

SEMPER ALIQUID NOVI AFRICAM ADFERRE:

PHILOLOGICAL AFTERTHOUGHTS ON THE PLINIAN

RECEPTION OF A PRE-ARISTOTELIAN SAYING

Italo Ronca, University of South Africa

1. Four years ago Prof. Van Stekelenburg wrote in this journal (December 1988, pp.114-120) a short but stimulating article on the saying "Ex Africa semper aliquid noui". It was the first attempt, as far as I know, at tracing the pedigree of a popular saying, which goes back to a Greek tradition predating Aristotle and was first transmitted in Latin by Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis Historia* 8.17.42). Prof. Van Stekelenburg's article gives a bird's-eye view of the more than bimillenary history of the proverb, its early forms and successive adaptations, as well as its practical applications down to the present time. It surveys a variety of texts with great concision, focusing on the turning points in the long history of the reception and aiming particularly at establishing when the modern adaptation of Pliny's recorded form was first introduced (circumstantial evidence seems to point to the 17th or 18th century: p.120). It takes, however, for granted the reliability of the received texts and does not discuss dubious metrical forms (as in the Greek transmission) or contextual ambiguities (as in the case of Pliny); nor does it address the intriguing question of the Erasmian reception. In brief, there is still a wide scope to be covered in the ground just broken by my learned colleague from Stellenbosch.

The present contribution is not intended to re-assess, or critically discuss, but mainly to complement Prof. Van Stekelenburg's meritorious article. It aims at deepening certain textual aspects of the Graeco-Latin transmission of the proverb down to the 16th century and is focused on Pliny, his Greek antecedents and his Renaissance reception, particularly by Erasmus.

2. Pliny the Elder records the saying that "Africa always produces something new" in a zoological context. Dealing with lions, Pliny explains the reported interbreeding between them and the leopards (or panthers: *pardi*)¹ on account of the arid African climate: there the scarcity of water, he says, compels such wild animals to gather at the few existing watering places, where they eagerly crossbreed and often produce *new varieties* of hybridised offspring (*HN* 8.42). "From this", the ancient naturalist concludes, "derives the popular Greek saying that *Africa always produces something new*".²

As Pliny himself later confirms, the source of his *ethological* news about the interbreeding, including the Greek saying, is Aristotle's treatise on zoology. In the eighth book of his *History of Animals*, the Stagirite assigns to "Libya"³ the primacy over all other continents in bringing forth the greatest variety of wild animals: a fact generally known, as "*there is even a*

¹ Pliny seems to call by different names the male (*pardus*) and the female (*panthera*) of the same species: cf. *HN* 8.62-63. We still use leopard as another name for the panther. More on the subject in Leitner (1972:188-189).

² "Vnde etiam vulgare Graeciae dictum, *semper aliquid novi Africam adferre*". The entire passage, which has been variously interpreted, will be further discussed below.

³ *Libyê* was the usual name of Northern Africa in ancient Greek, soon replaced with *Africa* by the Romans and extended further W and S, to comprehend most of the African continent north of Sahara (later further extended to denote the entire known continent).

proverb - he says - *that Libya always produces something new*".⁴ He then gives the following explanation, used by Pliny: "Due to lack of rain, it appears that wild animals mate at their encounters by the small water pans, even when they do not belong to the same species. They produce offspring if they have the same gestation period and a size not too different from each other. They become tame in their relationships to each other for want of drinking water" (*HA* 8.28.606b).⁵

Similarly, in his somewhat later essay *On the Generation of Animals*, Aristotle refers to the zoological origin of the proverb, which he relates in a slightly different form: "And the proverb about Libya, that '*Libya is always producing something new*', is said to have originated from animals of different species uniting with one another in that country, for it is said that because of the want of water all meet at the few places where springs are to be found, and that even different kinds unite in consequence" (*Gen.An.* 2.7.746b, transl. Platt 1912:746a-b).

Modern ethologists would only smile at the ancient popular belief, first reported as such by Aristotle, then however (after Pliny) as a matter of fact, that leopards or panthers could successfully mate with lions at water places in Africa.⁶ That lions and tigers can be hybridised in captivity, has recently been proved in the Bloemfontein Zoo. Let us, however, leave the zoological field and turn to the early history of the saying.⁷ Aristotle's double quotation leaves no doubt that the *paroimia* was well known in his time and that its original wording was very close to either quotation.

3. The earliest known allusion to an "African beast" as an extraordinary animal is found in Aristophanes. At the opening scene of the *Birds* (*Aves*, produced in 414), the Athenians Euelpides and Pisthetairos introduce themselves to a servant as "Shuddering, a bird of Libya" and "Shitterling, a bird of Phasis" respectively (vv. 65 and 68).⁸ The phrase *Libykon orneon* ("Libyan bird") is most probably an *ad hoc* substitution, due to obvious dramatic reasons, for the proverbial *Libykon thêrion*⁹ attested as such by the Byzantine *paroimiographos* Diogenianus of Heraclea, a grammarian and lexicographer active in Emperor Hadrian's time (AD 117-138) and one of the sources of Hesychius' lexicon. Diogenianus' gloss reads (Diogenian. 6.11):

Libyan beast (Libykon thêrion): <said> of those who are many-coloured (or changeable) and multiform in their habits. For, having a great variety of wild beasts - and many <wild> animals assembling and mounting one another -, Libya produces strange (unusual) and promiscuous animals.¹⁰

⁴ In Greek: *kai legetai de tis paroimia, hoti aei Libyê ferei ti kainon.*

⁵ This is my own translation, following the Greek Budé text (ed. P. Louis, 1969).

