

Imagined Elephants in the History of European Ideas: Varejka's Pataphysical Way to the Subject

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Review essay

Pascal Varejka, *Singularité de l'éléphant d'Europe*. (Collection « Biloba ».) Paris: Ginkgo, 2007. 131 pages. 107×208 mm. EUR 9.00 (paperback). ISBN 978 2 84679 028 2

Abstract. Varejka's booklet is a trove of information about elephants in the European imaginary, from antiquity to the present. Varejka's approach is facetious, *en bon pataphysicien*, but the information is sound, and arguably useful even for scholarly historians of the ideas. This essay is two-pronged: it considers the context of Varejka's volume within Pataphysique (a school which sometimes proposes mock-scholarly exposition, and sometimes, which is Varejka's case, scholarly mock-exposition). Then this essay proceeds to supplement (without replication) Varejka's booklet with further relevant information about the imaginary concerning elephants, information whose provenience is from across disciplines, but which is clearly of interest to folklore studies.

Keywords: Pataphysique; Zoological imaginary; Symbolism; Christian symbolism; Jewish studies; Humour in scholarly exposition.

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1. Varejka's Kind of Humour

1.1. A Dense Booklet in the Form of a Humorous Lexicon

We are concerned with a curious, humorous, but sound booklet in the history of the ideas: how in Europe they imagined the elephant. The book belongs to the French pataphysical school, which is sometimes mock-scholarly exposition, and sometimes scholarly mock-exposition: note the difference. The book we are considering is of the latter kind.

Varejka's book is a humorous, yet solid alphabetised lexicon of the elephant in the history of European ideas and art, from antiquity to the present, with much attention to the Middle Ages and early modern period (e.g., in a photograph on p. 22 a nun treats a baby elephant raised inside strange machinery at a clinic). It is lavishly illustrated in black and white.

The series in which Varejka's *Singularité de l'éléphant d'Europe* appeared, « Biloba », whose editor is Pierre Laurendeau, comprises other likewise funny works. As to Pascal Varejka, who has been living in Paris from 1990 (where he studied earlier on), and works "as a freelance translator, from Italian and from English to French", according to his online professional biosketch from 2010 (which de-emphasises his activities as an author of books):

My main areas of expertise are human sciences, documentary films dubbing (I adapted more than 250 documentary films), tourism and travels, journalism and politics (I adapted and wrote myself many magazine and newspaper articles, also for the French Ministère des Affaires Étrangères), and didactic texts (books or videos) for youth.

He had previously authored two books, both of them published by Parigramme, about Parisian history, *Brève histoire de la capitale*, in 1995, and *Paris au Moyen Age*, in 1998 (the latter, illustrated by Volker Theinhardt, is intended for children). Varejka also co-authored with Marketa Theinhardt a book about Prague (his city), *Prague imprevue*, published by Flammarion in 1994. To give an idea of the levity of the presentation, let us consider the back of the cover. The publisher's blurb (certainly by Varejka himself) is humorous because our expectations are awakened because the "European elephant" is introduced as though it was an actual species, along with the African Elephant and Indian Elephant, and Varejka is presented as being "its most strenuous defender", as though it needed a defender, not just some tutelage or inquiry. The tone is set with Varejka being claimed to be the holder of the chair of Elephantology at the College of Pataphysics. We know what to expect, and our appetite is whetted. The rest of the blurb is more *bona-fide*, but inside the book, instead of the author removing himself from quaint and inaccurate beliefs about the elephant, he proposes the items of lore unquestioningly on the surface, but of course tongue in cheek, and he even harmonises them, as though all entries were attributes of the same kind of being.

The blurb on the back of the cover states:

L'éléphant d'Europe a trouvé en Pascal Varejka, détenteur de la chaire d'éléphantologie au collège de 'Pataphysique, son plus ardent défenseur. Moins connu que ses cousins africain ou asiatique, le pachyderme européen est l'objet de nombreuses études et représentations dans la littérature et l'art occidental depuis l'Antiquité. Intelligent, sérieux, mais aussi boulimique (Aristote le crédite d'un appétit démesuré), il est volontiers mélomane, voir prophétique; amateur de belles femmes quand il n'est pas d'une chasteté exemplaire, il dégage une odeur suave qui peut guérir les maux de tête. C'est à un voyage dans l'imaginaire collectif européen que nous invite Pascal Varejka, avec humour et érudition.

Comme l'écrivait André Vialatte, fin connaisseur de l'animal, « *l'éléphant est considerable* ».

After the introduction (9–12), one finds the entries AGILE, ALLÉGORIQUE, ALLERGIQUE AU TABAC, ANALOGIQUE, ANTIQUE, APPLIQUÉ, APTÈRE (but winged in a treatise by Alfonso el Sabio), ARABO-NORMAND, À SANG FROID (in Pliny), BALZACIEN, BOTTÉ (quoting from Lewis Carroll and showing an elephant wearing boots in an old ad), BOULIMIQUE, CHASTE, CHAUSSÉ DE PANTOUFLES, CHRÉTIEN, COMESTIBLE, DÉSINCARNÉ, DISCRET, DOUÉ DE MÉMOIRE, DOUX, ÉCRABOUILLEUR, ÉPICURIEN, FIDÈLE, FORT (even carrying a fortress: cf. Elephant and Castle), FRAGILE DES INTESTINS, FRIGIDE, GALANT, GLABRE, GONFLÉ, GROS, HARCELÉ PAR LES CHASSEURS, HUMAIN DANS L'ACCOUPEMENT, INDISPENSABLE À L'HOMME (quoting from Vialatte: "C'est grâce à l'éléphant que l'homme a figure humaine"), INIMITABLE, JUIF (ASHKÉNAZE), KALÉIDOSCOPIQUE (a long entry), LAID, MAL FAGOTÉ, MALTHUSIEN, MARIAL (Mary's), MARIN (e.g., a medieval elephant-headed fish in Metz, and Venice's 1505 elephant-triton),¹ MÉDICINAL (Pliny, Hildegard of Bingen, Albertus Magnus), MÉLOMANE (sic!), MERVEILLEUSEMENT BIEN OUTILÉ, MONSTRUOEUX, MORALISTE, MULTICOLORE, NORDIQUE, ODORIFÉRANT, OMNIPRÉSENT (here, an elephant-contoured code bar is Dobritz's CODE BABARRE, after Babar the Elephant from the cartoons), OREILLARD (SOUVENT), PELOTEUR, PLURICENTENAIRE, POLITICIEN, PRESTIGIEUX, PRODIGUE, PROPHÉTIQUE, PROTECTEUR, PUDIQUE, QUADRILLÉ (lozenge-skinned in Pliny, tiger-striped in a Roman mosaic), RELIGIEUX, RIGIDE (supposedly knee-less), RUINEUX, SAVOYARD, SENTIMENTAL, SOCIABLE, SOIFFARD, STANDARDISÉ (even when its ears were shaped like seashells), SURPRENANT, SURRÉALISTE (e.g., a vegetal elephant on the cover of *Le Surréalisme même*, or an elephant whose head and trunk resemble a swan), THÉOLOGIQUE, TRÈS INTELLIGENT, UTILE, VÉGÉTARIEN, VERSATILE, VERTUEUX.

A select bibliography and an index of authors follow. Those entry titles are sometimes opaque, to wet the appetite. The text, on the whole, is a trove of information. Instructive as it may be, Heckscher's classic (1947) 'Bernini's Elephant and Obelisk' (only) tells you (so) much; Varejka's booklet instead is a fertile overview with a broad scope.

1.2. The Conceptual and Ideological Background of Varejka's Humour: Mock-Scholarly Presentations vs Mock-Scholarship in Pataphysics, and the Antecedent of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's Mock-Scholar Bonhommet

Alfred Jarry (1873–1907) was a humorous French novelist and playwright.² He is best known for the character of King Ubu, inspired by one of his teachers. Jarry is also the founder of pataphysics ('Pataphysique), supposedly a science, intended to deconstruct reality and

¹ A creature, half-fish, half-elephant, painted on the ceiling of the 12th-century St. Martin church in Zillis, Switzerland, or the one in a 13th-century painting on the ceiling of the Hôtel du Voué in Metz, or the one in relief on a bronze column from 1505, made for the Venetian doge Leonardo Loredan, and of which there is a copy at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Varejka 2007, pp. 75–76).

² See Dubbelboer (2009), Besnier (2005), Levesque (1970), Arrivé (1972), Béhar (1980, 1983, 2003).

reconstruct it in the realm of absurdity.³ Jarry defined it as "science des solutions imaginaires" or then as "science qui accorde symboliquement aux linéaments les propriétés des objets décrits par leur virtualité". Jarry actually spelled the term with an initial apostrophe: *'pataphysique*. The etymology has been explained as follows:⁴

Littéralement *'pataphysique* (contraction du pseudo-grec τὰ ἐπὶ τὰ μεταφυσικά – τὰ ἐπὶ τὰ μετὰφυσικά – d'après le titre « τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά » – « τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά » – de l'œuvre *la Métaphysique* d'Aristote) signifie « ce qui est sur la métaphysique », c'est-à-dire « ce qui est sur ce qui est après la physique » parce que le titre de l'œuvre *la Métaphysique* signifiait à l'origine « ce qui est (écrit) après (l'œuvre) *la Physique* ».

Jarry indique que l'apostrophe précédant le nom sert à « éviter un facile calembour », mais ce peut être un commentaire humoristique dans la tradition de cette philosophie, puisque le terme *'pataphysique* est lui-même un calembour (paronyme) de *métaphysique*. Étant donné que l'apostrophe n'influence ni le sens ni la prononciation de *'pataphysique*, ce terme a pu être créé pour spécifiquement rappeler des calembours divers. Ces calembours comprennent *patte à physique* (d'après les experts sur Jarry Keith Beaumont et Roger Shattuck), *pas ta physique*, et *pâte à physique*.

En outre, Jarry fait remonter l'origine de cette science à Ibicrate le géomètre et Sophrotatos l'Arménien.

Elephants are no strangers to Jarry studies: Annie Le Brun (1990) entitled "Comme c'est petit un éléphant" her preface to Jarry's novel *Surmâle* (of 1901, originally published in 1902).

The Collège de *'Pataphysique* was established⁵ by Emmanuel Peillet in 1948. It ceased its activities in 1975, then they were renewed in 2000. Basically its publications fall into two categories:

- ❑ *mock-scholarly exposition* (an illustrious and forceful antecedent can be found in 19th-century France, in Auguste de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's⁶ character of Dr Tribulat Bonhomet, to which we'll come back, or even as early as Rabelais in the Renaissance),
- ❑ and sometimes, which (as mentioned earlier) is Varejka's case, *scholarly mock-exposition*.

In both cases, pataphysics is a parody of science⁷ or more generally of scholarship, and of their methods. In fact:⁸

Alfred Jarry illustre la *'pataphysique* dans les *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll*, roman qui expose les principes et les fins de la *'pataphysique*, science du particulier, science de l'exception. [...] Plus tard, Boris Vian, grand promoteur de *'pataphysique*, exposera qu'« un des principes fondamentaux de la *'pataphysique* est l'équivalence. C'est peut-être ce qui explique ce refus que nous manifestons de ce qui est sérieux, de ce qui ne l'est pas, puisque pour nous, c'est exactement la même chose, c'est *'pataphysique* ».

La *'pataphysique* se présente généralement sous la forme de discours ou d'institutions scientifiques, philosophiques ou ésotériques, ou à l'inverse, sous des dehors amusants de jeux d'esprit, propose une réflexion plus profonde en décrivant un univers parallèle « que l'on peut voir et que peut-être l'on doit voir à la place du traditionnel. » Le *'pataphysicien* observe le monde d'une manière particulière, par exemple, au lieu d'énoncer la loi de la chute des corps vers un centre, le *'pataphysicien* préférera celle de l'ascension du vide vers une périphérie

³ http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Alfred_Jarry&oldid=76604489

⁴ <http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%27Pataphysique&oldid=76735431>

⁵ http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Coll%C3%A8ge_de_%27Pataphysique&oldid=75945494

The official website of the Collège de *'Pataphysique* is <http://www.college-de-pataphysique.org/>

⁶ The writer Auguste de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam was born in 1838, and died in 1889. He authored novels, short stories, and plays. In 1859, he had tried his hand at poetry.

⁷ See <http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%27Pataphysique&oldid=76735431>

⁸ <http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%27Pataphysique&oldid=76735431>

Varejka posturing as though he endorses beliefs about the elephant which we cannot consider but grossly inaccurate, is something that has precise pataphysical roots: for example, pataphysics made it its hallmark to endorse clinamen theory (ascribed to Epicure, and endorsed by Lucretius, Cicero, and Plutarch), according to which gravity causes an atom to fall down in a straight line, but it is not perfectly vertical.

The OuLiPo literary school from France (established in 1960 as an association by the mathematician François Le Lionnais and the poet Raymond Queneau) made clinamen theory into one of its dogmas, and this in turn is an assertion of its relation to pataphysics (we are going to see something similar concerning Villiers de L'Isle-Adam has something similar concerning his scholar character of Tribulat Bonhomet).

L'Ouvroir de littérature potentielle, généralement désigné par son acronyme *OuLiPo* (ou *Oulipo*), est un groupe international de littéraires et de mathématiciens se définissant comme des « rats qui construisent eux-mêmes le labyrinthe dont ils se proposent de sortir ». On prête cette définition à Raymond Queneau.⁹

Actually, the OuLiPo self-definition denies that it is a literary school, but for that matter, Karl Marx denied that his ideology was an ideology, claiming instead that it was a science.

The *Cahiers du Collège de Pataphysique* are a peculiar periodical which changed names several times¹⁰ as a matter of policy,¹¹ and which is primarily a forum in humour (rather than in humour studies), but where on occasion papers of serious scholarly interest have appeared,¹² and where moreover some important works of the *belles lettres* were first published (e.g., *La Cantatrice chauve* by Eugène Ionesco). There exists a *Calendrier pataphysique* (Fig. 1), whose current version can be downloaded from the official website of the Collège de Pataphysique, which adopted it formally in 1948.

Fig. 1 shows two weeks from the month of Absolu. The second month is called *Haha*. In his *L'Almanach du Père Ubu* (published by Fasquelle in 1899), Alfred Jarry included a « calendrier du Père Ubu », which he revised in *L'Almanach illustré du Père Ubu* of 1901 (also published by Fasquelle). The Pataphysical Era begins on 8 September 1873, i.e., the birth date of Alfred Jarry. The calendar comprises thirteen months of 28 days each, except the months of Gidouille, which has 29 days (from 15 June to 13 July): the additional day, Gidouille the 29th, is imaginary, and does not fit in any week; the same for Gueules the 29th on leap-years.

Les noms des mois sont inspirés par les termes pittoresques et néologismes que l'on peut trouver dans l'œuvre de Jarry (*oneille* au lieu d'oreille, *merdre* au lieu de merde, etc.). La nomination habituelle des sept jours de la semaine a été conservée — sauf le ou les deux jours imaginaires de l'année, qui sont nommés *hunyadi*, et plus spécialement *Hunyadi Gras* —, et tous les 13 sont des vendredis. En revanche, les Saints sont presque tous modifiés (Jean-Pierre Brisset, par exemple, en fait partie), [...] ¹³

⁹ http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ouvroir_de_litt%C3%A9rature_potentielle&oldid=76323644

¹⁰ At first the name was *Cahiers du Collège de Pataphysique* (1950–1957), then *Dossiers du Collège de Pataphysique* (1957–1965), *Subsidia Pataphysica* (1966–1974), *Organographes du Cymbalum Pataphysicum* (1974–1981), *Monitoires du Cymbalum Pataphysicum* (1981–1994), *L'Expectateur* (1994–2000), *Carnets trimestriels du Collège de Pataphysique* (2000–2007), and finally *Correspondancier du Collège de Pataphysique* (2007 to the present).

¹¹ "Le Collège de Pataphysique publie depuis 1950 une revue trimestrielle. L'intitulé de la revue change tous les 28 numéros (mais porte toujours en *avant-titre* **Viridis Candela**)." This quotation is from the webpage http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Viridis_Candela&oldid=73466107

¹² Bear in mind that sometimes actual science is funny enough, without it having to be fake for it to be funny. This is the case of the kind of scientific projects that are prized with the Ig-Nobel Prize (with the sound-alike *ignoble* being opposed to noble, a sound-alike as well as the etymological sense of the personal name *Nobel*). See e.g. Gingras and Vécrin (2002).

¹³ http://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Calendrier_pataphysique&oldid=71604585

An anthology of texts by Brisset was the second book in the same series as Varejka's *Singularité de l'éléphant d'Europe*.

1	NATIVITÉ d'ALFRED JARRY	8 septembre
2	St Ptyx , silenciaire (Abolition de)	9
3	St Phénix , solipsiste et St Hyx , factotum	10
4	St Lucien de Samosate , voyageur	11
5	St Bardamu , voyageur	12
6	Ste Vérola , assistante sociale	13
7	St Alambic , abstracteur	14
8	ABSINTHE, ci-devant *St Alfred	15
9	Descente du St Esprit (de Vin)	16
10	Dilution	17
11	Ste Purée , sportswoman	18
12	Vide	19
13	St Canterel , l'illuminateur	20
14	St Sophrotatos l'Arménien , pataphysicien	21
15	ÉTERNITÉ	22
16	St Ibicrate le Géomètre , pataphysicien	23
17	Céphalorgie	24
18	Flûtes de Pan	25
19	Stes Grues , ophiophiles	26
20	Ste Mélusine , souillarde de cuisine	27
21	*St Venceslas , duc	28

Fig. 1. Dates excerpted from the month of Absolu (8 September to 5 October) of the Pataphysical calendar.¹⁴

Let us turn now to the writer Auguste de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam (1838–1889).¹⁵ The pseudo-scholar Tribulat Bonhomet is the eponym of *Tribulat Bonhomet*, a novel¹⁶ of 1887. It is a masterpiece of mock-scholarly exposition. In a chapter, Bonhomet proposes to seek

¹⁴ http://www.college-de-pataphysique.org/college/accueil_files/calenpat.pdf

¹⁵ In contrast to the disrespect toward religion shown by Jarry in his calendar, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, an aristocrat, was proud of his strict Catholicism. His indebtedness to the Gnostic tradition was claimed however by Anzalone (1983).

¹⁶ The novel can now be accessed online at http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Tribulat_Bonhomet

advantage from earthquakes (*Motion du D^r Tribulat Bonhomet touchant l'utilisation des tremblements de terre*):

« Les indications de ce moderne Jonas une fois obtenues, je propose que, sur l'endroit le plus menacé, soient édifiés, pour l'époque utile, d'énormes bâtiments à toiture de granit. Cela fait, itérativement je propose qu'avec toutes ces câlineries persuasives et doucereuses [...] nous invitations à s'y établir toute l'inspirée ribambelle de ces prétendus Rêveurs, — que Platon voulait, en son indulgence, que l'on couronnât de roses en les jetant à la porte de la République.

« L'aléatoire de la catastrophe nous couvrirait, aux yeux de la Loi, de leur anéantissement.

« Bref, nous leur offririons un logis confortable, brillant même, avec des horizons, des couchers du Soleil, des horizontales, des étoiles, des falaises, des myrtes, des vins fins, des romans, des fleurs, des oiseaux, enfin l'entourage où ces messieurs perçoivent toutes leurs insipides fantasmagories. Et, puisqu'ils s'obstinent, malgré l'évidence, à croire encore au Mystérieux, qu'ils soient ainsi livrés au Mystérieux !

— De sorte qu'au moment où ils y penseront le moins,

krrraââk !!!

« nous en serons débarrassés ! — Et nous nous frotterons joyeusement les mains à cette nouvelle, en leur souhaitant bon voyage chez Pluton.

« De cette façon, ces périodiques interventions de l'Absurde, ces sursauts des dernières forces aveugles de la Nature seront utilisées et rationalisées... *Similia similibus*.

Another chapter (*Le Tueur de cygnes*) has the scholar exterminate the swans in a pond (and derives from this the knowledge that the song that a swan sings on dying is sublime), and the cruel experiment relates the given episode to Auguste de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's *Contes cruels* (of 1883) and *Nouveaux contes cruels* (of 1888). The climax of *Le Tueur de cygnes* is as follows:

Trois quarts d'heure, environ, durait cette extase, qu'il n'eût pas troquée contre un royaume. Soudain, le rayon de l'Étoile-du-matin, glissant à travers les branches, illuminait, à l'improviste, Bonhomet, les eaux noires et les cygnes aux yeux pleins de rêves ! le veilleur, affolé d'épouvante à cette vue, jetait la pierre... — Trop tard !... Bonhomet, avec un grand cri horrible, où semblait se démasquer son sirupeux sourire, se précipitait, griffes levées, bras étendus, à travers les rangs des oiseaux sacrés ! — Et rapides étaient les étreintes des doigts de fer de ce preux moderne: et les purs cols de neige de deux ou trois chanteurs étaient traversés ou brisés avant l'envolée radieuse des autres oiseaux-poètes.

Alors, l'âme des cygnes expirants s'exhalait, oublieuse du bon docteur, en un chant d'immortel espoir, de délivrance et d'amour, vers des Cieux inconnus.

Le rationnel docteur souriait de cette sentimentalité, dont il ne daignait savourer, en connaisseur sérieux, qu'une chose, — LE TIMBRE. — Il ne prisait, musicalement, que la douceur singulière *du timbre* de ces symboliques voix, qui vocalisaient la Mort comme une mélodie.

Anzalone claims (1983, p.25): "Villiers delighted in heaping ironic scorn on characters like Tribulat Bonhomet and Kaspar d'Auersperg, whose spiritual blindness seems indeed congenital, and reserved his highest admiration for those privileged characters who could hear the call of the *au-delà*."

We have seen that the pataphysical strike of the OuLiPo movement within French literature of the last half century is made apparent by its absurdly expousing the long discredited clinamen theory, about objects falling in a line that is not perfectly vertical. It is interesting that exactly one century earlier than the rise of OuLiPo within French literature, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam has something similar concerning his character of Tribulat Bonhomet.

In an article in the journal *Folklore*, Véronique Champion-Vincent (1999) discussed the false idea that the retina retains images, so that the image of a murderer can be retrieved as a tool for criminal investigation. She quotes such a belief (which she calls "The Tell-Tale Eye", patterned after Edgar Allan Poe "The Tell-Tale Heart") from a French article from 1863, and mentions that "in 1857, the same idea had appeared in the American press" (*ibid.*, p. 14). "In the circles of forensic specialists 'The Tell-Tale Eye' idea was seriously studied in 1869 in

France", but a report that the Society for Forensic Medicine had commissioned from Dr Vernois refuted it (Campion-Vincent 1999, p. 15).

Campion-Vincent's article comprises (on p. 16) a section entitled "The Tell-Tale Eye and Irony: Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Gustave Macé", in which she points out, among the other things:

In his short story *Claire Lenoir* (1867) Villiers de l'Isle Adam parodies the 1863 article from the *Publicateur des Côtes du Nord*. In a chapter entitled "The Mysterious Paragraph", Villiers's erudite and materialistic hero, Tribulat Bonhomet, recalls that he has read in "a local publication, dirty, forgotten, torn, already old" a paragraph describing how the last thing seen by an animal killed in a slaughterhouse is pictured in its eye. Tribulat Bonhomet comments that he is familiar with this fact and its recent application by "the police of North America" (Villiers 1867, 43). But in this parody Villiers adds cats and tiles to the original, and a prestigious endorsing authority as well:

The Paris Science Academy has just ascertained the authenticity of a most surprising fact. It would now be certain that the animals intended to supply our diet, such as sheep, bullock, lamb, horse and cat, keep within their eyes, after the butcher's mace or knife blow, the imprint of the objects they last contemplated. It is a real photograph, of pavements, stalls and tiles, of vague figures amongst which can almost always be distinguished that of the man that hit them (ibid., 43).

Campion-Vincent further explains (1999, p. 21):

I have quoted earlier Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's parodic quotation of the 1863 press article from the *Publicateur des Côtes du Nord*. It serves to introduce the hundred-page story of *Claire Lenoir*, the main theme of which is a long and static debate between on the one hand Tribulat Bonhomet, the scientific materialist, and on the other Césaire Lenoir, the Hegelian idealist and supporter of occult powers, and his unfaithful wife Claire, who defends the Christian Revelation. Neither party wins this philosophical discussion. Later Césaire dies suddenly and the story becomes fantastic as his ghost, transformed into a "Polynesian savage", cuts off the head of Claire's lover on a South Sea island. It is this very scene that Tribulat Bonhomet discovers, etched in Claire's eyes when she too dies. As is the rule in fantastic literature, the reader is left to decide whether this ghostly murder has really happened or is just an hallucination endured by poor Claire (Villiers 1867).

A question is called for: Varejka's affiliation with the College de 'Pataphysique is stated explicitly in the publisher's blurb of his book. Does he acknowledge any antecedent in Villiers de L'Isle-Adam? Varejka actually rephrases and quotes from Villiers de L'Isle-Adam a passage of fantasy fiction about the colours of an elephant (84–85, Varejka's ellipsis):

Dans la littérature, le plus bel éléphant multicolore, ou plutôt « caméléon », se rencontre sous la plume de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam. Dans *la Légende de l'éléphant blanc*, un des contes de *l'Amour suprême* (1886), l'auteur raconte que pour livrer un éléphant blanc volé au zoo de Londres, des aventuriers l'ont teint en noir à l'aide d'une puissante teinture. « *Mais les acides de la teinture initiale avaient pénétré profondément l'épais tissu cutané du proboscidien, de sorte qu'en se combinant avec les acides, ces reactifs [...] produisaient un résultat inattendu. Loin de prendre sa teinte natale, l'éléphant était devenu vert, orange, blue-de-roi, violet, cramoisi, gorge de pigeon — chatoyait et passait par toutes les nuances de l'arc-en-ciel : sa trompe — pareille au pavillon bariolé d'une nation inconnue, durant une accalmie — pendait immobile, contre le long mât peinturluré d'une de ses jambes immenses — si bien que, dans un saisissement, le directeur émerveillé s'écria : — Oh ! laissez-le ! de grace ! n'y touchez plus ! Quel monstre fabuleux ! c'est l'éléphant- caméléon !* »,

A stolen white elephant was painted black, but once recovered it cannot be made white again. Discoloration rather makes it of many colours, and the director of the London zoo, in the story, is proud of that fabulous "chameleon-elephant".

