

# *The Role of Ancient Egypt in Masquerades at the Court of François I<sup>er</sup>\**

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*This essay examines the role of ancient Egypt in courtly masquerades under François I<sup>er</sup> (r. 1515–47). It opens with an analysis of the iconography of a sphinx costume that was designed by Francesco Primaticcio (1504/05–1570) and worn by the king and one of his favorite courtiers, Cardinal Jean de Lorraine (1498–1550), at a wedding celebration held in 1546. Two other costume drawings by the same artist are discussed next, and the first printed French translation of Horapollo's Hieroglyphica, which was published in Paris in 1543, is identified as their source. In examining their strange aesthetic and multiple layers of meaning, this study considers how these costumes were symptomatic of a broader French Renaissance fascination with concealed truth and how, as conveyors of veiled messages, they were meant to spark lofty discussions and demonstrate the French court's sophistication.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Courtly life under King François I<sup>er</sup> (1494–1547) offered the French nobility ample opportunity to transform itself by means of extraordinary costumes and roleplaying. Masked manifestations such as *mommeries*, a form of masquerade that typically interrupted a ball and in which costumed participants presented themselves before their audience to dance and mime, provided pleasure and a fleeting escape from reality.<sup>1</sup> At

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<sup>1</sup>Derived from the Italian *mascherata*, the French term *mascarade* was first recorded in 1554. Prior to that, the term *masque*, and more commonly *mommerie* and its derivatives (such as *faire mommon*), were used to designate events in which costumed individuals, typically organized in successive groups, presented themselves before an audience to dance and to mime. For a succinct discussion of these different forms of entertainment, see Cohen, 4:312–15 (for masquerades), 448–49 (for *mommeries*).

the same time, however, these events could also serve to highlight the court's structure and to translate into striking visual terms the ambitions and personalities of those who partook in them. Judging from the plethora of extant diplomatic reports offering detailed descriptions of sumptuous costumed festivities organized by the king and his entourage, these modes of entertainment played an important role in furthering the French court's international reputation for sophistication and wealth.

As contemporary accounts and extant costume designs by court artists reveal, the characters and allegorical concepts that were brought to life in these performances were plucked from the literary and artistic culture that flourished in this period and owed a heavy debt to the classical world.<sup>2</sup> While costumes and props shared much in common conceptually and aesthetically with royally commissioned art and architecture, they were the centerpieces of ephemeral events and thus bore the burden of making an impression striking enough to last long after the pipe-playing had ceased. As a result, the creations invented for masquerades frequently veered from the whimsical to the bizarre, often bewildering audiences accustomed to Mannerist flights of fancy. In addition to pagan gods and biblical heroes, masquerades featured extraordinary beasts, exotic foreigners, and even living objects, including a walking perfume dispenser.<sup>3</sup>

A comprehensive critical history of the iconography of masquerading in Renaissance France has yet to be written. Margaret McGowan's latest book constitutes an invaluable source of historical information on sixteenth-century French costumed events, but in exploring this topic, the author's primary focus is dance.<sup>4</sup> In a recent article, however, McGowan concentrates more specifically on the richness, variety, and eccentricity of the costumes fashioned

<sup>2</sup>Many artists besides Francesco Primaticcio, whose drawings are the subject of this study, participated in the creation of costumes and designs for masquerades in sixteenth-century France. Among the most notable of these were Rosso Fiorentino (1494–1540), to whom two extant designs preserved in print form may be securely attributed: *The Three Fates*, engraved by Pierre Milan (Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, 84.71) and the anonymous *Figure Costumed as Hercules* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Vol. Ba12). In the second half of the century, artists active in this capacity included René Boyvin (1525–98), Antoine Caron (1521–99), and Hugues Sambin (1520–1601).

<sup>3</sup>This particular costume was worn, as Occhipinti, 2001a, cxx, and 153, no. ccxvii, has shown, at a masquerade honoring the 1546 wedding of the Duke of Aumale and Louise de Brézé and is recorded in a study by Primaticcio now in Stockholm's Nationalmuseum (870/1863). See also Cordellier, 134, cat. no. 32 (illustrated).

<sup>4</sup>McGowan, 2008, esp. 61–90, 127–50.

for French festivities in this period.<sup>5</sup> A wealth of new documentary evidence concerning masquerades at the courts of François I<sup>er</sup> and Henri II (1519–59) has also become accessible, thanks in part to the efforts of Carmelo Occhipinti, who in recent years has published a substantial body of Italian diplomatic correspondence.<sup>6</sup> Both Occhipinti and Dominique Cordellier have succeeded in connecting several extant preparatory drawings to costumes that were described by ambassadors who encountered them at festivities, thereby shedding new light on these events, their designers, and their participants.<sup>7</sup>

This study examines ancient Egypt as a source of inspiration in masquerades sponsored under François I<sup>er</sup>. More specifically, it considers how references to this exotic ancient culture that prized secrecy were symptomatic of a broader French Renaissance fascination, especially nurtured by François, with concealed truths and guessing games. The investigation opens with a discussion of a polymastic sphinx costume (fig. 1)<sup>8</sup> worn by the king and Cardinal Jean de Lorraine (1498–1550)<sup>9</sup> at a nuptial celebration in early 1546. The costume was designed by Francesco Primaticcio (1504/05–1570), whom François invited to France in 1532 and who, as a court artist, had frequent occasion to participate in the creation of ephemera during his lengthy French career. Evidence of France's interest in Egypt in this period is considered first, followed by an analysis and interpretation of the costume's appearance. Possible sources for its iconography are proposed and the significance of its having been worn by both the king and the cardinal is assessed. Attention is then focused on two other costume studies by Primaticcio (figs. 2–3), which, as this article shows, were derived from hieroglyphs in the first French edition of Horapollon's famed fifth-century

<sup>5</sup>McGowan, 2011a: I am indebted to the first reader of this essay for bringing this publication to my attention. Other important publications for the study of early sixteenth-century French masquerades include: Dahlbäck; Hall; Smith; Albert; Chatenet, 2002, 221–25; Chatenet, 2007; Cordellier, 120–36, cat. nos. 22–34; Chatenet and Lecoq. See also McGowan, 2011b, in which the author focuses on Primaticcio's collaboration with Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85) on a series of festivities — including masquerades — for Charles IX (1550–1574) held at Fontainebleau in 1564.

<sup>6</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a and 2001b.

<sup>7</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, cxvi–cxxv; Occhipinti, 2001b; Cordellier, 120–36, cat. nos. 22–34.

<sup>8</sup>Bjurström, no. 70, ascribed this study to a member of Primaticcio's workshop. However, in light of the drawing's spontaneous yet confident execution and delicate coloration, it should be recognized as the work of the artist himself, as has Dominique Cordellier: see Cordellier, 132, no. 30. The drawing has most recently been published by Chatenet and Lecoq, 27, fig. 18, who attribute it to Primaticcio's workshop.

<sup>9</sup>A member of the house of Guise and a close companion of François I<sup>er</sup>, Jean de Lorraine was made cardinal in 1518 and served as archbishop for several dioceses, including Reims, Nantes, and Albi.



FIGURE 1. Francesco Primaticcio. *Study for a Polymastic Sphinx Costume*, ca. 1545. Pen and brown ink, gray wash, and watercolor. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (872/1863). © Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

interpretative guide to Egyptian image-symbols, the *Hieroglyphica*.<sup>10</sup> Constituting veiled messages in sartorial form, these kinds of costumes were meant to be deciphered and to spark discussion, and as such, to both elevate and demonstrate the French court's sophistication.

## 2. TAILS FOR A WEDDING CELEBRATION

Costumed performances were a staple of the festivities accompanying important diplomatic meetings, as well as rites of passage, such as baptisms

<sup>10</sup>Horapollo, 1543.



FIGURE 2. Francesco Primaticcio. *Study for a Hieroglyphic Costume: The Defense and Preservation of Life*, ca. 1543–47. Pen and grayish-brown ink, watercolor, and black chalk. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (868/1863). © Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.



FIGURE 3. Francesco Primaticcio. *Study for a Horoscopist Costume*, ca. 1543–47. Pen and brown ink, watercolor, black chalk. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (MS Palat. C.B 3 53/2, fol. 61). Permission from the Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali della Repubblica Italiana / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.

and marriages. Of course, these were political events in their own right: the creation of heirs and the formation of new alliances through matrimony were essential to demonstrating the strength and permanence of the powers that were. Like those related to births or a particular political event, masquerades

organized in honor of marriages (which generally took place during the Carnival period) could feature a wide range of characters.<sup>11</sup> In some instances, the connection to the theme of matrimony was made explicit, as in the case of the Hymenaeus costume designed by Primaticcio (fig. 4) and described by the Ferrarese ambassador Lodovico da Thiene in a letter to Ercole II d'Este (1508–59) dated 25 February 1542.<sup>12</sup> Lodovico had occasion to see the outfit when it was worn by the Dauphin Henri and his companions at a masquerade held in honor of the Parisian wedding of Jeanne de Vivonne de la Châtaigneraie and Claude de Clermont, Baron of Dampierre. In addition to carrying the god of marriage's traditional attribute of flaming torches, the future King of France and his friends each sported golden hair, an elaborate helmet featuring a nature goddess as well as a Cupid satiating his thirst, and a red-and-gold tunic topped by a white drapery, which the Italian observer remarked was meant to symbolize the hymen from which the deity derives his name.<sup>13</sup> Lodovico also indicated that the torches they carried were wrapped in garlands and exuded a sweet perfume, calling to mind Ovid's description of the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda, when "Love and Hymen shake their marriage torches, and fires are fed by incense in abundance, and garlands wreath the roofs."<sup>14</sup>

A costume for a wedding-related masquerade could thus overtly evoke the themes of love and marital union; in other instances, the correlation between the costumes worn and the nature of the festivity is less obvious.

<sup>11</sup>Often comprising a string of banquets, balls, masquerades, jousts, and other forms of mock battle, royal wedding celebrations could last an entire week. For more on royal weddings in Renaissance France, see Knecht, 2008, 112–15; Chatenet, 2002, 220–25.

<sup>12</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 69–74, no. ciii; Cordellier, 128, cat no. 27; McGowan, 2011a, 47. At the same masquerade, François I<sup>er</sup>'s youngest son, Charles d'Angoulême, Duke of Orléans, appeared with six companions dressed as the Five Ages of the World, Claude Gouffier and five friends took on the role of Patience, while a certain "monsieur della Valle" and others dressed as windmills "in the French manner." Lodovico's letter goes on to describe the different characters adopted by high-ranking courtiers and members of the royal family on the following days in honor of Carnival. On Monday, for example, François I<sup>er</sup>, in the company of Jean de Lorraine, wore a centaur costume, complete with a mannequin on its back, possibly representing Deïanira. Occhipinti, 2001b, has demonstrated that this costume is recorded in a drawing by Primaticcio now in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (89. GB.66). For additional extant drawings that have been linked to Lodovico da Thiene's costume descriptions in this letter, see Cordellier, 121.

<sup>13</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 69: "These Hymenaeuses had hair of gold and the face of a youth. The garment was underneath gold cloth in red silk and on top had a white drapery embroidered with gold denoting the membrane of the virginal cloister from whence the name hymen is derived."

<sup>14</sup>Ovid, 140.



FIGURE 4. Francesco Primaticcio. *Study for a Costume of Hymaneaus*, ca. 1541–42. Black chalk and stylus. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (Palat. C. B. 3. 53, II, c. 46). Permission from the Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali della Repubblica Italiana / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.