⁶ On such crossbreedings cf. Wotke (1949:765): "In Wirklichkeit kommen Kreuzungen unter den natürlichen Lebensbedingungen der Tiere niemals, in der Gefangenschaft in sehr beschränktem Umfang vor; zwischen Löwe und Panther wurden sie noch nie beobachtet". This was substantially confirmed by Dr. F.W. Huchzermeyer, a known researcher at the Veterinary Research Institute at Onderstepoort near Pretoria.

⁷ The obvious starting point for literary and philological research is still Otto's collection of proverbs and proverbial sayings of the Romans (1890:8 [s.v. Africa]).

⁸ *Ar.Av.* 65: *Hypodediôs egôge, Libykon orneon*; 68: *Epikhechodôs egôge Phasianikos.*

⁹ *Thêrion*, for *ornis/orneon*, occurs in the same context, cf. *Ar.Av.* 69.

¹⁰ Diogenianus *Paroemiographus* [= *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum* 1, 271]: *Libykon thêrion: epi tôn poikilôn kai polyeidôn tois tropois. Polythêrou gar ousês tês Libyês kai pollôn zôôn syniontôn kai allêlois epibainontôn, exêllagmena apotelei kai symmika zôa.*

The first sentence of this text throws some new light on the line of Aristophanes quoted above (Av. 65: the nuance of *fickleness* could be subtly alluded to in Aristophanes's caricature of a certain Athenian character). The ethological detail contained in the second sentence undoubtedly points to Aristotle as the ultimate source.¹¹

4. Diogenianus is not the only ancient *paroemiographer* who deals with the saying. Zenobius, a Greek sophist and philologist, also active in Rome under Hadrian, has preserved it in a longer rhythmic form, which the editors of the *CPG* have emended by conjecture to restore what looks like an incorrect iambic trimeter. In his collection of Greek proverbs, for which he used and heavily edited the older collection by Didymos of Alexandria (1st century BC), perhaps via an *Epitome* by Lucillus of Tarrha (Crete, probably 1st century AD),¹² Zenobius writes (2.51):

*Libya always brings some <new> +evil+: <said> of (people) most mischievous and always excogitating a more strange evil.*¹³

Leutsch & Schneidewin have correctly restored "new" (*kainon*); they have not questioned the authenticity of "evil" (*kakon*), which is the reading of the manuscripts (instead of *kainon*) but does not suit the verse closure metrically.¹⁴ Instead of the impossible *kakon*, I would rather posit the trisyllabic *thêrion* ("beast") as the original, a word which suits the trimeter and restores the original meaning of the proverb to its genuine Aristotelian tradition. If my conjecture is correct, the original verse might have sounded:

Ael pherê ti Libyê kaînon thêrion.

5. Zenobius, who "heavily edited" his sources,¹⁵ is probably responsible for the unmetrical substitution of *kakon* for *thêrion* (perhaps he didn't care, or - possibly - the classical rules of quantity were no longer strictly observed in the versification practice of his

¹¹ Van Stekelenburg's interesting suggestion that "the saying must (...) have had a Roman origin, because it is an expression of Roman perceptions of Africa" and that therefore "Diogenianus (...) must simply have given the Greek version or the translation of the proverb" (119) is not supported by the texts: the phrase *Libyca bestia* is not attested in Latin before Erasmus; had it been the original "saying", it would have left some mark in classical literature. The usual term for "African wild beasts" was *Africanæ bestiae* (first Varro, *Rust.* 3.13.3, cf. *ThLL.* I.1261.82ff.). The only occurrence of *Libyca fera* I know of is Ov. *Fast.* 5.178 (*ipse fuit Libycae praeda cruenta ferae*), where for *ferae* several MSS and editors read *leae* (which is certainly wrong) and where the phrase can hardly be taken as proverbial. But Van Stekelenburg is right in attributing to Diogenianus the Roman negative perception of Libya/Africa because of Hannibal's and Jugurtha's "perfidia Punica": such perception might have influenced Diogenianus' *interpretation*; it cannot explain, without the support of parallel texts, the *Latin origin* of the saying.

¹² Cf. *Der Kleine Pauly* 3(1979), 778 (s.v. Lukillos).

¹³ Zenob. 2.51 (= *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum* 1, 45). The transmitted Greek text reads: *Aei pherei ti Libyê kakon: epi tôn kakourgotatôn kai aei prosexeuriskontôn neôteron ti kakon*. Van Stekelenburg's note on the form of the saying attested (and negatively interpreted) by Zenobius, that the saying is "a combined version of the original Greek and the later Roman proverbs" (p.120, n.34), should be qualified in the light of the above note on Diogenianus (n.11).