2. Supplementary Information about Elephants in the History of Ideas

2.1. From an Early Greek Citation of Elephants, to the Elephantine Iconography of Alexander the Great

Europeans have known about elephants for a very long time. Exotic as they were, those animals could be readily referred to. Consider the lexical facet: names for 'elephant'. Sometimes elephants were (and still are, in a lexicological sense) amenable to the category 'bovine' (cf. English *bull*, *cow*, and *calf*, referring to elephants), and indeed there exists a long-standing etymological hypothesis deriving the Greek name for 'elephant' (and the European names derived from it) from a conjectural Northwest Semitic **élef-Hind* 'cattle of India'. Discussing Hanno's *Periplus*, Duane Roller (2006),¹⁷ having stated: "After Soloeis, the expedition sailed easterly to a lake, notable for its reeds and elephants" (*ibid.*, p. 35), remarks (*ibid.*, fn. 100):

This may be one of the earliest citations of elephants in Greek, if the Greek translation is in fact from the fifth century BC. Only Herodotos (3.97 etc.) may be earlier. It is certainly the first documentation of them in northwest Africa. They were known to have roamed wild in the High Atlas from early times (Juba, fr. 50 = Philostratos, *Life of Apollonios* 2.13).

The Hindu elephant-headed deity Ganēśa, whose own myth includes the ocean, the white elephant, and the white horse, has been recognised as being the source of the elephantine iconography of Alexander the Great (Bonoldi, 2005). See Figs. 2, for Alexander's coinage, and Figs. 3 to 8, for the Indo-Greeks, and coins of Demetrius I, King of Bactria.

2.2. Elephant-Head Protomes on Pseudo-Ionic Capitals from Nabataean Petra

One would think of looking for elephants *outside* Europe. Aptly, Classical Greece's Ionic capitals' corner volute running along both sides evolved, in Nabataean Petra, thus in Asia, into the trunk of elephant-head protomes on pseudo-Ionic capitals (Blagg, 1990; cf. McKenzie, 2001). Ionian capitals, as their very name indicate, originated in (or were ascribed to) Ionian, thus to western Anatolia, in Asia Minor, whereas one usually associates Greek culture with Europe. The Corinthian style is associated with a city in European Greece. Once in the Hellenistic, then Roman times Greek styles of capitals came to be found in the Near East also other than Anatolia, they could nevertheless depart from the Greek tradition, such as with the inclusion of elephant-head volutes at Petra. See Figs. 9 and 10.

McKenzie noted (2001, p. 102):

The animal protomes on the two Ionic capitals found near the Temenos Gate at Petra [...] and the one at Khirbet Brak [...] were for many years identified as the heads of dolphins until Blagg (1990) demonstrated they were, in fact, elephant heads with holes for tusks. The excavation of the "Lower Temenos" of the "Great/South Temple" uncovered many more examples and innumerable fragments of trunks, confirming their identity and revealing their original provenance on the colonnades of the "Lower Temenos" [...]. A leaf is carved below the elephant heads on them, as also occurs under the corner volutes on the example from the North Propylon at Epidaurus [...], and a small leaf appears between the elephant heads and the abacus, as on the floral capitals at Petra. These zoomorphic capitals are clearly derived from Ionic capitals with four corner volutes, replaced by elephant heads. This idea of replacing corner volutes with animal protomes is also seen on the Temple of the Winged Lions where the Corinthian corner volutes of Type 1 floral capitals are replaced with winged lions [...]. Other examples at Petra depict other animals, such as goats' heads, in place of the corner volutes [...]. While these capitals are related to traditional Classical types from Alexandria, the idea of using animal protomes on them is eastern.

¹⁷ Reviewed by Nissan (2009a).



Fig. 2. A genuine coin of Alexander the great, with an elephant. It is a silver decadrachm of the Poros type, i.e., depicting on the obverse Alexander, on horseback, who attacks two men riding an elephant. Alexander annexated Indian satrapies in the Punjab, and left them to the rule of Porus and Taxiles. Remaining Greek troops in those satrapies were left under command of Eudemus, a general who eventually toppled Taxiles. Peithon, another Greek general, also ruled over Greek colonies in India. Both Eudemus and Peithon left India in 316 BCE, ten years after Alexander's conquest of northwestern India. An army was led by Seleucus I to the Indus, and in a peace treaty with Chandragupta, Seleucus received 500 war elephants. These became distinctive of the Seleucid army in the Near East (being employed for example in the war against the Maccabees).



Fig. 3. A similar coin, claimed to be a counterfeit. From File 138/1409 of the FORUM Classical Numismatics Discussion Board: Fake Ancient Coins Reports, as reported by Ilya Prokopov, who explained in detail how to distinguish the genuine coin from counterfeits.¹⁸ The original report was Example 7 in the *Bulletin on Counterfeits (IAPN BOC)*, 17(1), 1992, of the International Association of professional Numismatists (IAPN).

¹⁸ <http://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pos=-7997>

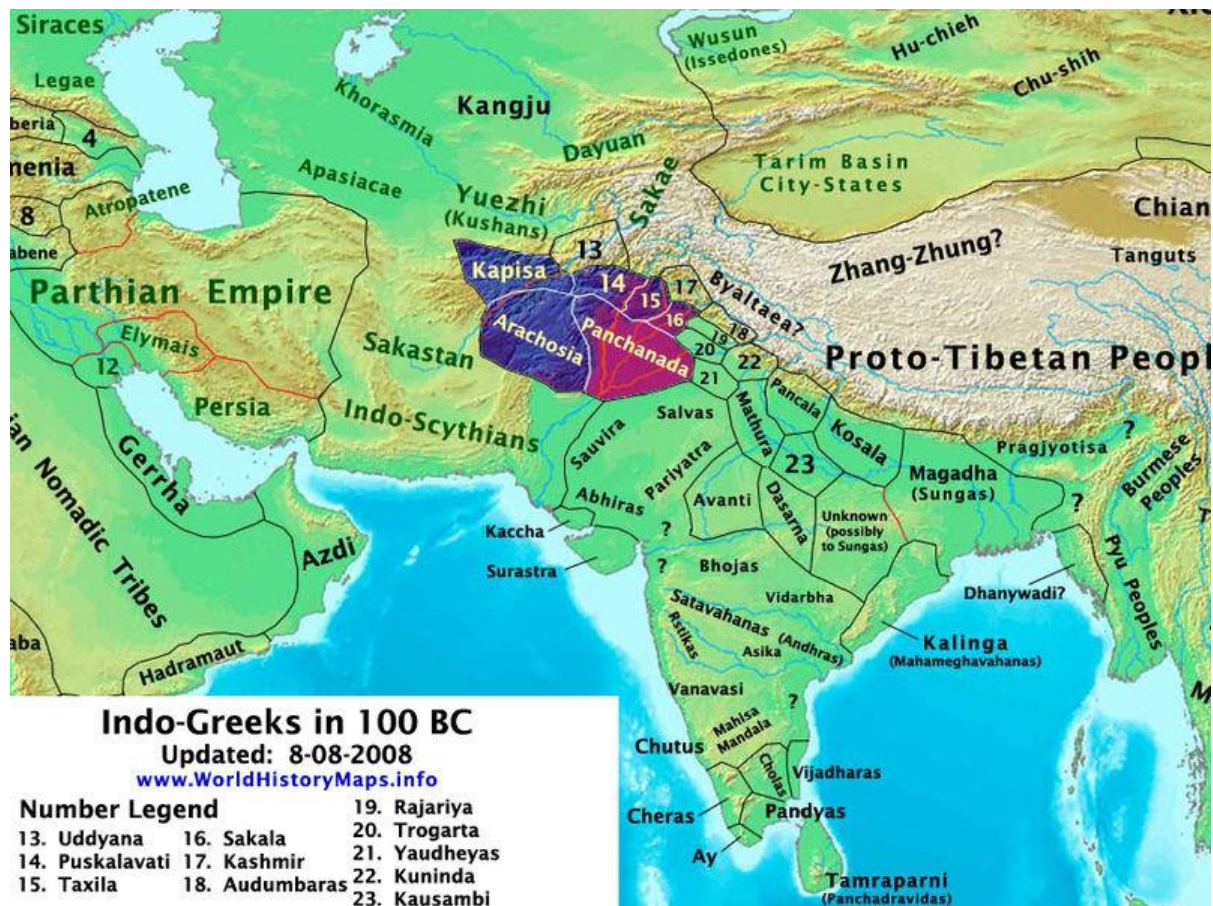


Fig. 4. A map of the Indo-Greek Kingdoms in 100 BCE, by Thomas Lessman (2008), in the public domain, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License.¹⁹ Around 250 BCE, Diodotus I, the satrap of Bactria in Central Asia, seceded from the Seleucid Empire. The Hellenistic king of Bactria, Demetrius I (r. c. 205 – c. 170 BCE), invaded India early in the second century BCE, thus giving rise to the Indo-Greek Kingdom. Eventually divided Hellenistic polities in northwestern India separated from the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, and endured during nearly two centuries. Apollodotus (r. 180–160 BCE) was the first Hellenistic king who ruled in India only (Bernard 1994; Bopparachchi 1991; Narain 1957, 1976).²⁰



Fig. 5. The invasion of India by the Graeco-Bactrian Kingdom, starting with Demetrius I.²¹ The territory of ancient Bactria corresponds to Balkh province in modern Afghanistan.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indo-Greeks_100bc.jpg ; originally at: http://www.thomaslessman.com/History/images/East-Hem_100bc.jpg

²⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indo-Greeks> ; <http://www.med.unc.edu/~nupam/greek1.html> ;

²¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IndoGreekCampaigns.jpg>



Fig. 6. A coin (a silver tetradrachm) of Demetrius I Anicetus (Aniketos, 'Invincible'), a Hellenistic King of Bactria,²² shown wearing the scalp of an elephant. If this reflects his real-life practice, arguably that must have been an elephant calf, or (more likely) even a fetus, as the skull and trunk are so small. It may be however (and actually this is more likely) that the headgear was only symbolic, not real. It was suggested that this was perhaps a posthumous coin. The elephant headgear symbolised Demetrius' conquest of India, and the association between conquering India and elephant symbolism dates back to Alexander the Great. The model for an elephant headgear may have been the iconography of Heracles wearing a lion's hide and scalp. Choking the Nemean lion was the first of Heracles' twelve labours.

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Demetrius_I_of_Bactria ;
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Demetrius_I_MET_coin.jpg



Fig. 7. Pedigree coin showing Demetrius I (with the elephant scalp), and coined by Agathocles.²³



Fig. 8. A bronze trichalkon on Demetrius I of Bactria, from the Merv mint.²⁴ The elephant head shown on the obverse of this coin (the animal has a bell around its neck) is thought to have represented Demetrius' conquest of India. This must be the sense of Demetrius' headger in his other coins. On the reverse of the coin, a caduceus is shown.

²³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AgathoklesCoinOfDemetriusAniketos.JPG>

²⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Demetrious.jpg> ;

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Demetrius_I_of_Bactria

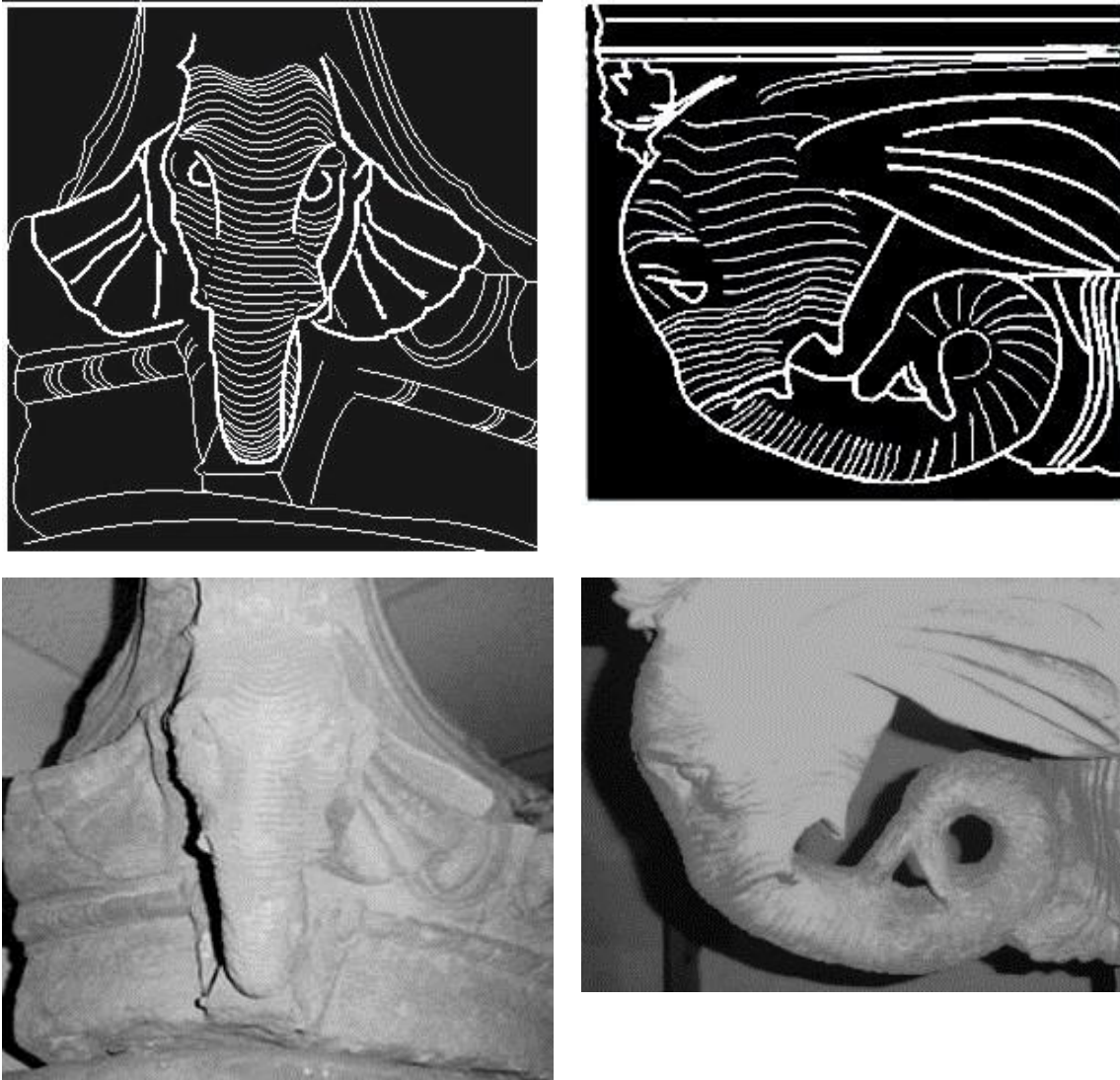


Fig. 9. Nabataean elephant capitals from the Museum of Petra, Jordan, photographed from below, and an artist's rendition from the photographs (here, modified).²⁵



Fig. 10. A modified image of a reconstruction from Brown University of a Nabataean elephant capital from Petra. War elephants has already been employed in the Seleucid army, and for that reason in the Hellenistic and Roman period the motif was known in the Near East, whereas Republican Rome was aware of war elephants because both the Carthaginians and Pyrrhus, the King of Epirus, had made use of them against the Romans.

²⁵ From: <http://nabataea.net/elephants.html>

2.3. Elephant-Eared Anthropomorphic Characters

2.3.1. Personified Africa on Roman Coins, and Diana on a Roman Door-Knocker

Ancient Roman visual representations of Diana (identified with the Greek Artemis) show her horned, but the two horns are those of the moon crescent. This is a possible link of ruminants to the moon. A door-knocker from Pompeii that was installed on the outer door of a house in London, moreover shows Diana with her chin on the back of her hand, as her forearm rests with the elbow on the other forearm, and behind her horns, one can see two enormous ears, whereas a small elephant trunk is raised above her head. Apparently this was a contamination with the elephant head or ears as being a symbol for Africa, as found on Roman coins: see the golden coin of 43 B.C.E., celebrating L. Cestius C. Norba on the reverse (Fig. 11), and the MAGNVS golden coin of 71 B.C.E. with Pompey in a triumphal quadriga on the reverse, respectively nos. 11 and 10 on pp. 76–77 in Sear's (2000) catalogue of Roman coins from the Republic and the Twelve Caesars. The Pompeians issued coins showing Africa with elephant ears and tusks: see Fig. 12, with a variant in Fig. 13 (Sear 2000, p. 262). The contamination of Diana with elephant attributes in the door-knocker was perhaps because Diana was associated with hunting, and Africa was a land from which exotic animals were being imported. Exposure of the public to such exotic animals in the arena games apparently made them familiar enough, for the notion of hunting being associated with them, and in turn Diana, inasmuch the goddess of hunting, came to span also the hunting of such animals, and not only of southern European game as had been the case in the early Roman imaginary.

2.3.2. Occurrence in India, and in the Persian Epos Kuš-nāma

An association of the bull and the moon is found in India, as both of them are sacred to Shiva. For example, in a painting made in the 1730s in the hill state of Mandi, Raja Siddh Sen (who reigned in 1684–1727) is shown at worship, with the tuft of hair at the top of his head adorned with Shiva's datura flower, and in front of the king there is a small image of Shiva's bull, Nandi. "The mark (*tilak*) in the form of a crescent moon drawn in ash on his [the king's] forehead is another allusion to the god Shiva" (Crill and Jariwala 2010, p. 136).

Arguably the representation of Diana, inspired by Roman symbolism for Africa, is unrelated to elephant-eared human as known to Persian mythology (and arguably of Indian derivation: cf. Ganēśa's elephant head). The Persian epos of Rostam, as related in Ferdūsi's *Shāh-nāmāh*, sees the hero vanquish Akvān, the elephant-headed demon of evil thoughts.²⁶ Akvān, having taken the shape of a wild ass, captures Rostam while he is asleep and throws him into the sea, but Rostam survives and eventually wins. An elephant head is also associated with the Hindu deity Ganēśa, whose own myth includes the ocean, the white elephant, and the white horse. This in turn has been recognised as being the source of the elephantine iconography of Alexander the Great.²⁷

According to the *Kuš-nāma*, the evil king Kuš, whose main goal is to uncover and kill the offspring of the already slain Jamšid, "battles the Pilguš Tribe (literally, the 'elephant-eared') and takes a woman from the tribe as his bride. She bears him an elephant-eared and tusked son. But when Kuš sees his son, he first kills his wife for giving birth to such a demonic creature and then abandons the child in the forest, which, as it happens, is the hiding place of

²⁶ Akvān is the subject of Khaleghi-Motlagh (1985). Bear in mind that a Persian context implies associating elephants with India, as in the modern Persian idiom (said to one looking sad): "The elephant has remembered India" (HAİM, 1956). Charles (2007) discusses the rise of the Persian elephant corps under the Sassanian dynasty, at the time of the late Roman Empire.

²⁷ See Albrile (2010), Bonoldi (2005).



Fig. 11. An golden coin of Cestius C. Norba, showing Africa wearing an elephant skin; she has a tiny elephant trunk and two tiny tusks on her forehead. The big elephant ear is her own.



Fig. 12. Left: Head of Africa, with an elephant trunk, tusks, and stylised (triangular) ear. This is a coin of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio, commander-in-chief of the Pompeians. He committed suicide after Julius Caesar defeated the Pompeians at Thapsus on 6 February 46 BCE. Was the triangular ear made to match the shape of an Egyptian *ankh* (see inset) which the hand of a standing lion-headed Genius of Africa holds in another coin of the same Scipio? (coins in Sear 2000, p. 262).



Fig. 13. Another variant of the same issue of Scipio's coinage.

the house of Jamšid. By this time Ābtin, the third generation of Jamšid's line (Jamšid > Nunak > Mahāru > Ābtin), has appeared on the scene. As narrated in the *Kuš-nāma*, Ābtin's wife shelters the abandoned child and raises him. The child shows early signs of being a physical prodigy. For a time he fights against Kuš in Ābtin's army, but later father and son recognize one another and join forces against Ābtin." The *Kuš-nāma*, written between 1108 and 1111, is "part of a mythical history of Iran written by Hākim Irānšān b. Abu'l-Kayr [...] dealing with the eventful life of Kuš the Tusked (or Pil-guš, 'The Elephant-eared'), the son of Kuš (brother of Žahāhāk). Kuš the Tusked is said to have lived 1,500 years; however, the only manuscript of the *Kuš-nāma* lacks an account of the last years of his life." But we eventually learn that this evil character is transformed: a particular "lord performs plastic surgery on him that restores his face to human form. The lord of the palace also wins him over to the cause of justice. Kuš stays with this wise lord 46 years learning a variety of disciplines from him. He convinces Kuš to return to his homeland where the transformed monster encourages everyone to worship G-d. It turns out that the wise lord was one of Jamšid's descendants, like Mahāneš, who gave the story of Kuš-e Pil-Dandān to Alexander. At this point the *Kuš-nāma* ends."²⁸ Here the elephant attributes stand for ugliness.

2.3.3. Roald Dahl's *Big Friendly Giant* as Illustrated by Quentin Blake

The late Roald Dahl (born in Wales to Norwegian parents) is Britain's best-loved children's author. The *Big Friendly Giant* (BFG) is a character of his, from the early 1980s. Quentin Blake illustrated most of Dahl's books, starting in the 1970s, when a manager at Jonathan Cape Publishing proposed they work together.²⁹ Blake was born in Sidcup in 1932, in South East London, and Dahl himself lived in Bexley, also in South East London, from 1927 (when he was in his early teens) and in the 1930s. This is why South East London's local press devotes attention to Quentin Blake, and on occasion also to Roald Dahl.

Soon after it shifted from tabloid format to stapled issues, a weekly from that area, *The Bexley Times*,³⁰ published a report (Cottle 2012) about Dahl and Blake. A remark Dahl once made appears in the text, and also appears in large print across a photograph showing "Roald Dahl in his famous writing shed": "It's Quent's pictures rather than my own written descriptions that have brought into life characters such as the BFG".

The *Big Friendly Giant* looks like an elderly pink-faced man, with a pointed nose, angular chin, wrinkled neck, and a bald head with just a few hairs on it. He is dressed informally, like a man of the late 20th century, and for example, his sleeves raised, he keeps a little girl standing in his hand, so they could talk face to face. What makes the BFG inhuman is not merely his gigantic size, but also his pink elephant ears. They stand on both sides of his face, and what would be the lower, hidden side of the ears of an elephant, in the way the BFG is depicted faces the viewer. Nevertheless, these are not ears like Mickey Mouse's. Their contour is definitely like that of the ears of an elephant, and the lower side reaches beneath the height of the giant's chin.³¹

²⁸ I am quoting from Jalal Matini's entry (2008) for the *Kuš-nāma* in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

²⁹ An unsigned report from Bexley's *News Shopper* of 18 January 2006 — entitled 'Stamp of approval for artist's post design' about Blake "being included on a Royal Mail stamp for a second time" as a set of six stamps reproducing illustrations by Blake for six of Dahl's characters (the first time had been in 1993: he designed a series illustrating Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*) — explained: "His familiar illustration of Dahl's *Enormous Crocodile* will be on one of the first-class stamps in the series, which went on sale last week. The story of the greedy reptile was the first in a long collaboration between Mr Blake and Mr Dahl, which began in 1975."

³⁰ <http://www.bexleytimes.co.uk>

³¹ Unfortunately Blake was unreachable: his copyright agent would not let me, without payment, ask him why he made that human figure of the giant elephant-eared (or whether he actually meant the ears to be associated with an elephant). This will therefore remain a mystery, unless another scholar is eventually luckier.

2.4. Elephants Away from Home: From the Euro-American to the Melanesian Modern Imaginary

2.4.1. The Transition from the Ancient Roman Period to the Middle Ages

Representations of elephants in the ancient Roman period (both under the Republic and the Empire) used to be rather realistic, to various degrees (Figs. 14 to 19), as this was when when people in Rome and eventually in other large cities of the Empire may have the opportunity of seeing an elephant from life (under the Empire, elephants as well as other wild game was captured in North Africa and made to fight in the arena; this depleted North Africa of its own elephant species).

From the early Middle Ages, however, realistic visual representations were no longer in favour, and this dovetailed with much lessened awareness of the actual visual features of elephants. The artist's imagination supplemented the scant knowledge possessed (e.g., Fig. 20). When an artist could actually see an elephant, such as the one given to King Louis IX of France, depiction is relatively realistic (see Fig. 21). See however in Fig. 22 a bishop's throne from Canosa, Italy, from the 11th century. The representation of the elephants supporting the throne in Fig. 22 is highly stylised, and the texture the surface is given is quite unrealistic as a matter of choice, not so much of ignorance. If anything, those elephants still resemble actual elephants more that this would have been the case later on or elsewhere in Europe, during the Middle Ages. Varejka's booklet illustrates that eloquently.

2.4.2. The Exotic Is No Longer Unfamiliar: Present-Day Western Familiarity with Elephants (and Dinosaurs)

Elephant could be seen from life at the zoo or the circus, during the 19th and 20th centuries, in Western countries. They are still exotic animals, but their visual features are familiar, even though concerning their behaviour the imaginary still holds sway, to a large extent. Elephants have become the humble side of exotica, as dinosaurs appeal much more to children.

It must be said that Western urban children's exposure to natural taxa is also mediated and distorted. Consider a neighbourhood library in a London borough, where the lady librarians are expected to sing with little children (the notion of libraries having to be silent having disappeared from neighbourhood libraries); they often sing a well-known English song about farm animals, *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, and stanza after stanza, a different far animal is introduced.

On a given day late in 2011, groping for a new stanza, a librarian introduced a dinosaur; she sang a stanza about it: "Old MacDonald had a farm, EE-I-EE-I-O, / And on that farm he had a... dinosaur! EE-I-EE-I-O, / With a [some improvised animal noise] here and a [noise] there", and so forth. That innovation persisted. Subsequently, when a librarian at that place sang *Old MacDonald Had a Farm* with the children, a dinosaur featured among Old MacDonald's farm animals. Dinosaurs are quite familiar at such sessions at libraries, as the librarians are used to read to the children such stories that feature dinosaurs behaving like other anthropomorphic characters from children's fiction.

2.4.4. Elephants' Exoticism Transferred to Unattainable Temporal Remoteness

As vast expanses of geographical space have become more and more easily reachable, from the late 19th century, exotic animals were no longer as exotic as to flare the imagination. Spatial remove was in part replaced with temporal remove: fossil animal kinds, when they were still alive, are really unattainable. In the case of the elephants, mammoths and mastodons are their really exotic relatives.



Fig. 14. A female elephant carrying a war-tower, on a South Italian painted clay dish of Gnatan ware (Rome, Villa Giulia, first half of the III century BCE).

