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**Jews in the Foliage**

Apes, as inferior “doubles”, have been used in art for more than a thousand years. As is known, symbolism attached to various animals derived mostly from bestiaries. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, from the snake of Eden, to the ram of Abraham and the animals symbolizing the Evangelists, beast have played an important role. Although apes and monkeys were never indigenous to Palestine –even the Hebrew name *kof* (ape) is a Tamil loan word - monkeys often appear in the foliage of woodcuts or in printings, referring to the Fall of Adam and Eve. In some late medieval literature, they pretend to act as priests, celebrating mass, etc. During the Renaissance, apes were frequently depicted doing secular jobs. In the “ape follies,” peddlers, who were mostly Jewish, were portrayed as monkeys or apes. Therefore, in this paper, I distinguish three categories:

- Monkeys copying human behavior (the accent being on copying).
- “Hybrid” illustrations in which imitation and interpretation are mixed.
- Monkeys symbolizing “Jews as such,” with emphasis on their rejecting Christian teachings and experience.

I contend that Christian (anti-Jewish) fantasy had found a special role for monkeys and apes. A creature subhuman and unclean, “*naturae degenerantis homo*” –since not humanized by baptism- the monkey becomes the devil or the Jew. A consistency of such symbolism in Renaissance representations in which monkeys appear in paintings and frescos, as well as in illuminated manuscripts, supports my claim.