¹⁴ It would fit if we could credit the unknown author of the iambic trimeter with a "licence" otherwise unparalleled in classical poetry: I mean the lengthening of the -i- in *Li-by-ê*, in the third foot of the seemingly smooth hexapody. For this exceptional lengthening, the only instance known to me is *Italiê* (with long *l-*) in third century Callimachus (*Hymn. in Dian.* 58), later imitated by some Roman poets (Catullus and Virgil: see Norden on *Aen.* 6.61). The licence remained limited to this word, and was apparently tolerated only at verse beginnings.

¹⁵ *Der Kleine Pauly* 2, col.13, lines 1-2: "Spuren des Werkes [i.e. of Didymus' collection of proverbs] lassen sich in der (stark redigierten) Sammlung des Zenobios nachweisen".

time?), as well as for the disparaging explanation of the proverb, whose application could henceforth be expanded by a remarkable shift of the original focus, we may pointedly say, *from African ethology to anti-African ethics*. In whatever way the unmetrical *kakon* might have been substituted for the authentic *thêrion*, Zenobius is answerable for twisting the original zoological meaning of the proverb ("Africa always produces some new beast") into a derogatory, anti-African generalisation ("Africa always produces some new evil"), which is not paralleled, and cannot be supported, by any other ancient author.

Palaeographically, the intrusion of *kakon* into the original verse line may be explained as a mechanical error of some copyist: that word might have appeared in the textual transmission, at any time before or even after Zenobius, as a marginal gloss either explaining *kainon*¹⁶ or as an alternative to it. Later the gloss might have been copied as a part of the text after *kainon*, while the (metrically redundant) *thêrion* was left out; or, rather, it simply replaced *kainon* after *thêrion* had been omitted.

In sum: The negative twist from the Aristotelian "always some new beast" to the Zenobian "always some new evil" could be ascribed to an ancient misunderstanding. A mechanical error of transcription might have played some role, as the mutilated verse glossed by Zenobius seems to prove. Alternatively, *kakon* for *thêrion* might have been substituted in Zenobius' immediate source, Lucillus' *Epitome* of Didymus' compilation; or, as implied by Van Stekelenburg, the Roman negative perception of North Africa because of the proverbial "perfidia Punica" may be made responsible for Zenobius' intentional manipulation of the transmitted text.

6. Unfortunately, Zenobius' *anti-African* interpretation, together with the incorrect verse, entered the late Byzantine collections¹⁷ and has never been challenged. That the zoological implication was the original focus of the proverb, and that my conjectural phrase *kainon thêrion* was there from the beginning, is strongly suggested by a fragment of Anaxilas, an Attic writer of the Middle Comedy, quoted by Athenaeus of Naucratis (fl. c. AD 200). In a passage of his *Deipnosophistai* ("The Learned Banquet"), dealing with "music as a producer of novelties", Athenaeus writes (14.623e = ed. Ch. Burton Gulick, Loeb, vol. VI, p. 360f.):

Music is a matter deep and intricate, and it is always supplying something new for those who can perceive. Hence Anaxilas, also, says in his *Hyacinthus*: "Music is like Libya, which, I swear by the gods, brings forth some new creature every year".¹⁸

Anaxilas lived in the 4th century BC; *Hyacinthus* is the title of one of his comedies. The fragment is reproduced as a rhetorical question by Edmonds, who translates (1959:344-345):

...Which is why Anaxilas says in *Hyacinthus*: "Does music, then, like Africa, give birth to some new creature every year?"¹⁹

¹⁶ Wild beasts were not only "strange" but also "harmful" according to the Roman jurist Ulpian (died ca 228 AD), *Dig.* 21.1.40: "ursum, pantheram, leonem aliudve quod noceret animal". Cf. also Lucretius' stark depiction of wild animals, as if "natural evils", in the famous account of primitive man and early civilisation (*De rerum natura* 5.982, 991-993, 1318ff.).

¹⁷ Gregorius Cyprius (I.27), Michaelis Apostolius (I.67) and Arsenius: cf. *CPG* 1, 45 (*Apparatus fontium*).

¹⁸ The relevant Greek text reads: *Dioper kai Anaxilas en Hyakinthô phêsîn: "Hê mousikê d'hôspêr Libyê pros tôn theôn / aiei ti kainon kat'eniauton thêrion / tiktai"*.

¹⁹ Edmonds' argument that "this formula [namely 'by the gods'] proves the interrogative" cannot be substantiated; and his rendering of that formula with a mere "then" does not add any weight to his assumption. Moreover, in his Greek text, *thêrion* is misprinted as *thêrôn*.

Leaving aside the marginal problem of whether or not the Anaxilas fragment should be read as a rhetorical question (I think it should not), one thing is certain: his poetical adaptation of the proverb in the 4th century is very close to Aristotle's and might stem from the same source. The key words are, quite naturally, *kainon thêrion* "new (= strange) beast" and not, as in Zenobius, <*kainon*> *kakon* "new (= unusual) evil". We have just seen how Zenobius' text stands alone in this derogatory tradition, which is likely to be a late, perhaps Zenobius' own innovation.