Fig. 15. A stylised elephant on the reverse of a coin of the Pompeian commander-in-chief Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio (SCIPIO IMP for "Scipio imperator", i.e., commander). This is a coin from North Africa, from 47–46 BCE (Sear 2000, p. 262). Behind the large eye of the animal, the contour of the ear is (clumsily) in relief. Only the tip of the trunk is reasonably depicted; one cannot see how the trunk is attached to the head.





Fig. 16. An elephant trampling on a serpent, on a Roman coin from *ca.* 49 CE.



Fig. 17. Another image of Caesar's silver denarius, showing an elephant trampling on a serpent, whereas on the reverse, emblems of the pontificate are shown: a simpulum, a sprinkler, an axe, and an apex (Sear 2000, p. 268).



Fig. 18. A coin of Augustus, from Rome, 36–7 CE. An ornated cart, carrying a seated statue of Augustus, is pulled by a team of four elephants (Sear 2000, p. 350).



Fig. 19. An elephant and its rider on the reverse of a coin of Philip I the Arab, the Roman emperor who in 247–8 celebrated Rome's thousandth anniversary by staging games in which wild beasts were exhibited at the Colosseum. Other coins of Philip I respectively featured a lion, an antelope, a stag, a goat, and a hippopotamus (Sear 2000, p. 55).



Fig. 20. A war elephant, as painted in Spain in the 11th century. (From Wikipedia)³²



Fig. 21. The elephant received by Louis IX as a present, as drawn (apparently from life) for a manuscript of a chronicle by Matthew Paris. (From Wikipedia)³³

³² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elephant_and_Castle_\(Fresco_in_San_Baudelio,_Spain\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elephant_and_Castle_(Fresco_in_San_Baudelio,_Spain).jpg)

³³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paris.elefant.jpg>

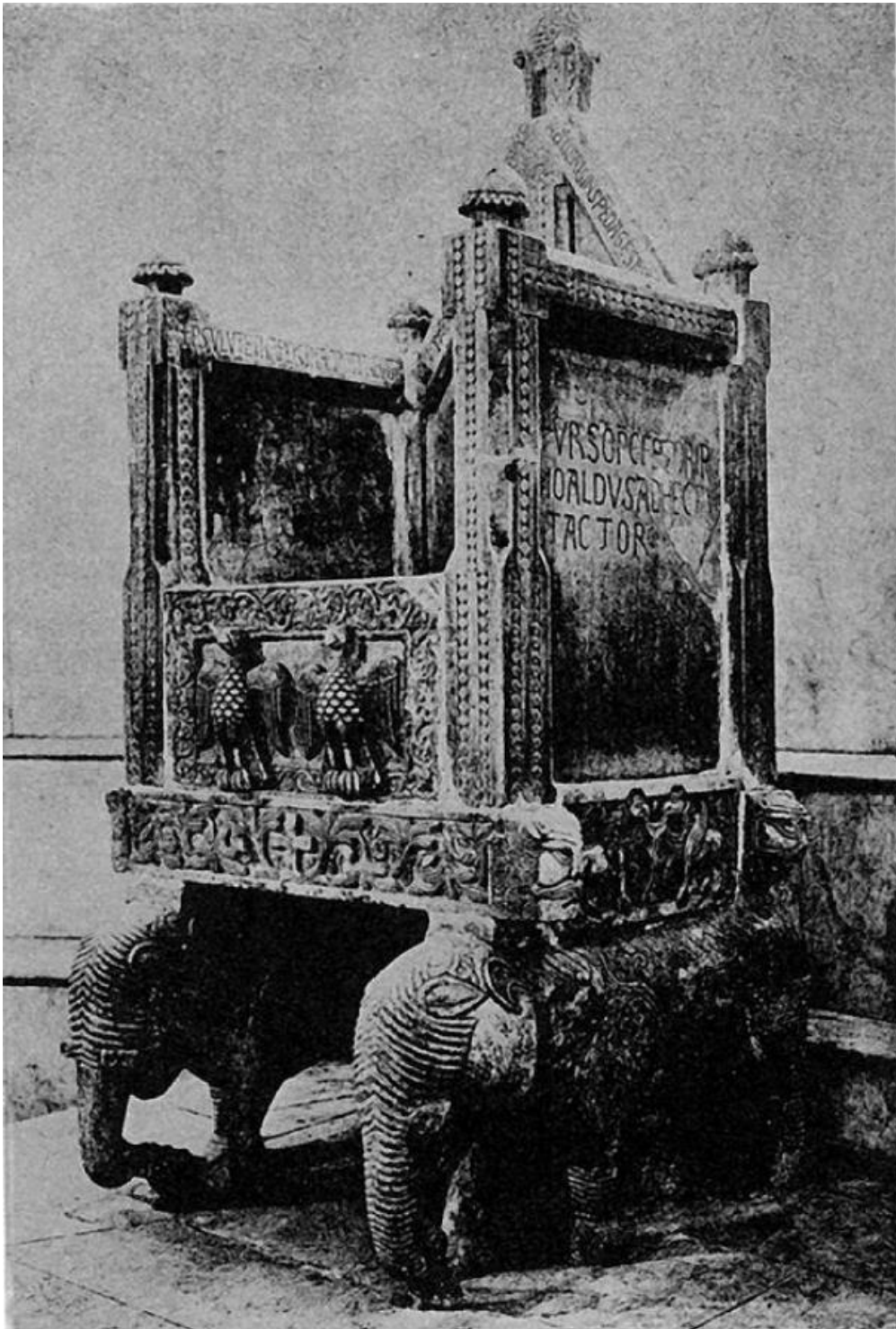


Fig. 22. Bishop's throne supported by elephants, from Canosa, southern Italy, 11th century.

John Owen (1891, p. 196) was concerned with the Jewish philosopher Rav Sa'adiah Gaon. Born in 882 CE in the hamlet of Dilas in the district of Fayyum, in Upper Egypt,³⁴ was active especially in Mesopotamia. He moved there from Tiberiad (in the Galilee) in 921, then was the head teacher (*alluf*) of the great Babylonian Jewish academy of Pumbadita, and in 928

³⁴ Jewish presence in Egypt was ancient, so it is unsurprising to find Jews in a small centre of the Fayyum region. Golb (1965) dealt with the topography of the Jews in medieval Egypt.

was appointed as head (*gaón*) of the academy of Sura, the other great Babylonian rabbinic school, which tenure he held in two stints separated by an interval of seven years, during which he completed his main philosophical work. He died in 942. Sa'adiah was the leading rabbi of his generation. He was a legal scholar, but his lasting legacy was as an apologete and philosopher.³⁵ He also was a linguist and poet, and his other lasting legacy was in that he translated the Hebrew Bible into Judaeo-Arabic. Owen stated (1891, p. 196):

In contrast with the *decretum horribile* of Calvin and Augustine, it is refreshing to note Saadiah's milder judgment as to the fate of children even of wicked parents, Thus he maintains that the death of the Midianite children, and of those who perished in Noah's deluge — involved, as they were, in the wholesale destruction of their parents — can only be reconciled with justice by assuming their recompense in a future world. We may accept this plea on behalf of innocent sufferers, whose fate awakens little notice or sympathy among Christians, as a tribute to Saadiah's enlightened rationalism, or to his humane sympathies, or probably to both combined. Indeed, it would seem that Saadiah carried those qualities still further in the same direction, for, following the lead of the Mutazilites, who pursued the doctrine of future life compensations to unusual extremes, he held that dumb animals were entitled to a recompense in an after state for their manifold sufferings here.

Owen elaborated about this in a footnote. It began thus: "This question was discussed by Proclus, *Ennead* iii. book ii. chap. xv." Owen concluded that same note on p. 197 as follows:

The other objection may be suggested by Mrs. Browning's lines:—

"It had
Not much consoled the Mastodons to know
Before they went to fossil, that anon
Their form would quicken with the elephant;
They were not elephants but Mastodons."
Aurora Leigh.

This is rather unimpressive verse, but Owen was interested in the philosophical concept. For our purposes here, it is useful as we are made to see that the English imaginary had found such next of kin of the elephants who were much more exotic. India, Burma, and much Africa between the Tropics had come under British domination, and basically they were attainable by travelling there, while remaining inside the British Empire. Mastodons instead roamed in Dreamland.

2.4.5. *Elephants as a Political Symbol in the United States and in France*

Just as in the United States, the elephant stands for the Republicans, in caricatures from France, starting in 1973, it stands for the French Socialists. See s.v. 'Éléphant socialiste', pp. 136–137 (cf. s.v. 'Éléphant', pp. 132–135) in Doizy and Houdre (2010). As a stable symbol for a political party, use of the elephant in France is 99 years more recent than in the U.S.

In the United States, the donkey as being a symbol for the Democrats came first, as indeed, "in 1837, with the retired Jackson still trying to call the shorts for his party, the anonymously authored 'The Modern Balaam and His Ass' showed the former president vainly urging his party (the ass) to move in the direction he wanted. 'Balaam' marked the real start of the donkey symbol for the Democrats" (Dewey 2007, p. 17), whereas the cartoonist Thomas Nast "came to it decades later and only after he had been in the habit of viewing Democrats as foxes" (*ibid.*, pp. 17–18). "His first documented use of the donkey didn't come until 1869, when 'A Live jackass Kicking a Dead Lion' portrayed the supposed reaction of Democrats to the death of Republican Secretary of War Edwin Stanton" (*ibid.*, p. 18).

³⁵ E.g., Gad Freudenthal (1996, 1998) discussed how through the conduit of Sa'adiah's writings, Stoic physics came to have an impact on medieval Jewish mysticism.

Nast himself "did sire the Republican elephant" (*ibid.*). In 1874, President Grant was under attack because it was claimed that he was considering running for a third term. This happened at a time when the New York *Herald* had also "gained national attention for splashing a sensational story across its front page claiming that wild animals had escaped from the Central park Zoo and were prowling Manhattan in search of prey" (*ibid.*). Nast was a supporter of President Grant. On 7 November 1874, Nast "combined the two stories in *Harper's Weekly* to show rampaging animals, including an elephant with the words 'The Republican Vote'" (*ibid.*, p. 19). In that same cartoon, a donkey representing the Democrats "is depicted frightening the other beasts, and none more than the elephant, a symbol of Republican voters rather than the party itself. The moral was, 'If you believed the zoo story, you'll believe this one, too'" (*ibid.*), namely, that Grant was planning to run for a third term (which, *pace* Nast, he was actually planning to do). Fig. 23 shows a sinister elephantine shape (the tusk in the skull is a snake) in Southern propaganda during the Civil War (cf. Fig. 24). An elephantised Ronald Reagan appears in a 1980 anti-establishment poster from (Fig. 25).

2.4.6. The Elephant as a Western Political Symbol in a Cartoon from Cambodia

It is an effect of globalisation that in South East Asia (thus, in a part of the world where elephants are domestic animals), the United States' Republican Party's elephant was drawn by a Cambodian cartoonist active in Cambodia with the likeness of Barack Obama's contender in the presidential elections, the elderly Senator John McCain. Fig. 26 shows "White elephant can't jump"³⁶ — a somewhat problematic, potentially offensive 2008 cartoon about the U.S. presidential campaign, by the political cartoonist Sacrava, i.e., Bun Heang Ung. (He certainly intended no offence to Obama, as upon his election in 2008 he published an enthusiastic cartoon. Nor did he intend any offence to Black people; more recently, he published a commemorative portrait of Martin Luther King)

The Republican elephant and the Democrat donkey compete on a basketball playground. They have the same face and (the one problematic thing about this cartoon) the same colour skin as the respective parties' candidates, Obama and McCain. In the original, the ball is red, and the banner, too, is in colour. Obama's donkey is bluish black, and McCain's elephant is between whitish and greenish. Obama was drawn as surpassing in cleverness McCain at playing basketball, but in drawing Obama in the likeness of a black donkey (the donkey is the symbol of the Democrats), the cartoonist showed he did not fully grasp the potential for giving offence, the way this would be perceived in the U.S. or in Europe. This may be understandable, in South East Asia in the 2000s, because of different demographic realities.

2.4.7. The Variousness of Contexts of the Modern Western Conceptual Use of Elephants

In terms of their natural habitat, or of the rural use of domesticated elephants, elephants would appear to be un-European indeed. For Europeans, they are exotic, but, as mentioned, at least their outwardly features are no longer unfamiliar. In the spring of 2010, 250 ornately painted elephants, reaching up to the chest of adult persons, and each with individualised colour patterns, were placed around London, to raise awareness of the endangered elephant.

Building up a full repertoire of the European forms taken by *elephant* (either the signified or the signifier) is mission impossible. During the summer of 2010, one could see in many places in central London waist-tall reproductions of elephants, painted variously. "Elefante" was the message, broadcasted from London on 2 June 1944, signalling to the Resistance the imminent liberation of Rome (Bonomi, 1947, p. 191). *CACAO ELEFANTE — Il quotidiano delle buone notizie comiche* is Italy's online daily of funny news.

³⁶ <http://ki-media.blogspot.co.uk/2008/10/politiktoons-no56-white-elephant-cant.html>



Fig. 14. What at first sight looks like the trunk of an elephant still attached to its skull, turns out instead to be a human skull with a snake inside it, in this detail from an especially repulsive cartoon, the etching "Worship of the North" (1863) by Adalbert Volck against the Northern cause and the emancipation of the Black slaves during the Civil War. A larger detail (including this one) is shown in Fig. 15 below.



Fig. 24. Another detail from Volck's "Worship of the North" (1863). "Gathered around an altar built of bricks labeled Puritanism, Witchburning, Negro Worship, and Free Love are a host of villains responsible for the unholy crusade against the South. As a devil-like Lincoln presides impassively to the right of the altar's black idol, abolitionist clergyman Henry Ward Beecher directs his knife toward the white victim being offered up in sacrifice. While famed editor of the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley, swings incense in the left corner and Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner (behind Greeley) guides Beecher's knife with a torch, a bevy of other Northern luminaries looks prayerfully on. Underscoring the commonly held Confederate conviction that the North had launched its war on the South for profit as well as for slave liberation, representatives of The Holy Cause of the Contractors stand barely visible in the far right background" (Voss 1988, p. 73).

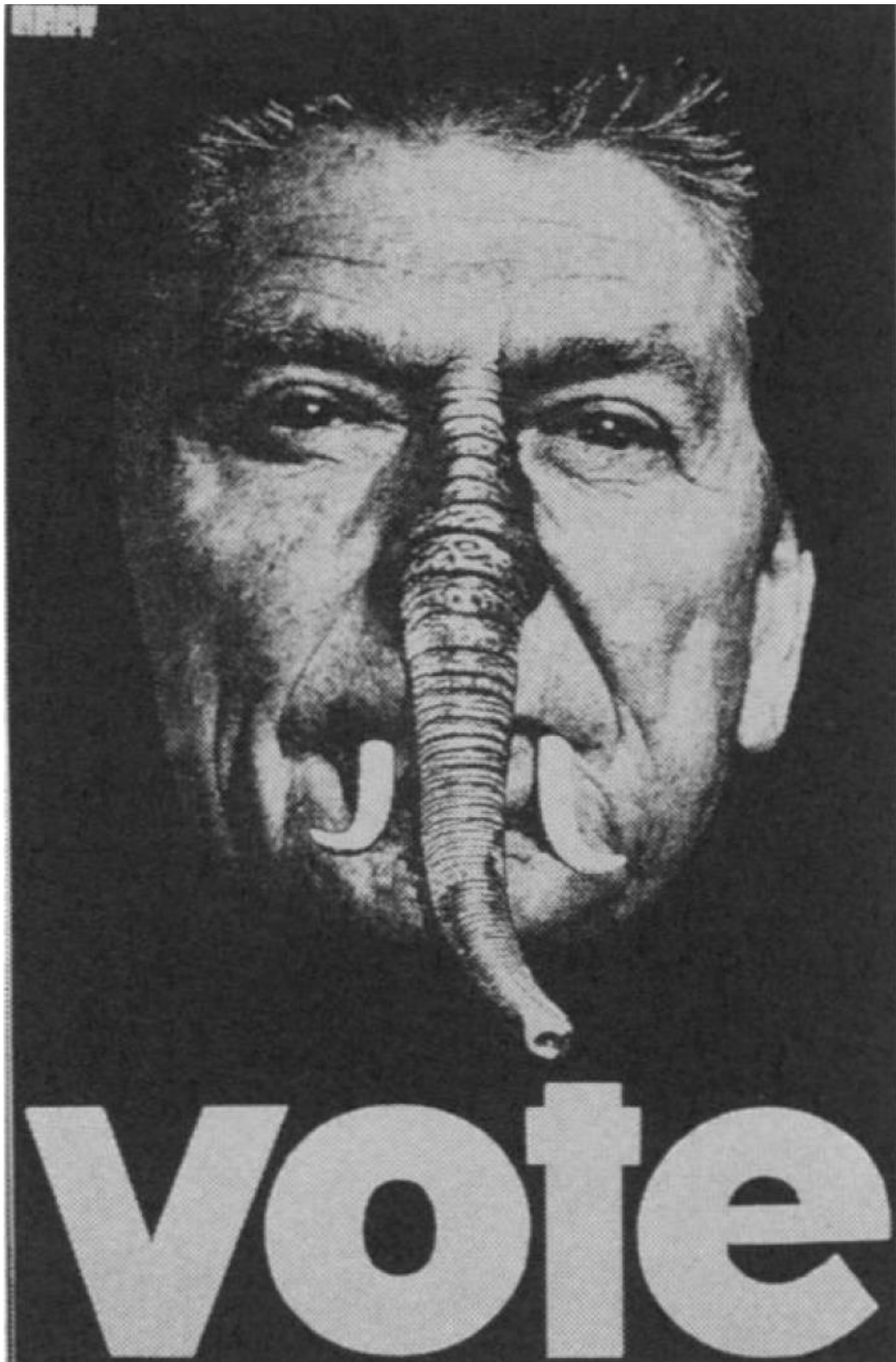


Fig. 25. A poster of 1980 by Pepe Moreno (from the so-called San Francisco Poster Brigade), combining the Republican elephant with Ronald Reagan's face, to which tusks and a trunk were added (Margolin 1988, p. 68, Margolin's Fig. 17). The tusks positioned where canines would be, also suggest a vampire. The animalisation of Reagan in this poster is offensive, whereas McCain's being shaped like a "white elephant" in the next figure (a Cambodian cartoon) is just playful, not offensive.

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Fig. 26. "White elephant can't jump", a 2008 cartoon about the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, by the Cambodian political cartoonist Sacrava.

Elephants have long loomed large and shifted shapes within the European imaginary, as the book under review shows. The American imaginary, and the elephant standing for the Republicans, are outside the scope of Varejka's book, but see s.v. 'elephant' in Puckett's (1897–1967) *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions: A Compendium of American Folklore*, of popular beliefs gathered in Ohio in the 1950s and early 1960s. As to British popular beliefs and superstitions on elephants, see s.v. 'elephant' in Opie and Tatem (1989).

Jumbo the elephant (Jolly, 1976) had a long career at a London zoo before Phineas Taylor Barnum bought him and brought him to the United States. Stuffed after being run over by a train, Jumbo, or rather both his stuffed skin and, separately, his skeleton, still featured in elephant parades. Barnum misrepresented Jumbo as having faced the train head on, in order to protect the smaller elephant that was with him. See more on this in Sec. 2.12 below.

The elephant clashing frontally against a train became an icon of nature vs. technology. Many songs came into being to celebrate Jumbo, judging from the results of an online search

I made in the 1990s on "Barnum" or "Jumbo" at the website³⁷ of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, at the Milton S. Eisenhower Library of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In 1995, I authored a long mock-epic in metric, rhyming classicistic Hebrew, *Ahā́d ha-Nefilím* (*One of the Giants*, cf. *filim/pilim* 'elephants'), about the grotesque and even cruel promotion tactics of Barnum concerning Jumbo, whose cunning trainer from the London Zoo (he duped even Barnum into hiring him), turns out to be sincere and humane.

In a science popularisation report (a cover story) in the London-based magazine *New Scientist*, Anil Ananthaswamy (2012, p. 33) was concerned with "the planet's most mysterious region — the vast netherworld of Earth's mantle that lies between its hot central core and thin outer crust", while conceding: "It is not that we know absolutely nothing about the elephant below" (*ibid.*). Clearly, Earth's mantle is quite huge with respect to an elephant, which in comparison is insignificant, and yet, *elephant* was used metaphorically for the large size of Earth's mantle. Even though that science writer has an obvious Indian background (thus, from a country where domesticated elephants are traditional), there is nothing that could not have stemmed out of present-day Western culture, in the remarkable metaphorical use that he made of elephants. Elephants being heavy is the reason behind the cover image (credited to Jerry Young) of *New Scientist* magazine, vol.217, no.2900, of 19 January 2013, referring to an article about the force of gravity, and the principle of equivalence of inertial mass and gravitational mass. The cover shows an elephant that appears to be levitating, because of how shadow is drawn under the animal's feet without touching them.

Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (Gorizia, 1829 – Milan, 1907) is commonly recognised to have been the father of Italian dialectology. Ascoli was the first Italian linguist translated into German. German linguistic scholarship he once termed the "elephant", and Italy's the "fly", while taking credit on behalf of the "fly" of its own innovations.³⁸ Self-taught in language studies, Ascoli formed himself on the output of the German School, and sometimes heeded the Neogrammarians, but about these he had reservations sometimes expressed sarcastically. Thus, Ascoli's likening German scholarship in historical linguistics to an elephant, as opposed to Italian scholarship (especially his own) being metaphorically a fly, was emotionally charged, and did not express unreserved deference towards the German school.

Elephants are available for metaphors indeed, for large size (which was the case of Ascoli's metaphor we have just considered, for excellent memory (this being ascribed to elephants), or clumsiness because of size: the elephant in the china shop. An elephant may stand for fauna in general from a zoo. Consider an ad for an anti-lice medication, broadcasted by the Israeli radio in 1991. We have the pragmatic knowledge that lice carry a social stigma, and that still, it happens sometimes that some children carry them home; this knowledge helps us to identify, in the humorous setting the ad was given, the execution of a plan intended to achieve a goal of de-traumatising the issue and the discussion thereof. The ad starts with the loud, low-pitched sound of (therefore) seemingly large wild animals trumpeting; then a child says: "I used to have a zoo on my head".

The idea for the ad is based on lice on one's head being referred to (by jocular, contemptuous, or euphemistic generalization) as 'animals' on one's head; 'a multitude of animals' is humorously described as 'a zoo', even though actually it is not a gamut of

³⁷ <http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/>

³⁸ Ascoli, in a letter to Brugmann of 5 January 1887, quoted in Tagliavini (1967, p. 199, n. 1), complained (our trans.): "Elsewhere, much more was done, and the Italian school can still, quite legitimately, appear to be, if contrasted to the German school, a fly *vis-à-vis* an elephant. Nevertheless, why should anybody want to deny the fly the credit for the novel phase having been initiated by it?" (i.e., Ascoli himself, rather than the smug Neogrammarians) ["Altrove s'è fatto ben di più, e la scuola italiana può sempre e legittimamente parere, al cospetto della scuola germanica, la mosca rispetto all'elefante. Ma perché voler negare alla mosca che la fase nuova è stata iniziata da lei?"].

different kinds of animals that is involved, in the situation described by the ad: just a variety of instances of the same kind of animals is (though the ad, in the following, refers to eggs, to depict the *variety* of phases of the life of lice). It is as though, by exaggeration, diversification of animal kinds was introduced. The humour in the ad involves misleading in two stages: acoustics at the very beginning has us expect something large, and, more specifically, it has us expect a zoo, which is where we experientially know a comparable mix of sounds — unless it is a film in an exotic setting: the dominant voice is the trumpeting of an elephant.

As being the descriptor of a hue, *elephant grey* (cf. Italian *grigio elefante*) is negatively connotated, as it conveys the given hue being unappealing. Elephants also stand for something you don't need,³⁹ but in that sense, *white elephant* is the usual metaphor. It is derived from lore about gifts from the king in South East Asia to persons he wanted to ruin: a white elephant had to be fed, but it was impermissible to make such an animal work.⁴⁰

In an article discussing the development of dialogue between Catholics and Jews in the United States, Singer pointed out (1985, p. 250, citing Angell 1975, p. 299):

There were other serious impediments to a trenchant dialogue between Jews and Catholics. In 1975, Fr. Charles Angell pointed out that the disparity in the numbers of Christians and Jews in the world made it difficult to conduct an equal dialogue between the two religious communities. Angell stated: "There are relatively few Jews in the world and many more Christians. When a small group dialogues with a very large group, there are inherent logistical problems. It is like getting in bed with a friendly elephant."

2.4.8. Two Conduits for the Imagined Elephant to Make an Impact on Local Cultures in Papua New Guinea: Epstein on Pupils' Dreams, and Dodsela on Snake-Like Noses (Trunks) in Folklore

Though foreign to Oceania, the elephant (known through the conduit of modern Western media) appears in the dreams⁴¹ of high-school pupils in Papua New Guinea (Epstein, 1998,

³⁹ When he was the mayor of New York City, David N. Dinkins was urged by politicians in Manhattan to buy some property. They claimed it was an extraordinary opportunity for the city. His response was: "If they're selling elephants two for a quarter, that's a great bargain. But only if you have a quarter — and only if you need elephants." This was related in the *New York Times* by Leonard Buder, and quoted in the *Reader's Digest*, 137(823), November (overseas December) 1990, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Chaim Weizmann was Israel's first president (after having been an academic, as well as a political leader; his discovery of synthetic acetone in Manchester during the First World War was important for the Allied war effort). As a token of appreciation to him in his political capacity, once somebody offered him an elephant as a present, but Weizmann refused. He said that his grandfather had taught him to never accept a present that eats.

