

lesbian episode in his novel *The Rainbow* on material gleaned indirectly from Mansfield. While some have denied any lesbian component to Mansfield's personality, the cumulative evidence makes this denial unlikely, and she is probably best regarded as bisexual.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Claire Tomalin,
Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life, New
York: Knopf, 1987.

Evelyn Gettone

MARDI GRAS AND MASKED BALLS

Both of pagan-Christian descent, they survive in only a few places today. Carnavalesque observances of this kind have long homosexual associations.

Historical Development. Mardi Gras and masked balls are not so very distant cousins, stemming from a union of pagan religious-theatrical festival and Christian tradition. The ancient Greek *Anthesteria*, honoring Dionysus with a boisterous mid-February revel in which celebrants, costumed as satyrs and maenads, drank, danced, feasted, and fornicated, later blended with the Roman *Februa* and *Lupercalia*. Held at the same time of year, the latter two rituals centered on protecting villagers and livestock from wild animal molestation and on insuring fertility. In earlier centuries, young nobles, acting as priests and called *creppi* or "he-goats," chased naked youths, representing wolves, through grain fields in a sort of reverse-molestation rite. The chase climaxed in festal drinking, feasting, and ceremonial sacrifice of dogs (wolves) and goats. Celebration of this festival continued until A.D. 494 when the church, unable to suppress it, shrouded it in religious garb as the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin. But many of the common people continued the old celebration.

Similarly, the masking associated with Greek and Roman drama, which itself had originated in music, song, and dance in honor of Dionysus, survived in

medieval mystery, miracle, and morality plays, and in more altered form, in mummers' plays and morris dances. A small gilded beard instead of a full mask, for example, served in the Middle Ages to identify St. Peter. Italy's medieval theatre retained a particularly high degree of spectacular and magnificent display, as well as use, in street processions, of "players' wagons" from the old Roman carnival tradition.

Because medieval religious drama focused on the Easter passion, Holy Week would normally have been the time for most of that age's theatrical presentations and their associated festivities. But the forty-day pre-Easter period of Lenten fasting and abstinence imposed by the church in the seventh century precluded that possibility. Instead, Lent effectively separated the devotional elements of theatre from the festive. The devotional elements were reserved for Holy Week itself, and the feasting and festive elements were made to precede the beginning of Lent.

Thus the pre-Lenten festivities fell during the time of year still associated, in the minds of many people, with the old pagan holiday. Thus evolved the tradition of plunging into fleshly indulgence during the days immediately preceding Lent. The last day for such worldly indulgence, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday (which begins the Lenten season, and on which Catholics go to confession and are forgiven the sins committed in days previous), became the high point of the new festival. Hence *Mardi gras*, or "Fat Tuesday" in French alludes to a fatted ox paraded through the streets on that day, before being butchered for feasting. In England the day is called Shrove, Shrift, or Confession Tuesday, and in the Germanies *Fas-tendienstag* or *Fastnacht* for the fasting required out of religious obligation to follow that day. Common in medieval Europe, and extravagant by the time of the Renaissance, Mardi Gras celebrations survived the sixteenth-century religious reformations only in Catholic Europe, for

Protestantism either abandoned Lent altogether or so weakened its strictures as to make any pre-Lenten fleshly indulgence pointless. In England, for example, the only remaining vestige of the festival is a now near-forgotten tradition of eating buttered pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.

On the other hand, the Reformation did not affect the tradition of masking. Renaissance princes and nobles took theatrical performances out of the hands of clerics, secularized them, and made them into court spectacles and masquerades. The anonymity afforded by masks soon made masked balls, as well as individual masking for an evening on the town, the rage of Europe. So masked, a Romeo could infiltrate the household of his love; a Turk could move unobserved; and a **Henri III** of France could accost boys in Paris dives. The practice migrated from the continent to England, beginning in 1717 when the Swiss entrepreneur John James Heidegger organized public masked balls at the Haymarket Theatre in London.

For the most part, both Mardi Gras and masked balls died with the *ancien régime* at the end of the eighteenth century. Mardi Gras survived the nineteenth century to continue into the twentieth in only a few Catholic cities, most notably in **Venice**, **Munich**, and **Cologne**; on certain Caribbean islands, where it acquired many African attributes; in Rio de Janeiro, where it was heavily influenced by both African and American Indian tradition; and in **New Orleans**, where, while incorporating a number of African and Indian elements, it preserved more of its original European form.

In **Sydney, Australia**, the local Gay Pride March was moved from wintry June to late-summer February and became the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras, which is now the city's largest annual street parade.

