

The Absolute Gender: Androgynous Image of Louis XIV in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*

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I . Introduction	V . The Absolute Gender for the Absolute Monarch
II . The Rising Sun: the abstract and cross-gendered roles of Louis XIV	VI . Conclusion Bibliography Abstract
III . The Young Monarch	
IV . The Female Quality in Costumes and Verse	

I. Introduction

Le Ballet de la Nuit-- performed in Salle de Petit Bourbon, Paris, 23rd February 1653 is known for marking the end of the Fronde, a civil war (1648-1652/3).¹⁾ Among a series of art works celebrating the defeat of the Fronde, *Le Ballet de la Nuit* represents Louis XIV as a rising sun who gives light and color to the world, extinguishing disorder which dictates the Fronde. However, contrast to the image of a glorious victor who is a tough and muscular commander, Louis XIV was only fourteen. Moreover, during the civil war, he had to flee from his palace in Paris, and only could re-enter the city in October

1) Lincoln Kirstein(1984). *Four centuries of ballet: fifty masterworks* (New York: Dover Publications), pp. 74-75. Also see Charles Silin(1940). *I. Benserade and his Ballets de cour* (The Johns Hopkins press), p. 219. And Peter Burke (1992). *The fabrication of Louis XIV.* (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 40-41.

1652.²⁾

This image of a teenager intimidated by his people is a striking contrast to the popular conception of Louis XIV, known as an absolute monarch claiming “L’état, c’est moi.” It must have been hard work to change his image from that of a poor child needing permission to return to his own palace to that of an absolute monarch, and *Le Ballet de la Nuit* was, quit possibly, the first step in this process of the drastic change.

Here, I ask my research questions: how did the image of Louis XIV in *Le Ballet de la Nuit* contribute to establishing an absolute monarch image, and how did gender representation relate to this contribution? To answer these questions, I divided them into several sub-questions: what is the gender representation of Louis XIV in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*? What is the relevance of his age(fourteen years old) to the gender representation of Louis XIV? Did Louis XIV appear to be androgynous; if so, what is the cultural significance of this representation?

A review of the literature reveals that there have been several scholarly works which view the dances of Louis XIV as being androgynous. Mark Franko, in his “Double Bodies: Androgyny and Power in Performances of Louis XIV,” suggests that for the first decade in the reign of Louis XIV he played “cross-dressing roles between 1651 and 1668.”³⁾ According to Franko, Louis XIV’s “transgressive appearance” connects to Louis XIV’s feminized body presentation. In addition, king’s feminized body presentation juxtaposes against his glorious reality and “terrifying agency.”⁴⁾ Chris Roebuck, in “‘Queering’ the King: A Remedial Approach to Reading Masculinity in

2) Geoffrey Treasure(1995). *Mazarin: the crisis of absolutism in France* (London; New York: Routledge), p. 200.

3) Mark Franko(1994). Double Bodies: Androgyny and Power in Performances of Louis XIV, *The Drama Review* 38(4), p. 73.

4) Ibid., p. 79.

Dance,” carefully suggests that the figure of Louis XIV can be read through a historically sensitized queer theory.⁵⁾ Roebuck states “His [Louis XIV’s] body, with its sexual signification masked by his costumes, is transformed into a hollow and genderless political vessel.”⁶⁾ Roebuck’s account articulates that Louis XIV’s male body is obscure in a ballet performance, and that his genderless body is linked to his political being. At this point, I put forth following questions: In *Le Ballet de la Nuit*, how is Louis XIV’s male body presented as feminine or genderless? How is his gendered body obscured? How does his gender representation connect to his terrifying being?

In this study, rather than discussing theoretical or conceptual issues like the scholars above, I focus on examining one specific production, *Le Ballet de la Nuit*, to view the concrete instances closely relating to the current issue of androgyny. Through the discussion, I will theorize that the androgynous body of the king presented an absolute gender: A plentitude-- rather than a lack-- a transcendent, extraordinary, and perfect being, or an ideal body. However, I anticipate contradictory evidence against my assumption, because creators, performers, and consumers of the ballet might tell me different stories which have their own reasons and logic. Rather than ignoring the conflicts between sources as if they do not exist, I try to find meanings I can acquire from multiple voices.