7. That the zoological reference was there from the very beginning as the basis for all further developments, can be legitimately postulated: all ancient sources point to it, except Zenobius. That the word *thêrion* "beast" should be posited for the pre-Aristotelian archetypal version, is strongly suggested by Athenaeus (< Anaxilas) and Diogenianus (where it is positively attested) and can be assumed for Aristotle (who might have read it in his *antigraphon*).²⁰

The omission of *thêrion* had no consequence for the Aristotelian and Plinian contexts (both overtly zoological); it affected the entire Latin tradition after Pliny (who was quoted *out of context*), when the proverb began to be used in the modern, more general, sense of "something unexpected, or unusual, always coming out of Africa" (*Ex Africa semper aliquid noui*), with a remarkable shift of the *grammatical and logical subject* from "Libya/Africa" to "something new/unusual", and the no less remarkable substitution of the abstract and ominously vague "something" for the concrete and well defined "some *beast*". The Greek verbs (*pherei* and *trephousês* in Aristotle, *pherei* in Zenobius, *tiktei* in Anaxilas) all point to the original connotation of "Africa giving birth, or nourishing, always new creatures". This connotation is lost in Diogenianus' short form and, due to Pliny's peculiar transmission (in the *Accusative with Infinitive* construction), in the entire Latin tradition, to which we now turn.

8. Pliny provides a paraphrased translation of Aristotle's first version of the proverb as well as his own interpretation of Aristotle's somewhat sceptical account of the *general promiscuity* of the African beasts. As we have seen, the proverb itself is quoted in an indirect form as the conclusion of a statement intended to confirm the validity of a seemingly incredible report, that of the frequent crossbreeding between lions and leopards/panthers (and, by implication, of *many other similar species* of wild animals). For clarity's sake I give here the Latin text and a fresh translation of Pliny's relevant passage (*HN* 8.17.42):

Leoni praecipua generositas tunc, cum colla armosque vestiunt iubae; id enim aetate contingit e leone conceptis. Quos vero pardi generavere, semper insigni hoc carent; simili modo feminae. *Magna his libido coitus et ob hoc maribus ira. Africa haec maxime spectat, inopia aquarum ad paucos amnes congregantibus se feris. Ideo multifirmes ibi animalium partus, varie feminis cuiusque generis mares aut vi aut voluptate miscente: unde etiam vulgare Graeciae dictum semper aliquid novi Africam adferre.*

"The lion reaches the maximum of his nobility at the time when the mane covers its neck and shoulders: this comes naturally with the age to (the animals) sired by a lion. Those sired by leopards are always deprived of this ornament; the females (= the lionesses) likewise (lack the mane). *They are very prone to (promiscuous)*

²⁰ By simply adding *thêrion* to the Aristotelian first version (*HA* 8.28. 606b) the line can be read as a correct iambic trimeter (with an anapaest in the 2nd foot, *Li-by-ê*, and a spondee in the 5th, *-non thê-*).

copulation, and this provokes wrath in the males. Such spectacles can especially be seen in Africa, where for lack of water (such) wild animals gather together by the few rivers. There can also be seen a multiform offspring of (such wild) animals, due to the fact that either violence or sexual lust urge males of (virtually) every species to copulate with the females (= lionesses) promiscuously. Hence also the common (= widespread, divulged) Greek saying that Africa always brings forth something new."

9. The Latin text preceding the proverb is both very concise and somewhat ambiguous; it can also be easily misunderstood. The ambiguity affects the central section, from *Magna to miscente*. This section has been translated as if it were a *general statement* about the strong sexual urge of the species lion, which leads males and females to pair indiscriminately, during the rut, *with virtually all related species*. The Italian translators of the recent edition of Pliny's *Natural History* (Borghini/Giannarelli, 1983:170) take *cuiusque generis* with *feminis* and seem to miss the point. They refer *haec to feris* ("queste fiere", as if *haec = hae*), and take the entire section from *Magna his* to *Africam adferre* as a parenthetical insertion on the promiscuity of *all possible kinds* of African beasts. Similarly unsatisfactory are the English and French renderings by Rackham (1967:33) and Ernout (1952:37-38).

The generalisation is undoubtedly present in Aristotle's text,²¹ which does not limit the mating of African beast to one or two species, and this might be the very reason why Aristotle refuses to subscribe to such an unwarranted popular belief. Pliny's text does not necessarily support the generalising interpretation; the slight alteration could reflect his corrective intervention. As I have translated it, the section under scrutiny can be taken in a restrictive sense, namely that the strong sexual urge is especially characteristic of the *females of the species lion* (the lionesses) and that this compels them to copulate indiscriminately with *males of virtually all related species*. Consequently, the resulting hybrids would be the offspring of a lioness and a male of any other (compatible) species. The ambiguity stems from the ambivalent reference of the anaphoric pronoun *his* in the opening phrase *magna his libido coitus*. In my opinion it refers to the immediate antecedent *feminae* (i.e. *leonum*); most translators have taken it with a generic *leones*, which *can* be understood as the topical term of reference of the entire paragraph 42. Similarly, the phrase *cuiusque generis* has been taken as qualifying the preceding *feminis* (females), but I prefer it to be taken with the following *mares* (males). Such a restrictive interpretation is supported by the syntactical structure (each sentence is closely and logically connected with the text immediately preceding it) and the *unambiguous* immediate context in which the entire section *magna - adferre* is embedded. Particularly relevant as contextual support are the phrase *simili modo feminae* on the one side (a phrase that cannot be *generalised* without doing violence to the Latin: it would be torn off the previous immediate context) and the sentence immediately following the proverb (*Odore pardi* etc.: on the wrath assailing the *male lions* when they discover by scent the "adultery" of their unfaithful females with the leopards) on the other, which unmistakably harks back to the wrath of the *male lions* (first occurring at the beginning of the section: *et ob hoc maribus ira*).