⁴¹ A particular kind of imaginary is hallucinations. In English, one speaks of *pink elephants* seen by one having hallucinations because intoxicated, or having hit his head, and therefore seeing things that aren't there. Discussing rock art from Zimbabwe, Huffman (1983) offers the trance hypothesis. In particular (*ibid.*, p. 51):

Other conceptual animals are probably more directly a result of hallucinations. Bushmen induce hallucinations as a normal part of trance through the physical exertion of dancing. Since hallucinations are the result of neurological factors, there are some cross-cultural regularities regardless of whether drugs, alcohol or dancing have induced the phenomenon (Siegel & Jarvik 1975). According to Siegel and Jarvik's research, common visual images occur in successive stages, and these regularities help explain some of the fantastic animals in Zimbabwe rock art. During the first stage, a limited range of geometric forms are generated, such as random lines, curves, lattices and spirals. The strange wavy lines at Dengeni Cave (Summers 1959:109, plate 60) probably depict this type of trance hallucination. The second stage encompasses images of familiar objects and places that are often distorted or cartoon-like and frequently superimposed on the earlier geometric forms. Therefore, the grotesque elephant-like animals with humps on their backs at Mrewa Cave (Summers 1959:27, plates 11 & 12) are most likely this second type of hallucinatory figure (cf. Maggs & Sealy, this volume) and so are the bird or aardvark-like creatures in the Marandellas district (Summers 1959:27, plate 10; Thornycroft 1978), the 'cartoon' elephants

p. 209). A.L. Epstein related (1998, p. 201):

My own interest in the dreams of Papua New Guineans was sparked when a former colleague at the Australian National University, Dr. Ruth Finney, presented me with some slides of dream drawings she had collected from a group of students who had attended art classes in the course of her own research into education in Papua New Guinea. Some of the drawings depicted creatures of quite grotesque appearance, but were nonetheless aesthetically very impressive. [...] I did return in 1986 and was able to collect a small number of dream drawings which I was able to discuss briefly with each of the artists [... W]hen I returned to the country once more in 1994, I was able to arrange for students at the Keravat National High School to write, as part of their ordinary class work, an essay under the title 'Recently I had a Dream'.

Along with other animals (*ibid.*, p. 209),

it should be mentioned that the horse and the elephant also appeared in the Keravat encounter dreams. Neither of these animals of course has a place in the Melanesian bestiary, but the horse with its thundering gallop and the elephant that makes the earth tremble provide powerful images that are readily accommodated within the Melanesian framework of ideas. This suggests that while on the overt level there may be differences across cultures in the way animals appear in dreams, the same underlying thought processes may also be at work at a deeper level. This raises questions about the role of the unconscious, [...]

It must be said however that apparently, exposure to the concept of an elephant through Western media apparently was not the first time that local cultures of Papua New Guinea. Traditionally, the island's closest seafaring neighbours with contacts beyond the region were Malays from what is now Indonesia, and before Islamisation, imported Hindu culture and Hindu symbols made an impact among the Malays. Both India and Indo-China have familiarity with elephants, and these appear in their respective cultures.

Henrich Dosedla, at present based in Vienna and Stuttgart, "spent the early seventies doing archaeological research in the Wagi Basin, and anthropological fieldwork among the adjacent tribal societies of the interior highlands of Papua New Guinea within just one generation of these societies having faced primary European contact (Dosedla 2012, p. 46).

Dosedla (2012) discusses a class of tales from the highlands of Papua New Guinea. "Apparently there is also some female equivalent to the two brothers complex consisting of highlands narratives dealing with a pair of sisters" (*ibid.*, p. 46). Tales as analysed by Dosedla were told in a native vernacular in the early 1970s, and translated into Talk Pisin, the local Pidgin English. Dosedla explains (*ibid.*, p. 55):

Regarding tribal oral lore previous to cultural change, there was permanent control by the clan elders who were also responsible for the proper interpretation of specific mythical backgrounds. There used to be intensive debates by the men during nocturnal house sessions, dealing with questions such as the attributes of spirits, the hidden meanings of narratives or the issue whether according to the symbolical colour index an object rather belonged to the *kunt* (red and magically harmful) or to the *pombra* (black and magically less harmful) spirit world.

Dosedla claims (2012, pp. 47–48):

A most prominent figure in these narratives is the old woman living underneath the pool, who according to local tradition is known by various names. [...] in all narrative contexts relating to spirit cult activities she is mentioned as the 'old lady' or 'ancient grandmother', sometimes also rather disrespectfully as the 'trunk hag' or the 'snake-mouthed harridan'. The latter names relate to her appearance; she is described as a very wrinkled creature having an enormous protruding snake-like mouth or beak which therefore usually is tied up by a rope, thus preventing it from nearly dangling down to the ground.

in the Chinamore area (Summers 1959:21, plate 9) and the lattice spiral with animal heads at Muromo (*ibid.*:108, plate 59).

According to Dosedla (2012, p. 59), the occurrence of the complex of tales he discussed in his paper (and which have similarities with narrative elements from international folklore) "may be evidence for the diffusion of these myths during the Austronesian Lapita migration from Southeast Asia around 1500 BC" (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, Dosedla remarks that other elements of a particular international tale type "are only found in an isolated part of the highlands representing prehistoric Wahgi civilisation" (*ibid.*). Therefore (*ibid.*, pp. 59–60):

This calls for an explanation taking full account of the archaeological material, including finds of bronze artefacts of Southeast Asian provenance and corresponding replica deriving from them, which may provide evidence for a different migration movement into interior New Guinea long previous to the Lapita period [...] While the Korwar style of Northwest New Guinea could be viewed as having been influenced by Southeast Asian art, the same has also been postulated for the mask and sculpture types of the Sepik, showing extremely curved noses resembling elephant trunks which could be traced back to Ganesha figures from some of the adjacent ancient Hindu kingdoms. These may have found their way to New Guinea as trade goods centuries ago and may also have generated the idea of the water demon with the enormous trunk (Speiser 1946; van Baaren 1968). The same is true of musical traditions including special instruments apparently of Southeast Asian origin (Fischer 1983 [*recte*: 1986]).

In the absence of elephants in ancient New Guinea, such images of the elephant head of the Hindu deity Ganēśa imported from Hindu kingdoms in Indonesia could not be related by local cultures to zoology. Nevertheless, the motif of the trunk was retained, in relation to supernatural beings with monstrous appearance.

2.5. The Elephant vs. the Rhinoceros

Already the Roman arena had witnessed animals fighting each other or against humans, and elephants and, on occasion, some rhinoceros were involved (Coleman, 2006; Nissan, 2007–2008 [2011]).⁴² As late as the early 16th century, a fight involving a rhinoceros was planned in Rome. In William Heckscher's words (1947, p. 170):

Dürer himself, as we know, had never seen a rhinoceros; [for his woodcut of a rhinoceros: Fig. 27] he had worked after a sketch depicting the unique rhinoceros at Lisbon in the menagerie of King Emanuel I. The specimen itself, which had been dispatched from Portugal by the king as a gift of Pope Leo X, never reached Italy, for it suffered shipwreck and was miserably drowned. An elephant of the same menagerie, Hanno by name, reached the Vatican safely. Hanno greeted Pope Leo with genuflections and poured the water he had deliberately concealed in his trunk, over the onlooking cardinals. The untimely death of the rhinoceros must have caused consternation, since Leo X had wished to match the two animals (who according to ancient theory were natural-born enemies) in single combat. Such a fight had been staged only shortly before in Lisbon and, *horribile dictu*, the elephant saved his life only by headlong flight. This fact — implicitly broadcast all over Europe by the inscription on Dürer's woodcut — undoubtedly served as a potent argument against the much-vaunted prowess of the elephant and as an equally weighty recommendation of the invincible rhinoceros as a fitting *impresa* for the valiant king of France.

Just as in Judaism interest in animals often was from the dietary viewpoint, in the Roman state and later on, among the powerful in Christian states animals were of interest as venison or (if strong or fierce) so that they would fight each other. Sometimes, the European imaginary about the elephant and its enemies was in debt to Arab lore, itself of Indian derivation. Wittkower (1938, pp. 255–256), discussing an engraving glorifying Magellan, by the Italianised Dutch painter Johannes Stradanus (1523–1605), stated the following:

⁴² Typically in Roman-age authors, it is the rhinoceros that fights against the elephant (Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, lib. VIII, chap. xxix, 79, ed. Loeb, p. 53). It is the rhinoceros that wins, according to, e.g., Oppian, *Cynegetica*, lib. II, 550 ff. (ed. Loeb, p. 105). "It should, however, be added that Diodorus Siculus (*Library of History*, lib. III, chap. xxxv), the first to mention the enmity, gives the elephant a fair chance once he has overcome the rhinoceros' initial onslaught, on account of his 'superior strength'" (Heckscher 1947, p. 170, fn. 75).

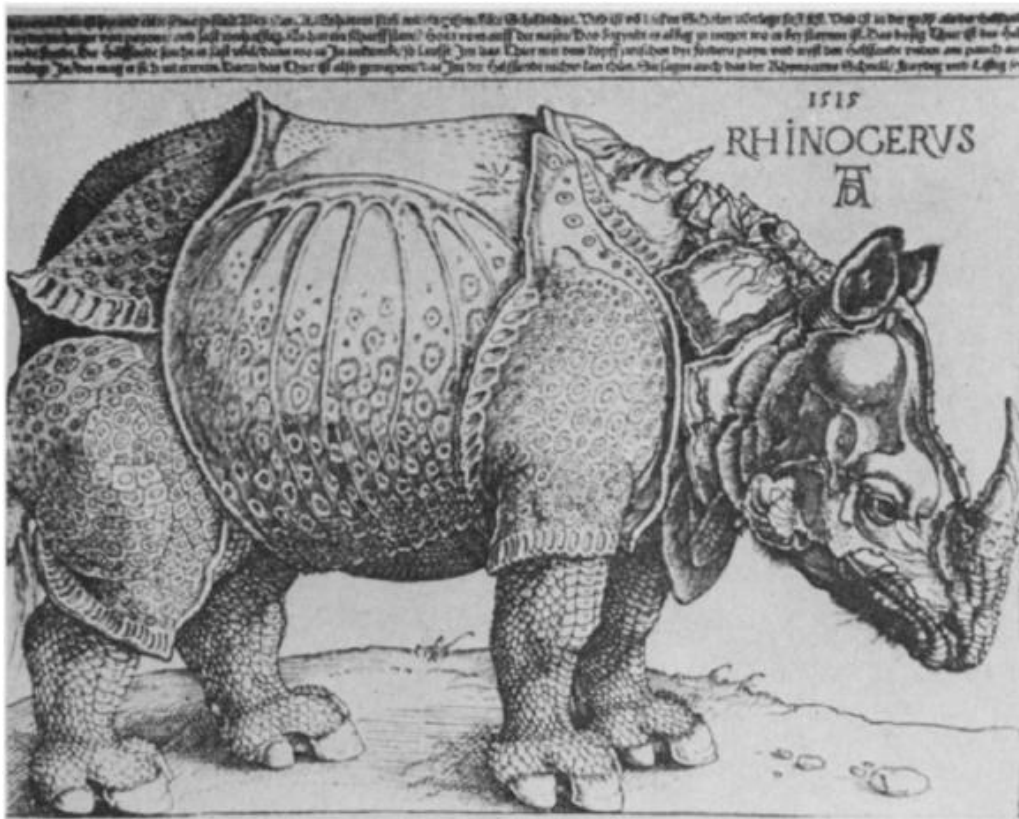


Fig. 27. *Rhinocervs*, a woodcut by Albrecht Dürer (1515), bearing his monogram. Whereas it is a remarkable image, with some features anatomically correct, and other features being just fanciful, see for comparison in Figs. 28 and 31 Dürer's accurate depiction of domestic animals.

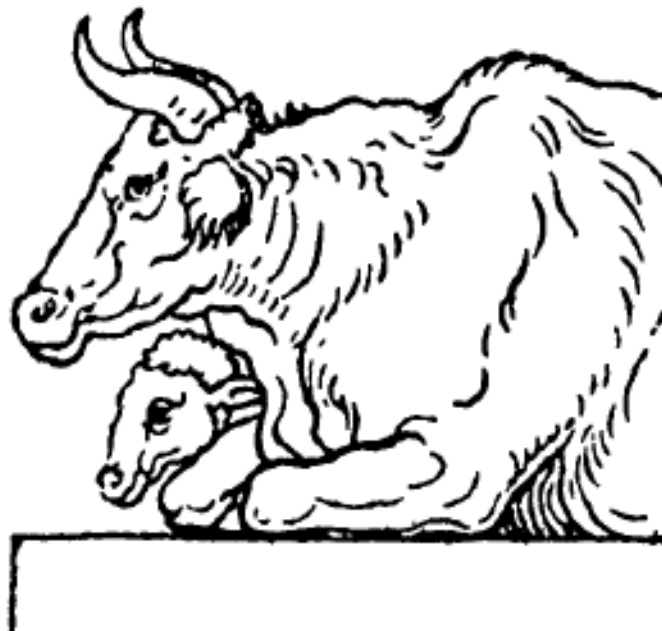


Fig. 28. Detail of planned sculptures of placid domestic animals in front of the pedestal of a "Monument to Commemorate a Victory over the Rebellious Peasants", planned by Dürer (cf. Fig. 31; Fig. 29 shows the plan for the full monument; Fig. 30, the backstabbed man at its top).

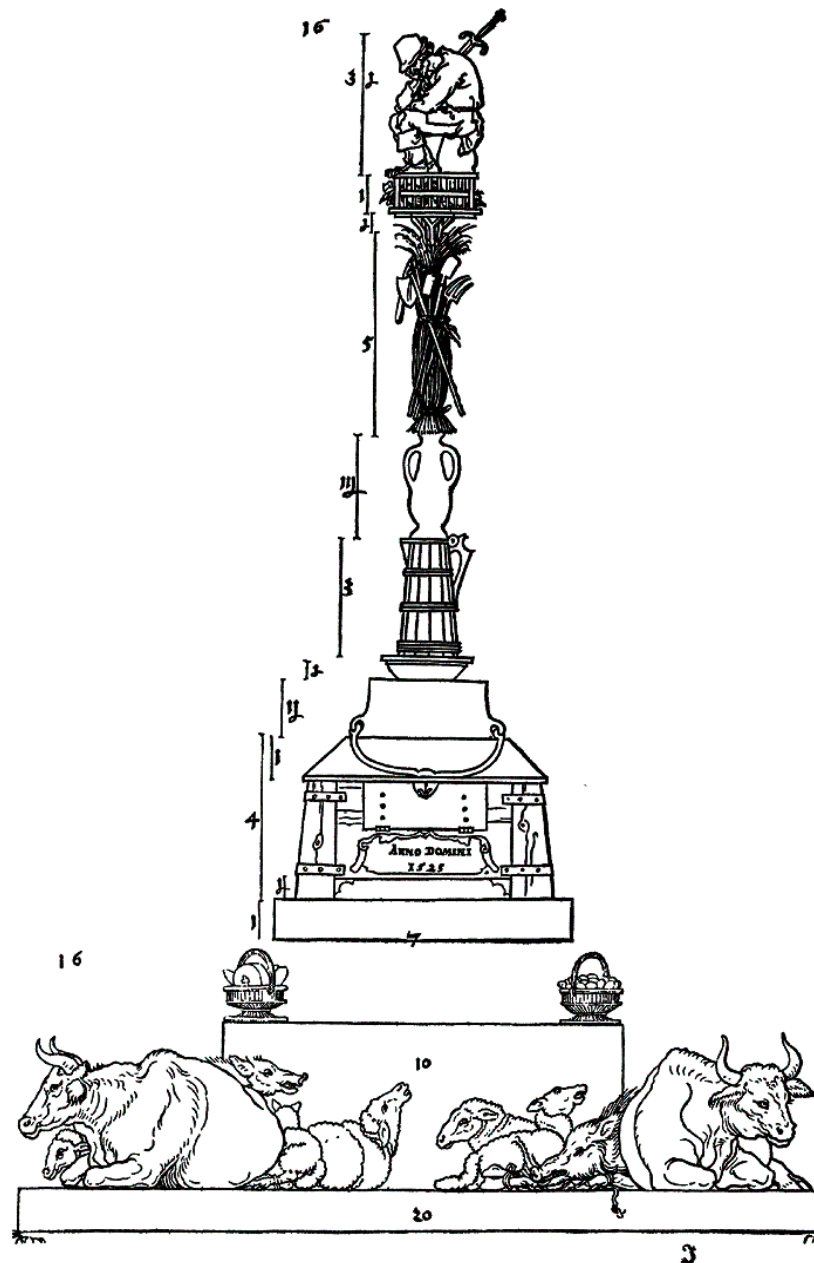


Fig. 29. The plan for a “Monument to Commemorate a Victory over the Rebellious Peasants”, from Albrecht Dürer, of 1525, from *The Painter's Manual*. That image has received scholarly attention elsewhere (Greenblatt 1983, where it is Fig. 3; cfr. Knappe 1965, p. 369).⁴³

⁴³ The pedestal is surmounted by a column, on top of which in the Roman arena, the condemned had to face wild animals, and a human public was staring at them, excited by the bloodshed. In Dürer's image instead, the central scene is on top of the central column. Sitting like a stylite, an anchorite confined to the top of a column, and reflecting (on his misdeeds?), the farmer is dead, having been stabbed with a sword in the back. It is the sword of authority, not a mere knife. Beneath, tame farm animals face away. Was the farmer, weary of the revolt and therefore sitting, pensive and unaware of what was about to befall him? Or was the peasantry *qua* social class reflecting *post factum*? The latter is likely to be what Dürer intended. At any rate (and Greenblatt pointed this out indeed), the farmer was executed from behind, because he was too lowly to deserve the honour of receiving frontally the capital punishment being meted to him. Those about to die in the Roman arena were under the public gaze. In contrast, Dürer offers viewers of the plan of the monument a view along with the expectation they are to hold, that viewers of the monument (once it is built) would themselves be staring at both the peasant, and the farm animals beneath. The farm animals who surround the monument are utterly uninterested, unlike the public in the arena. They know their place, whereas the rebellious peasant did not know his own. Present-day academics reflecting about their own milieu, symbolise by backstabbing something quite unlike what Dürer did.



Fig. 30. The top of the column, in the monument as planned by Dürer. The peasantry, chained and stabbed, reflects about the dire outcome of the rebellion.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 31. These animals from Dürer's woodcut are anatomically more accurate than his rhinoceros, notwithstanding there being much more detail appearing in the visual representation of the rhino.

The most fantastic part of the engraving is the group in the upper left corner: a bird of excessive size carries an elephant through the air. [...] It depicts the miraculous bird 'Roc'⁴⁴ which Pigafetta describes in a later phase of the journey. According to him its home is the Chinese Sea. We can trace the roc's migration and transformation with a certain degree of certainty. Stradanus's picture is derived from a very old oriental conception, the cosmological origin of which we know. It is the fight between the Indian solar bird Garuda and the chthonic snake Naga. The Indian word Naga means not only snake but also elephant. Indologists can probably explain at which crossway of mythical consciousness the naga as elephant was distinguished from the naga as snake. Garuda carrying off the naga-elephant appears in the two great Sanskrit epics, the Mahābhārata (I, 1353) and the Rāmāyana (III, 39). In both cases [p. 256:] Garuda carries into the air a fighting pair of elephant and tortoise. The appearance of the elephant instead of the snake may possibly be connected with a lessened sense for cosmology. But in this version too the story did not lose anything of its attractive power. [...] At all events, the western line of tradition from India through Persia to the Arab world is quite clear. Stories of the bird enter into scientific Arabic literature.

The double sense from India, *naga* 'elephant' and *naga* 'snake', reminds of the description from New Guinea — see in the previous subsection, about Dosedla (2012) — of mythical characters with snake-like noses, which according to Dosedla may have been inspired by imported Hindu elephant-headed imagery.

2.6. Late Antique, Medieval, and Early Modern European Jewish Occurrences of the Elephant

The strong body of elephants was even used in order to carry out executions. In the Hebrew account of his travels, Petahiah of Regensburg [= Ratisbon] (fl. 1175–1190) described how in Mesopotamia, he saw an execution being carried out by having an elephant seize and then cast away a man by means of its trunk (perceived as though it was the animal's fifth leg). One may reflect that the rabbinic Hebrew standard term for 'unnatural death', *mitah meshunnah*, can also be understood as 'strange death', 'awkward death', and presumably to Petahiah the sight of a huge beast throwing a human being to his death by means of what he perceived as the animal's fifth death, is as awkward a death as it could get. In this subsection, we are going to come across more instances of this subject.

A critical edition of Petachiah's itinerary, *Sibbuv R. Petachiah me-Regensburg*, was edited by Eleazar Gruenhut (1850–1913) and published⁴⁵ in three volumes in Jerusalem in 1904. (Whereas this belongs in the Middle Ages, from the modern era in connection with Iraq one can mention a chapbook for *Purim Baghdad*, a local festival of deliverance, on whose cover the etching of an elephant appears.)

Abraham David remarks (2012): "R. [i.e., Rabbi] Petachiah began his journey in the early 1170s, proceeding east via Poland and Russia, and south through the Caucas[u]s to the Black

⁴⁴ See, e.g., the rather concise entry for *Rukhkh* in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

⁴⁵ Popular editions of Petachiah's itinerary also exist; Eleazar Schenckel published in Cracow in 1566 *Anno Mundi* (i.e., 1896) a book of less than fifty pages, containing the itinerary of Petachiah of Regensburg along with the itinerary of Eldad the Danite and with *Midrash Yonah*. In 1856, Avraham Sason published a halakhic work from medieval France, namely, Rabbenu Tam's *Sefer ha-Yashar*, supplemented with *Sibbuv R. Petachiah*. The itinerary of Petahiah of Regensburg was published by Eliakim Carmoly (1802–1875) in Hebrew and French on opposite pages as early as 1831 (Carmoly 1831). An English translation of Petachiah's account was published in 1856 (Benisch and Ainsworth 1856). The two scholars referred to are Abraham Benisch (1811–1878) and William Ainsworth (1807–1896). A Latin translation also exists: *Itinerarium ab Joanne Christophoro Wagenselio ex Hebraico Latine redditum*. It was published in 1744 and 1750.

"The text of the *Sibbuv* has been published in several editions, however, not all the editions were based on the same manuscript. The first edition came out in Prague, in 1595. Almost a century later, it appeared with a Latin translation by Johan Christoph Wagenseil in two editions in Altdorf[,] 1687 and 1697, and formed the basis for Antonio Zanolini's Padua 1750 edition, also in Latin. Subsequently, additional editions appeared in print. The first critical edition was published more than a hundred years ago by Eliezer ha-Levi Grünhut (Frankfurt, 1905)" (David 2012, p. 322). See, e.g., the English version in Adler (1930, pp. 64–91).

Sea and Turkey, to the lands under Muslim dominion: Babylonia, Persia, Syria, and Eretz-Israel" (*ibid.*, p. 324). Petahiah of Regensburg was in Baghdad in 1175. "R. Petahia's journey ended in Prague. At a later date he moved to Regensburg where he evidently recounted tales of his journey to his close circle" (*ibid.*, p. 321). David explains (*ibid.*):

Unlike other Jewish travelers, who personally recorded their experiences and impressions, R. Petahiah himself did not write down his experiences. Evidently, R. Petahiah related what he saw, heard, or felt in the course of his journey, either to an individual or to a group. In turn, some individual eclectically recorded R. Petahiah's anecdotes.

"Elephants appear on the walls and in the domes of painted wooden synagogues in early eighteenth-century Poland, in spaces which are near to or flanking the Ark of the Law" (Epstein, 1994a, p. 465). Moreover: "Yehudah Hadassi, a Karaite sectarian, in 1184 [...] uses the bestiary tale of the capture of the elephant as an allegory for the struggle of the Karaites" (*ibid.*, p. 470).

The 13th-century (English?) fabulist Rabbi Berechiah ha-Nakdan "adopts the bestiary account of the capture of the elephant to comment on the appropriation of the Torah by Christians and its use against Jews in polemic and conversionary literature and exchange", Epstein claims (*ibid.*). Cf. Epstein (1994b), 205–231, and Epstein (1997, pp. 39–69). Berechiah however stated explicitly that his parable is about a poor man raised to greatness.

Such things that at first glance one finds it hard to tell how they sit together have been traditionally referred to, in Hebrew, as "What has the topic of Shemittah [the sabbatical year] has to do with Mt. Sinai?",⁴⁶ where the sabbatical is not academics', but the seventh year, when fields must lie fallow, debts are remitted, slaves freed, and ancestral land reverts to the seller. Less rabbinically inclined Israeli Hebrew speakers would rather refer to topics remote from each other as "the elephant and the Jewish question". This may well be a misnomer, as I have shown elsewhere.

Rather surprisingly, *leofante* — whose original sense is 'elephant' — turns up in Jewish onomastics. Among the crypto-Jews which the Inquisition had burnt on the stake in Sicily in the 16th century, there was Giovanni de Leofante from Palermo. He was burnt on the stake on 11 July 1512 (Renda 1996, p. 690).

Sometimes, for the sake of making casuistry exhaustive, legal or ritual discussion considers far-fetched situation. When building a *sukkah* (a booth for the Feast of Tabernacles), it is explicitly permitted to make a *sukkah* from an elephant(!).⁴⁷ It is permitted to make a *sukkah* on top of a camel, provided one would not go up during that part of the festival when one is not allowed to travel. In the case of a camel, this norm responds to a real-life need, as sometimes Jews had to travel together with a caravan.

Nissan (2009b) discusses subnarratives about the hero who dies in battle, crushed by the elephant he was disembowelling, from *Maccabees* (in this case, the warrior, Eleazar, was Jewish) as well as from early Mughal India. During the decisive battle at Samogarh on 8 June 1658 between Dara (the son favored by Emperor Shah Jahan) and Aurangzeb (the cunning brother who was to eventually seize the throne), a Rathor — a warrior from the clan headed by Jaswant Singh — almost killed Aurangzeb, in the Rajput offensive. Eraly relates (2003, p. 352):

⁴⁶ "What has the topic of Shemittah [the sabbatical year] has to do with Mt. Sinai?" originally appeared in a gloss by Rashi (i.e., Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, who lived in Troyes, Champagne, 1040–1105) to *Leviticus* 25:1–2, i.e., to the beginning of the pentateuchal weekly portion *Behar Sinay*. Rashi's is the Jewish *glossa ordinaria* to both the Hebrew Bible, and the Babylonian Talmud.

⁴⁷ *Torat Hoesed* (*Orah Hayyim*, 60:3), though he disagrees with *Magen Avraham* in general, tries to explain how, according to *Magen Avraham*, a *sukkah* can be made from an elephant.

'Raja Rup Singh Rathor', says Khafi Khan, 'sprang from his horse, and, with the greatest daring, having washed his hands of life, cut his way through the ranks of his enemies sword in hand, cast himself under the elephant on which the elephant (Aurangzeb) was riding, and began to cut the girths which secured the howdah' [inside which Aurangzeb was carried on the back of the elephant]. For a moment Aurangzeb was in mortal danger, then his guards cut down Rup Singh.