My analysis will be restricted to visual sources, such as sketches of costumes and portraits, Issac Bensenard’s libretto, and contemporary accounts including Gazette de France, through which Louis XIV’s contemporary public image was formed. I will use video viewing of reconstructed dances⁷⁾ to help my general understanding of the dances rather than taking the video as the

5) Chris Roebuck(2004). ‘Queering’ the King: A pemedial Approach to Reading Masculinity in Dance, *Rethinking dance history: a reader*, (ed.) Alexandra Carter (London; New York : Routledge), p. 55.

6) Ibid., p. 51.

7) Thames Television(1970). *Ballet for all*, pt. 1 (videotape). London: Thames Television (27 min.). Dance excerpts of Ballet royal de la nuit (1653).

object of close analysis. No source is known as the recording or notation of dance movements in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*. Hence, the dance in the video in question is considered as a reconstructed work based upon assumptions and imagination in many places. Although the video might be useful in attaining the general features of dances of that time, it would be inappropriate using it as an object of close analysis. To narrow my focus on the presentation of the king, I will not consider different versions of *Le Ballet de la Nuit* before 1653 as the object of inquiry. Differentiating from Franko's usage of the term androgyne to refer to the emblematic figure of sexual, racial, and class cross-dressing, I use the term androgyne for a non-gender-specified representation which includes both a genderless image and a two-sex image.

To find both primary sources and secondary sources, I used databases such as Worldcat, Academy Premier, Gender Watch, Project Muse, and JSTOR. Also, I searched through library catalogs such as Temple University Library, University of Pennsylvania Library, the New York Public Library, and Biblioth que National de France. To hunt electronic sources, I used Yahoo and Google search engines. With the sources I retrieved, I first focus on the roles danced by the king.

II. The Rising Sun: the abstract and cross-gendered roles of Louis XIV

In *Le Ballet de la Nuit*, Louis XIV danced six roles including “Heure (I Partie: 1 entrée),” “Le Jeux (II: 2),” “Ardent (III: 6),” “Curieux (III: 11),” “Furieux (IV: 2),” and “Le Soleil Levant (IV: 10).”⁸⁾ All six roles of Louis

8) Heure (Hour), Le Jeux (the sports or games), Ardent (flame), Curieux (curiosity), Furieux (furious), Le Soleil Levant (the rising sun). Issac Benserade (1997). *Ballets pour Louis XIV*. 1.ann. Marie-Claude Canova-Green (Toulouse: Societe de literatures classiques), pp. 97-160. Also see Silin(1940), p. 222. Silin notes that Lully played four roles rather than five roles. I follows Benserade's libretto.

XIV are abstract concepts in their natures: Hour, flame, sports, curiosity, furious (my translation), and the rising sun. The inhuman characters of Louis XIV roles are more salient in comparison with roles of other dancers. For example, Louis de Mollier danced four roles “Estropiez (disabled man, I: 14),” “Ardent (III: 6),” “Curieux (III: 11),” “Furieux (IV: 2)” and Jean Baptiste Lully, danced five roles “Berger (Shepard, I: 5),” a “Soldat (soldier, I: 12-13),” a “Gueux (begger, I: 14),” “une des Trois Grâces (one of the three graces, II: 5 “Les Nopces de Thétis” (The Wedding of Thétis). Here, “Les Nopces de Thétis” is not an individual entity performed in 1654, but it is a *ballet en ballet*, inserted in the middle of the partie deux.),” and a “Sosie (double person: my trans., II: 6).”⁹⁾ While Lully danced roles of human characters with a specific gender, and Mollier danced both a human character and abstract characters; yet, Louis XIV appears only in inhuman characters which do not have a specific gender.

Some might argue that his last role was personified, but I point out that Louis XIV’s last role was named “Le Soleil Levant,” not as “Apollo.” There are conflicting ways in which various scholars inscribe the role. Benserade’s libretto uses the expression “Le Soleil Levant,” while Roebuck uses “Le Roi Soleil” and “Apollo”¹⁰⁾; Alain Gruber “Apollo the sun god”¹¹⁾; Pierre Lartigue “Le Soleil” and “Apollon”¹²⁾; Kirstein “Roi Soleil, sun king”¹³⁾ and “Rising Sun”¹⁴⁾; Cohen “Sun”¹⁵⁾; Franko “rising sun.”¹⁶⁾ Two years before *Le Ballet de*

9) Silin(1940), p. 219.

10) Roebuck(2004), p. 49.