Such is the case with Primaticcio's design for a polymastic sphinx costume (fig.1).<sup>15</sup> The drawing closely corresponds, as Cordellier observes, to a description in a letter published by Occhipinti that was addressed to Ercole II d'Este and dated 1 February 1546.<sup>16</sup> In it, the Ferrarese ambassador Giulio Alvarotti reports details of the festivities organized in honor of Mademoiselle d'Avrilly's wedding as they were related to him by his secretary, whom he had sent to court with the instruction of recording anything that might be "notable and worthy" for their lord, the Duke of Ferrara.

Following dinner, the court moved to a large room, where it partook in an Italian-style ball to the music of trumpets, fifes, and cornets. François I<sup>er</sup>, Jean de Lorraine, the dauphin, and several other male courtiers eventually retired to don their masquerading attire. The first to reappear were the king and the cardinal, wearing identical costumes described by Alvarotti in the following manner: "Starting in the middle their costume was of grayish, shaggy velvet; in the back it was black and both of them had long tails to the ground and claws on all their feet. They had many breasts made of white sendal on either side of the body and above the middle of the torso. They had, how does one say, a breastplate of gold brocade, bordered all around by gems and pearls. They had the mask of a young woman with a headdress in the form of a *coiffe*. Above this was a piece of fabric rather large and uniform and pulled right over the forehead; behind the shoulder, until the top of the bust, hung scattered the rest of the silver cloth that made up the *coiffe*, which was laden with an infinite number of beautiful gems and pearls. What exactly the name of this costume is I leave it to your Excellency to determine [some baptize it a

<sup>15</sup>In his *Life of Primaticcio*, Vasari, 6:147, credits the artist with being involved in the creation of "many apparatuses for banquets and masquerades, with most beautiful and whimsical inventions"; while in his *Life of Rosso*, *ibid.*, 4:488, asserts that Primaticcio participated in the elaboration of Fontainebleau's decorations in honor of Charles V's visit in 1539. Several studies for masquerade costumes and props by the artist or his workshop survive in various collections. The bulk of these drawings are preserved in Stockholm's Nationalmuseum (848/1863–853/1863, 855/1863–862/1863, 865/1863–866/1863, 868/1863–870/1863, 872/1863–876/1863) and in Florence's Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (C.B. 3. 53.II, fols. 44, 50–61, 73, 75–78). Formerly in the collection of Pierre Crozat, those in Stockholm were first ascribed to Primaticcio by Dimier, 460–65, at the turn of the twentieth century, while those in Florence were identified as the artist's work by Dahlbäck in 1946. Since then, these drawings have received relatively little scholarly attention as a group, with a few important exceptions, including McAllister Johnson, 167–71, cat. nos. 191–93; Hall; Cordellier, 120–36, cat. nos. 22–34. The Stockholm drawings are reproduced by Bjurström, nos. 48–72.

<sup>16</sup>Cordellier, 131–32, cat. no. 30; Occhipinti, 2001a, 124–26, no. clxxxix.

faun, others a satyr].”<sup>17</sup> François and his companion each selected a lady from the audience and then proceeded to dance with them.<sup>18</sup> Maskers dressed as David, as Goliath and Holofernes, and in antique-style costumes soon followed.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. RENAISSANCE FRANCE’S FASCINATION WITH EGYPT

In addition to attesting to the masquerade’s function as a forum for the display of glittering sumptuousness, the king and the cardinal’s matching costumes were fashionable in their Egyptianizing dimension. French fascination with ancient Egypt manifested itself in numerous ways in this period, even in the traffic of mummies, which were thought to possess special healing powers.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 125: “Da mezzo, l’abito loro era fatto di veluto piloso biso, di drieto era poi nero, et aveano una coda longa fin in terra e ugne a tutti i piedi. Aveano molte tette da una banda e l’altra del corpo, di cendal bianco, da mezzo petto in su. Aveano, come dire, una pettorina di brocato d’oro, bordata all’intorno di gioie e perle. Aveano mascara da donna giovine con una conciatura a foggia di una scufia. Sopra un balzo assai grosso e tutto paro e tirato fin sul fronte drieto alle spale fin in capo di quell piccolo busto, pendeva sparta il resi di quella tela d’argento che faceva la scufia, la quale era carca d’infinite e bellissime gioie e perle. Qual sia mo il proprio nome di questo abito, me ne rimetto a Vostra Eccellenzia, [chi lo batezzò un faun, chi un satiro].”

<sup>18</sup>Alvarotti specifies that the king invited Mademoiselle de Lenoncourt while the cardinal approached a certain “Contessa di Vertù” and that they danced a *passamezzo* in the Italian style. The practice of masked men inviting unmasked women to dance is first recorded in France during the festivities ordered by François I<sup>er</sup> to mark the ratification of the Treaty of London and held at the Bastille on 22 December 1518. Edward Hall observed that it was an Italian custom in his account of a masque that took place at the court of Henry VIII in January 1512, remarking that several women refused to partake “because it was not a thyng commonly seen [in England]”: Twycross and Carpenter, 169. On the Bastille celebrations, see Lecoq, 1987a; Bamforth and Dupebe.

<sup>19</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 126, no. clxxxix. Alvarotti was unable to identify the six young Frenchmen who appeared as David. Next came the Dauphin Henri, the Count of Aumale and “monsignor della Vale” in the costume of “Holofernes, or of Goliath, as some would like to say.” The ambassador concludes by listing the final six courtiers who danced and who were all garbed in the “antique style, in silver cloth.”

<sup>20</sup>The term *mummy* stems from the Arabic word *mummiya*, meaning “bitumen,” for which the dark resin coating Egyptian mummies was mistaken. The use of human mummy (often in powdered form) as a drug to cure such ailments as bleeding dates back to the twelfth century and had become a standard medical practice by the Renaissance. As Paré, chapter 6, fol. 7<sup>r</sup>, reports in his *Discours de la mumie*, the demand for this treatment — of which he himself was very skeptical — became so high in France that some people “stole at night bodies from the gallows, and then removed the brain and the entrails, and made them dry in the oven, and then soaked them in pitch: after that they sell them as genuine and good mummy, and say that it was purchased from Portuguese merchants who brought it from Egypt.” For more on the history and medicinal use of Egyptian mummies and bitumen in the Renaissance, see Dannenfeldt, 1985; Dannenfeldt, 1959, 16–22.

François himself was said never to go anywhere without a quantity of mummy carried by his attendants as well as on his person, and which he customarily consumed with rhubarb.<sup>21</sup> Interest in the ancient culture was, however, far from limited to the realm of dubious remedies as reflected by the proliferation of Egyptian elements in the period's literature and arts — a fad doubtlessly spurred by Italy's mania for Egypt.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, from the collecting of artifacts to the creation of new works that drew on Egyptian iconography and religious thought, such as Bernardino Pinturricchio's frescoes for the Sala dei Santi in the Vatican's Borgia Apartment (1492–94),<sup>23</sup> a pronounced taste for things Egyptian had firmly gripped the peninsula by the late fifteenth century. Several factors contributed to igniting this phenomenon, including the diffusion of texts such as Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* and, through Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), the treatises of the Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus, who was believed to have attained a degree of enlightenment comparable to that of the Evangelists and to have transmitted his knowledge to Plato via Pythagoras.<sup>24</sup> As Erik Iversen observes: "Egyptian wisdom, Neo-platonic philosophy, and the humanistic studies became in this way consecutive links in an unbroken chain of tradition, joined together and united with Christianity by their common aim: the knowledge and revelation of God."<sup>25</sup> Secure in this knowledge, patrons such as Pope Leo X (1475–1521) found in the awe-inspiring mystique of pyramids, obelisks, and sphinxes a particularly prestigious means of expressing their power and linking themselves to the wisdom and glory of the ancient world.<sup>26</sup> Given François's profound admiration of Italian court culture as well as his patronage of artists such as Primaticcio and Rosso Fiorentino (1494–1540), who had firsthand knowledge of the Egyptian craze sweeping Italy, it is hardly surprising that

<sup>21</sup>Belon, fol. 117<sup>v</sup>: "The use of said bodies embalmed in Egypt, that is to say our Mumia, is so widespread that King François restorer of letters, would go nowhere, without his attendants always bringing some and they would serve it to him with rhubarb, and also he would carry some on his person."

<sup>22</sup>A substantial body of studies devoted to Renaissance Europe's (particularly Italy and the Germanic lands) interest in ancient Egyptian art and culture has emerged since the publication of Giehlow. Among the most illuminating of these are those by Curran; Wittkower; Dieckmann, 1957 and 1970; Iversen, 1958 and 1993; Dannenfeldt, 1959 and 1985.

<sup>23</sup>On the frescoes, see Parks.

<sup>24</sup>Undertaken at Cosimo de' Medici's request, Ficino's Latin translation of the fourteen Greek dialogues composing the *Corpus Hermetica* was completed in 1463 and widely diffused. On this subject, see Iversen, 1993, 59–61; Curran, 89–99. See also Yates, 169–89.

<sup>25</sup>Iversen, 1993, 60.

<sup>26</sup>On the Medici popes' interest in Egyptian studies and appropriation of Egyptian imagery, see Curran, 189–225.

a similar interest gained momentum in France during his rule.<sup>27</sup> As the desire to learn more about Egypt's mysterious past intensified, so did the need to explore the country, which resulted in two important expeditions and related publications. The naturalist Pierre Belon (1517–64) departed for the Levant and Egypt in 1546 with funds supplied by one of François I<sup>er</sup>'s most powerful advisors, Cardinal François de Tournon (1489–1562).<sup>28</sup> In 1549, Jean de Lorraine financed a similar journey undertaken by the Franciscan priest and royal cosmographer André Thévet (1516–90), revealing that the cardinal's curiosity regarding Egypt was still very much alive three years after he had masqueraded as a sphinx alongside the king.<sup>29</sup>

Growing interest in ancient Egypt also affected France's literary culture. The reign of François I<sup>er</sup> witnessed the publication of the first French translations of the two most important texts related to the Renaissance fascination with Egypt: the *Hieroglyphica* and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (both issued by Jacques Kerver in Paris).<sup>30</sup> Attributed to a fifth-century philosopher active in Menouthis (near Alexandria) by the name of Horapollo, the *Hieroglyphica* was rediscovered on the Island of Andros in 1419 by Cristoforo Buondelmonti, who brought it to Florence.<sup>31</sup> Divided into two books, it was regarded as a legitimate guide to reading ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, and as such, quickly captivated the attention of

<sup>27</sup>By 1526, Primaticcio was assisting Giulio Romano on the decorations of Frederico Gonzaga's Palazzo del Te in Mantua (1525–35), in which numerous Egyptian elements, such as sphinxes and obelisks, were integrated. As for Rosso, he was aware of trends in Rome where he resided between 1523 and 1527, and would certainly have known, for example, of the Stanza dell'Incendio's Egyptianizing telamons (1517). See Curran, 208, 237.

<sup>28</sup>Belon praises François de Tournon as well as François I<sup>er</sup> in the dedication of his travel diary *Les observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses mémorables, trouvées en Grèce, Asie, Judée, Egypte, Arabie et autres pays estranges: rédigés en trois livres*, which he published four years after returning to France. On the cardinal's position at François's court, see Michon, 40–42, 45–46, 49, 54, 56–59.