In Nissan (2009b) I pointed out:

If, again, this rings a bell — this bears a resemblance to the manner in which, according to Ch. 6 in the First Book of Maccabees, one of the Maccabee brothers, Eleazar, died, crushed by an elephant whose belly he had cut open, while fighting against the Seleucid royal army — this is so simply because this is part and parcel of warfare when elephants were employed on the battleground.

The episode of Eleazar's death by being crushed by an elephant was of course known to Christians, as their access to *Maccabees* and to Josephus was more direct than was available to pre-modern Jews. While discussing an early modern Catholic English translation of the works of Josephus, Kelly notes (2003, p. 1001 [sic]): "Lodge's translation of Josephus includes in *Antiquities* a description of Antiochus making martyrs of Jews who refuse to follow his impious edicts. *Wars of the Jews* describes Eleazar's brave attack on the king's elephant at the expense of his own life, an event recorded in 1 Macc. 6:43–47." Thomas "Lodge's 1602 translation of *The Famous and Memorable Workes [sic] of Josephus* offers English readers the works of Josephus as a defense of Catholic understandings of Christian history and theology" (Kelly 2003, p. 993).

It must be said that as by the Middle Ages in the West elephants had become unattainably exotic, Jews would read in an abridgement of the Maccabees' story, *Megillath Antiochos*, that Eleazar was found dead inside the excrements of the elephants. In this case, the utility function maximised in the latter version was the sense of horror, rather than of heroism.⁴⁸

Of course, also in Christian texts, for which the *Maccabees* books are part of the biblical canon, one comes across the story of Eleazar's death. Fig. 32 shows "Eleazar's death (the scene had been illustrated at least as early as the eleventh century)", which in 1324 in the *Speculum humanae salvationis* "was adduced as a prefiguration of Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross" (Heckscher 1947, p. 160). This was because Eleazar's death was an episode of self-sacrifice from the Old Testament.

⁴⁸ Of course, there is nothing strange in finding elephants in lore concerning Indian Jews. Consider the Jewish community of Cochin, in Kerala, southwest India. They included three castes, called the White Jews, Brown Jews, and Black Jews. Most of them moved to Israel. Mandelbaum related (1939, p. 451):

The disease known as elephantiasis is prevalent in Cochin and the Jews suffer from it no less than the other inhabitants. The legs of persons afflicted with this ailment swell to enormous dimensions, and it is not uncommon in Cochin to see people whose legs have a girth equal to that of their waists. Four males and eleven females of the white Jews are stricken with this disease, 12 per cent of their total population.

As to their founding myth (KATZ, 1995, pp. 123–124):

One of the most prized possessions of the Cochin Jews are two inscribed copper plates, kept in the synagogue's *aron hakodesh* (holy ark). According to the Cochin Jews' narrative, the plates were given to the leader of the Jews, Joseph Rabban, by "King Cheramanperumal" (a dynastic name; the individual monarch was Bhaskara Ravi Varman) in 379 CE (most modern scholars date the plates from the beginning of the eleventh century). Local traditions hold that the plates chartered an independent Jewish principality at Anjuvannam, believed to have been a section of Cranganore, known to the Jews as Shingly. Sovereignty was symbolized by privileges granted to Rabban, including such aristocratic symbols as the use of a parasol and an elephant, the sounding of a trumpet salute, and the commercial prerogative to levy duties and tolls.

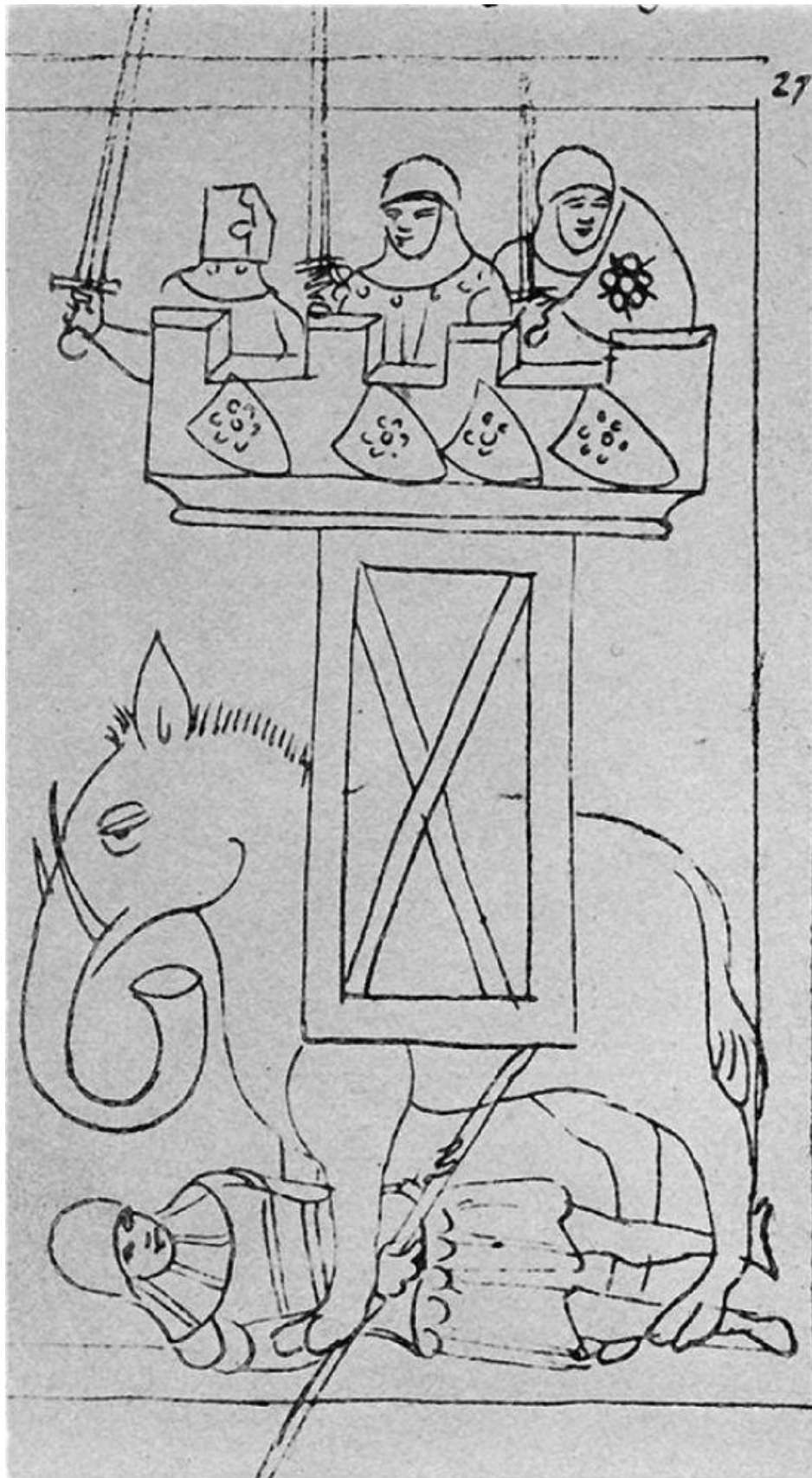


Fig. 32. Eleazar's death, trampled upon by an elephant (rather than crushed by the falling elephant), in a *Speculum humanae salvationis* from 1324 (MS Munich *clm.* 146, folio 27 *recto*).

Earlier on, in Carolingian literature, the elephant occurred as a symbol for sinners, albeit these are ultimately redeemable (Heckscher 1947, p. 162):

In Carolingian literature we find — isolated and almost without sequence — the nearly altogether negative interpretation that adduces the physical "monstrosity" of the elephant as proof for his signifying the "sinner debased by his evil deeds"; thus Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, lib. VIII, chap. i, *Patrologia Latina*, CXI, col. 222: "Elephas autem significat peccatorem immanem sceleribus, et facinorum deformitate squalidum", [...]

In Israeli Hebrew, "the elephant and the Jewish question" is an idiomatic description of unrelated things. Assuming that the elephant and the Jewish question, let alone the Jews, are strangers to each other is reckoning without the Jews of Elephantine,⁴⁹ and without Manetho's claim that Pharaoh chased the Jews of the Exodus away from Egypt because of their "leprosy", intending elephantiasis (Zellentin 2009, p. 47, fn. 47 [sic], discussed this elephant association). Moreover, Ptolemy VIII "captured the Jewish population of Alexandria and attempted to kill them with the help of intoxicated elephants", for their support for his sister, enemy, and future wife Cleopatra II (Zellentin 2009, p. 56), according to Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.50–52. Those events however took place in Egypt, not in Europe.

Likewise, consider this tale, about events taking place in Mesopotamia. A rabbi had asked two colleagues who were going to the city of Neharde'a, to fetch for him a silver cup he was owed by somebody of high status, assimilated to the Persian nobility, but quite possibly Jewish. As one of the two rabbis, while in in Neharde'a, had refused to release a quittance for the cup, he was beaten, and his colleague, in fear of suffering the same, told them: "Thrash him well". As his companion denounced him to the rabbi who had sent them, he claimed in his defence: "The hats of those men are as long as themselves. Their voice comes from their boots, and their names are outlandish — Arda, and Arta, and Pyli Barish. If they give the order to arrest, you are arrested, to kill, you are killed" (Babylonian Talmud, *Git□t□in*, 14a–b). Neusner commented (1975, p. 187): "As to the names, Arda meant 'Righteous', and was the Parthian equivalent of S□addoq. Pyli Barish meant elephant-rider."⁵⁰

The following are quotations from tractate *Berakhoth* of the so-called Soncino English translation of the Babylonian Talmud (Epstein 1935–1948). At *Berakhoth*, 55b, we find:

R.⁵¹ Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: A man is shown in a dream only what is suggested by his own thoughts, as it says, As for thee, Oh King, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed. Or if you like, I can derive it from here: That thou mayest know the thoughts of the heart. Raba said: This is proved by the fact that a man is never shown in a dream a date palm of gold, or an elephant going through the eye of a needle. [Footnote: Because he never thinks of such things.]

Then at *Berakhoth*, 56b–57a, one can read:⁵²

If one sees an elephant [*pil*] in a dream, wonders [*pela'oth*] will be wrought for him; if several elephants, wonders of wonders will be wrought for him. But it has been taught: All kinds of beasts are of good omen in a dream except the elephant and the ape? — There is no contradiction. [57a:] The elephants are of good omen if saddled, of bad omen if not saddled. [Footnote: Lit., 'this is ... that is']

⁴⁹ The Achaemenid-era Jewish garrison of the island of Elephantine, in the Nile near Assuan, has received considerable scholarly attention.

⁵⁰ Neusner commented (1975, p. 187) elaborated about the etymology of the name *Pyli Barish* in a footnote. He had already referred to the literal meaning of that personal name in Neusner (1964, p. 96).

⁵¹ *R.* stands for *Rabbi*.

⁵² There is a repetition at *Berakhoth*, 57b: "All kinds of beasts are a good sign in a dream, except the elephant, the monkey and the longtailed ape. But a Master has said: If one sees an elephant in a dream, a miracle will be wrought for him? — There is no contradiction; in the latter case it is saddled, in the former case it is not saddled." At *Berakhoth*, 58b, one can read: "Our Rabbis taught: On seeing an elephant, an ape, or a long-tailed ape, one says: Blessed is He who makes strange creatures. If one sees beautiful creatures and beautiful trees, he says: Blessed is He who has such in His world."

In Jewish law, there is a difference between some of the domesticated animal kinds, which are technically referred to as *behemah*, and usually wild quadrupeds, as well as some domesticated animals (dogs, mongooses, cats, elephants, monkeys), that are called *h□ayyah*. In the *Mishnah*, at *Kil'ayim*, 8:6, we are told (to say it with the Soncino translation):

The wild ox belongs to the category of *behemah*, but R. Jose said: to the category of *hayyah*. The dog belongs to the category of *hayyah*, but R. Meir said: to the category of *behemah*. The swine belongs to the category of *behemah*; the wild ass to that of *hayyah*, the elephant and the ape to that of *hayyah*. A human being is permitted to draw, plough, or lead with any of them.

In contrast, it is forbidden for example to have a donkey and an ox plough together. A human being instead may adapt to the pace of the animal with which he is ploughing.

Another domain in which elephants turn up is in *materia medica*. Quoting from a Hebrew text of folk medicine, *Sepher Segullot we-H□iddoth*, ascribed to Rabbi Nathan 'Omri, and possibly not from Europe (manuscript, 67b), Patai pointed out (1945, p. 217):

Of the elephant the tusk is the efficacious part. "Take the tooth of an elephant which is called *ebolio* (ivory) and grate of it with a knife up to the weight of seven *pshut□im* ("simples") and mix it with one ounce of boiling honey after the foam has been removed from it and mix it with water and give it to her to drink for three consecutive days and even though she be sterile she will immediately conceive."⁵³

I suspect that the clearly Romance loanword which Patai interpreted as though its Hebrew spelling stood for *ebolio* (he conjectured that the initial letter *aleph* for the glottal stop has the vowel *e* rather than *a*) is none else than Italian *avorio* 'ivory'. The word as transcribed into the Hebrew script must have been אבורי 'אבורי', but probably at some point the letter ר (for R) — assuming it was written with its upper horizontal trait with its left tip curved upwards more than usual — was misread and miscopied by somebody as though it was ל (for L), thus resulting in אבולי 'אבולי', which Patai guessed should be read as *ebolio*.

Also consider the Hebrew diary of the 16th-century Jewish adventurer David Reubeni, who arrived in Venice from Alexandria, in Levantine attire, in the winter of 1524, and claimed to be the brother of the king of a Jewish polity in Khaybar, Arabia (actually the diary calls it Chabor חבור by the unrelated name, Khabour, of both a Syrian tributary of the Euphrates, and a tributary of the Tigris in northwestern Iraq).

David Reubeni, allegedly a member of the tribe of Reuben, was seeking alliances in Europe. The diary was written during his second stay in Italy (when he was trying to recover the favour, which he lost in February 1530, of the local Jewish elite), before he left for Regensburg in 1523, from where the emperor Charles V sent him to Spain, where he was imprisoned and later executed, apparently in an *auto da fé* in the southwestern town of Lierena in 1538. In the part of the account claiming to cover his travel to Egypt through an African itinerary, by caravan (disguised as a Muslim) in what appears to be Sudan, he related about staying for a while in the native Black kingdom of 'Amrah, Islamised yet sticking to pre-Islamic custom. He claimed, about the local diet, that it included "□hpylym" (*happilim*, the

⁵³ For comparison, Patai remarks (1945, p. 217, fn. 90): "In Syria barren women were advised to pass under the stomach of an elephant, Abela, *Zeitschr. d. deutschen Pal. Ver.*, vii, 1884, 114. Among the Swahili barren women drink a beverage made of elephant's excrement and various roots, Ploss-Bartels-Reitzenstein[(1927)], II, 312." Weideger (1985) is an English-language distillation of Ploss's 1885 edition of *Das Weib*.

Dung is not unknown to folk-medicine. Patai (1945, p. 215) quoted this charm from the Hebrew work *Toldot Adam*, 3:1: "Take the excrements of a pig, dry it, pound it finely and give it to her to drink and you should immediately have intercourse with her and she will conceive". Next, Patai remarked (*ibid.*): "Animal dung and droppings were often recommended by Galen and other ancient writers, and adopted by practitioners down to the time of Quincy's dispensary. They are found in Arabic and Jewish 'dispansaries' [sic] also". Dung inside something edible is also found in folktales about pranks (Nissan 2011e, Part One).

elephants), ⟨whz'byḿ⟩ (*vehazze'evím*, and the wolves), ⟨nmlým⟩ (*nemalím*, ants), ⟨klbým⟩ (*kelavím*, dogs), ⟨gmlyḿ⟩ (*gemallím*, camels)", and so forth.

Ben-Melech (2011, p. 154, fn. 36) remarks that the reading ⟨nmlým⟩ נמלים 'ants' is dubious, and that perhaps it should be ⟨nmryḿ⟩ נמרים (*nemerím*), 'leopards'. Notwithstanding the similarity of the letters ג for G and נ for N, the word is certainly not ⟨gmlyḿ⟩ גמלים ('camels'), because the latter occurs close by in the same list. Like with the reading *ebolio* from Patai's paper, what Ben-Melech was commenting about is an instance of uncertain reading of a graphic form as the Hebrew letter ר (=R) or ל (=L).

2.7. The Elephant and Charlemagne in a Novel by Agnon, and Agnon's Humour

The Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd in Baghdad sent Charlemagne an elephant as a gift. The man who was sent along with the elephant was Isaac, the only member of Charlemagne's own delegation to return from Baghdad. The Frankish and Abbasid empires allied themselves, in opposition to both the Umayyads of Cordova (until shortly, Muslims had been in control of Narbonne) and the Byzantines (whose neighbour the Frankish empire had become after it defeated the Avars). Isaac and the elephant crossed the Alps from Piedmont, near Vercelli. A brief account of an elephant sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd to Charlemagne, taken there by a Jewish merchant, is found in the *Annales Regni Francorum*. Moreover, Charlemagne's biographer Einhard (d. 840) related⁵⁴ that while Charlemagne was in northern Italy, he was informed that the envoys of the "King of Persia" (*rex Persarum*, actually Hārūn al-Rashīd)⁵⁵ had disembarked in Pisa. They related to Charlemagne the the Jew Isaac,⁵⁶ who four years earlier (in the year 797) had been sent to the "King of Persia" along with Sigimund and Lantefrid, was coming back (without those companions), carrying precious gifts.

Allegedly the name of the elephant was either *Abul- 'Abbās* ('father of Abbās'),⁵⁷ or *Abul Abaz* or *Abulabaz* from *Elbaz*, this being Arabic *al-bazz*, 'the comely one'. (Therefore, *al-Bazz* (*Elbaz*) is found as a family name in Arabic-speaking countries among both Muslims and Jews, and it is found as well as a family name among Jews in Israel.) As an adjective, Arabic *bazz* denotes 'comely'. Nevertheless, in medieval letters in Arabic, *al-bazz* is also a name for a class of goods traded internationally: the noun *bazz* denotes 'textiles' (e.g., Goitein and Friedman 2008, n. 6 on p. 199, and n. 4 on p. 303). Hence, an ambiguity in the name of the elephant sent as a gift to Charlemagne.⁵⁸

The Hebrew writer Shmuel Yosef Agnon⁵⁹ (whose fiction is sometimes described as magic realism) lived in Germany in 1912–1924, having moved there from Ottoman Palestine.

⁵⁴ In his *Vita Karoli Magni*. See Kurze (1895, pp. 116–117), Thorpe (1969, p. 184).

⁵⁵ The *Annales regni francorum* 801:116 have "rex Persarum" ("King of the Persians").

⁵⁶ The *Annales regni francorum*, 802:117, state that "venit Isaac cum elefanto et ceteris muniberus, quae a rege Persarum missa sunt, et Aquisgrani omnia imperatori detulit; nomen elefanti erat Abul Abaz".

⁵⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul-Abbas> Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_historical_elephants

If it was *Abul- 'Abbās* ('father of Abbās'), then there is an irony to be potentially detected, because the sender was from the Abbasid caliphal dynasty. The Latin chronicles however do not appear to have been as subtle as that. *Abul-bazz* is as likely to have been the elephant's name, as *Abul- 'Abbās*.

⁵⁸ Isaac and the elephant embarked in Tunisia, disembarked in Genoa in October 801, spent the winter in Vercelli, started to cross the Alps in the spring, and reached Charlemagne in Aachen on 1 July 2802. The elephant died suddenly in 810. The *Annales regni francorum* 810:113 claim it was the elephant sent by "Aaron, King of the Saracens": "ubi dum aliquot dies moraretur, elefant ille, quem ei Aaron rex Sarracenorum miserat, subita morte periit". Allegedly, this elephant's bones were conserved at Lippenham until the 18th century.

⁵⁹ Shmuel Yosef Agnon is known by the acronym of his Hebrew initials as Shai Agnon. He was born Samuel Josef Czaczkes in Buczacz, Galicia, in 1888, and died in Jerusalem in 1970. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966. Agnon lived in Germany in 1913–1924, and in Palestine both before that (in 1907–1913) and afterwards. The surname Agnon is a penname (eventually also his official name), after the theme, 'Agunót' 'deserted wives', of an early work, occurring later on as well. The status of deserted wives is a much-debated, always a delicate and nowadays a hot issue in Jewish law. See, e.g., Jackson (2000, 2004, 2009).

In his short novel *Ba-Chanuto shel Mar Lublin* (*In Mr. Lublin's Shop*, first published in the 1960s), set in Weimar Germany, in one episode Agnon has the autobiographical narrator dream that during the night, he is kidnapped from an apartment in Saxony by four coarse soldiers, and brought into Charlemagne's presence. Charlemagne was an enemy of the Saxons. The monarch turns out to be benevolent towards the autobiographical narrator (Agnon), and mentions the elephant he had received as a gift. Charlemagne needs his presence so that he would write a letter in Hebrew to the Jewish merchant who had presented him with the elephant. Charlemagne wants to ask the merchant how to take care of the elephant. Agnon's narrator plays with an intertextual reference to the Babylonian Talmud (he often does: cf. Hoshen 2006), tractate *Berakhoth*, 56b, where the talmudic text says: "If one sees an elephant (*pil*) in a dream, wonders (*pela'oth*) will be wrought for him; if several elephants, wonders of wonders (*pil'ei pela'oth*) will be wrought for him." Agnon's narrator makes a humorous — and humorously otiose — consideration:

חשבתי בלבי, חבל שאיני ישן אילו ישנתי אפשר שהייתי רואה פיל בחלום והיו פלאות נעשות בי כמו שאמר, הרואה פיל בחלום פלאות נעשו לו. ואילו הוא מלך הישמעאלים שולח לקיסר הנוצרים שנים שלושה פילים ואני רואה אותם בחלום היו פלאי פלאות נעשים לי כמו שאמר הרואה פיל בחלום פלאות נעשו לו פילים פלאי פלאות נעשו לו.

I thought in my heart, it is a pity I am not asleep. Had I been asleep, it may be I would have seen an elephant (*pil*) in a dream, and wonders (*pela'oth*) would have been wrought for me, as they said: if one sees an elephant in a dream, wonders will be wrought for him. And if he, the King of the Ishmaelites, sends the Emperor of the Christians two or three elephants and I were to see them in a dream, wonders of wonders (*pil'ei pela'oth*) would have been wrought for me, as they said: if one sees an elephant in a dream, wonders will be wrought for him; if several elephants, wonders of wonders will be wrought for him.

In Agnon's short story *Two Rabbinic Scholars That Were in Our Town* (published in 1946, 1950, and 1953), it is related — by resorting to wordplay — that one of the characters "was not inclined towards vacuous acumen, the one associated with those *pilpulists* (subtle artists of disquisition [from *pilpel* 'pepper']) who transform a broadbean (*pol*) into an elephant (*pil*), and an elephant (*pil*) into a broadbean (*pol*)".⁶⁰

שהוא לא היה מתכוין לחריפות של הבל, של אותם בעלי הפלפול העושים מפול פיל ומפיל פול.

Esther Fuchs (1985, 1987) has discussed humour in Agnon. In the examples given, Agnon's posturing somewhat reminds of Varejka's posturing. Agnon was a devout Jew, and was conversant with rabbinic literature, let alone the Babylonian Talmud. That he pokes fun at it, like here, is not without reminding of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, a devout Catholic. But in the case of Villiers, he pokes fun at Tribulat Bonhomet (see Sec.1.2 above), a fictional miscreant.

2.8. Elephants in Imagery from Medieval Bestiaries

Already Druce (1919) discussed occurrences of the elephant in medieval art. In the late 14th-century Salvatorberg Bestiary (from an abbey near Erfurt), "[s]ome animal forms are maladroit, as an example the panther with a dog's body, horse's head, bird legs and feet, and horse's tail! The elephant has a trumpet-like trunk and horse's body and tail. In Douai 711 the elephant also has a horse's tail, but an elephant's body" (Clark, 2006, p. 77).

The Douai Bestiary is clearly the model for the Salvatorberg Bestiary. The latter's painter was apparently carried away by the horse's tail. Also worth signalling is Randall's (1989) discussion of the elephant from an English book of hours. Writing about illumination in Romanesque art from England, Saunders states ([1932] 1969, p. 68):

⁶⁰ I am grateful to Prof. Hillel Weiss for locating for me in his online Agnon corpus, all occurrences of ⟨pyl⟩.

The pictures of animals which are dotted about in the text of the bestiaries seldom have much relation to actual fact, even when they represent real animals, and not mythical ones like the phoenix and the manticora. Imagination fills up the gaps in knowledge: thus elephants, which were not seen in England before the thirteenth century, are often drawn with small, upstanding ears and tusks which curve downwards, and crocodiles are made to resemble stags. They are usually boldly drawn and highly coloured in an arbitrary manner. A lion may be green or blue; but this is the case in all twelfth-century manuscripts, not only the bestiaries.

We are going to continue discussing medieval Christian bestiaries in the next subsection, in order to see how elephant imagery was used in religious polemics, and in particular, in a visual allegory for the Passion.

2.9. *The Elephant Lashed at by a Jew in the Cambridge Bestiary*

Elephants put to anti-Jewish use appear in Strickland (2008, pp. 211, 229, and Fig. 5 on p. 498). Her paper is concerned with medieval Christian bestiaries that, while receptive to the partition of animals into clean and unclean camps as set forth in *Leviticus*, use that concept in order to attack the Jews. Fig. 5 on p. 498 in Strickland's article is taken from a bestiary from the Cambridge University Library, MS. Ii.4.26, folio 7 *recto*, and shows an elephant with cloven hoofs, slim, with a tail as long as the animal tall, which is not very much: the animal only reaches the waist of a man lashing at it, bearded and wearing a pointed hat (this identifies him as a Jew), and pulling reins attached to nostrils found at the base of the elephant's short trunk. The elephant has long eyebrows, shows a long row of clenched teeth, but this is not an aggressive display: rather, the elephant has an apparently suffering facial expression, while the animal is staring at the Jew. The elephant's tusks point upwards (as though it was a boar), and instead of elephants ears, we see a low hairline with, instead of hair, what appears to be feathers on a wing. This is apparently a representation of the ears.⁶¹

The elephant from the early 13th-century Cambridge Bestiary carries on its back a structure (the howdah or "castle", such as in the emblem that gave Elephant and Castle, a square in South London, its name) with columns ending in flowery capitals, and on top, four warriors are standing. Their body is smaller than the Jew's, at whom none of them is staring. The archer in front is aiming with his longbow in front, well above the Jew's hat, but the arrow aims at the knots at the end of the flail that the Jew is holding, with its threads high in the air (Fig. 33). The Cambridge Bestiary is perhaps from the North Midlands — it has been linked to the Cistercians of Lincolnshire (Strickland 2008, p. 229) — and is dated to 1200–1210. Strickland explains (*ibid.*, p. 211):

The early thirteenth-century Cambridge Bestiary image of the elephant provides an exceptionally gratuitous way into the Christ-killer theme ([her] Fig. 5 [see our Fig. 33]). Its accompanying text, based on the *Physiologus*, is a lengthy allegory that identifies the elephant as Christ as well as a model for Christian marriage. There is nothing here about the Crucifixion, much less about the Jews' supposed involvement in that event: it is the accompanying image that provides such extra-textual commentary. Once the viewer understands from the text that the fearful, grimacing elephant is a figure of Christ, the meaning of the wicked driver (manhout) wearing the pointed hat and threatening the elephant with a flail becomes clear. The manhout is a Jew, standing in for all contemporary Jews whose ancestors were accused of torturing and murdering Christ. I have suggested elsewhere that the contemporary knights riding inside the elephant's howdah in this and other bestiary elephant images represent Christian crusaders, a reference which in this context suggests another function of the decide charge, that of justification for the ongoing Christian aggression in the Holy Land.