11) Alain Charles Gruber(1994). The Ballet royal de la nuit: a masque at the court of Louis XIV, *Apollo: the international magazine of the arts*. Apr., p. 38.

12) Pierre Lartigue(1984). L’école française de danse: Histoire et traditions-11, *Opéra de Paris*. Paris. no 23, p. 35.

13) Kirstein(1984), p. 74.

14) Ibid., p. 75.

15) Sarah R. Cohen(2000). *Art, dance, and the body in French culture of the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press), Plate II.

16) Franko(1994), p. 77.



<Figure 1> Louis XIV as Le Soleil Levant in *Le Ballet de la Nuit* (1653) by Henri de Gisseys.¹ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes



<Figure 2> “Louis XIV en Jupiter, vainqueur de la Fronde” (1655) by Charles Parson.² Château de Versailles

¹ Henri de Gisseys is the costume designer and the creator of the costume sketch.

² Charles Parson is the artist of the painting.

la Nuit, in *Ballet des Fêtes de Bacchus* (1651), Louis XIV played various figures of Greek myth such as “Bacchante” (Entrée 18), “Titan” (27), “Muse” (29), and a human character “Coquette (Entrée Supprimee).”¹⁷⁾ Benserade’s libretto does not give an explanation why this entrée suppressed or cut (supprimee). Meanwhile, Franko presents that Louis XIV danced “a coquette, a nymph, or a fury” without saying in which ballet it was.¹⁸⁾ However, in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*, his role was not named after a god, not yet personified as “Apollo.” Though the two characters seem similar, Benserade’s librettos of *Le Ballet de la Nuit* and *Les Nopres de Pelée et de Thétis* (1654)¹⁹⁾ inscribe different names of “Le Soleil Levant” and “Apollo.” In contrast with the ballets before and after, in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*, Louis XIV danced abstract characters.

Not only the roles Louis XIV danced, but also roles he did not dance are

17) Benserade(1997), pp. 56-89.

18) Franko(1994), p. 77.

19) Benserade(1997), p. 181.

significant. Considering the Greek mythology the ballet embraced, I wonder why Louis XIV did not appear as Jupiter, the ruler of all gods in Greek mythology. Although *Le Ballet de la Nuit* includes an episode of Jupiter in the second part, the character of Jupiter, though he sits in the highest position in Greek mythology, seems to be far less highlighted than “Le Soleil Levant” danced by Louis XIV. In the episode of the ballet, Jupiter transforms into Amphitruon, a person, the human father of Hercules, masking the divine nature of Jupiter through a human incarnation. Louis XIV’s presence seems to overwhelm the other characters and elevate his abstract “Le Soleil Levant” role higher than personified Jupiter character.

Indeed, one of Louis XIV’s portraits, “Louis XIV en Jupiter, Vainquer de la Fronde” painted by Charles Poerson, shows him as Jupiter, holding lightning bolts in one hand, an eagle sitting at his feet. In this portrait, Louis XIV appears young, without a mustache, a beard, or whiskers just as he appears in the picture of the “Le Roi Soleil” costume in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*. Both the ballet and the portrait celebrate the end of Fronde, yet Louis XIV’s representations in the two are dissimilar. If *Le Ballet de la Nuit* was a celebration of victory in war, why did not Louis XIV choose to be Jupiter, as he did in the portrait? The answer might be found in that Louis XIV danced the ballet at age fourteen.

III. The Young Monarch

Louis XIV’s young age is recognized in several writings including the verses of libretto and official account of *Gazette*. In the “Récit de Vénus (II: 2)” (the narration of Venus), Louis XIV is called “Jeun Louis, le plus grand des Monarques” (young Louis, the greatest of monarchs, my trans.).²⁰⁾ The

²⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 117.



<Figure 3> Reconstruction of the statue of Zeus enthroned by Phidias³ (1990) Perseus Archive C. H. Smith⁴

³ Phidias is the artist of the colossal Zeus statue.

⁴ C. H. Smith is the artist of the painting.

⁵ Henri Testelin is the artist of the painting.