<sup>29</sup>Thévet's voyage lasted from 1549 until 1554 and took him to Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, and Egypt. For his account of the geography, history, art, and customs of ancient and contemporary Egypt, see Thévet, 113–59; for his mention of the cardinal as the financial backer of his trip, see *ibid.*, 15–16. I am grateful to the second reviewer of this article for drawing my attention to Jean de Lorraine's role in making Thévet's journey possible, and for emphasizing that two cardinals who had entertained a close relationship with François I<sup>er</sup> were thus responsible for funding exploratory trips to Egypt.

<sup>30</sup>Horapollo, 1543; Colonna, 1546.

<sup>31</sup>The manuscript, preserved in Florence's Biblioteca Laurenziana, was authored by Horapollo Niliacus, now generally identified as Horapollo the Younger, who lived during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Zeno (471–91). The title indicates that it was translated into Greek by one Philippus. On the *Hieroglyphica's* authorship, see Maspero; and Brunon, 1982, 31–33.

European humanists and spurred the fad for emblem books.<sup>32</sup> Generally attributed to the Dominican Friar Francesco Colonna (1433?–1527), the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* also enjoyed tremendous success in learned circles from the time of its 1499 publication in Venice by Aldus Manutius.<sup>33</sup> Drawing on a wide range of sources and lavishly illustrated, the text recounts in a series of fantastic dream sequences Poliphilo's passionate pursuit of his beloved Polia. Mysterious structures featuring obelisks, pyramids, and sphinxes inhabit Poliphilo's poetic world, and place him into contact with "Egyptian characters beautifully drawn" that require deciphering.<sup>34</sup>

Long before Kerker's editions appeared, however, both texts had an impact on shaping the way François I<sup>er</sup> and his family fashioned their emblematic identities. As Anne-Marie Lecoq has shown, for example, François's prestigious victory at Marignano (1515) was celebrated in an anonymous French translation of the *Hieroglyphica* produced in manuscript form for his mother, Louise de Savoie, sometime between 1515 and 1521,<sup>35</sup> the same period in which Albrecht Dürer executed his *Triumphal Arch* featuring a hieroglyphic portrait of Maximilian I that was also based on

<sup>32</sup>The *Hieroglyphica* provided 189 interpretations of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Scholars such as Sbordone, Valle, and Joseph Vergote (Vergote, 1943a and 1943b), have shown that the majority of these explanations bear a direct relationship to authentic Egyptian hieroglyphs. For example, hieroglyph 26 of book 1 explains that the Egyptians represented an opening by means of a hare when in fact the spelling of the word *wn* (meaning "to open") featured a pictogram of a hare. However, as Brunon, 1982, 33–34, points out, the hare has a purely phonetic function within the spelling of *wn*, whereas in Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* it is made to serve a symbolic one: the interpretation states that the hare is the hieroglyph for "opening" because it is an animal that always has its eyes open. Indeed, while the *Hieroglyphica* clearly reflects knowledge of the significance of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, it also betrays a misunderstanding of the language's structure, and in particular that different hieroglyphs could be strung together to produce sentences: see also Balavoine, 32–33.

<sup>33</sup>On the text's French reception, see Hiatt and Precott.

<sup>34</sup>Colonna, 1999, 37. For an in-depth analysis of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*'s interpretation of ancient Egyptian art and culture, see Brunon, 1991; Curran, 133–58. The origins of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*'s often fanciful hieroglyphs have yet to be thoroughly worked out. As several scholars have noted, its author clearly drew from Roman marble friezes that featured strings of ritualistic objects, such as anchors and vases: see Giehlow, 56–61. Various Egyptian sources have also been proposed, such as copies of Egyptian writing like those produced by Michele Ferrarini (for example: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Par. Lat. 6128, fol. 130<sup>v</sup>). For a discussion of these sources, see Curran, 147–49. Rejecting this view, Balavoine, 28–35, argues that the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* consciously distances itself from "real Egypt" by using purely Greco-Roman hieroglyphs.

<sup>35</sup>Chantilly, musée Condé, MS 682. Lecoq, 1987b, 255–57.

Horapollo's text.<sup>36</sup> Preserved in Chantilly's Musée Condé, MS 682 features a single hieroglyphic illustration representing a landscape with the sun in the background, while in the foreground, a crowned lion holds a tethered bear by its chain, symbolizing, respectively, the French king as a courageous victor and the Swiss mercenaries he defeated. While the image harbors only a distant relationship to authentic hieroglyphs, it nonetheless attests to a royal interest in communicating kingly values hieroglyphically from the very onset of François I<sup>er</sup>'s reign.<sup>37</sup>

The king's preoccupation with Egyptian visual culture endured, manifesting itself even in the famed Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>. There the influence of hieroglyphic language was evoked in different ways, including in the stucco image-symbols appearing in the inquadrature, such as birds, altars, and sandals, which all harken back to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*'s hieroglyphs.<sup>38</sup> A year after the Galerie was completed (1539), Sebastiano Serlio dedicated to François the third book of his treatise on architecture (Venice, 1540), which featured an illustrated account of the Great Pyramid and Sphinx at Giza as well as a section entitled: "Treatise on some of the marvels in Egypt," in which Egyptian monuments are described as being "more like dreams and visions than real objects."<sup>39</sup> In light of this, it has been suggested that Serlio was responsible for the portal of Fontainebleau's Pavillon

<sup>36</sup>Completed in 1515 and printed in 1517–18, Dürer's *Triumphal Arch* consisted of an assemblage of nearly two hundred woodcuts glorifying the rule of Emperor Maximilian (1459–1519). Above the main gate was the *Tabernaculum*, an image of Maximilian in imperial garb flanked by objects and animals with allegorical meanings derived from Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* that celebrated the emperor's qualities, from courage to nobility: on the arch, see Panofsky, 175–81; Silver, 135–38. Dürer also executed some illustrations for a Latin translation provided by Willibald Pirckheimer of Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, which the pair presented to Maximilian in 1514. A copy of the manuscript is preserved in the Vienna library and eight drawing fragments by the artist also survive, including a sheet showing a dog with a stole, a man sitting on a stool, a man eating an hourglass, and a fire next to a bucket of water in Berlin's Staatliche Museen: see Wittkower, 116–17, illus. no. 164.

<sup>37</sup>The bear does not figure among the logographic elements that make up Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. As Lecoq, 1987b, 256–57, points out, this representation owes much more to traditional emblematic images of animals than to Egyptian hieroglyphs. However, it is worth noting, as the author does, that the hieroglyph for courage is described as a lion in the *Hieroglyphica*: the same entry also compares a lion's mane to the sun's rays, which is why "they put beneath the throne of the sun lions to demonstrate the concorde between the sun and the lion."

<sup>38</sup>On the importance of the *Hieroglyphica*, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, and Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (Augsburg, 1531; first French translation, Paris, 1536) as iconographic sources for the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>, see Pierre and Françoise Joukovsky, 66, 99–100, 116–17.

<sup>39</sup>Serlio, 1:244.

des Armes, which harbored the royal collection of arms, antiquities, and curiosities.<sup>40</sup> The Pavillon's entrance is flanked by two life-size limestone Egyptianizing female terms wearing the *nemes* headdress as well as the royal kilt, and whose origins can ultimately be traced back to a pair of telamons then framing the entrance to Tivoli's Palazzo Archivescovile.<sup>41</sup> For both dating and stylistic reasons, however, the portal's authorship has yet to be definitively resolved, although the motif of putti playing with armor atop the entablature clearly derives from Rosso's vocabulary.<sup>42</sup>

Whoever conceived these architectonic telamons, it is important to note, as does Brian Curran, that, "the relative obscurity of the Fontainebleau portal belies its significance as the earliest large-scale sculptural exercise in the Egyptian *maniera* to be completed since antiquity."<sup>43</sup> Indeed, in terms of their material and prominent placement, the Pavillon des Armes' figures constituted a particularly conspicuous form of Egyptian revivalism, more so, for example, than the frescoed telamons appearing in the corners of the Vatican's Stanza dell'Incendio (ca. 1517).<sup>44</sup> A few years after the Pavillon was presumably completed, François also sent Primaticcio to Rome to make casts of several ancient statues, including what was then believed to be a statue of Cleopatra, the Vatican Nile, and two red granite sphinxes, the bronze versions of which were ultimately placed at the base of stairways leading to the entrance of Fontainebleau's Aile de la Belle Cheminée.<sup>45</sup> Similar sphinxes guarding entrances would also appear in several of

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, Pérouse de Montclos, 76–77. The construction history of the Pavillon des Armes, which is situated in the Cour du Cheval Blanc and opens onto the Jardin de Diane, is poorly documented. In their analysis of the history of the château's construction under François I<sup>er</sup>, Boudon and Blécon, 36–39, make a convincing argument that the edifice dates to between 1535 and 1538.

<sup>41</sup>On the portal and its figures, see Guillaume, esp. 235; Frommel, 250–53; and Curran, 208.

<sup>42</sup>The motif appears, for instance, in Rosso's drawing *Mars Disarmed by Cupid and Venus Disrobed by the Three Graces* (1530, Musée du Louvre). On the arguments against the attribution to Serlio, see Frommel, 253. Instead, *ibid.*, 253–54, has suggested that the Porte égyptienne was the work of a French architect. An attribution to Rosso was advanced by Guillaume, 236, and followed by Boudon and Blécon, 39.

<sup>43</sup>Curran, 208 (italics in original).

<sup>44</sup>For an illustration, see *ibid.*, 201, fig. 72.

<sup>45</sup>On Primaticcio's Roman trips in 1540 and 1542 and his casts of ancient statues, see Occhipinti, 2010, esp. 55–64; Cox-Rearick, 325–61. As *ibid.*, 359, points out, Primaticcio's bronze sphinxes appear at the base of the staircases in Jacques Androuet du Cerceau's *Château de Fontainebleau, face de la cour de la fontaine*, in *Premier [et Second] volume des plus excellents bastiments de France* (Paris, 1576–79). For an illustration, see *ibid.*, 339, fig. 369.

Primaticcio's frescoes for the now-destroyed Galerie d'Ulysse (1541–70), such as in the scene representing the Homeric hero being recognized by his faithful dog, which was engraved by Jean Chartier.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. ICONOGRAPHIC SOURCES AND MEANINGS OF PRIMATICCIO'S SPHINX COSTUME

This interest in Egyptian culture and art helps to shed light on the sphinx's suitability as a royal avatar for a *mommerie*. That the costume envisioned by Primaticcio is representative of a feminized Egyptian sphinx rather than its Greek riddle-posing cousin is indicated by the lack of wings and by the headdress's overall form, stripes, and ornamentation — especially the protruding detail evocative of a Uraeus in the center of the forehead section.<sup>47</sup> The headdress is an interpretation of the pharaonic *nemes*, which appeared in Egyptian-style sphinxes in Rome by the thirteenth century but was explicitly described as Egyptian only in the sixteenth century.<sup>48</sup> Primaticcio would have had ample opportunity to study such works during his Roman sojourn and, as noted above, even had occasion to make casts of two *nemes*-wearing granite sphinxes, which he subsequently translated into

<sup>46</sup>For a thorough discussion of the impact and French history of Primaticcio's bronze sphinxes, see Cox-Rearick, 358–59. On Chartier's engraving, see also Cordellier, 332, cat. no. 169 (illustrated).