10. The comprehensive interpretation is supported: *positively*, by the possibility of taking the whole section plus the quotation of the proverb (from *magna* to *adferre*) as a sort of parenthetical excursus, or afterthought, inserted here for the sake of the original *general* application of the Greek proverb; *negatively*, by the absence of any hint, either in Pliny or

²¹ Aristotle speaks of frequent crossbreeding of *even different species* [*kai ta mê homophyla*] in a general way, without singling out lions and panthers, or making the female animals responsible for the promiscuous behaviour.

Aristotle, at such irresistible lust as a peculiar characteristic of the *lioness* (and not also of the lion). On the other hand, the restrictive interpretation would credit Pliny with discriminating intention and a personal re-interpretation of the Aristotelian context. If this is true, Pliny would be credited not only with summarising and adapting his Greek source, but also with re-interpreting in his own restrictive (should I say *anti-feminist*?) way Aristotle's dubious report of what must have sounded hardly credible, namely that *all kinds* of Africa's wild animals crossbreed indiscriminately.

11. The first known epitomiser of the geographical books of Pliny's *Natural History*, the late 2nd/early 3rd century compiler Solinus (17.11, ed. Mommsen 1895:91) understood the controversial passage on lions and panthers in the restrictive sense.²² However, the second known excerptor of Pliny's passage, the 4th/5th century grammarian and Virgil commentator Servius, already understood his source in the comprehensive sense (*Aen.* 3.113).²³ Somewhat later a scholiast on Horace's *Epistles* (2.1.195), glossed the poet's cryptic description of the giraffe (*diversum confusa genus panthera camelo*: "a panther confusing with a camel a different species")²⁴ with the notes *unde camelopardalus*. *Leopardus ex parda et leone* ("from here [comes the term] *camelopardalus*" and "a leopard [is the offspring] of a female panther and a lion"), again interpreting Pliny's passage in the restrictive sense, albeit in the reverse.²⁵ Finally, Isidorus Hispalensis, bishop of Seville (died AD 636) and "one of the most important links between the learning of antiquity and the Middle Ages" (*OCD* 1970:553), quoting Pliny through Solinus (and possibly Servius), again understood the passage in its comprehensive meaning (*Erym.* XII.2.10-11, ed. André 1986:94-97).²⁶

²² *In his silvestribus (sc. pantheris) et pardi sunt, secundum a pantheris genus, noti satis nec latius exequendi: quorum adulteris coitibus degenerantur partus leaenarum <, > et leones quidem procreantur, sed ignobiles* ("Among these forest panthers are also the leopards, the second generation from panthers, enough known and not to be further pursued: out of their adulterous copulations are born or rather degenerated the fruits of lionesses, and the puppies are still lions, but lack the [lion's] nobility [namely the mane]").

²³ *Plinius in naturali historia dicit leonem cum pardalide (var. l. parda) et pardum cum leaena concumbere* ("Pliny in his *Natural History* says that the lion has intercourse with the female leopard and the male leopard with the lioness").

²⁴ Kiessling/Heinze (⁶1959:233) note that the giraffe was brought to Rome for the first time on the occasion of Julius Caesar's triumph in 46 BC and adduce the authority of Dio Cassius (XLIII.23). In fact, Pliny (8.27.69) had reported the event at least a century earlier. The scientific name of the animal, *camelopardus* or *camelopardalis* (Linné: *Cervus Camelopardalis*), goes back to Varro, *De lingua Latina*, 5.100, who says that the first imported exemplars came from Alexandria, and describes them not (as later excerptors misunderstood) as *hybrids* of a camel and a panther, but as having some features of the camel and some of the panther (*Alexandrea camelopardalis nuper adducta, quod erat figura ut camelus, maculis ut panthera*: "from Alexandria was recently imported the *camelopardalis* [giraffe], which was like a camel in shape, like a panther regarding the spots"). It should also be noted that the usual name for the giraffe in Afrikaans (from Dutch), *kameelperd*, is an adaptation of the scientific name, ultimately going back to Varro, and has nothing to do with *perd* "horse".

²⁵ The *pseudo-acronian scholium* could be as early as the 5th century AD. See *ThLL* X.1.2 (1986), col. 238, 1.47ff. (s.v. *panthera*) and Index ²1990 (Schol. Hor. etc.: "inde a saec. V"). I think that Pliny probably is the scholiast's direct source; alternatively, Pliny through Servius.

²⁶ *Pardus secundus post pantherem est [...] Leopardus ex adulterio leaenae et pardi nascitur, et tertiam originem efficit; sicut et Plinius in Naturali Historia dicit, leonem cum parda, aut pardum cum leaena concumbere et ex utroque coitu degeneres partus creari* ("The *pard* is the second generation of the panther [...] The leopard is born from the adultery of a lioness and a pard, and it constitutes the third hybridisation; as Pliny also says in the *Natural History*, the lion has intercourse with a female pard, or a male pard with a lioness, and from both intercourses degenerate offspring is created").