<Figure 4> “Louis XIV in State Robes” (1648) by Henri Testelin.⁵ Portrait of the ten year old King

“Dialogue du Sommeil & [sic.] du Silence (IV: recit)” (the dialogue of the Slumber and the Silence) is read “Tout jeune encore, & [sic.] déjà tout parfait” (all still young, & already all perfect, my trans.).²¹⁾ The *Gazette de France*’s official account of the first performance of *Le Ballet de la Nuit* calls him as “notre jeune monarque” (our young monarch, my trans.).²²⁾

Meanwhile, Jupiter is depicted as a mature man with a white beard and strong naked chest. The most famous visual presentation of Zeus is one of the seven ancient wonders: the colossal Zeus statue made by Pheidias (fl. C. 490-430 BC). Although Pheidias’ Zeus statue had been destroyed by an earthquake after seven or eight centuries, the image of Zeus by Pheidias established “forever general conceptions of Zeus.”²³⁾ A reconstruction of the statue by C.

21) Ibid., p. 143.

22) Gazette de France(1653), p. 222.

23) Encyclopaedia Britannica(2004). *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Chicago, Ill. : Encyclopaedia Britannica.



<Figure 5> "Louis XVI in his coronation robes"(1654) by Joseph-Siffred Duplessis⁶, Musée Carnavalet

⁶ Joseph-Siffred Duplessis is the artist of the painting.

H. smith shows Zeus with a beard and naked muscular chest. On the other hand, around 1653, portraits and drawings show the immature shape of Louis XIV in both the face and body where secondary sex characters (e.g. beard) are not yet observed-- not a woman, but not yet a grown-up man.

I believe that Louis XIV appearing as a non-human, non-gender specific character in the ballet rather was more credible than a strong, muscular, and mature man, in order to emphasize his extraordinary image. Being a dancing creature is different from being a painted feature. It is more difficult for one to fabricate one's natural body as one would do in an idealized painting, which was typical under classicism in the 1600s France. Particularly, paintings and portraits of king employed a grand or magnificent manner, involving idealization.²⁴⁾ Although make-up aids one's disguise, a living/moving body in front of direct gazes is harder to be detached from one's natural body than is a painted figure.

Franko also mentions the particularity of body presentation in court ballet, by

24) Burke(1992), pp. 23-25.

saying it resists “the project of royal self-portraiture.”²⁵⁾ Thus, when he appeared as a dancing being, Louis XIV’s young face and body fit better as a genderless and abstract “Le Soleil Levant” rather than a mature and tough Zeus.

IV. The Female Quality in the Costumes and the Verses

Besides “Le Soleil Levant,” Louis XIV’s first role “Heure” endows him with androgynous quality. Compared to other designs worn by Louis XIV, the costumes design of “Heure” seems to be feminine with a longer skirt, reaching beneath the dancer’s knees, and a lower neckline. According to Max von Boehn’s *Modes and Manners*, the masculine mode of the sixteenth century fashion was different from women’s in that the point was “displaying the legs.”²⁶⁾ Male costume designs for *Ballet de la Nuit* shows “displaying the legs,” with tight trousers and jackets for men reaching middle of one’s thighs. In addition, “the square opening of the bodice”²⁷⁾ was popular in women’s dressing of that time. The long skirt, hiding women’s legs, and square opening, bearing women’s neck and bosom, is repeated in the costume design “Heure.” Still, some might say the skirt of “Heure” is not long enough to be seen as feminine, because it does not entirely cover the legs. However, at least ten female costume designs²⁸⁾ for *Le Ballet de la Nuit* show the same length of skirts, reaching beneath one’s knees.

Not only the costume design, but also verses in the libretto indicate the

25) Franko(1994), p. 76.

26) Max Von Boehn(1932-[1936]). *Modes and manners*. Vol. 2, (Trans. Joan Joshua) (Philadelphia: Lippincott), p. 165.

27) *Ibid.*, p. 167.

28) These designs, retrieved by visiting dance collection in NYPL, include a “Marchande,” two drawings of “Coquette,” three untitled drawings (which look like disabled women), a “tristene,” a “Angelique,” and a “thetis.”



<Figure 6> "France c.1790," A Fashion Plate from Tara Maginnis' collection



<Figure 7> Costume design of "Heure" in *Le Ballet de la Nuit* (1653) by Henri de Gisseys.⁷ Paris, Bibliotheque nationale

⁷ Henri de Gisseys is the costume designer and the creator of the costume sketch.

female character of "Heure." The libretto addresses "Heure" with feminine pronouns, because the French word "Heure" is a feminine noun. The first five lines of the verse for Louis XIV's appearance as "Heure" use feminine articles (la, une), feminine adjectives (belle), and pronoun (elle).

