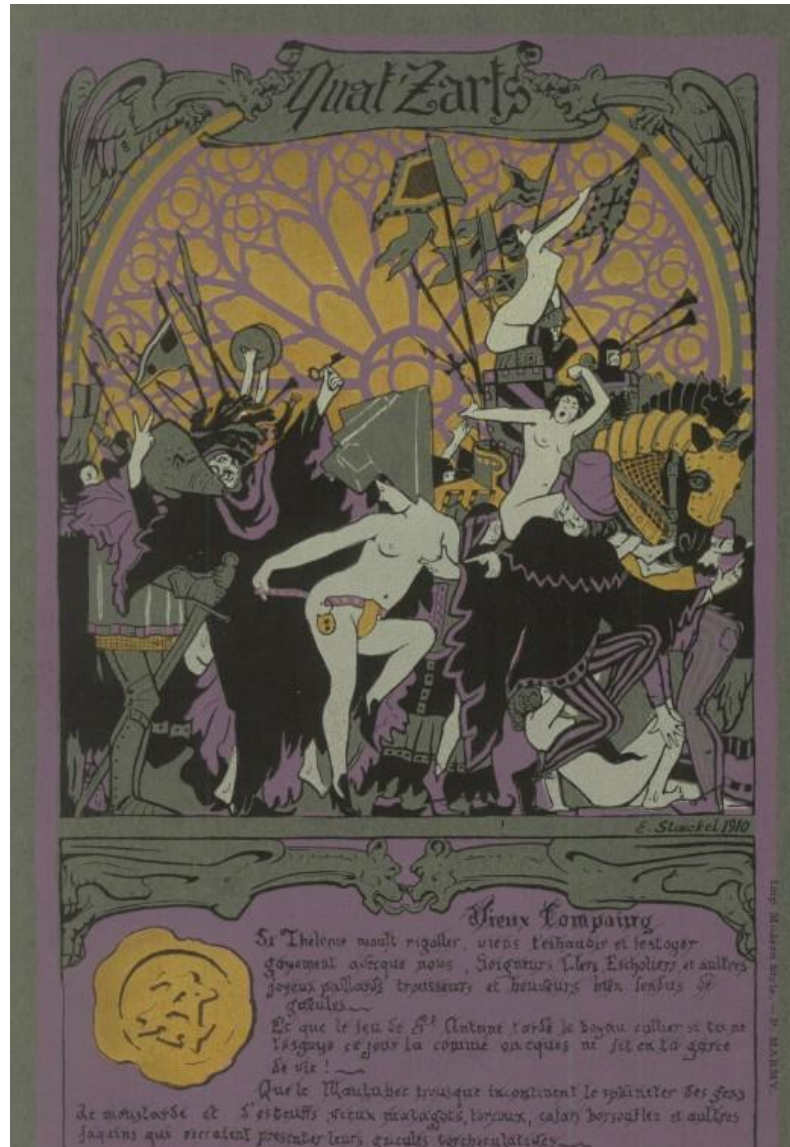


Poster
advertising
a popular
students'
ball, winter
1894

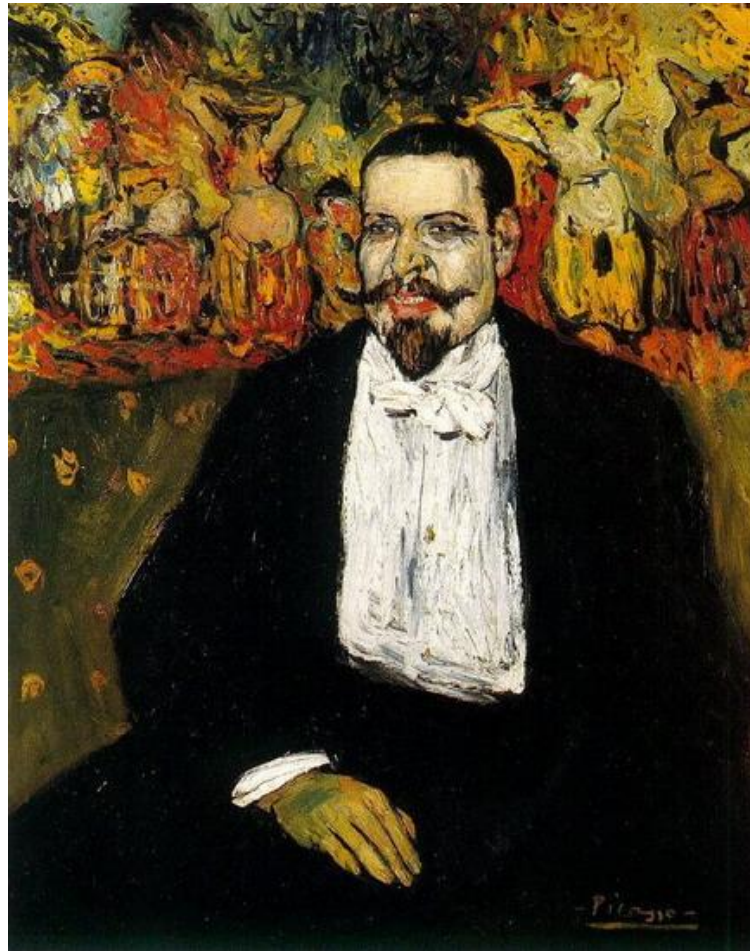