⁶¹ The facial expression is uncannily similar to the one that in the 1990s used to be drawn on a blackboard in front of the Red Lion pub in Plumstead, in the Greenwich borough of South East London: it was standing, wearing blue jeans (like a stereotypical pub-goer?), and did not look like a lion, but like a slim humanoid fox from the cartoons. When that pub was sold, it became a Chinese noodles bar, also called the Red Lion.

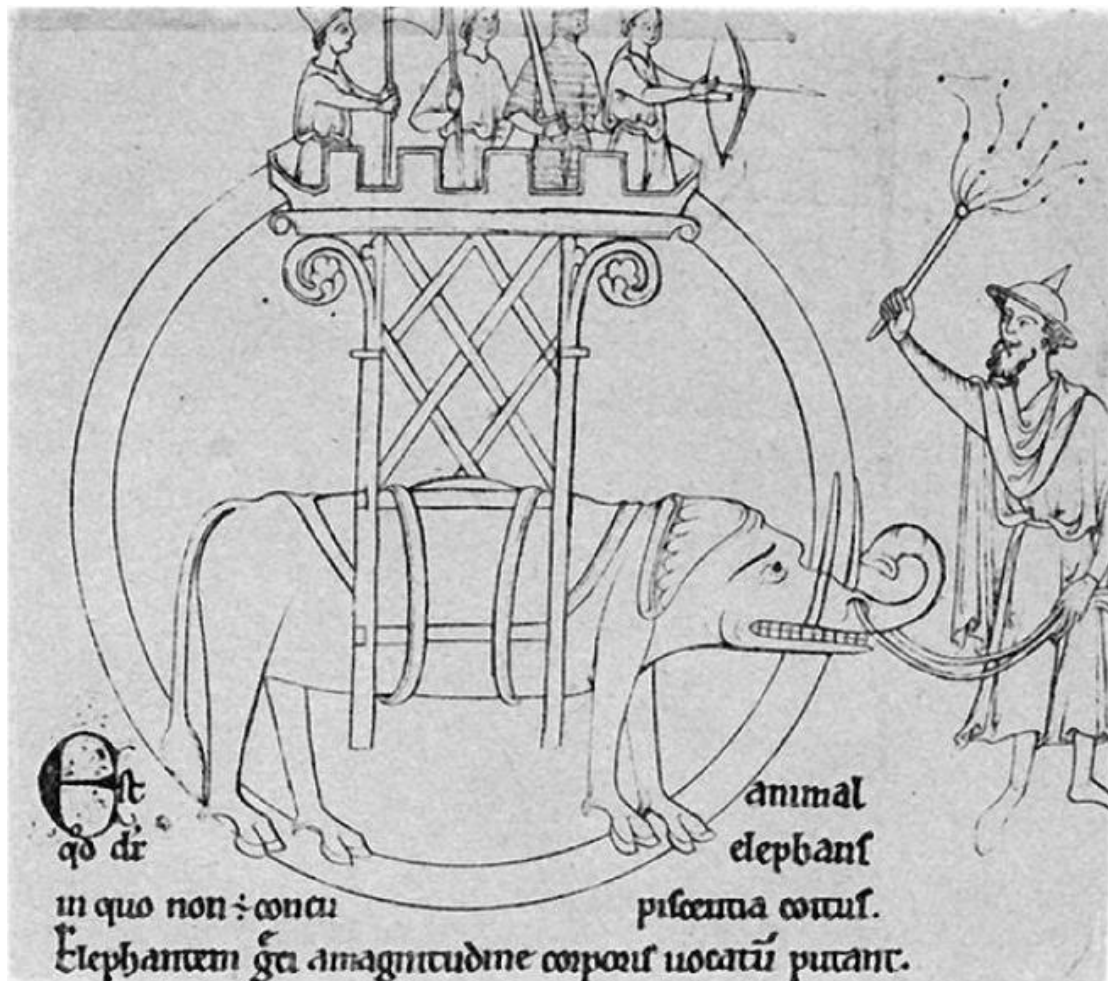


Fig. 33. An elephant lashed at by a Jew in the Cambridge Bestiary.

Strickland (2008, p. 229) cites Hassig (1995, pp. 135–141). [Debra Hassig is the same as Debra Higgs Strickland.] Strickland further remarks (2008, pp. 229–230): “This spectacular case of text-image contradiction suggests that an anti-Jewish agenda in the bestiaries was not just the inevitable result of its dependence upon an earlier, anti-Jewish text, but is indicative of an ongoing and developing concern promoted in the bestiaries by both authors and artists.”

Strickland (2008, p. 230, fn.212) points out that “the bestiary story of the elephant was appropriated for anti-*Christian* purposes by rabbi Berechiah HaNakdan, an English Jew also writing in the thirteenth century”. She cites Epstein (1994a; 1997, pp. 39–69), but it must be said that she apparently takes it for granted that Epstein’s interpretation is beyond dispute. This is not the case.

William Heckscher (1947) — in an article primarily concerned with the elephant in Bernini’s obelisk — does not appear to have either noticed, or found it necessary to comment about the Jewish hat of the man lashing at the elephant from the Cambridge Bestiary. The image appeared in a plate between pp. 158 and 159 in Heckscher (1947), and was captioned “Elephant with the Four Basic Weapons in His Howdah and Native Mahout.” Heckscher’s text on p. 163 (which does not mention any possible reference to Jews) remarked:

The epoch that par excellence was ruled by the exemplar, which did not aim at similitude but rather at the “true” image as it pre-existed in the artist’s mind, could well do without elephants as models and yet create the most convincingly beautiful elephantine creatures, such as the one in the twelfth-century *Bestiary* of Cambridge University Library (Fig. 18).

2.10. *Elephantographia curiosa*, and the Elephant in *Orbis Pictus*

The years 1715 and 1723 saw the publication of *Elephantographia curiosa*, by D. Georg Christoph Petri von Hartenfels (1633–1718).⁶² From the second half of the 17th century, well into the 19th, the illustrated zoology book *Orbis Pictus*⁶³ shaped the visual conceptualisation, as well as the wrong ideas, that young people of the better classes in Europe acquired and then entertained for life concerning the elephant. Later editions would tell youngsters very little about the behaviour of the elephant, and even that little had nothing to do with the life of elephants in their natural habitat. Youngsters were informed that elephants are fond of alcoholic beverages. (This partly replaced older ideas about the virtues of the elephant. An edition of *Orbis Pictus* in English from 1836 claimed:

The Elephant, the largest of the land quadrupeds, attains the height of 15 feet. Formerly the elephant carried small towers in battle, which were filled with men. They live from 100 to 200 years. They are particularly fond of wine and spirits, and have a great pleasure in musick and flowers.

Oettermann pointed out (1987, p. 37):⁶⁴

Guicciardini writes, appalled, about an elephant he saw in Antwerp in 1563: "The splendid attributes and rare qualities so often reported by the writers of antiquity are not to be found in this animal. It behaved like a pig, gulping down everything that was thrown to it, and once drank so much wine that it lay like dead for a full twenty-four hours, but when it had slept off his drunkenness it ate more than ever before".

2.11. *Browsing the 1850 Hand-Book of London: An Elephant Obedient While Being Executed*

When the Royal Society was established in London (incorporated by royal charter in 1663), it became the target for humorists. One of these was Samuel Butler (1612–1680). Cunningham relates (1850, p. 432):

When the Society was first established, it was severely ridiculed by the wits of the time, "for what reason," says Dr. Johnson, "it is hard to conceive, since the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts; and the most zealous enemy of innovation must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity." D'Israeli has given an account of the hostilities it encountered, but, curiously enough, has overlooked the inimitable satire of Butler, called *The Elephant in the Moon*.

Elephant and Castle, a square in London south of the river Thames, was so named after a tavern. The emblem of the tavern used to be an elephant carrying a "castle" of warriors. Cunningham's *Hand-Book of London* explains (1850, p. 173):

ELEPHANT AND CASTLE (The). celebrated tavern at Walworth, about le mile and a half from Westminster, Waterloo, and Blackfriars Bridges, and situated where several cross-roads meet, leading from these bridges to important places in Kent and Surrey. Before the railways removed stage-coaches from the roads, the Elephant and Castle was a well-known locality to every traveller going south from London. It has now changed character, and is chiefly known to the inhabitants of Camberwell, Dulwich, Norwood, and Herne Hill.

⁶² Its title inspired the subtitle of Oettermann's (1982), namely, *Eine Elephantographia curiosa*. Also see Popham (1930). Early modern treatises also include Perrault (1734), and an epistle by Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) incorporated in the 1723 edition of *Elephantographia curiosa* by Petri von Hartenfels.

⁶³ It was in 1659 that the first English edition appeared, of *Orbis sensualium pictus* (or *Orbis Pictus* for short) by John (Johann) Amos Comenius (Joh. Amos Comenii, Jan Amos Komensky) (1659). In 1968, a facsimile edition was made available by Oxford University Press.

⁶⁴ Also see Stephan Oettermann's book (1982) *Die Schaulust am Elefanten: Eine Elephantographia curiosa*.

When the 1850 edition of Peter Cunningham's *Hand-Book of London* appeared, the publisher, Murray, inserted in the front matter a full-page advertisement for a recently published book, *The Lion-Hunter of South Africa, or, Five Year's Adventures in the Far Interior*, by Gordon Cumming. The ad began with a quoted endorsement by Dickens ("Mr. Cumming had exhausted the Deer Forests of his native Scotland", and so forth). The last endorsement in the ad was from the *Christian Witness*. It glorified Cumming the hunter's mass destruction of elephants and lions, was pleased by his book's reference to missionary work, and had no qualms with his endangering his own life (as he apparently enjoyed a strong dose of providential protection):

One of the last testimonies given (to the labours of the missionary), and not the least remarkable, is that from the 'mighty hunter,, Mr. Gordon Cumming, of Altyre, whose work, 'A Hunter's Life in South Africa,' is just published. That wondrous adventurer — amidst his wilderness roamings found his way to Ruruman, when he stumbled upon the missionary settlement of the Rev. Robert Moffatt. We confess to no inconsiderable pride and pleasure in having such a testimony from such a man—a man of whom we can scarcely give any adequate picture. To know his character the public must read his book. We have read nothing in the history of romantic adventure so extraordinary. That he was not devoured a hundred times can only be accounted for by the superintendence of a special Providence. He slaughtered lions, rhinoceroses, and elephants like sheep, and many a time was he himself in the very jaws of destruction.

Just as it is all right to slaughter sheep, it is all right to slaughter elephants. Even when a tamed elephant was expediently killed, he could still be obedient. The *Hand-Book* entry for COLLEGE OF SURGEONS (ROYAL), on p.137, includes this piece of information about one of the exhibits, ascribing to a particular elephant obedience even as it was being executed for being ungovernable:

Skeleton of Chunee, the famous elephant brought to England in 1810 — exhibited for a time on the stage of Covent-garden Theatre, and subsequently bought by Mr. Cross, the proprietor of the menagerie at Exeter 'Change. After a return of an annual paroxysm, aggravated, as subsequently appeared, by inflammation of the large pulp of one of the tusks, Chunee, in 1826, became so ungovernably violent that it was found necessary to kill him. Amid the shower of balls, he knelt down at the well-known voice of his keeper, to present a more vulnerable point to the soldiers employed to shoot him, and did not die until he had received upwards of one hundred musket and rifle bullets. On the platform is preserved the base of the inflamed tusk, showing a spicula of ivory which projected into the pulp.

In the entry for EXETER 'CHANGE, a building that used to stand in the Strand (a street in central London), Cunningham relates (1850, p. 178, his brackets): "The last tenant of the upper rooms was Mr. Cross, with his menagerie; and here, in March, 1826, Chunee, the famous elephant, was shot. [See College of Surgeons.] Exeter 'Change was taken down in the great Strand improvements of 1829". In the early 18th century, *The Tattler*, no. 20, related about a tame elephant for sale at a discounted price, at May Fair; this was quoted in The *Hand-Book* entry for MAY FAIR (Cunningham 1850, p. 327): "Yet that fair [May Fair] is now broke, as well as the Theatre is breaking, but it is allowed still to sell animals there. Therefore if any lady or gentleman have occasion for a tame elephant, let them enquire of Mr. Pinkethman, who has one to dispose of at a reasonable rate. The downfall of May Fair has quite sunk the price".

2.12. The Myth of Jumbo in Britain and in North America

Even an individual elephant could make a cultural impact. Phineas Taylor Barnum injected into the American public new interest in elephants, when he bought the very large African

elephant Jumbo from the London Zoo, where children had been riding on its back for nearly two decades.⁶⁵ Scott, an employee of the zoo, had himself hired by Barnum, by simulating Jumbo's reluctance to leave the zoo (which the British press interpreted as reflecting Jumbo's British patriotism),⁶⁶ until the same trainer hinted to Jumbo that it was all right to accompany him to the ship. Barnum was teetotal, and that British employee scandalised him by sharing alcoholic beverages with Jumbo.

A freak accident saw Jumbo run over by a train at a train station; a small elephant was thrown to the side and wounded. Barnum presented this as though Jumbo had courageously immolated himself in order to save his companion. Actually, Jumbo had ran in terror in front of the train, and did not notice an opening to the side which the others had taken and saved themselves; Jumbo noticed too late, and turned in order to reach that opening, so the train hit him frontally. The frontal clash between Jumbo and the train became a powerful icon in the Western imaginary, symbolising as it did the clash between nature and technology. Fig. 34 is a photograph of the body of Jumbo after Jumbo's collision with a locomotive on 15 September 1885 in St. Thomas, Ontario.

Jumbo died at a railway classification yard in Canada at St. Thomas, Ontario, where he was hit and fatally wounded by a locomotive. Barnum afterwards told the story that Jumbo died saving a young circus elephant, Tom Thumb, from being hit by the locomotive, but other witnesses did not support this. Barnum's story says that the younger elephant, Tom Thumb, was on the railroad tracks. Jumbo was walking up to lead him to safety, but an unexpected locomotive hit Tom Thumb, killing him instantly. Because of this, the locomotive derailed and hit Jumbo, killing him too. Many metallic objects were found in the elephant's stomach, including pennies, keys, rivets, and a police whistle.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "Jumbo (also known as **Jumbo the Elephant** and **Jumbo the Circus Elephant**; born 1861 – died September 15, 1885) was a 19th century male African Bush Elephant born in the French Sudan (present-day Mali). Jumbo was eventually exported to a zoo located in Paris, France; and then transferred in 1865 to the London Zoo located in England. In November 1881, Jumbo was sold for \$10,000 USD to P. T. Barnum who brought him to America for exhibition in March 1882." "Jumbo was sold in 1881 to P. T. Barnum, owner of the Barnum & Bailey Circus, known as "The Greatest Show on Earth", for 10,000 dollars (\$241 thousand today). There was popular objection when Barnum's proposal became known; 100,000 school children wrote to Queen Victoria begging her not to sell the elephant. (*The Elephant War* (1960) by Gillian Avery is a historical novel featuring the protest movement based in Oxford.) In New York, Barnum exhibited the elephant at Madison Square Garden, earning enough from the enormous crowds to recoup the money he spent to buy the animal. In May 1884, Jumbo was one of the 21 elephants of P.T. Barnum that crossed the Brooklyn Bridge in order to prove that the bridge was safe after 12 people died on the bridge a year earlier on Memorial Day May 31, 1883 during a stampede." Quoted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jumbo&oldid=533418154>

⁶⁶ A song from the United States was inspired by Jumbo leaving Britain. I search I made around 1995 at the website (<http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/>) of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, at the Milton S. Eisenhower Library of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, returned this item:

Title: Why Part With Jumbo, the Pet of the Zoo.
 Composer, lyricist, arranger: For the Pianoforte by George Barnham.
 Words by G.H. Macdermott.
 Music by Ernest J. Symons.
 Publication: Boston: Oliver Ditson & co., 451 Washington St., n.d.
 Form of composition: strophic with chorus
 Instrumentation: piano and voice
 First line: Emigration is rife now all over the world, / Good, bad, and indiff'rent depart
 First line of chorus: They may take our stray dogs / and buy our dense fogs
 Dedicatee: Dedicated to P.T. Barnam, Esq.
 Engraver, lithographer, artist: [Jumbo, The Pet of the Zoo];
 J.H. Bufford' Sons Lith. Boston & New York.
 Subjects: Elephants; Children & adults; Animal shows; Exhibitions; istress; Circuses & shows
 Call no.: Box 106-107 Item 239

⁶⁷ Quoted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jumbo&oldid=533418154>



Fig.34. The body of Jumbo after the collision.⁶⁸

Barnum had Jumbo's skin prepared and stuffed with too much stuffing (thus giving the animal a larger size than it ever had), and also exhibited Jumbo skeleton. At a press conference, Barnum treated the reporter to beverage into which a powder was mixed, which had been obtained from one of Jumbo's tusk. A female elephant was brought from England, and introduced to the public as though she was Jumbo's "widow". Several elephants were trained to wipe their eyes, holding a handkerchief in their tusk, while following the remains of Jumbo at parades.

That the public was willing to suspend disbelief depended upon the wish to be entertained. Otherwise, all of this would have been found ludicrous and disgusting. Barnum's customers apparently found this funny and entertaining instead. Barnum eventually donated the stuffed skin of Jumbo to Tufts University in Boston, where the British trainer, broken, used to sit, until her eventually went back to Britain, in misery.⁶⁹

Ever the showman, Barnum had portions of his star attraction separated, the better to have multiple sites to which attract the curious. The skeleton was donated to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, where it remains. The elephant's heart was sold to Cornell University. Jumbo's hide was stuffed by William J. Critchley and Carl Akeley, both of Ward's Natural Science, who stretched it during the mounting process to make Jumbo seem even larger; the mounted specimen traveled with Barnum's circus for a number of years. In 1889, Barnum donated the stuffed Jumbo to Tufts University, where it was displayed at P.T. Barnum Hall for many years. The hide was destroyed in a fire in April 1975, coincidentally a fate that befell many of Barnum's exhibits during his own lifetime. The great elephant's ashes are kept in a 14-ounce Peter Pan Crunchy Peanut Butter jar in the office of the Tufts athletic director, while his taxidermied tail, removed during earlier renovations, resides in the holdings of the Tufts Digital Collections and Archives. [...]

Jumbo's hide remained at Tufts University, where it was displayed at P.T. Barnum Hall for many years; a superstition held that dropping a coin into a nostril of the trunk would bring a good grade on an examination. Although the hide was destroyed, Jumbo remains the mascot of Tufts, and representations of elephants are featured prominently throughout its campus. [...] A life-size statue of the elephant was erected in 1985 in St. Thomas to commemorate the centennial of the elephant's death. It is located on Talbot Street on the west side of the city. Railway City Brewing Company in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada brews "Dead Elephant Ale", an IPA, in recognition of Jumbo's connection to St. Thomas's railway history.⁷⁰

Juvenile literature about the elephant Jumbo still appeared in New York in the 1990s (Blumberg 1992; Smucker 1990). In particular, the following is the abstract of Barbara Smucker's novel *Incredible Jumbo*: "In the 1870's, a young boy helps care for the enormous

⁶⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jumbo04.dead.jpg>

⁶⁹ I first came across this story in a paper by James Haley (1974). See the book by Jolly (1976).

⁷⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jumbo&oldid=533418154>

African elephant that is the London Zoo's feature attraction and accompanies him to America to become part of P.T. Barnum's circus."

The very name *Jumbo* survives, e.g., in such terms as *Jumbo jet* and *jumbo tram* (the latter, for an articulated tram). "In time the elephant's name came to be a household word, with 'jumbo' meaning 'very large'".

Walt Disney's flying elephant, Dumbo (to whom we are going to come back), had his name formed as a portmanteau of *Jumbo* and *dumb*. On the European continent, the name *Jumbo* (in German lands and Eastern Europe, mispronounced as *Yoombo*) was sometimes applied to some other large animal. The refrain of an Israeli childrens' song from the mid 20th century stated: "Yumbo, Yumbo, Yumbo roké" ("Yoombo, Yoombo, Yoombo is dancing"), and that Yoombo was a dancing bear.⁷¹ Even though bears share with elephants an association for being on the heavy side (Fig. 35), the bear Yoombo from the song did not have that feature.

The Jumbo jig subgenre from the 19th century is defined thematically: it was inspired by the elephant Jumbo. It has morphed into a broader category: music about elephants. Disney reinterpreted music by applying it to a funny ballet of elephants and crocodiles, in his film *Fantasia*. Anita Hewitt-Jones has published (1995) an *Elephant suite: for intermediate string orchestra/quartet and double bass*.

Jumbo has been lionized on a series of sheet music covers from roughly 1882–83. The great four color lithograph of Jumbo was created by the famous Alfred Concanen of England and was matched with the music title 'Why Part With Jumbo', a song by the great lion comique of the British music halls, G.H. Macdermott. It pictured the children visiting the zoo and riding, somewhat precariously, on Jumbo's back. The finest of multiple American lithographic music covers was done by John Bufford. Canadian folk singer James Gordon wrote the song "Jumbo's Last Ride" which recounts the story of Jumbo's life and death. It is on his 1999 CD *Pipe Street Dreams*.⁷²

2.13. Elephant Ears: As a Verbal or Cartoonist's Jibe, and as a Metaphor

In a Walt Disney's film originally released in 1941, the flying elephant, Dumbo, is a little elephant so dumb that it keeps tripping over his ears, which are oversized even for an elephant, but who eventually learns how to use them for flying. Dumbo lent its name to the American compound *dumbo ears*, denoting the same as British and American *elephant ears* for large human ears.

Cartoonists drew George W. Bush with what was termed "dumbo ears", and they were sometimes made to resemble elephant ears. The wording "elephant eared" occurs, on the Web, for example when a member of the public refers asks rhetorically whether one is to accept as king "the elephant eared philanderer who cheated on Diana which led to her death in a tunnel". Whereas George W. Bush was being insulted visually, Prince Charles was being insulted verbally, but in both cases, the same metaphor was employed.

⁷¹ The Israel childrens' song Dubbon Yoombo (דובון יומבו) was — according to Meir Noy (1983, p. 427 = <tkz> דבון) — very popular during the 1950s, when it was sung by the famous singer Yafa Yarkoni. The lyrics were by Yehiel Mohar, and the music was by Daniela Dor. There is a refrain of five lines, interleaved with stanzas of eight lines each. It relates a dream, in which the dancing bear Yoombo dances between different actions of his. I translate the first few lines (quoted in Hebrew by Meir Noy on p. 427): "Yoombo, Yoombo, Yoombo is dancing! // I have a little bear, quick and tiny, / He is called Yoombo, A sweet mouth, a nice mouth — / And the head, there is nothing in it. // In a tub I was playing [at being at the] sea — / Who is shouting 'Help'? / He doesn't know, Yoombo the simpleton, / Even how to swim..." At the end of his article, which briefly discusses several Israeli childrens' songs about bears, Meir Noy dedicated the paper to his brother, the famous folklorist Dov Noy (the Jubilaris of the volume in which the paper appeared). This is because in Hebrew *dov* denotes 'bear'.

⁷² <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jumbo&oldid=533418154>



Fig. 35. An inconveniently heavy strong body is shared by bears with the elephants, in cultural perceptions such as the one reflected in this detail from a political cartoon.

The wording “elephant eared” occurs, on the Web, also as applied to plants: “elephant-eared rhubarb leaves poke out from beneath the spiny tall, October red shadows of a cultivated blueberry”, or “elephant-eared banana trees”, or “Curls and latticework elbowed a neighbor’s elephant-eared begonias”. Or then, when evaluating a New York restaurant, “a very solid elephant eared veal chop”.

Elephant Ear is also an English vernacular name in botany, for *Colocasium*. The ancient Roman author Apicius, in his book of cookery (*De re coquinaria*), gave this advice: “For the colocasium (which is really the colocasia plant, also called ‘egyptian bean’) use pepper, cumin, rue, honey, or broth, and a little oil; when done bind with roux colocasium is the root of the egyptian bean which is used exclusively” (Vehling 1936, Ch. 17, p. 322). *Egyptian bean* in Apicius’ Latin may well also be the same as the Mishnaic Hebrew *pol hammisri* (lit., ‘Egyptian bean’), which may therefore not be the same as *pol*, which like Arabic *full*, denotes ‘broadbean’. Vehling (*ibid.*) referred to the gloss from the 1541 Latin edition by Albanus Torinus; then offered this explanation: “His name, ‘Egyptian Bean’ may be due to the mealiness and bean-like texture of the *colocasium* tuber; otherwise there is no resemblance to a bean, except, perhaps, the seed pod which is not used for food. This simile has led other commentators to believe that the *colocasium* in reality was a bean”. Vehling continued as follows (my boldface):

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has in recent years imported various specimens of that taro species (belonging to the *colocasias*), and the plants are now successfully being farmed in the southern parts of the United States, with fair [179] prospects of becoming an important article of daily diet. The Department has favored us repeatedly with samples of the taro, or dasheen, (*Colocasium Antiquorum*) and we have made many different experiments with this agreeable, delightful and important "new" vegetable. It can be prepared in every way like a potato, and possesses advantages over the potato as far as value of nutrition, flavor, culture and keeping qualities are concerned. As a commercial article, it is not any more expensive than any good kind of potato. It grows where the potato will not thrive, and vice versa. It thus saves much in freight to parts where the potato does not grow.