Voicy la plus belle Heure & dans tous les cadrans
 La premiere dessus les r ang,
 Bien qu'en vn mesm e cercle aux douze elle se lie,
 Par dessus toute fois on la void rayonner,
 Elle est mesme du jour l'Heure la plus hardie,

Look at the most beautiful Hour & in all the dials
 The premiere above ranks
 Even as in a same circle it is connected to the twelve
 Over any time one sees to radiate it
 It is same of the day the boldest Hour,

Although the feminine words are the result of rules of French grammar, Louis XIV actually played a female character with the feminine costume. Since "Heure" is the first role Louis XIV danced in the ballet, I argue that the

feminine presentation of the king's male body was significant in shaping his gender representation as androgyny in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*.

V. The Absolute Gender for the Absolute Monarch

Although Louis XIV's gender representation in *Le Ballet de la Nuit* can be confirmed as androgyny, a question still remains: how does Louis XIV's complex gender representation contribute to the image of an absolute monarch? According to Peter Burke, by the year 1654, Louis XIV established the divine character of kingship. Even before his coronation in 1654, Louis XIV regarded himself as already having kingship and holiness, and coronation reinforced these factors, rather than creating them.²⁹⁾ Considering that the ballet existed between the end of Fronde and the coronation, I believe *Le Ballet de la Nuit* functioned as a contribution rather than a hindrance in establishing kingship.



<Figure 8> An emblem from *Le grand bal de la douairiere de Billebahaut* (1626)
London, Victoria and Albert Museum

29) Burke(1992), pp. 42-43.

However, it seems conflicting to view an androgynous quality as an absolute monarch image in a patriarchal society which held masculinity as source of power and control. Mitchell Greenberg confirms that the most suitable allegorical model is the “corps glorieus (male and paternal) of the king.”³⁰⁾ Louis XIV’s young body, which was not yet matured to be a man or a parent, does not fit into the concept of “corps glorieus.” Franko also argues that Louis XIV’s feminized presentation was threatening his power.³¹⁾ On this line of thought, androgyny seems to be inappropriate for the king’s presentation in order to establish an absolute monarch image. Nevertheless, if *Le Ballet de la Nuit* contributes to forming Louis XIV’s absolute monarch image, the reason might be found in the historical situation of France before Louis XIV’s time.

First of all, cross-dressing was familiar to the people of that time, because it had decades of tradition. According to Franko, burlesque ballet which employed emblematic figures of androgyny flourished through the 1620s.³²⁾ Although burlesque ballet was only scarce in Louis XIV’s time, some burlesque roles remained and, Benserade works of 1650s contained stylistic remnants of burlesque.³³⁾ Greenberg also notes that the French culture was familiar with the myth of the androgyn. According to him, the indiscriminate cross-dressers were “ubiquit[ous].”³⁴⁾

Before Louis XIV’s era, not only androgyny was a well-known feature in France, but also king’s androgynous presentation had existed. Franko cites Ernst H. Kantorowicz, who concludes: “what fitted two sexes of an hermaphrodite, fitted juristically also the two bodies of the king.”³⁵⁾ Moreover,

30) Mitchell Greenberg(2001). *Baroque bodies: psychoanalysis and the culture of French absolutism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 111.

31) Franko(1994), p. 79.

32) Ibid., p. 71.

33) Ibid., p. 72.

34) Greenberg(2001), p. 117.

35) Franko(1994), p.78. Franko also suggests that Louis III was “pictured as androgynous.” Ibid., p.73.

androgyny, which relates to king's presentation, signified something transcendent and extraordinary. "In France," Franko asserts, "one could think of it as a double-body doctrine whose effects pertain not to king's representation, but to his agency beyond the law."³⁶⁾ Greenberg analyzes Plato's account of androgyns where "Zeus decided to cut [androgyns] in two so that they will be diminished in strength."³⁷⁾ If the account is reversed, androgyns are being with transcendental power, because they are told to be stronger than two separate sexes. In his analysis of the myth,³⁸⁾ Greenberg links androgyns to opposite of lack and death which separated two sexes are doomed.³⁹⁾ Thus, androgyny connotes not lack or death, but plenitude or beyond the law of ordinary.