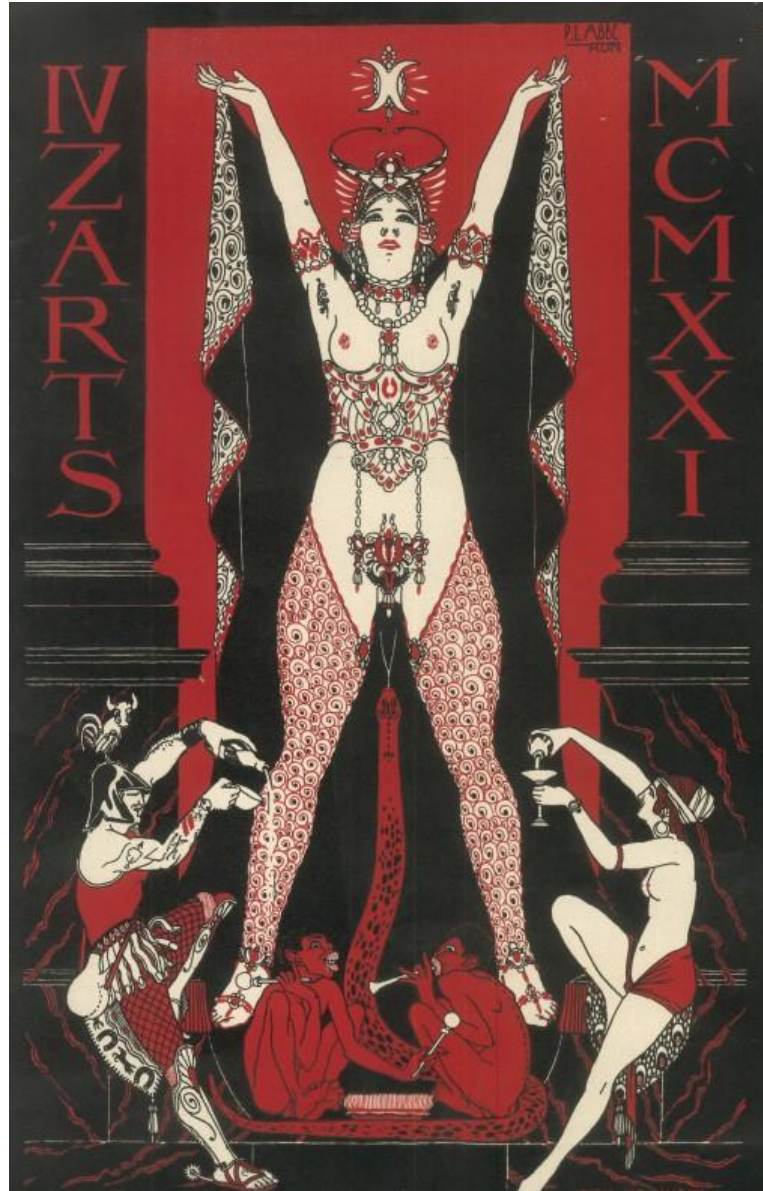
Invitation card to the artists' ball where the female guests attended nude