<sup>47</sup>Serving as a guardian, the Egyptian sphinx was traditionally represented as a male composite figure combining the body of a lion with the head of a man wearing a *nemes*. The Greek sphinx was most often depicted as a hybrid creature featuring the face of a woman, the body of a lioness, and the wings of a bird. Unlike her benevolent Egyptian counterpart, the Greek sphinx was a wrathful monster that controlled the entrance into Thebes and devoured those who failed to answer correctly the riddle that was famously solved by Oedipus. First briefly mentioned by Hesiod, the Theban sphinx and her myth were elaborated upon by later authors, including Pseudo-Apollodorus and Diodorus-Siculus. The term *sphinx* is in fact Greek: for more on its origins and the relationship between Egyptian and Hellenistic sphinxes, see Zivie-Coche, 1–14.

<sup>48</sup>*Nemes*-sporting sphinxes occur, for example, in Rome's Lateran Cloister (ca. 1215–32); later instances of the creatures' use in Italian art include Pituricchio's *Osiris Teaching the Egyptians to Gather Fruit* (1492–94) in the Sala dei Santi of the Borgia Apartment in the Vatican, and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*'s illustration of a Trinitarian obelisk: see Curran, 46, figs. 23–24; 112, fig. 41; 140, fig. 43. *Ibid.*, 117, cites Andrea Fulvio's *Antiquitates Urbis Romae* (Rome, 1527) as the first clear-cut record of *nemes*-wearing sphinxes being recognized as Egyptian. I am grateful to the second reviewer of this article for bringing this point to my attention and for also noting that in 1544 the headdresses of the Tivoli telamones — an important source for Fontainebleau's Pavillon des Armes, as noted above — were described as specifically Egyptian in the commentary on Vitruvius by the French humanist Guillaume Philandrier: see Philandrier, 5; Curran, 207, 360n101. For a catalogue of Rome's sphinxes indicating their original location and when they were first recorded, see Rouillet, 135–40.



bronze figures.<sup>49</sup> The costume envisioned by Primaticcio also comprises multiple mammary protrusions, a feature that may simply betray the artist's interest in zoology or grotesques, such as those adorning Cardinal Bibbiena's Loggetta in the Vatican.<sup>50</sup> However, a clue pointing to an alternate motivation for this iconographic detail may be found in Pierre Belon's writings.

In his travel diary, Belon provides a typology of sphinxes, even commenting on the bronze casts commissioned by François I<sup>er</sup>.<sup>51</sup> The author asserts that some sphinxes have two breasts, others have none, and still others "have them all along their stomachs, such as those on the coins of Augustus."<sup>52</sup> The inspiration for this particular aspect of the costume may thus have been Greek sphinxes appearing on coins minted under the Roman ruler, such as the example shown in fig. 5.<sup>53</sup> That Augustus relied on this imagery would certainly have appealed to François I<sup>er</sup>, who from the onset of his reign actively patronized art and literature that connected him to ancient Rome.<sup>54</sup>

At the very least, this aspect of the costume should be considered in relation to the fad for multi-breasted figures that swept *bellifontain* art in this period and reflected an interest in the ancient Mother Earth goddess, Artemis of Ephesus.<sup>55</sup> Connoting fertility, figures such as Niccolò Tribolo's

<sup>49</sup>See Occhipinti, esp. 55–64; Cox-Rearick, 325–61. That the headdress depicted in the drawing does not exactly conform to the *nemes* may stem from a desire on the artist's part to inject a fanciful note in the costume. It may also reflect that the artist was working from his memory.

<sup>50</sup>For an illustration, see Curran, 197, fig. 68. Primaticcio's feminization of a male pharaonic sphinx is not unusual: from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, it was often made to undergo this transformation as a nod to the Greek, feminine version of the creature. I am indebted to the second reviewer of this article for drawing my attention to this point.

<sup>51</sup>Belon, fols. 116<sup>r-v</sup>, 117<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., fol. 116<sup>v</sup>: "Some [sphinxes] have teats all along their stomachs, others have them on their chest, as it appears in the one that we see beneath the arm of the great colossus of marble representing the Nile, as well as in the coins of Hadrian and in the one that is in Rome in the garden of the Belvedere. The others have them all along their stomachs, as those in the coins of Augustus. The others don't have any, like those we see in Rome that are in basalt and granite."

<sup>53</sup>I would like to thank Christopher S. Lightfoot for bringing these coins to my attention. On Augustus's use of the sphinx as a symbol, see Zanker, 49–50, 269–71.

<sup>54</sup>On this subject, see Lecoq, 1987b, 214–55.

<sup>55</sup>The polymastic figure of Artemis was absorbed into Italian humanist visual culture and was subsequently introduced into France by François I<sup>er</sup>'s artists. To the Renaissance eye, the protrusions adorning the chests of ancient Artemis figures represented breasts, but their exact nature, origins, and significance have been a source of debate among modern scholars. For more on the different scholarly interpretations of these appendages in ancient representations of the goddess, see LiDonnici.



FIGURE 5. Silver Cistophorous minted in Asia under Augustus, ca. 27 BCE. London, The British Museum (AN31814001). © The Trustees of the British Museum.

*Nature* (1528) and Primaticcio's term of Ceres in his study for the decorations of Fontainebleau's *Chambre du Roi* (ca. 1535–36) were used, as Rebecca Zorach has argued, to stress France's natural wealth and the king's role in sustaining that superabundance.<sup>56</sup> Similar figures are equally present in Primaticcio's *Masquerade of Persepolis* (fig. 6), which reflects a lost fresco for the Fontainebleau quarters of the king's mistress, Anne de Pisseleu, Duchesse d'Etampes (1508–80).<sup>57</sup> The scene corresponds to the moment prior to the burning of the palace at Persepolis, an act of retribution against Xerxes sanctioned by Alexander the Great and described by various authors, including Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus.<sup>58</sup> Permeated by the eerie glow of torchlight and a strange, sensual atmosphere, the drawing includes among its costumed revelers two individuals representing the city of Ephesus, who descend the palace's staircase while garbed in temple headdresses and polymastic cuirasses in honor of Artemis. Similar costumes may perhaps have been used in masquerades hosted by the court: as noted earlier, the

<sup>56</sup>Zorach, esp. 83–134. Tribolo's *Nature* (Château de Fontainebleau) is illustrated in *ibid.*, 82, fig. 3.1; for Primaticcio's pen and ink drawing, *Scenes from the Myth of Proserpina*, featuring a term of Ceres (Paris, Musée du Louvre, dépt. des Arts graphiques, Inv. 3497), see Cordellier, 87–91, cat. no. 9.

<sup>57</sup>For Primaticcio's *Masquerade at Persepolis*, see Cordellier, 237–39, cat. no. 103.

<sup>58</sup>For additional sources, see *ibid.*

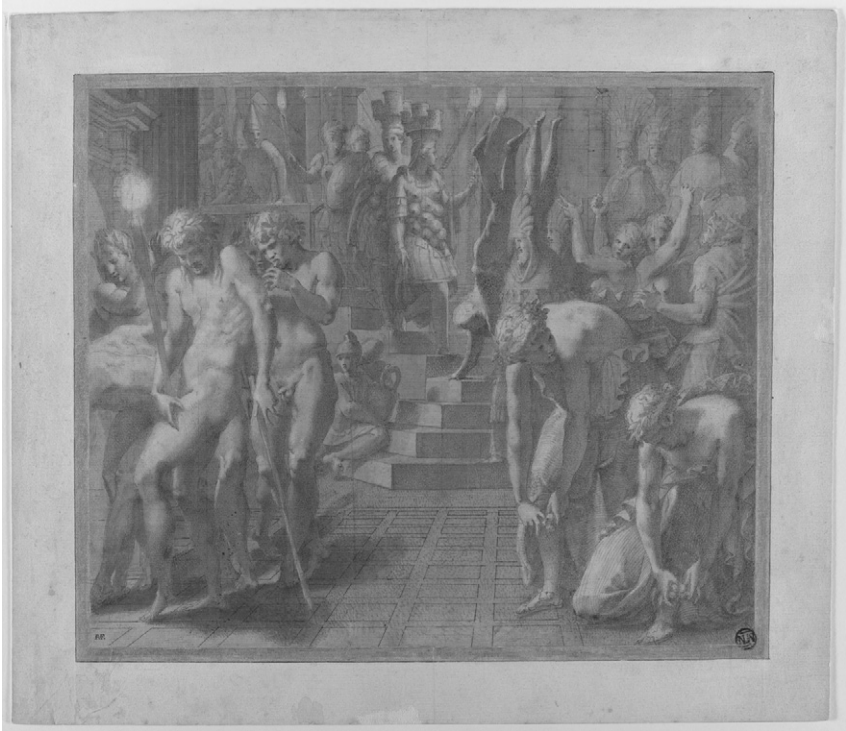


FIGURE 6. Francesco Primaticcio. *The Masquerade of Persepolis*, ca. 1541–44. Pen and black ink, gray wash, heightened with white. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques (INV8568-recto). Photo: Adrien Didierjean. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

multi-breasted figure motif appears in the helmet of the Hymenaeus costume worn by Henri and his companions.<sup>59</sup>

The costume's polymastic dimension was thus a key signifier of nurturing abundance and was also tied to Roman imperial imagery. The sphinx itself was subject to diverse interpretations in the Renaissance.<sup>60</sup> At

<sup>59</sup>The figures descending the staircase on their hands in Primaticcio's drawing may also be linked to contemporary festivities. Lodovico da Thiene describes how in the context of sumptuous masquerades organized on the Sunday of Carnival 1542, the Dauphin Henri appeared with nine companions in the guise of "morescanti" (Moresque dancers) with costumes featuring fake appendages so that it seemed as though they were advancing on their hands with their feet in the air: Occhipinti, 2001a, cxvii and 70, no. ciii.

<sup>60</sup>Among other things, the sphinx was associated with knowledge, vigilance, lust, and ignorance. On the creature's different significances in the Renaissance, see Chastel; Tervarent, 363; Moffitt, 286–307; Curran, 93–94, 196–200.

the negative end of the spectrum, the creature was seen to signify ignorance brought about by pleasure-seeking, shallowness, and pride, as in Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata*, the first French translation of which was executed by Jean Lefevre and appeared in 1536. Featured in emblem 188, "Submovendam ignorantiam" ("That ignorance must be banished"), Alciato's sphinx, however, is "in its face a virgin / in its feathers a bird / in its feet a lion."<sup>61</sup> The corresponding illustrations in the various editions of the text that appeared between 1531 and 1577 stressed the beast's ornithological characteristics, often replacing its hindpaws with talons.<sup>62</sup> Given that the costume designed by Primaticcio possessed no such avian features, and in light of the exalted identities of its wearers, the outfit was surely not meant to evoke ignorance, the very affliction François sought to eradicate through various means, including the foundation of the College of France in 1530.

The sphinx was also understood as a symbol of vigilance: this association is evoked, for instance, in Raphael's *Council of the Gods* in the Villa Farnesina's *Logge di Psyche* (1516–17), where a female-headed sphinx wearing the *nemes* headdress is placed beneath Janus, knower of both past and future.<sup>63</sup> For humanists such as Pico della Mirandola, whose writings had a lasting impact in France, the creature was emblematic of the concept of knowledge as a secret that requires initiation.<sup>64</sup> An important source for this notion was Plutarch, who wrote of the Egyptians' wisdom being "hidden for the most part in myths and stories which show dim reflections and insights of the truth, just as they of course suggest themselves when they place sphinxes oppositely before the shrines, intimating that their teaching about the gods holds a mysterious wisdom."<sup>65</sup> In addition to delighting the audience with its bejeweled exoticism, the sphinx costume may have been meant to communicate the concept of vigilance — a highly desirable trait in a ruler — as well as the idea of François I<sup>er</sup> as a guardian of secret knowledge. The king enjoyed occupying this position in real life, as attested by the complex programs he commissioned, most famously for the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>, and by the relationship he entertained to his art. The images' lack of transparency was calculated to sustain François's role as the metaphoric key to unlocking the Galerie's structural and iconographic mysteries.