In addition, the image of androgynes, not as abnormals but as supernormals, in court ballet served as representation of the union of king's body and the nation, which enables Louis XIV to say "L'état, c'est moi." Kantorowicz's classic study of *The King's Two Bodies* provides the two concepts of "the body natural" or "the body real" and "the body politic"⁴⁰⁾ which are useful in explaining the mystification of the kings' body. The body natural is the mortal aspect of the king, and the body politic immortal. When the body natural emblemize the bodies to his subjects as nation, the absolutism operates. While applying Kantorowicz's concepts to Louis XIV's cross-dressing, Franko asserts that Louis XIV stands for his real body while dancing in the mystical role-- his political body. Franko discusses how the supernormal androgynes, to which he refers "celestes Androgynes," had been presented as the union king's body and the nation in court ballet. For example, Franko

36) Ibid., p. 77.

37) Greenberg(2001), p. 119.

38) Franko(1994), p. 74.

39) Ibid., p. 121.

40) Ernst E. Kantorowicz(1957). *The King's Two Bodies: A study in Medieval Political Theology* (Prinston: Prinston University Press), p. 198. Quoted in Franko(1994), p. 74.

introduce the verses for the “Ballet of Androgynes” in *Le Ballet de Madame* (1615) which illustrate the celestes Androgynes who personify the nation as unification with the king’s body.⁴¹⁾ Upon the such tradition of “celestes Androgynes” in court ballet, Louis XIV’s genderless or two-gender image could have transcendental connotation, rather than abnormality.

Furthermore, it was not only male bodies which were related to the unification of king’s body and the nation, but also female bodies. Because Louis XIV was only five years old when Louis III died, Anne of Austria the “Queen Mother” had exercised actual power for about ten years. In the libretto of *Le Ballet de la Nuit*, the praise of beauty and victory over the Fronde was consecrated to the Queen Mother.⁴²⁾ According to Burke, one of the paintings for celebrating the defeat of the Fronde shows an image of the goddess Juno striking the city of Troy with a thunderbolt. The painting was clearly intended to make the spectators think of Paris and the Queen Mother.⁴³⁾ Joan Dejean also connects portrayals of female power during Anne of Austria’s regency to representation of amazons and cross-dressing.⁴⁴⁾

What’s more, even before Ann of Austria, there were other female rulers in France who were portrayed as representative of the nation. Sarah Cohen shows how royal females of Louis III’s and Henri IV’s iconize themselves in paintings, equalizing themselves and the nation.⁴⁵⁾ She analyzes portraits of Marie de Médicis, queen of Henri IV and mother of Louis III, and other royal women, concluding that “the paradoxes of gender ambiguity and transformation” served the monarch, and androgynous presentations were

41) Franko(1994), p. 75.

42) Silin(1940), p. 219.

43) Burke(1992), p. 41.

44) Joan Dejean(1991). *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 26.

45) Sarah R. Cohen(2003). Ruben’s France: Gender and Personification in the Marie de Médicis Cycle. *Art Bulletin* 35(3), September.



<Figure 9> "The Coming of Age of Louis XIII"(1622-25) by Peter Paul Rubens.⁸ Paris, Musée du Louvre



<Figure 10> "the Felicity of the Regency"(1625) by Peter Paul Rubens.⁹ Paris, Musée du Louvre

⁸ Peter Paul Rubens is the artist of the painting.

⁹ Peter Paul Rubens is the artist of the painting.

beneficial demonstrations.⁴⁶⁾ In both case of kings and queens, androgynous presentations functioned as beneficial factors for establishing transcendent and extraordinary images of the monarchs.

VI. Conclusion

Louis XIV, who needed to out shine the nobles of the Fronde, formulated in *Ballet de la Nuit*, through androgynous gender representation, an ideal and perfect self-image. His male body was masked by genderless and abstract characters rather than Greek god's personification. Dancing a cross-dressing role as his first appearance in the ballet, Louis XIV strongly presented his feminine aspect, which was fused with his male body. Louis XIV androgynous

46) Ibid., p. 517.

gender representation served to mold his transcendent image, rather than descended as an abnormal or disabled being, because of the decades old tradition of cross-dressing in the 1600s France. Androgyny portraits of kings and queens, which united the monarch's natural body to the nation, supported Louis XIV's body as "celestes androgyny." Claiming "L'etat, c'est moi" and embodying the mother nation, as an absolute monarch Louis XIV portraits androgyny. In his representation, androgyny is shown as a plentitude rather than a lack a transcendent, extraordinary, and perfect being, or an ideal body.