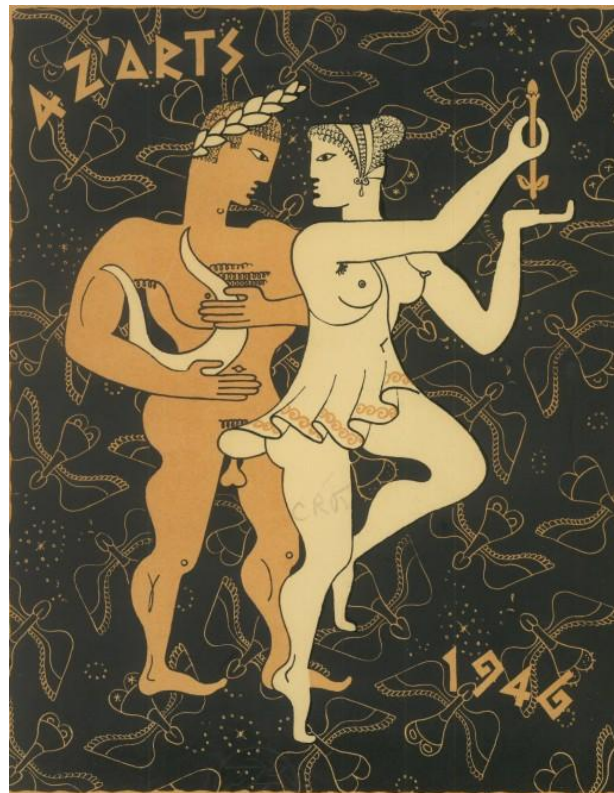


Picasso, Coquiot grinning at women performing in various stages of undress, 1901



Invitation card to the artists' ball





Jean Koch et Robert



LE HEROS QUI SE PRESENTERA HECTORTILLE COMME VA
 LAOCOON ENTREERA-T-IL LE 20 JVIN A WAGRAM ?
 Δ GΔ MΔM NON ?
 PROPOSEIDON PLUTO D'ALLER L'ETANDROMAQUE... Δ DAME

La Comité décline sa responsabilité des poursuites que pourrait
 entraîner l'exhibition du nu sur la voie publique. 1946