<sup>61</sup>Alciato, n.p.: "Sphing est pucelle de visaige / En plume oyseau / des pieds lyon."

<sup>62</sup>On the evolution of the sphinx's representation in the different editions of the *Emblemata*, see Moffitt, 297–301.

<sup>63</sup>Tervarent, 363.

<sup>64</sup>On Pico della Mirandola's interpretation of the presence of sphinxes before temples in his *De hominis dignitate* and commentary on Girolamo Beniveni's *Canzone*, see Chastel, 179–80; Curran, 93–94.

<sup>65</sup>Plutarch, 131.

That the king relished being the custodian of the program's significance and controlling to whom it was divulged is evidenced by his reserving the space for his own use and his keeping the key to the Galerie on his person.<sup>66</sup> Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549) confirmed this aspect of her brother's personality when she declared to him: "Seeing your edifices without you is like watching a dead body, and looking at your buildings without hearing your intentions for them is like reading Hebrew."<sup>67</sup> Situated on the western side of the Galerie's southern wall — and thus seen by sixteenth-century visitors at the conclusion of their visit — Rosso Fiorentino's *Ignorance Put to Flight* (fig. 7) also evoked the idea of the king as both the gateway to, and the gatekeeper of, knowledge.<sup>68</sup> Portrayed in the guise of a sword-brandishing Caesar, François is visually conflated with the portal to the temple of Jupiter that he is about to enter, thus simultaneously calling to mind his function as both a conduit and an obstacle to what lies inside. Only the king has access to the temple's interior and can see the golden light of wisdom that spills forth from it, while the blindfolded figures in the foreground, still guided by Ignorance, futilely grope the air around them.<sup>69</sup> The Galerie's program thus ended by drawing attention to François's role in monitoring the dissemination of knowledge, the very task he undertook each time he explained the space's significance to a visitor.

##### 5. THE KING'S SHADOW: JEAN DE LORRAINE

The idea of incarnating a sphinx may have appealed to François because of the creature's association with the protection of knowledge. Jean de Lorraine's appearance alongside the king in the same costume also begs interpretation. This act was likely intended to assert the cardinal's status as someone privy to the knowledge guarded by the king and awarded the privilege of sharing in its guardianship. (It is also worth remembering that entrances to ancient Egyptian temples were understood to have been defended by pairs of sphinxes.) As Cedric Michon has shown in his study of Jean de

<sup>66</sup>Knecht, 2002, 160.

<sup>67</sup>Marguerite de Navarre, 382: "voir vos edifices sans vous, c'est ung corps mort, et regarder vos bastiments sans ouïr sur cela vostre intencion, c'est lire en esbryeu." Marguerite made this statement in a letter to her brother written at Nérac in 1542.

<sup>68</sup>Contemporary accounts reveal that in this period a visit of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> customarily began through the eastern entrance leading from the royal apartments: see Chastel, McAllister-Johnson, and Béguin, 143–44.

<sup>69</sup>According to Panofsky and Panofsky, 119–20, the blindfolded figures represent the Vices, while the corpulent figure bearing a walking-stick symbolizes Ignorance. As the authors observe, the frame's decorative scheme expands the fresco's theme by "representing some of the vices born of Ignorance in emblematic fashion."



FIGURE 7. Rosso Fiorentino and assistants. *Ignorance Put to Flight*, ca. 1533–39. Fresco and stucco decoration. Château de Fontainebleau, Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>. Photo: Peter Willi. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

Lorraine's life, from the time he was first recorded at the French court in 1520 until François's death in 1547, he benefitted from the king's favor nearly constantly.<sup>70</sup> While the cardinal never possessed the political clout of the Constable of France, Anne de Montmorency (1493–1567),<sup>71</sup> he enjoyed an “unparalleled physical proximity” to the king, an honor he was able to maintain thanks to his adaptability.<sup>72</sup> Jean was, to use Michon's expression,

<sup>70</sup>Michon. While several accounts suggest that Jean de Lorraine's standing diminished in 1541–42 following Anne de Montmorency's disgrace, there is also ample evidence that he continued to be treated as the king's *mignon* in the years leading up to the François's death in 1547.

<sup>71</sup>Under François I<sup>er</sup>, Anne de Montmorency was made Marshal (1522) and then Constable of France (1538), and served as a key political advisor to the king. When Montmorency's attempts to mend Franco-imperial relations failed in 1540, his enemies — chief among them the king's mistress Anne de Pisseleu — were quick to accuse him of purposefully misleading François for his own profit and he was ultimately obliged to retire from court in 1541. For more on this subject, see Potter.

<sup>72</sup>As Michon, 39, describes it, Jean “enjoys with his sovereign a physical proximity without equivalent”), accompanying him not only to balls and hunting expeditions but to the Battle of Pavia as well. *Ibid.*, 41, also cites a regulation dated 1528 awarding Jean de Lorraine and the King of Navarre second place after François in royal processions as well several instances in which the cardinal appeared alongside his sovereign in official circumstances. On Jean's ability to endure as a *favori* because of his flexible will, see *ibid.*, 52.

*l'homme du roi* (the king's man), and his diverse duties included serving as François's alter ego on at least one diplomatic mission.<sup>73</sup>

This closeness found visual expression in different ways, including in Jean's systematically appearing as the king's disguised doppelgänger at masquerades.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, important relationships were clearly mapped out within the ostentatious context provided by these events: the cardinal's position as François's trusted *mignon* was advertised through their sharing of an alternate identity and its often fantastic sartorial accessories.<sup>75</sup>

At a masquerade held on a Sunday evening during Carnival in 1542, François and Jean both danced in the guise of bears.<sup>76</sup> They sported gem-studded collars and muzzles made of gold in which precious jewels were incrustated, including "the diamond that his Majesty purchased the previous year for sixty-two thousand *scudi*" and the "egg of Naples," presumably the same 241-carat ruby that would later be listed in the inventory of Mary Stuart's jewels following the death of her husband, François II (1544–60).<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup>For Jean's role as "l'homme du roi," see *ibid.*, 51–56. François I<sup>er</sup> sent in his place Jean de Lorraine to greet Cardinal Wolsey upon his arrival at Calais in July of 1527 and to accompany him to Amiens. Relying on David Starkey's discussion of Henry VIII's Privy Chamber, Michon, 40–41, aptly compares Jean's role in this case to that of the chamber's gentlemen, who sometimes took on the function of "full royal alter ego." By the 1540s, Jean de Lorraine's public political role had significantly diminished, but he remained on very close terms with the king.

<sup>74</sup>On the pair's appearances at balls and masquerades, see Chatenet and Lecoq, 27–28; McGowan, 2011a; Michon, 38–39, 46, 57; Smith, 30.

<sup>75</sup>On the political significance of the use of sartorial "doubles" by French royalty, see Chatenet and Lecoq. While François's selection of Jean as his double was certainly motivated by his desire to bestow favor upon the cardinal, this may not have been the king's only preoccupation. As *ibid.*, 27–28, observe, maintaining the element of surprise may have been another factor in François's choice. Arriving in waves, groups of identically dressed maskers would dance and then mingle with audience members, who would then try to guess their interlocutors' identities, which were revealed only when it was time to shed their masks. The authors have raised the possibility that Jean's role as royal double within the context of masquerades was perhaps owed to his stature as well as his close friendship to the king. By selecting a partner of comparable build, François could have prolonged the audience's guessing game and made the moment of the unveiling of identities all the more dramatic. I am indebted to the first reviewer of this article for bringing this reference to my attention.

<sup>76</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, no. ciii. Lodovico da Thiene describes these costumes in the same letter in which he relates the masquerade held during the wedding of Jeanne de Vivonne de la Châtaigneraie and Claude de Clermont, Baron of Dampierre.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 71. On the "egg of Naples" (*L'Œuf de Naples*) and its history in the sixteenth century, see Bapst, 247–58. See *ibid.*, 76, 68, for the inventory dated 26 February 1560 of Mary Stuart's possessions and the 1551 inventory of Henri II's jewels, in which the egg of Naples is listed as well. In both cases, the stone is described as a "large red ruby pierced by a metal stem called *L'Œuf de Naples* from which hangs a pearl in the form of a pear." For more on the use of jewels in masquerade costumes, see McGowan, 2011a, esp. 44–45.

This masquerade thus provided Jean with an opportunity to bedeck himself with prized royal gemstones, and in doing so to conspicuously promote his status as François's *favori*.

Light-catching jewels were not the only accessories integrated into the pair's costumes. For a masquerade held in honor of the wedding of the Duke of Maine in August of 1546, the king and the cardinal dressed as hermits covered in foliage, fruits, and vegetables, with the dictum *sat cito si sat bene* ("it is done soon enough, if it is done well enough") appearing amid this vegetation.<sup>78</sup> The presence of these words, which are linked to the Augustan adage *festina lente* ("make haste slowly"), as Erasmus reminds his readers, reveals that in this instance, François and Jean's costumes possessed a very clear emblematic function.<sup>79</sup> The saying *sat cito si sat bene* proclaims the importance of doing things properly rather than too quickly, for in Erasmus's words, "ripening brings sweetness in its own good time."<sup>80</sup> The proverb's relationship to ripened vegetation would later be made explicit in emblem 5, "Subrepunt prospera fata" ("Happiness arrives slowly"), of Imbert d'Anlézy's *Liber Fortunae* (1568), which was illustrated by Jean Cousin le Fils (ca. 1522–94).<sup>81</sup> On the recto facing the emblem proper, which shows Fortune on top of a turtle, the motto "it is done soon enough, if it is done well enough" is integrated into a frame featuring cornucopias brimming with grain and fruit (left and right sides, respectively), an ox (upper edge), and houses (lower edge). The meaning of this arrangement is explained in the accompanying text, which states that all great honors come slowly, "and step by step in the way that the ox slowly makes the wheat come, [as well as] grapes, apples, and pears, and constructs houses and palaces such as those

<sup>78</sup>The costumes are described in a letter dated 3 August 1546 written by Tommaso Sandrini to the cardinal and the Duchess of Mantua. Chatenet, 2007, 231, no. 49: "That night was celebrated as usual with three masquerades, the last of which included His aforementioned Majesty [François I<sup>er</sup>] and the Most Reverend [Cardinal] of Lorraine as hermits with branches, leaves and fruit that rose from the head, which showed them to have become dark from their long hermitage, and in between these branches in a note it read: 'it is done soon enough, if it is done well enough.'"