The ancient *colocasium* is no doubt a close relative of the modern dasheen or taro. The Apician *colocasium* was perhaps very similar to the ordinary **Elephant-Ear**, *colocasium Antiquorum Schott*, often called *caladium esculentum*, or *tanyah*, more recently called the "Dasheen" which is a corruption of the French "de Chine"—from China—indicating the supposed origin of this variety of taro. The dasheen is a broad-leaved member of the *arum* family. The name dasheen originated in the West Indies whence it was imported into the United States around 1910, and the name is now officially adopted.

Elsewhere in his book, Vehling explained:

This is a "new" and commercially and gastronomically important root vegetable, the flavor reminding of a combination of chestnuts and potatoes, popularly known as "Chinese potatoes" which has been recently introduced by the U. S. Government from the West Indies where it received the name, Dasheen, derived from *de Chine* — from China.

Zoology knows about the Elephant-eared Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodopmys elephantinus*). The Elephant-eared Chameleon or Short-horned Chameleon (*Calumma brevicornis*) from Madagascar does not have external ears, but there is an area behind its eyes, up to the crest on its back, that is separate from, and has a darker (orange) colour than the whitish surrounding skin. It is a mantle, not an ear, but it was likened to elephant ears. See Fig. 36.

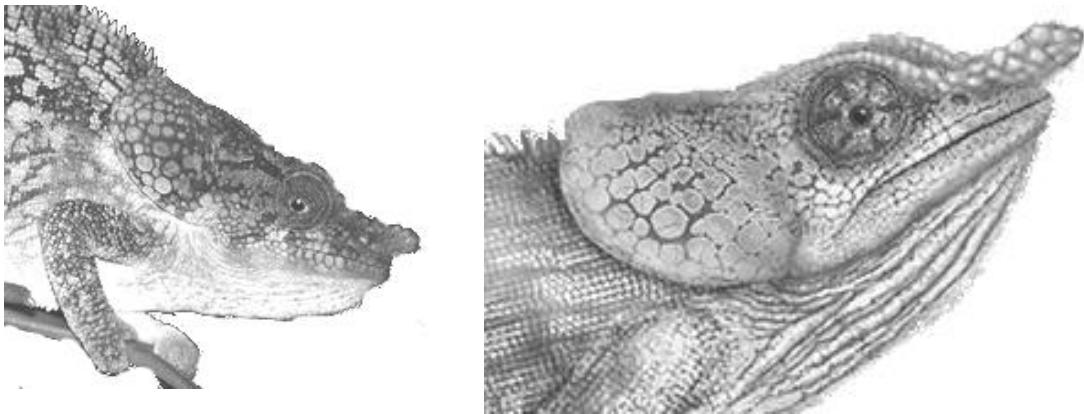


Fig. 36. The reason the Elephant-eared Chameleon got its name.

2.14. Bushes in Elephantine Form: Between Philosophy and the Police

The American philosopher Willard Van Orman Quine stated (1960, p. 8):

Different persons growing up in the same language are like different bushes trimmed and trained to take the shape of identical elephants. The anatomical details of the twigs and branches will fulfill the elephantine form differently from bush to bush, but the overall outward results are alike.

Dedrick (2006, p. 3) explains: "Quine was talking about how very similar 'phenotypes' could be produced by distinct causal structures". It may be that in Europe, shaping bushes like an

elephant is considered Kitsch. Not so in the United States, where Quine was referring to an actual practice. Shaping a bush like an elephant enables to keep much of the foliage, without trimming too much. The October 2012 issue of *The Police Chief* magazine (in Alexandria, Virginia) of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, featured on its cover (Fig. 37) William Lansdowne, Chief of Police in San Diego, California, along with a cheetah, with in the background a bush shaped like an elephant.

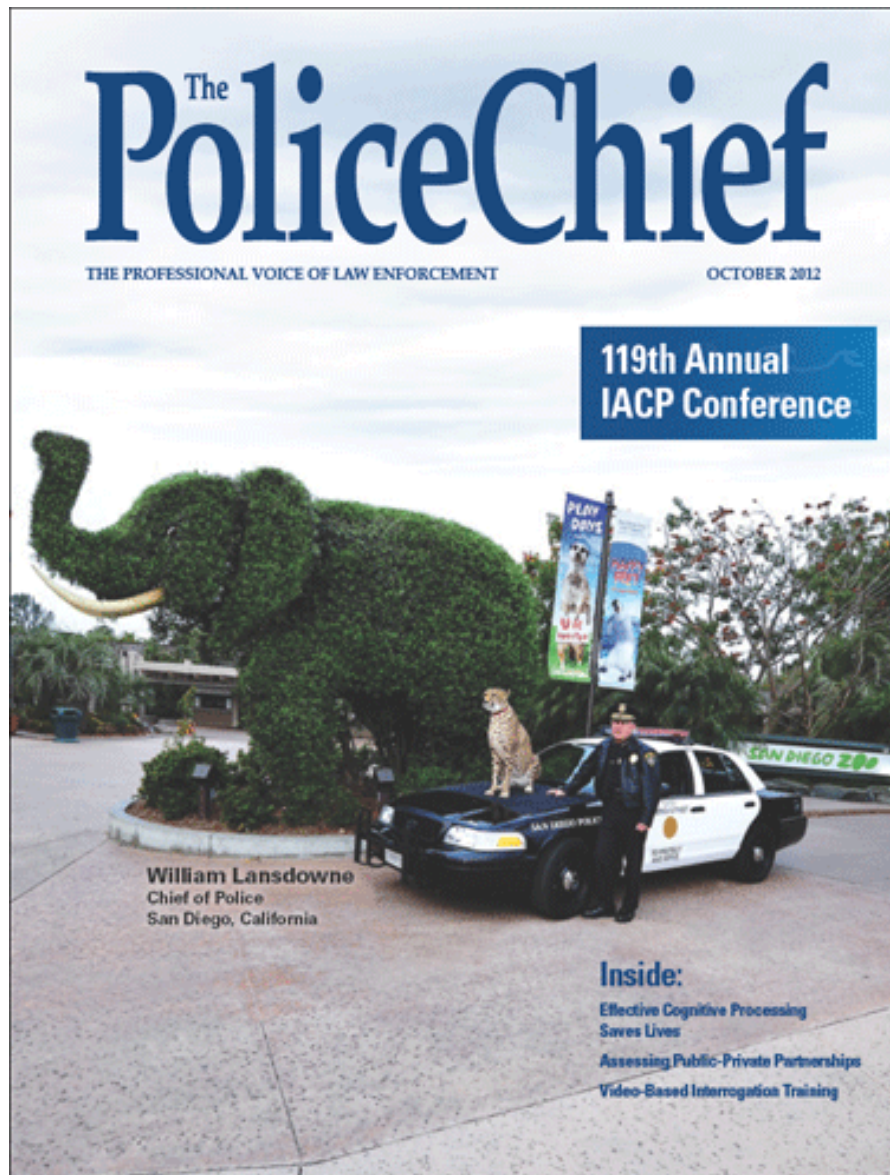


Fig. 37. The cover of the October 2012 of *The Police Chief* magazine.

The cheetah is unusual. The bush shaped to resemble an elephant is not, nor is it locally considered to be funny, I presume (this can be inferred from the image itself, as otherwise the formal portrait would not have been done against such a backdrop). It is simply a landmark in San Diego. But the decision to combine the presence of the cheetah with an elephant shape was in all likelihood deliberate, so as to be evocative (but not funny).

2.15. The Elephant's Clumsiness vs. Feminine Elegance in a Joke

The reason that some may find it awkward that the shape of an elephant is selected for a bush, is that elephants are widely perceived to be ungainly. The following example is poignant in this regard. A one-panel gag cartoon published in Italy's weekly *La Settimana Enigmistica*, year 81, no. 4197, dated 1 September 2012, on p. 29, shows a man painting a sign on the glass window of a shop of ladies garments:

TUTTO PER LA DONNA ELEFANTE
"Everything for the elephant woman".

A lady standing behind the man near the door of the shop — presumably she is the shopkeeper — stands akimbo and reproaches the man:

"IDIOTA, AVEVO DETTO «ELEGANTE!»"
("You idiot, I said 'elegant!'").

This is a case of mishearing (the man wears glass, so his sight, too, is far from perfect). It's not just mishearing, it is equivocation with far-reaching consequences, as the concept of an 'elephant woman' is known from circuses and freak shows. It is the opposite of feminine elegance.

3. Items from the Historical Record: Funny, without a Humorous Intention, Not Funny?

Mention of elephants may occur in a context which is bizarre for reasons independent of these being elephants (other than, for example, when they come under the broad category "endangered species"). Paradox sometimes affects statements about elephants in real life, such as the following, I am quoting from a law journal: "Culling may also be preferable because of its effects on the elephants themselves. A cull usually targets an entire herd, typically 30–40 elephants, thereby sparing individual elephants the trauma of experiencing the death of other elephants in the herd."⁷³ That is to say: to spare them sufferance, kill all elephants in a herd, so that no traumatised survivor would remain. As we perceive this as appalling, we do not find this funny.

Bear in mind the distinction between being humorous and being funny. Something may be funny without being intended to be. Or then, something may be humorous without triggering the reaction of being actually perceived to be funny. Moreover, when it comes to reconstructing authorial intentions concerning text or imagery from a bygone era, sometimes a critic feels confident enough to exclude humorous intent. Consider the following example. While discussing the Hague Bestiary (MMW 10.B.25, written in France in the mid-15th century), Willene Clark (2006, p. 77) states:

Douai 711 was probably its model, but the Hague Bestiary has more textual variants (with reference to Add. 11283) than do either Douai⁷⁴ or Salvatorberg.⁷⁵ In the Hague Bestiary the model's refinements have given way to a late medieval flamboyance that veils a degree of awkwardness in the draughtsmanship. Human faces are delicate, but poses tend to be stiff. Depiction of space was obviously an interest for the Hague Bestiary artist, but also a challenge.

⁷³ Heimert (1995, p. 1505, fn. 256), who then goes on to quote from Ricciuti (1993, p. 28, note 1): "If calves or females are knocked out of a population, the trauma suffered by the survivors disrupts their social structure and affects their ultimate survival. Poaching has had the same result. Elephants seem to experience distress when other elephants die and have been seen touching, even fondling, the remains."

⁷⁴ Ca. 1300, from the Benedictine abbey of Marchiennes, north of Douai, in northern France.

⁷⁵ A late 14th-century manuscript from the abbey of Salvatorberg, near Erfurt, now Wormsley Lib. BM 3731.

While trying to place trees behind animals, as the Douai painters had done, he sometimes creates the appearance of a tree "growing" from the animal's belly, a comical effect that was certainly not his intent (fig. 14). Still, the boldness of [p. 78:] design and wonderful color here can be exciting substitutes for mastery of spatial illusion. In the "Naming the animals" scene, Adam's clothing is impressive, especially the rich surcoat of bright red, trimmed in white fur, which confirms his high social status (pl. VI). His Mongol-style hat is a trendy fashion accessory, as Eastern-type headgear was much in vogue in fifteenth-century Europe.

Some other time, the intent to amuse is "almost" ascribed. Clark (*ibid.*, p. 81) ascribed another manuscript version of the bestiary, M.890 from the Morgan Library in New York, also from the so-called Second-family manuscripts, to "sometime toward mid-fourteenth century, to judge by the painting, which consists of unframed line drawings, with figures in tight-fitting garments that came into fashion in the 1330s."

The style is a delightfully playful one in which lively animals with upturned noses and mischievous facial expressions are drawn almost as if to amuse children (fig. 35). Despite a moderate degree of talent, the artist made some of the most winning of Second-family illustrations.

Amusing effects are such regardless of the painter's intent, in the following example from Clark's discussion of another bestiary manuscript (*ibid.*, p. 81):

The illustrations, in positions within the text, consist of English-type line drawings, both tinted and uncolored on rose and blue grounds, with color washes in the landscapes. Their creator had modest skills, yet a good sense of visual narrative. Sometimes he makes amusing visual errors, such as the lynx in the guise of a basilisk; the bonnacon without his fiery fart (Ed/Tr. chap. 13), and near him, curiously enough, a water lizard. Among the most delightful of the illustrations is the fashionably dressed prostitute holding forth a beaker in which to catch crocodile dung [...] and the sailor accompanying the dolphins' song on his hurdy-gurdy [...].

There is another thing to say concerning Heimert's (1995) statement — in a law journal — "Culling may also be preferable because of its effects on the elephants themselves. A cull usually targets an entire herd, typically 30–40 elephants, thereby sparing individual elephants the trauma of experiencing the death of other elephants in the herd."

It can be expected that a paradox be perceived (to spare them the trauma, kill them, too), but that this incongruity would not result in unintended humour being appreciated, for the very reason that the chilling theme prevents this. For that matter, consider that the argument that it is better for a community itself if it is exterminated as also made by the Reverend Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), a Christian Socialist and a Darwin enthusiast (Conlin 2011, p. 179, Conlin's brackets):

In the same way the disastrous fate of the French in the Franco-Prussian War led Kingsley to suggest 'that there might be cases in wh[ich] whole races or communities had fallen so low, that it was better for the whole world — and probably for them in another life — that they should [be] exterminated'.

In that case, a peculiar ideology was at play, and Kingsley expected that those slain would be reincarnated. History for Kingsley was the story of how a chosen race (the Teutons, who included the English) grasped its divinely ordained mission to subdue the world. The sense of "another life" (for exterminated races or communities) is understood when you consider that Kingsley, the unorthodox Anglican clergyman, also believed in metempsychosis (*ibid.*, pp. 180–181), apparently by influence of some French socialist thinkers. "Like Kingsley, they refused to believe in eternal damnation, and instead held that the self went through multiple lives. 'To live is to die in one form in order to be reborn in another form', as Leroux put it in

his *De l'humanité* (1840)" (Conlin 2011, p. 181). The concept of recapitulation of evolution through the development of an embryo

provides the narrative framework for Kingsley's best-known work, *The Water Babies*, as it did for other authors, such as George Eliot. Kingsley's 'parable' was part of his larger project of 'working out points of Natural Theology, by the strange light of Huxley, Darwin and Lyell'. The tale's hero, Tom the chimneysweep, is led to acknowledge his dirty nature by seeing little Ellie. In seeking to clean himself he drowns, is transformed into an eel and then climbs back up the evolutionary ladder, recapitulating the original evolution of mankind under the stern tutelage of Mother Nature herself. Set within the *Water Babies* is the cautionary fable of the Doasyoulikes, who evolve backwards into apes after moving from the Land of Hard Work to the carefree consumer utopia of the Happy-Go-Lucky Mountains. Degradationism provided another way in which Kingsley could accept the destruction of races as Providential, and join Carlyle and Froude in sneering at what the latter called 'that weak watery talk of "protection of aborigines"'.

The latter is quoted from Conlin (2011, pp. 278–179).

At any rate, the paradox about killing a herd of elephants in its entirety, supposedly for their own good, is not unique. As seen, in at least another instance from high colonialism, something similar was claimed about human groups, with Kingsley finding a way to claim that their demise would be for their own good (in another life).

Some other times, it is not out of supposed concern for some given group, that something chilling is to be done to them is proposed, that is grotesquely incongruous but which is not funny, because an appalling tragedy is involved. Nor am I referring to jokes in the margin of a human tragedy. [Rosenberg (1986) was concerned with humour among funeral directors; but funeral directors are used to death, and are desensitised, otherwise they could not endure their job. Disasters did not escape jokes. Jokes about the death of Princess Diana have been studied, and so were jokes about September the 11th: Giseline Kuipers (2002, 2005) discussed disaster jokes in relation to Osama Bin Laden's attack on the World Trade Center in New York; Christie Davies (1999) discussed jokes on the death of Princess Diana. When is it wrong to laugh? This question is the title of a paper by Ronald de Sousa (1987).]

Rather, I am referring to there being times when mention of an ongoing tragedy causes people to laugh, because they are expected to laugh, and are expected to get the point that that tragedy is irrelevant to them. In early January 2013 (this was before the civil war in Mali was again in the News, in mid-January), as an advert for a comedy broadcast, BBC Radio 4 preannounced that broadcast repeatedly, by excerpting the comedian's line:

There is a civil war in Mali.

This was greeted with an audience responding with laughter. (Appalling news had been given a few months earlier, and more were going to be given in about one week time.) This is an indicator of an expectation, on the part of the BBC, that enough listeners would be as coarse as to be enticed to listen to the programme for the very reason that it laughs at human tragedy.

In contrast, arguably the fact that BBC Radio 4 could have the given clip of the advert, in which the audience in a studio was laughing at the comedian line is not as indicative, as an audience in a studio feels under pressure to be game and conform to how the comedian and the broadcasting corporation would want them to behave.

Another example follows (Nissan 2011h):

In November 2008 in Rome, a Holocaust-denying high school teacher was suspended.⁷⁶ This manifests the increase in the public's awareness of the Holocaust as an important subject that has a place in the public discourse, something that in Italy reflects a global influence. It was not always the case that sensitivity could be expected.

⁷⁶ Bucci (2008). The teacher's denying the Holocaust was to teachers and students.

The year 1952 saw the release of *Totò e le donne* (Totò and Women), a misogynist comedy film scripted, directed, and produced by famous people who were influential long afterward. In one episode, the prominent comedian Totò is shown being pushed onto a train by a lady with whom he was having an illicit affair, and who did not want to be seen with him. Next one sees Totò wearing a convict's striped uniform and hat, sporting his saddest face, and walking slowly in a tiny, overcrowded courtyard among other inmates similarly clad.

There is a sign on the courtyard: "Mauthausalem", a portmanteau word formed from Mauthausen, the name of a Nazi concentration camp,⁷⁷ and Matusalemme, the Italian name for the biblical Methuselah, the standard of phenomenal longevity. This was intended to make viewers laugh, and no doubt many did.⁷⁸

On the web in December 2003, a blog of far rightists posted the claim that if that film from the early 1950s could joke about Mauthausen such a short time after the Nuremberg trials, it was evidence that the Holocaust did not actually take place.⁷⁹ It must be said that insensitivity was displayed by Italy's state television decades later (e.g., ca. 1980), at times when the old Totò film with the "Mauthausalem" scene, or then another Totò film, with a coarse anti-Black gag, were screened. Those scenes were neither excluded, nor commented upon.

Italy used to have colonies in East Africa, and e.g., the Italian administration in Somalia only ended in the mid 1950s. In that other film, in the given scene Totò, wearing colonial dress, and reviews a line of uniformed colonial troops. Suddenly he stops in front of one of those Black men, slaps him and then laughs grandly while looking him in the eye, and utters with professorial gravitas the Latin dictum "Castigat mores ridendo": it means "It castigates customs by laughing", but this scene was all for the sake of a pun, as though the sentence had

⁷⁷ "Mauthausen is not usually classed as an extermination camp, which describes those camps with facilities for the mass destruction of (mainly Jewish) lives as they existed at Auschwitz, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek, Chelmno, or Belzec; hence the accurate descriptor is 'Nazi concentration camp'. The distinction sounds cynical but is in certain ways meaningful. Confusion is made sometimes even by Jews. All the more so, some coarse filmmaker or comedian from the early 1950s, those responsible for the episode under discussion from *Totò e le donne*, can be expected to have entertained confused ideas" (Nissan 2011h).

⁷⁸ This note is from Nissan (2011h): "Before the shifting of emphasis to the Holocaust, the emphasis of memory in Italy was on the Resistance, and racial deportees were rather unglamorous, political deportees glamorous. This is true of Italy, but to some extent even in Israel, where the Holocaust memorial day was officially named after the Shoah (Holocaust) and *gvurah* (heroism). One in one hundred Italian partisans was Jewish, but only one Italian in one thousand was Jewish. Yet in non-Jewish Italy, memory — especially on the Left — focusing on the Resistance placed Jews on the periphery, and reduced Nazi horrors to an illustration of the evils not only of the radical Right but of the non-Left, the bourgeois class, and politics *tout court*, to the greater glory of the Left. This exonerated Italy, if converted to the Left, from feelings of guilt, and legitimized a holier-than-thou attitude of the Left even toward the Jews (viewed as bourgeois). Other aspects of the evolution of memory in Italy are discussed in [Consonni (2006)]. For how Israel's Shoah Day is celebrated in Israel vs. Italy respectively, see [Young (1990), Trevisan Semi (2006)]".

⁷⁹ The reference to the scene in Totò's film was in a blog, at a far-right webpage, which I accessed in March 2009, at: www.ejwd.net/cgi-bin/yabb/YaBB.pl?board=Ditelo_qui&action=display&num=1069970054&start=30 (dated 2 December 2003). The title was "Razzismo". The posting in which the reference to Totò's Mauthausen scene was found was that of an overt antisemite, signing as "Hashepsowe".

In March 2009, I also searched for references in blogs to the anti-Black scene with Totò described in the previous note. It turned up, and unlike references to the Mauthausen's film, it was in a political blog from the political mainstream, and used the reference without mentioning its being racist. On a blog (*Brodo Primordiale: un blog di varia umanità*), a political discussion was taking place in between 28 September and 7 October 2006 concerning the respective fiscal policies of Berlusconi and Prodi, and one of the bloggers, signing as "Legend" on the night of October the 1st, wrote: "I notice some confusion among those who earlier on, had an enemy [the latter being Berlusconi] ([whom they nickname] 'the dwarf', 'the bananero', 'the masked knight / the knight wearing mascara', and so forth), and by now have come to understand that the friend [Prodi] is even more dangerous than the enemy, because he swindles you by laughing... like what Totò said, 'ridendo castigat mores', 'by laughing I castigate the Moors'..." — the original being: "Ma noto un po' di confusione tra chi prima aveva un nemico ('il nano', 'il bananero', 'il cavaliere mascarato' eccetera) ed ora si rende conto che l'amico è ancora più pericoloso del nemico, perché ti frega ridendo.... come disse Totò, 'ridendo castigat mores', 'ridendo castigo i mori'..."

moros instead of *mores*, and meant "He beats Black people by laughing". The victim, when he was slapped, was quite startled, and after Totò laughed in his face and then walked past him, looked at him with a fulminating resentful stare. Clearly he wasn't warned beforehand: he just had a walking part in the film. Perhaps they put an additional banknote in his hand afterwards.⁸⁰

The Danish philosopher Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813–1855)⁸¹ is usually thought of as sad, but about his practice of humour, there exists an anthology edited by Thomas Oden (2004). Oden's (2004) publisher blurb claimed:

Who might reasonably be nominated as the funniest philosopher of all time? With this anthology, Thomas Oden provisionally declares Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813–1855) —despite his enduring stereotype as the melancholy, despairing Dane — as, among philosophers, the most amusing. Kierkegaard not only explored comic perception to its depths but also practiced the art of comedy as astutely as any writer of his time. This collection shows how his theory of comedy is integrated into his practice of comic perception, and how both are integral to his entire authorship. Kierkegaard's humor ranges from the droll to the rollicking; from farce to intricate, subtle analysis; from nimble stories to amusing aphorisms.

There exists an annoyed (rather than humorous) passage, written in 1847, in Kierkegaard's memoirs (§ 6008 in Kierkegaard, ed. Hong and Hong 1978, pp. 684–685), which somewhat reminds of (but also, on the moral level, radically differs from) a scene from the fourth film comedy from the Marx Brothers, namely, the 1932 film *Horse Feathers* (itself a parody of higher education), a scene in which Groucho Marx — in the role of the fun-loving Professor Quincy Adams Wagstaff, the new president of Huxley College⁸² — in a sense takes over a speakeasy (a clandestine liquor establishment from the Prohibition era in the United States in 1920–1933) by leaving out the person (the bootlegger Baravelli, played by Chico Marx) who had let him in, something that viewers find funny because of various reasons, and there is no impediment stemming from outrage at the takeover, because the takeover is only provisional, and because the person from the speakeasy was himself doing something illegal, so Groucho Marx himself is not morally resented. Moreover, Groucho is transgressive throughout the film, but the context is bizarre:⁸³

Baravelli: Who are you?

Wagstaff: I'm fine thanks, who are you?

Baravelli: I'm fine too, but you can't come in unless you give the password.

Wagstaff: Well, what is the password?

Baravelli: Aw, no! You gotta tell *me*. Hey, I tell what I do. I give you three guesses. It's the name of a fish.

Wagstaff: Is it Mary?

Baravelli: Ha-ha. That's-a no fish.

Wagstaff: She isn't, well, she drinks like one. Let me see. Is it sturgeon?

⁸⁰ There is a sense in which there was here, in both films, either consciously or subliminally, a reflection of the perceptions of both Jews and Africans plummeting in Italy in the mid-1930s, after the conquest of Ethiopia.

⁸¹ Kierkegaard is a major philosopher, so it is unsurprising that the year 2012 saw the publication on books about his influence in various domains: philosophy (Stewart 2012a), theology (Stewart 2012b), as well as literature and criticism, social science, and social and political thought (Stewart 2012c).

⁸² Incidentally, Wagstaff's inaugural speech at the installation ceremony has an interesting feature across languages. While the retiring president introduces him to an audience that comprises students as well as bearded and capped faculty with flowing robes, Wagstaff is seen shaving on the side of the stage. When it is his turn to speak, he says: "Members of the faculty, faculty members, students of Huxley and Huxley students — I guess that covers everything. Well, I thought my razor was dull until I heard this speech." For Italian-speakers, there is a reference lost on Anglo-Saxons, because in Italian, a dull speech is called *discorso barboso* or *barbosissimo*, i.e., "bearded speech".

⁸³ Incidentally: the exchange from *Horse Feathers* was part of an informal talk given by Oliviero Stock at the 1996 Twente workshop in computational humour.

Baravelli: Hey you crazy! Sturgeon, he's a doctor cuts you open when-a you sick. Now I give you one more chance.
 Wagstaff: I got it! Haddock!
 Baravelli: That's-a funny. I gotta haddock, too.
 Wagstaff: What do you take for a haddock?
 Baravelli: Well-a, sometimes I take-a aspirin, sometimes I take-a Calamel.
 Wagstaff: Say, I'd walk a mile for a Calamel.
 Baravelli: You mean chocolate calamel. I like that too, but you no guess it. Hey, what-sa matter, you no understand English? You can't come in here unless you say 'swordfish'. Now I'll give you one more guess.
 Wagstaff: (to himself: Swordfish. Swordfish) I think I got it. Is it 'swordfish'?
 Baravelli: Hah! That's-a it! You guess it!
 Wagstaff: Pretty good, eh?