Yvette Guilbert at the Ambassadeurs

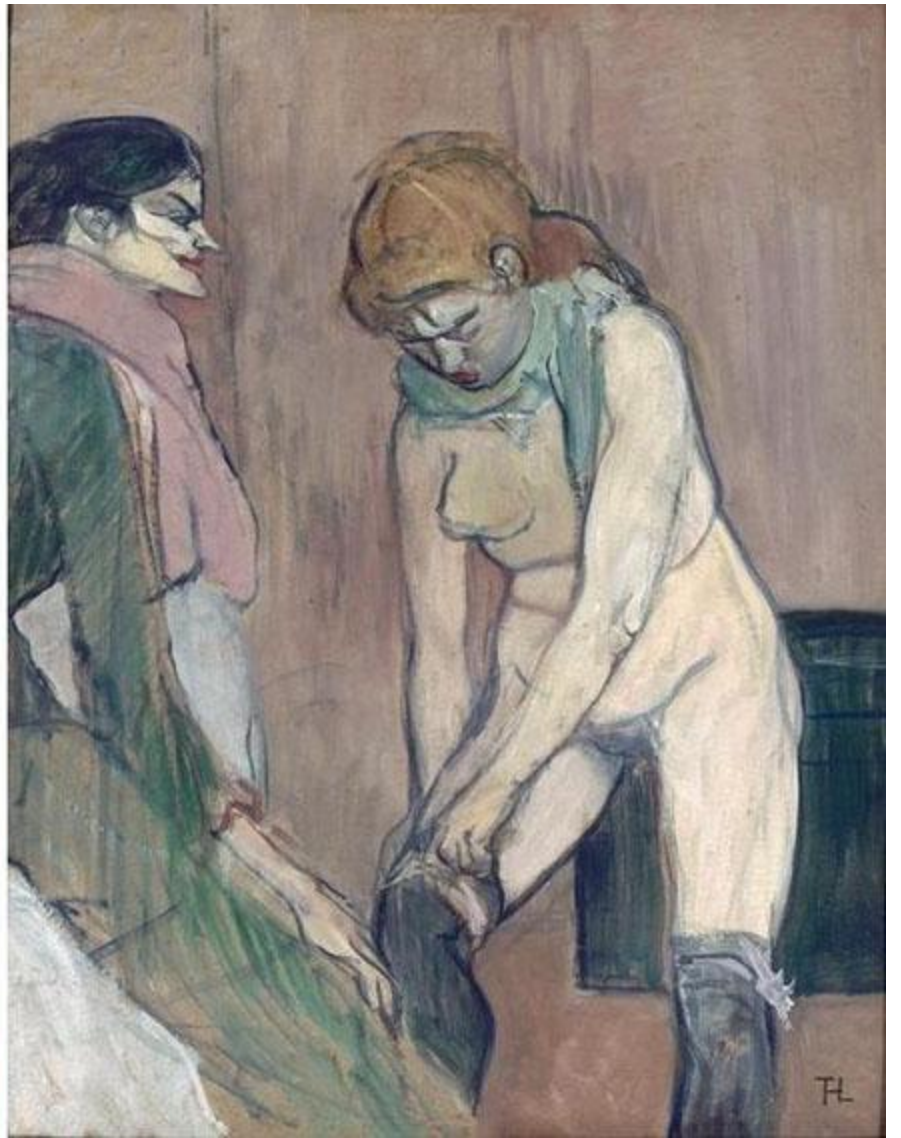


Prostitution during the Belle Epoque

- Between 1880 and 1914, Paris was the capital of pleasure.
- There were 224 bordellos in Paris during the Belle Epoque (vs. 100 in 1946 when they were outlawed)
- The prostitutes were checked regularly by doctors
- Ranks of sex workers: grisette, cocotte, demi-mondaine
- They saw up to 60 clients a day