<sup>79</sup>Erasmus, 189–90, who cites Saint Jerome as his source and attributes the saying to Cato.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>81</sup>The *Liber Fortunae centum emblemata et symbola centum continens: cum suis partitionibus, terasticis, et disticis, et multis testimoniis, expositionibusque variis* is a quarto manuscript, now in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut (MS 1910), featuring 100 two-part emblems devoted to the many facets of Fortune. Ludovic Lalanne was the first to identify Imbert d'Anlézy (d. 1574) as the author and to publish an edition of the manuscript in the late nineteenth century. For a thorough study of the manuscript and Lalanne's editions, see Saunders.



in the border of the compartment.”<sup>82</sup> Through their bountiful vegetal elements, François and Jean de Lorraine’s hermit costumes were doubtlessly also intended to bring to life the motto’s connection to the reaping of natural abundance and would have advertised the necessity of proceeding carefully and unhurriedly, a highly desirable inclination, particularly in a ruler.<sup>83</sup>

At Shrovetide 1541, the king and the cardinal transformed themselves into trees for a masquerade held at Fontainebleau.<sup>84</sup> They wore gowns that simulated the appearance of bark and covered their heads and hands with ivy. Writing to the Duke of Ferrara on 6 February 1541, Carlo Sacrati remarked that François and Jean’s tree costumes were “interpreted as being *impres* that conformed to the motto that was written on the overgowns [of the knights].”<sup>85</sup> The knights in question wore colorful silk embellished with a design of broken columns and ruins as well as a border with the following epigram: *qualis Roma fuit, ipsa ruina docet* (“what Rome was, its ruins teach us”). According to Sacrati, then, the king and the cardinal’s attire served to inform this conceit: the pair thus presumably incarnated not just any vegetation, but rather the kind that sprouts from Roman ruins as it appears in many illustrations, such as the frontispiece to Serlio’s *Third Book of Architecture*, which features the same epigram.<sup>86</sup> Even a costume representing something as seemingly mundane as a tree could be vested with lofty meaning: in this case, it evoked the rebirth of classical ideals and the king’s role in promoting this phenomenon, particularly at Fontainebleau, which Vasari later qualified as a “New Rome.”<sup>87</sup>

It would doubtlessly be imprudent to dismiss as mere flights of fancy François and Jean’s crustacean costumes, which were discussed by Lodovico da Thiene in the same letter to the Duke of Ferrara that described the

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 43: “et pas a pas comme vat le dit beuf tout bellement faict venir le bled, la vigne, pomes et poires, et construit maisons et palais comme il se voit en la bordure du compartiment.”

<sup>83</sup>Concerning *festina lente*, Erasmus, 172–73, notably remarks that “this proverb can be called royal, if any can,” for the fortunes enjoyed by rulers make them particularly vulnerable to acting hastily. He then specifies that it was a favorite proverb of the Roman Emperors Octavius Augustus and Titus Vespasianus.

<sup>84</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, cxvii, and 56–57, no. lxxxix; see also McGowan, 2008, 122. Cordellier, 121, suggests that an impression of the king and the cardinal’s attire may be obtained from a study in Stockholm for a tree costume (inv. 871–1863) catalogued as the work of Niccolò dell’Abate by Bjurström, no. 7.

<sup>85</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 57: “E questo è sta’interpretato essere impresa conforme al motto che era scritto nella sopravveste.”

<sup>86</sup>As McGowan, 2008, 122, observes, Serlio was residing at Fontainebleau when Primaticcio designed these costumes.

<sup>87</sup>On the role of classical culture at the court of François I<sup>er</sup>, see Occhipinti, 2011.

wedding of Jeanne de Vivonne de la Châtaigneraie and Claude de Clermont as well as other festivities.<sup>88</sup> Defined as “gambari” (most likely crayfish or spiny lobsters), the costumes were made of red satin and were adorned with gold fringes and cords “at every joint and at every nodule that a crayfish may have.”<sup>89</sup> Crustaceans were rich in symbolic significance: the crab (or crayfish) was associated with the astrological sign of Cancer and was an attribute of the planet Jupiter as well as of Diana of Ephesus, and was also featured on Augustan coins alongside the butterfly to illustrate the motto *festina lente*.<sup>90</sup> François and Jean’s costumes may somehow have been connected to these concepts, or perhaps the key to their meaning lies in Horapollo’s *Hieroglyphica*, in which the spiny lobster is specifically associated with the act of ruling. The text explains that when the Egyptians want to communicate the idea of “a man ruling over his fellow citizens, they draw a spiny lobster and an octopus. For the spiny lobster rules over the octopuses and holds first place among them.”<sup>91</sup> While the intended message of this particular costume may never be elucidated, it is clear that whether appearing as denizens of the sea or living vegetation, François and Jean were frequent partners in disguise, whose remarkable costumes awed audiences and publicized French royal refinement as well as the pair’s special bond.<sup>92</sup>

Primaticcio’s sphinx was thus one of a string of sophisticated and at times eccentric costumes worn by the king and the cardinal. Transformed into this formidable creature of the East, François and his shadow, Jean de Lorraine, became the embodiment of all of its mysteries. How accessible the costume’s layers of meanings would have been to its audience requires consideration. While it is impossible to know exactly what witnesses thought

<sup>88</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 69–74, no. ciii.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 74: “The next evening, which was the first day of Lent, his Majesty with the most reverend Cardinal of Lorraine dressed as two crayfish [or lobsters]. The crayfish were of red satin and at every joint and at every nodule that a crayfish may have, the same on the head as on the feet and on the stomach and on the carapace, it [the satin] was adorned with gold fringe and cords.”

<sup>90</sup>See Tervarent, 134 (for the crab), 151 (for the crayfish).

<sup>91</sup>Horapollo, 1993, 95, no. 106. For the hieroglyph’s illustration, see Horapollo, 1543, n.p.

<sup>92</sup>Jean de Lorraine was also alongside François when the king appeared dressed as a centaur clad in accurate Roman armor and carrying on his back a female figure (probably representing Deianira) at the masquerade held on the Monday following the wedding of Claude de Clermont and Jeanne de Vivonne de la Châtaigneraie. As Occhipinti, 2001b, has shown, a drawing by Primaticcio now in the Getty Museum corresponds to a study for this costume. See also Cordellier, 130, cat. no. 28.

of it, Alvarotti's letter to Ercole d'Este offers interesting information on the subject. The diplomat concludes his description by writing, "What exactly the name of this costume is I leave it to your Excellency to determine," and then, "some baptize it faun, others satyr" — a statement he attempted to erase, presumably because he realized these were unsatisfactory interpretations.<sup>93</sup> That the costume was not easily recognizable to an Italian diplomat or to his secretary does not mean, however, that it was not invested with significance, even with multiple layers of meaning.

In fact, much thought clearly went into the elaboration of complex symbolism for masquerade costumes that typically produced baffled reactions. Thus, at a *mommerie* organized at Châtellerault five years earlier, François and the cardinal once again appeared together, this time dressed entirely in gold and each holding in one hand a lightning bolt and in the other, a shield, to the utter mystification of those whose impressions were recorded.<sup>94</sup> For a masquerade held in 1518 in the Bastille's courtyard as part of a banquet honoring the ratification of the Treaty of London,<sup>95</sup> François presented himself in a white satin robe "in the manner of Christ" embroidered with golden compasses and clocks, symbols used elsewhere to advertise the king's prudence and temperance.<sup>96</sup> According to Marino Sanudo, the objects elicited diverse interpretations among those in attendance, reminding us that like so much of the art commissioned by the king, masquerade costumes were often not meant to be instantly understood by all, but rather to be deciphered by those in the know.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 125: "Qual sia mo il proprio nome di questo abito, me ne rimetto a Vostra Eccellenza, [chi lo batezzò un faun, chi un satiro]."

<sup>94</sup>Chatenet, 2007, 225. The masquerade was part of the festivities surrounding the wedding of Jeanne d'Albret and the Duke of Cleves held in the summer of 1541. The event was described in a letter written by G-B. da Gambara to the cardinal and the Duchess of Mantua and in Guiffrey, 367–83. On the capacity of certain costumes to baffle audiences, see also McGowan, 2011a, 47.

<sup>95</sup>Among other things, the treaty stipulated the marriage of the French King's then-heir, François, with Henry VIII's eldest daughter, Mary. François I<sup>er</sup> wanted the Bastille celebration to have an Italian flair and so entrusted its organization to Count Galeazzo Visconti. For more on this occasion, see Lecoq, 1987a; Bamforth and Dupebe.

<sup>96</sup>On 22 December 1518, Marino Sanudo wrote in his diary that the king appeared "with a long gown, all closed in the back and front, in the manner of the gown of Christ, in white satin, and on all the gown were embroidered in gold compasses and clocks, devices of which diverse interpretations were made": cited in Lecoq, 1987a, 165, Appendix B. On the meaning and use of the clock as a symbol, see Lecoq, 1987b, 117, 144–50; on the compass, see *ibid.*, 74–77, 112, 117.

<sup>97</sup>Lecoq, 1987a, 165, Appendix B.

## 6. HORAPOLLO'S *HIEROGLYPHICA* AS A SOURCE FOR PRIMATICCIO'S COSTUME STUDIES

Several extant costume studies by Primaticcio appear to have been designed for this purpose, including an example enhanced with delicate shades of yellow, green, and pink watercolor now in Stockholm's Nationalmuseum (fig. 2).<sup>98</sup> The drawing shows a masked man wearing an antique-style outfit comprising a cuirass-like component with articulated musculature and *pteruges*.<sup>99</sup> He supports a curtained baldachin on which rests a lamp between two disembodied heads. In formulating this creation, Primaticcio relied on *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques des Aegyptiens*, the first printed French translation of Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, which was published in Paris by Jacques Kerver in 1543 (fig. 8).<sup>100</sup> This was also the first printed edition of the text to have illustrations, 197 woodcuts traditionally attributed to Jean Cousin le Père.<sup>101</sup> The angled heads featured in Primaticcio's costume design closely correspond to those of the hieroglyph for a phylactery, in the

<sup>98</sup>Dimier, no. 205, was the first to publish the drawing as the work of Primaticcio. See also: McAllister Johnson et al., 169, cat. no. 191, where it is catalogued under the name *l'Homme au baldachin*; Bjuström, no. 65, where it is listed as *Old Man Carrying a Baldachin*. I am grateful to Dominique Cordellier for communicating to me his file on this drawing. Stockholm's Nationalmuseum also possesses an anonymous seventeenth-century copy of the drawing (NM 867/1863, Bjuström, no. 77).

<sup>99</sup>I am grateful to Sarah Lepinski for sharing with me her observations concerning the figure's attire.

<sup>100</sup>Two more editions of the *Hieroglyphica* featuring French translations were subsequently published in the sixteenth century: Horapollo, 1553 and 1574. The first of these was published by Kerver and featured a new translation alongside Jean Mercier's 1548 Latin translation (also published by Kerver). The 1574 edition consists of a reprint of the 1553 French translation alongside Bernardino Trebazio's 1515 Latin translation. The first French translation (Horapollo, 1543) has traditionally been given to Jean Martin (d. 1553), who was responsible for the first printed French translation of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* also published by Kerver (1546). Ascribing the second French translation to Martin, Brunon, 2006, 123–26, has suggested, however, that the first translation may have been the work of the philologue and Hebraist Jean Mercier (ca. 1525–70), who translated the *Hieroglyphica* into Latin for Christian Wechel in 1548.

<sup>101</sup>In addition to illustrating the interpretations featured in Horapollo's original text, Kerver's 1543 edition contained ten more hieroglyphs derived from various sources, including the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. The illustrations were reused in Horapollo, 1553 (with seven new woodcuts added) and in Horapollo, 1574 (with eleven new woodcuts). On the illustrations' authorship, see Zerner, 302–03. Brunon, 2006, 125–26, has questioned the illustrations' attribution to Cousin, arguing in favor of an artist of Germanic origin strongly influenced by Dürer.