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Abstract

절대군주의 절대젠더: 「밤의 발레(Le Ballet de la Nuit)」에 나타난 루이 14세의 양성성 이미지

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본 연구는 하나의 구체적인 발레작품, 「밤의 발레」(1653)의 분석을 통하여 당시 정치적으로 미완숙한 단계였던 루이 14세가 어떻게 절대군주로서의 첫 걸음을 시작하였는가를 살피는 데 중점을 둔다. 태양왕으로서 루이 14세의 이미지는 국가와 전 국민 위에 군림하는 강력한 것이지만, 그 태양왕의 이미지를 성립하는데 결정적인 역할을 하였던 「밤의 발레」의 초연 당시 루이 14세는 14세 남짓한 소년이었으며 아직 대관식(1654)도 치르지 못했을 만큼 정치적인 존재감이 불안하던 시기였다. 특히 1648년에서 1653년에 걸린 프롱드(Fronde)의 난으로 인하여 루이 14세는 파리에서 나와 도피생활을 해야 했으며 1652년 10월경에야 겨우 다시 루브르로 돌아오게 된다. 수도복귀 후 겨우 4달 후에 이루어진 「밤의 발레」의 공연은 그 기능과 목적이 단순한 여흥 이상임을 암시한다. 그 어마어마한 제작비용과 동원된 수백 명의 인원들, 그리고 9시간의 공연시간(해질녘무렵부터 일출때까지)을 생각할 때 그것이 단순한 여흥의 목적이었다면 대단한 에너지와 시간의 낭비였을 것이다. 본 연구자는 「밤의 발레」의 역사적 정황을 살폈을 때 그 공연에서 성립된 왕의 이미지는 루이 14세의 정치생명에 결정적인 역할을 하였을 것이라는 가설 하에 「밤의 발레」에 나타난 루이 14세의 이미지를 살펴보았다. 특히 당시 14세의 소년으로서 아직 성인 남성의 2차 성징인 수염도 나지 않은 루이 14세의 신체가 어떻게 초월적인 존재로 그려질 수 있었는가에 초점을 맞추었다.

프롱드의 난 직후, 반란을 주도했던 귀족들을 제압할 필요가 있었던 루이 14세는 「밤의 발레」에서 이상적이고 완벽한 이미지 조성을 위해 양성적인 모습을 구현하였다. 「밤의 발레」가 그리스신화의 에피소드와 캐릭터 등을 이용하였음에도 불구하고, 루이 14세의 역할은 그리스신의 캐릭터보다는 오히려 중성적이고 추상적인 성격을 띤다. 특히 첫인상을 결정짓게 할 첫 번째 역할이 cross-dressing role, 즉 이성(異性)의 의상을 입는 역할이었다는 점이 인상적이다. 루이 14세가 춤춘 6개의 역할 중 ‘시간’의 캐릭터는 프랑스 문법상 여성형으로 불려지며 그 의상과 가사에서도 여성성을 드러내게 된다. 남성의 존재를 특별히 하는 가부장적 문화에서 어떻게 루이 14세의 남성적 신체가 여성적 캐릭터와 공존하는 것이 용납될 수 있었을까하는 의문이 제기 될 수 있다. 그러나 1600년대 프랑스에서는 이미 cross-dressing의 전통이 수 십 년째

계속되어왔다는 것을 생각할 때, 루이 14세의 양성적인 혹은 무성적인 캐릭터가 비정상이거나 장애가 있는 존재로서가 아니라 오히려 비범하고 초월적인 이미지를 조성하는데 기여하였다고 보여 진다. 군주의 자연적 신체와 국가를 통일시킨 이미지를 표출하는 왕과 왕비들의 양성적 초상화들이 이미 존재하고 있으며 이것은 ‘천상적 양성인’으로서의 루이 14세의 신체와 그 맥락을 같이 한다. ‘짐이 곧 국가니라’라고 선언하며 국가 그 자체와 동일시 되는 절대군주로서의 루이 14세의 이미지는 초월적인 양성적 캐릭터의 도움으로 이루어졌다고 볼 수 있다. 루이 14세의 이미지에서 양성성은 결핍이라기 보다는 풍요, 초월, 비범, 완벽, 그리고 이상적인 신체이자 존재로서 구현된다.

주제어: 밤의 발레(*Le Ballet de la Nuit*), 루이 14세(Louis XIV), 젠더(*gender*), 양성성(*androgyny*), 바로크 신체(*Baroque body*)