Toulouse Lautrec, *Salon at the rue des Moulins*, 1894

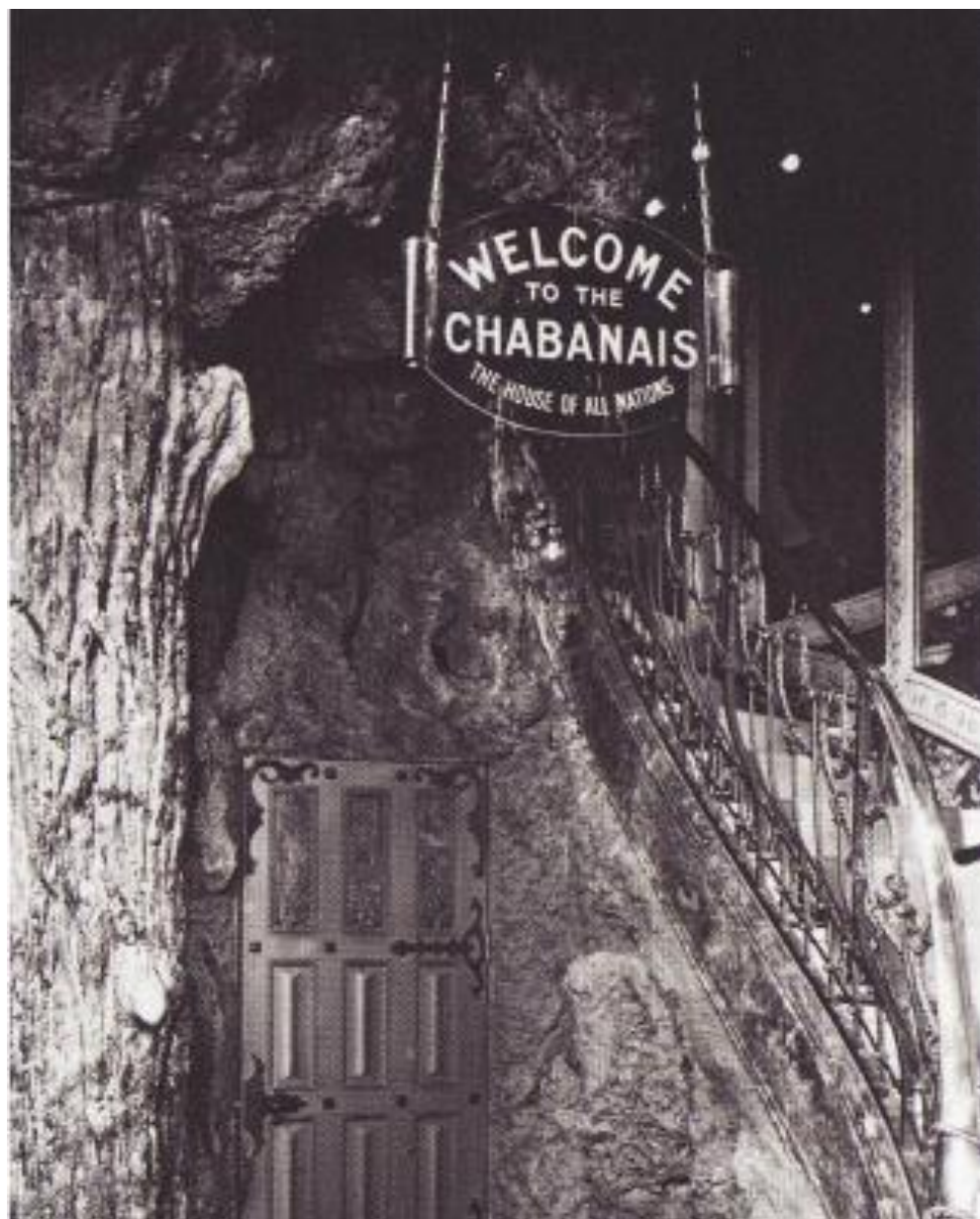




Brothel business card



- Even the street names reflected the business happening there: rue du Petit Musc in the Marais was called, until the 18th century, rue de la Pute-y-Muse (prostitute who muses)



Le Chabanaise

- **A grotto-like lodge/brothel founded in 1878**
- **Decorated with gilded mosaics, rocks and a noisy waterfall, it was the most sumptuous pleasure house of 1900s Europe**

Guests included Albert, Prince of Wales (later Edward VII of the United Kingdom); Toulouse-Lautrec; Cary Grant; Humphrey Bogart, Mae West and diplomatic guests of the French government.