New Orleans. The Louisiana city was the only place where masked balls continued into modern times in an unbroken tradition. Begun as private affairs in the mid-1700s, when the city was the

rough-and-tumble capital of France's frontier Louisiana colony, masked balls represented little more than stylish imitations of the mother country's social forms. But before the end of the eighteenth century, public dance halls adopted the trappings of masque and rented simple disguises to those among their patrons who failed to bring their own. After the United States purchased Louisiana from Napoleon in 1803 and began trying, largely unsuccessfully, to force its Anglo-Protestant values and racial attitudes on carefree, tolerant, French, Catholic New Orleans, the masked balls took on a new importance for the city's natives. Behind their masks and under their cloaks, rich and poor, black and white, free and slave, straight and gay could meet and mingle, safe from authorities. Along with "quadron balls," public dance halls run by free people of color but to which white men regularly went in quest of free black mistresses, masked balls flourished until the Civil War ended slavery in the 1860s. Vestiges of the masque tradition remain today, not only in the markedly high degree of **transvestism** seen in New Orleans streets, but in the pronounced and unparalleled delight that the local population, black as well as white, takes in the inordinate number of female impersonators featured by straight nightclubs throughout the city.

New Orleans' masked balls also bore, historically, a direct relationship to the city's Mardi Gras. Celebrated since the original French colonizers landed at the mouth of the Mississippi River on Fat Tuesday of 1699, Carnival came under hostile attacks from the city's new American masters after the Louisiana Purchase. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the ballrooms, of which the "Salle de St. Louis" and the "Café de Paris" were particularly notorious for their racial and sexual mix, served as meeting and robing places for groups bent upon holding Mardi Gras masques and parades.

Unable to stamp out Mardi Gras, the ruling American elite changed its tac-

tic, and in 1857 simply coopted the holiday. By the end of the century it had tied Carnival into the world of New Orleans high society. The Mardi Gras season became the social season; debutantes reigned, and continue to reign today, as queens of the fifty or more "krewes," the Carnival organizations that hold parades; and the spectacular masked balls to which the parades lead function as the city's debutante parties.

The pageantry and costuming, the anonymity of masking, and the freewheeling tolerance and sexual permissiveness characteristic Carnival made it a natural attraction for homosexuals. From early on, individuals as well as organized groups took part in the festival, first with greater decorum and later with greater abandon. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, groups of affluent young men, still dressed in white-tie formals from balls the night before, drank, sang, and danced together in the streets on Mardi Gras day, but went little further.

Black celebrants, on the other hand, showed considerably more exuberance. A group of black transvestites calling themselves "The Million Dollar Dolls," made Carnival appearances from the 1920s through the 1940s dressed in extravagant wigs, sequined blouses, and leotards covered with hundreds of one-dollar bills. In 1931 the King of Zulu, the major black Carnival krewe, chose as his queen one of the city's most outrageous female impersonators. And the relationships of the *runners*, *spy boys*, and *flag boys*, youths who attend the needs of the *braves* of the nine famous, and curious, straight, black, all-male Carnival groups called "Indians," are reminiscent of the relationships between ancient Greek warriors and their young pages.

In 1959 a number of individuals who had been masking in groups for some years formally organized the first gay Mardi Gras krewe, Yuga-Duga. Established *ad hoc* as a mockery of straight krewes and balls, it caught on and lasted a rocky three

years, including a police raid on its first ball, only to disband in 1962. But other gay krewes, intent upon establishing permanent social organizations, immediately formed. By the end of the eighties, there were twelve, including one all-female organization. The gay krewes now closely copy, and often equal in size and wealth, the straight krewes they once parodied. Each holds a series of "King Cake" parties that begin on Twelfth-night (January 6) and end at Mardi Gras; some have elaborate parades. All stage, during Carnival season, huge masked balls featuring spectacular tableaux that rival, or sometimes surpass, their straight counterparts. The gay balls fill the five weeks before Mardi Gras day. Though technically private affairs, the balls fill with invited guests, most of whom are straight, the 2,000-plus-seat civic arenas in which they are held. This popularity makes them, far and away, the largest regularly scheduled gay social events in the world.

Lucy J. Fair

MARÉES, HANS VON (1837-1887)

German painter. Marées was born into comfortable circumstances in Dessau, where his father was a jurist and poet and his mother a cultivated scion of a Jewish banking family. After study with Karl Steffek in Berlin in 1853-54, he gravitated to Munich, then Germany's premier center of artistic culture. There he struck up a friendship with the society painter Franz von Lenbach, who in 1864 took him to Italy where Marées subsisted for a time making copies of the Old Masters. Since the time of Goethe, Italy had been the promised land of sensitive Germans, and Marées, even more loyal than the Italo-philic painters of the time (the "Deutsch-Römer"), was to remain there for the rest of his life—except for the period 1869-73 which he passed in Berlin and Dresden. Italian landscapes and Italian men (especially peasants and fishermen)—together