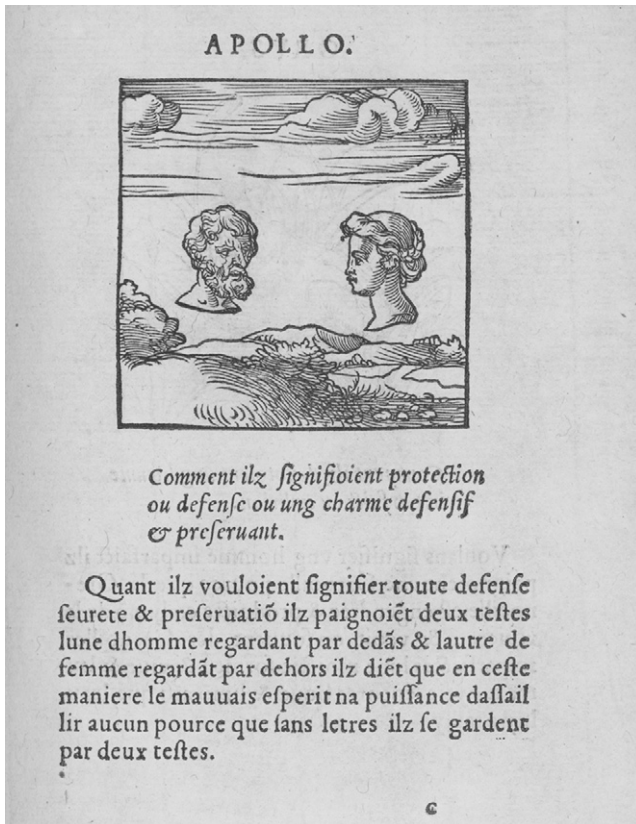


FIGURE 8. “Comment ilz signifoient protection ou defense ou ung charme defensive & preservant,” fol. c<sup>r</sup> from Horapollo, *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques des Aegyptiens* (Paris: Jacques Kerver, 1543). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1921 (21.24.2). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

sense of a safeguard or a charm, in Kerver’s edition. The definition beneath the image explains that the Egyptians signified a protective force by representing a male head looking in and a female one looking out. The inscription in Primaticcio’s hand at the bottom of the costume study translates to “all defense, security, and preservation of life.”<sup>102</sup> The same phrase, minus the word “life,” appears in the hieroglyph’s explanation as it is given in Kerver’s 1543 edition.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, ten extra hieroglyphs first make their appearance

<sup>102</sup>“Toute defense seurete et preservation de vie.”

<sup>103</sup>The wording is different in Horapollo, 1553, so it could not have served as the source for Primaticcio’s inscription.



FIGURE 9. “Comment ilz signifioient la vie,” from Horapollo, *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques des Aegyptiens* (Paris: Jacques Kerver, 1543). Woodcut. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1921 (21.24.2). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

in *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques*, including one signifying “life,” which is represented by none other than a burning lamp (a concept taken from the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*) (fig. 9).<sup>104</sup>

In devising this costume, Primaticcio was creating a statement by combining hieroglyphs derived from the 1543 French edition of the text, and making them his own through slight modifications that demonstrated

<sup>104</sup>On the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* as a source for the new hieroglyphs in the French editions of the *Hieroglyphica*, see Brunon, 1982, 36–37.

his mastery, such as changing the position of the heads. The burning lamp nestled between angled male and female heads was meant to convey the concept of protection and the preservation of life. If the individual carrying these glyphs was to be understood as the source of this protection, then it is likely that the role would have been reserved for someone important, such as the king. At the very least, given that the costumed figure is holding the curtains open, one can assume that the person incarnating him in real life was meant to be seen at some point during the masquerade. Presumably, this masker's appearance at a ball would have prompted audience members to try their hand at reading his costume, and in successfully doing so, to demonstrate their familiarity with Horapollo's text.

It remains uncertain whether the masker would have divulged the meaning of his attire to his audience. In the same letter describing the dauphin's Hymenaeus costume and the king and the cardinal's crustacean outfits, Lodovico da Thiene explains what François I<sup>er</sup>'s youngest son, the Duke of Orléans, Charles d'Angoulême, wished to convey when he appeared at a masquerade as a young woman spinning thread while seated on a fake turtle with a head that peeked in and out of its carapace as it advanced.<sup>105</sup> Primaticcio's study for this remarkable costume is preserved in Stockholm (fig. 10).<sup>106</sup> According to the ambassador, Charles's intention was to communicate that while he went about his business slowly, he did not waste a moment of his time, just like the turtle moving at a sluggish pace nevertheless covers much ground, and the thread that takes a long day of spinning to obtain is nonetheless the same thread that dresses the entire world.<sup>107</sup> Tied yet again to the motto *festina lente*, the costume's significance may have been divulged to the Italian diplomat by the duke himself or by someone close to him.

<sup>105</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 73. Men frequently dressed as female characters during masquerades in this period.

<sup>106</sup>For a thorough discussion of the drawing, see Cordellier, 130–31, cat. no. 29. Dimier, 153 (followed by Hall, 371) had erroneously identified the drawing as a study for a costume of one of the Fates. Bjurström, no. 69, attributed this work to Primaticcio's studio. However, the drawing's decisive and economical-yet-elegant lines, along with the limited application of pale yellow, pink, and purple, lead me to support Cordellier's attribution to the master himself.

<sup>107</sup>Occhipinti, 2001a, 73: "The said monsieur d'Orléans wished to denote by means of the turtle that, although it goes slowly, it goes far over time, and by the thread that, while a poor young girl spends an entire day to obtain a spindle, it is nevertheless the case that one sees the entire world covered and dressed in this thread, through this he we wished to infer that, although proceeding slowly in his business, he nevertheless did not waste an hour of his time."



FIGURE 10. Francesco Primaticcio. *Study for an Allegorical Costume Representing Steady and Productive Slowness*, ca. 1542. Pen and brown ink, gray wash, watercolor. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (862/1863). © Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Knowledge of *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques* would have been equally necessary for deciphering the costume envisioned by Primaticcio in a related drawing now in Florence's Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (fig. 3).<sup>108</sup> This design is connected to another hieroglyph from Kerver's 1543 edition, which shows a landscape with a man eating an

<sup>108</sup>It has long been recognized that the *Study for a Horoscopist Costume* is linked to *The Defense and Preservation of Life (The Old Man with a Baldachin)* because of the similarity in Primaticcio's inscriptions on both drawings. However, their common source remained unknown. See McAllister Johnson et al., 169, cat. no. 191; 171, cat. no. 192; Bjurström, no. 65. I am grateful to Dominique Cordellier for sharing with me his file on the drawing.



hourglass while dressed in contemporary garb (fig. 11). The explanatory text reveals that the Egyptians portrayed the horoscopist in this manner “not because a man can really eat the hours, which is impossible, but rather because men prepare their meats and what they must eat at certain hours.”<sup>109</sup> The theme of the horoscopist would certainly have appealed to the French court, since it entertained in this period an intense fascination with astrology, of which Egypt was regarded as the birthplace.<sup>110</sup> In keeping with its quasi-theatrical function, Primaticcio’s horoscopist costume, which comprises a pseudo-classical tunic, a mask-shaped clasp, and an extravagant plumed hat, is far more exotic than the attire worn by the figure in the woodcut. The drawing’s connection to Kerver’s 1543 edition is firmly established, however, through Primaticcio’s notation beneath the figure, which translates to, “Horoscopist monitors the hours to assess things.”<sup>111</sup> The inscription is in fact an abbreviation of a passage from the horoscopist’s definition: “a horoscopist, that is to say, who charts and monitors the hours to assess the state of things.”<sup>112</sup> It remains uncertain whether Primaticcio’s inscription would somehow have been part of the performance, or whether it was merely meant as an explanatory title for the benefit of his patron or those responsible for executing the design. At the very least, judging from the artist’s drawing, the masker would likely have simulated the consumption of an hourglass while appearing before spectators, which would have been the key clue to determining his identity.

In light of their relationship to *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques*, *The Defense and Preservation of Life* (fig. 2) and *Horoscopist* (fig. 3) may have been designed sometime relatively close to the text’s publication, that is, during the last years of François I<sup>er</sup>’s reign, when the book would have had added appeal due to its novelty. Writing in the early 1970s, Claude Massenet and William McAllister Johnson argued that the drawings were executed later, in the period between 1563 and 1570.<sup>113</sup> Massenet outlined the reasoning behind this dating in his short response to J. T. D. Hall’s notice in *The Burlington Magazine* on three previously

<sup>109</sup>Horapollo, 1543, fol. dii<sup>v</sup>: “non pas que ung homme puisse menger qui est impossible mais pource que les hommes apprestent leurs viands & ce quilz doibvent menger a certaines heures.”

<sup>110</sup>For the *Hieroglyphica*’s treatment of astrology, see Brunon, 1996. For more on French attitudes toward horoscopes and astrology in the Renaissance, see Crawford, 67–108.

<sup>111</sup>“Horoscope prent garde aux heures pour entendre au choses.” The text is different in Horapollo, 1553.

<sup>112</sup>“Ung horoscope cest a dire qui note & prent garde aux heures pour entendre lestat des choses.”

<sup>113</sup>See McAllister Johnson et al., 169, cat. no. 191; 171, cat. no. 192.

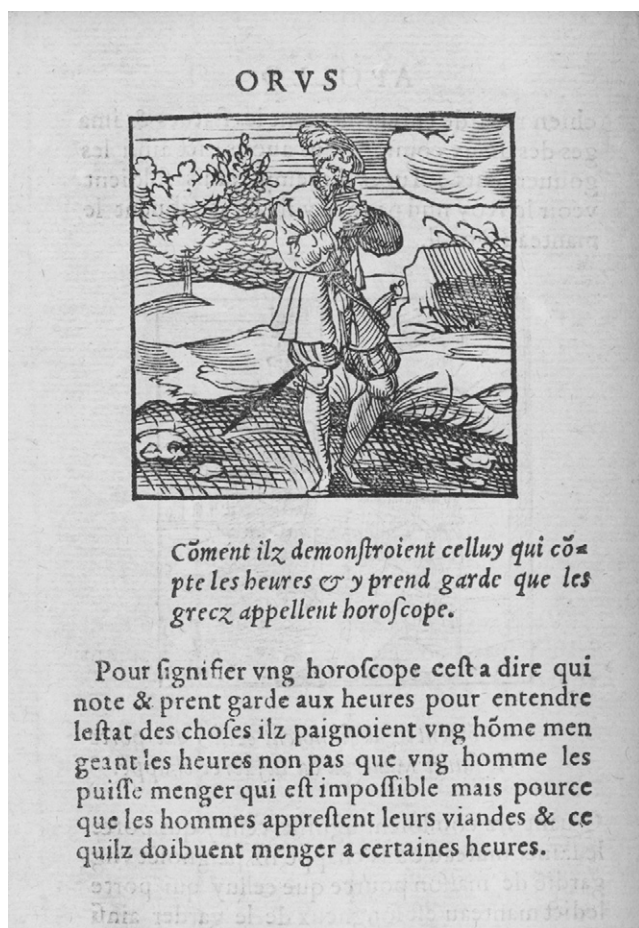


FIGURE 11. “Comment ilz demonstroient celluy qui co[m]pte les heures & y prend garde que les grez appellent horoscope,” fol. dii<sup>v</sup> from Horapollon, *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques des Aegyptiens* (Paris: Jacques Kerver, 1543). Woodcut. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1921 (21.24.2). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

unpublished letters written by Primaticcio to Catherine de'Medici (1519–89) and to Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara (1510–74).<sup>114</sup> After remarking that the only drawings bearing inscriptions by the artist in French are the ones that concern us here, Massenet asserted that they are “both in his late