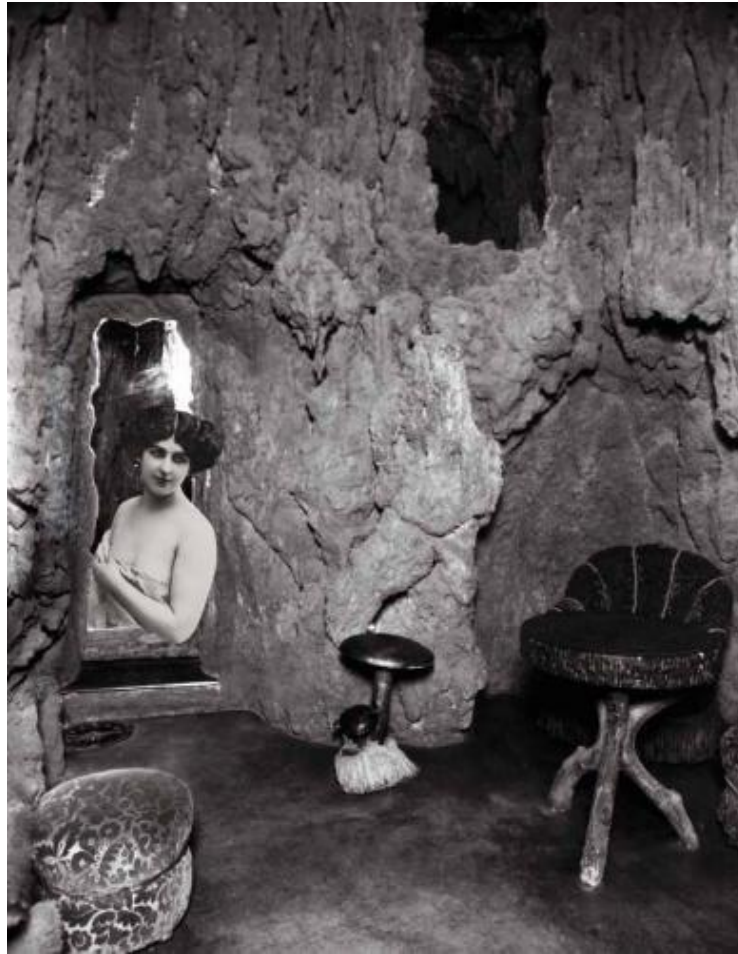
- Important people flocked to the Chabanais on special occasions.
- Ex. On the evening of the opening of the 1889 Universal Exhibit (when the Eiffel Tower was first unveiled), the Japanese-themed room in the brothel won a special prize for the quality of its décor.







The grotto entrance



Caricature of Eduard VII with bordel workers



Eduard VII's bath in his private room at
the Chabanaais. He filled it with
champagne



12 rue Chabanaïs today





A lorette meeting a client.



Many lorettes dreamed of becoming a
“grande horizontale” (great horizontal
aka courtesan)



High class courtesan Valtesse de la Bigne

She began life as a poor seamstress, changed her name and learn the etiquette of the higher classes