12. What all these utilisers of Pliny's text in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages have in common, is an obvious curiosity about lions and panthers and their "notorious" promiscuity; they show remarkable lack of interest in the *vulgatum Graeciae dictum*, the saying which accompanies, and in a sense crowns, Pliny's passage. These collectors of curiosities, *memorabilia* and *mirabilia*, have evidently been attracted by the passage for its extraordinary and exotic animal lore; they have simply omitted the saying as something secondary. A similar fate was reserved to the proverb by all later users (excerptors) of Pliny's 8th book until the second half of the 15th century, when the *Natural History* was first printed in Venice (Chibnall 1975:75)²⁷ and soon thereafter the first collection of Latin proverbs including our saying was published in the same city.

13. It is certainly not a coincidence that our Latin saying can first be traced, in a form which is closest to Pliny, to Vergilius Polydorus' *Proverbiorum Libellus*, published at the end of the 15th century in Venice,²⁸ 29 years after the Aldine *editio princeps* of Pliny (1469) and only five years after the first major critical study on the *Natural History*, the *Castigationes Plinianae* by the Venetian humanist Hermolaus Barbarus (1492-1493).²⁹ According to Hans Walter (No. 42016a), our main source for the medieval and early humanistic transmission of the saying in the collections of the 15th-17th centuries, Polydorus quotes the proverb as *Semper aliquid novi affert Africa*. Apart from the obvious elimination of the *Accusativus cum Infinitivo* construction, Polydorus has aptly changed the order of the last two words for euphonic reasons, not only avoiding hiatus (*Africa affert*), but also obtaining a triple vocalic alliteration (*aliquid...affert Africa*) and emphasising the subject (*Africa*) at the end position of well formed rhythmic line.³⁰

14. The second known citation (missing in Hans Walter) is found in a slightly changed form in Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Adagiorum Collectanea* (Paris 1500), the nucleus of what was soon to become the most famous collection of classical proverbs and sayings for the next three-four centuries, Erasmus' *Adagia* (Venice 1508).³¹ In both works the saying (*Adag.* 2610) is quoted as *Semper Africa novi aliquid apportat*.³² In the Venice edition, and

27 Chibnall's is a masterly account of the fortuna of the Elder Pliny, to be complemented (for the textual transmission) by Reynolds (1983:307-316).

28 The *Proverbiorum Libellus* was published in 1498. Vergilius Polydorus (or Vergilio Polidoro: 1470c.-1555) was a humanist of Urbino; cf. *DELI* (1968:425).

29 Hermolaus Barbarus (or Ermolao Bàrbaro) spent most of his life in his native Venice, where he began his seminal philological work on Pliny's text. The *Serenissima* made him ambassador to the Pope in April 1490. He completed the *Castigationes* in Rome, where he died in 1493. The correct title and date of publication of the work are *Castigationes Plinianae et in Pomponium Melam* (Rome 1492-1493). Chibnall (1975:75) gives the incorrect title ("*Castigationes Plinii*"); Garin (1952:837), the wrong date ("1490"). Cf. *DCLI* (1986:196). There is a new critical edition of the *Castigationes* by G. Pozzi (Padua 1973) which I could not consult.

30 The alliteration was more striking for the average Italians of the *Cinquecento*, who usually pronounced [äffrika], as still do many old people in Tuscany.

31 The *Collectanea* contained 818 *adagia* and was published in Paris only two years after Polydorus' *Proverbiorum libellus*. A second edition of the *Collectanea*, enlarged by 20 items, was published in 1506-1507 and reprinted over 30 times in Erasmus' lifetime (1466-1536). The first edition of the *Adagiorum Chiliades tres ac Centuriae fere totidem* was published in Venice by Aldo Manuzio in 1508 and contained four times as many items. This same edition was printed (without Erasmus' permission) five years later in Basel by Johannes Froben. In 1515 the first authorised *editio Frobeniana* was issued; then no less than seven editions appeared in Basel, progressively augmented, improved, and reordered, until 1536, when the last *editio Frobeniana* was published which lists 4151 *adagia* and is virtually identical with the vulgate text (Leiden 1703). Cf. Heinimann/Kienzle (1981:7-19).

32 Heinimann/Kienzle (1981:430): *Adag.* 2610 (traditional numbering III.vii.10).

all the following ones, the *adagium* is the third of four sayings on Africa, the others being *Libyca fera* (2608),³³ *Semper adfert Libya mali quippiam* (2609),³⁴ and *Afra avis* (2611).³⁵ As can be easily deduced from the new critical text and notes (Heinimann/Kienzle 1981:430-431), Erasmus first traced the saying to Pliny, whose work he knew very well, without bothering about Pliny's own source. In successive editions he added: "Pliny took it from Aristotle" (ed. 1515); the Anaxilas parallel from Athenaeus (ed. 1517/1518); a note on the metrical difficulty of the second half of the Anaxilas fragment (ed. 1528). Pliny's controversial statement on African hybrids is explained in its comprehensive sense ("there are [said to be] born various - and again and again new - forms of monsters") but the geographical setting is narrowed from Africa to Libya proper. The application reads (in the *editio Aldina* of 1508): "[The saying] will square with (= be appropriate to) people of slippery (= unsteady) allegiance and always longing for [some kind of] revolution". Most probably, Erasmus is thinking of men like Catilina (a Roman, mentioned by name at *Adag.* 2608 as a person whom Cicero regarded [*Cat.* 2.1-2] as one of the most repellent *monstra* of Nature), Hannibal and Jugurtha (alluded to at *Adag.* 2609 as exemplifying the "perfidia Punica"). He is certainly not thinking of sub-Saharan Africa or African "blacks" (no ancient writer had "racialist" attitudes towards African blacks).³⁶

