

EROTIC FRENCH POSTCARDS FROM THE EARLY 1900S (NSFW)



08.10.2016

[Angelou](#)

[Jean](#)

Erotic postcards were the pornography of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Small pocket-sized cards with a risqué photograph on one side and a postcard design on the other. They were mainly produced in Paris—which led to their appellation “French postcards.” Despite their name these postcards were never intended to be sent via the mail. Posting one could have led to a charge of obscenity, a hefty fine and a possible term in gaol. They were collectible erotica—sold through bookshops and photographic studios and certain gentlemen’s

establishments. Due to their pornographic nature, the cards were sold surreptitiously—quite literally under the counter and discretely hidden in brown paper bags.

The earliest French postcards date from circa 1870s. These featured clothed or semi-clothed women posing like classic Greek statues. By the 1900s, the images were far more provocative and titillating. The women were usually naked or captured disrobing in their boudoirs—Peeping Tom porn—adding a frisson of voyeurism to the mix.

[Jean Angelou](#) (1878-1921) was a one of the best-known photographers of nude and erotic photography. He was a master of producing the perfect French postcard. He photographed models in his studio, using only daylight to illuminate the scene. He had his favorite models—including his lover [Fernande Barrey](#) (who also posed for Modigliani) and the theatrical star Maud d'Orbay. The photographs were generally made by a creative collaboration between model and photographer.

By today's standards Agélou's photographs would not look out of place in a copy of Vanity Fair or the American Apparel catalog. In 1908, France outlawed nude photographs—which made Agélou's postcards all the more desirable.

Agélou's erotic postcards were printed and distributed by his brother Georges. Due to the clandestine nature of the work, it is difficult to assess how many erotic photographs Agélou actually produced during his brief lifetime—which makes his work all the more collectible today. Jean and Georges were killed in a car accident in 1921.





Fernande—Agelou's favorite model and lover.



Maud d'Orby—a singer, dancer and star of operetta.





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J. H.
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A. R.
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