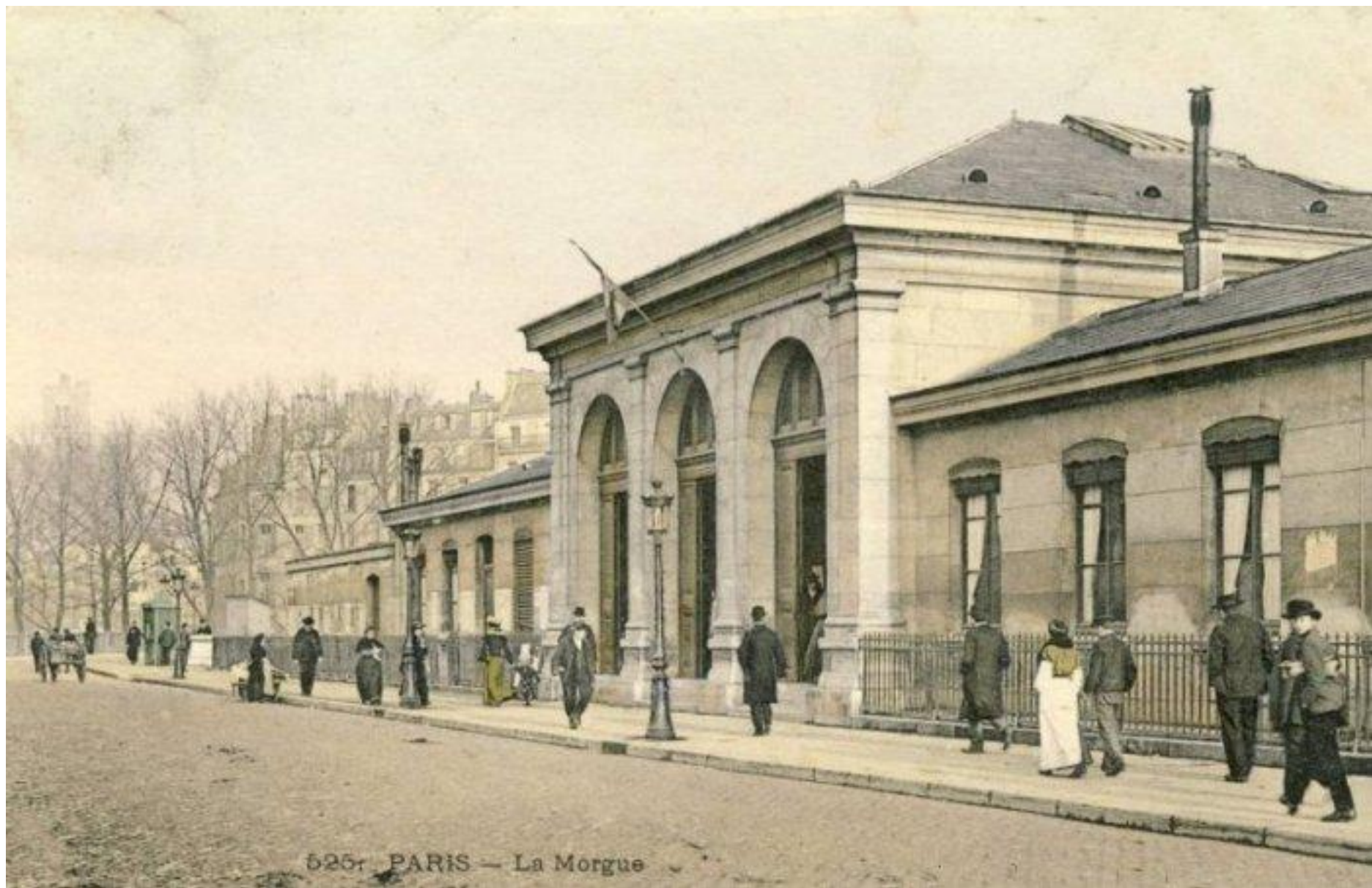
The Valtesse became one of the most sought-after courtesans, meeting her 'clients' in classy restaurants such as La Perouse

Valtesse's bed, said to be visited more than the Eiffel Tower



Part 2: Morgue Tourism and Macabre Nightclubs





5257 PARIS — La Morgue

Parisian Morgue Tourism, Harper's Weekly, 1874





Vue intérieure de la Morgue en 1855.

In *Thérèse Raquin* Zola perfectly captures the popular appeal of the morgue, with all of its grisly drama and spectacle:

“The Morgue is a spectacle within the reach of all pockets, free for all, the poor and the rich. The door is open, anyone who wishes enters. There are fans who make detours so as not to miss a single representation of death. When the slabs are empty, people leave disappointed, robbed, mumbling under their breath. When the slabs are well furnished, when there is a good display of human flesh, the visitors crowd each other, they provide cheap emotions, they scare one another, they chat, applaud or sniffle, **as at the theatre**, and then they leave satisfied, declaring that the Morgue was a success, that day”

Henri Gervex, An autopsy at the Morgue, 1872 (the dead man has clearly died of starvation)