15. Back to the formal aspect. Two important innovations by Erasmus (included in later collections) should be noted: the first concerns the word order, with two inversions dictated by Erasmus' sense of Ciceronian *concinnitas* (with the genitive usually preceding its referent); the second, the substitution of the less usual verb *apportat* for the very common *affert* used by Pliny. At first it appears that Erasmus may have chosen the synonym for reasons of clarity. But the main usages attested in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* for both verbs hardly support such a view: both verbs can mean "to yield, produce",³⁷ but also "to import" and even "to bring news, report". *Apportare*, in the sense of "bringing news" is well attested since Plautus, and was used at least once by Lucretius in the sense of reporting something unusual.³⁸ But this was probably not the reason why Erasmus preferred it to *afferre*. I believe that the learned Netherlandish humanist, who knew Terence as well as Pliny, must have remembered Demea's famous monologue in *The Brothers*, which begins with the *sententia* "a plan for life

³³ Heinimann/Kienzle (1981:429). The saying is identified as from Diogenianus, given in the Greek original (*Libykon thérion*) and its Latin equivalent *Libyca bestia*, and said to have been once (*olim*) applied to a shrewd person *variis moribus ancipitique ingenio*.

³⁴ Also derived from Diogenianus (= Zenobius 2.51) and literally translated. Erasmus comments that the *malum (kakon)* was originally connected with the imported *monstra*. Then he adds that the saying "can also be twisted against people's character" (*mores ingeniumque gentis*), "if it is true that as the region is fertile in poisons, so is the character of the people noxious/destructive (*siquidem, ut est regio venenorum ferax, ita gentis pestilens ingenium*). What he really refers to, is the "Punic faithlessness" (*perfidia Punica*), such as was blamed on Hannibal and Jugurtha by the Roman official historiography, hence "[the saying] will particularly apply to the 'breakers or changers of covenants'" (again combining Zenobius/Diogenianus with classical sources: e.g. Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.12.38 "Poeni foedifragi").

³⁵ *Afra avis: Libykon orneon*, id est *Libyca avis*, with reference first to a large chicken (Horace, *Epod.* 2.53ff.), the (ed. 1515) to the ostrich according to Acron (but in his opinion rather applicable to a person in a "strange attire"), finally (ed. 1526) adding the reference to Aristophanes, of which he says, not quite agreeing, that "the scholiast indicates that [the saying] would suit 'barbarians and timid people', since very big people are often more timid".

³⁶ On Blacks in Antiquity, see Snowden (1970 & 1983) and Thompson (1989).

³⁷ Especially fruits (produced by the earth), a connotation that can be assumed for Pliny's passage on the analogy of several agricultural parallels attested i.a. by Pliny's contemporary Columella. Cf. *ThLL* 1.1192ff., esp. 1199.60ff.

³⁸ Lucr. *De rer. nat.* 5.100: *ut fit ubi insolitam rem apportet auribus ante*: "as happens when you bring to someone's ears something unknown before".

may be well worked out, *but a man can still learn something new* from circumstances, age and experience".³⁹ The parallel is too close to be a mere coincidence. By replacing the verb, Erasmus conflated Pliny and Terence, implicitly suggesting a positive interpretation of the former's saying (in the sense that we can always learn something new about the natural riches of Africa). Be that as it may, Erasmus' *Adagia* had an enormous influence on several generations of writers, scholars, and collectors of proverbs. In the Erasmian form, but without the accompanying comments, the *adagium* found its way into several collections of the 17th century, of which two (excerpted by Walter: No. 27892a) should be mentioned by name: the *Alvearie* (1619: 199), one of the first English multilingual "dictionaries of quotations", and the *Adagia* (1646:349), *Alvearie*'s German counterpart.

16. The third (very slight) variant occurs in Paulus Manutius' collection of *Adagia* (1575:949): *Africa semper aliquid novi apportat*.⁴⁰ Erasmus' form is substantially preserved; only the word order is slightly changed. The topical word (*Africa*) is placed first for obvious reasons of emphasis. The somewhat pedantic *novi aliquid* is returned to the more usual *aliquid novi*.

The last, and most remarkable, variation traceable to the humanists is found in the second volume of the *Florilegium Magnum* (Gruter 1624:199 = Walter No. 34631d) by the South-Netherlandish classical philologist, jurist, and Neo-Latin poet Jan Gruter (1560-1627): *Aliquid novi profert quotannis Africa*. This is an elegant iambic trimeter (*senarius*) which Gruter skilfully adapted from Pliny to suit the popular rhythm of Publius Syrus (whose *Sententiae* he highly praised in the wake of Erasmus and Scaliger). Besides the meter, the phrase *profert quotannis* (substituted for *affert semper*) is particularly noteworthy. *Proferre* is a felicitous innovation, as it technically denotes "bringing into existence new living things" (*OLD*) and it is well attested at least since Naevius, in Lucan even in connection with pre-historic monsters believed to have been "brought into existence without seed by an incongruous Nature" (1.590 *monstra ... quae nullo semine discors / proferat natura*). *Quotannis* ("each year") for *semper* ("always") is a sensible substitution, aptly alluding to the yearly cycle of animal births. This particular substitution, as well as the metrical form, prove that the learned scholar knew (via Erasmus' *Adagium* 2610 of the 1517/1518 edition, or any following edition) the Anaxilas version recorded by Athenaeus, the only Greek variant alluding to the yearly reproduction (*kat' eniauton = quotannis*).