<sup>114</sup>Massenet.

handwriting,” which he defined as not “irregular, but clear, sharp, precise, and even, with light and varied pressure on the pen.”<sup>115</sup> However, these characteristics may just as easily be explained by Primaticcio’s not having spontaneously written his thoughts, but rather his having copied from a foreign-language text, which would have required from him a greater degree of application. Moreover, there is ample proof that Primaticcio’s activity as a costume designer was in full swing by the 1540s, and not limited to the last decade of his life, as Louis Dimier had first suggested over a century ago.<sup>116</sup>

### 7. THE ROYAL LANGUAGE OF HIEROGLYPHS

Primaticcio’s *Defense and Preservation of Life* (fig. 2) and *Horoscopist* (fig. 3) reflect the French court’s interest in what was certainly one of the most intriguing remnants of Egyptian culture to have reached it: hieroglyphic writing. In his dedicatory preface to Louise de Savoie, the anonymous author of MS 682 asserted that “those who will know this book [the *Hieroglyphical*] will be able to write through figures the gestures of kings in marble and in tapestry.”<sup>117</sup> Early on in François I<sup>er</sup>’s reign, then, Horapollo’s text was presented to the royal family as the key to accessing hieroglyphs, which were ideally suited to communicating in cryptic fashion the deeds and ambitions of contemporary rulers. Primaticcio’s *Defense and Preservation of Life* and *Horoscopist* reveal that, in addition to two-dimensional and sculptural art forms, Horapollo’s text was also used as a basis for “writing through figures” in the medium of masquerade costumes.

What made this writing so palatable to the noble audience that appropriated it was its enigmatic character. Renaissance thinkers believed that the Egyptians embedded their most important knowledge in hieroglyphs as a way of keeping it beyond the reach of all but a select, initiated few.<sup>118</sup> The preface to *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques*

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Dimier, 380–81. For a discussion of Dimier’s approach to Primaticcio’s artistic identity and oeuvre, see Passini.

<sup>117</sup>Cited in Lecoq, 1987b, 256: “et ceulx qui scauront ce livre pourrons escrire par figures les gestes des Roys en marbre et tapisserie.”

<sup>118</sup>Diffused by Marsilio Ficino, the Plotinian conceit that hieroglyphs directly conveyed the fundamental essence of things to those possessing divinely inspired insight (and thus transcended discursive thought) was central to the Renaissance understanding of ancient Egyptian writing. This belief made it possible to connect hieroglyphic writing to other religious doctrines and philosophies that were expressed by means of allegories and enigmas, such as the Platonic myths. On this subject, see Iversen, 1958; George Boas’s introduction in Horapollo, 1993, 3–29.

reminded French readers of this fact, stating that: “saintly and divine things have never been common nor public but only entrusted and given to certain wise and discreet individuals; also we see commonly and it always happens that things that are too known and too obvious lose their reverence and authority and in the end become subject to contempt and disdain.”<sup>119</sup> This fascination with hieroglyphs reflected a broader preoccupation with veiled truths that also fueled interest in alchemy and the teachings of the Kabbalah, which were grounded in the belief that another level of meaning was hidden beneath the literal text of scripture and that decoding these secrets was the key to accessing the divine. Designed to transform their wearers into living signs that required special knowledge to be deciphered, Primaticcio’s two costume studies based on *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques* were thus very much in accordance with the esoterically inclined climate that flourished during François I<sup>er</sup>’s reign. At the very least, such costumes should be considered in relation to the royal taste for enigmas, anagrams, and other brainteasers, such as the portrait game, which invited participants to try their hand at deducing the identity of a sitter in a drawing after the inscription bearing his or her name and motto had been obscured.<sup>120</sup> Of course, identification within this context was really a process of recognition, and thus a means of reaffirming appurtenance to the court. The same may be said of Primaticcio’s *Defense and Preservation of Life* and *Horoscopist*: interpreting these costumes meant proving familiarity with Horapollo’s text and thus with the learned, elite language of hieroglyphs.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This profound fascination with veiled knowledge helps to explain why Egyptian-themed costumes and other obscure creations enjoyed currency within the context of French masquerades, particularly under François I<sup>er</sup>, who often positioned himself as a keeper of secrets as a means of exercising control. Murky references could contribute to creating an effective power dynamic based on separating those in the know from those who were not, such as foreign visitors, who might be dazzled but perplexed, and consequently

<sup>119</sup>Horapollo, 1543, fol. aij<sup>r</sup>: “les choses saintes & divines nont iamais este communes ny publicques mais seullement fiees & commises a certains personages saiges & discrets aussy veoit lon communement & tousiours advient ques choses trop cognues & trop manifestes perdent leur reverence & auctorite & a la fin tumbent en despris & desestime.”

<sup>120</sup>A collection of portrait drawings from the early part of François I<sup>er</sup>’s reign and known as the *recueil Méjanés* after the library where it is preserved in Aix-en-Provence (Bibliothèque Méjanés) bears traces of the papers used to conceal the sitters’ names and devices for the purpose of such games. On this subject, see Jollet, 103.

made to feel impressed by the French court's sophistication. As Primaticcio's sphinx (fig. 1) and *Hieroglyphica*-inspired costumes (figs. 2–3) suggest, ancient Egypt offered the ruling elite what the familiar pantheon of Greco-Roman characters might not: the ability to mystify, and through this, to cultivate superiority.

As the sixteenth century progressed, Egypt continued to play a role in masquerades and other forms of costumed entertainments. Participants in these events often had occasion to dress as people from foreign countries, who thus collectively became representative of the vast world over which their monarch's sovereignty extended. The theme of the Other was also prevalent in these contexts because it offered an opportunity to showcase unusual and striking costumes that amazed the eye and triggered the imagination.<sup>121</sup> For the Carnival period in 1583, for example, the royal accounts of Henri III (1551–89) mention silver cloth for the fashioning of coats in the exotic “Egyptian style” to be worn at masquerades.<sup>122</sup> Foreignness could also be exploited for its comic potential, particularly if it was combined with cross-dressing. Thus, Brantôme notes that at a tilting at the ring tournament organized by François II (1544–60) at Amboise, the Grand Prior François de Lorraine (1534–63), appeared in the guise of an Egyptian woman to the great amusement of his audience.<sup>123</sup> An impression of his outfit may perhaps be gleaned from François Desprez's *Recueil de la diversité des habits* (fig. 12), which provides an often critical (and fanciful) record of the clothing habits and customs of different nationalities and professions. In addition to toting a monkey dressed as a child, François de Lorraine wore a large round hat as well as “a gown and *cotte* of velvet and very puffy taffeta,” calling to mind the *Recueil*'s illustration of an Egyptian woman, who is portrayed carrying a real infant.<sup>124</sup> The idea of Egypt as a land of continuity is evoked in the accompanying quatrain, which insists that the Egyptian woman wears her garments according to ancient tradition, an implicit criticism of French sartorial fickleness in this period.<sup>125</sup> Thus Egypt was not only used within court-sponsored spectacles in its capacity as the birthplace of impenetrable mysteries, but also as an alien land of unfamiliar conventions with a quaint attachment to the past.

<sup>121</sup>On the role of exoticism in masquerade costume, see McGowan, 2011a, 46.

<sup>122</sup>Boucher, 908.

<sup>123</sup>Brantôme, 4:159–61. The Grand Prieur's opponent, Jacques de Savoie, Duke of Nemours, was dressed as a “bourgeois lady of the city.”

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:160.

<sup>125</sup>For more on the functions and critical dimension of Desprez's *Recueil*, see Jones.



FIGURE 12. “L’egyptienne,” fol. G6 from François Desprez, *Recueil de la diversité des habits* (Paris: Richard Breton, 1562). Woodcut. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1940 (40.129). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As for the *Hieroglyphica*, its importance to European festivities in the Renaissance and early Baroque periods merits a systematic study.<sup>126</sup> Horapollo’s text and Piero Valeriano’s expanded commentary on it (Basel,

<sup>126</sup>For an excellent concise discussion of this subject, see Strong, 22–25.

1556) constituted key sources for events such as the masked Genealogy of the Gods procession organized in Florence for the marriage of Francesco de' Medici to Joanna of Austria in 1565.<sup>127</sup> In addition to the familiar cast of mythological characters described by Boccaccio, the procession comprised abstruse embodiments of concepts like Persuasion (*Peithō*), for which an anonymous costume study survives.<sup>128</sup> Persuasion took the form of a matron wearing a headdress with a bloody eye (from which sprouted a tongue) and holding another eye attached to a hand, because, as Baccio Baldini observed in his description of the event: "the Egyptians as we read it in Horus in the first book of his *Hieroglyphica*, when they wanted to signify speech that persuades to the point of provoking action, they showed it by these two signs."<sup>129</sup> Several other quotations from Horapollon's and Valeriano's texts were incorporated into this *mascherata*, including the anemones worn by the personification of illness or palm leaves held by the incarnation of month. In the following century in England, Ben Jonson was influenced by these publications in the formulation of his theatrical productions, such as the *Masque of Blacknesse* (1605), and even went so far as to refer to masques as "Court-hieroglyphics" in his *Expostulation with Inigo Jones* (1631).<sup>130</sup> Further investigation into these texts' usage in these contexts would surely yield important insight into how the sacred secrecy and exoticism of ancient Egypt was appropriated by the European elite as part of its quest to centralize its power and distance itself from the common realm. Additional research will also hopefully make it possible to connect Primaticcio's *Defense and Preservation of Life* (fig. 2) and *Horoscopist* (fig. 3) to a particular event, and in doing so, to learn more about their functions and the French royal culture to which they belonged.

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<sup>127</sup>Seznec; Brunon, 2004. Other forms of ostentatious display for which the *Hieroglyphica* served as a source include Dürer's *Triumphal Arch* and the triumphal entry of Henri II into Rouen in 1550: see Graham, 408, 413, no. 17.

<sup>128</sup>Uffizi, Florence, Disegni di figura, 2769. Illustrated in Seznec, 230, fig. 1.

<sup>129</sup>Cited in Brunon, 2004, 591: "gli Egitii comme si legge appresso a Horo nel primo libro de suoi Hierglyphici quando volevan significare il parlare che persuadesse onde ne seguisse poi l'operationi, lo dimonstravan'per questi duoi segni disopra detti."

<sup>130</sup>Dieckmann, 1957, 314–315. The author cites the following footnote by Jonson to his stage directions for the dance sequence of the "daughters of the Aethiopian river" in the *Masque of Blacknesse*: "Which manner of symbol [i.e., mute hieroglyphick, mute because it is not explained in the text] I rather chose, than imprese, as well for strangeness, as relishing of antiquity, and more applying to that original doctrine of sculpture, which the Egyptians are said to have brought from the Aethiopians." It is precisely this heightened degree of strangeness and antiquity that made hieroglyphs appealing to those who organized and designed French courtly masquerades over half a century earlier.

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