Ernout-Meillet derive *ebur* from Egyptian *3bw* (used for both "elephant" and "ivory"). A slightly different explanation, which would account for the *r*, has occurred to me.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that *3bw* itself is an African loanword. Suppose the Romans obtained their word from a Nubian rather than an Egyptian intermediary. A feature of Old Nubian is the suffix *l* (*il* after a consonant) which serves as a definite article — e. g. KOCMOC-, "the world". But Zyhlarz (Grundzüge der Nubischen Grammatik im Christlichen Grühmittelalter, Leipzig, 1928, p. 14) points out that this *l* occasionally appears as *r* — e. g. *[zλ]* or *[zφ]*, definite for *[z] "son". Since loan-words are often taken over in the articular form—European borrowings from an Arabic are an obvious example — the Latin language could have acquired *ebur* ready — made from Nubian traders.

Our knowledge of Old Nubian comes, of course, from texts of much later date², but the Sudanese languages seem to exhibit a considerable stability³.

Bedford (England).

---

J. W. Goethe:

ÜBER ALLEN GIPFELN...

Incubat monti requies, nec aurae
combovent ramos, tacet altum vox
cuncta per dumeta; mane: Frueris
tu quoque somnis.

Bedford (England).

Latine vertit G. M. Lee.

---

¹ I adopt Sir Alan Gardiner’s transliteration. I do not know whether *3bw* is related to *3by* "panther". Eric Partridge (A Charm of Words, 1960, p. 58f.) shows that in several languages the name of "elephant" is given to other large animals.

² Edited by F. Llewellyn Griffith for the Berlin Academy in 1913. They are written in a modified form of the Coptic alphabet.

³ The general character of these languages is described in Meillet and Cohen, Les Langues du Monde, II, nous. éd. 1952, p. 237f. — I abstain for the moment from speculation about the origin of *ελφας* and its oriental equivalents.