17. Finally, among the early vernacular writers who owed their knowledge of the Latin saying to Erasmus, at least one prominent name should be mentioned: François Rabelais (c. 1494-1553). The future author of the incredible stories of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* visited Lyons in 1532, two years before he published Book I (*Gargantua*) and Book II (*Pantagruel*) there. In Lyons he managed to have published Giovanni Manardi's Latin letters, as well as Hippocrates' *Aphorisms*, by the *libraire* Greiff (Sébastien Gryphe, known as Gryphius). At the same time, he became a friend of Etienne Dolet and Salmon Macrin, the best Latin poet of the time, and even wrote a letter to Erasmus, which has survived and is full of admiration for the great scholar from Rotterdam (Boulenger 1955:xiii). Lyons was then a major cultural centre in France, and we know (Heinimann/Keinzele 1981:9, n. 15) that the same Gryphius had just published two unauthorised reprints of the *Adagiorum Chiliades* (1528 = Basel 1526; 1529 = Basel 1528). In a passage of chapter 16 of his *Gargantua* (published, also by

³⁹ Ter., *Ad.* 855ff. = Act. 5, Sc. 4: *Numquam ita quisquam bene subducta ratione ad vitam fuit / quin res aetas usus semper aliquid adportet novi.*

⁴⁰ The Erasmian term *Adagia* is by now universally accepted. Paolo Manuzio (Venice 1512 - Rome 1574) was the third son of the famous Aldo (1450c. - 1515), the first "editor" in the modern sense of the term not only of Erasmus' *Adagia*, but also of the major classical texts. It seems that the *Adagia quaecumque etc.* was published posthumously by Paolo's son, Aldo jr. Cf. *Enciclopedia Italiana*, ed. 1949, vol. XXII, p. 185; *DELI*, vol. 3, 1967, p. 484.

Gryphius, in 1534; critical text in Boulenger 1955:51), being ironic about a certain Fayoles, Rabelais calls him "the fourth king of Numidia" and has him send "from his African country" to a Mr. Grandgousier "a mare, the most enormous and largest ever seen and [also] the most monstrous [beast] - as you well know that "*Africa always exports something new*" - because she was as big as six elephants and had feet cloven into toes like Julius Caesar's horse, her ears hung down like those of the goats of Languedoc, and a little horn stuck out of her anus."⁴¹ The French for "exports" (which is my free translation), *aporte*, is of course the literal rendering of the Erasmian (and Terentian) *apporlat*, which in French, as well as in Latin, means "brings, conveys to (somebody or a place)".⁴²

18. Here I must break off. To pursue the history of the ancient saying with a detailed account of its reception in the European literatures of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries would be intriguing for modern Comparatists; it transcends the scope of the present article, and - in my opinion - can be successfully attempted only with the full historical resources of major overseas libraries. For the time being, it might be sufficient to have complemented Prof. Van Stekelenburg's article by concentrating on the early transmission and delving in what lays under the surface of the pre-Aristotelian proverb. If what I believe to have uncovered there holds water, this attempt of mine - *qualecumque est* - might stimulate some younger reader of this journal to try his hand at something similar in the wide field of ancient *paroemiography*.

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⁴¹ "Fayoles, quarte roy de Numidie, envoya du pays de Africque à Grandgousier une jument la plus énorme et la plus grande que feut oncques veue, et la plus monstrueuse (comme assez sçavez que Africque aporte tousjours quelque chose de nouveau), car elle estoit grande comme six oriflans, et avoit les pieds fenduz en doigtz comme le cheval de Jules César, les aureilles ainsi pendentes comme les chèvres de Langueoth et une petite corne au cul."

⁴² For the sake of curiosity, Stevenson (1967:1415), the only modern dictionary of quotations which hints at Erasmus' *Adagia* and Rabelais' translation, refers not to the *Gargantua* passage, but to a spurious passage from the 5th book, ch. 3, most probably a late addition by the editor, who used the authentic passage as a source. The Fifth Book was published posthumously in 1564 and contains quite a few of such editorial manipulations. There the saying appears at the end of a satirical report on the Capuchins (recently introduced to France), described as a sixth species of outlandish birds imported from Africa, "more monkclubberly and fouler than any variety known locally". Which prompts Pantagruel to exclaim "Africa is used to produce strange and wonderful things": *Africque (dist Pantagruel) est coutumière de produire choses nouvelles et monstrueuses.* See Boulenger (1955:757, n. 9).

- CPG = *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, ed. E.L.A. Leutsch & G. Schneidewin, 2 vols. (1839, 1851), repr. 1958, 1961.
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