



# **Jumbo: The Unauthorised Biography of a Victorian Sensation**

*John Sutherland*

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# Jumbo: The Unauthorised Biography of a Victorian Sensation

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## **Jumbo: The Unauthorised Biography of a Victorian Sensation** John Sutherland

The first comprehensive 'biography' of one of the first celebrity animals who gave us one of our favourite words.

Jumbo, Victorian England's favourite elephant, was born in 1861 in French Sudan, imported to a Parisian zoo and later sold on to London, where – for seventeen years – he dutifully gave children rides and ate buns from their hands, all the while being tortured at night to keep him docile. Worldwide fame came when he was bought by the American showman and scam artist P.T. Barnum in 1881, despite letters from 100,000 British schoolchildren who wrote to Queen Victoria begging her to prevent the sale. Barnum went on to transform Jumbo into a lucrative circus act and one of the most loved animals of all time, establishing elephants as a regular feature of funhouses and menageries the world over.

Using the heartwrenching story of Jumbo's celebrity life, tragic death in Canada in 1885, and his enduring cultural legacy, Jumbo is personal and fascinating reflection on our cultural elephantiasis by one of our most distinguished literary-critical detectives, which is guaranteed to amuse, stimulate, provoke and delight in equal measure.

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