LES PERSONNES
QUI RECONNAITRAIENT
QUELQU'UN SONT
PRIÉES DE L'INFORMER
LE GARDIEN

L'inconnue de la Seine, thought to be a suicide victim



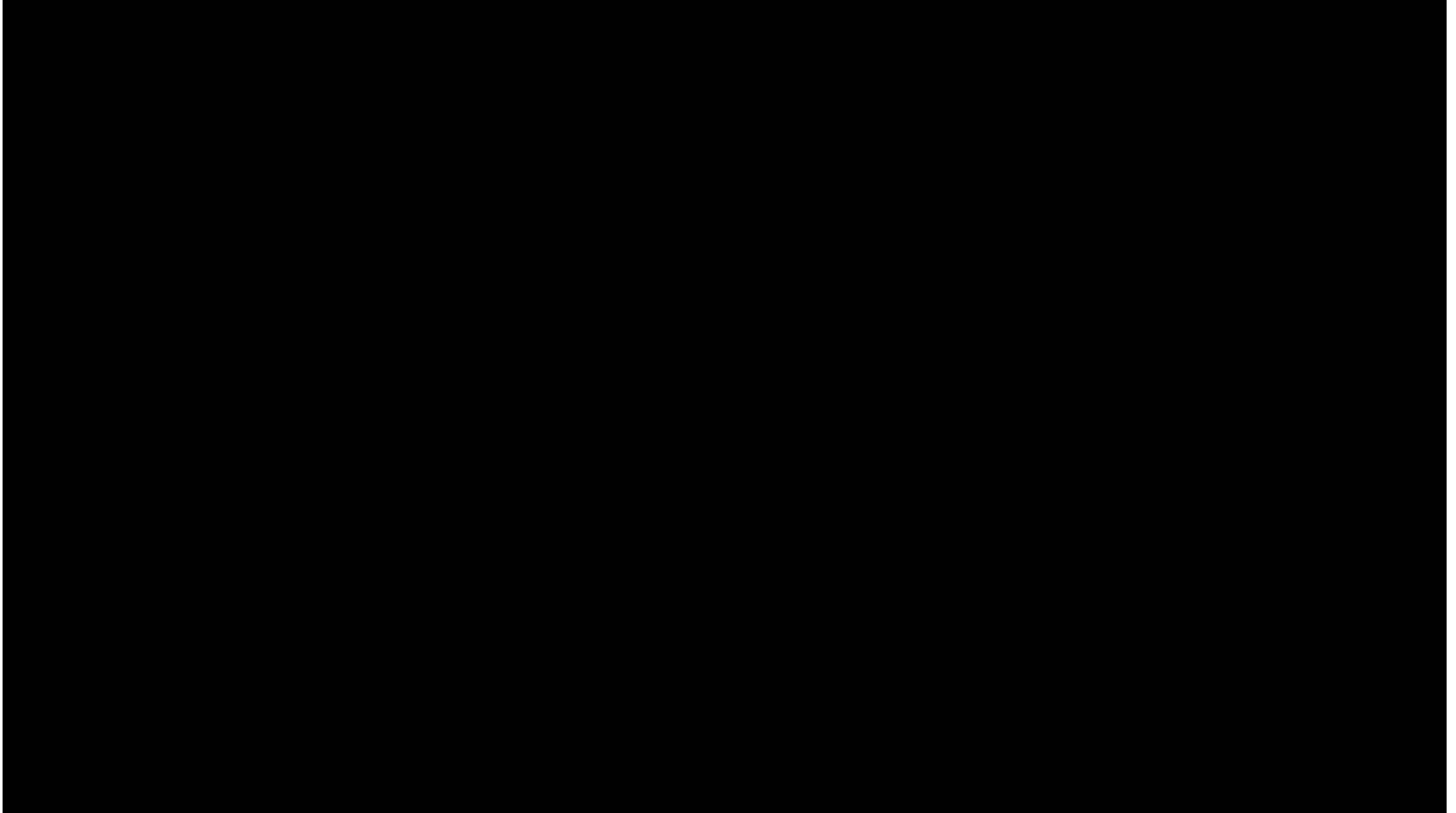
Unclaimed little girl in the mysterious death of the
rue Vert Bois on the cover of the newspaper



The CABARET DE L'ENFER (Cabaret of Hell) with as entrance a *fanged, open mouth and molten gold and silver running down the wall crevices.*



Entrance to ENFER (Hell) nightclub in 1882



Human bone chandelier at the Cabaret



CABARET DU NÉANT - Paris-Montmartre
n° 2. Lampadaire funéraire



Promotional Photo for the Cabaret du Ciel



Owner of the macabre clubs, dressed as a devil



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