Then Baravelli opens the door, and congratulates Wagstaff, who plays on him a trick: Wagstaff sneaks in the door, shuts it, and now it is his turn to ask Baravelli for the password. Baravelli complies, expecting to be let in:

Baravelli (confidently): No. You're no foolin' me. Swordfish.
 Wagstaff: No, I got tired of that. I changed it.
 Baravelli (knocking): What's the password now?
 Wagstaff: Gee, I forgot it. I'd better come outside with you.

That is to say, the takeover is not definitive. Wagstaff goes outside indeed, and now they are both locked out, because neither of them knows the password. This prevents a sense of injustice (let alone outrage) arising in the viewers concerning Baravelli being betrayed and extromited from where he had been by the one he had let in.⁸⁴

There is drama appealing on the reader's moral sense, instead, in Kierkegaard's passage:

Suppose there is only one megaphone on a ship and the cook's mate has appropriated it, an act which all regarded as appropriate. Everything the cook's mate has to communicate ("Some butter on the spinach" or "Fine weather today" or "G-d knows if there's something wrong below in the ship", etc.) is communicated through the megaphone, but the captain has to give his commands solely by means of his voice, for what the captain has to say is not so important. Yes, the captain finally has to ask the cook's mate to help him so that he can be heard. When the cook's mate was so good as to "report" the order, by going through the cook's mate and his megaphone the order sometimes became completely garbled. In that case the captain strained his small voice in vain, because the ship's mate, aided by his megaphone, was heard. Finally the cook's mate got control, because he had the megaphone.

Kierkegaard did not intend this to be humorous. It was an indignant allegory (even though we may be reminded of the funny scene of Groucho Marx taking over the speakeasy). At any rate, Kierkegaard left out the captain's perspective, as well as the confidential mode of his dispossession, but suffice it to say (we are left to figure out) that he was inenarrably sad. Nevertheless, being an engineer, he designed and built a ship like his original one. It was not as glamorous, his own opinion of human nature was none the better, and his inaugurating the new version was joyless. But as these details were away from the passengers' eyes, they enjoyed the cruise on the new ship. Kierkegaard's was an allegory about book authors (the captain) and journalists (the cook's mate), and he was being somewhat ironic. Kierkegaard made elsewhere, in the summer of 1847, this annotation about his own involvement with both

⁸⁴ What is more, Wagstaff and Baravelli eventually connive: once they are both out, Baravelli's partner, Pinky (Harpo Marx), a dogcatcher, appears and, at the door, pulls a fish out of his coat and sticks a small sword down its throat (thus satisfying the requirement for the password "Swordfish"), and all three get in (which this time they do by crawling instead of walking in). Wagstaff even recruits Baravelli and Pinky to play on the college's football team, and to enables this, enrolls them as students.

melancholia and irony: "From earliest childhood my heart has been pierced by an arrow of grief. As long as it is there I am ironic — if it is drawn out, I will die."

But what about the *intentio lectoris*? When Groucho Marx takes over by trickery the speakeasy of a bootlegger, and leaves him outside that brewery, the exchange is funny and Groucho's treachery does not conflict with funniness —the brewery itself was illegal, so our mirth at that scene in the film is not indecent in gloating. There is no such relief from the contextual desolation of the situation, in Kierkegaard's parable about the ship and the megaphone.

4. Concluding Remarks

This long study is two-pronged both formally, and substantially. Formally, in that it combines a review essay, with an original contribution. Substantially, because its initial part discusses the peculiar, humorous expository style of Pascal Varejka booklet about the elephant in the history of European ideas, whereas the rest of the paper contributes supplementary information within the subject matter of Varejka's book, without duplicating it. Readers are urged to also read Varejka's volume, and as it is in French, also in the present study some quotations (of disparate origin) appear that are in French, with no translation supplied, on assuming that translating would be superfluous.

I have noticed that scholars in folklore tend to be taken aback because of the facetiousness of Varejka's presentation. This is also why there is a noticeable penchant to belittle it. This need not be the case: Varejka choice of style, and his "strategic" use of humour and posturing, fits in the context of an important cultural trend in France. Whereas the roots of pataphysics are in the 19th-century France — its originator was Alfred Jarry (1873–1907), the author best famous for his grotesque character of King Ubu — it was institutionalised in the mid-20th century with the establishment of the Collège de 'Pataphysique. I have also shown that for specific aspects, the mocking of scholarly presentations, as well as with scholarly methods, one can detect clear antecedents in Auguste Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's mock-scholar character of Dr Tribulat Bonhommet. This is a subject of great interest for humour studies.

Of the two possibilities offered by pataphysics, namely, mock-scholarly presentations and scholarly mock-presentations, Varejka's highly readable and thoroughly enjoyable slim volume definitely fits within the second. This is why his book is valuable for the history of ideas, and for a subject now fashionable within anthropology: "animals in culture".⁸⁵ (I, too, have contributed to the latter domain, and part of my output in that sector is concerned with "animals and humour": see in the Appendix.)

Also the part of my present study that contributes to an understanding of the elephant in the history of Western ideas is of interest to humour studies, because the size and clumsy shape of elephants⁸⁶ associates them with the grotesque. Or should we rather say, there is much potential for the grotesque to make use of the concept 'elephant'.

We have seen that classical antiquity, along with the modern period, share a fair degree of familiarity with outwardly features (especially visual) of elephants. It is in the period that fits between — the Middle Ages and the early modern period — that imagination had a free rein,

⁸⁵ Themes and concepts associated with elephants cannot be expected to be treated exhaustively in either Varejka's booklet, or the present study. Suffice it to mention the theme of eating elephant meat, in such cultures that forbid the meat of some animals. The Oxford Orientalist Geert Jan van Gelder entitled a study of his (2003) "To Eat or Not to Eat Elephant: A Travelling Story in Arabic and Persian Literature".

⁸⁶ The elephant inspired English idioms for exceeding size (*the elephant in the room*) or harmful clumsiness (*an elephant in a china shop*), an Italian idiom for excellent memory (*una memoria d'elefante*), and an Israeli Hebrew idiom for irrelevance (*happil vehab'ayah hayyehudit*, "the elephant and the Jewish question"), but in Persian (Haïm 1956), an idiom for a sad mood or disposition ("The elephant has remembered India").

with how to shape the elephant. The Middle Ages were in the main unfamiliar with how elephants actually look like. The early modern period was better informed in that respect, but then is tended to ascribe moral features to the elephant (apart from symbolism) that belong in the imaginary. Inaccurate visual features continued to appear (e.g., Fig. 38).



Fig. 38. An elephant from the edition, *La geografia*, of Ptolemy's *Geography*, published in 1548 in Venice by Giovanni Battista Pedrezano. The depiction of the ear is inaccurate: it assumes that bones fan out inside it.

Bear in mind that in such regions of Asia where elephants are common, one does come across accurate visual representations of elephants even when the context is fabulous. For example, in an illustration from a Buddhist cosmology from Burma, the fabulous region of Himavant is populated with wildlife (Fig. 41), and elephants depicted accurately (Figs. 39 and 40) feature there prominently.

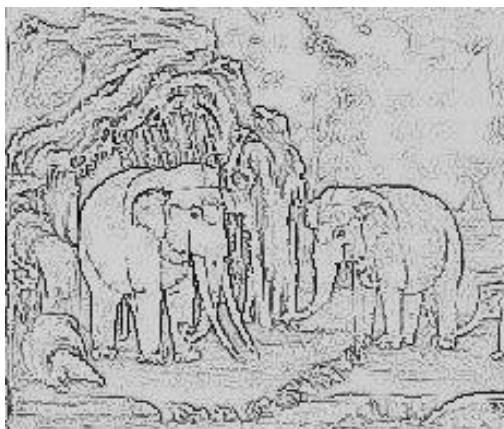


Fig. 39. If one only considers the drawing, and not the colours, in this detail from Fig. 34, then the depiction of the elephants is remarkably accurate (if not their association with a cavern).



Fig. 40. Another detail from the image in Fig. 41. Once colour, too, is considered, this detail is not realistic.

In the present study, we have considered the humorous occurrence of elephants in Hebrew fiction by Agnon: different kinds of humour are involved (Sec. 2.7). We have considered, in my present study (Sec. 2.4.8), how present-day familiarity with Western conceptions of the

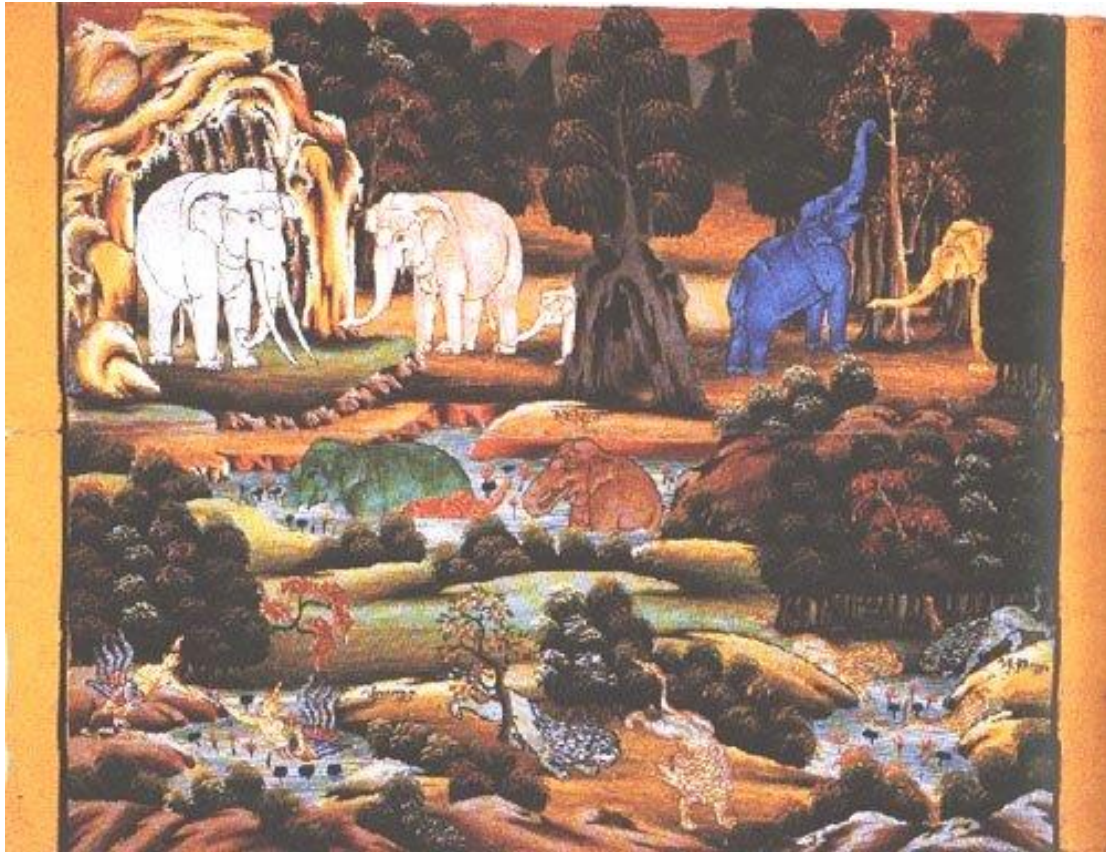


Fig. 41. Elephants and other animals in the fabulous Himavant region, in a Buddhist cosmology from Burma. The elephants (apart from colour) are visualised rather realistically. Not so the lion.

elephant also affects acculturated pupils in Papua New Guinea: they sometimes elephants, but we also saw that apparently Hindu imagery of an elephant-headed deity, imported in the far past from Indonesia into New Guinea, has affected local conceptions of mythical characters in folktales, as well as imagery in artefacts.

Myths about elephants,⁸⁷ or some individual elephant, also developed in the West during the modern era. We have considered an account of the execution in London of an ungovernable elephant, which was nevertheless claimed to have obeyed his handler's orders even as it was being shot at. And we have considered myths about the elephant Jumbo both before it left Britain (which it was supposedly refusing to do out of patriotism), and in North America where it was displayed by Barnum. Barnum spread a myth about Jumbo's death, and the very name of that animal had disparate repercussions.

Elephant-eared characters appeared on ancient Roman coins (Sec. 2.3.1), but this is also a feature of Roald Dahl's character of the Big Friendly Giant as drawn in London by Quentin Blake (Sec. 2.3.3). As to the elephant as a political symbol (Sec. 2.4.5), we have considered a political cartoon from Cambodia about the 2008 U.S. presidential elections (Sec. 2.4.6). We have considered bushes shaped like an elephant, without any obvious humorous intention (Sec. 2.10, cf. Sec. 3), but have also seen that the clumsiness of elephants is considered in opposition to feminine elegance in wordplay from a gag cartoon (Sec. 2.11).

⁸⁷ Another thing to bear in mind is folk-etymology. In the Graeco-Roman world, "the word 'elephas' was commonly thought to derive from the word 'lophos', mountain. Isidore [of Seville] handed down this time-honored etymology to the Middle Ages (*Etymologiae*, lib. XII, sec. xiv, *Patrologia Latina*, LXXXII, col. 436): 'Elephantem Graeci a magnitudine corporis vocatum putant, quod formam montis praeferat; Graece enim mons λόφος dicitur.'" (Heckscher 1947, p. 182, fn. 148). ["The Greeks deem that the elephant is so called after the size of its body, which has the shape of a mountain, and indeed, in Greek a mountain is called *lophos*".]

As seen in this study, in Hellenistic coinage the elephant is an associate of India, whereas an elephant's ears and trunk appear in a personification of Africa on Roman coinage. On occasion, the elephant is associated with a country in cartoons from our own days. Take *The Economist* (London), 345(8044), dated 22–28 November 1997. On pp. 93 and 94, there were two unsigned reports: "When China and India go down together" (from Beijing), and "India goes slow" (from Delhi). On p. 93, an unsigned cartoon shows an elephant and a (much smaller) giant panda (standing for India and China, in that order), walking side by side in a mountain pass toward the viewer. In a cartoon on p. 94, their back is seen, as they walk away in the same mountain pass. Instead on p. 80, an unsigned report from Montevideo, "Watch it, that's us you're trampling on", began with this sentence: "Squeezed between Brazil and Argentina, indeed born as a buffer between them, little Uruguay has not always found life easy." An unsigned cartoon shows a little girl in 19th-century garb, her forearms raised to her face (she is so small, she is not clearly visible), between two huge elephants, whose back is shown. Clearly, in the case of Brazil and Argentina the elephant is not shown because they form part of the natural habitat of elephants, they definitely do not (even though by the first few centuries of the Common Era, an elephantid genus still existed in Argentina). In that particular cartoon, elephant appear because they are huge, just as Brazil and Argentina are huge, *vis-à-vis* Uruguay.

Pascal Varejka's booklet is very interesting, in respect of both elephants, and humour. In both respects, it is culturally deeper than his facetious presentation would suggest. The quite rich iconographical apparatus in the book is carefully researched as well. And it comes from an illustrious French tradition of poking fun at scholarly presentations. I in particular am grateful for Varejka's volume providing me with the opportunity to write this study.

Appendix: Animals in Humour, vs. More Broadly, "Animals in Culture" Scholarship

Animals (either particular kinds, or an assembly of them, such as in gag cartoons about Noah's Ark) are a theme in various genres within humour. For example, such is the case of some of the animalisations in political cartoons (e.g., Doizy and Houdré 2010). In this appendix, I cannot provide a comprehensive survey, but I can rather signal some relevant publications of mine.

Many of my own publications have touched upon zoology in various contexts. Some of them touch upon humour. The pretext archetype "My dog ate my homework" is the subject of Nissan (2008a, 2011d), which I reworked in book form in *All the Appearance of a Pretext — in Courtroom Examples, and in Gag Cartoons* (nearly completed). Many jokes and gag cartoons are discussed in Nissan (2011d, and in the book *All the Appearance of a Pretext*). Jewish and Islamic traditions about the biblical Joshua riding a bull — the intent clearly being humorous in the early medieval Hebrew work *Pseudo-Sirach* — are a subject analysed in detail in Nissan (2011c), and is one of the subjects in Nissan (2008d).

Humorous wordplay in Rabelais is the subject of 'Folk-etymologies (Liger) vs. wordplay (Rabelais) for *papegai* or *papegault*', being Sec. II.6.5 in an article (Nissan, in press, e) with much concern with parrots as well as with biblical bird names and their reception throughout the ages. Cf. Sec. II.6.6, 'Mock-étymologisant wordplay: getting it wrong deliberately'.

There are examples involving humour in Nissan and Zuckermann's article (submitted) 'What Is in a Zoonym? Referential vs. Connotated Usage'. Ravens and crows in a humorous context are the subject of Nissan (submitted, a), as well as of some of the sections of Part Two in Nissan (2011e), and humour is especially relevant for that paper's Sec. 6.1: 'The Baghdadi Jewish tale About the Congregation Made to Caw'. Nissan (2012b) discusses a project in computational humour, about wordplay and mock-explanation (mock-etymology); a literary example is explained, concerning rabbits, carrots, and Noah's Ark.

My other publications about animals are typologically various, and are more numerous than the ones concerned with both animals and humour. For example, *Animal Names: Studies in Onomasiology and Dialectology* is an accepted book of mine, comprising several original essays. Amar and Nissan (2009) discussed gazelles as being raised by some Iraqi Jews up to the mid twentieth century. Nissan and Amar (2012) examine a scene from a novel by Agnon, and then turn to a detailed discussion of the Hebrew zoonym *tsvi*, which as used there means 'roebuck', whereas in Biblical Hebrew as well as for Jews from Arabic-speaking countries it means 'gazelle'. Modern and current research into early rabbinic zoology was surveyed in Nissan (2007a). The Jewish bird imaginary is the subject of Nissan (1997 [1999], 1997 [1999]). Elephant warfare in Jewish vs. Indian sources was discussed in a folklore studies perspective in Nissan (2009b). A few examples from Hebrew zoonymy were discussed in Nissan (2000a). Nissan and Zuckermann (in press) discussed lexical conflation (e.g., by phono-semantic matching across languages) in the making of Modern and Israeli Hebrew zoonymy, as early as the animal names invented by Abramowitsch in the 1860s (Abramowitsch later became the famous novelist Mendele Moikher Sforim). Nissan (2000b) conceptualised surrogate meat (especially from a Jewish perspective) in terms of Massimo Negrotti's naturoid theory (then still called *the theory of the artificial*).

Nissan (1999a), whose subject is Hebrew early hymnography, discussed among the other things the explicit occurrence there of the claim from homiletics that Pharaoh, for his pursuit of the Jews before their crossing of the Sea, chose a mare instead of a horse because the former does not stop running when passing water. Reference to such lore in Byzantine-era hymnography is grotesque for our present perceptions, whereas at the transition between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages it was just a clever display of erudition.

Nissan (2011a) proposed to identify with the Parrot and the Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*), an Indian Sturnid talking bird, the two kinds of of the mysterious *andrafta* bird mentioned in the *Babylonian Talmud*, tractate *Hullin*, 62b. Scholars have argued that the *andrafta* is a parrot. A parrot is the subject of Nissan (in press, c, d) and of part of Nissan (in press, e). Snakes or crocodiles were discussed in Nissan (2011b), an article about the semiotics of temporal relations of traditional Jewish exegesis of the biblical episode opposing Moses to Pharaoh's magicians. Lore about demonic dogs is the subject of one of the sections in Nissan (in press, b), namely: 'Demonic dogs, and Abraham Ibn Ezra'.

Nissan (submitted, b) discussed animal hybrids in relation to names that as a kind they are given in various languages, with special attention given to Hebrew. Nissan (2009 [2011]) discussed attitudes towards tomatoes as reflected in a passage from Agnon's fiction.

Nissan (in press, f) is concerned with bird names in modern and ancient Greek and Hebrew, in relation to the respective tradition. Nissan (in press, g) discusses how two biblical bird names were reinterpreted by an exegete in the Middle Ages, based on European lore. Nissan (in press, h) is concerned with such terms that have two acceptations, one denoting a bird, and the other one denoting a quadruped. In Nissan (in press, i), two geographically disparate names for some species of swallow is shown to have been derived from a name for 'crossbow', because of a metaphor about the contour of the flight display of the bird. Nissan (in press, j) discusses attempts to recover names for freshwater fishes in two Jewish vernaculars from Mesopotamia (Jewish Zakho Neo-Aramaic, and Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic). Nissan (in press, k) discusses the modern debate concerning the identity of the snails from which the biblical blue dye used to be obtained.

The early rabbinic myth of the allegedly luminescent *krum* bird is the subject of Nissan (1997 [1999], 1999b [2001]); its relation to the phoenix myth was discussed in Nissan (1999b [2001]; 2007a: Sec. 1). The sporadic and (as I argued) disconnected occurrences in Jewish sources of the cyclical snake (i.e., the *ouroboros*, as it was called in ancient Greek) are the subject of Nissan (in press, a).

The symbolism of crocodiles is a theme in Nissan (2008b). Nissan (2008c) was concerned with Audubon's early drawings of birds. North American Tertiary mammals were the subject of Nissan (2000c, 2009e, and, with a focus on rhinos, 2006). Nissan (2009d) discussed animal communication networks. In a section in Nissan (1995c), I discussed the medieval visual imaginary of the rhinoceros, in terms of cognitive prototypes (as an example of a notion I called *default by example*). In the long endnotes of Nissan (1995c), I discussed a traditional ascription to apes of an ideographical writing in southwest Nigeria, as well as the identification of the mythical *hakawai* bird from New Zealand.

My paper (Nissan, submitted, c) 'The Tortoise, Amid Lore and Literature, Scripture and Exegesis, Lexicology and Onomastics. From Chessboard to Turtle Shield: Considerations about Marino's Galania, the Nymph Cheating at Chess and Transformed into a Turtle (*Adone*, canto XV, octaves 170–181, vs. *Hosea* 12:12)' is mainly about Italian Baroque literature and turtles in the history of ideas, but it also makes considerations, in Sec. 9, on Biblical Hebrew *gallim* 'turtles'. The review Nissan (2010 [2011]b) is about ancient Greek names for birds. Nissan (2011g) discusses, among the other things, a folk-etymology for an ethnic name, based on a folktale involving cattle as being indemnification.

Animals in the Roman-age (but also Renaissance) arena games are a prominent subject in Nissan (2007–2008 [2011]; cf. 2010 [2011]a); whereas rabbinic zoology was not the main thrust in Nissan (2007–2008 [2011]) — it rather was what can be gathered from early rabbinic sources about the Roman arena games and how they were perceived within Judaism, which was badly, like in early Christianity (*ibid.*, Sec. 5: 'Gladiators as an allegory for Cain and Abel, in early rabbinic problematising of theodicy') — that theme also encompasses the *venationes*, i.e., animal fights (*ibid.*, Sec. 6: 'The *venationes* in a Jewish eschatological vision, and a possible Christian parallel'). Moreover, other sections as well are quite relevant to rabbinic zoology (*ibid.*, Sec. 9: 'Setting the bear upon Joseph: A metaphor from the arena?'; cf. *ibid.*, Appendix C: 'Bird-headed humans in different European contexts', which includes the avoidance of representing the human face, in some illuminated Hebrew manuscripts from the Middle Ages). In present-day perceptions, such images appear to be funny, as they remind of Walt Disney's and Hanna and Barbera's cartoons. The intention at origination was not humorous. Consider however that bird-headed saints or astral deities are also known from Christian and earlier Near Eastern and Western cultures, something that Zofia Ameisenowa (1949) discussed also in relation to the illuminations in some medieval Jewish manuscripts. Moreover, human-headed birds and bird-headed humans in European art found in churches were discussed in the epilogue to a book by Florance Waterbury (1952), *Bird-Deities of China*.

Nissan (in press, c) is concerned with a report from the 1930s about a parrot shouting republican slogans, being put to death on the island of Crete after the coup carried out by General Metaxas in Greece. A mathematical formalism of analysis is proposed. An early rabbinic, Mishnaic problem concerning a paschal lamb that ran away and became mixed up with other paschal lambs was discussed in Nissan (1995a, 1995b) and Ma and Nissan (2003), by resorting to two different mathematical formalisms.

By resorting to yet another method of formal representation, a controversy among ornithologists — about a bird collection which has been claimed to comprise some stolen and restuffed items — was formalised mathematically in Nissan (2003c), then reworked as Nissan (2012a). The study about the bird collection controversy (Nissan 2003c) applies a mathematical formalism, *episodic formulae*, which I developed and applied variously: to a case of amnesia from the 1920s which is still famous in Italian popular culture (Nissan 2001); to the identity roles (including delusional or by posturing) in the plot of Luigi Pirandello's play *Henry IV* (Nissan 2002); to a case of multiple usurped identity in a play by Marivaux (Nissan 2003a); to the plot of an episode from a Middle English romance about Alexander the Great in disguise in India, and Queen Candace recognising him on the evidence of a portrait

she had a sculptor make of him (Nissan 2003b); to the Feveroles Case from English law, and to the Cardiff Giant double hoax which involved Barnum (Nissan 2003d); to policy making and in particular, the privatisation and then — after a corrupt contract involving a mayor of Grenoble was exposed — the remunicipalisation of the city water system in Grenoble, France (Nissan et al. 2004); to an episode from 17th-century Mughal history in India, when during a succession war the future emperor Aurangzeb betrayed his brother and ally Murad, whom he had put in golden fetters (Nissan 2007b); to how the Rathors thwarted Aurangzeb's attempt to seize the baby Ajit, heir to the throne of a Hindu vassal who died in the Emperor's service (Nissan 2009b, 2009d); to the narrative of Tamerlane and the three painters (Nissan 2008d); to an episode in a trial, in Italy, against Adriano Sofri and others, when the police that evidence had been destroyed by mice (Nissan 2008a); to the social dynamics of the Jewish badge as a compulsory sign of group identity disclosure (Nissan 2008e); to a particular such case, with the intervention of Joseph Cazès in Teheran in 1898 (Nissan 2009 [2010]); and to a story from the Forty Viziers, about a king who transferred his soul into the dead body of a parrot in front of his vizier who transferred his own soul into the lifeless body of the King, and how the King nevertheless managed to obtain redress, once the Queen (informed by the parrot) tricked the false King into showing her the trick of transferring one's soul into the cooked body of fowl on the table (Nissan, in press, d; Nissan and Dragoni, submitted).

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⁸⁸ *America* is a Catholic periodical from the United States.

⁸⁹ No longer accessible at www.gramma.it/gramma_v4/rivista/saggio/44/044_exuviaeelephantis.htm/

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